
	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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Female Gothic, as first conceptualized by Ellen Moers in 1976, concerns itself with "the work that women have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic"(90). Distinguishing Female and Male Gothic through the gender of the writer has become a common and straightforward way of conceptualizing these sub-genres. Nonetheless, this definition has never been proven satisfactory to the innumerable critics that theorize about this subject, for it has become obvious that this distinction is too simplistic and that it does not contemplate the possibility that female writers can write Male Gothic novels and vice versa.

Conventionally, 'Female Gothic' sets itself apart by the use of certain themes and motifs that have been reused and reinvented by female writers since the eighteenth century. Traditionally, the typical Female Gothic plot "centralized the imprisoned and pursued heroine threatened by a tyrannical male figure, it explained the supernatural, and ended in the closure of marriage". (Wallace and Smith, 3) Employed to explore social anxieties of the time, it usually focuses on the writer's concerns with issues such as identity, sexuality, language, race and history. It is also marked by reflections on and resentment against patriarchal society, and women's place within it. Another particular theme, not so frequently highlighted but no less relevant to the study of the Female Gothic, is the redemption or damnation of the

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² This article is dedicated to Professor Maria Zulmira Castanheira, who first introduced me to the work of Iris Murdoch and whose erudite lectures on Gothic literature, particularly on the Female Gothic, granted me the tools with which to write this essay. I would also like to thank Professor Miguel Alarcão, for his unrelenting encouragement and pertinent advice without whose guidance the publication of this article would not have been possible.


	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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soul. As it stands, Female Gothic remains, to this day, a subject of discussion and theorization – as does the very conceptualization of 'women's writing'.



Iris Murdoch

British author Iris Murdoch was born in 1919 in Dublin to Irish parents, Irene and Hughes Murdoch. Her academic excellence began very early in life when, at 13, she won a scholarship to the Badminton School in Bristol. By 1938 she had already published her first piece of work, two poems entitled "The Phoenix-Hearted" and "Star-Fisher". That same year she enrolled at Somerville College, Oxford, to study "Mods", Greek and Latin language and literature, and "Greats", philosophy and ancient history. In the final year of World War II, Murdoch began working with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – created to help liberated countries and refugees – and was sent to Graz in 1946 to work in a refugee camp, an experience that would forever etch itself in her life and work. Looking to delve once more into her studies, in 1947 Iris took a Research Studentship in Philosophy at Newnham College, Cambridge, securing her a place as Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy and, allowing her to teach moral and political philosophy at St Anne's College, Oxford, in the following year. (Martin and Rowe, 1-10)


	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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Throughout her life, Murdoch published twenty-six novels, excluding her philosophical essays, which have been read and studied all over the world. To read her work is to become unavoidably aware of the particular period of history in which the author wrote. In the aftermath of two World Wars, Iris writes of a world immersed in a postmodern sense of scepticism and disbelief, an era where "one can no longer believe in coherent universal claims to truth which ... are replaced by moral relativism." (Smith, 141) It is precisely this "moral relativism" that will become the author's main concern and core research throughout the development of her work, both philosophical and fictional.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how Iris Murdoch uses her Female Gothic fiction to explore her moral philosophy. Following a logical train of thought, this research initiates with some remarks on Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy, in an attempt to better understand how it relates to the construction of her Gothic novel, *The Unicorn* (1963), as well as her complex characters. The second part of this article will focus on the analysis of the novel, its themes and imagery. Finally, the third part is dedicated to the thematic of the 'Madwoman in the Attic' and how it relates to *The Unicorn*.



I - The Death of God, the Birth of Good


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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Throughout the ages, religion has functioned as the moral compass of society. This institutionalization of faith, together with the belief in the afterlife, has guided people in their moral behaviour; working as motivation to become better, to be compassionate, to attend to other people's needs, to live as a community.

Iris Murdoch calls attention to the fact that, in an increasingly secular society, the loss of faith reflects itself in the loss of a common moral ground leading people away from each other, for "old God symbolized, namely, the idea of the Good as the source of an absolute moral claim on human life"(Antonaccio, 19). With the loss of religion as an ethical guide, humanity has been left in a spiritual void; Murdoch believed that philosophy should become men's modern moral compass. Deeply acquainted with philosophical studies, this understanding gave her grounds to develop a moral philosophy through which people could guide themselves in their quest for 'Goodness'.

Exposing her ideas through her philosophical and literary work, Murdoch's main focus was on characterization, echoing her Platonist influences. Throughout life, people do not have access to the whole truth because perception does not accurately portray real life; thus individuals only have "intimations of truth". Reflected in her novels, this idea of the awareness of reality - expressed by Murdoch's characters - is proportional to their spiritual development, the virtuous having a better perception of Truth. (Bove, 5)

In her essays on morality, Murdoch makes patent her belief that life is made of terrible incidents, not because there is a divine plan but simply because "life is horrible, life is a muddle and one's existence has no pattern"(6); accidents happen because they are a part of life and life is chaotic. With religion, life seems to acquire some kind of meaning, faith supplies consolation for the atrocities of life and the reassuring idea of an afterlife gives people the incentive to be better. Humanity takes comfort in the belief that one's soul does not perish with the death of the body.


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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Following in Freud's footsteps, Iris argues that the individual is egotistical by nature due to a propensity to see the other as a mere extension of the self. In this terrible world made of chance and chaos, the subject's psyche tends toward consolation, a natural form of protection or, as Freud puts it, to ego-satisfaction. (14) However, in order to reach the Truth, to get out of the state of illusion and walk towards reality, one must reject this inclination and focus on attending to other people's needs.

Reflecting another one of her concerns, a major theme in Murdoch's novels is language, more precisely, the inability to express what one has to say or what one means. With religion no longer functioning as a common background, society falls victim to a communication breakdown; people with different natures and views of the world do not possess a common semantic foundation or shared past and shared values such as faith used to provide. In analysing Murdoch's characters, we come to the conclusion that this inability to express reality finally results in lies, for Truth is all but unattainable. (11)

By creating her moral philosophy, the author proposes the replacement of God for 'Good', expanding a form of thinking that is neither secular nor religious in an attempt to provide the means for moral improvement and perfection. For Murdoch, art had the potential to be the closest representation of Truth and, as such, it is the artist's responsibility to present a "just vision of reality" by combining love, virtue and truth: 'beauty and art can act as incentives for moral perfection. In an individual's apprehension of nature or art ... one can momentarily forget oneself. Any movement away from the self is seen as moral improvement.'(15)

This kind of ideology, as explained above, can be seen in characterization. Creating both types of characters, the ordinary and the spiritually aware, Iris Murdoch alludes to the possibilities behind moral perfection and expresses her vision that individuals should improve themselves even with the knowledge that

	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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there is no reward waiting in the afterlife, for the real reward is enlightenment and the possibility of seeing through the 'veil of illusion'.

This focus on the work of art is relevant because attention to something other than oneself is necessarily a step toward 'Good', meaning that narcissism is contradictory to morality. An individual sees the world as he wants to, choosing his own interpretation of the reality around him. Yet, by focusing on a work of art or another individual and consequently walking towards moral perfection, one allows oneself to gradually grow neutral in his view of the world, becoming closer to Truth itself.

The emphasis on the work of art explains why the author believes fantasy to be immoral, for it means stepping away from reality and therefore from 'Goodness'. Being a deceitful art, fantasy is a form of consolation. In such a cruel and terrible world, suffering becomes an excruciating feeling and the individual's tendency is to protect himself, turning his suffering into consolation and therefore shielding his soul, if not his body, from the Truth. As false perceptions of reality, consolation and fantasy should be banned from one's conscience, allowing the individual to focus on love, beauty, and great art, for these are the real paths toward 'Goodness'.

Although Murdoch considers 'Good' to be veritably unattainable, perfecting oneself and improving one's moral behaviour is possible through the attentive observation of the world and art and through the focus on others rather than oneself. The author also believes some glimpses of Truth can be attained in near death experiences. Accepting death means accepting chance and the insignificance of one's life; everything that takes the individual away from himself moves him closer to Reality and Truth.



Iris Murdoch's *The Unicorn* (1963):
Gothicizing Morality

Ana Antunes Simão
Universidade Nova




In an attempt to demonstrate this, Iris Murdoch creates characters in her novels that glimpse this tiny bit of Truth through epiphanies during near death experiences. In *The Unicorn*, Effingham Cooper has one such experience while slowly drowning in a swamp, seeing strange bright lights in the wilderness of the bog:

Since he was mortal he was nothing and since he was nothing all that was not himself was filled to the brim with being and it was from this that the light streamed. This then was love, to look and look until one exists no more, *this* was the love which was the same as death. He looked, and knew with a clarity which was one with the increasing light, that with the death of the self the world becomes quite automatically the object of a perfect love. (Murdoch, 161)

II - Lifting the Veil of Illusion

Accepting literature as a form of moral pedagogy, it is through her novels that Iris Murdoch more clearly expresses her ideals on life and ethical behaviour. By meticulously creating complex characters that drive towards 'Good' or 'Evil', Murdoch tries to teach society which path to follow towards moral perfection. Constructing this kind of binary opposition allows people to understand the ways in which the so-called 'veil of illusion' clouds one's perception of Reality and Truth. It is


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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important to note that this perception is an essential tenet of Murdoch's philosophy; as such, it becomes also a central theme in her work.

This feature of Iris Murdoch's characterization is clearly expressed in *The Unicorn*. Her choice to engage in the Gothic mode allows her to explore the origins and representations of 'Evil' by analysing the "human psyche and its obsessive desires, murderous impulses and dysfunctional fantasies"(Rowe and Horner, 70). Writing in this mode also gives her the chance to "explore the possibility that evil is not just the absence of good, but a dynamic force to be recognized and rejected by those pursuing moral goodness". (71) In other words, the possibility that one's soul might be tainted with the force of Evil must be acknowledged in order to let the quest for moral Goodness preclude this egotistical predisposition.

The Unicorn is a novel concerned with the nature of liberty and imprisonment in which Iris explores the connection between suffering and power. The story takes place in a gloomy Gothic scenario: an Irish landscape (Martin and Rowe, 62) full of great cliffs of black sandstone, underground rivers and bogs surrounded by a cold and lethal sea, an eighteenth century castle... The central plot revolves around Hannah Crean-Smith, who has been incarcerated for seven years, at Gaze, for attempting to murder her husband Peter. Everyone who works in this house has been hired by Peter to guard his wife and Gerald Scottow, Peter's ex-lover, is the one in charge. Marian Taylor arrives at Gaze at the beginning of the novel to tutor Hannah in French, and it is through her perspective that we attain knowledge about the tragic history behind Gaze's population.

But why is the novel called *The Unicorn*? The Unicorn is a mythical creature, whose origin has never yet been traced to a single mythology. It is usually described as a "composite animal with equine features predominating, and much sought after by hunters. He can, on the one hand, be a fierce fighter against other animals, even

	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
---	---	--


with his own kind; but he can also be one of the most gentle of four-footed creatures."(Suhr, 93)

This creature has been subject to numerous symbolic and metaphorical interpretations. Largely inherited from the oral tradition of the Dark Ages, the unicorn has been used in art to symbolize the union between Christ and God, reflecting Christ's purity and suffering. Although ostensibly agnostic, Iris Murdoch has been known to use Christ allegories in her novels, in all likelihood influenced by her Irish Catholic upbringing, because Christ embodies the behaviour Murdoch considers to lead to moral perfection.

Given what we know about unicorn allegories, at first glance, Hannah seems to fit this role in the novel, a persecuted victim immersed in her own suffering. Robert E. Scholes, in *Fabulation and Metafiction*, goes so far as to link Hannah Crean-Smith to the unicorn symbol and Christ, stating that her surname is an anagram for Christ-name or Christ-mean. (68). Yet, this character has tried to kill her husband and, at the end of the novel, she succeeds in killing Gerald Scottow, her persecutor, suggesting that she is neither innocent nor pure.

Murdoch believes suffering to be always morally imperfect, because distress stems from the unawareness of truth. As part of the human condition, pain becomes dangerous in the sense that the one grieving draws those around him into his own suffering, which in turn becomes a source of power. In the novel, this process is explained by the use of the Greek concept *Ate*:

Ate is the name of the almost automatic transfer of suffering from one being to another. Power is a form of *Ate*. The victims of power, and any power has its victims, are themselves infected. They have then to pass it on, to use power on others. This is evil, and the crude image of the all-powerful God is a sacrilege. Good is not exactly powerless. For to be powerless, to be a complete victim, may be another source of power. But Good is non-

	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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powerful. And it is in the good that Ate is finally quenched, when it encounters a pure being who only suffers and does not attempt to pass the suffering on. (Murdoch, 92-93)

This transference of suffering is obvious in the habitants of Gaze. Everyone around Hannah feels her pain and, throughout the novel, she draws power from this empathy with and obsession over her suffering. Her closest friends (and persecutors!) idolize her, allowing her to become an almost spectral figure, too pure to be touched, too unsubstantial and uncertain, virtuous, Divine... It is this obsessive love that imprisons the other characters at Gaze; their souls become captive of Hanna and her guileful power.

It is Hannah who eventually breaks this illusion of herself as pure and virtuous, acknowledging her suffering as manipulative and selfish: "Ah how much I need you all! I have battered upon you like a secret vampire... I lived by your belief in my suffering. But I had no real suffering". (213) However manipulative, the chance that this character is lying still has to be dealt with, for the reader suspects that Hannah was not in fact suffering when her actions told otherwise. At the end of the novel, Hannah commits suicide in a desperate attempt to free herself from her tyrannical husband. This extreme act proves her suffering to be real, but there is, nevertheless, the possibility that she did not understand or even acknowledge her pain as real.

Be that as it may, this kind of behaviour on Hannah's part echoes that of Diane Long Hoeveler's notion of 'victim feminism', for at the end she does not recognize herself as a true helpless victim:

...an ideology of female power through pretended and staged weakness. Such an ideology positions women as innocent victims who deserve to be rewarded with the ancestral estate because they were unjustly persecuted

	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
---	---	--

by the corrupt patriarch. If the heroines manage, inadvertently of course, to cause the deaths of these patriarchs, so much the better. (7)


Although Hannah is, in fact, guilty of trying to murder her husband during an argument about her adulterous affair, she still plays the part of the female Gothic victim of a patriarchal society.

This analysis leads us to the conclusion that Hannah Crean-Smith does not, in fact, fit the symbolism of the unicorn. A more consistent choice would be Denis Nolan, Gaze's gamekeeper, a man whose Gothic and mysterious identity comes from the fact that he is believed to have fairy blood.

As Joseph A. Cosenza notes in "Murdoch's *The Unicorn*", the first proof of a connection between this character and the unicorn is made through his description. Being short of stature and wild in nature, his characterization is always allusive to wild animals or horses. This critic also suggests that Nolan's elongated fishing net can be a metaphor for the unicorn's horn. Following Cosenza's analysis, the three celibate women engaged in Nolan's life represent the virgin who "lures the unicorn for capture: Hannah dotes on Denis, Alice LeJour "jumps"him, and Marian seduces him. Each woman weakens Denis in some way."(175)

Although somewhat far-fetched, this interpretation is not totally exempt of meaning. In fact, this character seems to be the closest to Murdoch's ideal of moral perfection albeit not fully accomplished (for 'Goodness' is almost impossible to attain). Selflessly loving Hanna, he appears to be the only character able to absorb her guilt and suffering, eschewing the necessity of passing it on to someone else. His eyes and gaze are emphasized by Marian throughout the novel and his clear vision denotes his connection to reality.

Throughout the novel, Denis is constantly associated with fish. When Marian first arrives at Gaze, Denis is seen carrying a sick fish in a bowl, and it is often pointed out in the narrative that he is taking care of a salmon pool. In *Understanding Iris*


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
---	---	--

Murdoch, Cheryl Bove comes to the conclusion that Denis's connection to fish is an allusion to, but also a subversion of, the ritual fisher king; "Ritualistically, the fisher king must be healed by the questing knight before health and prosperity can return to the kingdom, but in this situation Denis himself heals the kingdom by vicariously expiating the guilt of the household". (173)

Although Denis's suffering is clearly more virtuous than Hannah's, he still fails in his quest for 'Goodness' and Truth when he lets his hate consume him and, in a desperate attempt to protect Hannah, murders her husband Peter. By loving Hannah selflessly, this character allows his hate to overpower love and, subsequently his suffering becomes imperfect and impure. Nonetheless, in a final act of altruism, he decides to leave the castle after Hannah's suicide, carrying all the guilt and suffering with him, freeing everyone imprisoned in Gaze's web of enchantments.

Semantically deconstructing Gaze, name with which the author baptizes the castle, may provide some curious clues to Murdoch's labyrinthine narrative structure. "To gaze" is to look carefully and attentively at something, usually with a sense of admiration. Going back to the author's philosophy, it becomes evident that this word was meant to allude, once more, to one's perception of Reality and Truth. Gaze then becomes the battle ground for Reality and Perception, and, consequently, between 'Good' and 'Evil'. This becomes evident when we accept Murdoch's understanding of moral perfection as the precept that the closest one is to reality - through humility, selflessness and virtue - the closest one is to 'Goodness'. Conversely, by being mischievous and selfish, one turns further away from Truth and thus closer to 'Evil'.

It is also curious how the word "gaze" is phonetically close to "maze", arguably a combination of the words "gothic" and "maze". This is of value because in this novel Murdoch "has mischievously constructed, in terms of narrative, a Gothic labyrinth but she gives us enough clues to find a way out to clear vision, if we are good enough readers". (Rowe and Horner, 78) Labyrinth-like narratives, built out of

	<p>Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p>Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
---	---	--


uncanny repetition, are a common feature of Gothic literature, and Murdoch too embraces this technique, subverting the actual trajectory of the plot in an attempt to question and deceive the reader's expectations.

By having Jamesie tell a story about a man who died drowned in the swamp right before Effingham gets lost in the bog, we, as readers, are led to believe that this character is going to die. However, Effingham escapes death, for he is saved by Denis Nolan. When Hannah is about to commit suicide at the same location, with our knowledge of Effingham's survival, we expect her to somehow free herself from those feelings of despair and entrapment and to change her mind about her own death. However, we are twice the fool; Hannah succeeds in killing herself. Both these episodes are part of a pattern of textual and uncanny repetition meant to confuse the reader and make him distrust his intuition while the plot fails to comply with his expectations. (Rowe and Horner, 78)

III- Madwoman in the Maze

As mentioned above, *The Unicorn* is a novel highly concerned with the nature of liberty, and confinement and power are the main themes used to explore this concern. Imprisonment has been a major subject in 'Female Gothic' ever since *Jane Eyre*, having become a timeless expression of the sense of claustrophobia felt by women in a society dominated by men.

In a patriarchal society, women have always been subdued to a secondary role as much in life as in literature. In the nineteenth century, with female authorship emerging as a strong force within the Gothic mode, women faced the hard struggle of expressing and asserting themselves in a world where only men were allowed a real and strong 'voice'. As inferior beings, women were expected to be submissive and quiet, an 'angel in the house', or to be dismissed as monstrous,


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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evil, mad... To become a literary presence in society, female writers had only a few options, most of which demeaning and humiliating:

if she did not suppress her work entirely or publish it pseudonymously or anonymously, she could modestly confess her 'limitations' and concentrate on the 'lesser' subjects reserved for ladies as becoming to their inferior powers. If the latter alternative seemed an admission to failure, she could rebel, accepting the ostracism that must have seemed inevitable. (Gilbert and Gubar, 64)

This ostracism created an understandable anxiety subsequently reflected in female literature. The allusions to these limitations, the use of an imagery of imprisonment, the sense of claustrophobia felt by the characters and, of course, the concept of madness, all these reflect these women's feelings of sickness and suffocation. The powerful metaphorical criticism they delivered of society thus voice their rebellion against patriarchal culture.

Analysing what is now known as the Female Gothic, the figure of the 'Madwoman in the Attic' is fundamental to the tradition. Following Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's perspective, the madwoman emerges as a projection of the writer's despair, becoming a fervent, even overemotional character who "acts out the subversive impulses every woman inevitably feels when she contemplates the "deep-rooted-evils of patriarchy". (77) Understood as a projection, this character thus becomes the writer's mad double, allowing this female authors to enact their own rage and violence, their repressed feelings, their desire to be freed from patriarchal constrictions. Curiously enough, these mad women were always secondary characters in the novel, for the Gothic heroine was usually a (albeit subtle) subversion of the 'angelical woman'.


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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Spatial confinement, as mentioned previously, was constructed by these female writers in their novels, as a metaphor for their sense of imprisonment and powerlessness caused by a society that did not allow them to express themselves. In a culture full of restrictions, this imagery appears as a reflection of their discomfort and even confusion for not trusting the place assigned to them in the world. These complex and disorienting emotions are thus projected onto the mad character that becomes the means for the writers to acknowledge feelings of fragmentation, their "sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be". (Gilbert and Gubar, 78)

In writing a Gothic novel, Murdoch creates her own version of the 'Madwoman in the Attic'; Hannah Crean-Smith, as the helpless woman incarcerated in an isolated castle, clearly fits this part. Her subjugation to an abusive male is two-fold: her husband is the one responsible for her imprisonment; his ex-lover, her persecutor.

Although not the typical madwoman, Hannah clearly does not fit the prototype of a sane woman either; starting with her attempt to kill her husband, she never shows any kind of remorse for her actions as the novel progresses. In the light of what we know about Hannah, any allusions she might make to remorse are necessarily met with suspicion by the reader. In fact, her suffering (or apparent suffering) seems to be a direct consequence of her confinement and not at all of her murderous act. Her ease in manipulating other people's feelings and shaping their actions in her favour leads the reader to believe she might, in fact, be a sociopath.

A sociopath is someone who is incapable of feeling guilt, remorse, compassion or empathy. Although the person usually abides by a certain moral code, it is usually a reinterpretation, and thus a disruption, of the codes that guide society. Nonetheless, such a person might still feel guilty in going against said 'rules', not because these are intrinsic values, but because of an understanding of the dependency upon society, and thus, the need to comply. A fundamental aspect of


	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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sociopathy to bear in mind is that one afflicted cannot develop a real emotional connection.

Hannah manipulates everyone around her in such an extreme way that leads them to dysfunctional obsession; their love for her is obsessive, and so is Marian and Effingham's quest to save her. Although Hannah expresses her love for those around her, what she really loves is to be loved, and more, to be idolized. In any case, her madness is the traumatic effect of a previously abusive relationship at the hands of a tyrannical husband. This mental trauma, consequence of her inability to free and even defend herself from his many forms of abuse, is indeed the cause of her sociopathic behaviour. Even though Hannah tried to kill her husband in a desperate attempt to free herself from enslavement, she failed, leaving him, once again, in charge of her destiny. The relevance of Hannah's dichotomous character lies precisely in the fact that, on the surface, she is the 'angel': virtuous, innocent and pure, but underneath, she becomes monstrous, evil, mad...

In order to understand Iris Murdoch's use of the 'Madwoman in the Attic', one must note that this author was extremely concerned with the ethical course society was taking in the twentieth century. This motif allowed her to express her anxiety not only towards a society still maddeningly patriarchal in its extreme oppression of women, but also towards the lack of a moral compass to guide society in its quest for 'Goodness'. By creating an angel monster, Murdoch is demanding that the reader acknowledges the essential fragmentation of the human being and subsequently understands the unavoidable necessity of guidance towards a genuine perception of Truth and Reality.

Iris Murdoch appropriated the Female Gothic as a means to express her concerns with such subjects as the lack of a unified moral guidance for humanity, assessing the problematic predisposition to evil acts, as well as the place of women in a society that continues to subjugate them to a secondary role. Murdoch was

	<p style="text-align: center;">Iris Murdoch's <i>The Unicorn</i> (1963): Gothicizing Morality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ana Antunes Simão Universidade Nova</p>
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adamant in stating that gender is not a legitimate argument for distinguishing between superior and inferior intellectual capacities.

Although a field of inquiry not pursued in this article, it is nevertheless interesting to comment on how, albeit Gothic, this work is also very much a product of the literary movement of its time - postmodernism – and, even more so, can be categorized as belonging to that genre we understand as Gothic postmodernism. By engaging in such a genre, Murdoch is thus fulfilling the "expression of the darkness of postmodernity" (Beville, 16), a darkness induced by a war that called into question the very existence of an objective truth. With this literary model as a platform, the author explores and proceeds to call into question an array of ethical and moral constructions, as well as the fragmentation of the self, thus proving how through the prism of Gothic-postmodernism, one can question "our unconscious, beliefs and prejudices, not only in terms of the desire that instigates them but also in terms of the repercussions for society in general."(16)

Murdoch's moral philosophy reveals itself systematically throughout the novel as a cry for society's consciousness. Only by understanding egotism as a form of Evil can we focus on all that is outside the Self. By concentrating on others, as well as on art, forgoing the self, the individual enters the path of knowledge that will enable him to change his perception of Reality, ultimately allowing for the unearthing of Truth – the secular redemption of one's soul.

In analyzing Murdoch's work, *The Unicorn* in particular, we arrive at the conclusion that the author's moral philosophy and her novels are developed as a fairly utopian attempt to reform our spiritual world, through the dissemination of 'Goodness'.




Iris Murdoch's *The Unicorn* (1963):
Gothicizing Morality

Ana Antunes Simão
Universidade Nova



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