P R E F A C E

The present study does not claim to be a comprehensive one. It confines itself to analysing Murdoch's ethics and aesthetics in terms of her first ten novels, a period accepted as her early phase. It discusses Murdoch as a serious writer, indeed a philosophical one, and contests the common misconception that the chief interest of her novels consists in a kind of fantasy and aberration that they so profusely provide, or in a thriller-like quality of her plots. It also opposes the view that her moral positions are uncertain allegedly due to a subtle use of ideas and an arbitrary exploitation of contingencies. It has been shown, on the contrary, that none of these elements are left in an arbitrary disarray in a Murdoch novel. They are significantly integrated in an artistic enterprise that turns the novel into an adequate vehicle for the artist's moral vision. Indeed, 'fantasy' for Murdoch does not serve the cheap exigencies of a bestseller. It is one side of the binary representing man's relentless ego, the other side being represented by love, a perception of others beyond oneself. A cultivation of this virtue is, therefore, synonymous with moral progress that subdues fantasy and helps the individual <u>see</u> the world as it is. The true vision of reality, moral progress and freedom, thus, presuppose one

another in the Murdoch canon. This is Murdoch's realism in both ethics and aesthetics, which foregrounds otherness and is achieved through a clash of the opposites like fantasy and imagination, self and other, illusion and reality. The Introduction, sub titled 'Realism in Murdoch's Ethics and Aesthetics', discusses these central issues at length by way of analysing her non-fction. In the light of this discussion the first ten novels of Murdoch have been interpreted, each in a separate chapter. Indeed, her fiction and non-fiction together form a complementary whole in her attempts to understand the problems of life and to go beyond them. The Conclusion places her in the perspective of the postwar English fiction and briefly meditates on the artistic success of her novels.