

Gillian Dooley. 'The Post-War Novel in Crisis: Three Perspectives.' *AUMLA* No 104, November 2005, p103-119. (This is the author's preprint version.)

### **The Post-War Novel in Crisis: Three Perspectives.**

**Gillian Dooley, Flinders University**

The most obvious difference between nineteenth-century novels and twentieth-century novels is that the nineteenth-century ones are better.

*Iris Murdoch, 'Existentialists and Mystics,' 1970<sup>1</sup>*

... the warmth, the compassion, the humanity, the love of people which illuminates the literature of the nineteenth century and which makes all these old novels a statement of faith in man himself ... are qualities which I believe are lacking from literature now.

*Doris Lessing, 'The Small Personal Voice,' 1957<sup>2</sup>*

The great societies that produced the great novels of the past have cracked. Writing has become more private and more privately glamorous. The novel as a form no longer carries conviction.

*V.S. Naipaul, 'Conrad's Darkness,' 1974<sup>3</sup>*

What changes led to this perceived crisis in the novel? What causes a literary journalist like D.J. Taylor to declare that 'we read Dickens and George Eliot at school and we know, we just *know*, that no modern writer – certainly no modern English writer – can hold a candle to them'?<sup>4</sup> Three major novelists of the period following the second world war, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and V.S.

Naipaul, have pondered these questions, as have many twentieth-century writers. Each of these three writers has suggested remedies, to which they have aspired with varying degrees of success. And each of them offers, implicitly or explicitly, different reasons for the change. In this essay I will evaluate their arguments and attempt to account for some of the factors which give rise to the consciousness that they are different in some qualitative way from their predecessors. I will also discuss the effect such attitudes may have on their own work.

Of the three, Murdoch has examined the question most systematically. It is one she often addressed in philosophical essays and interviews. In her 1960 essay 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited' she discussed Romanticism in relation to the history of the novel. '[I]t is remarkable,' she wrote,

and in ways entirely relevant to its characteristic and pre-eminent merits, how very un-Romantic the great nineteenth-century novel is.... There is in these novels a plurality of real persons more or less naturalistically presented in a large social scene, and representing mutually independent centres of significance which are those of real individuals.... Here one may see the Liberal spirit at its best and richest, disporting itself in literature, and not yet menaced by those elements of Romanticism which later proved, if I am right, so dangerous.<sup>5</sup>

Romanticism in the modern novel, she claims, has developed into neurosis and produces 'tightly conceived thing-like books.'<sup>6</sup> At the other extreme, there is 'a loose journalistic epic, documentary or possibly even didactic in inspiration, offering a commentary on current institutions or on some matter out of history.'<sup>7</sup>

Different views of a similar polarisation in the novel were also offered at about the same time by Lessing, and by Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution*. While what Murdoch missed in the modern novel was the individual character who is distinct from the author, Williams saw the twentieth-century problem as a matter of imbalance. In the great realist novels, he says,

we attend with our whole senses to every aspect of the general life, yet the centre of value is always in the individual human person – not any one isolated person, but the many persons who are the reality of the general life.<sup>8</sup>

Since 1900, realist fiction styles, he believed, had divided into the social novel and the personal novel. Lessing's view added another dimension: her reading habits were clearly different:

If the typical product of communist literature during the last two decades is the cheerful little tract about economic advance, then the type of Western literature is the novel or play which one sees or reads with a shudder of horrified pity for all of humanity. If writers like Camus, Sartre, Genet, Beckett, feel anything but a tired pity for human beings, then it is not evident from their work.

I believe that the pleasurable luxury of despair, the acceptance of disgust, is as much a betrayal of what a writer should be as the acceptance of the simple economic view of man; both are aspects of cowardice.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of their differences, these views have in common the assumption that the twentieth century novel is an inferior product because it is not able, for some reason, to represent human life as well as the nineteenth century novel does. It is

also notable that they all share an ethical dimension: it is the morality of fiction, especially in relation to its representation of characters, that is emphasised rather than its aesthetic qualities.

Richard Clark Sterne believes that ‘the idea of ethical natural law has faded in the modern mind,’<sup>10</sup> the result being ‘the depiction of existence, in much of the best imaginative writing of our age, as absurd.’<sup>11</sup> However, the same impulse to write truthfully but enjoyably about the world still animates novelists. Contemporary English novelist Jane Gardam, echoing many of her nineteenth-century predecessors, believes

that the most important thing about [fiction] is to entertain, but ... ‘entertaining’ [is] a much more serious thing, an ‘entertaining novel’ is much more fluid, healthier and wiser than the novel with a purpose, the novel that sets out to instruct.<sup>12</sup>

Compare this with Thomas Hardy: ‘novels which most conduce to moral profit are likely to be among those written without a moral purpose,’<sup>13</sup> or Nathaniel Hawthorne: ‘when romances do really teach anything, ... it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one.’<sup>14</sup> That fiction is still believed to contain moral values is clear from the publication of such books as Colin McGinn’s *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction* (1997). McGinn observes that ‘our moral understanding and the story form seem fitted for one another.’<sup>15</sup> He says that it is

so obvious that I am almost embarrassed to state [that] reading novels (or watching plays and films, or reading poetry and short stories) ... is ... for most people ... the primary way in which

they acquire ethical attitudes, especially in contemporary culture.<sup>16</sup>

D.J. Taylor, in spite of his belief that morality has been eroded in the post-war world, in a discussion of novels which criticize imperialism (in itself a moral activity) says that ‘it is easy ... to talk of the subversion of agreeable but unsustainable myths, but equally easy to argue that the truly agreeable myth of the post-war era is that of the wicked colonial oppressor’<sup>17</sup> – a myth which has become widely adopted in the post-colonial world. Moral values have not disappeared: they have merely shifted their emphasis.

Twentieth-century novelists’ nostalgia for an earlier age of greatness is described by Salman Rushdie as ‘culturally endemic golden-ageism; that recurring, bilious nostalgia for a literary past that at the time didn’t seem much better than the present does now.’<sup>18</sup> David Lodge points out that ‘the English Victorian novel ... is represented by the work of perhaps a dozen novelists, out of the thousand or more who actually wrote novels in this period.’<sup>19</sup> Often the differences in our lives from theirs are emphasized and the homogeneity of experience within their time is assumed: Margaret Anne Doody in *The True Story of the Novel* has noted how ‘untidiness on the part of the *zeitgeist* distresses world-pictures involved in some critical claims’;<sup>20</sup> we might contemplate an entity we call ‘the nineteenth-century novel,’ but find on examining examples that they deviate in important ways from the norm. Taylor admits that ‘one talks confidently about “the novelist.” In fact there are only novelists,<sup>21</sup> but still makes large claims such as ‘the great Victorian fictional beings seem to bestride their world; its concerns are theirs; they invariably dominate it.’<sup>22</sup> He also claims that

we live in a highly sophisticated, technological world governed by huge, distantly glimpsed and apparently impersonal forces, in which communications as much as morals have tended to invalidate the traditional novel of character. The whole plot of a novel like Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, which hinges on the absence overseas of a crucial witness, could not take place in a world with telephones.<sup>23</sup>

But plots can still hinge on communication failures even in a world supplied with telephones, as Murdoch's *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* shows. Major technological innovations which significantly affected everyday life, like the railways and the telegraph, were, in any event, a common feature of the nineteenth century, and did not prevent the 'traditional novel of character' from flourishing.

Reasons given for the changes in the novel, by writers and critics, are multifarious. They include historical events, such as the world wars and the break-up of the European empires; the erosion of the unquestioned status of organized religions in western societies; a growing popular awareness of psychological theory which makes writers (and readers) unprecedentedly self-conscious; the rapid pace of technological change and scientific discovery; political and social changes attributable to these factors, as well as socialism and other movements – feminism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism; and linguistic and aesthetic theories which, along with the development of psychology, have made unself-conscious writing increasingly difficult. These factors, however, have differing effects on the practice of individual writers. As Andrzej Gasiorek says in his study of the post-war British novel,

postmodernism is so often invoked as a cultural dominant that a diverse range of literary forms come to be seen in a homogeneous fashion as part of a general ‘crisis of representation.’ ... To read authors who engage in quite different ways with the epistemological and aesthetic difficulties entailed by representation as though they are all participating in the same pursuit is to ‘flatten out’ the post-war period in a way that can only contribute to the very dehistoricization that critics of postmodernism lament.<sup>24</sup>

None of the three authors included in my study has resorted to what is usually regarded as postmodernism, but they have certainly ‘engaged in quite different ways’ with the problems of writing in this period. They have also defined their difficulties in quite different ways.

Born in 1919 and brought up in Southern Rhodesia by her English settler parents, Doris Lessing regards the two world wars as ‘the two influences in my life – these wars. The older I get, the more I realize just what an influence they have been.’<sup>25</sup> She suspects that they have left a ‘pattern of disaster’<sup>26</sup> in her mind which exerts a powerful but unconscious force on her creative work, citing as an example a story which had formed in her mind in which the simplest task becomes virtually impossible because of obstacles which would appear in the path of her character. Stories of this type, however, are not new. A narrative that does not contain some sort of struggle against unusual odds, some kind of testing of the mettle of its protagonist, would be, indeed, out of the ordinary. Whilst the wars undoubtedly influenced her, the pattern in her mind might have been there without them.

In her Afterword to Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* Lessing describes the novel as 'that hybrid, the mixture of journalism and the *Zeitgeist* and autobiography that comes out of a part of the human consciousness which is always trying to understand itself, to come into the light.'<sup>27</sup> But in spite of her opinion, quoted above, that 'all those old novels' were 'a statement of faith in man himself,'<sup>28</sup> she does not admire them unreservedly. '*Wuthering Heights* is an appalling novel ... but it doesn't really matter';<sup>29</sup> she admires George Eliot enormously, but there is 'a kind of womanly certitude ... something too cushioned in her judgments';<sup>30</sup> and '*Anna Karenina*. What a marvelous book! ... is a story about nothing, about a local society, a very local, temporary set of social circumstances.' She goes on,

in fact, a good deal of Victorian fiction can be classified like that.... These tragedies are mini-tragedies because they derive from fairly arbitrary social conditions; they are not rooted in any human nature.... We now live with our heads in the middle of exploding galaxies and thinking about quasars and quarks and black holes and alternative universes and so on, so that you cannot any more get comfort from old moral certainties because something new is happening. All our standards of values have been turned upside down.<sup>31</sup>

To condemn Tolstoy to obsolescence because society has changed, and the problems his characters faced no longer exist, is an extraordinary statement for any novelist to make. The novel deals in such particularities – as Williams says, 'a particular apprehension of a relation between individuals and society.'<sup>32</sup>

Historiography or journalism can show the big picture, but the novel can show



the consequences of wars, laws, social attitudes, and political and moral creeds, at the personal level. John Updike says, 'a writer's witness, surely, is of value in its circumstantiality.'<sup>33</sup> If authors believed that individuals no longer mattered – as E.L. Doctorow says he was beginning to feel, 'that the story of any given individual ... may not be able to sustain an implication for the collective fate'<sup>34</sup> – then the novel would very quickly die. And of course Lessing knows this, at the level at which she actually creates her fiction, rather than that at which she expounds her beliefs in essays and interviews.

Another odd aspect of her statement is the notion that nineteenth-century society was not rooted in human nature. Surely all human societies are necessarily expressions of human nature, and the behaviour of individuals is a result of their various human natures reacting to their circumstances. All of Lessing's main characters – Martha Quest, Anna Wulf, Jane Somers, *Ambien II*, Mara – are individuals struggling in the world as it is, on a personal level, without understanding the causes of their troubles, however much their creator purports to know. And if they matter at all, they matter because they are unique individuals (which is what they have in common with real people), not because they are especially representative and belong to a society more quintessential than that portrayed in nineteenth-century fiction. This is an example of the type of illogical thinking that often mars Lessing's novels. She has certainly experimented with new forms to suit the ethical problems she has discovered for herself, but a little more rational analysis of exorbitant claims like these might have prevented her work from exhibiting determinism, didacticism and what Jeannette King calls 'a potentially authoritarian dimension.'<sup>35</sup>

Iris Murdoch, born in Ireland in 1919 and educated at Oxford, is more modest than Lessing about the claims of modern novelists to have improved on the nineteenth-century tradition. She writes in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited,'

Many reasons might be given for the particular qualities of the nineteenth-century novel: reasons which might connect it with particular, now-vanished historical and social conditions....

Whereas society in the nineteenth century was either a reassuring place where one lived, or else an exciting, rewarding, interesting place where one struggled, society today tends to appear, by contrast, as menacing, puzzling, uncontrollable, or else confining, and boring.<sup>36</sup>

This is a fair description, perhaps, of the impression given by reading some of the fiction of the respective periods, but for most women of the nineteenth century, social acceptance and material security were gained only by submitting to an existence which was very 'confining and boring.' A recurrent theme in Jane Austen is the infinite patience the female characters need to get through their days, with little scope for action beyond a walk to the drapers, and the Victorian era was hardly an improvement in that respect. And for Dickens' characters, society is often not reassuring; it can seem very 'menacing, puzzling and uncontrollable.' They did not have the particular menace of the nuclear holocaust in view, but they might have found the prospect of the workhouse or death in childbirth similarly threatening. The bizarre juxtaposition, in the developed societies of the twentieth century, of increasing material security and improvements in medical science, especially in the fifties and sixties, with the

threat of complete destruction of human society posed by the cold war, may have given rise to the postmodern fragmentation of modern literature, but that may also indicate, paradoxically, a greater feeling of security. Literary critic Philip Stevick pointed out in 1973 that ‘new fiction ... elevates play to the very centre of the complex of apparent motives that animate the work.’<sup>37</sup> The kind of playfulness of a novel like Murdoch’s *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is not a symptom of insecurity, but its opposite, in spite of its serious underlying myth. Murdoch fights against and to some extent sloughs off what Murdoch scholar Elizabeth Dipple calls entrapment ‘by the theories and preoccupations of a milieu which encourages self-concentration from both writer and reader,’<sup>38</sup> but she still regrets she cannot write in the same way as the novelists of the past whom she admires so much. She notes that the modern novelist ‘would find it difficult to write as they did without an element of pastiche,’ that the typical writer of the twentieth century ‘won’t ... describe his characters from the outside; he will describe them from consciousness, or if he suddenly describes them from the outside, this will be an obvious literary device’<sup>39</sup> (a technique which, incidentally, Jane Austen sometimes used, most notably in *Persuasion*). Nevertheless, Murdoch’s preoccupation with aiming for what she suspects is impossible, but believes is a moral imperative for the novelist – the high standards of the novel as it was written in the nineteenth century – has, by turning her attention away from what she might have achieved if she rethought the form on her own terms, restricted her development as an artist. James Wood comments that it is ‘frustrating ... to see a novelist so well-equipped artistically, skidding about on this hard philosophical ice.’<sup>40</sup>

V.S. Naipaul was born in colonial Trinidad in 1932 of a Hindu Indian family. He was brought up on Dickens and other classic English novelists, making what sense he could of an alien society in his tropical home. In later life, however, he has claimed to find the novelists of the nineteenth century less interesting than essayists of the period like William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, who 'would have had their gifts diluted or corrupted by the novel form as it existed in their time,' and who, 'novelistic as they are in the pleasures they offer, found their own forms.' Of novelists like Anthony Trollope and William Makepeace Thackeray, great as they are as observers of society, he feels 'the need for narrative and plot sat on [their] shoulders like a burden.' He insists that 'every serious writer has to be original,' and 'the other man's forms served the other man's thoughts.'<sup>41</sup> He may, however, be projecting his own difficulties with what he sees as the conventional novel form onto these writers. Trollope did not regard plot highly, but he was quite happy to use it as 'the vehicle [for] a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos,'<sup>42</sup> and in any event he, as well as his major contemporaries, did adapt the novel to his own devices. The major novelists of the nineteenth century may have much in common, but they are also each unique in the uses they made of the form as it existed at their time. Consider the vast differences between *Wuthering Heights*, *Middlemarch*, *The Way We Live Now*, and *Oliver Twist*. All these novels are of their time, but they describe quite different worlds and reveal great differences in sensibility while still falling solidly within the definition of the novel. Naipaul feels the inadequacy of the current form to his content because his experience is further from the mainstream of the tradition than that of someone like Murdoch; and although his deployment of the form, which is of its very

nature protean anyway, worked brilliantly with little overt experimentation in *A House for Mr Biswas*, since then his most successful works, like *In a Free State* and *The Enigma of Arrival*, have moved beyond the conventional novel form, if considered as a chronological narrative unified by characters and plot. He says,

You might go on endlessly writing ‘creative’ novels, if you believed that the framework of an ordered society exists, so that after a disturbance there is calm, and all crises fall back into that great underlying calm. But that no longer exists for most people.<sup>43</sup>

It is one of Naipaul’s strengths as a writer that he does not participate in this illusion of security. Because he has been forced to define his own individual problems with the form, rather than identifying a set of general standards, he has developed a series of ethical strategies uniquely suited to his personal needs.

One reason for the obvious differences in novels written since the second world war is that we know more about the natural world, and about the human mind, and about what human beings are capable of under extreme circumstances. Gasiorek says of the immediate post-war period, ‘the horrors of the war seemed to outstrip the literary imagination.’<sup>44</sup> There are, also, standards of decorum which have vanished, so that there is now, it seems, nothing that cannot be written about. Miriam Allott claimed in her introduction to *Novelists on the Novel* (1959) that ‘nineteenth-century social conventions are partly responsible for hindering the development of the English novelist’s understanding of his moral responsibilities as an artist’;<sup>45</sup> but Taylor points out that

the post-Chatterley trial relaxation gave writers a hitherto unthought-of degree of freedom, but it also presented them with an obligation – to find an appropriate language in which descriptions of sexual activity could be conveyed. With very few exceptions this obligation has been ignored, and the freedom to write about sex in whatever way you choose is generally agreed to have been an aesthetic disaster.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, he says, in the case of a nineteenth-century character such as Becky Sharp, her charm ‘is all done by hints and allusions, a code of occlusion which demands the reader’s participation and has the effect of increasing, rather than diminishing, Becky’s appeal.’<sup>47</sup> Naipaul has remarked that

if I were an English person trying to be a writer, I wouldn’t know how to start. I don’t see how you can write about England without falling into parody, without competing with what you’ve read, without wishing to show that you know it too – class, sex, and so on.<sup>48</sup>

Besides feeling compelled to mention the previously unmentionable, writers are constrained by advances in psychological knowledge. Not only do the popular versions of Freudian theories make it impossible to portray the kind of uncomplicated affection between family members which is common in Austen and Dickens, but new discoveries about the physical nature of the human brain and its role in the perception of reality were becoming widely known in the post-war period. Raymond Williams wrote in 1961,

the new facts about perception make it impossible for us to assume that there is any reality experienced by man into which

man's own observations and interpretations do not enter. Thus the assumptions of naïve realism – seeing things as they really are, quite apart from our reactions to them – become impossible.<sup>49</sup>

Gasiorek finds that in post-war British fiction 'attention to language's constitutive role, the doubleness inherent in fictional representation, and the impossibility of unmediated access to the real, are everywhere apparent.'<sup>50</sup> Framed narratives, magical realism and metafiction have become common. These techniques are, of course, not new to the twentieth century. The classic example is *Tristram Shandy*, but there is a great deal of self-consciousness in *Tom Jones*, and English writers in the nineteenth century did not shed this tendency entirely, however much they professed realism as their aim. The narrative framework of many of the great novels is deliberately put on view, and first-person novels, which arguably carry within themselves the seeds of indeterminacy, were common in the nineteenth century. On the whole, however, as Taylor points out, 'Victorian displays of self-consciousness were never allowed to penetrate the carapace of personality.'<sup>51</sup>

The stability usually assumed to be characteristic of Victorian England was as much of an illusion, and recognized as such, as it is in any western society today. Peter Keating, in his 1989 book *The Haunted Study*, observes that

that there are relatively few complete or harmonious families to be found in Victorian fiction is not a repudiation of the importance attached to the idea. The broken family units – widows and sons, widowers and daughters, guardians and wards,

aunts and nephews, lonely and endangered orphans – all serve to emphasise the precariousness of the social fabric and point forward to the stable unity that only marriage and children can convincingly represent. It often reads like the impossible dream it was.<sup>52</sup>

Happy endings do not obscure what Williams called ‘the intensity of the central experience [of] those lonely exposed figures’.<sup>53</sup> as Peter Brooks says in *Reading for the Plot*,

if at the end of a narrative we can suspend time in a moment when past and present hold together in a metaphor ... that moment does not abolish the movement, the slidings, the mistakes, and partial recognitions of the middle.<sup>54</sup>

Keating believes that ‘the omniscience of the novelist, and therefore the characteristically Victorian form of realism, was only possible because the existence was assumed of a higher form of omniscience.’<sup>55</sup> And it may be true that, for many Victorians, their religious belief meant that death held fewer terrors. A virtuous, long-suffering character in Dickens, like Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times*, going uncomplainingly to his death, is confidently assumed by Dickens’ implied reader to be spending eternity among the celestial hosts. No such fate would be predicted for Jenkin Riderhood in Murdoch’s *The Book and the Brotherhood* when he is killed by a stray bullet in a duel in which he had no part. But even this difference may be over-emphasized. Doody remarks that ‘some twentieth-century novels of repute have been written – and read – by theists and Scripture readers,’<sup>56</sup> and Charles Taylor, in an analysis of Murdoch’s moral philosophy, notes that ‘even the grossest superstitions survive in



advanced societies, and these were on the other hand always condemned by minorities.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, as D.J. Taylor notes, ‘novels about religious doubt were a staple of the Victorian best-seller lists.’<sup>58</sup>

John Fowles, in his ‘Notes on an Unfinished Novel,’ refers to Robbe-Grillet’s question, ‘*Why bother to write in a form whose great masters cannot be surpassed?*’ and provides his own response:

The fallacy of one of his conclusions – we must discover a new form to write in if the novel is to survive – is obvious. It reduces the purpose of the novel to the discovery of new forms: whereas its other purposes – to entertain, to satirize, to describe new sensibilities, to record life, to improve life, and so on – are clearly just as viable and important. But his obsessive pleading for new form places a kind of stress on every passage one writes today. To what extent am I being a coward by writing inside the old tradition? To what extent am I being panicked into avant-gardism?<sup>59</sup>

The novel is a flexible form and it is capacious and adaptable enough to suit a multitude of purposes. Rushdie asserts that ‘there is no crisis in the art of the novel,’ and following an enumeration of some recent innovations in this ‘hybrid form,’ concludes, ‘the novel can welcome these developments without feeling threatened. There’s room for all of us in here.’<sup>60</sup> It might certainly be said that novels of a particular period share characteristics, but, as Susan Sontag says, ‘seen from the outside, that is, historically, stylistic decisions can always be correlated with some historical development.... But this approach, however sound and valuable, of necessity sees matters grossly.’<sup>61</sup> Historical context is

important, but it is only one of the factors that affect the choices authors need to make about form and content in their fiction. To ignore it altogether would be foolish, but simply to believe, like Murdoch, that nineteenth-century writers are intrinsically greater, or like Lessing that they are intrinsically more trivial, than contemporary writers, can lead to writers' failing to examine critically the nature of their own personal artistic impulses and circumstances; and it is this process which is crucial to the success of their work in both ethical and aesthetic terms. Naipaul is the most successful of the three in translating his beliefs about the form into practice, since it has led to constant but disciplined experimentation directed towards finding the form most suited to his unique material.

### Notes

*N.B. Dates in brackets indicate original date of publication if applicable.*

*Published interviews with Murdoch, Lessing and Naipaul are a major source of information for this article. Accordingly, to avoid confusion, bibliographical style has been adapted to the extent that the interviewer is treated as the author of each interview, rather than the interviewee.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'Existentialists and Mystics: A Note on the Novel in the New Utilitarian Age,' *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997) 221.

<sup>2</sup> Doris Lessing, 'The Small Personal Voice,' *A Small Personal Voice: Essays Reviews, Interviews*, ed. Paul Schlueter (London: HarperCollins, 1994) 15.

<sup>3</sup> V.S. Naipaul, 'Conrad's Darkness,' *The Return of Eva Peron with the Killings in Trinidad* (New York: Vintage, 1981) 244.

<sup>4</sup> D.J. Taylor, *After the War: The Novel and English Society since 1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993) xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited,' *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997) 271.

<sup>6</sup> Murdoch, 'Sublime' 279.

<sup>7</sup> Murdoch, 'Sublime' 278.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) 279.

<sup>9</sup> Lessing, 'Small' 15.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Clark Sterne, *Dark Mirror: The Sense of Injustice in Modern European and American Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994) xxi.

<sup>11</sup> Sterne xx.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Gardam, 'Angels and Daemons: The Anatomy of a Novel,' *The Agony and the Ego: The Art and Strategy of Fiction Writing Explored*, ed. Clare Boylan (London: Penguin, 1993) 16.

- 
- <sup>13</sup> Miriam Allott, ed., *Novelists on the Novel* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959) 98.
- <sup>14</sup> Allott 93.
- <sup>15</sup> Colin McGinn, *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 174.
- <sup>16</sup> McGinn 174-5.
- <sup>17</sup> D.J. Taylor 56.
- <sup>18</sup> Salman Rushdie, 'In Defense of the Novel, Yet Again,' *New Yorker* 24 June and 1 July 1996: 49.
- <sup>19</sup> David Lodge, 'The Novel Now: Theories and Practices,' *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990) 11
- <sup>20</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996) 3.
- <sup>21</sup> D.J. Taylor xxiv.
- <sup>22</sup> D.J. Taylor 174.
- <sup>23</sup> D.J. Taylor 123.
- <sup>24</sup> Andrzej Gasiorek, *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995) vi.
- <sup>25</sup> Sedge Thomson, 'Drawn to a Type of Landscape,' [1989] *Doris Lessing: Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 179.
- <sup>26</sup> Nigel Forde, 'Reporting from the Terrain of the Mind,' [1992] *Doris Lessing: Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 218.
- <sup>27</sup> Doris Lessing, 'Afterword to *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner,' [1968] *A Small Personal Voice: Essays Reviews, Interviews*, ed. Paul Schlueter (London: HarperCollins, 1994) 163.
- <sup>28</sup> Lessing, 'Small' 15.
- <sup>29</sup> Michael Thorpe, 'Running Stories Through My Mind,' [1982] *Doris Lessing: Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 98.
- <sup>30</sup> Christopher Bigsby, 'The Need to Tell Stories,' [1980] *Doris Lessing: Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 71.
- <sup>31</sup> Bigsby 72.
- <sup>32</sup> Williams 279.
- <sup>33</sup> John Updike, 'Why Write?' [1974] *First Person Singular: Writers on their Craft*, ed. Joyce Carol Oates (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1983) 3.
- <sup>34</sup> E.L. Doctorow, 'Politics and the Mode of Fiction: a Conversation with E.L. Doctorow,' *First Person Singular: Writers On Their Craft*, comp. Joyce Carol Oates (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1983) 240.
- <sup>35</sup> Jeannette King, *Doris Lessing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989) 92.
- <sup>36</sup> Murdoch, 'Sublime' 272, 279.
- <sup>37</sup> Philip Stevick, 'Scheherezade Runs out of Plots, Goes on Talking; the King, Puzzled, Listens: an Essay on New Fiction,' [1973] *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977) 215.
- <sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Dipple, *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 4.
- <sup>39</sup> Bryan Magee, 'Iris Murdoch on Natural Novelists and Unnatural Philosophers,' *The Listener* 27 April 1978: 535.
- <sup>40</sup> James Wood, 'Iris Murdoch's Philosophy of Fiction,' *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999) 184.
- <sup>41</sup> V.S. Naipaul, 'On Being a Writer,' *New York Review of Books* 24 April 1987: 7.
- <sup>42</sup> Allott 247.
- <sup>43</sup> Adrian Rowe-Evans, 'V.S. Naipaul: A Transition Interview,' [1971] *Conversations with V.S. Naipaul*, ed. Feroza Jussawalla (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997) 36.
- <sup>44</sup> Gasiorek 2.
- <sup>45</sup> Allott 33.
- <sup>46</sup> D.J. Taylor 233.
- <sup>47</sup> D.J. Taylor 221.
- <sup>48</sup> Amer Hussein, 'Delivering the Truth: An Interview with V.S. Naipaul,' [1994] *Conversations with V.S. Naipaul*, ed. Feroza Jussawalla (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997) 155.
- <sup>49</sup> Williams 20.
- <sup>50</sup> Gasiorek 19.

---

<sup>51</sup> D.J. Taylor 292.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: a Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989) 161.

<sup>53</sup> Williams 68.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984) 92.

<sup>55</sup> Keating 160.

<sup>56</sup> Doody 3.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Taylor, 'Iris Murdoch and Moral Philosophy,' *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, ed. Maria Antonaccio and William Schweiker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 25.

<sup>58</sup> D.J. Taylor 169.

<sup>59</sup> John Fowles, 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel,' [1969] *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977) 139-140.

<sup>60</sup> Rushdie 50.

<sup>61</sup> Susan Sontag, 'On Style,' *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966) 32.

Gillian Dooley is Special Collections Librarian at Flinders University Library. Her Ph.D. thesis, completed at Flinders University English Department in 2000, was on the novels of Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and V.S. Naipaul. She has presented papers at a number of conferences in Australia, has published articles in journals in India, USA, UK and Australia, and reviews books regularly for *Australian Book Review* and *Writer's Radio*. She is a co-editor of *Alas, for the Pelicans: Flinders, Baudin and Beyond* (Wakefield Press, 2002) and compiler and editor of *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Conversations with Iris Murdoch* (University of South Carolina Press 2003). She is working on a book on V.S. Naipaul for the same publisher in their series 'Understanding Modern British Literature', and is also editing, in collaboration with Anthony J. Brown, Matthew Flinders' private journal 1803-1814.