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TRAVEL – QUEST – TRAVELOGUE: THE PURSUIT OF SELF IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVELS

Levchenko O. V.
Candidate of Sciences in Philology, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of World Literature
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University
Nauky Ave., 72, Dnipro, Ukraine
orcid.org/0000-0001-5773-4783
alevchenko1184@gmail.com

Velihina N. H.
Candidate of Sciences in Philology,
Associate Professor at the Department of World Literature
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University
Nauky Ave., 72, Dnipro, Ukraine
orcid.org/0000-0001-6070-039X
nveligina@gmail.com

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The article examines the motif of travel in Iris Murdoch's novels as a central aesthetic and ethical principle rather than a subsidiary narrative device. Despite extensive scholarship on Murdoch's prose, spatial movement in her fiction has remained insufficiently theorized. The study addresses this gap by conceptualizing the «travelogue» as a category that integrates geographical displacement with psychological, moral, and existential transformation. The aim of the article is to identify the main models of travel in Murdoch's fiction and to demonstrate how they structure experience and moral perception. Drawing on close textual analysis, intertextual reading, and genre-historical contextualization, the paper traces the evolution of travel from the modernist travelogue of Under the Net to the symbolic quest of later novels, including The Good Apprentice and The Green Knight. Particular attention is paid to the model of the journey «from England to England», which reworks the medieval quest in a modern psychological key.The analysis shows that Murdoch consistently transforms external routes into inner trajectories of ethical formation. Spatial shifts correlate with changes in consciousness, while foreign and domestic loci function as projections of inner states. Travel in Murdoch rarely culminates in resolution; instead, it produces moments of moral insight grounded in attention to the Other and acceptance of ordinary reality. The paper also demonstrates how Murdoch combines documentary precision with lyrical defamiliarization, creating a «double optics» in which space operates simultaneously as physical environment and affective experience.The findings suggest that Murdoch's prose constitutes a system of open routes in which travel becomes a philosophical instrument and a model of moral practice. Her novels articulate a vision of human existence as journey without final destination, thereby extending the tradition of the late modernist novel of moral formation and redefining travel as a universal metaphor of ethical becoming.

ПОДОРОЖ – КВЕСТ – ТРАВЕЛОГ: ЕТИЧНЕ САМОСТАНОВЛЕННЯ В РОМАНАХ АЙРІС МЕРДОК

Левченко О. В.
кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри зарубіжної літератури
Дніпровський національний університет імені Олеся Гончара
пр. Науки, 72, Дніпро, Україна
orcid.org/0000-0001-5773-4783
alevchenko1184@gmail.com

Велігіна Н. Г.
кандидатка філологічних наук,
доцентка кафедри зарубіжної літератури
Дніпровський національний університет імені Олеся Гончара
пр. Науки, 72, Дніпро, Україна
orcid.org/0000-0001-6070-039X
nveligina@gmail.com

Ключові слова: *Айріс Мердок, британський роман XX століття, жанр, поетика, літературна традиція, тревелог, квест.*

У статті розглянуто мотив подорожі в романах Айріс Мердок як центральний естетичний і етичний принцип. Попри значний корпус досліджень, присвячених прозі письменниці, просторові переміщення її персонажів досі залишалися недостатньо теоретизованими. Запропоноване дослідження заповнює цю прогалину шляхом концептуалізації «травелогу» як категорії, що поєднує географічне зміщення з психологічною, моральною та екзистенційною трансформацією. Метою статті є виокремлення основних моделей подорожі в художньому світі Мердок та з'ясування їхньої ролі у формуванні досвіду й етичного бачення героїв. Спираючись на текстуальний аналіз, інтертекстуальне прочитання та жанрову контекстуалізацію, простежено еволюцію мотиву подорожі від модерністського тревелогу роману «Under the Net» до символічного квесту пізніх творів, зокрема «The Good Apprentice» та «The Green Knight». Особливу увагу приділено моделі шляху «з Англії до Англії», що переосмислює середньовічний квест у сучасному психологічному ключі. Показано, що Мердок послідовно трансформує зовнішні маршрути у внутрішні траєкторії етичного становлення. Просторові зсуви корелюють зі змінами свідомості, тоді як «чужі» й «домашні» локуси постають проєкціями внутрішніх станів персонажів. Подорож у романі Мердок рідко завершується фінальною дестинацією; натомість вона породжує моменти морального прозріння, засновані на увазі до Іншого та прийнятті повсякденної реальності. Продемонстровано поєднання документальної точності з ліричним остороненням, що формує ефект «подвійної оптики», за якого простір функціонує водночас як фізичне середовище й афективний досвід. Проза Мердок постає як система відкритих маршрутів, у межах якої подорож перетворюється на філософський інструмент і модель моральної практики. Її романи артикулюють бачення людського існування як шляху без остаточного пункту призначення, продовжуючи традицію пізньомодерністського роману морального формування та переосмислюючи подорож як універсальну метафору етичного становлення.

Problem statement. Despite the substantial body of scholarship devoted to Iris Murdoch's prose, the motif of travel in her prose remains only fragmentarily theorized. Existing interpretations tend to focus primarily on ethical issues, intertextual relations, or the philosophical foundations of Murdoch's work, while the spatial movements of characters are usually treated as auxiliary narrative devices. At the same

time, Murdoch's novels display a persistent presence of travelogue elements – both in the form of explicit geographical journeys and as symbolic, psychological, and existential transitions. Travel emerges not merely as a narrative event but as a principle of artistic organization, closely correlated with processes of moral formation and with Murdoch's philosophical conception of «decentring the ego».

The semantics of these movements, their place within the poetics of the novels, the typology of travel models, and their relation to both the medieval paradigm of the quest and the modernist tradition have not been subjected to systematic analysis. This gap necessitates a comprehensive reading of «travelogue» in Murdoch's novels as an aesthetic and ethical category.

Iris Murdoch's work, a classic of twentieth-century English literature, has long been a sustained focus of critical scholarship and literary research. Studies by G. Steiner (Steiner, 1999), P. Conradi (Conradi, 2001), A. S. Byatt (Byatt, 1994), R. Todd (Todd, 1988), J. Bayley (Bayley, 1999), and E. Dipple (Dipple, 1982) have become not merely part of the canon of Murdoch studies but also classics of British literary criticism more. The most significant contributions by Ukrainian scholars to the study of Murdoch's novels likewise constitute classics of national literary Anglistics, notably the work of N. Zhluktenko (Zhluktenko, 1988) S. Pavlychko (Pavlychko, 2001), and L. Skuratovska (Skuratovska, 2017). Murdoch's oeuvre has also been examined in monographic form in doctoral dissertations by H. Klymenko, A. Matiichak (Matiichak, 2007), and O. Levchenko (Levchenko, 2010).

The aim of the paper is to identify the functions of the travel motif in Iris Murdoch's novels and to substantiate the travelogue as a principle of her artistic thinking. The study examines the principal models of spatial movement (the modernist travelogue, the «journey from England to England,» and the symbolic quest), traces their evolution from early to late works, and demonstrates how geographical and imagined displacements are transformed into forms of moral experience. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between external routes and the characters' inner transformations, as well as to the role of travel in shaping the ethical perspective of Murdoch's prose. **The objectives of the paper** are (1) to identify the main models of travel in Murdoch's prose, (2) to explore their connection with the tradition of the modernist novel and the medieval quest paradigm, and (3) to demonstrate how spatial movement becomes a form of moral and existential experience.

The object of the research is the representation of travel in selected novels by Iris Murdoch. **The subject of the research** is the motif of travel in Murdoch's fiction, understood as an aesthetic and ethical principle that integrates spatial movement with psychological, moral, and existential transformation. The study focuses on the principal models of travel and on their role in structuring narrative experience and processes of moral formation.

Discussion. Murdoch's novels, when considered as an artistic whole, leave a clear impression of the presence in almost every work of significant travelogue elements, developed to varying degrees. Whereas earlier usage of the term (travelogue) referred to works that required little interpretation, the notion of the novel-as-travelogue–or of texts in some way related to the travelogue–now presupposes precisely such an interpretive effort.

In this respect, Iris Murdoch's legacy proves particularly revealing. Her novels not only incorporate motifs of actual journeys but also construct a complex system of movements across the spaces of culture, memory, and ethical experience. Travel in Murdoch is almost never confined to geography alone: it invariably entails an inner transformation, a change in one's mode of perceiving the world, and often a revision of moral coordinates. For this reason, the concept of the travelogue in her prose inevitably expands into a philosophical–aesthetic category encompassing both physical movement and spiritual search.

In Murdoch's novels, therefore, the notion of the travelogue is substantially broadened: it embraces not only direct geographical displacement but also psychological, ethical, and existential transformations. Travel becomes a means of structuring experience, a form of articulating inner conflict, and at the same time a model of moral development. Accordingly, spatial shifts in her prose almost always correlate with changes in the characters' consciousness, with their painful or redemptive movement beyond the limits of their own ego.

Journeys in Murdoch's novels are more often metaphorical or symbolic formations than straightforward plotlines. The journey itself – which turns characters into fugitives, refugees, or emigrants; victims or persecutors; «demonic gods» or seekers of truth in foreign lands or within a seemingly familiar yet alienated personal world–frequently remains offstage. What comes to the fore instead are its spiritual consequences and the life changes it precipitates, which together form the operative and semantic «network» of her novels, invariably complex in both respects.

One may attempt to distinguish those novels in which the travelogue is overtly present: for example, the depictions of London and Paris and the protagonists' movements between them in *Under the Net*, her first novel, or Italy in the penultimate *The Green Knight*. In another group of works, travelogue elements appear as «shadows» of Central and Eastern Europe, India, or America – latent, underlying factors that function as subtexts shaping characters

and events. This is evident in *The Flight from the Enchanter*; in *The Unofficial Rose*, where dreams of Italy and memories of Australia contrast with everyday English life and become driving forces of action; in *Bruno's Dream*, where India figures as an ideal of refinement and beauty; and elsewhere.

These «shadows» of other cultures generate in Murdoch's texts the effect of a distant horizon, a symbolic elsewhere that continually attracts and unsettles the characters. Even when the action is formally confined to England, the presence of a «foreign» space is felt as a latent challenge to established ways of life.

Finally, Murdoch's novels feature yet another mode of travel–her distinctive and characteristic discovery, which, following Peter Conradi, may be termed the journey «from England to England». (Conradi, 2001, p. 487): a symbolic or metaphorical quest of transformation; that is, movement within the spatial axis «London–province», «city–countryside», in which the country estate is transfigured into an enchanted castle (Gaze in The Unicorn, Seegard in The Good Apprentice, Rose Curtland's estate in The Book and the Brotherhood), while the characters' journey to and from the magical place becomes equivalent to a fateful life path, a search for the self.

It is precisely here that the medieval quest model, reinterpreted in a modern psychological key, emerges most clearly. Space becomes an allegory of inner states, and the return «home» signifies not a restoration of the old order but a radically altered perception of reality.

This is what transforms Murdoch's «fantasy–myth» (her own term, introduced in the essay *Against Dryness*) into a psychological Bildungsroman or into a narrative of overcoming the ego–the Murdochian path of virtue; into a «Grail quest» understood as the recovery of humanity (Nuns and Soldiers, The Good Apprentice, The Book and the Brotherhood, The Green Knight).

Such a «journey» from «England to England» – a restless movement among country houses and estates, with distant countries lingering on the horizon – constitutes, in Murdoch's final novel (Jackson's Dilemma, 1995), an intricate topographical and semantic network, marked by recognizable «Englishness» of character and custom and by a religious–philosophical ascent toward imitatio Christi. In Jackson's Dilemma, however, all this appears more compressed and less fully articulated than in Murdoch's earlier work.

Thus, the motif of travel in Murdoch's novels gradually crystallizes into an ethical category. What is at stake is not the exoticism of places but an inner discipline of attention to the Other, the capacity to step beyond one's own projections and to accept reality as it is.

The «net», a metaphor–philosopheme Murdoch repeatedly employs in both her novels and theoretical writings (borrowed from Wittgenstein), seems to become entangled toward the end of her life; yet the author of twenty-six novels and no fewer philosophical essays could assume that over nearly a quarter-century of work (1946–1999) her language and her system of artistic and philosophical thinking had become familiar to her readers, and that the sense of obscurity and departure from earlier achievements noted by critics would eventually be overcome.

Already in Under the Net (1954), the movements of the protagonist, the translator and aspiring writer Jake Donaghue–onto whom Murdoch projected many of her own traits (a passion for literature, brilliant command of French language and culture, translations from French writers, and a love of Paris, where Murdoch herself worked after the war) – are not merely «circumstances of place and time» but a formative factor in the hero's development as a person.

It should be emphasized that for Murdoch's debut novel the multiplicity of cultural coordinates is of fundamental importance: London and Paris coexist here as two modes of being, two rhythms of life, two types of sensibility. London provides the framework of everydayness, social play, and intellectual exchange; Paris opens a space of freedom, emotional release, and aesthetic experience. Movement between these poles shapes Jake's trajectory of self-knowledge.

In her characters' «journey through life», literature itself may offer a guiding impulse: this is the case with Edward Baltram, Murdoch's «good apprentice,» for whom Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time becomes a teacher of life. In Under the Net, the guiding figures are Queneau, Sartre, and Beckett – named explicitly by Murdoch herself – as well as Joyce, whose influence can be traced analytically.

What matters here is that these literary reference points do not merely delineate Murdoch's own reading circle; they function as inner compasses that determine the direction of the hero's spiritual quest. French existentialism, Beckett's absurdism, and Queneau's linguistic experimentation create a polyphonic background against which Jake's consciousness takes shape as that of an «adult adolescent» who is only beginning to learn responsibility for his own life.

It should also be noted that Raymond Queneau's presence in Murdoch's text is not limited to his novel Pierrot mon ami. Undoubtedly this work is of primary significance: Murdoch signals it through the dedication («To Raymond Queneau») and through the hero's «intellectual property»–two books, Beckett's Murphy and Queneau's Pierrot mon ami. Murdoch herself acknowledged thinking about Queneau and orienting herself toward him while working on Under the Net (Murdoch, 1981, pp. 483–484), a process that culminated in her translation of Pierrot mon ami. Yet scholars have paid comparatively little attention to another experimental novel by the French surrealist

that also left its mark on Murdoch's writing–Zazie dans le métro. Here the connection does not operate through overt quotation or readily legible proximity of characterization; rather, it takes the form of a dialogic reflection of verbal and imagistic motifs: urban wandering (Paris/London) by an «underdeveloped person» (the adolescent Zazie and Jake Donaghue, the «adult adolescent»), and hence a distinctive mode of observation, analysis, and reflection on everyday life–an uncovering of the strange within the ordinary, of the wondrously inexplicable within the mundane, and an effect of *defamiliarization* (to use Shklovsky's term) in perception and evaluation. This allows Queneau the surrealist to describe the «real» Paris in reverse, and helps Murdoch's protagonist glimpse and seize a fragment of reality «from under the net» of words, conjectures, and fantasies – to grasp the value of «this moment alone», and ultimately the very «result» of the journey-adventure (is it absent? has life remained unchanged, yet now understood differently?). What emerges is an interaction of artistic structures, an intertextual dialogue whose analytical identification and reading deepens the interpretation of Murdoch's text itself.

The affinity here – much as in the case of Murphy – also lies in the peculiar conjunction, or rather mutual reinforcement and mutual justification, of the comic within the tragic and vice versa (discussed above). A careful reading of Queneau's novels suggests that the original nature of his comic mode lies not in buffoonery, even absurdist buffoonery (which may be seen as a stable tradition of French literature), but in the grotesque tragicomic quality of the everyday – or, more precisely, in a perception of the everyday that constitutes Beckett's «discovery» and will be further developed in «new» literature (the «new drama» and the «new novel», which here appear to converge despite other significant differences). Zazie dans le métro, it seems, also reverberates in Murdoch's later novel A Word Child, where the affinity is expressed at the level of plot structure: Zazie's wandering-adventures correspond to the seemingly endless wanderings-journeys of Hilary Burde through the London Underground, in his attempt to rediscover himself.

In this context, the topographical precision inherited from Joyce becomes especially eloquent: the absolute exactness of both London and Paris loci in the novel. London is Holborn and the City, a ring of pubs and churches through which Jake and his companions circulate. «This pub stands exactly where Cannon Street meets Queen Victoria Street, in the shadow of St Mary's Church …» (Murdoch, 1981, p. 960. Or: «Hugo lived, I think, directly above the Holborn Viaduct, in a flat perched at the very top of some office building (…). If you have ever been in the City of London in the evening, you know the eerie loneliness that settles over these streets, so noisy and industrious by day. … Although we could see far and not only Holborn and Newgate Street were visible, but also Farringdon Street, flowing past us like a dry river, we saw not a single living being … the area around us was silent, sealed off by a ceiling of distant noise that might have been traffic or the summer sigh of the western sun …» (Murdoch, 1981, p. 92).

In Jake's wanderings through Paris, we find the same observational precision and the effect of a moving camera. The Luxembourg Gardens, the Tuileries, the Left Bank: it is Bastille Day, and the whole city appears to Jake as «one enormous party. To be alone at such a carnival is a strange feeling» (Murdoch, 1981, p. 193). At the same time, the city seems to him to have «let down its luxuriant hair» (Murdoch, 1981, p. 1930). Even these brief fragments reveal the distinctive features of Murdoch's landscape poetics: details, facts, and addresses coexist with defamiliarization («the sounds of the sun,» «the city's hair») and subjectivization («we», «strange feelings»). The result is a lyricization of the urban landscape, especially evident when compared, for example, with the description of famous London sites in Peter Ackroyd's London: The Biography. In Murdoch's texts the city (and more broadly the «locus» as such) functions less as a place than as an affective experience–and an experience that absorbs not only beauty and goodness but also mystery and threat.

It is precisely this fusion of documentary exactitude with lyrical defamiliarization that produces Murdoch's effect of double optics: the city appears simultaneously as real space and as a projection of the protagonist's inner state. The locus is transformed into a modality of experience.

In this, one may discern a continuation of the English literary tradition reaching back to the Romantics – Coleridge, partially Blake, and especially Wordsworth's «humanized» nature in lyric poetry: the desire to perceive difference within the individual and the personal within the diverse and the shared. Such a vision of nature, or even of objects from the material world – when they become unique and are revealed as filled with meaning and light for a particular person at a particular moment – will reach its fullest development in the practice of the English modernist novel; Joyce termed this phenomenon «epiphany.»

So it is for Murdoch: Paris as celebration and mystery, the Seine in lights, and the Luxembourg Gardens alternately blooming with fireworks or enveloped in darkness, remain such for the reader only as long as the protagonist continues to sense Anna Quentin – his love and his truth – diffused throughout this scene, to experience it all as a single authentic life («moments of being», in Virginia Woolf's terms). The following day, however, it is once again simply Paris, a city presenting its everyday face to other travellers. Alone on the streets of Paris, Jake searches for Anna, mistakes

her for phantoms, glimpses her illusorily and loses her again, as in London, within an enchanted realm of silent theatre. At this point, through the dry graphics of naming and enumeration, through the painterly play of light and colour, another paradigm begins to emerge – the paradigm of fairy tale, quest, and chivalric expedition undertaken to liberate an enchanted princess. It does not matter whether she is ultimately found or proves not to be a princess at all; for the aim of the quest, as represented in medieval literature, is not possession of the Holy Grail but the journey in search of it, the trials endured by the knight, his heroism and selfless fidelity to the cause. Not the acquisition of the relic but its discovery through a life worthy of communion with the Holy Grail – this is what transforms the knight into a quester; and what matters even more for Murdoch is renunciation of the self for the sake of others and of the Other, a perception of life itself as a given miracle – and thus, as if, the finding of a new self.

This pattern recurs in most of Murdoch's works, beginning with the first; in the later novels (The Good Apprentice, The Book and the Brotherhood, The Green Knight), the journeys of young «questers» seeking truth about themselves and about life lead to unexpectedly simple discoveries and, one might say, elementary moral truths: there is no «true» life and no «higher» truth; all that a person possesses and must value is the «ordinary» reality around them, populated by people and filled with their relationships. Life is the same life, yet seen and apprehended as a «centre of many loves».

Crucially, in Murdoch's works the quest never concludes with triumphant possession of truth. Rather, truth reveals itself as acceptance of the everyday, as readiness for co-presence with others. This is why the final insights of her protagonists are always devoid of pathos and take the form of quiet moral knowledge.

After the debut novel, the model of travel in Murdoch's prose becomes progressively more complex. Whereas Under the Net is dominated by a modernist travelogue with clearly articulated cultural coordinates, in later texts geographical movement increasingly gives way to the symbolic, and the external route is transformed into an internal one. It is here that the writer's attraction to archaic narrative forms–above all myth and the medieval quest–becomes especially pronounced.

In this sense, The Green Knight (1993) occupies a special position. Italy in the novel functions not merely as a space of aesthetic experience but also as a territory of ordeal, where characters confront their own limitations and the unpredictability of existence. The Italian episode bears the character of initiation: it draws the protagonists beyond their habitual roles and sets in motion a process of moral self-reinterpretation.

The foreign yet beloved and historically and artistically familiar city, the carnival crowd – unlike Londoners yet destined to become «one's own,» to become humanity itself – occupies a substantial place, quantitatively and qualitatively, semantically as well, in Murdoch's penultimate – and among her most significant – novel, The Green Knight (1993). It is here that the quest unfolds. One of Murdoch's characters, the beautiful and youthful Harvey Blackett, an eighteen-year-old polyglot sensitive to art, finds himself in Italy, in a small town at the foot of the Apennines, thanks to the benevolence of older friends. In the evening, festivities take place in which the entire population participates (there is even a special term for this, as for a carnival, cited as in a genuine travelogue: passaggiata). And Harvey joins the procession: «The square , in warm waning light, was crammed with people walking … It was like being inside a shoal of fishes who were confined by a net into a huge compact ball … Faces, smiling faces, sad faces, young faces, ancient faces, qrotesques faces, appeared close to him and vanished … Good temper reigned, even a luxurious sensual surrender to some benign herd instinct. Girls…, boys…, married couples, … walked smiling, … in harmony with the swarming adolescents» (Murdoch, 1994, p. 220). And this sense of unity with all–where even the «herd instinct» is felt as benevolent, gracious toward the human being–leads him to an unexpected decision: to cross the long, narrow parapet of a bridge suspended at a dizzying height over a gorge. That is, to respond to the emotional exaltation of communion with an act of daring. Murdoch devotes nearly four pages to describing all the physical and moral dangers of this ordeal, compelling the reader to experience the full risk of the adventure. And then comes victory: he, who had consciously perceived the trial as «the ordeal» (Murdoch, 1994, p. 280) (an ordalium, a «judgement of God», the severe testing of a quester), now feels «the yelp of triumph,» jumps down–and breaks his ankle. In an instant, the flourishing youth becomes an invalid; happiness, future, university, Italy, love – everything is lost.

This abrupt reversal of Harvey's fate underscores Murdoch's central insight: genuine journeys are almost always bound up with loss. Only through the destruction of illusions does the possibility emerge for a different vision of oneself and of the world.

Italian space for Murdoch is never neutral. Rather, it functions as a concentration of cultural memory, where antiquity, Christianity, and Renaissance sensuousness form a multilayered backdrop for contemporary drama. Travel here becomes an encounter with an excess of meanings – and it is precisely this excess that precipitates the protagonists' crisis of identity.

In The Green Knight, the Grail myth and the figure of the Green Knight introduce an Arthurian

dimension into the novel, yet Murdoch consistently demystifies the heroic narrative. The quest does not culminate in triumph; on the contrary, it opens a field of moral indeterminacy in which no decision can be final.

The vicissitudes of fate, transformations, the will of «alien gods,» «gods-demons» (this is Murdoch's own lexicon) – all belong to the paradigm of the chivalric romance that shines through the deep semantic layers of her fiction. And not only here, where the poem of Sir Gawain enters the very title and permeates imagery, plot, and dialogue. For The Green Knight, like the novels of the 1980s (The Good Apprentice, The Philosopher's Pupil), also participates in the cycle of Murdoch's «Gothic novels» of the late 1950s and early 1960s, each of which involves some form of «journey» or displacement. In these works, the world appears to have lost its stability; its parts are no longer separated by firm boundaries; characters abandon their homes and countries, and among them are evil and benevolent magicians alike, victims and captives.

Even those who move only within their own England find the native ground beneath their feet transformed into an alien, submarine-forest world (Seegard in The Good Apprentice), or into a menacing castle of sleep and death (The Unicorn). This type of journey is particularly important for understanding Murdoch's ethics. She consistently demonstrates that the true trials take place not on the periphery of civilization but in one's immediate surroundings. A «foreign country» may turn out to be the neighbouring room, and the quest – the necessity of seeing the other as they truly are, rather than as one wishes to imagine them.

Such a rethinking of travel as an inner path aligns Murdoch's prose with the tradition of the moral novel, while preserving a modernist openness of form. The movement of her characters through space increasingly resembles the movement of thought itself: discontinuous, contradictory, and devoid of guarantees.

In one of Murdoch's favourite writers, John Cowper Powys, England of real time and real circumstances appears – to both author and characters – now «as it is», from the perspective of the cosmos, now from the depths of ancient history and legend (A Glastonbury Romance, 1932); and this view from another world and another time does more than merely shade the present–it grounds contemporary characters, destinies, and the very nature of human relationships.

Murdoch inherits this principle: in her early novels barely naming her sources, and in her later works – especially The Green Knight and Jackson's Dilemma (1995) – by openly recalling their existence through references, titles, and depictions of her characters' favourite reading and personal libraries. She continually reminds us that a writer's relationship to literature is always «my library», as Borges would have it, rather than some abstract common tradition. On the near and deep shelves of her library stand not only the 1920s and 1930s, but also the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and classical antiquity. Thus even the reader of a single Murdoch novel embarks, together with her, on another invisible journey – back through time, in search of the origins of one's cultural, moral, and psychological foundations.

Harvey Blackett's «quest», which initially led to painful losses, concludes unexpectedly and favourably: he discovers an «other» self and a different beloved from the one he had previously hoped for. The experience of unity with humanity that he felt during his journey to Italy bears directly on this outcome. Accordingly, the image of the Italian passaggiata reappears almost at the very end of The Green Knight: «The people of the little town walked together, circling and circling the square. Quickly, putting his arm around Sefton's waist, he drew her into the slow crowd. … They moved slowly, as in a march, as in a great demonstration or religious procession, driven by the human current, by its physical pressure; they were jostled, brushed, gently compressed. There was a soft murmur of voices, like distant birds, like the sound of silence. Some, determined and stubborn, moving in the opposite direction and meeting their eyes, smiled, brushed sleeves, touched hands, questioning faces, friendly faces, alien bitter faces, like masks … Harvey pressed Sefton to himself … as if they had grown together … They felt that they were alike, that they were twins …» (Murdoch, 1994, p. 460).

With this image of unity – and of separateness, of each person's uniqueness – with this allegory of humanity which, at the conclusion of its quest, finds (must find) itself, Murdoch in effect brings her creative work to a close, as a testament to us. Deeply loving England and admiring its beauty (both John Bayley and especially Peter Conradi, those closest to her, observed that she saw England as if through the eyes of a foreigner), she nevertheless could not confine her characters solely to England when creating such a polysemous allegory. Like E. M. Forster, another writer she cherished greatly, Murdoch embraced the human-directed motto «Only connect!» as a guiding imperative.

Conclusion. In Murdoch novels the «travelogue» is not a generic feature but a principle of artistic thought. Travel becomes a universal model of human existence, in which every movement is simultaneously a moral choice and every encounter a test of one's capacity for love.

The models of travel examined in the paper – from the modernist travelogue of Under the Net to the symbolic quest of the later novels – make it possible to discern the inner unity of Murdoch's prose. Spatial displacements, real or imagined, emerge as forms of

ethical experimentation. Her characters are constantly placed in situations of choice without guarantees, where no route leads directly to truth. It is here that the travelogue becomes a philosophical instrument, and the quest a form of moral practice.

The travelogue in Murdoch's novels encompasses not only physical space but also movement within the planes of memory, culture, and interpersonal relations. The «shadows» of other countries and traditions, together with the motif of travelling «from England to England», create the effect of an open horizon within which characters experience a crisis of identity while simultaneously gaining the possibility of ethical insight. In Murdoch's prose, locus emerges as a mode of experience in which documentary precision is combined with lyrical defamiliarization, and space is transformed into a projection of the inner state.

Murdoch's novel may be understood as a system of open routes, in which travel functions as both a philosophical instrument and a model of moral practice. Within this framework, the travelogue appears as a universal metaphor of human existence, where every movement is at once an ethical choice and every encounter a test of one's capacity for attention, co-presence, and love. It is precisely this unfinished, processual logic of movement that determines the inner unity of Murdoch's prose and defines it as extending the tradition of the late modernist novel of moral formation.

Further research may focus on the psychological dimension of space in Iris Murdoch's novels and on the ways in which spatial structures become instruments of character formation and ethical perception. Particular attention may be devoted to the interrelation between travel and the contemplative representation of England, which may be interpreted as Murdoch's exploration of the cultural and imaginative construct of «Englishness». Another promising direction involves the study of Murdoch's urban poetics, especially the representation of London in *Under the Net* and *A Word Child*, where the city functions not merely as a setting but as an active semantic centre of the narrative. Such approaches may deepen the understanding of the role of spatial imagery in the poetics of Murdoch's prose and in the broader context of the twentieth-century British novel.

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