

**GENDER CONFLICT AND MASCULINITY IN IRIS MURDOCH'S  
NOVEL *THE SEA, THE SEA***

**Pamukkale University**

**Institute of Social Sciences**

**Master's Thesis**

**Department of English Language and Literature**

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**DENİZLİ**

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İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı öğrencisi ÜMİT KIZIL tarafından Doç. Dr. Meryem AYAN yönetiminde hazırlanan GENDER CONFLICT AND MASCULINITY IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVEL *THE SEA, THE SEA* başlıklı tez aşağıdaki jüri üyeleri tarafından 28/08/2019 tarihinde yapılan tez savunma sınavında başarılı bulunmuş ve Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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Ümit KIZIL

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'U' and 'K' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.



To my mother...

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## ABSTRACT

### GENDER CONFLICT AND MASCULINITY IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVEL *THE SEA, THE SEA*

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The aim of this dissertation is to analyse Iris Murdoch's novel *The Sea, The Sea* from a post-structural point of view to emphasise artificiality of gender roles. Unlike her contemporaries, Murdoch concentrates on the philosophical and moral aspects of the gender issue rather than its political aspect. Platonism and Poststructuralism are dominant elements that have shaped Murdoch's views. The novel is narrated by an excessively masculinised narrator. This is a literary element preferred by Murdoch to create a detachment between herself and her fiction. This detachment is necessary to emphasise over-developed masculinity's effect on human consciousness. Throughout the novel, masculinity and femininity are in conflict within the narrator's mind. This conflict is used to emphasise Murdoch's ideas on gender roles. According to Murdoch, the gender is an artificial phenomenon. Therefore, the novel tries to deconstruct the traditional gender roles by representing the tragedy of masculine narrator. The narrator's tragedy is his ignorance and inability to see things free from his masculine perspective. In the end, he reaches a new level of consciousness which is a Platonic salvation.

Chapter one concentrates on a poststructural gender model which is also supported by Murdoch. Chapter two analyses Iris Murdoch's style and techniques. Chapter three analyses the novel by focusing on symbolism, characterisation, and personal relationships. Finally, the conclusion part highlights Murdoch's views on gender and their effects on the novel.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Poststructuralism, gender roles, Iris Murdoch, gender conflict, femininity, *The Sea, The Sea*.

## ÖZET

### IRIS MURDOCH'UN *DENİZ, DENİZ* ROMANINDA MASKÜLİNİTE VE CİNSİYET ÇATIŞMASI

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Bu tezin amacı Iris Murdoch'un *Deniz, Deniz* romanını cinsiyet rollerinin yapaylığını vurgulamak için Postyapısalcılık açısından incelemektir. Çağdaşlarının aksine, Murdoch cinsiyet meselesinin politik yönünden çok felsefi ve ahlaki yönüne yoğunlaşmıştır. Eflatunculuk ve Postyapısalcılık Murdoch'un görüşlerini şekillendiren baskın unsurlardır. Roman aşırı erilleştirilmiş bir anlatıcı tarafından anlatılmaktadır. Bu Murdoch tarafından kendisi ve eseri arasında bir tarafsızlık yaratmak için tercih edilen bir unsurdur. Bu tarafsızlık aşırı gelişmiş erilliğin insan bilinci üzerindeki etkisini vurgulamak için gereklidir. Roman boyunca, erillik ve kadınlık anlatıcının zihninde bir çatışma içerisindedir. Bu çatışma Murdoch'un cinsiyet rolleri üzerindeki fikirlerini vurgulamak içindir. Murdoch'a göre cinsiyet kurgusal bir olgudur. Bu sebeple, roman eril anlatıcının trajedisini sunarak geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini yapısal olarak sökmeye çalışmaktadır. Anlatıcının trajedisi olguları eril görüş açısından bağımsız olarak anlamlandıramaması ve cehaletidir. Sonunda, Eflatuncu bir arınma olan yeni bir bilinç seviyesine ulaşır.

Birinci kısım Murdoch tarafından da desteklenen Postyapısalcı cinsiyet modeline odaklanır. İkinci kısım Iris Murdoch'un tarzını ve yöntemlerini inceler. Üçüncü kısım sembolizme, karakter kurgusuna ve kişisel ilişkilere odaklanarak romanı inceler. Nihayetinde, sonuç kısmı Murdoch'un cinsiyet üzerine fikirlerini ve bunların romana etkisini vurgular.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** erillik, Postyapısalcılık, cinsiyet rolleri, Iris Murdoch, cinsiyet çatışması, kadınlık, *Deniz, Deniz*.

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyse Iris Murdoch's Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Sea, The Sea*, from a Murdochian Post-structural perspective to highlight problematic gender conflict and over-masculinised characters. Among many other novels by the author, this novel has the worst "egoist" and "predator" as a male narrator Charles Arrowby, a manipulator whose actions embody a failed masculine abuse of power (Capitani, 2003: 103). Murdoch intentionally stimulates the scale which shows asymmetric discrimination between femininity and masculinity in *The Sea, The Sea* to take the reader from illusion of gender-biased consciousness to the reality of conflicting gender consciousness by depicting the gender relation and tension between characters. Murdoch's works, for being works of a female writer, have been a major interest in feminist studies. Nevertheless, Murdoch's philosophical standpoint assumes that the idea of gender is not fixed, linear or completely binary and "has at least certain degree of instability"; nevertheless, it is inclusive for all gender-conscious behaviour of an individual (Grimshaw, 2005: 220). However, the common tendency is to classify Murdoch's works as feminist portrayals of oppressed and silenced woman. Radical narration and implicit symbolism of the novel exposes gender conflict between over-masculinised cave men and oppressed and silenced women. Moreover, the conflict is both interpersonal and intrapersonal since gender-consciousness is not only a collective phenomenon; it is also a personal phenomenon. In the novel, gender is an unstable and fluid notion that is deliberately attacked by narrative tools. Therefore, this study focuses on gender relations within the novel to scrutinise gender conflict and masculinity between the characters to highlight Murdochian gender consciousness which "claims there are no genders" on the highest level of self-consciousness (Rowe, 2007: 165).

Predominantly language-oriented and experience-based aspects of the phenomena such as gender role, femininity, and masculinity are no exception for an artist to cross the boundaries of textual imagery to expose oddity of pre-existing social norms. Moreover, Murdoch is known for her daring technical modifications of traditional forms such as novel which allows more "intellectual freedom" as a medium (Sturrock, 1988: 146). Thereby, Murdoch is a renowned writer whose novels bend and twist the traditional structure of the genre to establish a philosophical journey from "illusion to reality" (Meyers, 2013: 91). Thus *The Sea, The Sea*, with its symbolic and riddled title, is no

exception for readers and critiques to plunder what is inside and what is outside of the text since not only is the ultimate source of virtual existence questioned by Murdoch as a Platonic scholar, but the predetermined social and cultural notions were also deconstructed with the help of narrative tools. Language, narration, illusion, and ambiguity create a base structure for a theoretical standpoint for using detached characters from the real author whose main motivation is to dismantle fixed assumptions about what is considered as normal and necessary.

Language has been the definitive tool for communication among people and it has also functioned as a tool for recording history and narrating stories. Nonetheless, with the combination of philosophy and theory, the validity and reliability of language have been questioned by philosophers and academics including Saussure, Derrida, and Levi-Strauss. It is almost inevitable for the philosophers, who study the language and its productions, to focus on literature and narration. In the universe of infinite narrations, it is impossible to find a standpoint which encompasses readers to find a single meaning in the text. A reader approaches a text from a certain point of view whereas another reader approaches the text from a totally different perspective to find possible meanings that are encrypted. These possible meanings are the factors that motivate critics and readers to seek arguably missing and hidden elements within the text or outside the text. This, of course, stems from the argument that reality of experience and existence which is an ancient question asked by Plato as the idea that uniqueness of experience and actual time and space is impossible as what is considered as real is a poor imitation of an absolute *idea*. Moreover, many philosophers after Plato have contributed to the cumulative theory that investigates what is considered the history of civilization and its footholds such as language and discourse. Therefore, literature which sets up fictionalised universes has no escape from such limitations as it is mainly created by experience and language. Since the perception of reality for the author is unique as an artist within Platonism's jargon, it leaves the doors open for artists who benefit from the plurality created by a text within the minds of its readers.

The conceptions of gender, in its briefest qualities including limitations and ambiguities, are questioned by theorist working on feminist studies, gay and lesbian studies and male studies. These studies initially focused on female oppression since the primary focus on feminist theory was to eradicate male-female inequality. Later studies focused on the idea of gender as a "fabrication" which is relational to the human body

and other discursive referential points (Butler, 1999: 174). These theorists, most of whose expertise based on real-life experiences and struggles, tried to contribute to gender theory by focusing on real situations about the hypocrisy of the society on gender inequality. Additionally, most of the gender theory canon has been established by female writers and theorists as a result of this cast out nature of gender issue since the gender issue had not been trouble for particularly patriarchal literary and theoretical canon before the emergence of feminist ideals. However, the momentum created by feminist theory set a path for cumulative progress enabling further theories regarding gender roles and their discontents. After the emergence of approach regarding gender as a multi-referential entity, more investigations, and theoretical inquiries have been conducted on literature and history of theory.

The first chapter focuses on the idea of gender consciousness in the novel which shifts from one end to the other on an invisible scale which shows the asymmetrical range between masculinity and femininity. Both ends of this scale go to infinity since there is not a fixed limit for masculinity and femininity; however, the origin or the neutral point of the scale, androgyny can also be considered as an inclusive point where the qualities of both femininity and masculinity meet. The asymmetrical and “differential” nature of language, and as a result discourse, according to Post-structuralists such as Derrida (1998: 159), create orbital and irregular shifts on the gender scale by making it non-binary. Masculinity, contrary to feminine traits, has more flexibility to swing along the gender scale when it comes to benefit from sentimental and physiological sovereignty of other gender traits since the common tendency is to define anything “other” than masculine is considered feminine (Frosh, 2002: 89). Nonetheless, it is dangerous to define femininity relative to masculinity since both concepts are unstable per se. Of course, it is not possible to number or specify any part of this scale for specific levels of femininity and masculinity under such subjective and liquid perceptions on gender; however, it is possible to consider the meeting point or inclusive surface (inside the circular movement pattern) as the gender-free or androgynous in Murdochian terms. This scale may recall litmus paper which is used to measure the level of acidity of liquid material, and high acidity and high alkaline are the destructive state of materials in nature similar to excessive levels of masculinity and femininity which mutually destroy the individual who embodies such conflicting motives. Nevertheless, such a binary scale may be misleading since the symmetry is something that creates a bidirectional reference, which is rather within the

range of structuralism than Post-structuralism. Thereby, it is vital to reach a level of consciousness on which one cannot situate himself on problematic ends of the scale, rather seeks for an unbiased position in the middle and this is achievable by accepting the circular, counter-circular and spotty movement of gender on level of individual gender consciousness. Furthermore, gender conflict, which is caused by over-masculinised or over-feminised consciousness, unsettles the idea of biologically determined gender inequality by showing both sexes have the same qualities at certain levels since there are not any specific patterns of behaviour even about the most profound male and female attitudes.

The second chapter analyses Iris Murdoch's views on language and her relation with philosophy. Furthermore, her approach to gender and the motives behind her artistic concerns are explained. Murdoch's philosophical and literary texts have close relations with Poststructuralist ideals. According to Murdoch, "language transcends its user, meanings are ambiguous, words are clarified through discrimination, and so on" (1992: 193). Moreover, Poststructuralism of Murdoch and her approach to gender consciousness have a common ground. Whereas it is difficult for an author, whose writing style and social experience as an individual within academic intelligentsia were slightly affected by traditional sex-discriminated experience, to cross the traditional literary boundaries, Iris Murdoch, novelist and literary critic, utilises possible dimensions of narrative ambiguity and plurality to trigger a Platonic epiphany over gender roles and its whetstone, masculinity in *The Sea, The Sea*. The purpose behind this approach is to deconstruct norms of reality and highlight the importance of an partly androgynous, non-gendered consciousness in relation with Murdochian concept of gender.

The third chapter tries to unveil what is symbolically and intentionally interwoven within *The Sea, The Sea* on Murdochian philosophy about consciousness and gender. Beginning with the title, which stands as a full reduplication of a geographical formation, imagery and philosophical connotations refer to duality yet sameness in human perception. The novel contains narrative gaps and imagery that lead readers to question the reliability of the story (narration) which is a delusive production of the over-masculinised and egoistic male narrator of Murdoch. The novel is the narration of a retired theatre director, Charles Arrowby, who reminisces his youth and tries to compensate the bad decisions made by him throughout his proactive period by forcing his mind to write his own book. However, this attempt becomes fruitless since his abusive nature fails to

follow a coherent account of language and narration in classical terms and distorts textual relations. Furthermore, Charles, who is a corrigible womanizer according to his own remarks, seeks to find a suitable partner to establish the family that he longs for during his seclusion from the theatre and art. Surprisingly, during seclusion, Charles comes across with his teenage love, Hartley who is now married. The exceedingly masculinised narrator of the story, Charles, uses every privilege of male voice to depict Hartley's story as an unhappy married woman with children. However, the assumptions about Hartley and her family life are inaccurate since her marriage is not chaotic and oppressing as depicted by narration; yet, the problem arises with the appearance of Charles in their lives. Hartley's son Titus also becomes a concern for Charles as he tries to act as a benevolent father figure for Titus. Moreover, James Arrowby, the cousin whom Charles envies, comes back from his military mission after retirement and unintentionally disturbs Charles by his existence as a result of self-conscious personality and superior male qualities. Throughout the novel, readers are drawn to witness speculations on other characters and abuses of personal relationships thanks to the narrator whose masculinity and male consciousness are troubled by unexpected visits and irrepressible incidents. Charles' failed chivalric attempt to save Hartley from her marriage by abducting and death of Titus lead him to the disillusionment that opens a way of a "new understanding of himself" (Spear, 1995: 99). Although this new understanding is not an entire exit from the circular gender conflict for the narrator, it is the end of the symbolic journey starts from binary and symmetrical gender illusion of masculinity and ends in differential and circular gender reality. Finally, Iris Murdoch's philosophical perception about self and consciousness in *The Sea, The Sea* and its effects on gender conflict caused by masculinity are analysed within the scope of this study.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENDER ROLES AND MASCULINITY

#### 2.1. Gender Discourse and Origins

Poststructural theory and gender studies have begun at different layers of social and political sciences. There were slight differences between these two phenomena since one was about language and productions of language whereas the other was about social, domestic and political inequalities between female and male individuals. To have a better understanding of the relation between these initially different but technically similar theories, a brief recollection of cumulative progress of feminist theory should be summarised. First, the historical background of the issue will be explained briefly in this chapter. Later, the emergence of traditional gender roles and traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity will be mentioned. Furthermore, the issue of measuring gender in terms of traditional binary approach and alternative approaches to gender roles such as androgyny will be analysed. Finally, a Poststructural model for gender discourse will be introduced.

It is probable that the first assumptions of mankind about the environment could be about classifying the things as black or white, good or bad, etc. The common perception is to see things within a frame either useful or useless for survival since the primal motivation for mankind was not to think but to act. Traditionally, there are two different genders in terms of biological differences. The discrimination started even before the emergence of religious texts and doctrines. The classical categorisations of male and female were the result of the primitive lifestyle. In primitive times, domestic and open field tasks were divided between male and female. As the child-bearer, female took responsibility for the infant and, ironically, this has created all the difference. The division of tasks was innocent and useful at the beginning. However, the range inequality between female and male authority have multiplied as a result of never-ending progressive and aggressive dominance of male individual whose personality has been shaped by the violence inherent in nature. Female individuals' personalities have been shaped by limitations and domestic restrictions. The biased biological view of gender inequality ignores the analogy of gender inequality that derives from basic needs and goes out of control. Bearing a child and limiting female consciousness to tender and caring

domains have led the scale of inequality to reach its zenith with the emergence of language and what is called history, a production of biased perspectives of discourse contaminated consciousness of male individuals. Consequently, this process has situated oppression of the women into “a social foundation, in the relations between families, and not a biological foundation, in a supposedly natural division of labour within the family” (Clarke 1981: 91). All that is included in written history and other records such as literature as well as forms of art have surrendered to a biased approach on gender discrimination. The inequality is a deformed version of reality in an illusory environment founded by language-oriented discourse. Discourse has divided gender into two opposing spheres that provide a binary and contradictory existence for both phenomena. Moreover, binary existence of male and female has established an opposing gender reality by one putting the other into a distant position. By doing so, the range between two genders irreversibly has been enlarged. Nevertheless, putting the other in a distant position and binary logic are problematic for both spheres of the circle. “Spheres and circular wholeness” are the terms that intentionally used in order to highlight the idea of all including-gender nature of individuals put forward by Iris Murdoch.

Female individual and her existence as an equal part of the society had been a long-ignored fact by the patriarchal society and its ideological and political apparatus. Earlier inequalities have forced female writers and female activists to recapture what had been taken from them. The initial attempt was to annihilate inequality between female and male individuals. The feminist theory started as a movement to gain equal rights for women. The initial purpose was to eradicate public restrictions and inequalities between two genders. However, the core of the problem is not only limited to social and public life; limitations also exist in intellectual and theoretical domains. The assumption of biological inequality was attacked by various theorists as a result of the taken for granted position in an intellectual environment. The biological categorisation was considered as stable and determining idea “that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman” (Wittig, 1992: 10). It alienates women from society and imprisons them to so-called passive and paralyzed states of minds. However, after the industrial revolution and catastrophic world wars, the position of women has shifted to social domain from a domestic environment. The shift did not change anything in terms of being in the position of other. Woman workforce is called for to compensate losses caused by disastrous World War II. Even though women took up the burden of men in the industry, hegemonic



masculinity and patriarchy put them in a secondary position when compared to a male individual. Then the gender-biased discrimination started to deprive women of their equal rights to have equal rights in workplace, public and domestic areas. The feminist movement sought equality in both political and theoretical domains. The term *feminist* stands for “someone who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of this class” (Wittig, 1992: 14). Thus feminist movement became as aggressive as patriarchal apparatus that protect and support the privileged position of male individuals. The fight was not a physical one, yet it is a fight that tries to challenge psychological assumptions about gender and female inferiority artificially created by the masculine discourse.

## 2.2. Gender Roles

In the most primitive and simplest sense, literary history and language are guilty of discrimination of women from the men in the equation between each other. The early tendency on gender issues was to define gender on a binary opposition since “language defines the reality” in a poor manner that one simply perceives so-called reality with language considered as deferential and illusory (Reeser, 2010: 29). Therefore, gender is defined in an “oppositional” manner due to our dependence on language which is an imperfect tool for such critical phenomena (ibid, 36). Structuralist assumptions are the reason behind this binary classification since linguistically meaning is referential and multiple meanings coexist in a contradictory and conflicting stratum which situates each item with a binary compound. Such predetermined classifications triggered the force behind so-called biological inequality. The force, of course, is called hegemonic masculinity following patriarchal gender notion. The classification, discrimination, and reproduction of the ideas that are related to human sexuality and relevant behaviour generate the realm of gendered society. The devices that reproduce gender such as hegemonic masculinity function in alliance with language. In other words, language creates and feeds the discourse. Moreover, discourse is shaped by language and at the same time, it shapes the language. One cannot prevent himself from using the language since it is a fundamental tool to communicate. People are drawn into language by birth without their consent. It is the masculine discourse hand in hand with language that predetermines individual gender roles. The roles that one cannot act contrary to the given script are called gender roles. When one moves, talks or chooses something, gender is always at the presence in spite of the common belief on “freewill” (Alcoff, 1988: 406). The idea of gender roles is what has been cumulatively inherited by humans throughout

the history of civilisation. Furthermore, the idea of gender and its definition has been another problem for theorists since the theory itself is immensely biased as a result of its male-dominant, patriarchal position. Theorists such as Hélène Cixous stated this discrimination puts theory in a “male” persona whereas it considers “non-theoretical discourse as female” (qtd. in Greaney, 2006: 100). The privilege of the male individual that embodies male gender traits is at the core of theory and philosophy. Even though there have been female theorists working on common issues on a theory, neutrality of the theory poses a major problem for those theorists. Since theory and gender roles mutually support and verify each other, the focal point for rooting out the inequality between genders is encrypted in gender roles. A revelation that exposes all motivating factors behind what one perceives as usual behavioural patterns regarding his own sex. By the term sex, not the physical act of sexual intercourse is mentioned, but it is the noun that biologically categorises according to his genital development. It is because of the common and conventional tendency to classify things according to either by absence or presence. These types of classifications are binary in nature as a result of their submission to language. The lack of sex-specific gender traits for one person; for instance, “a crying man” drives people to label that person as “effeminate” (Reeser, 2010: 1). Effeminate is a term used to label male individuals that lack masculine traits. In other words, it is not a biological classification at all; rather it is a group of abstract qualities that are attributed to male personality. As it is evident from this transformation that gender roles have faced; the transformation is a form of metamorphosis, a kind of rebirth but in an entirely different form than the original form. Theoretically, gender is something that could be altered and changed since it is unstable and changing unceasingly. Accordingly, Butler defines gender as:

“[T]here is neither an “essence” that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction “compels” our belief in its necessity and naturalness” (1999: 178).

The roots of gender as a notion that surrounds individuals with its existence are encoded in the depths of collective notions within the language. Moreover, the plurality of gender is the plurality of acts that is related to sex-specific and primitive binary classification. The reality of gender is also questioned by Butler due to its referential nature as a

consequence of ties with linguistic determinism. Perceptions of the issue tend to consider it as a natural phenomenon, yet it is not a natural and innocent practice between equals. It is more relevant to behaviours including hierarchy and oppression of one side. Various prejudiced frameworks of classifications are made for gender-biased thinking. According to Hooks, the “predetermined, gendered script” is what individuals internalise without realising actual outcomes of it and patriarchy is determinant of the system of gender that shapes identities as well (2010: 1). Patriarchy is the cultural heritage that puts male experience as to a superior position and generates a gendered reason for civilisation. Hegemonic masculinity is briefly about “the symbolic equation of masculinity and power” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2005: 264). Gender roles are elements that also shape the cultural perceptions of female and male identities. The widespread division is between woman and man whereas there are also other gender roles. This study focuses on primal and the problematic binary gender discrimination and classification due to a structuralist and holistic approach. Furthermore, the unstable and artificial nature of the phenomenon is under the scope of Poststructuralism as a result of gender roles’ linguistic roots. The categorisation of woman and man needs to be analysed to unveil implicit linguistic deficiencies that define both genders and the gender roles in general.

### **2.2.1. Femininity**

Female individuals have been limited to certain intellectual, domestic and professional areas by patriarchy. The so-called biological inferiority or tenderness, when compared with male physiognomy, has been a major determinant that restricts female individuals. Identity and gender-related behaviours are two ends of the equation without one the other cannot exist even though it is a destructive relationship. Gender roles are the paths for female and male to follow without questioning. The society also supports these roles and it mentally blocks and scorns any attempts to ignore them. This kind of tendency is called *hegemonic masculinity*, a notorious term signalling accused oppressor of female identity. Masculinity, with its all-encompassing power-driven apparatus, defines what is feminine as the opposite of male or as the “the second sex” coined by Simone de Beauvoir (1956: 21). This is a classic and orthodox view on gender excluding feminine experience. Frosh explains the femininity as:

“Femininity has, historically and psychoanalytically, usually been defined as the negative of the masculine, as something existing as ‘other’ and as less worthy, reliable or complete. This means that it has in many respects been an ‘empty’ category in the sense that it is defined principally in terms of its distance from masculinity rather than in terms of its own positive attributes. Where content is given to the feminine, it is

mostly to characterise it either as inferior or as dangerous—for instance, as expressing weakness, passivity, seductiveness and unreliability. In this way, femininity has been constructed to offer a space which can be filled by projected male fantasies, becoming a receptacle for what is disowned and feared” (2002: 89).

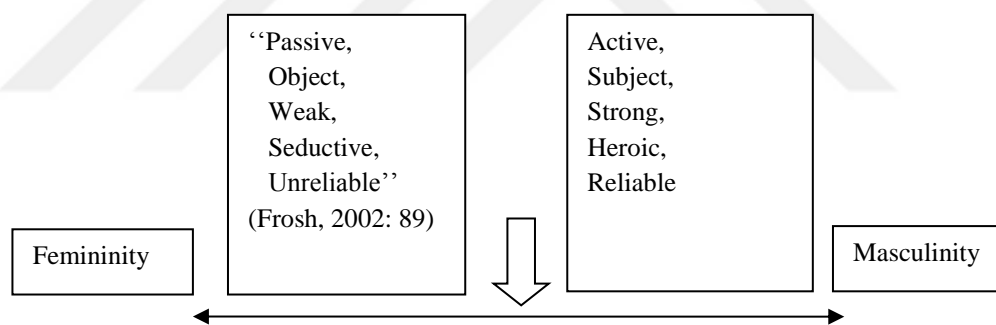
Such an approach to femininity generates a problematic view on the women since there is no balance between the two ends of the unequal bidirectional gender equation. The feminine side is considered as a vast space that could be spoiled by excessive desires driven by hegemonic masculinity. Thus the position of female becomes fluid, ever-changing and unstable the opposite of masculine traits such as reason, intelligence and power. Everything that is not related to masculinity becomes subject for femininity. It is indeed no related to biology; rather it deals with the tension between subject and object in the public sphere. Total submission of the women is necessary to establish female identity under these terms; moreover, “woman is required to make herself object, to be the other” (Beauvoir, 1956: 268). Within this milieu, being other or being object always stands as a threat to the subject, male identity. Threats may include seduction, conspiracy and envy. Seduction is a weapon that is used to disarm masculine individual by distracting him from his allegedly superior goals or enchanting him to disregard his highly valued honour. Honourable and divine toils such as writing for public and writing for private are also within the grasp of male dominance. These academic tools have been used by man since the emergence of religions and academic thinking, both of which are male dominant and hegemonic over female identity as well. The first texts of religion stand as the pillars of western philosophy and culture. In these religions manuscripts, male subjectivity is privileged and put on a superior level within the masculine hierarchy. Moreover, the texts almost ignored female presence within nature except for their limited existence as child-bearer and care-taker; yet their depictions are not limited to these attributions, there are also evil, demonic, seductive women in religious texts. The written history and religious history put the female in a position that any attempt out of limitations would be considered as an evil deed at the beginning of the modern period. However, women started to question gender role by “attempting the pen” as Gilbert and Gubar define it (200: xiii). The only way for women to break the chains of hegemonic masculinity or patriarchy is to attempt the pen write from the perspective of the subject; in other words, women need to write their history free from predetermined restrictions. If a woman frees herself from these limitations, she will eradicate the so-called equation of binary existence of gender roles and gender conflict within human perceptions due to masculine discourse.

### 2.2.2. Masculinity

Traditional gender roles have negative effects on male identity as well since it functions with a conscious superiority over female subjectivity. On occasions such as a male individual lacks superior male virtues, the problem of identity arise to classify the gender of this individual. In any case, he would be considered as feminised as a result of the absence of male virtues. This would drive that person to an unknown position between male and female. Thus he would become neither subject nor the object of patriarchy. Nonetheless, the cast out position would classify him as effeminized since he is not within the reach of masculine traits. Male identity has been heralded by patriarchal ideals throughout history until this day. What is normal and what is usual are considered as male since our perceptions have all been shaped by patriarchal discourse. The presence of masculinity grants existence since it connects individuals with the reality created discourse. Moreover, there is no masculinity without “social interaction, but come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given milieu” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2005: 37). People produce and support masculinity which is an offspring and production of patriarchy. Male individuals, similar to females, face masculinity at their first social interaction, namely, the interaction within the household and between their parents. During this process of social development, a boy is thought that he can “express rage” but not his feelings for as an adult he can use rage “to provoke him to violence would help him protect home and nation” (Hooks, 2010: 1). Therefore, aggressive and hostile traits are interconnected with masculinity. Every motivation or idea that is in one way or another relies on hostility, anger and violence recall masculinity and male gender role. Also, productiveness is considered to be male, which is surprising, women as child-bearers lost this quality to men. Productiveness in theory, literature or anything that is within the concept of “rational” freedom is regarded as male (Alcoff, 1988: 406). Rationality and reason are considered as male and any attempt from outside to take authority is parried by patriarchal discourse. In brief, anything that belongs to discourse is chiefly “male” as Cixous utters (qtd. in Greaney, 2006: 100). There are aphorisms such as mankind is a “rational animal with freewill” (Alcoff, 1988: 406). These kinds of aphorisms exclude female identity and only celebrate and praise what is considered as male traits.

### 2.3. Measuring Gender

Rationalism and patriarchal discourse fixate gender roles and they present a gendered form on a binary equation. The two gendered models of gender roles take the issue as a fixed and stable phenomenon. Therefore, the classical approach towards gender traits while situating an individual within certain gender roles focus on differences and similarities of behaviour patterns. By the classical approach, the structuralist approach to gender roles is mentioned. It is structural since it gets its meaning with the language of patriarchy, a superior system. The binary discrimination of gender roles occurs when one's behaviour and words are classified as male or female. The strict oppositions and differences are indicators of gender patterns. The initial form of the gender equation between binary roles can be demonstrated on a bidirectional cline. Such stable and rigid categorisation is quite superficial in terms of meeting the desired outcomes of measurement. Two ends of cline go on an endless rotation. One is femininity, the other end is masculinity. See Figure 1 below which is a model of binary discrimination of general gender traits.



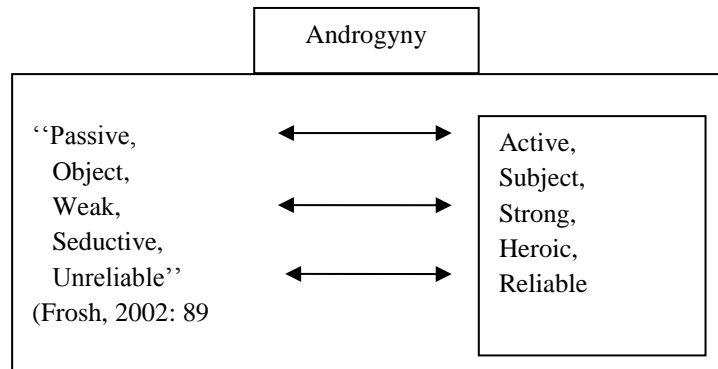
**Figure 1: Classical Model of Bidirectional Gender Equation**

The traits are, in a sense, sexually-oriented and the discrimination is supposed to be sexual categorisation. However, the poles of two genders are not only related to sexual identity, but they are also about acts and thoughts regardless of biological classification. According to Sedgwick, it is about the nature of gender that “is variable, but is not arbitrary” (1985: 22). Variations of behaviour and thoughts signal masculinity or femininity of an individual. For instance, a fighting woman figure like Queen Elizabeth I could be placed on masculinity end of the scale; or a man who conspires against his king could be placed on femininity end since treason is also considered as a feminine trait as a result of religious myths. The relation is changeable but the roots of the argument about gendered

acts are not randomly specified regardless of classical descriptions of male and female sexuality. For instance, features that Beauvoir remarks such as a “changeless smile or an enigmatic impassivity”, hiding their sentiments, lying to men, being “wily, hypocritical, play acting” towards men are considered as feminine traits as a result of patriarchal discourse (1956: 265). Furthermore, any trait that includes a sense of power may also be situated on the masculine end of the scale. As it is evident from the strict and predetermined categorisations, binary and opposing approaches miss some of the natural phenomena about human psychology. For example, every trait that is categorised on classical gender models has been experienced by both sexes throughout their lives regardless of their gender. In other words, strict discriminations ignore the unstable features of human sentiments and psyche. Also, the terms which have various referential ties with other terms under gender discourse are linguistically and fundamentally unstable. Thus a more flexible and inclusive phenomenon has emerged, androgyny.

#### **2.4. Androgyny**

Androgyny is a hybrid phenomenon that includes traits of both genders. The traits are traditional gender roles are considered as reference points in androgyny model. It consists of feminine features that situate female between “male and eunuch” (Wittig, 1992: 10). Besides, masculine traits are still encoded in acts of power and dominance even in this model. Bidirectional traits are listed under the androgynous gender model. This model establishes a changeable and flexible perception of gender roles and the binary scale is covered by superset proposed by androgyny. A superset is a set that includes other sets in it. So the classical gender equation scale’s traits are the subsets of androgyny. Figure 2 shows the androgynous gender scale including a superset including gendered traits listed in Figure 1:



**Figure 2: Androgyny Model of Gender Traits Superset**

Although Figure 2 presents traits that are enlisted in Figure 1, the relations between gender traits are multidimensional and not contradictory. An androgynous individual could be related to any of the traits listed above regardless of biological and traditional two-ended classification. However, as a subset of androgyny cluster, traits that are related to femininity should be considered together with male traits in order to discuss a normalised personality under a genderless scope. The idea was beneficial as its primal position for questioning fixed norms. According to Kimmel, “several empirical studies seemed to bear out the desirability of an androgynous personality constellation over a stereotypically feminine or masculine one” (2011: 107). However, the idea was later seen as a consequence of confirmation of stable qualities. The crux of the issue remains unsolved due to the acceptance of classical gender traits. According to Morgan, classical tendency to objectify female individual concerning female gender traits is a problematic process itself; moreover, the people “who support a psychological model of androgyny play into the hand of sexual polarization; they do not challenge it” (1982: 259-260). Androgyny is a form of “otherizing of female experience” and “males and male experience” are considered as “neutral standard” for individuals; nevertheless, “females and female experience” are considered as out of male-dominant standards (Bem, 1993: 41). Androgyny was necessary for a flexible classification at the beginning, yet it turned out to be a patriarchal tool that functions incognito. Androgyny also failed to solve the inequality problem about the perception of gender roles. Therefore, a new and unbiased approach was needed and as a result of this need new and more radical ideas flourished such as Murdoch’s approach to gender roles.



## 2.5. Murdochian Gender Consciousness

Feminism, beginning with the initial women's rights movements, has helped the theory to reach such groundbreaking levels. At least, it has put the issue at the heart of the discussion. The problem of inequality was a superficial and fairly evident problem for theorists yet the crux of the problem was not only inequality in social domains, but it was an issue of plurality and self-realisation in terms of seeing the ultimate source of the problem. The problem becomes bigger and bigger with the help of language and never ceases to spread thanks to the productions of language. Therefore, any attempt to abandon gender-biased theory partly failed at the beginning due to its dependence on discourse, and of course language. Many feminist theorists failed as a result of the patriarchy encrypted within the language that they used involuntarily. Therefore, feminist theorists concentrated on language rather than social phenomena. Later, with the emergence of Structuralism, the emphasis was put on language rather than laws or social applications. Furthermore, Poststructuralism and its analytical apparatus, deconstruction, has been a fresh application for theorists and critics working on gender roles and issues. Since this approach "tends to look behind the signs that one sees in order to find meaning that might not seem immediately apparent or might not seem to correspond to the visible sign" (Reeser, 2010: 10). Thus the consciousness of seeing reality in a distance from language and its production, discourse, is a theme that has emerged with poststructuralism. To understand gender roles and their conflicting nature, a poststructural understanding of gender roles is necessary.

The initial difference between structuralist gender consciousness and poststructuralist gender consciousness is the dismissal of binary and contradictory assumptions on the issue. Poststructuralism opposes fixed and binary referential phenomena; furthermore, conventional female and male roles are also stable and totalised concepts. To describe gender in such neologism, the relation of subject and object needs to be analysed by, accepting the idea that there are no fixed gender roles, rather there are "infinite number of minigenders and non-gendered subjectivities that move along in unpredictable ways" (Reeser, 2010: 40). Moreover, the plurality of genders is a result of the differential nature of the subject in structuralist terms. The core of the problem about gender inequality is closely related to restricting approach of patriarchal and structuralist notion. The Structuralist approach to gender is a holistic and limiting approach due to its referential and binary definitions on gender roles. For instance, classical tendency to

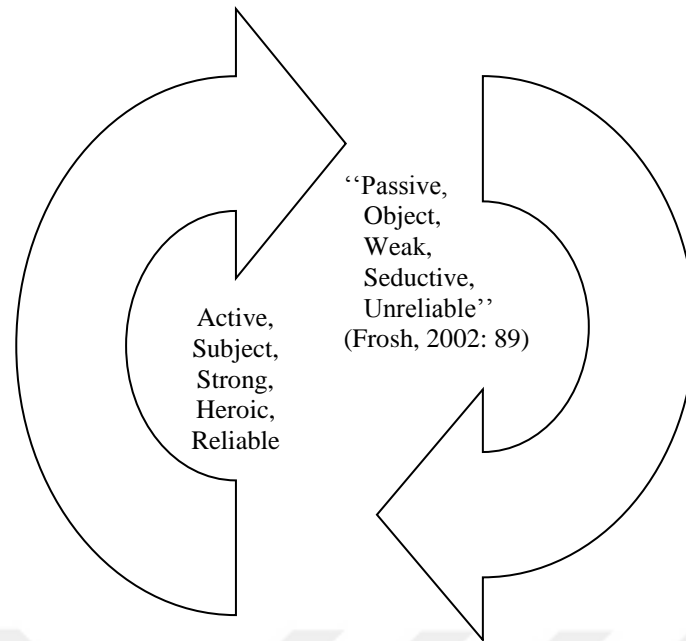
classify female or feminine is a referential equation for gender issue on which the absolute determinant is the presence of male individual and masculine traits, in other words, hegemonic masculinity. The position of male on classical gender equation provides female identity. Such a model is an insufficient theoretical production of the patriarchal model established and provided by structuralist perspective. Patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity are in disguise within the cloud of discourse which supports and establish such predetermined and perplexed conceptions on human psychology and physiognomy. This view also takes the linear and progressive development of identities for granted and assumes that there are no possible alternatives or nonlinear development. For instance, a Poststructuralist approach to this phenomenon “would not allow for a linear move from one type of identity (a boy) to another (a man), nor would it allow for strict delineation of identities” (Reeser, 2010: 13). An individual’s identity and behaviour within gendered prescript could be considered as flexible, not strictly encoded and parallel with the differential nature of concepts due to the effect of discourse on perceptions of people. The ideas on female and male gender roles are entrapped within the borders of language. Not only is the female role restricted, but also the “[m]en often feel themselves to be equally constrained by a system of stereotypic conventions that leaves them unable to live the lives to which they believe they are entitled” (Kimmel, 2011: 118). Therefore, a structuralist tendency to define the existence of female and male identities in a binary spectrum is a troublesome issue on theoretical and practical grounds of the social environment since structural approach takes binary and referential ties as normal structures. However, an unrestricted and deconstructive approach is more effective for deciphering the encoded hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy in discourse.

Practices of gendered behaviours are masterminded by patriarchal apparatus such as hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. According to Frosh, hegemonic masculinity is “the assumption of universality, of sameness, of the reality of phallic authority” (2002: 92). Emphasised femininity is related to female’s “compliance to patriarchy” in brief (Connell, 2005: 848). It is a vicious circle for theory since it gets more and more radical during the course of civilisation with its limitations and oppression. The predetermined roles and binary equations those stand as absolute truth for many theorists and critics have been considered as normal. Moreover, those who reject the oppression and objectification of woman and fight for independent theory has also failed to alter gender roles as a result of using a language full of encrypted sexism. This

tension between theory, language and practice was a result of a series of interconnected issues. These issues have led to a radical thinking pattern for theorists. According to Marsden, this has happened as a result of:

“[...] insisting on the need to explore the asymmetrical relation of men and women to the symbolic order and attempting to give voice to the muted, mysterious wild lands of female experience that feminism is able to maintain a vital critical perspective on contemporary philosophical activity. At once token males and excluded females, women could be said to constitute an opposition within an opposition, maintaining resistance both from within and without philosophical discourse” (1993: 199-200).

Gender roles and other instruments created by patriarchy and language have been crucial towards female subjectivity and existence on theoretical grounds. There was a mutual tendency to entrap female subjectivity to protect traditional and fixed notions about identity and gender roles. The oppression or hegemony was not a result of physical restriction, yet it was a result of psychological and philosophical restrictions. Since these two phenomena are immensely related to the language, deconstruction of a gendered environment or textual reality may be the perfect tool for eradicating gender roles and effects of masculinity on other gender norms. According to Marsden, using “deconstruction into the functioning of binary logic—the hierarchies it engenders and the identity it assumes—provide feminist theory with valuable critical tools for” highlighting the oppression of women and “their subsumption under an inherently 'masculine' subjectivity” (1993: 190). In order to deconstruct a text written with a masculine perspective, one has to understand that the idea of gender is a build-up phenomenon and it is “inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (Butler, 1999: 174). Every attempt to classify gender traits under specific gender subjectivities will remain useless under such circumstances. Therefore, the models that are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 are poor representations on classical binary and polarised gender ideals. A deconstructive and inclusive model is needed for gender and identity relations to highlight the elusiveness of the issue. Figure 3 shows a Poststructural model for gender roles or gender flexibility:



**Figure 3: A Poststructural Gender Model**

Figure 3 shows a circular gender scale which has no binary reflections apart from the traits enlisted. Moreover, traits which are listed under the figure have no binary interchanges as a result of flexibility in human nature and psychology. The asymmetry between so-called gendered behaviours and patriarchal reflections of gender traits is highlighted by the model. There is not a strict classification under these terms as a result of the elusiveness of language and its successor, the masculine discourse. There is no binary or endless direction on the model and inclusive nature is similar to individuals' entrapment within masculine discourse. As mankind uses language and masculine discourse functions in disguise, traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity keep their fixed and prejudiced position. Therefore, this inclusive model allows extensive Poststructural analysis of gender roles since it is more flexible and less predetermined than androgynous model and traditional binary model. Each trait that is related to gender roles in traditional terms has a free-floating correlation with other so-called gendered behaviours. For instance, a crying man is not a half-man or not a man, indeed he is an individual with natural emotions. In traditional terms, under masculine discourse's labels, a woman with heroic or active traits could not be considered as female instead she is considered as a masculinised woman. However, with the advances in theory and collaborations between feminist and poststructural theorists, a new approach to traditional assumptions about masculinity and femininity has emerged. Marsden explains this collaboration as "...it is that in the latter half of the twentieth century the master discipline of philosophy and the politics of the oppressed enter into a surprising alliance" (1993:

191). Thus, the masculine discourse has been questioned and analysed from an analytical perspective by avoiding masculinity in theory and literature. In order to avoid masculinity, a perspective which seeks to show the vulnerability of so-called gender roles and missing unity of images and their implicit symbolism on gender-related issues has been developed by theorists. Iris Murdoch is one of those theorists and she is also a renowned literary figure whose novels predominantly deal with issues related to reality, identity and gender.

A poststructural theory on gender roles and masculine discourse is a precious outcome of cumulative studies on female oppression and masculine discourse. The movement started as an equal rights movement and later turned into a theoretical and political struggle for both women and men. The first attempts to define a problem were difficult for intellectuals due to an indescribable position of the individual as the subject of the masculine discourse. The initial tendency was to either put individuals in female or male subjectivities. However, intellectuals such as Iris Murdoch tried to subvert and alter masculine subjectivity by playing and parodying masculine discourse in her fiction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IRIS MURDOCH'S STYLE AND NARRATIVE

#### 3.1 Iris Murdoch's Style

Iris Murdoch was remarkably affected by philosophy as a writer. Moreover, her philosophical studies have been overshadowed by her position as a female writer. This study does not tend to classify Murdoch as a feminist writer; rather the intention is to highlight gender conflicts and masculinity in her novel, *The Sea, The Sea*, as a result of lack of self-awareness and philosophical disillusionment. Moreover, Murdoch's literary works are also known for close textual connections with philosophical works. Grimshaw states that it is almost impossible to classify Iris Murdoch's works staidly as a result of various effects on her views; nevertheless, she adds that Murdoch remained closely tied with "philosophical and social theories" as well as "theories at the opposite end of the time spectrum, specifically, Platonism and classical models of sexuality" (2005: 224). Certainly, Poststructuralism was one of those social science trends since it is both related to philosophy and literature. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on philosophy, language, and art of narration to analyse motives that are implicitly interwoven in Murdoch's fiction. As a result, a better understanding of the self-destructive nature of her novels related to perverse and radical shifts could be possible. To see interrelations between ideas that have shaped Murdoch's fiction is vital to read *The Sea, The Sea* against its textual spheres verification of Murdochian concepts such as Platonism, Poststructuralism and gender conflict. These concepts, for Murdoch, are closely related to the narration.

Murdoch focuses on Plato's views on renowned bilateral relation between reality and "illusion" which is also the ideal plot for her literature (Gordon, 1990: 115). As she states her views on the ideal plot as: "I think they all start in much the same way, with two or three people in a relationship with a problem. Then there is a story, ordeals, conflicts, movement from illusion to reality, all that" (Meyers, 2013: 91). A Platonic illusion is an illusion that an ordinary man finds himself in without recognizing the illusory nature of the situation as a result of lacking self-awareness. According to Plato, all the struggles for mankind to reach a self-conscious acceptance of the environment is caused by an internal confusion as a result of double-sided effects of shifts between

“light” and “darkness”, namely reality and representation/imitation (1993/2003: 70). Moreover, consciousness or self-awareness is the key motivation in both Murdoch and Plato’s thoughts. This relation is a result of Murdoch’s tendency to enhance “Plato’s understanding of the necessity of the concept of consciousness to challenge the will-centered psychologies of modern moral theory” (Antonaccio, 2012: 224-225). In other words, Murdoch opposed the idea that one can move according to desires and needs since this is not possible under the guise of reality proposed and provided by language and images, both of which are illusory according to their nature. Furthermore, as it is stated in earlier chapters of this study, one cannot shape his environment; it is the pre-existing notions such as language and other individuals that shape the individual. Hopwood comments on this issue of relative existence as: “For Murdoch, the reality to which we are subject as moral agents is the reality of other people” (Hopwood, 2018: 496). Briefly, this kind of reality is closely tied with poststructuralist reality in a decentred and free-floating space by relations with other determinants. Additionally, within this spectre on moral philosophy, individuals are more interested in “primordial appetites than they do about a doubtful super sensible world” (Obumselu, 1975: 298). Therefore, illusion and detachment from the reality are other key elements to emphasise to understand Murdoch’s motives behind writing fiction. Although the importance of departing from delusion to truth is highlighted, it is also impossible according to Murdoch to reach total reality as Gordon claims by commenting on her pessimistic view as, “it is virtually impossible for us to escape illusion, to turn from Plato's fire, and from the images it illuminates, to his sun” (1990: 123). However, without a total submission to deceitful nature of the reality; it is also important to conceive “reality apart from self” within this milieu (Antonaccio, 2012: 227). For Murdoch “self-effacement” is not a sole motivation to reach out real apart from any other determinants, it is an “acceptance of contingencies” without taking pre-existing codes and images for granted (Obumselu, 1975: 315). By doing so, one may perceive the patterns of relations showing independent connections with reality between other individuals by reaching a basic type of “moral awareness” (Hopwood, 2018: 478). Nevertheless, for Pondrom, it is also impossible to reach a total self-awareness as a result of “scientific scepticism” on individual qualifications “to measure accurately” in Murdochian philosophy, any attempt would be far from being perfectly illuminated (1968: 414). Consequently, philosophy has been a primary tool for guidance to reason, yet for Murdoch, it serves as secondary determinant since “human beings are no longer primarily defined by the philosophical activity of reason” (Altorf, 2011: 396).

Concerning these difficulties, one way to use philosophy as a medium to reach reality is seeking “real subject” regardless of the knowledge that it will “transcend reality” thus transform it into another subjective representation (Lazenby, 2014: 216). Philosophical tendencies of Murdoch serve as an instrument for “personal exploration” that tries to reach the general by starting from the specific (Altorf, 2011: 393). Therefore, literature and fictional characters stand as the perfect instruments to set up an allegoric journey through forests of unconscious or illusory relations to a self-conscious environment of reality, which is indeed impossible to grasp entirely with human perception. This theme is so dominant in her fiction that Herman remarks as: “...even if Murdoch herself did not recognize or acknowledge the degree to which her ethical and novelistic concerns overlapped” (2001: 554). Even though it is proposed as impossible to reach a full-scale reality, this study focuses on the attempts made by literary creations concentrating on philosophic and linguistic detachment from the self and consciousness.

This type of scepticism about reaching reality or attaining the instruments establishing reality is similar to Poststructuralist critics’ position towards language. Iris Murdoch embraces points made by Derrida on linguistic, and thus perceptive, indeterminacy. There are also several works of Murdoch concentrated on Sartre, Derrida, and Poststructuralism apart from eminent studies on Platonism. Language is the paint that Murdoch uses on canvas, metaphorically speaking, narration. To have a better position on the fictional ground she pursues tricky touches made possible by the brush of language. Murdoch approaches language with a sceptical yet pragmatic perspective. For instance, in her book *Metaphysics Guide to Morals*, she makes a parallel description for the nature of language in which “meanings of words and concepts are determined by innumerable relationships with other words and concepts, no individual speaker can really ‘know’ what he means”, and adds that it is the language that shapes contrary to common argument that language is shaped by humans (1992: 187). Moreover, Murdoch also believes a type of “individual consciousness” which is departed from “public and collective meanings”, and as a result, not easy to express accurately (Antonaccio, 2003: 3). However, this consciousness is also betrayed and contaminated by discourse that “cedes human freedom over to the system of language” (Antonaccio, 2003: 10-11). Therefore, language is a lacking tool in terms of representing actual intentions or creating visual replicas of ideal thoughts on virtues and individual behaviours. According to Kuehl, it is Murdoch’s desire “to write fiction entirely free from rationalism” (1969:



359). Rational and other forms of fixated ideals are not as stable as it seems within the theoretical background highlighted in this study. Thus one cannot acquire any guidance or illuminating ideas from Murdoch's works to evaluate "truth-values of his moral beliefs or the propriety of his individual actions" (Denham, 2001: 604). As it is evident from the keywords, unstable, liquid and referential, Murdoch's fiction owes its complex and hard to grasp character to her sceptic yet pragmatic approach to language. It is inevitable for Murdoch to benefit from these deficits of language since many of her contemporaries are also renowned spokeswomen of Poststructuralism (Weese, 2001: 632). The lacking and referential position of words, texts, and fiction, as well as self-revealing determinants of the artificiality of literary works, are the factors that make Murdoch's works imperfect "wholes" (Mulhall, 1997: 234). These limitations are both dangerous as a result of their illusory and manipulating structure; and, beneficial for artists trying to manipulate meaning within hermeneutic circles to highlight conflicting realities of concepts such as truth, gender, and moral values. The mental "conflict" is a dominant theme supporting the detached position of Murdoch as a writer from the text (Hall, 1965: 259). Finally, language is a prolific device for creating fictional texts within fictional contexts as a result of its referential and differential structure. By using "silence" and "language" as conveyors of distorted reflections, Murdoch establishes nets of narrations that are special to her style (Gordon, 1990: 118). Narration is a principal medium for a writer whose authorial motivations intercept with Poststructural approach to language and philosophy. The conflict in Murdoch's fiction creates a narration that is free of predetermined assumptions of any given phenomena, totally isolated and radical in its nature.

Narration functions as a conveyor of ideas for some writers whose close relationships with theory contaminate their work of art. It delivers personal conflicts of the authors to the text and readers as a consequence. In other words, it resembles a puppet master in a representational universe and freedom of self-effacement gives authors to deliver messages either implicitly or explicitly. One can project his fears, ambitions or desires on specific characters or places within the narration. There are also some writers who use narrative voice in an opposing manner to expose potentially weaker points of counter assumptions on apparently stable notions such as gender. Moreover, this method is also used with an aim to create a sudden illumination by promoting encrypted paradoxes to the readers. As a result, scepticism arises and desired or aimed consciousness of the reader is partly established. Iris Murdoch is one of the authors that take advantage

of narrative tools to subvert what is considered as normal. Style and characterisation of Murdochian novels overlap with her philosophical, linguistic and literary views reevaluating the readers' mental domain.

As a renowned pioneer of philosophy, Iris Murdoch attracts readers with her fiction more than her philosophical texts. According to Sturrock, Murdoch also prefers fiction as a result of her disappointment with philosophy for if had not been successful in representing facts in real-life situations with "intellectual freedom" (1988: 146). Novel is the major medium for Murdoch since it provides "intellectual freedom, boldness and humanism" which are not primal for philosophy (1988: 146). In other words, philosophical texts are predominantly concentrated on abstract phenomena when compared with literature which allows authors to create universes filled with philosophical concerns within human relations. Literature reflects the moral concerns of philosophy better than philosophical texts for some writers. Murdoch's moral goals drive her to use novel as an instrument to address philosophical concerns. Her motivation mainly derives from her mistrust to philosophical texts since her ties with philosophy are productions of a quest for individual consciousness, "seeing reality apart from self" (Antonaccio, 2012: 227). Consciousness is a state of mind that differentiates the illusory environment constructed by language and other misleading apparatus made up and inherited by the mind. For Iris Murdoch, literature is the best medium to expose the artificiality of man-made concepts and emphasise "element of disorder in reality" (Mulhall, 1997: 233). Moreover, literature and specifically novel permits readers to compare and contrast textual and actual realities due to sense of linear and progressive mental movement triggered by a "spiritual pilgrimage" from poor images to better imitations (Mulhall, 1997: 226). Instead of reality, the term 'better imitations' is used to underline Murdoch's sceptical perspective about reaching total reality, a platonic version of seeing things or perceiving phenomena in ideal form. Hall defines Murdoch's ideal novel as, "people-in-motion-toward-a-resolution" (1965: 269). The resolution is not always a total illumination for her characters and narrators; they are, in a way, entrapped within a vicious circle of "natural enigmas of life-the stars, the ocean, rocks, the recurrent seasons-are reminders for Murdoch's characters of a reality deeper than any they can arrive at" (Moss, 1986: 231). Other forms of enigmas are also used in her novels to drive readers to disillusionment in the end. For instance, "metafictional techniques" are also engaged by Murdoch to establish a narration with multidimensional connotations by

referential concepts such as morbid love affairs and egoistic outbreaks with a purpose to eradicate limitations between “fictional world of the narrative and the ‘real’ world of the reader” (Grimshaw, 2005: 222). “Coincidence, riddles, ironic reversal and sexual perversion” are some of the clues that are used to generate sensual twists to highlight fictionality of texts (Kuehl, 1969: 352). There are other textual methods used for same authorial intentions such as “eavesdropping, inculpatory letters, and abrupt or coincidental arrivals” to move towards reality by seeking self-destructive elements interwoven in narration (Gordon, 1990: 117). Nevertheless, it is important to recall the idea that language is considered as referential and “imperfect instrument” with an ability to “speculate” or poorly imitate the real phenomenon (Gordon, 1990: 118). “Narrative gaps” and silence are also exploited to emphasize linguistic quirks of novels that deconstruct unity and continuum (Jordan, 2012: 372). However, this speculative feature also creates an opportunity for multidimensional and self-revealing connotations in terms of moral and philosophical reflections. The progressive novel of Murdoch includes characters that enrich her multidimensional and ever-changing narrations.

Characters and narrators serve as representations of conflicting internal and external abstract forces in Murdoch’s novels. Characters seem as if they are the personal reflections of original personas; however, the personalisation and representation of individuals are quite different from traditional characterisations of fiction. The difference emerges as a result of the deconstruction of traditional characters and narrators by caricatures. For instance, the characters in Murdoch’s novels are from various professions and they embody a prudish approach to their professions such as stage director Charles Arrowby of *The Sea, The Sea*. In many ways, Murdoch and her characters have similarities such as profound interest in literature; conversely, the mental detachment from the consciousness of seeing the illusory nature of things is the sole principle that discriminates her characters from herself. One of the reasons behind the successful portrayal of mentally blindfolded characters is related to a “sympathetic understanding of the occupations that bring intellectual and moral fulfilment to the personages in her novels” (Jefferson, 1984: 48). Even though they are entrapped in circle narrowing down to their “self-destruction” particularly designed by the author to generate “poetic justice”, these characters are also famous for their manipulative personalities (Lesser, 1980: 10). Although they want to be a member of a “familial, social, or national group”, they are power poisoned, egoistic “solipsists” trying to manipulate others according to

their desires (Sullivan, 1977: 558). Thus “the illusion is created and maintained” for both characters in the novel and readers since narration exposes its defects by coming out of a narrator that is also fictional and deceitful (Nicol, 1996: 189). Cunning nature of Murdoch’s narrators is a result of conflict between narrator’s attempts to divert his fate which is cursed from the beginning by his personality and “illusory desire that can never be satisfied” (Lesser, 1980: 9).

Mental restrictions of Murdoch’s characters support the ideal entrapment created to utilise freedom of speech by using a detached voice of characters by creating “distance” (Kuehl, 1969: 355). Moreover, these textual personas are not only limited by language and egoistic ideals, but also restricted to “self-betrayal” caused by the “characters [that] actually talk about ideas, but when they move decisively, they move in spite of them” (Moss, 1986: 229). Tragedy would be the perfect match for such a destructive approach to characterisation, yet Murdoch intentionally generates such conflicts and paradoxes in characterisation to recall her ideals on consciousness apart from illusory realities imposed upon mankind such as language and binary classifications. Therefore, it is essential to analyse her characters’ endeavour of transformation to obtain consciousness free from pre-existing phenomena. The transformation or the movement from illusion to reality is a symbol that is evident in Murdoch’s novels. One of Murdoch favourite paintings is *Flaying of Marsyas* that depicts the aftermath of mythological competition between Marsyas and Satyr. This painting is also mentioned in *The Sea, The Sea* with implicit symbolism. Furthermore, the moral story behind the mythological incident is nothing special for Murdoch, it is the “masochistic unselfing required of the person who yearns for contact with a now inaccessible godhead” (Gordon, 1990: 120). It is evident from this deduction that the process of mental transformation is calamitously painful and difficult for Murdoch’s characters. Furthermore, “an open form” that allows moving between “consciousness of characters” is the best form for Murdoch to perform her artistic skills (Burke, 1987: 488). Moving from female consciousness to male consciousness is a prominent narrative device in Murdoch’s novels. According to Nicol, Murdoch is famous for using first-person male narrators in a manner that subverts “narrator’s discourse” by exposing “the illusory nature of male position” (1996: 194). From poststructuralist perspective, exposing the superficiality of gendered narrations is a tool to emphasize that gender as a notion is also a part of the discourse. The discourse

which is made up by language and images, both are problematic like Murdoch's characters that represent ideals yet act contrary to those ideals.

To summarize, in many ways Iris Murdoch is a Poststructuralist literary figure and her deconstructive motivations derive from relations with Platonism and Philosophy. For Murdoch, similar to Derrida, language is a distorted mirror that reflects nothing but poor imitations of imitations due to referential aspects. Therefore, it is almost impossible to reflect real stories with the help of language as a medium. Nonetheless, the limitations generated by language and discourse could also be used as devices to underline the illusory nature of narrations. Furthermore, by using narrations in such manner, Murdoch deconstructs binary ideals proposed by discourse such as gender and moral values by using characters that are uninformed about their tragedy of entrapment within an illusion. Fixed and stable notions are broken into pieces of referential and multidimensional realities. For instance, gender and masculinity stand as the archenemies of Murdochian narration and philosophy as a result of her various encounters with difficulties of writing within a male-dominant language with a female consciousness shaped by the same discourse. There are not any specific and fixed gender roles; yet for Murdoch, individuals embody many traits that are considered as opposing or binary for both genders. Accordingly, the second part of this chapter focuses on Iris Murdoch's approach to gender conflict and an overdose of masculine discourse.

### **3.2. Iris Murdoch's Masculine Narrative**

Iris Murdoch is not a writer to be classified or categorised as a feminist writer. Murdoch's approaches towards gender issues are different from classical feminist perspectives. According to Rowe, Murdoch deals with gender issues as many other contemporary philosophers and literary figures; however, to analyse her works, "one must fully consider the author's moral stance, especially the impact that Platonism had on her views on sexuality and ethics" (2007: 163). In other words, her fiction and philosophical texts do not contain a direct criticism of patriarchy and masculine discourse. However, as a Platonic scholar, Murdoch's criticism is about the reality of the experience or perception of reality in terms of representation of personal experience. It is closely related to an individuals' situating himself in an environment which is full of fallacies and distractions. To create a chain of reactions that illustrates causes and effects of entrapment in the fallacy of representation, Murdoch tries to show that every individual

problem between nature and other individuals is a result of a fictionalised reality by mankind. Gindin explains this as:

“Iris Murdoch's images frequently place the formless against the precise, the fish or the woods against the architecturally devised or the manmade cage. And when the man-made image, the reflection of the human attempt to impose order on its world, is made into a generalization or a system, that system fails to operate for human beings, becomes a rational or emotional illusion” (1960: 188).

Textual and philosophical concerns of Murdoch seem as a reflection of her disillusionment with representation of reality. Moreover, moral philosophy of Murdoch is a powerful element that needs to be considered to analyse her approach to gender issues. According to Lovibond, “Murdoch’s distinctive moral philosophy is covertly a device for the oppression of her sex” (qtd. in Robjant, 2011: 1024). Nevertheless, for Murdoch, gender is not an issue with paramount importance since the main problem is a philosophical problem. Murdoch explains her position on the issue at a conference on Virginia Woolf as: “There’s an awful lot in her [Woolf’s] stories which is to do with portraying a feminine sensibility in contrast to a masculine intellect, [. . .] and I don’t think that I see the world quite in those terms” (qtd. in Rowe, 2007: 163). By this statement, Murdoch underlines the fact that she rejects the common tendency to put female writers in an oppressed and secondary position as a feminist writer. Patriarchal society has a tendency to nominate and limit feminist ideals into a secondary position. Demonization of female writers and female philosophers in a patriarchal environment is a critical problem for both female and male individuals. Also, the hypocrisy on higher and intellectual stratum of the society maintains the primitive idea that woman is inferior to man. For Murdoch, this problem can only be solved by reaching a consciousness level on which one can realise the illusory nature of the existence and representation in Platonic terms. What is more, it is inevitable for a radical writer like Murdoch to be attacked by patriarchy and masculine discourse. However, there is a consensus on Murdoch’s uniqueness as a writer who is hard to be classified either as female or male qualities. According to Ayan and Özer, “Iris Murdoch is a rare woman writer who is hard to classify as a ‘woman writer’. Iris Murdoch does not write as a woman” (2010: 133). Consequently, feminism and other mainstream gender theories are partly evident in Murdoch’s philosophical and literary works; nonetheless, her approach is a hybrid one which tries to highlight deficiencies in human perception on gender consciousness in terms of representation of experience and linguistic determination.

There are some common points between Murdochian gender consciousness and contemporary feminism. For instance, Murdoch claims that “there's not much difference really” between female and male (qtd. in Rowe, 2004: 80). This statement can be interpreted in various ways as a result of open-ended implications. However, the sameness between female and male is not a social or physical one for Murdoch; it is a level of consciousness on which one exceeds the limits of perception of social reality. This may be possible by education at a level that one internalises philosophical literacy to see things apart from predetermined conceptions. Male individuals have a privileged position on this occasion since they have been there from the beginning as makers of philosophy and literature. Nevertheless, a female individual has to take her equal share and the only way for such participation is “education” (ibid: 80). Thanks to her familial ties and economic independence, Murdoch had the education to reach a level of consciousness to question and comment on social structures. Another common aspect of Murdochian gender consciousness and contemporary feminism is the argument that gender is a social construct rather than a natural fact. According to Grimshaw, “[...]on many occasions Murdoch seems to illustrate that sexuality is socially constructed, although on other occasions she appears to insist that gender has at least a certain degree of instability” (2005: 220). As a scholar working on theories on Derrida, Murdoch accordingly highlights the unstable nature of gender as a result of its dependence on language. Although gender is a socially constructed phenomenon in Murdoch's works, “she does not always portray the social construction of gender” (Grimshaw, 2005: 219). However, symbolism and textual elements in her works depict the artificiality of gender roles. For instance, while creating a communicating and living environment in her works, a “man-made order” in society in her novels is a reflection of the desired depiction of so-called patriarchal or masculine order in society (Sullivan, 1977: 559). Therefore, a female individual is not a primary character in Murdoch's fictional societies; they are castaway members of public domain. Furthermore, “[i]n Murdoch's world, intellectual women are very much relegated to the private, domestic sphere, while the world of the professions, the public world, is male dominated” (Rowe, 2004: 81). Murdoch's narration is often from a male perspective and male voice is used to underline the effect of masculine discourse which functions simultaneously with language. According to Steven Cohan, using male narrator “allows for a playful act of male impersonation as an ironic commentary on the paradox of fiction writing” and irony of the situation derives from fictionality of the experience (qtd. in Ayan&Özer, 2010: 133). This is a dominant

theme in Murdoch's fiction. Gender is a social construction and it needs to be deconstructed to reach a higher level of understanding of gender issue. In order to achieve such level of understanding one needs not a total rejection of gender issue, "but rather [...] [an] exchange of a vicious engagement for a virtuous one [...]" (Robjant, 2013: 493). As a female writer using male narrators is not an extraordinary method in the literary world. Nevertheless, Murdoch uses male voice to emphasise gender conflict in individual consciousness since individual gender traits and gendered behaviours shift spontaneously on different occasions. Though there are common features between female and male individuals, masculine discourse and hegemonic masculinity trigger this shift between genders and put female experience on a secondary level. This creates a tension for man and woman in Murdoch's narrative. Male narrators struggle with the inner forces that drive them to feminine ends of the gender equation. Traditionally, a male narrator should have some of the masculine traits that are listed in Figure 1. However, the feminine traits are also evident in most of Murdoch's narrators. This tension is named as gender conflict and gender conflict is a major dominant in Murdoch's male narrators.

The conflict is an outcome of masculine discourse since masculine discourse circumscribes female existence in literature. Murdochian gender conflict in her novels can also be seen in her "(omni-) sexually-charged narratives" (Hampl, 2001: 663). A narration from a male perspective "often deform[s] reality" (Rowe, 2004: 93). There are some possible reasons behind this preference to be male and one of them is to "deconstruct the misogyny of the external narrative by attacking from within" (Nicol, 1996: 193). Thus, explicit reflections of masculinity are evident in her novels. Moreover, there are "male characters and their psychological, ethical, and social dilemmas occupy center stage" (Rowe, 2004: 80). Another reason is related to the secondary position of female and female experience in theory and public domain so it is "linked to the fact that males did not find issues (they took to be) amenable to serious rational investigation in the world conventionally defined as a woman's domain" (Mooney, 1987: 242). Therefore, Murdoch aims "to mock male views of women by imitating those views", male narrators create the alienating effect (Lesser, 1980: 10). On an interview with Lesser, Murdoch was asked a question about her preference to use male narrators and symbolism such as the sea in her novels. Murdoch's answer to the question of symbolism was a bit longer than the other answers. Murdoch criticises critics for their suggestion "that there's a kind of machinery of symbolism which the author invents or refers to"



(Lesser&Murdoch, 1984: 13). She ignores the first question about male narrators and just concentrates on the second question about symbolism. Murdoch often evades such classifying question and tries to support her approach to the issue of gender conflict from a Platonic perspective. When the question of gender becomes a major concern for the critics of Murdoch, she explains her approach initially as “my own characters are often androgynous [. . .] because I believe that most people are androgynous” (qtd. in Rowe, 2007: 163). However, her novels try to depict the “social construction of masculinity and femininity” (Weese, 2001: 634). Gradually, Murdoch’s views on androgyny have changed drastically as a result of biased nature of it. The characters in her novels take a journey through a polarised world view on gender and finally reach a point gender is not a real phenomenon, yet it is a social construction. Murdoch For Murdoch, this point is on a “spiritual level where Murdoch claims there are no genders” (Rowe, 2007: 165). Contrary to the fixed and predetermined position of androgyny, Murdoch takes up a gender-free and unbiased view.

Iris Murdoch’s approach to patriarchal and masculine discourse is related to her studies on Poststructuralism and philosophy. It is not possible to categorise Murdoch as a feminist writer. Nonetheless, her views on gender are similar to contemporary feminist scholars. The common ground for this collaboration is the belief that language creates masculine discourse and masculine discourse shapes the society in a polarised way. Murdoch’s approach differs from some of the other scholars working on gender as a result of her belief in a spiritually fulfilled and non-gendered consciousness similar to Plato’s idea of seeing the reality with its purest and original form. Therefore, the narrators and characters in Murdoch’s novels represent a symbolic mental struggle to establish a non-gendered and pure consciousness. In order to highlight this struggle, Murdochian gender conflict is a method of elevation between female and male traits within an individual character’s mind. For instance, Charles Arrowby, the narrator of *The Sea, The Sea*, thinks and acts according to “his monstrous masculinity, his patriarchal world view” (Weese, 2001: 647). *The Sea, The Sea* may be the perfect novel to see Murdoch’s play with gender roles and other techniques centred on deconstructing masculinity. Narration and characterisation of the novel are peculiar to Murdochian gender consciousness. The tension between narrator and other characters give readers a sense of mental struggle to abandon gendered thinking patterns. Excessive amount of masculinity is the primary tool for Murdoch while creating this tension.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DROWNING IN THE SEA OF CONSCIOUSNESS

#### 4.1 The Sea as a Symbol of Consciousness

Iris Murdoch is a writer who refuses all classifications on her fiction and philosophy. She is unique in her style and her fiction is famous for great symbolism and philosophical reflections. *The Sea, The Sea* is one of Murdoch's masterpieces and it is not an exception. The novel is both criticised and celebrated by the critics. The reason behind this paradox is a consequence of the novel's male narrator, Charles Arrowby's, megalomaniac attitude towards the other characters and the environment. Many of Murdoch's male narrators are known to be vulgar and egoistic. Charles Arrowby is a perfect match for this description. According to Capitani, "[h]e is an enchanter, a predator, and an egoist, wielding power in a bad way over all those around him" (2003: 103). It is important to mention the male narrator of the novel while focusing on the symbolism around him and within the novel since the narration is a symbol itself which is built up by Murdoch to emphasise the artificiality of the consciousness of the narrator. Therefore, descriptions and images in the novel are important symbolic factors to understand Charles' emotional status and characterisation as a hegemonic masculine narrator. The sea is the dominant element that is used to symbolise suppressed feminine consciousness in Charles' mind. The sea is represented by positive descriptions and it functions as the setting of the novel. Moreover, negative descriptions of the sea are also mentioned by Charles as a result of the inner conflict that he struggles to overthrow his overdeveloped masculinity. The sea is used as a symbol of warning by two other male characters. The warning is 'to see, the sea' which is a phonetic wordplay to emphasise gender conflict within the narrator's mind.

For Murdoch, symbolism is a vital tool to express her philosophical concerns. Symbols including philosophical, sexual, and mythological contexts are everywhere in Murdoch's fiction. As a writer whose artistic and philosophical concerns are interconnected with Poststructuralism, her novels include implicit symbolism to designate the imperfect nature of the language. Moreover, Murdoch depicts her narrators as manipulators of reality. Thus, both by subverting language and using symbols, Murdoch's narrators create a sense of false emotional essence in her novels. The tendency to use

implicit symbolism is highlighted by Murdoch in an interview with Lesser. Murdoch states that:

“Well, everything's symbolic. I mean, this is a fact about human nature, people make things symbolic for themselves. It's sometimes too much suggested by critics that there's a kind of machinery of symbolism which the author invents or refers to. The symbols arise spontaneously, I think, in novels because they arise spontaneously in life. One's surroundings are charged with emotional significance” (Lesser and Murdoch, 1984: 13).

The spontaneity of the symbolism is an element that allows Murdoch to create a distance between the narrator and herself since the surroundings of the narrator is established by unique relationships and characterisations. Murdoch's fiction has a rich symbolism when it comes to the point of criticising and analysing the natural flow of the social motivations and interpersonal relations. Moreover, it is in every part of her novels beginning with titles. In literature, symbols are related to the artists' intellectual domains. For instance, as a British writer, it is natural for Murdoch to talk about the sea and use it as a symbol. The sea is one of the fundamental and widespread symbols that are used by various artists and in different genres. Nevertheless, the sea in Murdochian terms is a symbol that needs to be analysed from a Platonic and Poststructural perspective since these are prominent elements of her fiction. Therefore, the issue of consciousness and the entrapment between illusion and reality are initial elements to discuss.

Consciousness, in Platonic terms, is a state of mind that one reaches after “a journey or pilgrimage from illusion to reality” (Milligan, 2012: 170). Moreover, the pilgrimage is related to one's perception of the surrounding environment by considering the fact that they are all mere imitations of a higher and an ultimate form. According to Plato, to reach this level of consciousness, people have to break the chains around “[...]their legs and necks tied up in a way which keeps them in one place and allows them to look only straight ahead, but not to turn their heads” out of the cave that they are chained (1993/2003: 64). *The Sea, The Sea* is a novel about Charles Arrowby's “demon-ridden pilgrimage” (Murdoch, 1980: 502). Charles' pilgrimage is an attempt to reach a Platonic illumination since even “the title becomes a central metaphor for human consciousness itself” (Martin and Rowe, 2010: 122). The novel starts with a detailed description of the sea by Charles. After a few pages, he underlines that he writes these things from a perspective that views the sea from a “cave” (1980: 4). Moreover, Charles uses the sea as a central element in his narration and he “manage[s] to build [a] form

around it: the sea is metaphorically contained in his novel, as its title indicates” (Nicol, 2004: 148).

Charles narrates his story from his cave while facing the sea. By the cave, Charles mentions the mansion he lives. The building is described as a huge, dark, and uncanny structure. Although the mansion seems like a static element, it functions as a symbol as well. The mansion, like other mansions in Murdoch’s novels, “isolates the characters from the outside and intensifies the sense of foreboding” central to the action (Kuehl, 1969:348). Charles’ masculine consciousness exists in the mansion and it resonates between the walls. The sea is both benevolent and dangerous place for Charles. However, the mansion is a safer place when compared to the sea since there are no dangers in the mansion. The sea has many dangers including real and fantastic ones. As the narrator of the story, Charles writes about sea monsters, sea creatures and talks about the sea as if it has a personality. For instance, Charles describes the sea as “The sea is noisier today and the seagulls are crying. I do not really like silence except in the theatre. The sea is agitated, a very dark blue with white crests” (1980: 14). The consciousness which is portrayed by the sea and Charles’ masculine consciousness counteract with each other. Charles is a tyrannical male narrator with boastful descriptions about his profession and appetites so his consciousness is a limited one; however, the sea in the novel symbolises “an ever-present metaphor for human life, for spiritual vastness and aloneness” (Capitani, 2003: 107). Nevertheless, the sea is described by Charles specifically similar to his own descriptions about himself. As an egoistic and highly masculinised narrator, Charles’ symbols and adjectives about the sea are quite related to his own personality. In other words, the consciousness symbolised by the sea is not only an archetypal symbol, but it is a symbol of a feminine consciousness which is restricted by stereotypical hegemonic masculine traits under the guise of male narration.

The language is used in a way that allows the narrator to manipulate the narration and speculate about images and symbols. According to Martin and Rowe, such an approach to language is “Murdoch’s attempt to extend the boundaries of language so that it can evoke quality of consciousness more accurately” (2010: 123). The various narrative elements “in *The Sea*, *The Sea* help ‘ideal limit’; that is, the possibility of attaining unhindered knowledge of an ultimate Good” (Clements, 2011: 62). To overpass boundaries of language, the narration of the novel includes fantastic symbolism under the effect of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, sea creatures, sea monsters, and light

illusions are some of the elements that are abundant in the descriptions of the sea. The boastful and exaggerated tone of Charles creates a sense of kitsch abuse of language. After coming out of the sea with some physical struggle Charles looks at the sea and utters these words, “The sea is golden, speckled with white points of light, lapping with a sort of mechanical self-satisfaction under a pale green sky. How huge it is, how empty, this great space for which I have been longing all my life” (1980: 14). From Charles’ perspective, the sea is described as a limitless space with vivid colours and a mechanic, in other words, limited movement. Moreover, the sea is a passive, yet potentially aggressive environment and it is necessary to tame it with physical power and dexterity which are masculine traits. Charles’s descriptions about the sea are all related to feminine gender traits. Another example for such description is a symbolic scene which recalls the birth of a baby from the womb. Giving birth is a biological capacity of women and it has a unique effect on human life as creating a new consciousness and bringing it to life. Giving birth and capacity to give birth are traits similar to freeing oneself from a closed and unknown place, and resembles releasing a prisoner in symbolic terms. In such an equation, the women become the prisoner and guardian who keep an individual captive. Therefore, to be born is a difficult process for a masculine character such as Charles Arrowby.

“Today the sea was gentle compared with antipodean oceans where I have sported like a dolphin. My problem was almost a technical one. Even though the swell was fairly mild I had a ridiculous amount of difficulty getting back onto the rocks again. The ‘cliff’ was a little too steep, the ledges a little too narrow. The gentle waves teased me, lifting me up towards the rock face, then plucking me away. My fingers, questing for a crevice, were again and again pulled off. Becoming tired, I swam around trying other places where the sea was running restlessly in and out, but the difficulty was greater since there was deep water below me and even if the rocks were less sheer they were smoother or slippery with weed and I could not hold on. At last I managed to climb up my cliff, clinging with fingers and toes, then kneeling sideways upon a ledge. When I reached the top and lay panting in the sun I found that my hands and knees were bleeding” (Murdoch, 1980: 4).

This scene resembles a baby’s status in the mother’s womb, a place where the baby stays in calm water. Charles describes his struggle to climbing up the rocks between the sea and his mansion. Almost like a real birth, ‘gentle waves’ help him to get out of the sea like real spasms during birth. After the struggle to climb out, Charles reaches the top and realises blood under the light of the sun. Blood is another element that is related to human birth. Furthermore, reaching a higher place under the sun is similar to ‘cave metaphor’ of Plato. The symbolic birth recalls one’s struggle to reach a Platonic consciousness. After this incident at the beginning of the novel, Charles looks at the sea and admires its wonder and massiveness. A sort of mental rebirth happens for Charles after this symbolic birth.

Charles, who is known to be a womaniser and heartless man, starts reminiscing about his past relationships with the woman. The rebirth drives him to find love of his life, but first, he needs to decide on which woman he feels a real love since Charles' emotions, as his narration, are really incoherent and unexpectedly incalculable. Charles' first descriptions about the sea are positive and admiring similar to symbolic rebirth incident. The sea functions as a caring, tender and relaxing element. However, this positive approach to the sea changes drastically later in the novel. Readers experience these changes from Charles' perspective and it is not a reliable source to see things at first hand. Moreover, every depiction and symbol is represented by the male narrator's masculine consciousness. This is an intentional technique used by Iris Murdoch to create a sense of detachment from her literary object and let it exist as an independent subject. Martin and Rowe assert that the novel itself a representation of Charles' mental journey; furthermore, they explain this phenomenon as:

“Murdoch brings in a range of metaphors, subtexts, dreams, symbols and synaesthesia so that Charles's experiences are not merely observed but are re-experienced by readers. By creating such empathy with characters, she believes that a strong residual moral force within the novels works on readers as they experience momentarily the separateness of a consciousness that is uniquely different from their own” (2010: 127).

The mental distance created by the narration is a deconstructionist attempt by Murdoch to emphasise the movement from the illusion of masculine consciousness to the reality of the non-gendered level of consciousness. In order to deconstruct fixed ideas including gender roles, Murdoch abuses Charles to create a sense of vulgarity on his narration to establish a fixed perspective on the issues such as female and male relations. The sea as a symbol is also affected by the narrator's hegemonic consciousness and becomes a symbol of female oppression since his depictions are classifying and limiting.

The positive depictions of the sea turn into a misogynistic toil to express the dangers and uncanny nature of the sea. Negative and fantastic qualities are attributed to the sea by Charles. One of the uncanny images that he depicts about the sea is the great sea monster which is mentioned several times within the novel. The sea monster's description recalls the feminine personality of the sea. For instance, during the first encounter with the sea monster, Charles describes the creature as:

“I could also see the head with remarkable clarity, a kind of crested snake's head, green-eyed, the mouth opening to show teeth and a pink interior. The head and neck glistened with a blue sheen. Then in a moment the whole thing collapsed, the coils fell, the undulating back still broke the water, and then there was nothing but a great foaming swirling pool where the creature had vanished” (Murdoch, 1980: 19).

The image created by the narration resembles the ancient gender-related descriptions of the traits attributed to the women as the serpent, cold-blooded, passive and uncanny. The open mouth of the monster is representational female genitalia with its pink interior and openness. The sea monster comes out of the sea and returns to its original place, where it belongs. The sea is a symbol of consciousness of a female persona throughout the novel. Therefore, Charles' approach to the sea starts to become a perturbed relation. Moreover, the sea monster is a representation of Charles' insecurity about women. According to Martin and Rowe, the sea monster is a symbol that stands for "Charles's insecurities: his repressed feelings of jealousy, shame and a hidden fear of women" and while looking at one of his former lovers, her image recalls the sea monster in his mind (2010: 125). Charles' envy and fear of feminine consciousness of the sea both attract and distracts him. The relation between female consciousness and the sea is evident metaphor since negative and dangerous thoughts are also related to the sea. For instance, after seeing the love of his life, Hartley, or at least he claims it to be, Charles intensively thinks about seeing her again and tries to find a solution to see her again. Of course, this process is a mental monologue in his mind and after this monologue; he starts to think about the sea.

"As the sun began to go down and the sea was turning gold under a very pale green sky I laid my empty glass in a cranny and crawled up to a higher rock from which I could get a view of the whole expanse of water. In the lurid yet uncertain light I found that I was now suddenly scanning the scene and watching it intently. What was I looking for? I was looking for that sea monster" (Murdoch, 1980: 130).

Charles begins to think about the sea monster just after thinking about Hartley. It happens one after another just as a guilty conscience emerges to prevent him from acting inattentively. Therefore, the sea monster represents mother figure for Charles since from his detailed descriptions about his mother. It is possible to see a link between the mother figure and the female consciousness. Charles' unconsciously recalls a mother figure image when he thinks about the sea monster since his relationship with his mother is a cold and depressing type. When Charles talks about his mother for the first time he describes her character briefly. "I cannot see my mother as a lovely girl, as the Maid Marian of the Warwickshire lanes. I see her face, in my earliest memories, as a mask of anxiety. She was the strong one" (Murdoch, 1980: 24). The sea monster is a figure Charles both admires and fears, like a mother figure. He admires the sea monster's physical power, beauty, and wonder. Moreover, whenever he tries to decide on a movement, the sea is the only place that he tries to find the answers while looking at and pondering about the sea. The sea is metaphorically the embodiment of Charles' feminine

consciousness. Over-developed masculinity of him makes it hard to decide or act without the limitations of hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, the feeling that both limits and drives Charles to consider his actions from a different perspective is related to be in a conscious limbo. Charles is a manipulative and destructive narrator for those who come into his life; furthermore, his powers affect his own consciousness without being noticed. As a consequence, “[t]he power of the unconscious mind to unwittingly determine conscious action is what the novel explores” (Martin and Rowe, 2010: 123). The sea is a reminder for Charles to take up his burden as a male individual in traditional terms. In other words, the feminine consciousness embodied by the sea determines his actions in a masculinised domain since he prevents seeing the reality proposed by the sea.

Charles’ seclusion ends when he comes across with Hartley, love of his life according to his descriptions. In a frenzy to have Hartley again and take the position of her husband, he decides to save her from her actual husband, Ben Fitch. Charles’ manipulations about Hartley’s marriage and her unhappiness in the narration are psychological determinants of his actions. He justifies his actions by portraying Ben as a violent and dangerous man. However, readers later realise that Hartley is not totally unhappy with her marriage. Masculine illusions of Charles’ mind drive him to fantasise himself as the protector and hero of Hartley. Nonetheless, the feminine consciousness within Charles affects him to reconsider his passion for Hartley. The mental dilemma of him is symbolically evident in the incident when Charles remembers visiting an art gallery and seeing the painting *Perseus and Andromeda* by Titian. The painting is an explicit symbol for a heroic fight to save the loved one from captivity. However, the implicit symbolism behind this inter-textual reference is a Poststructural attempt by Murdoch to expose Charles’ manipulative and abusive tendency to distort reality. Charles explains the instant feeling between remembering the visit to the museum and thinking about Hartley as:

“I was gazing in a dazed way at Titian’s picture of Perseus and Andromeda, and I had been admiring the graceful naked figure of the girl, whose almost dancing pose as she struggles with her chains makes her seem as airborne as her rescuer, when I seemed to notice suddenly, though I had seen it many times before, the terrible fanged open mouth of the sea dragon, upon which Perseus was flying down head first. The sea dragon did not quite resemble my sea monster, but the mouth was very like, and the memory of that hallucination, or whatever it was, was suddenly more disquieting than it had ever been since the first shock of its appearance. I turned quickly away and found myself face to face with, directly opposite, Rembrandt’s picture of Titus. So Titus was here too. Titus and the sea monster and the stars and holding Hartley’s hand in the cinema over forty years ago” (Murdoch, 1980: 171).



The sea monster is seen in this incident as sea dragon a similar creature to his own descriptions. Perseus is a mythological heroic figure with masculine qualities such as physical power, courage, and unconditional love. Andromeda is another mythological figure that embodies feminine traits such as physical beauty, passivity, and submission. Charles considers himself as Perseus and Hartley as Andromeda and the sea dragon is not Ben, but it is Charles' female consciousness represented by a mother figure. The open mouth and serpent-like complexion of the dragon remind the readers Charles' first encounter with his sea monster. Therefore, the fight between masculine and feminine consciousness occurs when Charles describes the painting. His struggle is not an external one, yet it is internal and within his mind which transcends through his narration. Unconsciously he is terrified with the appearance of the dragon and turns away and then, suddenly he comes across with Rembrandt's painting *The Artist's Son Titus* in the gallery. The painting is another symbol that includes another character from the novel to the heart of the issue. Titus is Hartley's son who is despised by his father Ben; and, Charles suspects him of being his own son. Seeing the painting of Titus reminds Charles of Titus, the son that he longs for the unity of his love. The title of the painting functions as a reference to Charles' profession as a theatre director and gives him satisfactory relief. Charles is almost about to give up the idea of rescuing Hartley from Ben when he feels petrified by encountering the sea dragon, his feminine and sensibly rational consciousness symbolised a mother figure. However, after seeing the image of Titus, he decides to rescue Hartley and bring Titus and her together again; and thus, he can reunite the family that he lost almost a lifetime ago. Of course, these are fantasies that are represented by Charles' narration and Murdoch uses such implicit symbols to highlight narrators' power to manipulate things. According to Felheim, Murdoch "uses her characters as a device" and these characters "are a combination of strangeness and reality" (1960: 196). The strangeness of Charles is a result of his entrapment by his masculine consciousness while struggling to reach a higher level of consciousness. His own fantasies which are masterminded by his masculine consciousness contaminate his views about the sea.

When Titus, Hartley's son, agrees to stay with Charles, the joy and hope become dominant elements in Charles' mind. Taking care of Titus and preventing him from losing his track are the preoccupations for Charles. Moreover, Titus' presence can bring Hartley back to Charles as a result of her maternal instincts. This intention is an evident motivation to attract Hartley and it is equally unethical, yet normal to Charles'

characterisation. While Titus and Charles swimming in the sea, Charles describes Titus in a way that he is like a genderless infant, free from any limitations. Therefore, the effect of the sea as a feminine consciousness functions again on this occasion:

“The boy, showing off of course, swam like a dolphin, graceful, playful, a white swift flashing curving form, giving glimpses of sudden hands and heels, active shoulders, pale buttocks, and a wet exuberant laughing face framed in clinging seaweed hair. His sea-darkened hair certainly changed his appearance, became dark and straight, adhering to his neck and shoulders, plastering his face, making him look like a girl. Aware of the effect, he charmingly tossed his head and drew the heavy sopping locks back out of his eyes and off his brow” (Murdoch, 1980: 257).

With full of joy and self-satisfaction for having Titus under his roof, Charles describes Titus’ performance in the sea in a way that readers feel a sense of a natural flow in the sea. The image of dolphin which Charles used for himself to describe his swimming abilities is used again for Titus. This link is an intentional bond between an allegedly father and son. After swimming in the sea, Titus’ appearance is resembled to a girl by Charles which is a symbol of feminine aspects of the sea. However, Titus realises the effect of the sea on his appearance and suddenly fixes his hair to his eyebrows again to look like a man again. This is another symbol that shows the dilemma of individuals between feminine and masculine consciousness. Hegemonic aspects of the masculinity prevent male individuals to sympathise with feminine qualities including physical and psychological elements. Charles’ fear and resistance to the sea is evident from the beginning of the novel. The fear includes an uncanny feeling towards the greatness of the sea. When he is alone, Charles becomes a bit hesitant about swimming. For instance, he decides not to swim after realising that the rope he has fixed to get in and out from the sea easily is “untied and floated away” (Murdoch, 1980: 27). The rope is an attempt to tame the unpredictable nature of the sea and resist to the immense power of it since rocky shore is difficult to get in and out. Later in the novel, fear of drowning emerges as a threat which makes the danger of the sea more evident.

The sea includes life and death at the same time in the novel. The setting of the novel is not a place, but the sea is the ultimate setting of the novel. Moreover, as it is stated earlier in this chapter, the representation of the sea is from Charles’ perspective. His dreams and fears are reflected in the sea intentionally to establish a sense of detachment between female and male consciousnesses. Drowning is one of the dangers of the sea. Symbolically, the benevolent and tender water of the sea may become a merciless killer. It is in the nature of the sea which is occasionally both passive and aggressive. When fantasising about Hartley’s arrival after leaving her husband, Charles

is suddenly shocked by the fear that Hartley might have been drowned and starts questioning the probability of this incident. Charles' mind starts to produce various scenarios about his fear. The fear is not only about losing a loved one, but it is mainly about Charles' ambitions about creating his version of reality by having Hartley and Titus by his side. Charles is terrified and starts questioning himself:

“I had not till now formulated the thought that she might have run straight out of the house to hurl herself into the sea. She had cried out, ‘I want to die.’ Had she, in those years, contemplated suicide, indeed how could she not? A strong swimmer would scarcely cast himself into a calm sea hoping for death, but to a nonswimmer the sea might be the very image of restful death itself. *Could* she swim?” (Murdoch, 1980: 233).

Charles' keeps speculating about Hartley's life and marriage. Moreover, he considers himself as the protector of her and condemns his ignorance for not realising this tendency to suicide earlier. Even his fears are not about Hartley's sake. He keeps having this monologue by guessing whether Hartley knows swimming or not. While emphasising the possibility of a good swimmer's survival, Charles' hegemonic masculinity puts Hartley in a secondary and passive position. Therefore, fear of drowning melts into the background in the presence of Charles' fear of losing his illusion. Charles, being pushed by his friend Peregrine, survives from drowning later in the novel and accuses Ben inwardly of this incident. Charles and Hartley do not die of drowning in the novel. However, Titus drowns in the sea while he is under Charles' roof. Finally, the sea performs a pitiless attack on Titus which is described by a neighbour, Bob Arkwright as:

“[...] I seen him trying and trying to get up that sheer rock near your house, and he kept falling back. It was mad crazy to swim with the waves like that. Then he managed to get up somehow, but he was dead beat. When he got up the top he just flopped. What must have happened he tired himself out and then the waves threw him against the rocks” (Murdoch, 1980: 403-404).

The incident is described as a murder committed by a person. The sea is personified again from a person's perspective, but this time it is not Charles Arrowby. The attack resembles a predator's attack on a prey. Therefore, Charles' setting becomes a dangerous place for the characters. Furthermore, Bob criticises Charles about being imprecise about Titus' protection. He says “[t]hat sea's a killer, I told you, didn't I, didn't I?” (Murdoch, 1980: 403-404). Charles fails as a guardian or parent. His fantasy of being the father of Titus and having a family with Hartley collapses. The sea functions as a reminder of reality on this issue. The masculine consciousness of Charles drives him to the depths of illusory fantasies about his relations. However, the feminine consciousness, which is also depicted by Charles as a narrator, destroys illusion and elaborates a truth value for the events. The positive and negative aspects of the sea are both depicted by Charles. At the beginning of

the novel, Charles intends to change his worldview and personality by admiring the sea and symbolically embracing his feminine consciousness which is innate in Murdochian terms. Conversely, his resistance to the feminine consciousness, which derives from hegemonic masculinity, drives him to his tragedy. His desire to change fails since his personality is shaped by his life and his personality shapes his life; therefore, it “is an illusory desire that can never be satisfied” (Lesser, 1980: 9). Charles’ tragedy is his loneliness and egoistic perspective on life which distracts him from embracing his feminine consciousness and reaching a higher level of consciousness. There two occasions in the novel when Charles is warned about seeing reality and realise the illusion of his fantasies. Furthermore, these warnings are related to the title of the novel.

The title of the novel is a reduplication of two completely similar words, very unusual for Murdoch. Iris Murdoch, as a poststructural scholar, creates a wordplay from the dominant symbol of the novel, the sea. The sea is a symbol of the feminine qualities of a person in Murdochian gender consciousness. However, it is not easy to realise for a male individual. It is related to seeing reality apart from illusion. In Platonic terms, it is about looking outside the cave, in which one’s masculine features reside. Looking is not enough, so one has to see the reality. Therefore, the first ‘the sea’ is wordplay that recalls the verb ‘to see’ phonetically. The determinative group ‘the sea, the sea’ symbolises a warning sign as ‘see, the sea’. This reduplication can be seen in the text twice and the two occasions are important to understand the link between the symbols and the title.

The first time readers come across with the reduplication ‘the sea, the sea’ is during Charles and James’ conversation. James is a rational man and he is the symbol of virtue in the novel. After finding Charles in a state of a hangover, James uses some Tibetan remedy to cure his hangover. Charles has been fantasising about sea monsters and Hartley. The conversation between them is not a perfect one since Charles is still in a sort of hallucinating status. However, this element is important to understand the title and wordplay. James asks Charles some questions about birds such as gannets. Charles, both listening to James and still fantasising about the paintings in the art gallery, tries to answer James. The conversation stops after this question and suddenly James says “The sea, the sea, yes,’ James went on. ‘Did you know that Plato was descended from Poseidon on his father’s side? Do you have porpoises, seals?’” (Murdoch, 1980: 176). This sentence seems as if it has no use literally and the reduplication is not a symbol. However, after this question, Charles answers James and continues to fantasise about having Hartley and

Titus under his roof. He is both poisoned by the drugs and his hegemonic masculinity which prevents him from seeing the reality. He fails to see the sea, in other words, his female consciousness which functions together with masculine consciousness in a gender-free mind in Murdochian terms. The paternal link between Plato and Poseidon is not a random metaphor. It is related to the title since Plato is known to be one of the first philosophers to talk about human consciousness and Poseidon is the sea god in mythology. Therefore, there is a play of symbols by Murdoch to highlight the link between consciousness and the sea.

The second time that the same wordplay used in the novel is during a dialogue between Charles and Titus. The dialogue is about Charles' coming into the lives of Titus' family. Charles still acts out of his "self-serving illusion masked as love" and tries to find a way to convince Hartley to stay with him (Denham, 2001: 617). While Charles and Titus are talking about the countryside, Titus says "No. [...] Oh, the sea, the sea—it's so wonderful." (Murdoch, 1980: 251). Suddenly, the dialogue shifts into Titus' questioning Charles for his presence in their lives. Furthermore, Titus asks Charles about the reason behind his interest in Hartley. Charles avoids the question and Titus gives up questioning him. This incident shows that Charles is warned for the second time in the novel. The warning is uttered by Titus as 'see, the sea' and Charles, for the second time, failed to understand the warning. Therefore, he is drawn into his masculine illusion which drives him to his tragedy.

Consequently, the sea is a symbol of feminine consciousness which is inherent in every person. This idea is also supported by Murdoch since she asserts that women and men are similar in terms of their gender-related behaviour. The sea functions as a determinant for Charles' tragedy in the novel. The gender conflict in Charles' mind is symbolised by the conflict between the sea and Charles. This conflict is both a physical and a psychological one. Initially, the sea is depicted as a natural beauty by Charles to restrict it in a beauty layer and ignore its nature. However, the dangers and unrestricted nature of the sea emerges later in the novel. Without limitations made by Charles, the sea represents "unconfined, unordered experience; all that lies outside and presents itself to the perceiving consciousness; the whole, random, contingent world" (Ramanathan, 1990: 68-69). Charles fails to embrace his feminine consciousness by failing to suppress his overdeveloped masculine consciousness. The dilemma of gender-biased consciousness is the tragedy of the novel. Charles' characterisation by Murdoch is important to see the

reason behind this failure. Charles thinks according to his masculine instincts and shapes his narration according to masculinity. Nevertheless, his own descriptions of his characterisation reveal that he thinks in a masculine manner, yet occasionally he fails to act in a traditional masculine pattern.

#### **4.2. Becoming Charles Arrowby**

*The Sea, The Sea* is a novel written from the perspective of its highly masculinised narrator. It is important to analyse Charles' characterisation since Iris Murdoch is famous for her male narrators attached "to fantasy and illusion" (Fiander, 2004: 98). Charles' illusion derives from his personality since his consciousness has repressed his feminine consciousness. The reason behind this repression is related to Charles' personality which is shaped by his family environment and a teenage trauma. Overdeveloped masculinity submerges the innate feminine consciousness since Murdochian gender consciousness considers gender as an inclusive phenomenon. Murdoch intentionally portrays a character like Charles Arrowby to highlight the failure of traditional gender-biased approach to the gender issue. As a successful theatre director and popular celebrity, Charles lacks not only reality at the level of consciousness, but he is also in need of real social and romantic relationships. However, Charles' personality is the ultimate source of his sorrows and loneliness. Therefore, focusing on family relations of the Arrowby family and childhood of Charles is necessary for a brief analysis of the motives behind overdeveloped masculinity of Charles.

Charles' family roots are in "Stratford-upon-Avon" (Murdoch, 1980: 27). He is proud to be born in the same place as Shakespeare. Moreover, like Shakespeare, he is a theatre director and he is famous for directing Shakespeare's plays. Of course, this coincidence is a poststructural symbolic play by Murdoch and it can be interpreted as a reference to the male-dominated western literary canon. Charles has a modest and orthodox family. Every individual's personality is first shaped by their family. Maternal and paternal figures are vital and effective before one's personality is shaped by society. According to Charles' descriptions of his childhood and teenage memories, he is affected by his mother's personality more than his father. His descriptions of his mother are all about her cold and anxious personality. Moreover, she is quite a religious person that she considers theatre as "an abode of sin" and she is hardly ever happy (30). The relationship between his mother and father is a relation that lacks communication, yet Charles' father

admires his wife and feels devastated after her loss. When compared to his authoritative mother, his father is a humble and entertaining man for Charles. Furthermore, the admiration and love of Charles for his father is evident in his narration since many times he reminisces about his father's positive effect on him. For instance, when Charles sees a spider in his house he remembers his father's merciful attitude as "[h]e had a positive moral quality of gentleness. I can picture him now so clearly, bending down with his perpetual nervous smile to pick up a spider on a piece of paper and put it [...] where it would not be disturbed" (30). Whenever Charles thinks about his mother, he either starts seeing the sea monster or fantasising about the sea monster. Therefore, the reason behind Charles' 'predator' personality may be related to his mother figure. Nevertheless, it is not the only factor behind his personality. There are two other figures in the novel that has shaped the personality of Charles. One of them is his cousin James Arrowby, a heroic and virtuous male character in traditional terms and the other one is Hartley.

James is morally and psychologically a better version of Charles. Growing up together, but with uneven economic opportunities, Charles envies James' parents and his character. James' moral and intellectual superiority drives Charles to a childhood disappointment which lasts until James' death. Charles explains this rivalry as "I resented, for him, his deprived status. I felt, for him, the chagrin which his generous and sweet nature did not feel for himself. And in doing this I was aware, even as a child, that I thereby showed myself to be his moral inferior" (58). For Charles, James is an irritating figure since even his beloved father admires James. James becomes a figure that Charles tries to overshadow by being successful in life. Unfortunately, success, fame, and money do not bring happiness to Charles later in his life whereas James reaches spiritual refreshment by converting to Buddhism.

The last person that has affected Charles character is the most significant one since the effect is massive. Charles' childhood love Hartley is the key figure on his personality. Hartley jilts him after learning that he is going to study in London. Charles is distressed after this incident and his personality changes drastically. He explains this change with his own words as:

"Hartley destroyed my innocence, she and the demon of jealousy. She made me faithless. But with her I would have been faithful, with her my whole life would have been different, less rootless, less empty. Do I then think my life has been empty, *my* life? A ridiculous judgment! Could Hartley really have thought the youth that I then was 'a worldly man'? If so she was more like my mother than I ever suspected. She made me a worldly man by rejecting me, that failure ruined me morally" (Murdoch, 1980: 84).

The effect of this incident creates incurable wounds in Charles' emotional world. Charles' disappointment with his mother is evident from his descriptions about her. Furthermore, Charles puts Hartley into the position of his mother since she is also against the idea of becoming an actor. This incident drives Charles to be a seriously successful and morally incorrigible man. Therefore, his personality and egoism overshadow his teenage innocence which is ruined by Hartley. Charles becomes power-obsessed after this character change and his life is "dominated by a theme of extraordinary tenacity and power" (Jefferson, 1984: 54). The power hunger is not the only consequence of this change, Charles' turns into a womaniser who considers women as inferior and dangerous creatures. His tendency to despise women drives him into a kind of narcissism. He puts himself and his ideas at the centre of life. Consequently, Charles becomes the perfect narrator for Iris Murdoch since his egoism blocks his insight and he fails to perceive reality.

Charles' illusion that prevents him from seeing the reality is related to his childhood memories. At the beginning of his book, he decides to write about those memories and readers learn about this irritating egoist's history. Masculinity is a whetstone that has sharpened Charles' character throughout his life. Furthermore, his masculine consciousness turns his perspective into a superficial one. For instance, when Peregrine "accuses him of despising woman", he objects to this statement and says that he loves "Shakespeare's heroines" (Fiander, 2004: 97). Even this statement shows that he is blindfolded by his masculine consciousness. He becomes excessively self-centred as a result of isolation from the world after Hartley and he "attempted to hold on to his power over his friends and over events [...]" (Spear, 1995: 98). His egoism reaches its zenith after Charles has an affair with a woman who can be at the age of his mother Clement. For Charles, Clement is like a mother figure that he longs for. Charles explains his relationship with her as:

"Clement was my first mistress. When we met I was twenty, she was thirty-nine (or said she was). Partly because of someone I had loved and lost, and partly because of my puritan upbringing, I remained virgin until Clement swooped like an eagle. Was she a great actress? Yes, I think so. Of course women act all the time" (Murdoch, 1980: 33).

Charles' hatred towards women can be seen in these descriptions. Even for a woman that he once loved so much, he can utter such words that not only despise her but also her gender. After Clement's death, Charles Arrowby turns into a masculine predator.



The storyline of *The Sea, The Sea* starts after Charles' transformation into an egoistic old man who only cares about his appetites. The novel is a recollection of memories and ideas of the narrator. The novel starts with Charles' uncertain attempts to define the genre of his book. He treats the book as if it is alive and says that "[y]es, already I personify the object, the little book, the *libellus*, this creature to which I am giving life and which seems at once to have a will of its own" (2). Charles sees a godlike power in himself and gives life to the book. The monologue proposes Murdoch's intention to the readers to discriminate between the narration of Charles and her fiction since she aims to create a narration from an excessively masculinised male narrator's perspective to emphasise gender conflict on a conscious level. According to Weese, the fantastic and exaggerated elements in the novel emphasise "the author's social and historical concerns", especially "the construction of gender roles" (Weese, 2001: 631). Therefore, Charles' narration becomes more and more aggressive when it comes to misogyny and fantasy. According to Ramanathan, his narration should be considered as:

"[...]revealing the workings of his frenzied mind. Charles emerges from his journal as an impossible man; possessive, mistaken, hugely egotistical. He sees things in his own special light; and the reader, uncertain at first, soon learns how unreliable he is as observer. The reinterpretation the reader has continuously to make of Charles's account relentlessly underlines his distorting perspective" (1990: 70).

Therefore, it is normal to see explicit examples of misogyny and egoism in his narration. His language becomes quite disturbing on various occasions. For instance, when he is talking about the reason for not learning how to drive a car he says "I have never lacked people, usually women, longing to drive me whithersoever I wanted. Why keep bitches and bark yourself" (11). He criticises his own egoism at some points of the novel such as "I am known as a Shakespeare man but of course I have tried my hand at everything; you name it, I did it. And so-enough of boasting" (39). His tone and style are disturbing for regular readers; however, the narration emphasises the irony of its personification as a masculine consciousness. Charles' masculine consciousness makes him more and more humiliating towards women.

After leaving London and everything about his glorious celebrity life behind, Charles buys a mansion on the seaside. During his seclusion, he finds time to reminisce about his former love affairs with different women. Then, he decides to write Lizzie, one of his former affairs, to invite her to visit his mansion. After years of single life, Charles needs someone to share his life which gravely depends on his own desires and appetites. However, Lizzie's answer is a scorching letter that criticises Charles' egoistic traits as

“[y]ou made me act, you made everyone act, you’re like a very good dancer, you make other people dance but it’s got to be *with you*. You don’t respect people as people, you don’t *see* them [...]” (45). Lizzie’s reaction surprises Charles since he thinks that he is at the centre of the charm and everybody desires to be around him. It is not a mistake for him to think in that way since his “[p]ower intoxicates people” and “magnetizes everyone around him” (Moss, 1986: 228). Nevertheless, from this point on, Charles’ masculine pride and consciousness start to fade away on the occasions when he comes across with actual people who are not limited to his masculine consciousness.

Lizzie’s reaction functions as a warning for Charles. He reminisces about his past and feels desperate since the only woman that could eradicate his solitude is Hartley who is disappeared years ago. While thinking about her Charles calls her “my end and my beginning, she is alpha and omega” (77). Charles keeps thinking about Hartley and he tries to find the reason behind her disappearance. His love for Hartley is far greater than any other woman in his life. This is emphasised by Spear as “[m]ost of Charles's affairs may be seen as lustful escapades as well as the exercise of power but in the Hartley episode, he constantly measures all the others against the pure, the innocent love he once felt for Hartley” (1995: 99). After the shock of Lizzie, Charles faces another shock by Rosina’s letter. Rosina, a married woman, is another affair of Charles. Rosina attacks Charles by reminding him of his disloyalty. Moreover, one of the most precise criticisms about Charles’ personality is uttered by Rosina as “[y]our first mistress was your mother. Clement was baby-snatching. But don’t you see that it has all been a mirage? Those women loved you for your power [...]” (108). After facing such a harsh criticism maybe for the first time, Charles’ accidentally comes across with love of his life, Hartley. Thus, everything in his storyline and life changes dramatically. His masculine consciousness is the most vulnerable part of his characterisation. It is inevitable to expect a change in masculine consciousness of Charles after he is reunited with the symbol of his innocence since his over-developed masculinity is a result of his disappointment with Hartley. The encounter is not a positive one, yet Charles’ mental powers drive him to his tragedy.

After finding Hartley again in his life, Charles becomes obsessed with the idea of seeing her again. His mental weaknesses drive him to put Hartley into a key position to find peace in his life. He starts to “de-realise” Hartley and “subject” her to “the mechanism of [his own] fantasy” (Hopwood, 2018: 490). Charles’ over-developed masculinity triggers him to objectify her as a woman seeking the protection and love of a

hero. This is a normal attitude for a man like Charles since his relationships with other women are also problematic. Nevertheless, his feelings for Hartley intensify with his masculine pride since he pities Hartley since she has grown old; however, Charles is also an old man who fails to perform most of his physical fantasies. He tries to cover his physical weakness by showing Hartley as a weak and vulnerable woman. His descriptions of Hartley's physical appearance show his tendency to pity her. He describes her as:

“I saw: a stout elderly woman in a shapeless brown tent-like dress, holding a shopping bag and working her way, very slowly as if in a dream, [...] This figure, which I had so vaguely, idly, noticed before was now utterly changed in my eyes. The whole world was its background” (113).

Charles decides to find and talk Hartley again. He soon learns that she is married and lives with her husband. However, his feeling of pity for Hartley drives him to a state of mind that he considers himself as the liberator. Furthermore, his masculine consciousness casts his insight and he fails to see that he is more desperate than Hartley in his life. The more his psychological misery arises, the more he speculates about Hartley's situation. After visiting Hartley's home by making up a pretext, his fantasies about the situation of her multiplies. Hartley's husband, Ben, is a veteran and he is an aggressive masculine figure whom Charles considers as a rival out of jealousy. Ben feels the same distrust for him. Accordingly, Ben's personality and his oppressing behaviours support his fantasies about Hartley's despair. He explains this situation as:

“Hartley had been a captive all these years. She may, in the earlier times, have thought of escape; but gradually she fell, as so many bullied isolated women do, into a gradual despair. Better not to fight, not to hope. [...] Her frightened negative behaviour was easy to explain. She was probably afraid of her husband; but she was much more afraid of her old love for me, still alive, blazing away there like an underground oil fire: a love which, at the very least, could now utterly destroy her small despairing peace of mind” (158).

Charles' misogyny is evident in his descriptions about Hartley. He talks about women in general and their oppression. His approach to the situation is quite hypocritical since his personality, hegemonic masculinity, is symbolically the reason behind isolation and despair. He is so overwhelmed by his own fantasies. He still believes that she loves him, yet she is afraid of Ben. Charles questions himself after meeting with Ben since he feels oppressed by Ben's existence. Ben's profession and his authoritative presence make him a superior masculine figure when compared with Murdoch's blindfolded male narrator who longs for his feminine consciousness. Charles asks himself: “Was I frightened of Fitch?” (131). Ironically, Charles portrays Hartley under physical and psychological captivity of her husband, yet his intention includes having her by his side like an object. Hartley's emotions and personality are overshadowed by two male characters.

Furthermore, as the narrator, Charles likes to play with women like they are objects. This is related to his passion for power since he “loves directing” (Tucker, 1986: 380). His passion exceeds Hartley’s family and he learns that her misery is related to her son’s disappearance. Ben’s negative feelings about their ‘adopted’ son give Charles an opportunity to enchant Hartley to become his mistress.

Titus accidentally meets with Charles and he is convinced by Charles to stay with him. Thus, Charles’ master plan to abduct Hartley becomes easier since she desperately longs for her son. However, Charles fails to see the reality that she loves Ben and cares about him. His ideas about marriage are limited to his perspective which is shaped by his personality and his friends. He agrees with the idea that “[e]very persisting marriage is based on fear” as his friend Peregrine tells him (153). Therefore, he thinks that Hartley would like the idea of going with him. After being refused by her, Charles tries to find the reason behind this and comes up with solutions natural to his narrow masculine consciousness. He thinks that she is afraid of Ben and represses her feelings for Charles. As a result, Charles decides to wait which is unlikely to happen since his masculine passion for power over Hartley is relentless. Nevertheless, Ben’s masculine superiority forces Charles to a passive position. Charles, who is portrayed as a masculine predator by Murdoch, starts to act as a feminine individual in terms of classical bidirectional gender model (Figure 1). He is entrapped in his own passion, metaphorically, similar to Hartley’s situation. He describes his decision to wait as “[s]o, having done my thinking and made my resolution, I had the relaxed sense of an interval, wherein I might rest and gather my strength. Hartley would wait. She would not run away. She *could not* run away” (160). Like Hartley, he could not run and would not run away from his fantasies which imprison him to depths of the masculine consciousness. His mind continues to create fantasies and reasons to capture Hartley, yet he does not take action to rescue her. However, his masculine predator inside his head drives him to implement his plan to abduct her.

Waiting passively forces him to think about Hartley. He cannot prevent himself from thinking about Hartley. Then, he decides to write a letter to her which is the beginning of Charles’ rage for possessing her. His mental status and aggression can be observed in his words. Moreover, his hypocritical approach to Hartley’s situation is evident in his letter. He tries to sound like a lover who only wants to see her happiness by setting her free. He conceals his real intentions by using a critical and aggressive tone in

the letter. Nevertheless, his real intention is to put her into captivity under his roof and his self-centred lifestyle. Charles talks about his letter as:

“If I were to amend and polish it, it might sound insincere and lose its force. And as for self-centred, of course I am self-centred. Let her indeed be sure that I am pursuing my own interests here and not just altruistically hers! Let her know that she can give me happiness by giving herself freedom” (206).

His words are ironically explicit outcomes of his real personality. They are like slips of the tongue. Murdoch intentionally exposes Charles’ mental insufficiency to see his tragedy and by doing so, the deficient nature of his masculine consciousness is emphasised. Murdoch uses this method to highlight her approach to gender issue by “masquerading as Charles”, a male author (Nicol, 1996: 201).

Charles fails again to convince Hartley to leave Ben and live together with Charles and Titus. According to Fiander, “Hartley's resistance to this idea only leads Charles to redouble his efforts” (2004: 97). His passion triggers him and he decides to act instead of thinking. Therefore, he abducts Hartley and keeps her in his mansion. He believes that “she is yet unconscious of what he could offer her” (Fiander, 2004: 97). He believes that by rescuing her, he sets her mind free of fear and limitations created by Ben. His masculine consciousness experiences satisfactory happiness since his fantasies about Perseus and Andromeda myth come true. He embodies the masculine qualities posed by the ancient hero Perseus. Perseus is a figure who can be placed on the extreme point of masculinity on the traditional double-gendered equation (Figure 1). By abducting her, Charles regains his masculinity after losing it against Ben on a psychological battle. Nevertheless, his dream of having a nuclear family collapses after realising Hartley’s discontent for staying.

James tries to convince his cousin to reconsider Hartley’s situation since she is imprisoned in one of the rooms of the mansion. Charles does not give up on her easily since he is power-obsessed as a result of his excessively masculine self-consciousness. His passion for her “is based less on love than on power” and his desire to keep her as his mistress is not a result “of tenderness but of aggression” (Herman, 2001: 555). Therefore, he regains his passion and power with the help of his masculine motives. He decides to make a final attempt to stop Hartley and convince her to stay. However, she tries to escape from the mansion.

“I tried to lift her and to capture one other hands, and then it became too dreadful and too hard to attempt to crush this pinching, kicking animal into submission and I abruptly let her go, and with the impetus staggered backwards, banged into the table and upset the candles” (232).

He tries to tame her like she is an animal. His definitions about her are degrading her and her gender. The animal is a metaphor that is a reference to the traditional view that women are both mentally and physically inferior to men. According to Charles' narration, he is the one that lets her go as he has the power, not her. In the end, she manages to get away from the mansion and rescues herself. Charles fails to stop her and also his masculine power fails to stop a woman physically. He fails to see her real feelings as a result of his masculine consciousness since "the role of memory and imagination, of subjective notions of the past and future—are all under-theorised aspects of the masculine experience" (Robinson, 2011: 17). From the beginning, he is deceived by his own memories about Hartley. He "imbues her with qualities and emotions the text doesn't support"; rather he fantasises about them (Moss, 1986: 229). He ignores the fact that she has left him since she does not want to be with an egoistic person like him. Her dreams are different from his desires. Furthermore, the love story that Charles creates is one of the defence mechanisms people use to avoid "themselves from facing reality" (Martin and Rowe, 2010: 126). After this incident, Charles experiences a sort of disappointment; however, this time he is affected less than Hartley's first departure when they were young. On the contrary, his desires and passion for power are directed towards Titus, the only person that he thinks he can shape according to his dreams. He loses Hartley, his Andromeda, but he still has Titus, the artist's son.

Ben refuses to consider Titus as their real son and underlines the fact that he is adopted when Charles visits their home for the first time. Accordingly, Titus feels the same and does not consider Ben and Hartley as his family. He comes to Charles' place by chance and Charles convinces him to stay. Initially, he is the bait that is used to attract Hartley by Charles. However, after Hartley's escape, he becomes the central concern for Charles. Charles' desire to control people and their fates is a recurrent theme in the novel. Indeed the novel itself is a metaphor of Charles' desire to control his memories and people in his life. Titus is not an exception that has his share from Charles' rage towards the power of controlling people's life.

Titus is an important figure for Charles. Charles is the artist and Titus is his ideal son. He puts Titus into the position of his teenage self. He considers Titus as a tabula rasa version of him which is open to training by his superior and experienced version. Moreover, Titus is his less masculine version Charles' and it makes him easier to control. Charles projects his fantasies on Titus' personality. His youth and vulnerability allow him

to be a prey to Charles' masculine predator. After Hartley, Charles is expected to have a drastic change in character by the readers; or at least, it is the traditional plot of the genre. Conversely, he keeps his masculine consciousness unrestricted and idealises another person to deform or reject the reality. He feels happy when he is with Titus and his youth gives him energy and joy. They have a connection since both of them are in need of a commitment. They are both rejected and despised by the people they love. Charles' consent with Titus' company can be seen in his description of their swimming party.

“He had the effortless crawl which I have never mastered, and in his marine joy kept diving vertically under, vanishing and reappearing somewhere else with a triumphant yell. Equal mad delight possessed me, and the sea was joyful and the taste of the salt water was the taste of hope and joy. I kept laughing, gurgling water, spouting, whirling. Meeting my sea-dervish companion I shouted, ‘Now aren't you glad you came to me?’” (257).

Charles admires Titus' youth and energy by performing aesthetic and difficult moves in the water. He accompanies Titus as if he is at the same age and has the same energy as Titus. Contrary to his mother, Titus seems happy with staying with Charles and this idea makes Charles madly happy. When he asks Titus about being glad of staying with him, Titus' answer is beyond Charles' expectations, “Yes, yes, yes!” (257). Finally, Charles seems happy with his life as he has everybody under his control in his mansion. Moreover, Titus lives freely as he pleases and swims restlessly in the sea until one day the sea brings reality to Charles' life again.

Charles faces many difficulties while he is alone in the sea. Although he claims that he is a master swimmer, due to his physical weakness related to his age, he struggles to handle the sea alone. Nevertheless, he is the only one that knows this fact since he ignores the fact that he is weak as a result of his masculine consciousness. Weakness and passivity are related to lack of power and energy, both of which are masculine gender traits. Charles tries to conceal everything that is related to his physical weakness and his age since as a narrator, he wants to portray himself as a powerful and almighty male figure. However, he fails to save Titus from drowning “out of masculine pride, fails to warn him of the dangers of the current that” he has faced on several occasions (Martin and Rowe, 2010: 126). He says it is not easy to describe what happened after they find Titus dead, yet he describes the scene briefly as:

“He looked so whole, so beautiful, lying there limp and naked and dripping, his hair dark with water, someone had drawn it away from his face, and his eyes were almost closed. He was lying on his side showing the tender fold of his stomach and the bedraggled wet hair of his front. His mouth was slightly open showing his teeth and I remember noticing the hare lip. Then I saw a dark mark on the side of his forehead, as if he had been struck” (387).

The description of Titus is like a description of a painting. His physical beauty and youth are also mentioned by Charles again. The open mouth of Titus resembles Charles' sea monster which is a symbol of his feminine consciousness. Charles also mentions the dark mark on his forehead which indicates the physical struggle that Titus has. It is a symbolic scene since it creates a parallel reading of the sea monster. It is described by Charles' in a masculine perspective; however, it can be interpreted as the feminine consciousness which struggles to come out of the sea of consciousness. The dark mark on Titus shows that even though he has succeeded to come out of the sea, other natural forces haul him to death. After seeing Titus lying dead Charles suddenly rushes to find James, who saves him from drowning earlier. However, there is nothing to do with Titus' case. After realising that, Charles blames Ben for murdering Titus and fails to see that the killer is himself. Therefore, his masculinity kills Titus. Charles' masculinity is his tragedy since it causes him to lose people around him. Titus is the last person that Charles manipulates and drives him to despair.

Charles fails to reach a level of consciousness that allows him to see his tragedy. Even the death of Titus drives him to blame Ben and prevent himself from seeing the reality of the situation. Charles faces several tragic events throughout the novel; however, he does not experience a total character change or enlightenment before James' death. James' effect on Charles' life is immense. Furthermore, James is the only person that comes to his life with his own consent. The other characters in the novel are all drawn to Charles' life by his manipulations and abuses of power. Accordingly, James is the only person that feels real love and connection for Charles. Nonetheless, Charles feels envious and inferior when James is present. The reason behind this is related to the envy of Charles since James is more masculine in the traditional gender scale. However, the death of James is the only incident that affects Charles deeply and changes his character radically. James tries to show Charles that to reach an enlightened consciousness, he "must give up power and set people free"; however, he fails to illuminate Charles' mind when he is alive (Capitani, 2003: 103).

Charles experiences a dramatic change in his character after James' death. He decides to go back to London. His masculine consciousness starts to ease and he becomes less obsessed with the power. Hartley and Ben leave England and settle in Australia. Charles loses the most significant friends after Titus and James' deaths. His solitude becomes his reality. In the end, his illumination emphasises Murdoch's authorial concern



that she wants readers to show empathy towards this tragic masculine hero. Charles realises his own power-poisoned motives behind his actions and criticises himself.

“What innumerable chains of fatal causes one’s vanity, one’s jealousy, one’s cupidity, one’s cowardice have laid upon the earth to be traps for others. It is strange to think that when I went to the sea I imagined that I was giving up the world. But one surrenders power in one form, and grasps it in another. Perhaps in a way James and I had the same problem?” (500).

He admits that he is in a sort of power frenzy when he fantasises about other people’s lives. He also admits the effect of fear in his actions which is unlikely for an excessively masculine narrator. Self-criticism of Charles is a dramatic relief proposed by Murdoch to highlight the effects of masculinity which she uses as a whetstone to sharpen her philosophical concerns over gender roles. Charles confesses that he uses drugs which cause hallucinations and at some point, he says that the sea monster can be a production of such drugs. Ironically, Murdoch uses excessive masculinity to distort the perspective of Charles. Thus, he narrates a story which includes fantasies and misleading descriptions about the other characters. Additionally, he talks about his seclusion as if it is a notion similar to a pilgrimage. He says that his intention behind leaving London is related to his discontent with his power-poisoned life and relationships. From this remark, it is evident that Charles is partly aware of his over-developed masculine consciousness which is dominated by a desire to handle power and use it on the others. He decides to leave London and live by the sea peacefully thanks to his desire to change. The realisation of his masculine consciousness is a result of the gender conflict which is evident in most of Iris Murdoch’s novels. As it is stated in the second and third chapters of this study, Murdoch considers the individual as a genderless creature. Nevertheless, hegemonic masculinity and other social forces affect individuals’ actions and thinking patterns. They do it by using language and language in use is male-dominated. Therefore, there is a conflict in people’s minds about their actions, decisions, and relationships with other people. Charles is a good example of such a gender conflict since his actions are shaped by his masculinity whereas his ideas are affected by his repressed feminine consciousness represented by the sea. Charles also admits that his narration is also contaminated by his mental dilemma about power and abusing people. The artificiality of his narration is highlighted by him as:

“Of course this chattering diary is a facade, the literary equivalent of the everyday smiling face which hides the inward ravages of jealousy, remorse, fear and the consciousness of irretrievable moral failure. Yet such pretences are not only consolations but may even be productive of a little ersatz courage” (483).

At the very beginning of the novel, Charles is indecisive about the genre of his book and he is boastful about his recollections. He considers himself equal to literary figures such as Blaise Pascal. His arrogance and masculinity blindfold him and he is a perfectionist about his writings and observation skills.

“I have considered writing a journal, not of happenings for there will be none, but as a record of mingled thoughts and daily observations: ‘my philosophy’, my *pensées* against a background of simple descriptions of the weather and other natural phenomena” (2).

However, it is evident in Charles’ final remark on the book that the book is nothing but a diary which includes its authors’ subjective judgments. The two extracts radically differ from each other. Charles begins to write the book as a masculine predator and ends up being confronted by his own mistakes and changes drastically. For the first time, readers see Charles criticising himself in an honest way. The words sound like they are not Charles’ productions but Murdoch’s comments on her own creation. Charles’ role as the puppet of Murdoch ends and the philosophical narration, which symbolises a pilgrimage from illusion to the reality of gender-free consciousness, finalises its purpose. His narration fades out slowly and his entries to the book become shorter and shorter. His final remark is important since he talks about pilgrimage. He is curious about the next events that the “demon-ridden pilgrimage of human life” will bring (502). He admits that the human mind is poisoned by demonic thoughts restricting human nature and gender roles can be listed under this category.

James is a dominant figure in Charles’ pilgrimage from illusion to reality. Until Charles reaches enlightenment he struggles to give up his masculine consciousness. After all the losses and disappointments he has experienced, Charles manages to suppress his feminine consciousness and keeps acting as a vile misogynist. Nevertheless, James’ death opens a new path for him. The magnitude of the effect is probably related to James’ virtuous character and his naive approach to relationships. Furthermore, it is also related to their upbringing. It is important to concentrate on Charles and James Arrowby rivalry to analyse masculinity’s effect on Charles’ narration. Therefore, the following part of this chapter focuses on the rivalry and connection between Arrowby cousins.

### **4.3. James Arrowby: a Guiding Spirit**

It is inevitable for a critic or a scholar who studies *The Sea, The Sea* from a literary perspective to be exhausted by analysing Charles Arrowby. His personality, narration, and psychology may attract any reader who is not familiar with Iris Murdoch’s writing

techniques and style. She is famous for creating powerful villains and poor victims. Nevertheless, there are also other major figures in her novels who define the fate of a protagonist or narrator. James Arrowby is one of those prominent characters in Murdoch's fiction. Moreover, he is maybe the first character that overshadows a narrator and the narrator that he overhauls is Iris Murdoch's most famous villain, Charles Arrowby. The qualities that make James overshadow Charles are related to his moral richness. James has an "essential goodness" in his character whereas Charles suffers from "lack of understanding of moral concepts" (Spear, 1995: 89). Therefore, the reader sympathises James' personality and Charles becomes more irritating out of comparison. Besides rivalry, Arrowby cousins have sympathy towards each other, or at least James cares about Charles and tries to protect him. James' importance in Charles' life is understood when James is mentioned in his narration for the first time. James is not mentioned by Charles at the beginning of the novel. His name is mentioned when a letter from him arrives at Charles' mansion. It seems like an unimportant detail at the beginning; however, when James' importance in Charles' life is considered, readers understand that he does not mention him earlier since he "hates and envies James" (Capitani, 2003: 102). The background of this hatred is explained earlier in the second part of this chapter. Nevertheless, a detailed account of James Arrowby is essential to comprehend Charles' pilgrimage.

James' letter to Charles introduces him to the reader. Although James' storyline is narrated by Charles, his moral quality and mental perfection prevent him from abusing Charles. He is not forced to experience Charles' power experiments. However, the descriptions about James carry envy and hatred. After reading James' letter Charles is irritated by the tone of writing and blames James for writing in a "patronizing" tone (56). Furthermore, he starts to explain his views on James.

"[...] I had better offer some longer and more frank account of my cousin. It is not that James has ever been much of an actor in my life, nor do I anticipate that he will ever now become one. We have steadily seen less of each other over the last twenty years, [...] No, cousin James has never been an important or active figure in the ordinary transactions of my life. His importance lies entirely in my mind" (56-57).

Charles' first views on his relationship with James are dominantly affected by his inferiority complex. As a narrator whose masculinity shapes his narration, Charles feels threatened by the existence of such a heroic figure since he tries to portray himself as the ultimate source of the power. Charles' decisions and actions are all predetermined by his fantasies and masculine consciousness. James' existence puts Charles in a passive domain

since the traditional tendency to classify gender depends on the binary oppositions. Charles' active position as a narrator and power addiction is tranquilised by James. Therefore, James functions as a rational guiding spirit for Charles and guides him through his pilgrimage. James' mental superiority endangers masculinity of Charles. According to, James has no place in his life and the only importance of James is given to him by Charles. Nonetheless, throughout the novel, James functions to dilute Charles' masculine fantasies and actions.

Charles is also aware of the fact that his personality fades when he is with James. His desire for power and success may be related to James' success. Their childhood memories are filled with disappointments for Charles since James' family is economically and socially more advantaged than his family. However, he also knows that James is not a person to misuse his advantages over a person. Charles confesses his real feelings for James as:

“[h]e *shone*; and although he was not at all boastful, I increasingly felt myself, and was made to feel, a provincial barbarian when I was with James. I felt a gap between us widen, and that gap, as I more intelligently surveyed it, began to fill me with despair. Clearly, my cousin was destined for success and I for failure” (62-63).

James' and Charles have immense differences when their personalities are compared. Conversely, they have a common passion when it comes to possessing power. According to Capitani, “James [...] is seduced by power, although not of the same kind as allures his cousin” (2003: 104). James uses his power to bring peace and harmony into peoples' life whereas Charles uses it to abuse people for the sake of his fantasies. Capitani explains this difference as:

“[...]he begins to believe that he may be able to employ a kind of "white magic" to restore order to the chaos that Charles creates in Hartley's life and particularly that of her son Titus. James attempts to influence Charles to leave Hartley alone and to restore Titus, who has run away, to his parents.[...] He has a strong influence over Titus, and he exercises a great deal of power over the novel's other characters, in part because of the strength of his personality and what everyone perceives as his true goodness” (2003: 104).

James' effect on Charles' life is explained briefly by Capitani since the events that are mentioned above have the biggest impact on Charles' enlightenment. Furthermore, “James' arrival affects the others strange ways” as he is also respected by them (Tucker, 1986: 384). Whenever Charles is about to make a critical mistake, James always appears somewhere near the action and guides Charles out of the trouble. He does this not directly, but rather indirectly by trying to make Charles recognise his own mistakes. His dialogues with Charles include “wise” remarks (Martin and Rowe, 2010: 128). Charles' apparent

resistance for James' presence in his narration counteracts with his behaviours since James is the only person that he can trust and he only trusts James. James saves Charles from drowning with an enormous struggle in the sea. Therefore, their relationship intensifies as he starts to trust James more. After finding Titus' deceased body, Charles suddenly feels desperately in need of James' help. The only time James fails to perform his magic is after he fails to revive Titus. James is also devastated after Titus dies since maybe for the first time his powers cannot help another person.

James is found dead in his home shortly after this incident. Thus, he physically departs from Charles' life. However, his ideas and the points that are made clear by him keep appearing in Charles' narration. James' death creates an illuminating effect on Charles since he becomes aware of his own egoistic and narcissistic impulses. Metaphorically, Charles begins to embrace his feminine consciousness by submitting the superiority of James' moral values. His masculine consciousness has been in a great war against the idea of James' superiority and this inner conflict drives him to his tragedy that he fails to see the artificiality of his fantasies. In the end, Charles accepts James' importance in his life and says that "[t]here are spiritual beings, perhaps James was one, but there are no saints" (482). James guides Charles through the maze of his own fantasies and brings him to reality. Although Charles narrates his story in a way that readers may confuse the plot as a miserable unanswered love story by a retired stage director, "the heart of this book is the contrast between the artist (Charles Arrowby) and the saint (James Arrowby) [...]" (Burke, 1987: 488).

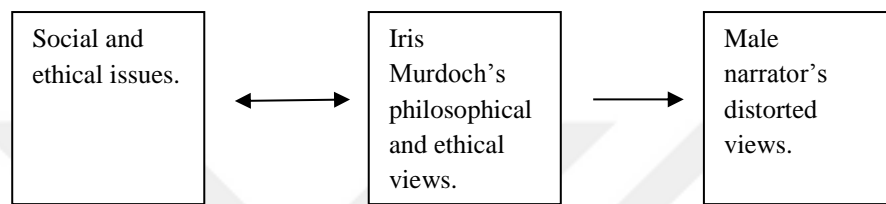
Consequently, *The Sea, The Sea* is a recollection of the memories of Charles Arrowby. His masculinity casts his vision and he fails to act ethically towards the other characters. Misogyny and abuse are the elements that Charles uses to despise others around him. His relationships with both men and women are problematic as a result of his power-poisoned mind. James is the only person that stays with Charles with his consent since other people are mesmerised or captured by Charles to stay with him. The gender conflict within Charles' mind is eased by James since whenever Charles acts with masculine frenzy to realise his fantasies, James appears in the novel and helps Charles by triggering his philosophical insight. James balances the forces in Charles' personality. Therefore, just like the sea, James is an important element in the novel that symbolises Murdoch's spiritually enlightened individual who is free from any predetermined social and psychological restrictions such as gender roles.

## CONCLUSION

Under the umbrella term of Post-structuralism, many of Murdoch's novels were analysed within the perspective of feminism, psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism. Nevertheless, the common misconception about discriminating female writers' works has also affected critics' perception; Murdoch's novels have been predominantly analysed from a feminist perspective which limits these texts to a closed area of women oppression and effects of patriarchy on women. *The Sea, The Sea* questions the existence of fixed gender roles and deconstructs ancient terms such as manhood and femininity to parody or mock such discriminations among literary characters who symbolize the microcosm of the society. Moreover, the impossibility of fixed notions on gender roles and motives are fabricated throughout the novel with unceasingly gender shifting narrator in terms of how he perceives the society from one perspective to another, between masculinity and femininity. Murdoch creates this tension between gender roles by subverting the reality with the help of language. Therefore, poststructural tendencies of Murdoch need to be emphasised to analyse the novel.

As a writer and philosopher, Murdoch is highly influenced by Platonism and Poststructuralism. Her moral values and social perspective, as well as her style, are affected by Platonism. Murdoch considers life as one's "exile from perfection, and [...] as a journey or pilgrimage from illusion to reality" (Milligan, 2012: 170). The reality is a kind of enlightenment on the conscious level. Furthermore, the reality is hard to perceive since people are enchained to the illusion of apparent and existing phenomena. Language is behind this confusion between illusion and reality. According to Murdoch, it is hard to find a fixed meaning in the language since "language transcends its user" and its nature enables various interpretations which are problematic (1992: 193). Murdoch's close connections with poststructural school enable her to create her unique style of fiction. *The Sea, The Sea* presents a narration which is utterly contaminated by the over-masculinised consciousness of Charles Arrowby. The language is used in a speculating manner. Murdoch's method to use a male voice enables her to create a Platonic dilemma between illusion and reality. As readers are detached from the image of a female writer, Iris Murdoch, they start to question ethical concerns that are proposed by the narrator's caricatured character. This allows readers to focus on the issues put forward by Murdoch and "results in a new reading of the text" that elaborate Murdochian concepts (Nicol,

1996: 196-197). This method is similar to Plato's metaphor of carpenter in *The Republic Book X*. While talking about the illusory aspects of the art, Plato resembles the artist to a painter who makes a painting by imitating an imitation created by god(s). The carpenter makes the bed by imitating the *idea* of the bed and painter imitates the image of the bed in his art. Therefore, the artist's creation becomes detached from the truth. Similarly, Murdoch uses male narrators to create a sense of detachment and artificiality in order to emphasise his philosophical and ethical concerns. Figure 4 illustrates the Murdochian masculine narration which is a replica of Plato's metaphor.



**Figure 4. Murdochian Masculine Narration**

The figure elaborates Murdoch's technique by which she successfully shifts the emphasis on social and ethical issues without being judged as a female writer. The artificiality of the narration is established by vulgar and egoistic male narrators' explicit abuses of power of narration. The movement between narrations on the figure is important. Murdoch and the issues that she aims to emphasise transcend each other whereas the male narrator's views are only limited to his characterisation. Therefore, male narrators become a tool for the deconstruction of traditional literary tendencies.

*The Sea, The Sea* is a novel that deconstructs traditional gender roles by representing the tragedy of its excessively masculine narrator. Murdoch's views on the gender issue are different from many other critics since she believes that people embody common qualities rather than separate gender traits listed in Figure 1. Murdoch initially defines her gender concept as an "androgynous" one (qtd. in Rowe, 2007: 163). The androgynous gender model is illustrated in Figure 2. However, Murdoch becomes dissatisfied with the idea of "categorizing human beings and limiting their autonomy" to predetermined roles of masculine and feminine (Rowe, 2007: 163). Therefore, Murdoch supports a model illustrated in Figure 3 which supports her idea that "there are no genders" but traits related to biological classifications; indeed, these traits are

embodied by both groups (Rowe, 2007: 165). Thus, deconstruction of the traditional gender roles becomes a prominent tool for Murdoch.

The novel is an experimental attempt of Murdoch to bend, twist, and deconstruct traditional gender roles and emphasise the importance of comprehending this phenomenon. Charles Arrowby is an egoistic, boastful, and abusive misogynist who is created by Murdoch to create a sense of detachment between reality and the illusion. Charles is poisoned by hegemonic masculinity and he uses power to attract people around him since he is alone as a result of his personality. Charles' decision to leave London and live by the sea is a result of his desire to change. However, before changing drastically, he needs to experience tragic events that are related to his masculinity. He is a desperate person "who has achieved worldly success at the expense of his spirit" (Spear, 1995: 95). The sea functions as a symbol to represent his repressed feminine consciousness and he fails to see the reality within the sea. His fantasies drive him to abduct Hartley whom he thinks is the key to his happiness. However, his plan to revive his love and create a nuclear family turns into a tragedy which is "a conclusion that the reader, but not Arrowby, is largely able to foresee" (Denham, 2001: 616). Nevertheless, Charles manages to handle the failures thanks to his guiding spirit and cousin, James Arrowby. James functions as a tranquiliser for Charles' excessive masculinity since James makes Charles feel inferior which is an effect that eases the gender conflict in his mind.

Charles' pilgrimage from illusion of his masculine fantasies to the reality of his genderless consciousness is not a linear one. Charles idealises Perseus which is an ancient hero and symbol of masculinity, yet his actions are far from heroic traits. His fantasies are representations of his failed masculinity. Furthermore, Murdoch uses masculinity as a whetstone that sharpens the gender-biased approach. Throughout the novel, Charles' repressed feminine consciousness tries to emerge with the symbols presented by the sea. Most of the occasions, Charles fails to see the reality. Murdoch, intentionally, shifts the gender scale within Charles' mind to highlight the artificiality of "gender roles" (Weese, 2001: 634). Moreover, the shifts between feminine and masculine consciousness deconstruct the traditional narrative techniques as his "pilgrimage is far from straightforward, but involves going forward, back and also within" (Nicol, 2004: 145). In the end, Charles experiences a moral change and it happens after the death of James who symbolises a higher spiritual consciousness. By accepting his feminine qualities which are inherent in his nature, Charles manages to reach a higher level of self-



consciousness which is free from any predetermined social and linguistic prejudices. Therefore, Murdoch's plan to deconstruct gender roles from a male narrator's perspective is related to her philosophical concerns. As an artist, she tries to imitate social forces that shape people's minds.



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