The Event of Love and the Being of Morals: A Deleuzian Reading of Iris Murdoch's *The Bell*

Mohammad Ghaffary

Summary

Iris Murdoch's philosophical novel *The Bell* (1958) presents a singular ethical situation by portraying a prospective priest, named Michael Meade, engaged in a homoerotic relationship resulting in thorny moral dilemmas. The previous studies of the novel claim that Michael is doomed to a tragic failure because of his wrongdoing and the consequent sense of guilt. Contrarily to such traditional, "dominant" readings, in the present article I offer a Deleuzian-ethical reading and discuss how Michael finally achieves freedom by embracing the joy of his "schizophrenising" love. I argue that Michael's love for Nick and Toby should not be judged according to the constrictive rules of slave morality as a wrong feeling, because it aims at forming an open multiplicity that would increase the power of both bodies. Whereas religion by definition is supposed to bring happiness for human beings, in this fictional universe such restrictive societies as the Abbey relegate it to a repressive "order of judgement" requiring blind obedience to a set of reactive moral doctrines. In the end, solely Michael and Dora manage to find a line of flight by revolting against reactive morals. By offering such a "resistant" reading, this article reveals the virtual forces within this text as yet unactualised and demonstrates how such texts indeed are "becoming-texts."

Amor via mea [Love is my way].
(Murdoch 1999: 30)

The way is always forward, never back.
(Murdoch 1999: 235)

Introduction

Among the writers of the second half of the twentieth century, the interconnectedness of philosophy and literature is perhaps most manifested in the philosophical novels of Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), the British thinker and writer. However, a few exceptions apart (including Ghaffary & Anushiravani 2016), so far chiefly the Platonist positions of Murdoch herself have been

JLS/TLW 35(2), June. 2019
ISSN 0256-4718/Online 1753-5387

doi.org/10.2519/1753-5387/11597

applied to her fictional works −what Poststructuralist thinkers would call "transcendentalistic readings" on the grounds that they depend on Murdoch's personal philosophy as the transcendental signified endowing her literary creations with meaning. For instance, Graham Martin (1965) claims that "her own novels reflect her philosophical interests" (297), and Peter Wolfe (1966) argues that a clear understanding of Murdoch's own philosophy is necessary for appreciating her fiction (4, qtd. in Leeson 2010: 3). Harold Bloom (1986) describes her as "a Platonist novelist, perpetually in pursuit of the Good" (5), and George Steiner (1997) holds that "in the compendious *oeuvre* of Iris Murdoch, philosophy and literature have been strictly inseparable" (x), and by this statement he means her own philosophy is an inseparable part of her fiction. Likewise, Barbara Stevens Heusel (2001) maintains that Murdoch's "novels and her philosophical work are closely intertwined" (4). Nevertheless, Murdoch's novels are multi-layered texts open to various readings, even those that could contradict her own philosophy. As Alasdair MacIntyre (1982) states, "Murdoch's novels are philosophy: but they are philosophy which casts doubts on all philosophy including her own" (15-16, qtd. in Leeson 2010: 3). Perhaps, one reason contemporary French theory has not been adopted to analyse Murdoch's novels is that she herself was always dubious about its efficacy (Murdoch 1993: 5). Yet, the irony is that it is Poststructuralist critical methods that can reveal the "singularity" of such a prolific novelist as Murdoch most effectively, because Poststructuralism, particularly Deleuzian literary criticism, attends to the concept of "difference" rather than "identity". For example, a major question to the Deleuzian critic would be how Murdoch is different from other writers conventionally regarded as having the same style or concerns, or how Murdoch's fiction "resists" her own philosophical ideas. This considered, the purpose of the present article is to delineate the forces of difference underlying Murdoch's fiction, focusing on her fourth novel *The Bell* (1958), deemed by Murdoch "the best of my earlier novels" (Murdoch & Todd 2003: 192).

This article also shows how, by raising such issues as ethics, the meaning of life, love, religion, and happiness, one can devise new strategies for Deleuzian criticism of narrative fiction, because Gilles Deleuze's thoughts on ethics and the more general meaning of happiness in human life are not usually taken into account in exploring literary texts. In her model for Deleuzian criticism, which seems the most organised account so far offered for this critical approach, Claire Colebrook (2002a) contents herself with such concepts in Deleuze's philosophy as transcendental empiricism, style, and affect, leaving out his ethical ideas *in toto*. Thus, we can reactivate Deleuzian criticism and actualise its virtual potentials by reading literary works in terms of their ethical views of life and the way they portray human beings and their search for happiness and flourishing in various societies. This is in line with Deleuze's own method in reading, which for him is "going beyond the

perception of something in its actual form to the virtual components that make it up" (Colebrook 2002b:46). Deleuze and Guattari (2004a) argue that

> reading a text is never a scholarly exercise in search of what is signified, still less a highly textual exercise in search of a signifier. Rather it is a productive use of the literary machine, a montage of desiring-machines, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force.
>
> (116)

Thus, reading, according to Deleuze, does not mean to search for the writer's intention or the meanings encoded in the text in question; rather, through the act of reading, we open up new possibilities for the writer's text: we both give order and consistency to the text and provide the ground for the text to create further orders (Colebrook 2010: 3). That is, when we read a writer, we must "attend to the fluxes of difference [and *becoming*] that make up" the text as real and not seek to "perceive a world of determined and stable *beings*" (Colebrook 2002a: 219; emphasis added). Upon the surface, Murdoch's fiction does not appear to be revolutionary because she employs conventional fictional forms and genres, yet as Deleuzian readings indicate, deep down her novels are indeed revolutionary.

Murdoch published her fourth novel *The Bell* in 1958. With this novel, the early period of her literary career ended, and she embarked on a new phase that Hilda D. Spear (2007) calls the era of her "romantic novels", beginning with *A Severed Head* in 1961. *The Bell* is of the same length as the three previous ones and in terms of narrative structure is closer to *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956). Thematically, however, to a certain degree it differs from her first three works, in that it introduces two unprecedented subjects to Murdoch's novelistic universe, namely the issues of religion and homoerotic love, though in all of the previous novels she had slightly touched upon the question of religious faith in the modern, post-War world. These two subjects together form one of the central ethical conflicts of the text, manifested in the internal struggles of Michael Meade, a would-be priest and the unofficial head of a lay religious community, who in different phases of his life becomes involved in two unrequited homoerotic relations. Moreover, extra-marital affair is a serious ethical problem that haunts Murdoch in this novel, too, embodied in the figure of Dora Greenfield and her endeavours to emancipate herself from the constraints of a failed marriage. For the same reason, A.S. Byatt (1999) believes this novel "is about religion and sex, and the relations of those two" (ix). This makes the novel quite apt for ethical analysis, especially the Poststructuralist ethics of Deleuze, who repeatedly turns to these problems throughout his entire career.

In his study of Murdochian tragedy and its relationship with love and religion in Murdoch's *The Bell*, Kenneth Masong (2008) uses Murdoch's moral philosophy ("metaphysics as a guide to morals"), which has its roots in Platonic morality and his idea of reality, to expound on how Murdoch

describes the "logic of internal tragedy in the novel" (28). In Masong's analysis, Murdochian tragedy leads to "a religious solipsism, the collapse of the religious Other [= God] into the subject's internality," which does not mean "the removal, but the replacement, of God" (29). Thus, for Masong, *The Bell* is a religious tragedy in which the old bell, representing God, is replaced by another bell, which stands for the subject's internal moral values. This suggests that in Murdoch's philosophy and fictional universe in order to "retrieve the Good, we must displace God" (29). Nonetheless, on a Deleuzian reading of the novel, this situation is not tragic at all because, as pointed out below, it is seen as a positive process, marking the becoming-different or flight of the desiring-machine.

In this article, I focus upon the subjects of religion and homoerotic desire and their ethical significance in *The Bell* from a Deleuzian perspective and demonstrate that Murdoch's text, although appearing traditional in terms of form and structure, proves to be greatly revolutionary in theme, as it presents a radical view of homoerotic love as well as religion. It is argued that through hierarchising power structure and repressing revolutionary forces, the order of judgement occasions a unified, fixed image of human beings as essentially identical and subject to a universal moral system, whereas there are always bodies within such systems that strive towards disorganisation and deterritorialisation.

Love, Religion, and Ethics in *The Bell*

Near the beginning of the novel, the Imber Court is described to the narratee as Dora perceives it during her first visit. As an enclosed organism, from the very first moments the Imber Court and its inhabitants appear to the desirous Dora as a restrictive, daunting system. In a paranoid manner, she becomes "red with alarm" when the people of Imber look at her, feeling "embarrassment and vexation" when addressed by them (Murdoch 1999: 34). Furthermore, their rites look to her "half sinister, half ludicrous" (34). One of the reasons for these people's negative treatment of Dora is that before her arrival they have been informed by Paul that she has been unfaithful to her husband. Consequently, as members of a system that promotes judgement, they judge her as an "erring wife" (55) and behave accordingly. The situation becomes unbearable to Dora, in as much as she decides to escape the house and go to the lake next to it (the only body over which the "order of Judgment", to use Deleuze and Guattari's terminology [2004b], cannot predominate). Outside the house, she spontaneously takes off her shoes and runs toward the lake: "She stood looking out into the darkness across the water and reflected that this was the first moment of quietness in her day" (Murdoch 1999: 36). Noel, a life-affirming force, warns Dora against the mechanism of such an order before her second departure to Imber: "about those religious folk [*sic*.]. Don't

let them give you a bad conscience. People like that adore having a sense of sin and living in an atmosphere of emotion and self-abasement" (185). What Noel enumerates as the characteristics of an order of judgement exactly match with the negative features Friedrich Nietzsche ascribes to the weak and their system of slave morality (the "ascetic ideal"), which aims at afflicting the noble or strong with internal conflicts and separating them from what they can do, thus rendering them reactive (see Deleuze 2001: 78-79). The ascetic body renounces life because he compares it with a higher, metaphysical mode of existence which stands in opposition to this earthly life and, thereby, considers this life as a mere bridge to the other world (Nietzsche 1989: 117).

The essentially active Michael is already combatting with this order. Michael had intended in his youth to become a priest, before acquiring an adequate knowledge of his virtual powers. This longing remained with him throughout his life, though he never managed to, or could not bring himself to, become part of the order of judgement. It was the Abbess, the centre of the order, who first suggested that Michael make the Court a lay community dependent on the Abbey, with its inhabitants being slavishly at its service. The community members are passive bodies that can neither fully deny the virtual powers of life nor affirm them. At the narration time, under the influence of the authoritative Abbess, Michael sees himself as one of these bodies:

> he felt himself to be one of them, who can live neither in the world nor out of it. They are a kind of sick people, whose desire for God makes them unsatisfactory citizens of an ordinary life, but whose strength or temperament fails them to surrender the world completely.
>
> (Murdoch 1999: 81)

The narrator does not expose to us the inner processes of the other members of the Court, so it is never known if, like Michael, they are suffering from the same internal clashes. Most likely, this image holds true only for Michael himself, who is essentially an active force connected with a system of reactive forces that show no interest for "deterritorialisation". At all events, the Abbess wants the Court to be a home for such people and wants Michael to be one of these sickly, inert bodies. Thus, she will be able to prevent them from retrieving their full strength and becoming pure life-affirming forces (in the sense conceived of by Deleuze's Nietzsche).

From the very beginning, as the community takes "shape as a corporate body", Michael is reluctant to assume the position of leadership, since he "had always held the view that the good man is without [such organisational] power" (Murdoch 1999: 5). He cannot stand organisations, organisms, and the negative power they bring for their organs, although at the moment he lacks the power for making a rupture in this structure: "He felt himself compelled to remain in a region where power was evil, and where he could not honourably find the means to strip himself of it completely" (85).

Consequently, he has to internalise his sense because he cannot express it outwardly: "His lot was rather the struggle from within [...]. Perhaps this was after all his road; it was certainly *a* road" (86; emphasis in the original). This is a "necessary" event and he has no freedom of will to alter the course of Nature (Spinoza 1994, Deleuze 1988), not least at this phase of his life. He also has to combat with the demands of reactive morality in order to become able to emancipate himself, but this has to wait for his desire for becoming to grow operative again. He already knows that priesthood is nothing but a slavish "surrender of the will" to power with "an unquestioning obedience" to the judgement of God and the kind of morality it entails (Murdoch 1999: 85). Before the advent of Toby, his second homoerotic lover who reactivates his desire, Michael is stuck in an in-between position, his mind vacillating between passive resignation (accepting priesthood) and active creation (the memory of his former "schizophrenising love" that has kept him from remaining completely reactive). Finally comes the moment he feels the joy of schizo love and immanent becoming once more, when he becomes able to resist the force of the order of judgement and the Abbess's indoctrinations. At long last, as I explain below, he prefers schizo love to the order of God. The Court is dissolved but he is revived and brought back to a life of pure immanence as a "body without organs" (BwO) (see below).

One of the dichotomies presented by the novel is that of two conflicting moral points of view, expressed in the form of two sermons for the members of the Imber Court by James Tayper Pace and Michael. James's moral view is built on strictly deontological and universalising rules, counter to Michael's particularistic and immanent ethics. For instance, James "believed that truthfulness consisted in telling everybody everything, whether it concerned them or not, and regardless of whether they wanted to know" (Murdoch 1999: 88). He holds that moral rules are universal and all-encompassing, no matter in what situation the moral agent is placed. By contrast, for Michael, the ethical body in each particular situation assesses the goodness or badness of an action and whether it will increase their power or not and, then, acts accordingly: "Michael did not share James's view that *suppressio veri* was equivalent to *suggestio falsi*" (99). Therefore, he never reveals his past relation with Nick to the members of the Imber community, because it will certainly decrease his strength and endanger his authority.

The sermons given by James and Michael reveal their moral theories more effectively. In his talk before the community members, including Dora, James asserts that "[t]he chief requirement of the good life [...] is to live without any image of oneself" (Murdoch 1999: 131).[1] Though he insists on becoming impersonal, his view is dependent upon a reactive system in which a false

1. This is in fact the Platonic moral view put forward by Iris Murdoch in her philosophical writings (see Murdoch 1997), and interestingly enough here these words are uttered by such an unsympathetic and marginal character as James.

image is to be substituted for one's true image of oneself. He goes on to claim that "[i]deals are dreams. They come between us and reality – when what we need most is just precisely to see reality. And that is something outside us" (131). He contrasts the ideal with the real, demanding that one's singular ideals should be abandoned in favour of external reality. He invites his audience to stick to *reality as it is*, where in fact this reality is merely what the slave morality he seeks to promote has defined as reality (Deleuze 2001: 71). He rejects the singularity of bodies and believes that all bodies should submit to universal, pre-determined rules of action and behaviour: "I confess I have very little time for the man who finds his life too complicated and special for the ordinary rules to fit" (Murdoch 1999: 131). No one is ever allowed to deviate from the line of action defined by this moral system deeply rooted in the judgement of God, otherwise they would deserve punishment:

> We should think of our actions and look to God and to His Law. We should consider not what delights us or what disgusts us, morally speaking, but what is enjoined and what is forbidden. [...] We know it from God's Word and from His Church with a certainty as great as our belief. [...] sodomy is not disgusting, it is just forbidden.
>
> (132)

What James presents is exactly the antithesis of an active, immanent ethics: in his view, there are only some universal moral duties that all should fulfil, regardless of whether or not performing them will be good or bad to each body in its singular situation. By invoking the Bible (God's word) and the institution of the Church, he highlights the reactive origins of this slave morality that rejects human beings' infinite capacities for flourishing in favour of a set of pre-established rigid rules. Judging others is an essential element of this system: "These are rules by which we should freely judge ourselves and others too. [...] Those who hesitate to judge others are usually those who fear to put themselves under judgement" (132). God as conceived of by such a moral view is "the God of Judgement, whose principle is that of an [*sic*] ubiquitous evaluation of life by otherworldly standards" (Bogue 2001: 25). The lives of all bodies are judged to be either good or evil, not by intrinsic criteria, but according to a set of all-encompassing transcendent standards that basically deny the value of life in this world: as Deleuze and Guattari would say, "[e]verywhere life is judged guilty, and everywhere people are invited to judge others and themselves, to engage in an endless judgement that has as its aim a world of total social control and conformity to a dominant, homogeneous order" (Bogue 2001: 25). The Imber Court, as a microcosmic society dominated by reactive / slave morality, is the epitome of such a "signifying" or "despotic" regime, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms (2004b), and it is this God of judgement that Michael must "betray" as a prerequisite for becoming a free-flowing, independent active force.

The moral agent, according to this reactive moral view, does not reserve any right to bring into question what is dictated by his religious faith: "We may remember here the words of Saint Paul [...]. The good man lives by faith" (Murdoch 1999: 132). James here mentions the name of St. Paul as one of the originators of this system of values. Nietzsche blames the same figure (along with Socrates) as the cause of man's ethical decline and later nihilism. Nietzsche believes in an active, immanent "ethics", where good and bad are created by the noble or strong individual in his affirmative process of becoming, as opposed to the traditional, religion-based "morality" initiated by (Plato's) Socrates and (St. Paul's) Christ, where the "good" and "bad" are converted to fixed, universal "good" and "evil", defined through a negation of noble values. In Nietzsche's view (2005a), it was St. Paul who made Christianity into a pernicious, life-denying moral and political ideology, so in this sense he "is the *first Christian*, the inventor of Christianness" (42). Deleuze, inspired by Nietzsche, "demonstrates no great hostility to the person of Christ" but reproaches "the system which installs Christ within a due-exacting regime of judgement" (Bryden 2001: 2), initiated by St. Paul and his followers who employed religion as a means of depriving the noble from their strength. The slave morality repudiated by Nietzsche and Deleuze naturally rejects any other source for determining the normative value of actions, including the consequence of the moral agent's acts (consequentialism): "The good man *does* what seems right, what the rule enjoins, without considering the consequences, without calculation or prevarication" (Murdoch 1999: 132). In short, the moral agent, on this view, must solely carry out what he is told by the Law to be right and avoid what is said to be wrong.

This morality is the one promoted and practised by the Imber community under the supervision of the Abbess, and it is the exact opposite of an active master ethics, one of the basic principles of which is that no one should engage in practices that might represent certain bodies and their capacities as either essentially superior or inferior to others. Religion is reduced by such restrictive societies to mere rituals and a blind obedience to a set of reactive moral rules (for example, the Decalogue) that run counter to the divine, infinite spirit of religion, which is basically supposed to endow human beings with happiness. For an active and creative force, God is not "a separate and concrete personification" but rather "an infinite power (one absolute expression [in the Spinozan sense]) that *is* all life" (Colebrook 2002b: 78, emphasis in the original). All Nature and its elements are expressions of this "univocal", eternal substance, which cannot be relegated to a mere order of judgement, exemplified by the reactive, slavish, and life-denying Judeo-Christian tradition. Escaping such a system is of course too difficult, and in the fictional universe of *The Bell* eventually it is only Michael and Dora who manage to find a line of flight.

To flee from the spell of the order of judgement, characters like Michael and Dora need to react against what Mary Bryden (2001) terms "the triangulation

of desire", whether in the form of the daddy-mommy-me of the Oedipal structure of the capitalist nuclear family or the Trinity of the Christian Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and flow along the lines of a rhizomatic, non-hierarchical ethics (3). Michael is "the scapegoat" in this signifying regime, "charged with everything that was 'bad'" by the order of judgement, and at the same time being "that line of flight the signifying regime cannot tolerate, in other words, an absolute deterritorialisation" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004b: 128, 129). By embracing and remaining faithful to an event of love that cannot be justified within the framework of the religious morality, Michael is able to escape judgement and make himself a body without organs: "it is precisely because the body that refuses its status as organism asserts instead of divine judgement its own powerful, nonorganic vitality [...] that it is able to undermine the judgement of God" (Poxon 2001: 47). Michael is the force that resists the pressures of the organisation enforced by the Abbess in particular and religion in general, and creates his own table of values in the course of the novel.

The God-like Abbess has an "inscrutable wisdom" (Murdoch 1999: 82) and is inaccessible and invisible to the members of the community though supervising their deeds and knowing everything about their past and present with the help of her "information service" (84). The people of the community are not permitted to meet her, and only in case of emergency the (unofficial) leader, namely Michael, is "summoned [...] by her to discuss matters of policy" (82) in specially-constructed parlours and from behind panelled grilles. As Roald Bogue (2001) explains, in signifying or despotic regimes, "signs are centered on the frontal face of the omnipotent despot, from whom all signification emanates" and, as is the case with the Abbess at Imber, the despot "is surrounded by ever-widening circles of priests, officials, and bureaucrats interpreting his pronouncements" (13). In the fictional universe of *The Bell*, the information service of the Abbess and priest-like figures like James, Sister Ursula, and Mrs Marks − who impart the Abbess's teachings to the members as well as to the guests (including Dora) − form the circle of power around the despotic Abbess. No body within the Abbess's territory is immune to her influence except for the scapegoat figure who is "the only creature allowed to wander outside the sphere of despotic control" (Bogue 2001: 13). Michael gains the power to cross the boundaries of this organised territory only after his desire is refueled by Toby and the revenant Nick. For Deleuze and Guattari (2004b), "the system of the judgment of God [...] is precisely the operation of He who makes [...] an organisation of organs called the organism" (176). At Imber, "the wish of the Abbess was law" (Murdoch 1999: 110), that which makes a potential body without organs into an organism, namely the Imber Court and its moral organisation.

The Imber Abbey − a signifying system interestingly located within a "post-signifying regime" (the modern Western society characterised by the death of God) − seeks to impose its desired order on the Imber Court. Byatt (1999)

refers to the Abbey as "the power-house across the water" (ix). The inhabitants of the house are not even permitted to decorate their rooms as they wish. This pronouncement of the Abbess is interpreted and imparted to the newcomer Dora by Mrs Mark: "we don't normally allow any sort of personal decoration in the rooms [...]. We try to imitate the monastic Life in certain ways as closely as we can" (Murdoch 1999: 61). Everything in the Court is supposed to have significance only in relation to the Abbey, the centre of signification. Each organ is hailed to assume only the role specified beforehand by the order of judgement; for example, according to the law, "women should stick to the traditional tasks" (71). The bodies, treated as organised organs within this system, are not allowed to create any values of their own: "No point in making a change just to make a change" (71). This closed system is opposed to any difference that does not rely upon the transcendent Abbey as the frame of reference.

Nevertheless, this imposition of order by the Abbey eventually results in the death of the community (the Imber Court), as there are bodies within the community who seek to escape its order and create singular lines of flight for deterritorialising themselves. A body cannot die or be destroyed by itself; it is always an external cause that brings about a body's death or destruction. As soon as the bodies are affected by these external forces, they enter into relations incompatible with the assemblage's flowing existence, in a way that the bodies are no longer able to express with their relation "the singular force of existence or 'essence' of that" assemblage (Baugh 2010: 64). This is the moment the body dies. The destruction of the Imber Court is caused by the Abbess's attempt to force from the outside an undesirable organisation upon Michael, Catherine, Dora, Toby, and Nick, each of whom tries in their different manners to flee this order. Of course, the Abbey itself "is an enclosed order of nuns. No one goes in or comes out" (Murdoch 1999: 64). No external force is allowed to enter into connection with this order; however, the disastrous events that lead to the dissolution of the Court at the end of the novel (the discovery of the accursed old bell in the lake by Toby and Dora, Toby's confession to James of his homoerotic relation with Michael and his subsequent abrupt departure, the descent of the new bell in the lake just before its instalment in the Abbey tower, Catherine's suicide attempt when she is about to join the order of the nuns, Nick's suicide, and Dora's resistance to the Abbey's indirect instruction to return to her husband) may also influence the integrity of the Abbey, as the domination of the despotic Abbess is menaced by the endeavours of such external forces as Dora, Michael, Toby, Nick, and Catherine, especially when we take the last two ones as Nietzschean "men who want to die" (see Deleuze 2001: 81-82).

It was argued above that James represents conventional morality, whereas Michael is an active ethicist who practices the creation of new values for himself in accordance with the particular situations he is engaged in. Michael's immanent ethics is expressed in his sermon, delivered before the

community members a week after James's: "The chief requirement of the good life [...] is that one should have some conception of one's capacities. [...] One must study carefully how best to use such strength as one has" (Murdoch 1999: 200). Happiness, on this view, means to discover and actualise one's virtual powers, otherwise one's existence would be meaningless. Only those who affirm life and deem desire and power as positive will be able to achieve happiness: "It is the positive thing that saves" (203). Thus, the necessary condition for building an ethically good life is self-knowledge: "In each of us there are different talents, different propensities [...]. We must endeavour to know our possibilities" (203). For Michael, who sees the world from the perspective of his own flow, all bodies are singular and no universal moral law can be implemented to all of them: "As spiritual beings, in our imperfection and also in the possibility of our perfection, we differ profoundly one from another" (203). This is quite applicable to the situation of Michael himself and is in line with the way Deleuzian ethics understands homoerotic bodies, "defining their being through their capacity for becoming, in terms of a productive desire" (Nigianni 2009: 6). Michael is not a body violating divine rules and engaging in a relation prohibited by the Law but an active force recognising his capacities for striving and aiming at enhancing his desire through a relation that in his own view is good.

The order of judgement defines "essence" as "a monolithic and a static force of being-the-same, reproduced by established power relations" centred on the Abbey, whereas an active ethics considers a body's essence as the force that "opens up the capacity of the body to become other through its encounters with other body-forces, through its involvement in a multiplicity of connections that changes qualitatively with every new connection added to it" (Nigianni 2009: 6). As soon as Michael realises what his capacities are, he looks for proper bodies to connect with and become different in this way: "Michael Meade at twenty-five had already known for some while that he was what the world calls perverted" (Murdoch 1999: 99). He is no more the same Michael as before when he enters a connection with Nick. This is a qualitative change, not merely quantitative, since it is his essence that grows different in the process. The same is true of his later relation to Toby, which once again sets him in motion towards "becoming-minoritarian". Difference, as understood by immanent ethics, "occurs through the eternal recurrence of the power to create relations, to produce connections" (Colebrook 2009: 19), and Michael possesses such a power to the end of the story, though in between he experiences moments of hesitation and vacillation.

Michael and Nick fell in love about fourteen years before the narration time, when the twenty-five-year-old Michael was a schoolteacher and the fourteen-year-old Nick his pupil. Significantly, his new desire, which is close to the Aristotelian friendship (*philia*), never comes into conflict with his religious belief, because it brings him joy and increases his power: "It scarcely occurred to him that his religion could establish any quarrel with his sexual habits"

(Murdoch 1999: 99). Even when later as a prospective priest he becomes aware of the conflict between the kind of love he cherishes and the moral rules of his religion, he tends to give up his religious practices rather than his love affairs:

> He did not, for the moment, alter the mode of his friendships, but he ceased to receive the sacrament and went through a time of considerable distress, during which he continued rather hopelessly to do what he now felt the most dreadful guilt for doing.
>
> (99-100)

In this reactive society, all interpersonal love must fit into the category of "bourgeois marriage" and, under the force of *doxa*, all other forms of love that do not match this "normal" definition are dismissed as perversion (Colebrook 2002b: 17). However, the kind of love Michael pursues is an "encounter with another person that opens us up to a possible world" (Colebrook 2002b: 17). By such an open conception of love, one can "think of forms of love that are not yet given, that are not actual but virtual" (Colebrook 2002b: 17). Michael's love, therefore, should not be judged according to the restrictive rules of slave morality, in that it is different both from the normal bourgeois marriage and from the forbidden relation conventionally called sodomy.

The positive encounter of Michael and Nick is adequately described in the scene where for the first time they declare their love for each other: Michael tightly holds Nick's hands and they begin to talk like the previous day: "they seemed to live an eternity of passion, although as yet they did nothing but hold hands and exchange the gentlest of caresses. This was a time for Michael of complete and thoughtless happiness" (Murdoch 1999: 105). This joyful union is the only thing that can make Michael (as well as Nick) happy. For him, it is not the same as the sinful, illicit act banned by Christian morality because he has appreciated the true spirit of God as the infinite, eternal, impersonal force of becoming underlying all life: "He ceased going to communion. He felt, strangely, no guilt, only a hard determination to hold to the beloved object, and to hold to it before God, accepting the cost whatever it might be" (105). He comprehends the way the dominant morality and its socio-political institutions abuse religion for maintaining their own mastery and repressing revolutionary, minoritarian bodies. This love is goodness *par excellence* for Michael as this joyful connection has the potential to boost their power and allow them to become-imperceptible and impersonal (selfless):

> He could not believe that there was anything inherently evil in the great love which he bore to Nick: this love was something so strong, so radiant, it came from so deep it seemed of the very nature of goodness itself. Vaguely Michael had visions of himself as the boy's spiritual guardian, his passion slowly transformed into a lofty and more selfless attachment.
>
> (105)

Remindful of Plato's *eros* and Aristotle's *philia*, the feeling Michael has for Nick is not at all a selfish, egotistic yearning that would lead to Michael's domination over Nick, but rather it aims at the good of both bodies in the form of a powerful multiplicity developed out of a proper relation between them. In consequence, his feeling for Nick is marked by "a self-effacement which would be the highest expression of love" (105). This love makes him aware of the virtual aspects of his life yet to be actualised: "He felt that he had known Nick all his life" (106). In this way, homoeroticism is granted a new significance, entering a realm of "sense" far beyond its conventional, anthropomorphic "meaning" as a forbidden intercourse between two male individuals. It becomes an impersonal, non-human connection between two bodies (not necessarily two "persons") that results in the enhancement of their power.

Rejecting the traditional conception of sexuality, Deleuze and Guattari (2004b) contend that

> sexuality [...] is badly explained by the binary organisation of the sexes, and just as badly by a bisexual organisation within each sex. Sexuality brings into play too great a diversity of conjugated becomings; these are like *n* sexes, an entire war machine through which love passes.
>
> (307)

In *The Bell*, having turned into a schizophrenising body, Michael does not reduce his "sexual" desire for Nick or Toby to physical intercourse, as the above quotations from the novel suggest. After both admit to be in love with each other, Michael's longing for Nick / Toby in the main takes the shape of a yearning to see them, be with them, take their hands, and talk to them rather than sleeping with them. Therefore, even when they are alone in Michael's room, nothing happens between them of the sort conventional morality would designate sodomitic. Michael's sexual desire for Nick is creation, multiple connectivity, an active force, a source of becoming(-woman), a revolutionary machine, a productive energy (Beckman 2011). The traditional notion of sexuality, supported by Freudian psychoanalysis, defines sexuality negatively and connects it to the institution of family, castration, and sexual difference, thus hindering the flow of sexuality in other planes of life, including the metaphysical, the social, and the political (Beckman 2011: 8). Even after fourteen years and despite Nick's betrayal, Michael still is overcome by his desire to connect with him whenever they meet at Imber, and what is important is that on Michael's part this feeling cannot be reduced to a sexual / physical relation. For Michael, Nick is a "friend" in the Aristotelian sense of the term (Aristotle 2009: 142), that is, one with whom he can flourish and achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*): "His whole body was aware, almost to trembling, of the proximity of his *friend*. [...] he deeply realised in this moment [...] that he loved Nick" (Murdoch 1999: 226-227, emphasis added).

Thus, whereas the order of judgement, represented by the Abbey, as a molar organisation, "reduce[s] sexuality to sex and thereby destroy the productive, connective potential of sexuality" (Beckman 2011: 1), Michael's love for Nick / Toby, in line with Deleuzian ethics and its positive concept of desire, is the antithesis of Oedipalised desire and, consequently, should be regarded as a non-human desire endowing him with the power to go far beyond human sexuality and join the plane of impersonal becoming.

As John Protevi (2003) explains, there are two kinds of love in Deleuze and Guattari's works: 1) Oedipal / paranoid love ("sick desire"): love that "is personal, exclusively differentiated, fixed in meaning, guilty, and familial" — love takes this form when it is "captured in capitalist axiomatics"; 2) revolutionary / schizophrenising / schizo love: the "creative novelty of connection" between bodies or the "joining of multiplicities" in a way that deterritorialises desire and releases it from the "servitude as predicates of a subject" and the structurations of the capitalist system (188). In short, Oedipal love (desire reduced to the Freudian Oedipal model) reinforces the body's bondage and dependence on the restrictive system and its institutions like the nuclear family, while schizo love provides the subject with a "line of flight" for escaping the limits of the dominant system. Lovers like Michael seek to become "bodies without organ" in the first place (BwOs: non-formed, non-organised, non-stratified, actively dismantled bodies), because only then will they be able to create openings and spaces for the production of new modes of experience.

Yet, though it is opposed not to the organs themselves but "to that [molar] organization of the organs called the organism" and seeks to "dis-organ-ise" them (Deleuze & Guattari 2004b: 175; Deleuze & Guattari, 2004a: 362), a BwO cannot entirely break away from the system that it desires to escape. In order to be affective, it must exist in the first place within the system it aims to subvert. This explains why our conception of love still is related to heterosexual desire (with the possibility of leading to marriage). A schizophrenising love reveals to us that there is always ample opportunity to follow roads not taken in the past or even to create new ones through constant experimentation and novel connections. It reminds us that the virtual singularities of life coexist its actual manifestations and that we are always granted the chance to enter into the pre-subjective domain of the virtual and deterritorialise our fixed subjectivities. In Murdoch's novel, Toby revitalises in Michael the memory of love (first ignited by Nick), exposing to him how he *might* live or how he might have lived.

If we take a closer look at Michael's love for these two young boys in the course of the story, we observe that the love of another individual is considered by him parallel to the love of God, without the former being, as the transcendentalist Plato believed, a step toward the latter. Homoerotic feelings, in their pre-subjective mode, are no more regarded as sin or that which would conflict with one's devotion to God. In truth, this is a new kind

of love, different from the Oedipal love prescribed through the institution of marriage by conventional morality and the capitalist society. Thus, homo-eroticism is defamiliarised and depersonalised in Michael's case, rendered into a non-human or impersonal connection with another body that results in an increase of power in both bodies and an enhancement of desire for becoming different. This is reminiscent of the way Plato defamiliarised the mutual love between Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. The significance of Michael's case lies in the singularity of his situation, since Murdoch casts a man of traditional religion (a would-be priest) in the role of homoerotic lover and imparts all these feelings and thoughts through such an individual's discourse. The extensive use of "free indirect discourse" to depict Michael's inner world throughout the narrative bridges the distance between this character and the reader, in a way that the implied reader comes to empathise with Michael and confirm his ethical views and emotions.

After Nick's death, for a while Michael "had been consoled only by the knowledge that he could still kill himself" (Murdoch 1999: 306), but he does not, since he is a strong man, compared with Nick and Catherine. According to Deleuzian ethics, those who take their own life are in a sense the weakest of all men, because the act of committing suicide is in sheer conflict with human reason, their own nature, and the laws of Nature. Suicide can never be a purely active choice since it is contrary to what Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Deleuze and Guattari respectively name human's *conatus* (striving for self-preservation), will to power, and desire. Such a passive act as committing suicide is always caused by overpowering external causes (seemingly, the reactive moral system in the case of Nick and Catherine).

Even after Nick's demise, Michael is alive with his love, which still is a virtual part of Michael's life, co-existing any actual form his life may take from now on and always providing the possibility of essential change and positive becoming:

> During this time his love for Nick seemed to grow [...]. He had the image of Nick continually now before his eyes, seeing him often as he was when a boy, [...] and sometimes it seemed to him as if Nick had died in childhood.
>
> (Murdoch 1999: 306)

Now, Michael is a body without organs who has successfully escaped the order of judgement and become impersonal / imperceptible: "there was very little of him left now" (309). The Abbess can no more affect him: "Michael went to see the Abbess several times. Now, when it was too late, he told her everything. But there was nothing, at present, which she could do for him, and they both knew it" (306). Michael feels responsible for Nick's death, on the grounds that his hesitations and moral waverings had prevented him from offering his love to Nick at a time both of them really needed it. He had not been "faithful" enough to the "event" of his love, as Alain Badiou (2005) puts it: "Nick had needed love, and he ought to have given him what he had to

offer, without fears about its imperfection. If he had had more faith he would have done so, not calculating either Nick's faults or his own" (Murdoch 1999: 307). But this does not mean that he is sad and feels guilty: "The annihilating sense of a total guilt gave way to a more reflective and discriminating remembrance" (309). What remains in him after these catastrophes is only the joyful memory of Nick's love. The spell of the order of judgement is completely broken (Murdoch 1999: 308):

> After Nick's death he was for a long time quite unable to pray. He felt indeed as if his belief in God had been broken at a single blow, or as if he had discovered that he had never believed. [...] He thought of religion as something far away, something into which he had never really penetrated at all [...] he put it to himself: there is a God, but I do not believe in Him.

The majoritarian God he rejects now is the one constructed and enforced by the dominant reactive morality: he is conscious that God is an eternal, infinite substance that cannot be reduced to any anthropomorphic body (Jesus Christ) who may die and resurrect whenever the order of the priests wishes so. He is determined to avoid the institutionalised, organised religion and its value system, since he is able to create his own values actively. After Nick's death, Toby's departure, and Catherine's hospitalisation, Michael will live on, actively, creatively, and spontaneously. He leases the Court, which belongs to him, indefinitely to the Abbey and leaves Imber for Norwich, where he has found a temporary job at a school. Thus, the noble Michael manages to repudiate Oedipalised love and find a line of flight to deterritorialise himself. Michael's active, immanent ethics is further depicted at the end of the novel by the way he treats Dora's situation and helps her to extricate herself from the mastery of her so-called husband: "Michael felt no inclination to recall her sharply to her duties as a wife" (301). As a minoritarian body, he feels "that there was little point in forcing her willy-nilly into a machine of sin and repentance which was alien to her nature" (303). Only an active / noble force is capable of seeing through other forces: he does his utmost to help Dora in fleeing from reactiveness, because he observes in her the capacity and desire for deterritorialisation.

Based on James's statements in his sermon, one could offer a transcendentalistic reading of Michael's situation, in terms similar to Murdoch's moral theory (Murdoch 1997). On such a reading, Michael is not able to emancipate himself from his egotistic longings, most importantly the pleasures of being in love with Nick (and later with Toby), and that is why his beloved (Nick) and he are ruined in the end (for such traditional readings of this novel, see, among others, Whiteside 1964, Stubbs 1977, and Kuriakose 2000). However, from the viewpoint of Deleuzian ethics, as was explained above, quite the contrary, Michael is in pursuit of a connection with Nick in the form of an open multiplicity that gives more strength to both of them.

At the end of the day, Michael accepts his fate: "What he had failed to do was accurately to estimate his own resources, his own spiritual level [...]. One must perform the lower act which one can manage and sustain: not the higher act which one bungles" (Murdoch 1999: 201). Michael knows that this connection is a necessary natural event, part of their fate, and that they must affirm and actively embrace it − what Nietzsche (2005b: 72 & 2008: 157) refers to as "love of fate" or *amor fati*. He realises that the connections he had aspired to make with Nick and Toby were beyond his capacities. He harmed both Nick and Toby instead of making them bodies without organs: "He had completely destroyed Toby's peace of mind. He had turned the boy from an open, cheerful hard-working youth into someone anxious, secretive, and evasive" (201-202). Then, he is responsible also for Nick's dissipated life and later for his suicide. However, this does not mean that he repents for having felt such a love in the first place: "For himself, God had made him so and he did not think that God had made him a monster" (205). What is at stake here is that he ultimately retains his positive homoerotic desire. In the final analysis, as a homoerotic body, his "forces and potentialities cannot be reduced to its cultural representations and the norms of gender", and he "is no longer seen as static and passive, a blank slate written by language and culture," but rather he survives "as energy and movement in variation, as modulation (and not as mould) that produces singularities" (Nigianni 2009: 5). As an active force escaping any kind of organisation, he is in a constant flux of becoming: "the BwO cannot be said *to be* at all; rather, it always *becomes*" (Poxon 2001: 5).

Interestingly enough, such characters as Michael and Dora and their desires are so depicted by Murdoch within the narrative discourse of *The Bell* that the implied reader comes to empathise with them, though he or she knows the relationships they are involved in (Michael with Nick and Toby and Dora with Noel and Toby) are by social norms immoral, forbidden, and unlawful. As a result, the implied reader appreciates what it means to be ethically active and capable of creating new singular values in keeping with one's own flow of becoming. A Deleuzian reading, Claire Colebrook (2009) argues, "look[s] at the ways in which works of art introduce a difference or dissimulation in the image of the human" (21). A Deleuzian queer reading, in particular, "would attend to all those moments in the text in which the normal is [...] exposed as contingent, constituted, and open to change" (Colebrook 2009: 21). Murdoch's novel indicates how power relations − "often expressed in couples such as man-woman, straight-gay, master-slave" (Conley 2009: 27) − are destabilised by active forces like Michael and Dora who do not submit to dominant conventions. This novel of Murdoch's disrupts the order of judgement by highlighting its hierarchical structure and the way it represses revolutionary forces for constructing a unified, fixed image of human beings as identical to one another in essence and, thereby, subject to a universal system of judgement. Through such minoritarian bodies as Michael and Dora,

Murdoch's text also displays the manner in which such an organisation is open to dis-organ-isation, deterritorialisation, and even dissolution.

Conclusion

The reading offered in this article brought to the fore the Deleuzian notions of morality, religion, and homoerotic love and the way they determine the meaning of life for individuals, hoping to revitalise Deleuzian literary criticism. For this reason, the Spinozan and Nietzschean background to Deleuze and Guattari's ethics were pointed out in the course of the analysis of Murdoch's novel. Such a reading, in the case of this novel, aimed at foregrounding the flows of becoming and difference within the text which had previously been ignored by traditional, dominant readings mainly built on the ethical ideas of Murdoch the philosopher. Accordingly, this reveals how a writer's texts cannot be reduced to a single, all-encompassing meaning, even if it is the meaning pronounced by the writer herself. In sharp contrast with the avant-gardism and experimentalism of contemporary Modernist and Postmodernist authors, the narrative discourse adopted by Murdoch in her novel resembles the established form of traditional Realist fiction, yet as I demonstrated in the present study, the results of which might not be approved by Murdochian critics, her fiction is thematically revolutionary, even to a greater extent than the works of many leading novelists of the twentieth century. Her fiction directly addresses the fundamental question of the meaning of human existence by creating singular ethical situations and producing unique, multifaceted characters involved in decisive events. This verges on the reading strategy employed by Deleuze in his analyses of other philosophers. When talking about his early monographs on Western philosophers, Deleuze (1995: 6), utilising a homoerotic discourse, admits:

> I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or [...] immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous.

The text a minoritarian author like Murdoch creates is already in constant flux, and the task of the critic is to shed light on this flux and show how the text is indeed a "becoming-text", irreducible to one single interpretation.

References

Aristotle
2009 *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. David Ross. Revised by Lesley Brown. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Badiou, Alain
2005 *Being and Event*. Trans. Oliver Feltham. London & New York: Continuum.
Baugh, Bruce
2010 Death. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.) *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Revised edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 63-65.
Beckman, Frida
2011 Introduction: What is Sex? An Introduction to the Sexual Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. In: Beckman, Frida (ed.) *Deleuze and Sex*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 1-29.
Bloom, Harold
1986 Introduction. In: Bloom, Harold (ed.) *Iris Murdoch* (*Bloom's Modern Critical Views*). New York: Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 1-7.
Bogue, Ronald
2001 The Betrayal of God. In: Bryden, Mary (ed.) *Deleuze and Religion*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 9-29.
Bryden, Mary
2001 Introduction. In: Bryden, Mary (ed.) *Deleuze and Religion*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 1-6.
Byatt, A.S.
1999 Introduction. In: Murdoch, Iris *The Bell*. London: Vintage, pp. vii-xv.
Colebrook, Claire
2002a Deleuzean Criticism. In: Wolfreys, Julian (ed.) *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 219-37.
2002b *Gilles Deleuze*. London & New York: Routledge.
2009 On the Very Possibility of Queer Theory. In: Nigianni, Chrysanthi and Storr, Merl (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 11-23.
2010 Introduction. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.) *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Revised edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 1-6.
Conley, Verena Andermatt
2009 Thirty-six Thousand Forms of Love: The Queering of Deleuze and Guattari. In: Nigianni, Chrysanthi and Storr, Merl (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 24-36.
Deleuze, Gilles
1988 *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
1995 Letter to a Harsh Critic. In: *Negotiations 1972-1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 3-12.
2001 Nietzsche. In: *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*. Trans. Anne Boyman. With an Introduction by John Rajchman. New York: Urzone Books, pp. 53-102.
Deleuze, Gilles, & Guattari, Félix
2004a *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem & Helen R. Lane. London & New York: Continuum.
2004b *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London & New York: Continuum.

Ghaffary, Mohammad, & Alireza Anushiravani
2016 "Entering the School of Life": A Deleuzean Reading of Iris Murdoch's *The Flight from the Enchanter*. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 8 (1): 173-85.
Heusel, Barbara Stevens
2006 *Iris Murdoch's Paradoxical Novels: Thirty Years of Critical Reception*. Rochester: Camden House.
Kuriakose, V. Maya
2000 The Concept of Sin in Modern British Fiction with Reference to the Works of Ivy Compton-Burnett, Iris Murdoch, and Graham Greene. Diss. Tiruvalla: Mar Thoma College.
Leeson, Miles
2010 *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist*. London & New York: Continuum.
MacIntyre, Alasdair
1982 Good for Nothing: Review of *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit* by Elizabeth Dipple. *London Review of Books* 4(10): 15-16.
Martin, Graham
1965 Iris Murdoch and the Symbolist Novel. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 5: 296-300.
Masong, Kenneth
2008 Iris Murdoch's *The Bell*: Tragedy, Love and Religion. *Kritike* 2(1): 11-30.
Murdoch, Iris
1993 *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London: Penguin Books.
1997 *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*. Ed. Peter Conradi. New York & London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
1999 *The Bell*. London: Vintage.
Murdoch, Iris & Todd, Richard
2003 Discussions from *Encounters with Iris Murdoch*. In: Dooley, Gillian (ed.) *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Conversations with Iris Murdoch*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, pp. 167-93.
Nietzsche, Friedrich
1989 On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic. In: *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 1-198.
2005a *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2005b *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2008 *The Gay Science, With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Nigianni, Chrysanthi
2009 Introduction: ... So as to Know "Us" Better: Deleuze and Queer Theory: Two Theories, One Concept – One Book, Many Authors .... In: Nigianni, Chrysanthi and Storr, Merl (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 1-10.

Poxon, Judith
2001 Embodied Anti-Theology: The Body without Organs and the Judgement of God. In: Bryden, Mary (ed.) *Deleuze and Religion*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 42-50.
Protevi, John
2003 Love. In: Patton, Paul & Protevi, John (eds) *Between Deleuze and Derrida*. London & New York: Continuum, pp. 183-194.
Spear, Hilda D.
2007 *Iris Murdoch*. 2nd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Spinoza, Benedict de
1994 The Ethics. In: Curley, Edwin (ed. and trans.) *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 85-265.
Steiner, George
1997 Foreword. In: Murdoch, Iris *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (ed.) Peter Conradi. New York & London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, pp. ix-xviii.
Stubbs, Patricia Joan Ann
1977 The Treatment of Moral Values in the Work of Four Contemporary Novelists: Graham Greene, Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch, Doris Messing. Diss. London: University College London.
Whiteside, George
1964 The Novels of Iris Murdoch. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 6: 24-47.
Wolfe, Peter
1966 *The Disciplined Heart: Isis Murdoch and Her Novels*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Mohammad Ghaffary
Department of English, Arak University, Arak 38156-8-8349, Iran
m-ghaffary@araku.ac.ir