



**IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVEL "A SEVERED HEAD": CRIME,  
REALITY, AND ETHICS**

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>Interesting points about "A Severed Head" are discussed in this study. The author's fascinating approach, rife with symbols, philosophical and psychological features, makes for a compelling read that leaves readers in awe. There is a strong interdependence between the characters, which forms a chain of events leading to revelations of truth, provocation of reactions, exposure of secrets, confrontation, breakups, and new relationships. In this context, "crime" does not refer to a specific offense category but to any action that endangers another person's well-being. Everyone seeks the truth, but it's notoriously elusive. Morality is examined in opposition to its antithesis, immorality. The author does not offer cookie-cutter answers to the problems. The ending is vague enough to be susceptible to various interpretations. Everything about this novel is postmodern.</p>	

**Introduction**

Dame Iris Murdoch's 1961 novel "A Severed Head" is a satire about high-class characters struggling with infidelity, incest, and divorce. A novel about the terror and cruelty of falling in love, as promised on the cover: even if you have not read the rest, this clue suggests something is amiss, given that love can be terrifying and unforgiving. Everyone talks about love being the purest emotion, but here we have suspense. The title alone—"A Severed Head"—raises tension and anxiety. Webster defines *criminal behavior* as: 1. engaging in illegal conduct or 2. failing to comply with a legal requirement. Significant wrongdoing, especially one that violates morality. Thirdly, criminal behavior 4 - an inexcusable act or omission.

Love, as is explored throughout the story, is a complicated topic that can lead to drama and intrigue. In this paper, we would like to explore the profound connections between people's thoughts and how they influence daily interactions. We need to do some character and behavior analysis on them. How do they reason and behave? What do they keep hidden from the world? How do they contribute to

problems related to crime? Can a crime be hidden? What if confidence is betrayed? Is it thus a criminal for someone to tell the truth about another person?

All of these concerns center on issues of morality. Virtue and moral behavior are merely two sides of the morality coin; immorality must also be considered. It has to do with the average and whether or not the characters follow it or go above and beyond it. The issue is whether or not the truth is being kept secret. Morality penetrates the characters' independence. Is it their goal to find independence? Do they have a sense of autonomy? How does freedom fit into the accepted norm? Since morality is fundamental to human civilization, it naturally includes discussions about what makes specific actions good or bad. Murdoch cares about the human race. Instead of being passionate about her Christianity, she wants everyone to be saved. She hopes that by awakening him to his moral ideals, she can save his soul. As Murdoch put it, "Moral progress is made through an enriching and deepening of concepts." The article cites (Murdoch, 1977).

The novel's protagonist and several of the other characters break ethical norms. They break the norm. When people's standards are disregarded, they are essentially breaking the law. Martin Lynch-Gibbon, the protagonist and narrator, has a tough time since he needs to follow the rules. However, it is not just metaphysics that drives him to investigate the ultimate origins and fundamental essence of things; his social environment plays a role, too. We must shift our focus from inwardly directed authenticity to outwardly directed truth. Benighted animals rooted in a reality whose nature we are continually and powerfully tempted to alter by fantasy; that is who we are (Murdoch, 1977), not solitary free choosers, lords of all we observe. A life of horror, confusion, darkness, and uncertainty characterizes his daily existence, and he is constantly on the go. This is because he lacks mental steadiness and composure. He is perplexed by the revelation of a previously unknown truth. He seeks explanations for the many puzzles he faces. He tries to establish connections between happenings, occasionally comes across proof, formulates hypotheses, and unearths hidden truths. "Real people destroy myth; chance kills fiction and makes room for fantasy and the imagination." The article cites (Murdoch, 1977). These details bring to mind the work of a private investigator or police agent. Problems relating to criminal activity will inevitably be examined.

It is challenging to come up with answers right away because Martin's actions are all morally offensive. Therefore, he is committing a "crime" whenever he takes one. When discussing "crime" or "the discovery of crime," it is essential to note that the novel is intricate and thorough. If you skip over a step, you risk losing track of the intricate connections between the many events.

The novel can keep you on the edge of your seat and completely baffle you. It was easy to deduce that the author was trying to be truthful. However, due to the novel's intricate and, at times, overblown plot, this is a challenging goal to achieve. The novel's complex narrative is part of what makes it so enjoyable to read. It seems like a puzzle that needs to be solved. It is like the TV mysteries we love to watch, with plenty of mystery and hints to decipher. You will find a wealth of information on every page you must remember as you go through the puzzle. You read the book quickly but with tremendous enjoyment because you cannot wait to discover what happens next.

## **Martin's denial of reality**

Martin sneaks under the radar of love in "A Severed Head." He warped reality and existed in an unconscious realm. He fancied that his life was going swimmingly. He thought his marriage to Antonia was great and regarded his affair with mistress Georgie as "so utterly private" (p.13). Martin

was living an "egocentric drama," as described by Antonia Byatt in her book "Degrees of Freedom" (Murdoch, 62), and nothing seemed to bother him. He had a huge ego. He did not want the divorce to disrupt his life. He did not rate Georgie's loyalty to him in any way. Because of Georgie's "character, her toughness, and the stoical nature of her devotion to me," he "had not had to pay." (p.13). She got an abortion and endured her pain quietly while Martin did nothing to help. It was honest Georgie who told it like it was when he opened up about their relationship: "If it were exposed to the daylight, it would crumble to pieces" (p.13). Martin brought up the myth of Psyche, saying, "Remember the legend of Psyche, whose child, if she told about her pregnancy, would be mortal, whereas if she kept silent, it would be a god." (p.13)

However, random events begin to alter the course of his life. He had assumed that his "clandestine relationship" would remain hidden forever, but as he describes, his world was turned upside down when he met Palmer Anderson, Antonia's psychoanalyst. Antonia announced her intention to wed Palmer and requested a separation. There is one essential point that must be made. Antonia, much older than Martin, argued that getting a divorce would be best for both of them. According to Palmer, "You have been a child to Antonia, and she a mother to you, and that has kept you both spiritually speaking at a standstill" (p. 29). He needed "a master," as Georgie informed him, so he did not want to leave Antonia and was willing to be "enslaved" (p. 7) by Palmer and Antonia.

Having a relationship like that in the actual world is impossible to fathom, imagine, or perceive. No husband and his wife's lover should ever share a home. However, we must deal with implausible occurrences because the book mocks the high society for being dull and lifeless, always finding something to complain about, and engaging in hidden affairs. Antonia, a noblewoman with a frail appearance and a penchant for recurrent headaches, requires the presence of Martin in order to feel powerful, possessive, and admired. Despite being older than her husband and childless, she is a seasoned performer. When the figure of a father, represented by Palmer, joins the two mothers, Martin becomes her child, and he grows to enjoy his new role.

Degrees of Freedom author Antonia Byatt writes, "Here we have both a Freudian and a Sartrean enslavement; Antonia and Palmer play the part of his parents suppressing with 'love' his feelings of antagonism towards the male and desire towards the female, and in Sartre's sense they are taking away his freedom to act from himself" (p.124).

Without his powers, Martin is helpless. Because he fears upsetting his mother figure wife, he finds himself paralyzed. He is described as a lifeless individual with no interest in improving himself. Nothing would even occur to him to do. Readers can immediately make the connection between his passivity and the Oedipal complex.

According to Freud, the Oedipal complex is the pivotal childhood crisis that helps a child form a sense of identity. As a result of this crisis, the child fears being castrated for having inappropriate sexual desires and instead comes to identify with the father; self-development then continues. This crisis involves a sexual desire for the mother and a subsequent wish to harm the father because he has greater strength and power. Moving through a crisis similar to the Oedipal complex (the novel, with Martin as its narrator, could be understood as a version of Freud's "talking cure," psychoanalysis) leads Martin to embrace the reality of his connection with Antonia. Martin already had a lot of respect and affection for Anderson before he had an affair with his wife. The urge to be respected by Anderson is maybe symbolically represented by a dread of castration (Wilson et al., 1965).

Antonia and Palmer have exerted some form of control over him. If you can believe, Martin approves of the psychoanalyst's connection with Antonia. Antonia and Palmer are acting like overprotective parents and disapprove of him having an affair. He continues to pay them repeated visits and follows Palmer's directives. Here, we might recall the cellar scene in which Martin, at Palmer's behest, deliberately causes a wine spill in his and his wife's bedroom. This response, while understandable, is passive, concealed, and covert; he must reveal his rage and loathing for Palmer's paternalistic directives. Martin's cruelty takes different forms: he beats Honor in the cellar after she tells Palmer and Antonia about their relationship, and he hits Georgie for telling Honor about theirs. Like a kid trying to compose himself after hearing his father mock him in front of his mother, he denies his impulse to injure Anderson, saying, "I had been cheated of some fruitless movement of violence, of some special fruitless movement of will and power." (p.34). His subconscious desire to harm Palmer as a father figure is made visible in his dreams. He only feels powerful in his nightmares when he murders his father. It is hard to make sense of the dream alone: "He glided towards me with increasing speed, his huge Jewish face growing like a great egg above the silken wings of his gown." I swung the sword in an arc before him, but the blade broke free and sailed into the gathering winter night sky above us. I recognized my father as I clung in shame and terror to the remnants in my palm. (p.136). Martin's biological father has long ago died away; it is clear that he wants to damage the father figure depicted in Anderson, according to Freud's interpretation of dreams—Wilson (1965) by Robert W. Wilson.

If he is dreaming of murdering his father, it is a sign that he needs to find a way to rebel against Palmer Anderson's control. He has much room for growth and development. He has a yearning for autonomy and the validation that comes with being a man, but we are still determining if achieving this goal will bring him to terms with reality.

We cannot ignore his mother and ignore his desire to hurt Palmer. Martin and Alexander loved their mother dearly, and their loss was profound. Alexander wanted to take a death mask when my mother passed away, but I forbade it. I had a quick, clear memory of the scene in the bedroom, where the motionless body lay on the bed with its face obscured by a sheet. The novel's title, "A Severed Head," has multiple symbolic meanings. Iris Murdoch is a skilled storyteller who baffles her readers with a metaphor involving their heads. Martin's mom gets a nod because she wears a scarf on her head. The sculpture of Antonia's head that Alexander created sticks out in his mind. By remarking, "I do not think I like a sculpted head alone," Martin betrays his distaste for Alexander's work as he enters the artist's workshop.

"It seems to symbolize an unfair advantage, an illegitimate and unfinished relationship," he said. (p.44) The answer Alexander gave was crucial. What he means by comparing Antonia to Martin's mother needs to be clarified, but his opening statement hints at that. The relationship was "illegal and unfinished," Alexander added. "Yes. Maybe you have an obsession with what Freud thought of the Gorgon. The female genitalia might be seen as the head, which is to be feared rather than desired. (p.44). Symbolically, Martin fears being castrated, and this dread becomes intertwined with the idea that he has no sexual desire for Antonia. Similar to how Freud's Oedipal complex has the child sexually desiring his mother, Martin spends most of the novel convinced that he is once again in love with Antonia after discovering her infidelity. However, these emotions are not genuine, and Martin only completes his Oedipal complex once Honor Klein steps in (Wilson, Robert. W. 1965).

However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that Martin has no Oedipal-style sexual obsession with Antonia. Alexander, Martin's brother, has had a long-term romantic relationship with Antonia. When Martin discovers their relationship, he is relieved. He is getting back to being a man. However, the introduction of Honor Klein, Palmer's half-sister, has helped him mature. In a sense, he "grows up" when he learns to embrace uncertainty.

In *Collected Papers*, in volume V, Freud describes the dread of castration as the meaning behind the striking symbol of the petrifying Medusa. Of course, according to Sartre, its most fundamental meaning is our universal aversion to being watched (*L'être et le Néant*, p. 502). How one would determine which interpretation was "correct" is an intriguing thought experiment."

He believes he loves his wife and compares her to his late mother: "I recalled my mother clearly, with a sad shudder of memory, and with that particular painful, guilty, thrilling sense of being both stifled and protected with which a return to my old home always afflicted; and now it was as if my pain for Antonia had become the same pain, so closely was it blended in quality, though more intensely, with the obscure malaise of my homecomings. Maybe the anguish had always been there, like a double-edged shadow falling over my future. (p.40)

Martin needs a master, and he must be set free from that mastery simultaneously. While sculpting the skull, Alexander adds, "...There is nothing between schematized symbols and caricature. What I am after here is freedom from the impossibility of it all. (p.44)

Slowly but surely, as Martin works on bettering himself, he emerges as a significant player in the story. His Oedipal issues are resolved when he meets Honor Klein, a plain, unattractive woman with an appearance reminiscent of Japanese culture. Nobody would ever think Martin could feel anything for her. When he picks her up from the train station, she keeps her head out the car's window, furthering the visual of a severed head. Martin has been living the dream until now, what with his wife and lover. It all seems ideal. He is unable to choose between his wife and his mistress, Georgie. Both the former and the latter would benefit from having him in their lives. He requires their services yet does little to improve his circumstances. Antonia had no idea that her husband was seeing another woman. Georgie has been persistent in her desire for him to end his marriage. These things have yet to occur. Honor Klein's sudden arrival upends everything. She divulges Martin's affair with Georgie to Antonia and Palmer. Martin's universe crumbles to pieces, or it is more accurate to say that his fantasy is blown wide open. Now that the evidence is in front of him, he must justify his dissatisfaction with his marriage. He needs to figure out why he is not more committed to his relationship with Georgie. Martin is roused to action by Honor Klein, whom he recognizes as a goddess and a prophet. She tells Martin that "a severed head was used in primitive tribes and old alchemists, anointed it with oil and put a morsel of gold upon its tongue to make it utter prophecies" (p. 182).

When Martin arrives at the railway station to meet Honor, the fog is a metaphor for his dreamlike existence. Her subsequent appearances in the book are far more substantial. She pulls him awake, reorienting his path away from the dream. God must save him. His spirit is restless, and he calmly and coolly concludes that neither Antonia nor Georgie are suitable matches for him. He needs to find himself before he can have a healthy and lasting connection with another person. Honor's admission that "I am a terrible object of fascination to you" is telling. The idea that the mind guides people to be sober, determined, tenacious, and strong in life is emphasized in the line "I am a severed head" (p.182). Honor's severed head image establishes a significant fear of petrification, her lack of sex appeal, and the description of her body as "like a headless sack" (p. 57). Martin perceives her as a Medusa rather

than a person. According to Webster, Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danae in Greek mythology, killed the Gorgon Medusa. She is like Freud's Medusa—to be feared rather than desired.

At their first meeting, She tells him that "truth has been lost long ago in this situation" (a reference to the current state of affairs). You cannot have "civilization" and "truth" in these situations. Mr. Lynch-Gibbon, you are a very violent man. Honor Klein is "vaster and vaguer and more general truth who combines in human form...respect for the individual... and that love we have discussed in terms of The Bell, and which is both inevitable and truth-seeking" (Byatt, 1965), so you cannot get away with being so close to your wife's seducer.

The concept of vengeance is introduced by honor:

"Just like everything else in our world, love costs money. With payment, my brother's patients would be in a safe situation. They would be enslaved if you treated them gently, but all that does is save you from potential harm and extend the web of lies they have created around themselves and you. You will inevitably have to turn into a centaur and kick your way out (p. it is your business if you let them steal your thoughts and label you like a baby. I want to express that leniency breeds dishonesty and evil (p.65).

"something animal-like and repellent in that glistening stare" (p.55) is how Martin describes Honor, the dark god. She is demonic because she is the one who orchestrates everything: she tells everyone about Martin's affair with Georgie, she introduces Alexander to Georgie, she causes Antonia much trouble when she finds out that Alexander is engaged to Georgie, she gets Alexander to admit that he is in love with Antonia and not Georgie, which drives Georgie to try to kill herself, and she allows Palmer to meet Georgie and take her to New York. It is not that she physically performs each of these actions. These events can be traced back to her in some fashion. Martin's senses are sharpened by honor. He is over Antonia at this point. He speaks highly of her, saying:

I could not forgive her and needed to get her out of my life. The talent for a kinder world that Palmer had remarked upon had also died in me, and I had become more rigid and absolute. No, it had not been a particularly saintly gift, more like a subtle form of egocentrism (p. 195)

Having exposed Martin's affair with Georgie, Honor appears to be a fierce warrior in the scene with the sword. She defines herself further by describing swordplay as a "spiritual exercise."

"truth":

To be a Christian is to connect the spiritual and the loving. They associate it with the ability to exert one's will on others.

To what do you relate it?"

I identify as a Jew.

However, you worship shadowy deities, right?

"I believe in people," Honor Klein stated. It was a surprising response (p.97).

Martin is motivated to take on challenges by his sense of honor. Antonia says to him, "You are such a dreamer, Martin. "If she had not shown up, he would still be daydreaming. You enjoy daydreaming as a means of avoiding reality (p.189).

Martin was terrified of two things: accepting reality and facing the truth. Honor gives him an abundance of motivation to alter. She insisted he defend his wife at any cost. Martin grew enraged when she told Palmer and Antonia about his affair, which he had kept secret. He was furious that Honor had introduced Georgie to Alexander, and he stroked Georgie angrily. How Honor had found out about them, he had no idea. He calls her a "ghost" (p.73) who goes from place to place, overhearing

everyone's private thoughts and conversations. That made him feel uneasy. He had beaten her up when they ran into each other in the basement but afterward wrote a letter of apology. This demonstrates how humiliated he was and how much inner conflict tormented him. After their fight in the cellar, Martin was forced to face reality out of honor.

Nonetheless, the letter is a significant step toward facing facts as they are. The battle with Honor is a metaphor for the internal conflict he faces. After what happened in the cellar, he has no contact with Antonia or Georgie. Since none of them can be both maternally loving and sexually satisfying, he finds he has no interest in any of them. Antonia was stuck in a role as a mother, while Georgie's sexual allure could not win his devotion.

He fell in love with Honor for the first time, "an extreme love," as he said. Let us let these ladies be. He needs to find his own life and love. He believed that Honor was the one who could fulfill him both spiritually and physically. He called her "nearly ugly" (p.95), yet they may have represented each other symbolically: he needed the truth, and she represented that need; the truth is bitter, and it may seem ugly for people since it does not suit them, but they nevertheless seek it out.

Martin is afraid to contact Antonia and Georgie because of Honor's presence. For fear of Honor's gaze, he leaves their world. Honor's demonic presence and entrance into his life are worshipped by the protagonist, who attributes excellent power, prophecy, and supernatural status to Honor. There is no way for him to catch up to her. He goes out into the streets but still has no intention of finding her. She outmatched his abilities as a human. An outlaw deity, she was forbidden.

He avoided this terrifying Medusa until fate compelled him to learn a secret that gave him the same strength as this diabolic apparition. In the cellar incident, he had already begun to directly challenge her power by engaging in combat with her. He knows from that point on that he needs her in his life. He decided to visit Cambridge in search of her. Honor and her half-brother are snoozing in bed when he arrives. All morality condemns this act of incest. This woman of honor, despite her name, is not a deity. She is not an example of what she teaches. She is just as nasty and immoral as Martin was when he first began his secret affair. The prophetess was a natural person made of flesh and blood. No longer is she considered forbidden. She appears humble and approachable, with no air of superiority. Martin is impressed by this new information. He has confused her but can now look her in the eye. Now he can tell her how he feels about her. His search for love had tormented and shackled him, but he had found freedom in Honor's bedroom. She was human and lived on Earth. She was his deliverance; she set him free. Because of the incestuous relationship between Palmer and Honor, Martin could enslave Palmer and usurp the throne. This time, Honor's return to his home as a human, humble, and ordinary is the recompense for all of his anguish and frustration. He pokes fun at her, asking if a human can make love to a severed head. Important information. She is now desired rather than feared. Instead of "a severed head," she is a living human being. The time for her prediction has passed. She has earned the right to go her own way. We have been in a dream state up to this point. Are the chances that we will still be together when we awake?... We had better hold hands and pray we can stay together through the dream and into the real world. What if we found joy?"

"This has nothing to do with happiness, nothing at all," she proclaimed.

It was the case. The hope in her remarks resonated with me. When I asked her if I would make it, she replied with a beautiful grin, "You must take your chance." (p. 205)

Finding true joy is challenging, and theirs is a relationship grounded in the actual world rather than romantic notions. They will not waste this opportunity to face reality head-on as a couple.

Crime in Murdoch's works is exceptional, but any violation of morality is treated as wrongdoing. Martin and his wife are both guilty of adultery. She initially abandons him for Palmer before finally coming clean about her secret relationship with Alexander. Their marriage is failing because of a lack of mutual respect and affection. Martin did not hand over the divorce to his wife, and Antonia let him visit her every day while she was living with Palmer since they did not want to accept this and continue living together. They deceived their minds.

Abortion is not a significant theme but is mentioned for dramatic effect. Martin does not seem to care about Georgie's pain following the abortion. Because of the legal prohibition on abortion, they are equally responsible for their decision. Actions are taken by society as a whole to ensure that no unwanted preborn child is killed. It is on par with murder, if not worse. After the abortion, though, things go badly for Georgie. Her connection with Martin is different. She gave up her right to have a child to give Martin, who desperately needed freedom and serenity, an abortion. Due to his lack of maturity and moral illness, he could not assume the role of a responsible parent.

A perfect world would have allowed unwed parents to keep the child and tie the knot. However, Martin lacked the fortitude to take things as they came, so he opted for the quickest and most self-centered means of abandoning the child. Readers are presented with a complex plot that is true to life. Abortions are performed, adultery is committed, couples fail to communicate, incest occurs, and acts of violence are committed.

Martin's affection, Georgie is crushed, but she hopes that Alexander will love her. To make Antonia jealous, he seduces Georgie, making him even worse than his brother. Like Martin, Alexander has no qualms about offending her. Because she betrays Palmer, he desires vengeance against Antonia. He betrays Georgie and then urgently pursues Antonia. Georgie broke down emotionally and needed help. She made a suicide attempt after discovering that not even Alexander loved her. She mailed Honor a note and a lock of her hair to Martin. Either she was in trouble and needed assistance, or she was saying goodbye to the people she loved.

Life's difficulties are the root cause of crime. Crime begets crime in the characters' overlapping and interacting. Tragedies befall the protagonists. They are motivated to succeed, but they know it will be tough. To get what they want, they have to work hard. In this way, the truth is concealed. They conspire to bring each other down. When people are forced to face reality, they harden and sometimes resort to violence. We have Martin's case. When Georgie disclosed their relationship, he got jaded. He abuses her by stroking her. The issue of sexism against women is addressed, albeit obliquely. To satisfy their sexual needs, guys like Martin objectify women. They utilize both physical violence and psychological coercion against them. Martin does more than physically harm Georgie; he also damages her integrity. The populace safeguards rights. Martin's lack of regard for Georgie was partially demonstrated by the fact that he struck her. What happened to the affection he had for her? He was distraught and unable to pull himself together, yet he was not alone. George valued himself. She told everyone about their romance after Martin humiliatingly dumped her.

There was a collision between Martin and Palmer. If Palmer backed out, what would prevent him from suing him? Palmer did acquire Antonia from Martin, but this should not be construed as a case of theft. The initiative was Martin's after she left. Palmer is innocent of any wrongdoing. He should not be hit physically. Antonia, of all others, does not merit her husband's abuse.

Definitely out of character for Martin. He adored her the way a young boy adored his mom. His envy drives him to act violently.

A sword may represent something more profound—a symbol of authority or finality. Like Perseus slaying Medusa with his sword, honor has arrived to exact vengeance and establish right. Honor's resolve to persuade Martin to go to war to get back his wife is justifiable and unjust. Everyone will risk injury or death to protect the one they love, but violence is never the answer.

By treating Martin like a kid and treating him like property, Palmer and Antonia violate Martin's moral principles; they render him helpless, ineffective, and immature. The fact that he struck Georgie and attacked Honor demonstrates his feelings of offense and betrayal. Even though Georgie has come clean to Honor about their connection, he still feels betrayed. When the door opened, they mistook Honor for Antonia, and Georgie told him he had insulted Honor by sending her away. She needed to talk to someone to vent her frustration, but she felt ashamed, as if someone had caught him "kissing the housemaid" (p. 83). They went with the honorable option.

It is immoral to engage in incest. Unscrupulous persons, the mentally ill, and maniacs are the ones who conduct these acts. It's frowned upon by the general public. Nonetheless, it can be found in almost any context.

When people are ruthless, it is because they do not care about one another. When Georgie meets Antonia, she immediately becomes brutal. Antonia's innocence and authenticity make up for her lack of experience. Martin assumes she is "enslaved" to Palmer after seeing him with her and Honor at London Airport, but this is untrue. Her youthfulness and wits end up being her saviors. She ought to find love and happiness with someone who cares deeply for her. His brother has become so ruthless that he has stolen Martin's wife. It was not that he thought less of him ethically; he says (p. 196). However, he had a strong sense of isolation.

## **Conclusion**

Iris Murdoch is an experienced problem solver. Many critics agree that she writes philosophically. The subject of life philosophy is handled professionally. Life can be viewed from any vantage point. Her novel covers every conceivable topic of human experience. It is easy to adapt to her aesthetic. She talks like an average person since her problems are everyday people's problems. Character development takes a back seat to the action in her novels. Melodramas are so dramatic because of this reason. Her protagonists tend to adore themselves. Their precariousness is made clear to us through our actions.

The complexities of life are exposed. Murdoch can address complex topics. She addresses issues of love, norm, freedom, truth, sex, and family. She is not one to speak her mind freely. She leaves the novel's conclusion unresolved. The text can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Not only does she try to heal her characters' spiritual blindness, but she also strives to appeal to the reader's moral compass. People believe that love gives them the ability to live and thrive. It is also a dangerous catalyst for devastation, a web of intrigues. In a desert, it stands out like a mirage. Many people believe they have found the one, only to be disappointed. As a result, people feel belittled and lose hope. It is human nature to deviate from the accepted norm to advance. As a result, there is a problem with crime. It is essential to look for freedom. Lack of agency, exposure to reality, and lack of "growing up" are all issues plaguing these characters. They cannot behave freely in the real world because of the distortion, but lovely people are always there to support them.

The quest for truth is eternal. People's confidences are where you will find it. At some point, the truth enters the open and among the people. These days, sex is always the main topic of conversation.

Homosexuality, heterosexuality, and incest are all discussed openly. It is considered an assault on women in some circles. The family unit is the basic social unit. If it is not working, then debauchery is widespread. A happy couple may create a pleasant home. Contrarily, Murdoch's work concentrates on troubled marriages. In this case, divorce is dealt with. The spotlight is on childless couples. Infidelity is discussed.

Byatt claims that the grand themes explored in Murdoch's novels are reminiscent of those in Shakespeare's works. The ability to make the reader laugh and relax is something I have always found very comparable between Shakespeare and this author. She is humorous and has a great attitude. Other works by her that I could get my hands on immediately.

There is a joyful resolution to the narrative. Postmodernism's disruption of illusion leads to muddled thinking. The reader is left wondering whether or not a new relationship has formed, whether Honor will leave him, or whether something terrible will happen to Martin. That is just how life is; full of twists, turns, and the unexpected. We must keep our feet firmly planted on the ground and learn to accept the truth.

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