Magic Realism in Iris Murdoch’s novels
Master’s Diploma Thesis

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2011
I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
I would like to thank my supervisor, prof. Mgr. Milada Franková, CSc., M.A., for her valuable comments and suggestions during the writing of the thesis.
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Preface

In this thesis I would like to prove that Iris Murdoch (1919 – 1999) can be regarded, to a certain degree, as a magical realist writer. For this purpose I chose three of her novels *The Sea, the Sea* (1980), *The Green Knight* (1993) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989), which share characteristics with magical realist fiction. Despite the fact that Iris Murdoch is not a typical magical realist author, her style of writing offers a new contribution to the genre which I would like to develop.

The thesis includes four chapters. In the first chapter, I focus on the genre of magical realism and my aim is to point out its history as well as its main characteristics. The origin of the term is explained, the role of magical realism not only in literary but also in cultural studies is suggested. Magical realism is an important phenomenon in postcolonial discourse, therefore its role in this field is discussed. Despite magical realism is mainly connected with Latin American fiction, I specify characteristics which are shared in magical realist fiction worldwide and to clarify the genre I also differentiate magical realism from similar genres such as fantasy, science fiction and surrealism.

The second chapter is devoted to the author Iris Murdoch. As she was a prolific writer as well as an acclaimed philosopher, I focus on her literary and philosophical contribution to literary studies. In this part, I discuss her position within literary streams, her philosophical doctrine as well as her literary criticism. Philosophical concepts which Iris Murdoch analysed under the heading 'moral philosophy' are also pointed out because the ideas are reflected in her novels and can be used to explain magical realist elements in her works.
In the third part, I focus on the three novels where I analyse magical elements in the novels. All three novels include a magician who causes the supernatural in his surroundings. Apart from this, other magical realist elements and supernatural occurrences are analysed in detail. In the last sub-chapter of the analytical part, the connection between Iris Murdoch’s philosophy and the magical elements in the three novels is suggested, where I discuss the intermingling of Murdoch's philosophical concepts and the magical.

In conclusion, I prove that Iris Murdoch’s novels belong within magical realist fiction by matching examples from her fiction to the characteristics of magical realism. In literary studies, magical realism is still not a clear-cut genre which offers the possibility to extend its scope with new authors and thus help to specify its position and my aim is to include Iris Murdoch among such novelists.
1. Magic Realism

“In recent critical studies, magic realism has been designated variously as a critical concept, a category, a literary current, a tendency, movement or trend, a discourse and a phenomenon” (Hegerfeldt 46). However, despite its connotation with literary and cultural studies, the term was initially used in connection with painting. The term was coined by Franz Roh in his 1925 book *After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting*. Roh used the term ’magic realism’ in connection with post-expressionist art – it referred to the shift from Expressionism to Realism in which “an exaggerated preference for fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects” pertains (Roh 8). The intermingling between the real and the fantastic was the reason for the shift of the term to literary studies as well which I will discuss in the following chapter.

1.1. Magic Realism in Latin America

Magic realism is closely connected with Latin American fiction, as it was in this area that magic realist literary works started to appear. Slemon points out that magic realism is closely associated with two periods in Latin-American culture – the first one being the 1940s and 1950s, “in which the concept was closely aligned with that of the 'marvellous' as something ontologically necessary to the regional population's vision of everyday reality", and the latter one in the late 1950s and 1960s, which is considered to be a boom period in Latin-American fiction (407). However, the history of the phenomenon is much more complicated so let me focus on the development of magic realism in Latin America.
The term was imported from Europe to Latin America via translation of Roh's book into Spanish in 1927. The author Arturo Uslar Pietri (1926 – 2001) is credited with applying the term 'magic realism' to a certain kind of Latin American fiction, this suggestion appeared in his book *Letras y hombres de Venezuela* (1948). However, the term was spread after the release of professor Angel Flores's study *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction* (1955) (Lukavská 13-14).

Since its first connotation with literary studies in Latin America, the term 'magic realism' has never been clearly defined and a general agreement about this phenomenon lacks. There are two important opinions suggesting a definition of this term. The first one comes from Angel Flores who claims that, “Magic realism is actually an amalgam of reality and fantasy“ (Lukavská 14, my translation). Flores assimilates magic realism to fantastic literature and thus he degrades magic realism to a derivative of European literature (Lukavská 20). This view was opposed by Luis Leal who defines magic realism as an attitude to reality, which offers to a creative writer a deeper knowledge of the world and he refuses identification with any other literary stream (Lukavská 14). Leal's view corresponds to Alejo Carpentier's term 'marvellous real', which he formulated in the preface to his novel *The Kingdom of this World* (1949). Carpentier's 'marvellous real' "presupposes an attitude to reality which is based on belief in the magical which helps to realize the marvellous in life" (Lukavská 19). Carpentier points out the aesthetic privileges, the marvellous, of American reality which are unique for the continent and which writers reflect in their works, therefore they are authentic and real (Lukavská 19).

In order to clarify the term magic realism a conference of Iberoamerican Literature was held in Michigan in 1973. But the results remain contradictory as both
versions, Leal's as well as Flores's, were accepted as definitions of magic realism (Lukavská 17). After that several studies appeared which tried to clarify the term, for instance, in the 1970s Juan Barros divided all existing concepts of magic realism and their representatives into three groups (Lukavská 21). Until now, the ambiguity of the term 'magic realism' remains.

Despite the lack of agreement about magic realism, the prominent authors of this genre, such as Garcia Márquez or Asturias, accepted the term as the most accurate description of their literature. Garcia Márquez does not try to specify the term, but his description and comments of his literature largely reflect Leal's definition. For Garcia Márquez the magic was the most accurate mode of representing reality (Simpkins 148). He claims that our lives are surrounded by the fantastic and it is a writer's task to depict the magical as the real. Each narrative is based on a real event and even the most fantastic element has a realistic base (Lukavská 27-29). This view is reflected in Garcia Márquez's novels, which are prominent examples of magic realism. Other protagonists of magic realism in Latin American fiction are Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Marius Vargas Llosa, José Donos and Augus Roa Bastos.

1.2. Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse

In literature as well as in cultural studies, magic realism is a very important phenomenon. It reflects the dichotomy between colonial and imperial mode. Slemon points out the association of the term magic realism with Third World countries and the seeming incompatibility with texts written in English which are characterized with “the more established genre systems”. As such magic realism can be seen as carrying a
“residuum of resistance toward the imperial centre and to its totalizing systems of
generic classification” (407-408). Another important view comes from Faris who
defines realism as a European export and associates it with imperialism and puts it into
opposition with magical realism whose post-surrealistic resources “question
homogeneous systems in the name of plurality” (180). Hegerfeldt supports the claim
that magic realism is a postcolonial phenomenon and suggests the ways in which it re-
thinks the Western world: by means of “rendering metaphors, stories, dreams or
magical beliefs real on the level of the text, magic realist fiction re-evaluates modes of
knowledge production generally rejected within the dominant Western paradigm”(3).
But she admits that Western writers might as well participate in this project. Moore
supports this claim by pointing out features of magical realist texts that are connected to
postcolonialism, such as hybridity and "the inharmonious arenas of such opposites as
urban and rural, and Western and indigenous".

We can acknowledge that magic realism is mainly a postcolonial project, but not
exclusively. If we consider British fiction, there are magic realist works to be found as
well and there are great authors of this genre, the most prominent ones being British
Indian writer Salman Rushdie, English feminist writer Angela Carter and Louis de
Bernieres.

Nevertheless, certain characteristics of difference can be found. Whereas in
South American fiction, as Alejandro Carpentier points out, the marvellous can be
perceived as something "inherent in the myths and superstitions of non-European
populations" (Delbaere-Garant 252), in Britain, the appearance of magical realism is an
outcome of the fight between reason and the irrational dominating the Western culture
since the Enlightenment. Carpentier names this dichotomy as the 'marvellous reality' of
the Caribbean and the artificial way of 'provoking the marvellous' in the Old World (Delbaere-Garant 252). The cause for this dichotomy can be attributed to the different social forces that created the authors in the respective countries. Angela Carter remarks that in the Caribbean the use of countryside and folklore are sufficient for creating a magical realist story, but Britain is different as the author has to invent much more, “we don’t have an illiterate and superstitious peasantry with a very rich heritage of abstruse fictional material” (Haffenden 81-82). John Fowles supports this claim by saying that, “the main problem with magical realism in this country is a moral, or puritanical one“ which means both, “‘bend' reality and be really serious“ (qtd. in Delbaere-Garant 252), that is to say the inability to accept the bent reality as a fact.

Nevertheless, despite these variations from the pathfinder Latin America writers, the works of magic realism share common features in the whole world. In the following chapter, I would like to point out the characteristics of magic realism which can be applied to any magic realist fiction irrespective of its origin.

1.3. Magic Realism: Theory and Classification

Now that the position of magic realism in literary and cultural studies has been outlined, let me define what magic realism in literature is.

In *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2008), we find the following definition:

As recently as 2008, magical realism in literature has been defined as "a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report, designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance. The fantastic attributes given to characters in such novels —
levitation, flight, telepathy, telekinesis — are among the means that magic realism adopts in order to encompass the often phantasmagorical political realities of the 20th century. (Baldick)

This definition is very thorough but let me add one more point to it. The term 'magic realism' itself is an oxymoron and the opposite which one can see in the term is reflected in the texts as well. As Slemon puts it, there are everpresent two opposing discursive systems meaning “a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy [...] with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other” (409-410). Thus the two modes of narration exist one next to the other at an equal level which is reflected in the novels as well, as the authors do not provide a solution to the mixture of the two modes and thus the reader must accept the reality as encompassing 'the real' and 'the unreal'.

Let me point out what the basic characteristics of magic realist works are with the most prominent examples from the following works: Gabriel García Marquéz's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1998), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1996) and Angela Carter's *Wise Children* (1992). The most comprehensive classification was suggested by Wendy Farris, the Professor of English and Comparative Literature at University of Texas at Arlington.

1. "The text contains an irreducible element of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them“ (Farris 167). This is the basic feature of all magic realist texts. The author is not obliged to explain what the magic element means; the reader must accept it as a part of reality. For instance, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1998), there appear supernatural motifs such as levitation or flying carpets as a part of normal life.
2. “Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory” (Faris 169). Detailed descriptions of magical elements as well as reality underpins the equality of both worlds; via the detailed descriptions of magical elements the unreal is connected with the real. For instance, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1998) it is the description of the yellow butterflies that appear with Mauricio Babilonia.

3. “The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events – and hence experiences some unsettling doubts” (Faris 171). This is because the author is not obliged to explain the occurrence of the unreal events and he/she leaves the reader in doubts how to interpret the contradiction and at the same time create symbiosis between the real and unreal in the novels. The example is the apparition of Grandma Chance's ghost before Nora and Dora go to Melchior's 100th birthday in the novel *Wise Children* (1992).

4. "We experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds" (Faris 172). This is the intermingling between the real world and the magical world. As Lee points out, “These two realities are connected by his dreamlike state; it is this small bit of magic that allows these multiple planes of reality to be possible that would not exist otherwise“ (Lee). The best example is José Arcadio languishing half-dead and half-alive for years under a banana tree in the courtyard of his house in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1998).

5. “Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space, but our sense of identity as well” (Faris 174). Sense of time and space are shaken and larger than life characters appear in the novels. At one point they are normal realistic characters, but on the other hand, they dispose of supernatural characteristics. For instance in *One
Hundred Years of Solitude (1998) there is the character Melquiades who disposes of supernatural powers.

6. "The reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic – a closing of the gap between words and the world, or a demonstration of what we might call the linguistic nature of experience" (Faris 176). For instance, in Midnight’s Children (1996), the metaphor for the making of fictions is apparent in the partial view obtained by a Muslim doctor of his patient through a hole in a sheet.

7. “The narrative appears to the late-twentieth-century adult readers to which it is addressed as fresh, childlike, even primitive“ (Faris 177). For instances, there appear miracles such as the basket in which Saleem travels from Banladesh to Bombay in Midnight's Children (1996) or Remedios' ascension to heaven in One Hundred Years of Solitude (1998).

8. "Repetition as a narrative principle, in conjunction with mirrors or their analogues used symbolically or structurally, creates a magic of shifting references“ (Faris 177). Faris suggests an example of the appearance of ghosts/ghostly people in the stories which are situated between the two realms of the real and unreal or life and death, thus they form the crossing section between the two worlds (178).

9. "A carnivalesque spirit is common in this group of novels. Language is used extravagantly, expending its resources beyond its referential needs" (Faris 184). Faris also claims that the most carnivalesque example is the novel Midnight's Children (1998) which adopts “the style of a Bombay Talkie a cat of thousands, songs, dances, exaggeratedly sumptuous scenarios, horrifying blood and gore“ (185).
Other characteristics are the following: hybridity, metamorphoses, metafictional dimension, antibureaucratic position where the magic functions "against the established social order" (Faris 179) and last but not least, the psychological dimension is also important. Faris claims, that "Jungian rather than a Freudian perspective is common in magical realist texts; that is, the magic may be attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dreams or visions“ (Faris 183).

1.4. Variations of Magic Realism

There are various offshoots which require a more precise definition of magic realism; Jeanne Delbaere-Garant suggests the following terminological constellation:

1. 'psychic realism', which is “magic realism generated from inside the psyche“. The examples are William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, or Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (251).

2. 'mythic realism', which can be applied to “all the countries that still possess 'unconsumed space', where 'magic' images are borrowed from the physical environment itself, instead of being projected from the characters' psyches“. Such an area is for instance Canadian West (253).

3. 'grotesque realism' is "a combination of North American tall tale, Latin American baroque, and Bakhtinian 'carnivalesque". Grotesque elements are used by popular tellers who tend to “amplify and distort reality to make it more credible“ (256). The author also suggests that 'grotesque realism' can be used not only for popular oral literature but also for “any sort of hyperbolic distortion that creates a sense of}
strangeness through the confusion or interpenetration of different realms like animate/inanimate or human/animal“ (256).

Faris points out, that Jean Weisgerber makes another distinction between two types of magical realism: the 'scholarly' type, which “loses itself in art and conjecture to illuminate or construct a speculative universe“. This type, as the author suggests, is particularly connected with European writers. The second type, 'the mythic or folkloric type', is connected to Latin America. Faris points out that this division coincides with a similar distinction suggested by Roberto González Echavarria. He distinguishes “the epistemological, in which the marvels stem from an observer's vision, and the ontological, in which America is considered to be itself marvellous“(165).

1.5. Magic Realism versus Similar Genres

It goes without any doubt, that magical realism forms "a strong current in the stream of postmodernism" ( Faris 165). However, for some critics it is difficult to differentiate this genre from the neighbouring ones, such as fantasy, science fiction or surrealism, thus as Slemon states, "some critics have chosen to abandon the term altogether“ (407). Therefore I will point out the main differences between these genres and magical realism and I will prove that the border line is possible to set.

Let me choose Surrealism first. Farris claims, that magical realism is "a major legacy of Surrealism“ (170). The main contrast is that magical elements in Surrealism tend to escape interpretation and thus are not associated with material reality but focus on the psychological domain. However, as Bowers claims, magical realism focuses on material reality and places it into the realm of imagination.”The ordinariness of magical
realism's magic relies on its accepted and unquestioned position in tangible and material reality” (22-24).

The major difference between magical realism and fantasy is that fantasy creates a new world, but magical realism creates the magical or the supernatural in the world we know (García 89). Amaryll Beatrice Chanady points out that as opposed to magical realism, fantasy perceives the supernatural elements as problematic and what complicates it even more is the authorial reticence, which is present in both genres. But whereas in magical realism, the authorial reticence helps to integrate the two modes, in fantasy, it problematizes the perception of the story (30-31). Thus fantasy aims to accentuate the uniqueness of the extraordinary, but magical realism tries to incorporate the extraordinary within the realistic mode of story-telling.

Last but not least, the difference between science fiction and magical realism should be pointed out. Bowers argues that "the science fiction narrative's distinct difference from magical realism is that it is set in a world different from any known reality and its realism resides in the fact that we can recognize it as a possibility for our future". The author also suggests that as opposed to magical realism, the realistic setting is missing (Bowers 29-30).

It is possible to differentiate magic realism from similar genres, therefore I suggest that magic realism is a fully-fledged genre.
2. Iris Murdoch

Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) ranked among the leading literary figures of the twentieth century. Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin in 1919 and spent her childhood in London. She was educated in private progressive schools. After taking a BA in classics at Oxford and working for the civil service and the UN, she began an academic career as a philosophy lecturer at Oxford which continued until 1963, when she took up writing full-time. During her studies at Oxford she became a member of Communist Party, which she later resigned in disillusion. She married the scholar and critic John Bayley in 1956. She was created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1987 and she has been presented with numerous honours. Towards the end of her life she suffered the Alzheimer's disease and died in 1999 (Wheeler 186).

She was famous not only as a prolific novelist but as an acclaimed philosopher as well. With her 26 novels, 6 plays, 2 poetry collections and 5 philosophical books, she gained an international reputation. Three of her novels were awarded a literary prize: *The Black Prince* (1973) received the James Tait Memorial Prize, *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974) was the winner of the Whitbread Literary Award and *The Sea, the Sea* (1978) was awarded the Booker Prize.

Iris Murdoch entered the literary scene in the 1950s and was mistakingly associated with the Angry Young Movement. She was not interested in social protest but as Byatt claims in philosophical games and in the nature of fiction. Byatt also suggests that the only thing which Murdoch shared with the writers of Angry Young Movement was "an interest in rapid comedy, and the long English tradition of the farcical episodic novel" (*Iris Murdoch* 5). In the 1950s, Murdoch published her first philosophical work *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), where she expressed her critique of Sartre's
existentialism. In this period, her first novels appeared: *Under the Net* (1954), *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *The Sandcastle* (1957) and *The Bell* (1958). Wheeler points out that already in her first novel Iris Murdoch "sought to establish the need for new literary, narrative, thematic and stylistic conventions leading to a new kind of realism" (186).

The 1960s was an era in Iris Murdoch's writing characteristic by a shift from realism to the mystical. As Franková claims, Iris Murdoch diverted from realism and included myth and symbol bordering on the supernatural. She mainly focused on "free characters" and wanted to find out the author's role in this respect (*Britské spisovatelky* 147). Todd claims that the novels of the 1960s were received the least favourably (20). In this period the following novels were published: *A Severed Head* (1961), *An Unofficial Rose* (1962), *The Unicorn* (1963), *The Italian Girl* (1964), *The Red and the Green* (1965), *The Time of the Angels* (1966), *The Nice and the Good* (1968) and *Bruno's Dream* (1969). Murdoch also wrote two plays: *A Severed Head* (1964), *The Italian Girl* (1969).

novels such as creating of types and schemes, unrealistic realism and the relationship to Shakespearen plays (Britské spisovatelky 147-148).

In the 1980s, popularity of Iris Murdoch with literary critics started to sink. There still appeared new observations which contributed to the general view of Iris Murdoch as a remarkable writer of the 20th century but there were no new discoveries about her writing (Britské spisovatelky 148). The novels of this period include Nuns and Soldiers (1980), The Philosopher's Pupil (1983), The Good Apprentice (1985), The Book and the Brotherhood (1987), The Message to the Planet (1989) and three plays were written as well: The Servants (1980), Acastos: Two Platonic Dialogues (1986), The Black Prince (1987).

The last decade of her literary career brought another two philosophical works, Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (1992) and Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature (1997). Iris Murdoch wrote two last novels: The Green Knight (1993), Jackson's Dilemma (1995) and one poetry collection Poems by Iris Murdoch (1997). The 1990s was a period which was typical for plurality in novels and Iris Murdoch contributed to this stream with her novels. As Franková claims, the most important part of her philosophy, which is tolerance to the 'otherness', was in accordance with the current development in British novel (Britské spisovatelky 148). Thus Iris Murdoch was among the most important novelists of the second half of the 20th century.

2.1. Iris Murdoch within Literary Streams

In academia, there is little agreement about to which literary stream Iris Murdoch's novels should be classified. Nevertheless, the myriad ideas suggest that Iris
Murdoch's style of writing is a special one, which deserves a specific approach. As Wheeler claims, "Not only is there little agreement as to whether her novels and her style are 'good'; there is even less agreement as to how to classify her, as realist, ironist, experimentalist, romantic or moralist" (187). Franková also points out that her works were variously classified: philosophical, symbolic, moralist, didactic, realistic, fantastic, gothic and allegorical (Britské spisovatelky 145). Trying to classify her writing we can even come across such terms as 'rococo plots', 'surrealistic comic fantasies', which reflect Murdoch's techniques of experimental writing and playing with traditional realism (Wheeler 186).

It is definitely true that her writing includes all of the elements which appear in the particular genres, but needless to say, none of them fits absolutely her novels, as in some features her writing always escapes the classification. What follows from this is that Iris Murdoch belongs somewhere between realism and postmodernism, and I am going to enlarge the suggestions as I claim that she can belong to the literary stream of magical realism and let me explain why.

Franková claims that Iris Murdoch's first three novels belong within the post-war realistic revival tradition (Human Relationships 26). Despite the fact that the early writings of Iris Murdoch are connected to realism, and Byatt even points out that Iris Murdoch can be put into the same group with Jane Austen or George Eliot (Iris Murdoch 5), which I strongly doubt, Iris Murdoch started to adopt a more philosophical and mystical style of writing. Wheeler claims that Iris Murdoch "sought to establish the need for new literary, narrative, thematic and stylistic conventions leading to a new kind of realism" (186).
In her novels Iris Murdoch did not want to purely reflect reality but she focused on moral and religious themes in modern society and she deals with these topics in reflection of her own philosophy. Murdoch's writing is rich in connotations, allusions and ambiguity which makes it exceptional and standing out of the realistic novels. Franková also suggests what gives to her novels the Murdochian hallmark, it is “her rich blend of serious moral concerns, playfulness of form despite her continual commitment to the traditional novel, and exuberant inventiveness” (Human Relationships 7).

Taking this into account, she could belong within the stream of postmodernism, but her writing is more accessible than the postmodern experimental writing and as opposed to the postmodern writing, her experiments reflect her own philosophy but do not cross the border to become experimental in the radical postmodern sense. Wheeler points out that Iris Murdoch “has made the dichotomy between realism and modernism or experimental writing almost redundant […] Murdoch has subjected realism to systematic scrutiny, parody and self-consciousness“ (186). In this way, she diverted from realism but she never needed to include the extreme experiments, as she still wanted to make her novels understandable and realistic. Franková also suggests that Iris Murdoch is put in this way between two millstones, “she is not experimental enough for postmodernists and, on the other hand, seems to be too experimental for realism“ (Human Relationships 26). What she proposes is a middle way between realism and modernism in the sense of experiments with the mystical and supernatural. This new kind of realism included mystical and supernatural elements, but still keeps the realistic mode and this is the proper feature of magical realism.

Iris Murdoch's novels have not been discussed much in terms of the magical realist stream, which is a mistake, as her novels do partly correspond to this stream. One
can say that the experimental, many times supernatural features, which appear in particular in some of her novels which I am about to analyse, function in the novels as her philosophy in practical, real life. She did not want to mix philosophy with writing, but nevertheless, the questions which she discussed in her philosophy appeared in the novels in the form of magical, supernatural and mystical. As Conradi claims, "Her ingenious style of realism, in combining fantasy with a meticulous naturalistic rendering of detail, shares something with surrealism" (6) and he even suggests that magical realism is the best descriptive term for her works (Conradi 6). Wheeler suggests that Murdoch has found a new way of writing, “neither realist nor experimental in the traditional senses of those words – which is remarkably accessible, yet also rather subversive"(187) and as such I would not be afraid to suggest that Iris Murdoch's writing could be partly magical realism.

In this work I will analyse three of her novels on which I will try to prove this statement. But before that, let me focus on Iris Murdoch’s philosophy and opinions because they are reflected in her writings and are connected to magical realism.

2.2. Iris Murdoch as a Philosopher

Iris Murdoch was not only a successful novelist but she was an acclaimed philosopher as well. As Conradi claims, "It is rare to find someone who has excelled, as has Murdoch, both as a novelist and as a moral philosopher“ (15). As a philosopher, Iris Murdoch was interested in philosophy of morals and she proclaimed herself a Platonist, because of her adoption of the concepts of morals and the idea of Good as discussed by Plato.
She came to distrust Sartrian philosophy and British philosophy equally, as they were insufficient to come to terms with the idea of a complete modern man. As she said, “What I feel sure of is the inadequacy, indeed the inaccuracy, of utilitarianism, linguistic behaviourism, and current existentialism in any of the forms with which I am familiar” (The Sovereignty 76). Iris Murdoch encountered Sartrian existentialism in 1945 when she worked with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. She criticised this philosophy in her book Sartre: Romantic Rationalist (1953). Her critique is also reflected in her novels in the figures of the culturless outsider heroes. Conradi claims that “What excited her about it was the primary place it gave to a consideration and depiction of experience, a subject then absent from Anglo-Saxon philosophy, and its comparative willingness to tackle problems of value and morality. It was the phenomenological and moral bias of the existentialists that excited her” (11). Iris Murdoch perceived existentialism as “an unrealistic and over-optimistic doctrine and the purveyor of certain false values” (The Sovereignty 46-47). She criticised this stream because of its central focus on human self-assertion, which was according to her a remainder from Romanticism and it did but support the supremacy of the individual will which is insufficient in the whole picture of the world. She felt the urge to focus on people as impenetrable human beings and acknowledge and turn attention away from the “the dry symbol, the bogus individual, the false whole” (“Against Dryness” 294). She also acknowledged and feared that we live in "a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the dogmas, images, and perceptions of religion have lost much of their power" (“Against Dryness“ 287) and she was trying to point out that the most important thing in human life is the recognition of what is Good.
Iris Murdoch was influenced by the great French mystic Simone Weil, from whom she borrowed the concept of 'attention' and with whom she shared views about morality and virtue. Unlike Sartre, Weil "does not sentimentalise the position of being radically denuded and outside society" (Conradi 13) and her main argument which inspired Iris Murdoch was expressed in *Need for Roots* (1952). "the affliction and degradation caused by the destruction of roots was such that it deprived all but the saintly person of the capacity to change or 'unself' from inside. […] Only for the saintly can virtue have no fixed address, in Weil's philosophy and in Murdoch's fiction" (Conradi 13).

Throughout her moral philosophy, Iris Murdoch was searching for the answer to the idea what is meant by being good and within this scope she was discussing the relations between various concepts connected to morals which I would like to focus on in the following chapter.

### 2.3. Iris Murdoch's Philosophical Concepts

Iris Murdoch was a philosopher of morals. She defined, developed and interrelated the following concepts under the heading of moral philosophy: goodness, freedom, morality, religion, virtue and duty, beauty, Eros, love, art, attention, fantasy and imagination. In this chapter, I will sum up Iris Murdoch’s philosophical stream of thoughts concerning the most important concepts which are reflected in her novels.

The pivotal concept in her philosophy is the idea of 'goodness' which is something to which all men in the age of lack of religion should aspire. Though undefinable and invisible, this concept should be perceived as the ultimate truth of life
as it is devoid of time, space and the inner selfish self. It is a sovereign of any other
topics, as Iris Murdoch says, "It is a concept which is not easy to understand partly
because it has so many false doubles, jumped-up intermediaries invented by human
selfishness to make the difficult task of virtue look easier and more attractive: History,
God, Lucifer, Ideas of power, freedom, purpose, reward, even judgement are irrelevant"
(The Sovereignty 92). Iris Murdoch warns against distorted shadows of 'goodness'
which appear in various forms such as money or power and might lead one on the
wrong way. The sovereignty of 'good' does not exclude its connection to other concepts
but it should inspire other ideas such as 'love' which respond to the magnetic force of
the 'good'. As she says, "Good is not a god, but Idea which inspires love" (Metaphysics
14).

'Love' is a desire or a tendency, it is a form of energy which can be used either in
the correct - that is unselfish and impersonal way, which is mainly experienced in
relationship to art or it can be distorted by human selfishness and possessive violence in
relationships of human beings. Iris Murdoch warns against the false variation of love
but does not give up the hope that human beings are capable of mutual unselfish love, as
she argues, "It can prompt a process of unselfing wherein the lover learns to see, and
cherish and respect, what is not himself" (Metaphysics 17). For Iris Murdoch, only
unselfish love is the true love. It is possible to experience the true love in connection
with art because art "guarantees our existence, while removing our petty egoistic
anxiety" (Metaphysics 81). Good art transcends the egoistic reality as it cannot be
possessed thus one can experience the true, unselfish love when facing a piece of good
art.
Other concepts which Iris Murdoch developed were 'fantasy' and 'imagination'. She put them into contrast, the first one “mechanically generating narrowly banal false pictures (the ego as all-powerful)” and the latter one “freely and creatively exploring the world, moving toward the expression and elucidation (and in art celebration) of what is true and deep” (Metaphysics 321). The faculty of 'fantasy' is connected with self-delusion, necessarily escaping the truth and 'imagination' is perceived as a positive concept, which is a good path to the revelation of what is true and thus good.

The overhead concept of 'morality' is a uniquely human arena. For Iris Murdoch it is a pivotal aspiration of all human beings, as she says, "It is 'inescapable and fundamental" (Metaphysics 26). Morality should be seen everywhere in the world, beginning with fundamental deeds as purification of consciousness. Each human being possesses a moral energy, which is a function of how one understands or sees the world (Metaphysics 293-4), and in order to cross the barrier of methodological egoism, which is inherent in all human beings, one must perceive morality as the achievement of becoming good, but the question remains how to do it.

The answer might be found in faith in God because Iris Murdoch claims that morality is closely connected with religion. It is because religious faith preconditions the focus from the egoistic self to something higher which aims human attention to the idea of goodness. As Murdoch claims, "Belief in a personal God seemed a prime guarantee of general morality" (Metaphysics 81). Nevertheless, Murdoch perceives faith in God as a psychological fact which is a source of the good energy. Such energy can be drawn from other things which are valuable, such as virtuous people, great art or the idea of goodness itself (The Sovereignty 56), which is important to realise in the age when people lost faith in God and where some other moral guide is necessary to find.
But how to find out what is good and what is bad? For this purpose Murdoch specifies 'Eros', a concept taken from Plato, as the powerful force capable of drawing one's attention to the good or to the bad. "Eros is the continuous operation of spiritual energy, desire, intellect, love, as it moves among and responds to particular objects of attention, the force of magnetism and attraction which joins us to the world, making it a better or worse world: good and bad desires with good and bad objects" (Metaphysics 496). This energy is present in the world and it depends on each being how to use it.

Murdoch desires that all people focus their attention on being good and she calls for a philosophical doctrine of moral philosophy which would help people specify and realize what is moral and thus good. She claims that "I also feel sure that moral philosophy ought to be defended and kept in existence as a pure activity, or fertile area, analogous in importance to applied mathematics or pure useless historical research" (The Sovereignty 76). Moral philosophy should focus on human nature which has discoverable attributes and these should form a base for a discussion of morality. Iris Murdoch also calls for an ethical system which should function as an ideal, as she says, "Ethics should not be merely an analysis of ordinary mediocre conduct, it should be a hypothesis about good conduct and about how this can be achieved" (The Sovereignty 78). Murdoch also finds it necessary to develop clear and realistic terminology, which would defend itself in the new era full of scientifically minded empiricism which is not capable of coping with human nature.
2.4. Iris Murdoch: Literature and Philosophy

Iris Murdoch's philosophical ideas are reflected in her comments on current literature and point out where she excels and differs. She considered the 20th century novels, which she distinguished as 'crystalline' or 'journalistic', as failing to grapple with reality ("Against Dryness" 291). In a conversation with Brian Magee she said, “I think literature is about the struggle between good and evil, but this does not appear clearly in modern writing, where there is an atmosphere of moral diffidence and where the characters presented are usually mediocre" (27).

She also criticised the modern idea of man who is a rational being, totally responsible for his action, without faith in God, for whom the only virtue is sincerity and there is not transcendent reality. She considered this existentialist hero insufficient and contrasted him with the mystical hero, who believes in goodness without religious guarantees. Iris Murdoch complained that “we no longer see man against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world. For the hard idea of truth we have substituted a facile idea of sincerity" ("Literature and Philosophy" 290). Iris Murdoch's main contribution in literary field is, as Franková claims, the connection between tradition and search for new forms under the heading of 'ethics' (Britské spisovatelky 148).

In her contribution to literary criticism, Iris Murdoch distinguished philosophy and literature as two distinctive branches, which should not be mixed. In the interview with Brian Magee she claimed that as opposed to literature, philosophy is missing the personal voice and self-expression of the writer, it does basically only one thing.
Literature offers space for self-expression, it is full of magic, tricks, playfulness and deliberate mystifications. From the reader's point of view, he can entertain himself, he is left the space to play in literature, but in philosophy there is not such a space (“Literature and Philosophy” 4-5).

Despite the fact that she wanted to keep these two areas aside, her philosophical ideas are present in her writing. Franková claims that her philosophical ideas are indirectly reflected in her novels as if they were put into practice and tried whether they function or not (Britské spisovatelky 152). It is as if Iris Murdoch tried to keep the novels in the literary sphere, without intermingling of philosophy, but her novels include long passages where one can notice the penetration of her theories. Her philosophical ideas are reflected in the thoughts of the characters she creates, and this is where she probably found the stage for her thoughts and philosophical ideas.

Iris Murdoch admitted that there is one thing which connects literature and philosophy – both of them are truth-seeking and truth-revealing (“Literature and Philosophy” 11) and this concept connects her philosophy and her novels. She is also aware of the fact that despite she was feeling an “absolute horror” of putting her theories into the novels, they might appear there. As she claims, “I might put in things about philosophy because I happen to know about philosophy” (“Conversation” 19-20). Needless to say, it is mainly in the parts which are on the borders between the real and the unreal where her philosophy enters the novels.
3. Magic Realism in Iris Murdoch's Novels

Iris Murdoch experimented with the employment of fantastic, mythological and magical elements in her novels. She incorporated unlikely incidents, science fiction, gothic and supernatural elements into a realistic mode of writing. As Hartley claims,

The novels of Iris Murdoch are characterized by intricate and fantastic plots, which frequently introduce a cast of eccentric characters, often Bohemians, artists or intellectuals who are thrown together under the influence of mysterious and dominant mystical figures, or sudden overwhelming passions. The novels are filled with rich symbolism and humour, laced with intellectual discussion about great moral issues drawing on existentialism, religion and mythology. (327)

Nevertheless, the intrusion of the supernatural elements does not disturb the realism of the story and as in magical realist fiction, the magical coexists with the real.

In this analysis I would like to focus on the novels *The Sea, the Sea* (1980), *The Message to the Planet* (1989) and *The Green Knight* (1993) from Iris Murdoch's later work and I want to prove that they belong to magic realist fiction. Other novels from this author might be included as well, but these chosen novels are the most illustrative ones of this genre. The magical elements in Iris Murdoch's writing are partly connected to her philosophy, therefore the last part of this analysis is devoted to the connection between her philosophy and the novels.

3.1. *The Sea, The Sea*

The novel *The Sea, the Sea* (1980) is written primarily in a realistic manner but on occasions there are mixed elements of fantasy and supernatural within the precisely described scenes. As Byatt claims, "the novel becomes a curious patchwork of those of Iris Murdoch's novels which could be described as magical fables and those which are a
First of all, I would like to focus on realism in the novel. A realistic novel must fulfil several criteria: there must be a reliable narrator and characters, the mode of writing as well as the setting and the plot must be realistic too. Let me start with the narrator. The narrator of the novel, as well as the main protagonist, is Charles Arrowby. The reader knows, that he or she deals with a diary of Charles Arrowby, who decided to withdraw from his life and enjoy solitude in a house near the sea. The narrator explains his intentions and addresses the reader from time to time, which incorporates the reader into the story and it creates a close connection between Charles and the reader, which establishes the credibility of the story. What also makes Charles a reliable character is that he provides a detailed account of his appearance as well as of his background, thus the reader can imagine Charles and gets a picture of his whole life. For instance, Charles says, “I am Charles Arrowby and, as I write this, I am, shall we say, over sixty years of age. I am wifeless, childless, brotherless, sisterless, I am my well-known self, made glittering and brittle by fame" (The Sea, the Sea 3). Next, Charles provides the reader with a detailed account of his everyday life. We are informed what his everyday activities include – walking in the surroundings, cleaning the house, going shopping, visiting the pub Black Lion and mainly writing his diary.

In the novel, as in other novels of Iris Murdoch, there is a lot of attention put to the minute description of the way of preparing food, which functions to introduce Charles's other characteristics. As Conradi claims, “These recipes are entertainments which have a more than culinary interest. They establish Charles as partly a puritan, who hates mess, a squeamish soul, who intelligently makes a ceremony out of small
pleasures" (234). The important feature which underlies realism of the story is that there is never a hint that Charles could be a liar and try to deceive the reader. Byatt points out that, "Charles's very style is an indication that a major subject of this tale is illusion, self-delusion, wish-fulfillment, the impossibility of seeing the truth" ("The Murdoch Theatre" 9). Charles lives in illusion when it concerns his relationship to other people, which the reader realizes, but he is not a liar. The reader knows Charles's nature and all his behaviour in the novel corresponds to it – he is to a certain extent predictable and thus real because in a realistic story, the reader should know the protagonist and should be able to anticipate the character's possible behaviour. Charles meets this criterion.

As the story proceeds, the narrator diverts from the description of his everyday life and the plot turns around his encounter with other people – in particular, his old flame Hartley and other intruders who visit him. Besides writing down his experience with those people, Charles recalls and shares with readers his past experience with them which adds realistic mode to the story, as it makes the other characters real and imaginable. The reactions of the outer world in the novel to the protagonist also reflect the personality of Charles. We know Charles from the other's perspective as well, in particular via letters and dialogues with his friends. There is no doubt that he is an obsessive, manipulative, self-centred man which the reader knows and which the other characters support by their vision of Charles. The other characters in the story can be considered real as well, the only exception is Charles's cousin James, who I will focus on later.

The mode of writing is 1st person narrative and this corresponds to the intention of Charles to write his diary. In the novel, Charles jumps from one topic to another, he wants to note down his past, but he interrupts it with present events. He is unable to
keep a line and this adds to the realistic mode of the novel, as his diary follows his real life which is unpredictable and sometimes worth more attention than the past. As he says, “I thought I would write it as a continuous narrative without too many reversions to the present tense. So I am writing my life, after all, as a novel! [...] so my novel can still be a sort of memoir and a sort of diary” (The Sea, the Sea 153). From time to time, he seems to put an order into his writing, for instance when he introduces the theme of the following text, “I will now describe the house” (10). He also wants to keep the reader focused and keep the realistic mode of the story, when pointing out the time span, “Another day has passed since I wrote the above“ (The Sea, the Sea 6). He is also considerably open and is not afraid to put pen to paper whenever he feels it appropriate or necessary. The diary offers many direct speech dialogues, which might be misleading. However, Charles ensures the reader that whatever he writes is true, “I have in particular, and this may be a professional attribute, an extremely good memory for dialogue, and I am sure that a tape-recording of my candlelit conversation with Hartley would differ but little from what I have transcribed“ (The Sea, the Sea 239). Charles also reminds the reader that they are reading his past experiences; for instance, when he notes down his fall into the sea, he reminds the reader that they are still dealing with his diary, “As I am writing this story it will be evident that I survived“ (The Sea, the Sea 365). All these comments from Charles should keep the reader aware that they are dealing with his diary and the reader is in a position of a confidant.

As far as the setting of the novel is concerned, the more details are provided about the place where the story takes place the more the story is believable, imaginable and thus real. The novel The Sea, the Sea includes a plethora of realistic details covering the description of the surroundings of the main character such as his house, the sea, the
village and people in the village. The names of the few places, which are mentioned frequently during the whole story, add to the realistic mode of the writing – the readers are familiar with his house Shruff End, the only pub Black Lion, the Raven Hotel and the place where Hartley lives Nibletts.

However, the realistic, detailed, descriptive mode of writing is throughout the novel disturbed by supernatural interventions, overripe fantasies, theatrical illusions, Tibetan magic, delusions and mind games. On the one side, a realistic approach to life is a part of Charles's character, but on the other side, he seems to miss reality by his imaginations about the situations and people around him, which could be a consequence of his long life in a theatre where the life is full of illusions and fantasies. He does not seem to be able to return to a normal life and perceive reality of human relationships as they are. He acts as a director in his daily life and plays with the people around him. He believes and imagines human relations which are not real, in particular in connection with Hartley, as he is obsessed with his idea that she suffers in her marriage and loves him. The detention of her in his house reminds us of some theatrical story, as if she were a princess kept in detention in a tower waiting for redemption. Charles considers himself to be the saviour of her life, but little does he realise, that he is the incarcerator.

Charles is also full of fantasies which sometimes edge on gothic elements. Despite his down-to-earth character, he has some imagination about the presence of ghosts. For instance, Charles once admits that, "I put some cushions into the empty alcove, the place where I had dreamt there was a secret door through which Mrs Chorney would emerge to reclaim possession of her house“ (“The Murdoch Theatre“ 293). Nevertheless, Charles is a down-to-earth person, he does not believe in any supernatural apparitions and always tries to find a reasonable explanation to the magical
around him. Charles lives in illusion, but he is not prone to believe in any supernatural elements around him which he cannot control.

The fantasies, theatrical illusions and mind games are present in the story as a tool to understand something greater than the self. Aside from them, there are supernatural, almost gothic and horror interventions, which appear all of a sudden on several occasions in the story, which could cause a very strong disruption of the realism of the novel but as they do not have a lasting effect on the development of the plot and can be considered only as a sideline, the realistic mode is preserved. As Conradi points out, “The 'explanation' of the unearthly occurrences early in the story has two functions. It relaxes us to find that we are in a world in which the uncanny can be explained, and prepares us for the much more uncanny events that are to follow […] The sheer narrative intensity takes us over the implausibilities” (236). When the magic elements appear, the narrator and with him the reader who has no alternative but to identify with Charles, are quite taken aback and this shared experience between the narrator and the reader keeps the story realistic, as no one can really believe the supernatural element.

The reaction of the main protagonist to the magical in the story is to find a reasonable answer, which is where the realistic and the supernatural mix and as it seems, the reason mostly wins, but not definitely. To each of the magic elements, the narrator tries to find a reasonable answer, but as the story proceeds, the magical is accepted as a part of life, which is where the story meets magical realism.

The supernatural occurs in the story basically in three forms. First of all, Charles believes his house to be haunted. The second and the most striking form of the magical is the appearance of the sea monster. Last but not least, the mysterious Buddhist cousin James is another magic element in the story. Let me focus on these elements one by one.
There are some suggestions, that the house Charles lives in is haunted, which is where the magical intermingles into the realistic story. The narrator admits that he can hear some soft footsteps in the attics above, but as he is a down-to-earth person, he finds a reasonable solution to it, as he says, "Of course the house is full of little creaking straining noises, even on a windless night, any elderly house is, and draughts blow through it from gappy window-frames and ill-fitting doors" (The Sea, the Sea 18). This explanation characterises Charles and his relationship to the supernatural, he would not believe in ghosts or any other supernatural apparitions. This makes the other, genuine magical apparitions stand out as real and there is no need to doubt it. Before I focus on the real supernatural interventions, let me point out some more accidents, which seemed to be supernatural but which were explained. This is the mysteriously broken vase and broken mirror which was perpetrated by the witch-like revengeful character Rosina, who wanted to scare Charles. It is a huge relief for Charles to find out that the things were broken by Rosina, but there still remains one ghostly apparition unexplained,

I looked up and was for a moment perfectly sure that I saw a face looking at me through the glass of the inner room. I sat absolutely still, paralysed by sheer terror. The vision was only momentary but, although I cannot now describe the face, very definite. Perhaps it is significant that I cannot remember the face? (The Sea, the Sea 68-69)

Even though Charles is scared by this face he considers two reasonable explanations of this apparition – it was either a reflection of his own face or the reflection of the full moon, but anyway, neither of the solutions seems to be a plausible explanation. Charles gives up finding the answer and considers it an optical illusion.

Nevertheless, this scene returns in his dream, when he sees that Hartley hangs herself on a stocking. As her feet are above the floor, her face is in the same height as was the
apparition's face. This connection between dream and reality is a typical magical realist element.

The two most prominent examples which clearly correspond to magical realism are the apparition of the sea monster and the magical figure James. The most striking is the appearance of the sea monster, which emerges all of a sudden from the sea. Charles describes it as follows,

Out of a perfectly calm empty sea [...] I saw an immense creature break the surface and arch itself upward. At first it looked like a black snake, then a long thickening body with a ridgy spiny back followed the elongated neck. [...] 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. (The Sea, the Sea 19)

This appearance at the very beginning of the story is quite perplexing for the reader, because while the narrator describes his retired, relaxing life and his intentions to write a memoir of his life, there appears this sea monster. At this very moment in the novel, the realistic mode of writing is very strongly disturbed. With the apparition of the sea monster the narrator is as stunned and shocked as the reader and after admitting, that he found the courage to write this accident down after several days, he tries to find a reasonable solution to it. Charles calms himself down, that the sea monster was either a big eel or only his imagination. The most acceptable solution to this sea serpent is, according to Charles, the after-effect of LSD, which he experienced a long time ago. Thus the narrator concludes that it was only a hallucination and frees his mind from it and the story proceeds in a realistic manner. As the sea monster does not influence the development of the story and Charles continues to describe his everyday life, the realistic mode is preserved. Nevertheless, the sea monster reappears in the story on several occasions.
During the story, Charles is at some moments very careful about the sea and he finds himself look for the sea monster. He also associates the sea serpent with mythological beings – a dragon and a witch. At one point, Charles calls the sea serpent “coiling worm” and claims that 'worm' is an old word for a dragon. In another situation, he sees in the witch-like character Rosina the sea monster, “I suddenly then, as I was staring at her, saw a vision: it was as if her face vanished, became a hole, and through the hole I saw the snake-like head and teeth and pink opening mouth of my sea monster” (The Sea, the Sea 105). Another situation when Charles remembers the sea dragon is when he examines Titian's picture of Perseus and Andromeda, where Perseus is going to fight a sea dragon. On seeing this painting, Charles feels terrified again. Towards the very end of the story, the supernatural element of the sea monster flows to the surface not as hallucination or fantasy, but as a reality and this is the typical magical realist feature. Charles remembers encountering the sea monster at the very bottom of the sea, when he almost drowned.

I had seen a strange small head near to mine, terrible teeth, a black arched neck. The monstrous sea serpent had actually been in the cauldron with me. [...] But now I could recall the black coiling thing, very close, reared over me and quite unmistakable in the dim light, its head and neck for a moment outlined against the sky. I saw in memory its green luminous eyes. The sight had lasted for seconds, perhaps a second, but it had been clear and not to be doubted. Then after that second had come the blow on the head. (The Sea, the Sea 433-434)

The detailed description underpins the real magical element, which appears in the story. At this moment, the narrator has absolutely no doubt that the sea monster is real and accepts it as a fact. But as this accident happens towards the end of the story, it does not cast an influence on the realism of the story and it rather makes the reader accept the supernatural as a part of real life. The acknowledgement of the supernatural as part of everyday life is the core of magical realism.
Another magical being which creates a connection to magical realism and which also reflects Iris Murdoch's philosophy is Charles's cousin James. He is a typical character in Iris Murdoch's novels who is on the verge between realism and mysticism. James is a mystical figure in this story, he is not only saint-like, but he has a magnetic personality which influences people around him and he is the one who has supernatural powers. As Conradi points out, "He is more than a catalogue of eccentricities but is certainly equipped with various small signs, or stigmata, of his spiritual status" (240). James is the second most developed character in the novel. James is a person who follows Charles's life since childhood, as they were cousins. However, those two have not met for quite a while and when James appears in Charles's life again, he plays a crucial role. The relationship between Charles and James reflects the Murdochian dichotomy between the saint and the artist. Charles is the artist and in comparison with James, he is very immature and there are many suggestions in the novel that James is a saint-like, spiritual person. First of all, Charles is not capable to describe his appearance in detail, as he says, "His face is unmemorable, by which I do not mean dull, it is indeed a rather intense face, but I mean that when I picture it in absence I can only conjure up a set of features, not a coherent whole. Perhaps it is just not a very coherent face" (The Sea, the Sea 174). This suggests the fact that James is a spiritual person, he is not an ordinary man as he eludes the detailed, physical description. Charles admits the dichotomy between them, he acknowledges that one of them is more powerful and superior to the other, "When I was young I could never decide whether James was real and I was unreal, or vice versa [...] Somehow it was clear we could not both be real; one of us must inhabit the real world, the other one the world of shadows" (The Sea, the Sea 36).
As opposed to Charles, James acquired better education, knows more languages, is proficient in painting, communicative and literary talented.

Charles respects James and at the same time he is jealous of him as he is aware of his inferior position. This is also reflected in the presence and lack of religion in those two characters. As Charles points out, “We had both of us acquired that vague English Christianity which disappears in adolescence” (The Sea, the Sea 65). However, James converts to Buddhism and finds in this religion a path of life, but Charles does not have any faith. James's faith supports his spirituality and in his character Murdoch's vision between the connection of eastern religion and mysticism is reflected, “Eastern art has not been so 'thingy' or concerned with complex completeness; and eastern philosophy and religion are more evidently mystical” (Metaphysics 7) Thus James's religion is partly an explanation of his supernatural qualities. Another thing which adds the magical quality to James is that Charles's encounter with him is connected with some magical element – one of them is when Charles stands in the gallery watching the painting which reminds him of the sea serpent and another encounter happens with a theatrical background with the foghorn noise from the sea which reminds Charles of the wooden clappers used in the Japanese theatre. These elements are typical of magical realism.

As far as the relationship of James to other people is concerned, we know that Charles is jealous of him, because his friends seem to respect him much more than Charles, as he admits, “My desperate state was caused partly by the presence of James, who seemed to be a centre of magnetic attraction to the other three” (The Sea, the Sea 328). James is the one who influences and creates special feelings in people around, for instance between him and the general Ben happened sort of a “military telepathy”. Titus
is also influenced by him but cannot explain why, which underlies the spiritual magic of James, “It's funny, I feel as if I’d met him before, and yet I know I haven't. Perhaps I saw him in a dream” (The Sea, the Sea 328). James makes people react in a right way, he persuades Charles to give back Hartley, he somehow makes Titus appear in the village and thanks to him, Peregrine admits his attempt to kill Charles.

The most striking instance of magical realism connected with James is when he saves Charles's life after his fall in the sea. After Charles sets to writing after his rescue, he describes in minute details his feelings while drowning but he admits that there is something which he cannot remember. He is aware that James saved him, but in the course of time there appear proofs that there must have been some magic behind it. First of all, the explanation that a wave lifted Charles up from the sea is implausible, as the hole into which Charles fell was too deep. James gave him the kiss of life, but afterwards, he was too exhausted to be able to do anything else, “James was, rather surprisingly, still in bed. He had slept, on and off, for many hours. Whereas I, who had had the real ordeal, was now feeling better. I went up to see him” (The Sea, the Sea 382). This total exhaustion suggests some extra output of energy, which is connected to spirituality.

The memory comes back to Charles when he finds his notes which he wrote immediately after the accident. In this situation, Charles and the reader are again faced with the supernatural together, so the credibility of this magical element occurrence is undoubtful. Charles reads in his notes, that “James saved me... But he was not standing on anything. One moment he was against the rock as if he were clinging onto it like a bat. Then he was simply standing on the water. And then...” (The Sea, the Sea 468). This wakes in Charles other memories about this accident and this is the apparition of James
as a beast. Charles is quite sure to have seen him as a lizard or a bat walking on the water and he gives us a detailed account about this apparition, which makes it real,

Then I saw James already half-way down the rock, sort of kneeling against the side of it, and coming down like some animal. The bat image was not quite right, he might have been more like a lizard, but the point was that he was not climbing down with footholds and handholds like a man, he was creeping down on the smooth surface like some sort of beast. [...] Then James, as he crept right down into the churning whirlpool, detached himself from the rock like a caterpillar. ....I could now recall the feel of his hands as he touched me, and then the extraordinary sensation which I described as rising ‘in a lift’. I could not remember being pulled or dragged up, there was no sense of effort.. My memory of James’s exploit was certainly no hallucination. (The Sea, the Sea 468)

It is the very climax of James's appearance in the novel and Charles as well as the reader must accept him as a magical being. Charles acknowledges the power of his cousin James, when he says that, “only today I had concluded that no human force could have raised me. My cousin had rescued me by the exercise of those powers which he had so casually spoken of as 'tricks" (The Sea, the Sea 468). Charles also contemplates the connection between James and the sea serpent, but he does not try to find any solution. Charles also admits that James had the power to choose his time of death, “No, I could not attach this ‘casting off’ to any ordinary or present cause. James’s decision belonged to a different pattern of being, to some quite other history of spiritual adventure and misadventure” (The Sea, the Sea 474). Thus the magical and spiritual is accepted as part of the real.

James as a spiritual being redeems Charles, as after he saved his life using magic Charles feels the touch of destiny and realizes another dimension in life than his obsession with his own wishes. After this accident, Charles starts to be free from Hartley. He all of a sudden starts to contemplate the spiritual and supernatural, he seems to be abandoning his earthly preoccupations and realizes something which is the way to
the truth. For instance, he starts to contemplate the co-occurrence of the good and the bad in connection with white and black magic and the existence of demons which James talked about. Charles also wonders about the death of Titus in connection with this, “Had one of these demons, with whose help James had saved me, taken advantage of James’s collapse to seize Titus and crash his young head against the rock?” (The Sea, the Sea 471-472). Thus James redeemed Charles and set him on a new way of life.

A very powerful element in the story connected with magical realism is the sea. It is presented in the novel as something vast, incomprehensible and certainly uncontrollable. In the context of the novel, its meaning must be connected to the fact that much of what surrounds us is actually beyond our control. The sea is a place which discloses to Charles the supernatural, as the sea monster appears in the sea, James's mysticism is revealed in the sea as well; the sea is a grave for Titus and moreover, Charles experiences the bridge between life and death in the sea.

Falling, what the child fears, what the man dreads, is itself the image of death, of the defencelessness of the body, of its frailty and mortality, its absolute subjection to alien causes. Even in a harmless fall in the road there is a little moment of horror when the faller realizes that he cannot help himself; he has been taken over by a relentless mechanism and must continue with it to the end... (The Sea, the Sea 365)

The sea is a symbol of life limits as well. As Byatt points out, “It kills, supports, entices, delights and terrifies, reminding one that those things exist, things that Wallace Stevens called 'inhuman, of the veritable ocean'” (“The Murdoch Theatre“ 9). Throughout the story, the sea is frequently described by Charles. Besides casual descriptions of the conditions of the sea, it is also ascribed human qualities, in particular, having a mood, as Charles says,

The sea was like liquid jelly, rising and falling with a thick smooth dense movement. Then some time after Titus returned from his swim it began to change its mood. A brisk wind started to blow. The smooth swell became
more powerful, the waves higher and stronger. I could hear them roaring into the cauldron. (*The Sea, the Sea* 356)

It is obvious, that the sea raises respect and the sea, the natural element in the story, functions as a bridge between the reality and the supernatural.

Though this novel is not a typical magical realist novel, as for instance *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1996), there are features which very precisely correspond to magical realism. The acceptance of the magical as existing next to the real undergoes a development in this story and finally, the supernatural is accepted as part of everyday life which is where this novel meets magical realism.
3.2. The Green Knight

*The Green Knight* (1993) is one of the most accomplished works of Iris Murdoch. This novel is special as the background for this story is inspired by the medieval poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* thus the expected presence of the mystical and magical falls partly within the scope of the legendary story. The connection between the chivalric romance and a 20th century story opens space for Iris Murdoch to reflect on moral concepts of justice and mercy whose essence is timeless and thus this novel offers a scene where Iris Murdoch evokes her moral philosophy as well. As in other novels, a mystical, larger-than-life character appears who causes the main line of the story. In this novel, the supernatural and the magical is present not only in the surroundings of the magician, but it is connected with other characters as well. The co-existence between two universes sets this novel within the tradition of magic realism.

As in the other novels of Iris Murdoch, the customary closely knit circle of friends is disturbed by a magnetic personality, who is perceived in various ways from a mad man to a God-like being. In this novel, the mystical person is Peter Mir, whose presence in the lives of the group of friends is caused by an accidental encounter with two brothers, Lucas and Clement. Peter Mir received an almost lethal blow with a bat from Lucas who was about to kill or frighten Clement. The reason for this action was hatred and jealousy of Clement's favoured position in the family during their childhood, as Lucas was an adopted child. After this accident, when Peter is thought to have died, Lucas explains this attack as self-defence against a thief. The court settles the case accordingly and Lucas leaves the town to make sure that the matter is over. However, after a certain time, Peter reappears and starts to demand retribution.
Peter Mir enters the novel as an unknown stranger watching the house of Joan's family, which is the basic setting for the story. The first description of Peter in the novel is as follows, "He was a tall robust man wearing a trilby hat and a mackintosh, just folding up his green umbrella. He certainly did seem to be watching the house" (The Green Knight 19). After his encounter with the perpetrator Lucas, Peter demands justice and he also wants to replay the initial scene in order to remember what he forgot. The second scene is prepared for him and it helps Peter to find his lost Buddhist faith. Concerning his call for justice, he demands that Lucas or Clement tells the truth to the whole group of friends and he also requires that he becomes a member of the fellowship as retribution for his suffering. The first requirement is not met because Clement prefers to defend his brother and endorses the general view of Peter that he is mad and that he lost his mind. However, Peter is allowed to enter the world of the group of friends and he astonishes them. Nevertheless, the newly born friendship lasts only briefly, as Peter is found by his psychiatrist Sir Edward Fonsett and retreats. After a certain time, Peter dies in the clinic. The typical Murdochian pattern occurs in this novel – after the magician's death there remains a question mark over the extraordinary being which opens the gate to magical realism.

Peter is on the verge between the real and the supernatural, as Antonaccio argues, "As a luminal figure, he participates in both worlds but cannot be clearly located. [...] He does not fit in the assemblage of characters; apparently, he does not want to – his will is other-oriented, and what he perceives in people is their moral, spiritual, or allegorical being" (166). The main reason for his appearance in the story is his call for justice - not only for himself to disprove the claim that he is a thief but for Clement as well on whom the evil act of murder by his own brother was almost
perpetrated. He tries to explain to Lucas that his behaviour was evil-like and deserves punishment.

Their encounter is an allegory of meeting of two powerful forces in the world – the good and the bad. The bad is characterized by hatred, jealousy and torture and the force of the good springs from the effort to punish the bad and make it aware of its ill deeds. However, Peter is not a forthright representative of the good until a magical moment of acquiring his faith again, because his initial motive to address the bad is partly his own wish for retribution. The pivotal moment when the good wins in Peter occurs during the second arranged scene when he finds his lost faith. In the scene, there are present not only the initial participants, but also Bellamy, a character who is looking for God. Bellamy prays for Peter to remember what he forgot and the prayer is followed by a magical moment, “He saw Peter Mir as if he were burning, only he was not being consumed, he was simply composed of light, and grown taller, a pillar of light, burning, shining. In this second there was a devastating crash, a deafening sound of tumbling smashing destruction” (The Green Knight 281). After this magical moment when Peter regains his lost faith the bad revengeful side is defeated in him and he addresses his enemy on good terms. Peter exchanges his idea of punishment and retribution for forgiveness and reconciliation. As he writes in a letter to Lucas, “My desire for revenge, an eye for an eye, the humiliation and destruction of my enemy, is now understood by me as an impulse of unenlightened egoism, a submission to determinism, an evil fantasy, which I now hereby repudiate and make to vanish” (The Green Knight 307). The good wins over the bad, as Lucas is devoid of hatred of his brother. The magical event was not sufficiently explained – Clement suggested that Peter was struck by a
lightning, but the detailed description of the event suggests that it was a sign from heaven which was brought to the elected person, which is a magical realist element.

Peter's exceptionality is suggested by his appearance which diverts from general descriptions of the other characters and also by the special places which he abides at or visits. Clement compares Peter's physical appearance to an animal-like being, "Clement thought, he smiles like a dog. He has proud nervy nostrils like a horse, and his hair is like a close pelt, and he has big prominent dark eyes" (*The Green Knight* 125). This description underlies his extraordinary character. The places which Peter abides at or visits are as secretive as his own personality. One of the places where Bellamy encounters Peter is at the pub called *The Castle*, which is not a usual pub. Bellamy describes it as follows, "He thought, it's all so bright and clean and empty, it's like science fiction, it's like in a spaceship, loss of gravity, all movements slow, like swimming" (*The Green Knight* 170). Another place which is connected with Peter is his own house. When Bellamy and Clement visit it for the first time, they find the abode unsettled as there lacks any evidence of a permanent resident. At first this special setting raises question of Peter's human-like needs, but later on, this strange empty house is explained as we know that he intentionally avoids the house because he is on the run from a psychiatric clinic.

Peter's position out of the ordinary and real world is also disclosed when he appears in the role of a healer. This is a typical Murdochian hallmark, as the magicians in her novels are ascribed the extraordinary ability of healing the incurable. Peter manages to partly cure Harvey's impaired foot, which is described in the novel as follows, "He took Harvey's hot swollen foot in both his hands and held it firmly. [...] Harvey felt the relief [...] He felt an electrical thrill in the sole of his foot. Then it
seemed as if an electric shock, then another, passed on up his leg. The shocks were warm, slightly painful, but exhilarating" *(The Green Knight 338)*. Peter promises to continue in healing the foot, but as he dies, the question mark remains whether he would be capable of the magical healing or not. Harvey's state improves considerably, but as this action is not discussed any more it is left up to the reader to decide how to explain it.

However, the reader is prone to believe in his extraordinary qualities because of his magical influence on other characters as well. The most prominent one is Bellamy, who is lost in his faith and who is looking for a destiny. In Peter, he can see an angel, a God-like person who can redeem him. Bellamy requires from him help, he asks Peter to enter his life like a God-like being. Peter understands Bellamy but admits that he has not such a power any more, “I am sorry, perhaps once I could do such things, perform such miracles, but now I cannot do them any more“ *(The Green Knight 171)*. Peter's magical qualities are considered as possible until the last scene, which shatters his credibility. After the disclosure that Peter ran away from a psychiatric clinic and after admitting that he was a liar about his occupation, the possibility of him being mad is open. As in other novels, the extraordinary qualities of the magician might be ascribed to madness, but since the magical elements are not disproved as they are witnessed by other characters, the magical wins over the reasonable.

Apart from Peter's character, in this novel there are other magic realist elements. The most striking one is Moy's telekinesis ability described as follows, “Lately however she had developed a curious power, that of making small objects move simply by looking at them with a certain concentration. She had discovered this talent by accident, she even knew a scientific name for it, telekinesis “*(The Green Knight 109-110)*. She has
a very close relationship to nature which is shattered after a swan attacks her. This bad experience might have been a result of her losing the telekinesis ability later on in the novel. Nevertheless, the ability to move stones in the realistic background of Joan's family is a proof of magical realism.

Another magic realist element present in this novel is the carnivalesque scene at Joan's house during Moy's birthday party, where everybody wears a mask which best corresponds to their personality. Thus Louise wears a gentle, mild mask, Clement's mask is his dress borrowed from the theatre reflecting his lack of imagination, Joan puts on a heavy make up which reflects her witch-like character, Harvey comes in a military mask reflecting his inner fight with his impaired foot. The most interesting scene is the encounter of the two magical figures, Peter and Moy. Peter wears the most scaring mask of all, Moy is the first one to see it and she is frightened by the apparition, "It was a bull: a big savage bull with great curling horns and huge wild dark eyes fixed upon her" (The Green Knight 209). Moy prepares for herself an elaborate mask reminding of the face of an owl. They decide to enter the company together, Moy leading Peter as her pet, reflecting the mythical scene of a beast and a beauty. This carnivalesque scene, in which the masks function as symbols of the personalities of the characters, and the mythical allegory connected with the two magical beings of the beast and the beauty, are characteristics of magical realist fiction.

In this novel, dreams and reality frequently mix. Dreams are described in details and they reflect the character's inner thoughts and offer a view into their souls. Sometimes the dreams function as premonitions of future happenings, as it was in Clement's dream prior to the attempted murder, when he dreamt about Lucas giving him a poisoned chalice which caused his death. In this case, the dream is a premonition of
future, which is another magical realist element. The premonition of future happening
occurs in connection with another animal character in the novel, the dog Anax. The dog
can perceive that Moy is in danger, as he starts to run towards the sea where Moy
jumped and wanted to drown. He saves her life. In this novel, there is a very interesting
passage when the space is left for the dog’s thoughts. Iris Murdoch's insight into non-
human mind is another magic realist element.

As mentioned at the beginning, this story was inspired by the medieval poem *Sir
Gawain and the Green Knight*, whose plot is as follows. The Green Knight appears at
New Year's Eve at Camelot where King Arthur and his knights are having a feast and
offers a challenge of a beheading game. Whoever cuts off his head with the Green
Knight's golden axe must appear in one year and one day at his place to have his head
beheaded in return. Sir Gawain accepts the challenge and cuts off his head, but the
Green Knight collects the head and retreats with repeating Gawain's promise. Looking
for the Green Chapel, Gawain comes to Bertilak's castle where he stays for several
nights. He accepts a game by his host, which lies in exchanging all things which will be
acquired during each day. Bertilak hands in his trophies after each day's hunting and Sir
Gawain gives him kisses which he received from the lady of the castle. However, he
fails to hand in a magical girdle which is supposed to protect him against any evil. After
his encounter with the Green Knight, who turns out to be Bertilak, Gawain gets three
feigned blows, the last one causing him a small cut on his neck as a punishment for his
broken promise to exchange all presents. Gawain promises to wear the girdle as a
reminder of his shame.

The novel *The Green Knight* (1993) draws on the main themes of the medieval
story. As Franková points out, “Murdoch retains the outer framework of the Beheading
Game of retribution and mercy, the themes of virtue and truth and certainly the enigmatic mood. The rest is jumbled, reversed or hinted at by allusions" ("The Green Knight" 79). Iris Murdoch offers a discussion of moral topics and points out the fight between the good and the bad, as mentioned above. Between the two stories, there can be found several parallels but also many differences. However, this is not what I want to focus on. For the purpose of my thesis, I would like to point out the magical elements which connect both of the stories, which is the parallel between the magical characters Green Knight and Peter Mir and the role of Morgan le Fey.

The enigmatic being, Peter Mir, might be paralleled with the Green Knight of the poem, who is a being out of the real world. First of all, their physical appearances are similar as both of them are of a robust built, clad in green which is the symbol of truth. Antonaccio points out that, “He [Peter] always wears something green, as though to present himself not as a person but as a self-contrived image”(162). Thus he is a symbolical character of truth and honesty. The Green Knight wears an axe, the weapon of the game which he uses at the end to cut Gawain's neck and Peter wears a green umbrella inside of which there is a knife which he uses as a weapon of punishment for Lucas, causing him a slight cut on his rib. The Green Knight is immortal and can be said to be a magical character, which is shown after he collects his beheaded head and retreats on his horse. This scene is reflected in Iris Murdoch's novel when Peter Mir is resurrected after the lethal blow and as well as the Green Knight, he requires his retribution. Thus Peter's extraordinary character might be attributed to the legendary character, the Green Knight.

In the story *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, there occurs Morgan le Fay, the being which causes either good or bad actions. The bad character is the lady of the
castle, who is tempting Gawain and who causes his breaking of his promise because she
discloses his vulnerable spot – the fear of death. This character is reflected in the novel
*The Green Knight* as well. Joan is the evil character, not causing any supernatural
events, but she is a temptress and keeps playing games. The good opposition is the
magical being, Moy, connected with nature and capable of supernatural events. She is
symbolically connected with Peter by a green lead which she uses to introduce him at
the birthday party as her beast.

Thus the magical qualities of the characters Peter Mir and Moy in the novel *The
Green Knight* might be paralleled with the medieval poem *Sir Gawain and the Green
Knight*. Even so, the inspiration in myth does not exclude the membership in magical
realist fiction. The proof for this story to belong to magical realism are all the magical
realist events occurring in the story: Peter's resurrection, Peter's healing power as well
as his God-like qualities, the magical scene when he is struck by a power from heaven,
the strange places which he abides at, as well as Moy's telekinesis qualities and the
presence of the carnivalesque.

### 3.3. The Message to the Planet

*The Message to the Planet* (1989) is one of the last novels of Iris Murdoch. Out
of the three novels I focus on in this work, this one is the most philosophical one as it
encompasses many dialogues which reflect Iris Murdoch's philosophical concepts, but it
still keeps the Murdochian hallmark, as Russell points out, "Like all Murdoch novels,
"The Message to the Planet" is filled with free-rolling emotional complications,
happenings natural and possibly supernatural, fidelities and infidelities. It includes a
putative miracle and some inspired insights into the futility of possessiveness” (Russell). This novel shares an important feature with the other two novels. As well as in *The Sea, the Sea* and *The Green Knight*, there is a charismatic character who causes magical events. Also, in this work the real and the magical co-exist and on the basis of this I want to prove that this philosophical novel can be included within the tradition of magic realism.

The pivotal character in the novel the *Message to the Planet* is Marcus Vallar. Marcus is a magnetic personality and his ideas, behaviour and what he causes in his surroundings trespasses the border between the real and explainable and the imaginary, supernatural and magical which is where magic realism enters this novel. He stands out of the ordinary, as it was with James or Peter Mir, therefore some people consider him a genius and others attribute his extraordinary qualities to madness.

This novel is full of philosophical thoughts and dialogues which follow from the main line of the novel: Marcus Vallar is believed by his friend Alfred Ludens to know a magical formula of mankind which is above any philosophical doctrine of the present time. Ludens considers Marcus a “possessor of an intellectual secret, some master-key, talisman, password or radiant lump of deep fundamental knowledge which, if it could be acquired, would shine through all the other knowledge, utterly transforming it” (The *Message to the Planet* 13). Ludens wants to learn from him the magical formula, however, in the course of the story, Ludens realizes that Marcus's thoughts are not so straightforward and he needs help with putting his ideas into a comprehensible whole. As Broyard accurately expresses, "Marcus Vallar, the central character, is a philosopher of "pure thought" who pushes his ideas to the point where they might actually kill him through their sheer intensity, as a high-voltage wire will kill you if you touch it"
In the course of the story the relationship between Ludens and Marcus is reversed as Marcus is not able to take charge of his life and his thoughts. Ludens appears in the role of a leader and tries to explain to Marcus what is best for him and stimulates his thoughts. Thus the typical relationship teacher-pupil in Murdoch's novels is reversed in this novel which ends in a failure – Ludens is lost in Marcus's thoughts and starts to doubt himself whether he is a genius or a fool and Marcus's stimulated state of mind kills him. As Franková points out, Murdoch plays here with the idea that a teacher has a power which is potentially destructive (*Britské spisovatelky* 156). Ludens acquires a destructive power in the position of a teacher as his main ambition is to reach his own target and he forgets about Marcus's needs. The failure of the reversed relationship reflects Iris Murdoch's ideas about the failure of modern philosophical doctrines, which reverse the long established hierarchical order and which cannot but end in failure if not properly developed.

As with other Iris Murdoch's novels, the story develops around a group of friends about whom we know lots of details, which creates the realistic base for this novel. The lively dialogues as well as the description of the surroundings contribute to the realistic mode of the novel. The story is narrated mostly from Ludens's perspective and the reader also knows Franca's point of view. As in *The Sea, the Sea* (1980) and *The Green Knight* (1993), we do not know the magician's thoughts, which helps to create a veil of the unknown around him, but the reader is provided with several explanations concerning the magician. We know Marcus's personality from several perspectives and the diverse opinions suggest his extraordinary qualities.

Alfred Ludens is the main follower of Marcus and we know him mainly from this perspective. Alfred, as well as Charles, is a character who is obsessed by a certain
vision which other people do not share. Ludens views Marcus as a genius capable of bringing to humankind a magical formula which would redeem the whole world. Marcus symbolises for him an authority who can provide mankind with truth and lead them out of "the cave". Ludens admits that he cannot follow his ideas and blames himself for not being intelligent enough to be able to understand everything that Marcus says but as the story develops, Ludens discloses his worry that Marcus is not a genius, but a fool. Ludens does not believe in any supernatural powers of Marcus, he is, as well as Charles, a down-to-earth person, who prefers logic and reason to the supernatural. His obsession springs from his personal vision and he is not willing to accept opinions of the others. From the perspective of magic realism, Ludens's main function is to keep the story in a realistic mode, as he is the character who is not willing to believe in anything but science and philosophy.

Another opinion about Marcus is offered by his daughter Irina, who perceives him as a mad man. She is scared of his extraordinary states of mind and she reproaches Ludens with supporting him in approaching the "weird" thoughts. In their relationship, Irina is the one who is in charge, she needs to take care of Marcus. Marcus fails to fulfil his role of a father as he prefers his role of a thinker on his way to find a doctrine in which he would be able to realize himself. This suggests his position out of the ordinary life and moves him into the philosophical and mystical sphere.

The group of friends are ambivalent about Marcus but they keep a distance from him as they are not sure how to approach him and are afraid of him. Gildas and Jack were influenced by Marcus in the past – Gildas lost his faith in God as Marcus disclosed his uncertainty about his faith and Jack's artistic talent was considered mediocre next to Marcus's. Other people influenced by Marcus are the other "healers" of Patrick.
represented by a religious and medical person. Father O'Harte who is present in the resurrection scene of Patrick considers Marcus a saint and the doctor is shattered as the diagnosis about Patrick's illness was disproved by a miracle. The fatal influence on people around him shows Marcus's extraordinary power.

The magical elements appear in Marcus's surroundings and are always connected with his personality. As opposed to *The Sea, the Sea* and *The Green Knight*, the supernatural concerns only the magician, there are not other unexplainable apparitions or events such as a sea monster (*The Sea, the Sea*) or moving stones (*The Green Knight*). The places which Marcus abides at are rather extraordinary and the special setting adds to the magical atmosphere around Marcus. One of the places, Fontellen, is Marcus's residence in seclusion and its detailed description introduces a reader into a solitary place which clashes with the city life of the other characters. The house in the middle of nowhere reminds the reader of a romantic and gothic setting. Thus dream-like states which are also part of magic realism are to be expected in this area. One of the moments which trespasses the border between the real and the supernatural occurs at night in Ludens's room. Not being able to fall asleep, Ludens finds a path through the cupboard in his room where he encounters a mysterious being - a child with a strange behavior.

What he saw was, lying upon a low bed, a child of perhaps ten or twelve, wide awake. The child – he could not make out if it was a girl or a boy – more probably a boy – [...] The child looked at Ludens with calmness, with understanding, without surprise or hostility or fear, but with a cool interested detachment. It made no sound. (*The Message to the Planet* 78)

This unlikely scene, the most improbable expression of a child woken up in the middle of the night, reminds the reader of all but reality. Ludens tries to find a reasonable answer for the presence of this being, thus he tries to see the room once
again in the morning, but the door in the cupboard is locked. He also tries to ask Irina about this child but she is not aware of any other being in the house and she claims that it must have been her. This horror-like scene might be attributed to a dream, as it reminds of a dream-like state of walking through the cupboard with a candle to a tunnel at the end of which he finds a strange being, but Ludens is sure that he was fully awake therefore this situation cannot be explained as a dream. The question mark about this apparition remains with the reader for the rest of the book, but as there is no need to explain, the supernatural dream-like apparition is accepted as a part of real life, which is a basic feature of magic realism.

Another being which appears in Marcus's surroundings and who is affected by his magnetic personality is the fairy-like girl Fanny. As Ludens describes her, “the little figure, in the dimmer light even less visible than before in her dark-green dress against the somber hedge, materialized, one moment not there, the next moment there. She moved, or travelled, like a beetle walking upon a wall” (The Message to the Planet 303). The description refers rather to a supernatural being. She is a person who contributes to Marcus's magical status as she believes in his power. To Ludens's disapproval she comes to see Marcus each morning at the Axle Stone place and draws energy from him. Fanny is one of the Stone People, the religious group closely connected with nature, and she functions as a representative of the whole group of people who try to find an idol who they can follow. Her fairy-like appearance as well as her connection to the Stone People support Marcus's extraordinary power and is another magical element in this novel.

Marcus's supernatural qualities are displayed during the act of healing Patrick. Patrick has no doubt that Marcus cursed him and after that brought him back to life.
Patrick considers Marcus as his saviour and starts to spread the knowledge among people which results in the Stone People embracing Marcus as their God. To Ludens's disapproval, the group incorporates his personality into their myth. On their wish, Marcus performs a ritual of showing himself in front of the assembled group where the magical power appears. They believe in his power to heal illnesses, and they come to see him for that reason. Marcus accepts this iconic role of a modern Christ which was chosen for him and which reflects the fact that people are still in search of religion and a religious leader and are still not willing to let the idea of a religious authority go.

However, after Marcus admits that he has no supernatural powers and that he deceived them, the Stone People become very angry and upset and start to despise him. Nevertheless, their religious belief is not shattered as they perform the long-time planned full moon ritual. Iris Murdoch plays with the idea of the rise of a new and fall of the old religion and suggests that the traditional religion Christianity is not sufficient in the new era and that people search for new doctrines which do not necessarily need an authority in the form of a person with supernatural powers. The fact that the people did not stop practising their religion even after they were disappointed by Marcus's confession that he was not a God-like person, suggests the possibility of finding the truth and way of a good life in alternative beliefs.

Let me focus on the most important event in this novel which is an evident feature of magic realism - the healing scene of Patrick. Patrick got deadly ill after Marcus cursed him. The group of friends do not doubt Marcus's negative effect on people and they take it for granted that the curse occurred, but its result might be attributed to psychosomatic effect. In the novel, there are many descriptions of Patrick's illness which offer to the reader a vivid picture of a sick, mad man. Doctor Hensman
and a priest Father O’Harte come to see Patrick regularly, but refuse the possibility of finding any cure for him. As the doctor claims, “If Patrick was sent back to the hospital, he might be temporarily revived, but only briefly and perhaps in some damaged state. There was no point in adding this useless torment” (The Message to the planet 118). Marcus disproves the medical diagnosis as he is able to cure Patrick and brings him literally back to life. The healing scene is a powerful one witnessed by more people who function in this novel as an evidence for this supernatural event to happen in real. The whole healing scene is a ritual during which Marcus with his body and his words releases from Patrick his illness. The healing was successful and thus Marcus won over the scientific point of view. The clash between the scientific and the supernatural is contrasted during this scene and deserves a more detailed focus as this scene is the main magic realist element in the novel and the two areas are encountered in the whole novel.

The scientific point of view is represented by medical specialists who deal with Patrick and later on with Marcus. Prior to the healing scene, the doctors base their conclusion about the incurability of Patrick on scientific facts and experiences. This forms the base for realism of the novel as the reader is provided with information from the specialists who can explain any situation by logical reasoning which people tend not to question especially in the medical area. Marcus is a person living in seclusion looking for his own understanding of the world apparently ignoring all the facts about the universe. The exceptional power of Marcus is shown during the healing scene and as the magical element is performed in front of the doctor, the two universes of the real and magical collide. Marcus does not question his power and is not willing to reveal his secret of healing Patrick, which keeps the reader in doubt as he or she does not know the thoughts of the magician. Nevertheless, the representatives of the scientific field are
not willing to accept any supernatural element and try to find a reasonable explanation to the healing act. They start to persuade people around that they are still in control of the situation and try to explain the cure of Patrick based on the medical fact, "Of course, it was now agreed, no one had really felt sure that Patrick was terminally ill, such conditions have their unpredictable aspects, even sometimes of psychosomatic origins" (The Message to the Planet 134). Despite their effort to defend the scientific truth, they fail to persuade the reader as it is evident that they are afraid of losing control of the medical situation of their patients and oppose any supernatural element. Ludens also adopts the scientific point of view but only from personal incentive as Marcus's supernatural status endangers his intention to focus only on the philosophical doctrine.

Opposing this view is a group of people who believe in the healing power of Marcus, the leading person is Patrick. He is persuaded that Marcus brought him back to life and decides to sacrifice his life to serving Marcus. After spreading the news about the healing event among people, the Stone People appear and accept Marcus as their idol. During their evening sessions the power in the air is experienced and people come to Marcus for healing their illnesses. Even after his separation from the Stone People, Marcus chooses his death during the full moon ritual, which is symbolic of his connection to the mystical. Marcus's death is the terminal point where the medical science is defeated by the magical, as the representative of the medical, doctor Marzillian, admits to Ludens that he cannot explain the cause of Marcus's death, as he says, "I don't know. It was an unnatural death" (The Message to the Planet 493). The doctor admits the presence of something uncontrollable in the universe which was shown through Marcus and thus he admits the surrender of the science to the magical. The doctor claims that, "He had discovered that he had magical powers, paranormal
powers as people say. He was a magician. He wanted to be a good magician" (The Message to the Planet 497). Marcus was even recorded when he spoke a language which no one could understand, which is another feature of his supernatural nature. Even though Marcus's status is not sufficiently explained, he is accepted as an enigmatic person being able to cause supernatural events, which is the feature of magic realism.

This novel includes magic realist elements therefore it might be classified as a magic realist work. The main feature is the magician, Marcus Vallar, capable of causing supernatural events. Despite medical proofs, he is able to resurrect a human being after cursing him into an incurable illness. This enigmatic person chooses his own time of death, symbolically connected with the Full Moon Ritual of a religious group who accepted him as their leader. He is a magnetic personality attracting people who are on the verge between the real and the supernatural, which is the fairy-like girl Fanny and the child-like person with an adult-like expression. Despite the fact that all of these events are tried to be reasonably explained, the magical wins over the real as the evidence is not sufficient and therefore the supernatural is accepted as a part of everyday life.
3.4. Iris Murdoch's Philosophy and Magic Realism in the Novels

In this chapter, I would like to point out the connection between Iris Murdoch's philosophy and her novels. The connection is very important for this author, which is evident from her statement which Leeson sums up as follows, "the true novelist is, in some sense, a phenomenologist [...] fiction then must be concerned with the inner life and is, as a vehicle of promotion, of most relevance to a promotion of certain philosophical ideas" (2). Antonaccio claims that Iris Murdoch addresses deep human issues in her novels which are connected to the religious sphere in which the soul yearns for perfection which only the saint can achieve and to the moral actions in which her characters more or less fail (138).

First of all, I would like to focus on the religious sphere, which is present in all the three novels and which is partly connected to magic realist elements. The three novels share one important characteristic, which is an enigmatic being who influences the lives of a closely knitted group of friends and who has supernatural powers. This enigmatic being in the role of James, Peter Mir or Marcus Vallar, functions as a modern Christ and is perceived as a saint-like person capable of perfection. All the three characters have ardent followers who admire them immensely and perceive them as holding the clue for a good life. On the other hand, the charismatic beings have also their opponents, who refuse to admit any sovereign being and for whom the magician is a weird, mad person.

This reflects Iris Murdoch's idea about the current situation of religion which is constantly losing its position in the world and about the lasting inner drive of all human beings to follow some faith which in the modern age refers rather to an intense personal impression than to a religious authority. This kind of magician is always good and
aspires to perfection. Those characters, who disrespect him, are symbols of human beings easily led astray because they lack faith and moral lead, as Iris Murdoch says, “If one does not believe in a personal God there is no 'problem' of evil, but there is the almost insuperable difficulty of looking properly at evil and human suffering” (The Sovereignty 73). The prominent example in the novel The Message to the Planet is Jack – he is devoid of faith and his distorted idea of a good life results in his logical reasoning about living with two women in one household. This selfish wish has a destroying effect on Franca, whose love for Jack is stronger than her personal feelings and thus she persists in such a relationship hiding her inner feelings. Nevertheless, this trio ends in a failure, as the third part of the triangle, Alison, leaves this self-delusive life.

The magician also helps some characters to find the way to a good, moral life. The example is Charles Arrowby, whose selfish idea of love almost destroys his childhood love Hartley. After his encounter with James's extraordinary qualities and after his life was saved by him, he starts to contemplate the spiritual and supernatural, he seems to be abandoning his earthly preoccupations and realizes something which is the way to the truth. In the novel The Green Knight, Peter Mir inspires Bellamy who symbolises the contemporary man lost in life and looking for faith. As Christianity was not sufficient for him, he finds his way in following the enigmatic being.

The spiritual life of the magicians is connected with Eastern religion – James as well as Peter Mir were Buddhists and Marcus Vallar aspired to Eastern religion as well. This reflects Iris Murdoch's ideas about the supremacy of Eastern religion which lacks an abstract and absent being, saints and religious doctrine and is focused on spirituality. As Iris Murdoch's philosophy is not conclusive, the ideal of an avatar and a great
teacher pure of heart is only a suggestion of a new religion which people should follow. However, the magician's presence is limited as all of them die, reflecting the fact that people must look for faith and the good mainly within themselves.

In all the novels, Iris Murdoch warns against overripe fantasies which might create in people false comforts. The example is Bellamy who gives up the world for his illusion about Christianity, which is an unattainable religion for him as he lacks the faith. He was feeding his fantasy thinking that he was cherishing his religious belief until redeemed by the good magician Peter Mir. Another character following his false fantasy is Charles, whose mind is focused on the false fantasy about his ex lover Hartley.

Iris Murdoch also reflects on the concept of spiritual energy 'Eros' which can cause either good or bad moral actions. For instance, Charles is driven by the bad Eros, as his spiritual energy is destructive, reflecting his lack of faith and lack of moral knowledge, but in the end, he is redeemed by James who is driven by the opposite, good Eros. In the novel *The Green Knight*, there is an inner fight between good and bad Eros in the magician Peter Mir. It results in the good winning over the bad as Peter finds his lost faith Buddhism. In the novels, there is an opposite between two people – one following the good spiritual energy, the other the bad one. In *The Green Knight*, the pair is Louise and Joan, in *The Sea the Sea* it is Hartley and Rosina and in *The Message to the Planet* the opposite is not that clear, but Franca is the good character and Irina is rather on the bad side. The bad characters are evil-like, they are teasing people around them and lack any moral sense of life. The good characters are moral, sensitive to the feelings of the others and unselfish.
In the three novels, Iris Murdoch touches upon the philosophical concept of 'Love'. We read about unfulfilled and distorted loves which are caused by selfishness in the characters, such as Jack and his two mistresses or Charles following his vision of Hartley's love. On the other hand, the good characters attain their love, the prominent example are the good characters Clement and Louise. This reflects Iris Murdoch's idea that people without moral sense are not generally capable of unselfish love and that true love necessarily encompasses unselfishness.

Iris Murdoch reflects her philosophy in her novels, she uses her ideas in practise and tries their feasibility. Concerning the connection between her philosophy and magical realism, her contemplations about religion is the obvious connection between the two realms. Iris Murdoch created enigmatic beings whose role was to prove whether an enigmatic teacher can take over the role of Christianity in the new unreligious age. Thus the magical realist elements might be ascribed to Iris Murdoch's endeavour to make the beings outstanding and unique, which she undoubtedly managed.
4. Conclusion

The aim of my thesis was to prove that Iris Murdoch’s writings might be classified within the tradition of magic realist fiction. Though she was not a typical author of this genre, Iris Murdoch’s experiments with the employment of fantastic, mythological and magical elements against a realistic background in many of her novels prove that she partly ranks among the best magic realist authors.

For my purpose I chose three novels which are the most illustrative examples of magic realism: *The Sea, the Sea* (1980), *The Green Knight* (1993) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989). Let me sum up how these three novels correspond to magic realist fiction based on the criteria for magic realist fiction specified in the first chapter.

“The text contains an irreducible element of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them“ (Farris 167). This certainly holds true for all three novels, as in each of them there appears a magic element which despite many trials for reasonable explanation escapes the laws of the universe, such as the appearance of a sea monster, a ghost-like face in the window, Marcus’s healing power, Peter’s miraculous memory acquirement or Moy’s telekinesis abilities.

“Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory“(Faris 169). In all three novels Iris Murdoch provides detailed descriptions not only of the real world, but of the magical world as well. The reader is offered minute details of all supernatural events in the novels, thus the real and the magic is approached in the same way and both worlds are set on equal level.

“The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events – and hence experiences some unsettling doubts“ (Faris 171).
With each and single extraordinary event, there is an endeavour for a reasonable explanation. The reasonable and the scientific is contrasted with the mystical and the magical world. In all three novels, this pertains to the magician, who is seen either as a God-like, enigmatic being with supernatural qualities or as a mad person living in self-delusion. Both views have their followers, but in all the three novels the scientific and reasonable world is defeated, as it cannot provide sufficient explanation for a supernatural event and the magical is accepted as a part of everyday life.

“We experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds” (Faris 172). The magical world with the supernatural events and the real world exist side by side in all three novels. Moreover, the realm of dreams and reality are also mixed and the dreams reflect and enter reality. Sometimes, the character is not sure whether he is dreaming or not, as it was with Ludens who entered a cupboard where he found a strange apparition, or the dreams function as premonition of future events, as it was for instance with Clement who saw his future almost murder in his dream. Another mix of two realms is the mythical and current world, which was apparent in the novel The Green Knight (1993) which re-awakened medieval characters.

“Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space, but our sense of identity as well“ (Faris 174). Iris Murdoch’s novels involve a change in the mind of the main protagonist because of the magician. As the reader identifies with the main character, whose sense of identity is shattered after his encounter with the magician, the reader is forced to rethink his position in the world as well. The aim of Iris Murdoch was to point indirectly to her philosophy of morals via the extraordinary characters in her novels who were the only aspirants of the moral and good way of life.
“The reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic – a closing of the gap between words and the world, or a demonstration of what we might call the linguistic nature of experience” (Faris 176). Iris Murdoch’s style of writing is rich in connotations, symbols and allusions, which create a strong bond to the nature of experience.

“The narrative appears to the late-twentieth-century adult readers to which it is addressed as fresh, childlike, even primitive“ (Faris 177). This criterion is not reflected in Iris Murdoch’s novels, as the supernatural events have deep philosophical background and the contemplation about the magical excludes the primitive and playful tone of other magic realist texts.

“Repetition as a narrative principle, in conjunction with mirrors or their analogues used symbolically or structurally, creates a magic of shifting references“ (Faris 177). The repetition of magical events and their presence throughout the novels in slightly different versions form the magic of shifting references. For instance, Charles’s sea serpent appears not only in the sea, but he can see it in the character of Rosina as well as in Titian’s picture or Peter’s mysterious appearance in various situations, but always wearing a green attribute, refers to the medieval character the Green Knight.

“A carnivalesque spirit is common in this group of novels. Language is used extravagantly, expending its resources beyond its referential needs” (Faris 184). This certainly holds true for all of Iris Murdoch’s novels as she uses a complicated language which reflects philosophical ideas and which is used to contemplate the extraordinary events. In the case of Marcus, a new language was invented which no one could understand.
All the three novels analysed in this thesis belong without any doubt within magic realist fiction. Not only because they all fulfil all but one of the criteria for magic realist fiction, but because of their general message which is common for all magic realist fiction. The magical elements are present in our world and it depends on each person how to perceive them. Iris Murdoch addressed the supernatural in our world in reflection of her own philosophy. The co-existence of the magical and the real world with a background of Iris Murdoch’s philosophy of morals is an important contribution to magic realist fiction.
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6. Résumé/Resumé

6.1. Résumé

This thesis deals with the author Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) and her connection to the literary genre magical realism. The thesis has one objective: to prove that Iris Murdoch belongs within magical realist tradition.

The work includes two major parts, theoretical and analytical. The theoretical part deals with the literary stream magical realism, in particular the history of the genre, its position in literary and cultural studies worldwide and its characteristics and variations. Many studies about magical realism are used to delineate the genre. In this part, the author Iris Murdoch is also focused on. Her position and contribution to the literary and cultural studies of the twentieth century are discussed as well as her philosophical doctrine and literary criticism.

In the analytical part, three novels from Iris Murdoch are analysed with respect to magical realism. Despite the fact that the author wrote 26 novels, *The Sea, the Sea* (1980), *The Green Knight* (1993) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989) were chosen as the most illustrative examples of magical realist fiction. Each study includes examples from the novels which are discussed in detail and which are explained within the scope of Iris Murdoch's philosophy.

Despite the fact that Iris Murdoch is not a typical writer of magical realism, such as Gabriel García Márquez, it is concluded that she belongs among writers who contribute to this genre as her novels share basic characteristics with the prominent works of magical realist fiction.
6.2. Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá dílem britské spisovatelky Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) a cílem je dokázat, že její tvorba lze částečně začlenit do žánru magický realismus.

Tato práce zahrnuje dvě části: teoretickou a analytickou. V teoretické části se soustředím na historii, literárně-kulturní postavení, členění a varianty magického realismu. Dále se zaměřuji na autorku Iris Murdoch a zejména vyzdvihuji její filozofii, přínos do literární kritiky a pozici v literárně-kulturním světě 20.století.


Na základě srovnání vybraných románů s charakteristikami magického realismu vyvozuji, že lze Murdocchovou řadit do jisté míry mezi autory magického realismu.