

The audience for which Walkiewicz has written is difficult to identify. A student is not apt to grasp the modest directive when asked to consider the relationship of the famous essays to "the ontogeny of Barth's corpus" and to view that relationship as "metaphoric rather than strictly exegetic or completely correlative." Instructed that ontogeny recapitulating cosmogeny is "of course" (!) the governing principle of *Finnegans Wake*, even professors of literature will find themselves daunted. What audience that requires those goosy headlines is properly addressed in such a manner? The irony is that Walkiewicz deserves an audience for this otherwise careful and generally successful book.

Peter J. Conradi

IRIS MURDOCH: THE SAINT AND THE ARTIST

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. Pp. xvi + 304

Reviewed by Amin Malak

With the publication of her twenty-second novel, *The Good Apprentice*, Iris Murdoch proves once again to her critics and admirers alike that hers are a talent and an energy that deserve close and alert scrutiny. Peter Conradi's *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist* represents a welcome addition to the now established and steadily growing Murdoch criticism. Interestingly, Conradi's book combines mainstream Murdoch scholarship, which usually follows a predictable pattern of examining her novels within the context of her critical and philosophical pronouncements, with original insights based on sympathetic, clear-headed reading of Murdoch's fiction.

Avoiding a chronological survey of Murdoch's work, Conradi divides his book into three parts based on three rather vaguely defined conceptual perspectives. The first, entitled "A Kind of Moral Psychology," deals with *Under the Net*, *An Accidental Man*, *A Severed Head*, *Bruno's Dream*. Unlike many Murdoch specialists who see her fiction as an illustration of her lucidly articulated moral philosophy, Conradi, who interprets her philosophy as "anti-philosophy," finds the term "moral psychology" a more cogent definition of whatever concepts operate within the novel's dynamics. The second part, "Open and Closed," covers *The Bell*, *The Unicorn*, *The Time of the Angels*, and *The Nice and the Good*. Like many other critics, Conradi affirms that Murdoch's novels of the 1957-68 period alternate between "open" and "closed" novels. (The terms are Murdoch's coinage.) The "closed" novels employ moral psychology for didactic and poetic effects, revealing in the process intense formal tightness and atmospheric impact. The "open" novels, conversely, are superficially more realistic, and spatially more expansive.

The third and most illuminating part, revealingly entitled "The Closest Compression of Form with the Widest Expansion of Meaning . . ." analyzes seven novels from the late period, starting with *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), which signals, according to Conradi, the beginning of a progressively maturing period. Evolving from earlier merits, this maturity, so argues Conradi, marries myth to psychology; pursues Shakespearean convention; gives, in a deep and dark comedic manner, equal insight to the structure of Murdoch's work and the characters. The later works are thus artistically and conceptually cued to the earlier ones: Murdoch's earlier fiction should be read *through* the later works.

Conradi's method of analysis involves exploring the prevalent Platonic imagery of the cave, the fire, and the sun, and highlighting the twin ideas of Eros and the Sublime as major preoccupations arising from the duality of Murdoch's imagination: to him, Murdoch is both traditional and postmodern, serious and playful, moral and permissive, existentialist and mystic. He gives consistent and persuasive interpretations of Murdoch's ability to solidify abstract concepts into believable situations.

To Conradi, Murdoch's mastery of her craft can be attributed to numerous virtues: an intense visual imagination, an ability to create spell-binding stories, empirical curiosity, moral energy, and a control over dense evocative prose. Her best work is, as he puts it, "quiveringly real/unreal" in its texture, blending fantasy with meticulously rendered realistic detail. The

novel's aesthetic function accordingly operates on the reason-imagination interface, leading to an antirationalist, and antitheorizing stance. Conradi, moreover, asserts that Murdoch is a romantic writer, who makes the strange seem familiar and the familiar seem strange, or quoting Dr. Johnson's comment on Shakespeare, she "approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful."

Thorough and comprehensive in exploring the formative influences of Plato, Freud, Simone Weil, and Sartre on Murdoch's thought and imagination, the book can be complemented by discussing the impact of the writings of Elias Canetti, whose seminal masterwork, *Crowds and Power*, Murdoch admirably reviewed, and to whom she dedicated her second novel, *The Flight from the Enchanter*. While Conradi offers us intelligent and detailed readings of Murdoch's oeuvre, one may find his militant admiration, couched at times in superlative terms, a bit overwhelming: one feels that some critical distance from Murdoch's point of view would have made the analysis more valuable and engaging. This limitation, however, is minor, and should in no way detract from the solidity of the scholarship and the honesty of perceptions. Certainly, Conradi has given us a highly readable book.

Paul Hjartarson, ed.

*A STRANGER TO MY TIME: ESSAYS BY AND ABOUT
FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE*

Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986. Pp. xii + 356

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Almost 40 years after his death, Frederick Philip Grove is still one of the more controversial Canadian novelists. Not only that the question for his literary classification has not yet been answered, but we do not even know yet who that man was, hidden behind the initials FPG. Douglas O. Spettigue's discovery in 1972 of Grove's true identity as the German poet, novelist, and translator Felix Paul Greve not only undermined the uneasy consensus that critics had arrived at in labeling Grove a "Prairie realist," but also diverted a considerable amount of research interest to his biography rather than his bibliography. No book about Grove had appeared since Spettigue's research report, *FPG: The European Years* of 1973, but several essays every year attempt to discover the mysterious stranger behind the books.

In his collection, *A Stranger to My Time*, Paul Hjartarson attempts to do justice to both the man and his books. His stated intention is, "to reintroduce that stranger to us . . . to make the unknown a little better known, to put us on a more familiar footing with the writer and his texts" (p. xi). Hjartarson divides Grove's career into three geographical and temporal parts—Germany, Manitoba, and Ontario—and concludes his volume with the hitherto unpublished "Thoughts and Reflections," a very sporadically kept diary that Grove apparently intended for later publication "as a record of his best thoughts for posterity" (p. 301). Each of the other three parts consists of essays written by Grove during the period in question and of recent essays concerned with the author's work of the same time.

The volume's great strength lies in its original material. This includes not only essays such as "Apologia pro Vita et Opere Suo," "Assimilation," or "A Writer's Classification of Writers and Their Work" which Grove published in periodicals in the 1930s and which have so far led a relatively hidden life in Grove scholarship, but it also makes accessible for the first time four pieces of Grove's writing that shed a fascinating light on the development of his perception of himself, art, and life. The first of these pieces, "Flaubert's Theories of Artistic Existence," published in a German newspaper in 1905, begins as a review of Greve's own translation of Flaubert's correspondence but then develops into his earliest printed pronouncement on the interrelationship of art and life. How far this FPG is still away from the one who wrote *It Needs to Be Said* or the above-mentioned "Writer's Classification" becomes obvious from his concluding statement: "The artist is as unable to live in life as is the coral creature unable to live on land" (p. 10). In addition to "Thoughts and Reflections," which covers the years 1933 to 1940, *A Stranger to My Time* also includes two early Canadian pieces.