The Book and the Brotherhood Study Guide

The Book and the Brotherhood by Iris Murdoch

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

The Book and the Brotherhood is an intricate novel about a group of middle- aged Oxford graduates. Almost three decades earlier, they form a group known as the Brotherhood. Its sole objective is the financial support of a fellow graduate, David Crimond, so that he can continue his work writing a book about his Marxist political philosophy. Now, a reunion takes place at Oxford, which the elusive and solitary Crimond also attends. Many years previously, Crimond seduced Jean Cambus, the wife of a fellow graduate, and the affair drastically changed the dynamics of the relationships within the Brotherhood. He has come to the midsummer ball for the express purpose of seducing Jean for the second time, and he succeeds in his quest. Jean leaves Duncan, setting into motion a number of unsettling events that culminate in the death of one of the Brotherhood

Two members of the Brotherhood, Gerard Hernshaw and Jenkin Riderhood, are concerned about the renewed affair and meet to discuss possible ways to reconcile Jean and Duncan. They decide to send a young naive Oxford student, Tamar Hernshaw, to Jean to try to salvage the marriage. Tamar does not succeed, and Jean remains with the acerbic and brilliant Crimond. No persuasive argument can deter her from the firm conviction that Crimond is the only man she can love totally and completely. Jean's refusal to reconcile leads to a short affair between her estranged husband Duncan and the youthful Tamar, who conceives a child by him. The pregnancy is quickly ended through an abortion, but the act of killing her unborn child leaves Tamar in a terrible state of emotional confusion. An Anglican priest, Father McAlister, sees her suffering when she attends a church service with her middle-aged friend Rose Curtland, a member of the Brotherhood. Tamar resolves her life crisis through a conversion to Christianity.

At the same time, the Brotherhood must grapple with the fact that Crimond has not produced a book. Several meetings with the brilliant Marxist end in misunderstanding and renewed suspicion about his motives in conducting a second affair with Jean Cambus. Duncan hates Crimond and thinks about various ways to kill him, but he does not have the courage to take revenge. However, when Crimond finishes his masterpiece, he is determined to die in a suicide pact with Jean. When the plan to kill both him and his mistress goes completely awry, he instantly breaks off the relationship and turns to Rose Curtland. He asks Rose to marry him, but she refuses to consider such betrayal of the friendship she has with Jean. Although the estranged couple has reconciled, the affair continues to haunt both them and Crimond.

Crimond attempts to solve the problem by proposing a game of Russian roulette to Duncan. He actually hopes to die, but when a bullet is finally fired, their gentle friend, Jenkin Riderhood, is killed. Duncan refuses to take responsibility for Jenkin's death and swears his hated rival to a secret pact. Crimond may never tell anyone who actually shot Jenkin, and he must take full responsibility for explaining the accident to the authorities. Subsequently, Duncan and Jean leave England for a new life in France.

Jenkin's death leaves the Brotherhood in disarray. Jenkin's friend, Gerard Hernshaw, who proposed that they live together in a homosexual relationship, enters into a prolonged mourning. Only when he reads Crimond's book does he gain a renewed sense of purpose and direction. He talks to Rose, an aristocratic member of the Oxford set who has loved him for many years, and suggests that they live together as friends and pay homage to the memory of Jenkin Riderhood by writing a response to Crimond's unorthodox Marxist philosophy. David Crimond himself is almost forgotten except by Lily Boyne, a young wealthy widow who has been obsessively and secretly in love with him for many years. Although she plans to marry the youthful and engaging Gulliver Ashe, a penniless actor, she still pleads with Crimond to love her in return. He rejects Lily's plea, and she returns to Gulliver. The author provides a conventional ending for the novel but only for two of the secondary characters. The lives of the central characters, and their relationships to each other, have undergone changes, but there is no "happily ever after."

Part 1 (through page 51)

Part 1 (through page 51) Summary

The novel begins with a reunion at a midsummer ball. A group of Oxford graduates has banded together in a "Gesellschaft" or Brotherhood in order to facilitate the work of one of their friends. David Crimond, the central character of the novel, is a brilliant, charismatic but eccentric political philosopher with radical ideas about how to transform society. His friends have agreed to support him financially as he researches and writes "the Book," but as the years pass there is little evidence that such a book actually exists. When the members of the Brotherhood discover that Crimond has unexpectedly attended the ball, there is great concern about Jean, the wife of Duncan Cambus, who was seduced by him many years earlier. Their friends fear more trouble for the marriage as they consider the likely possibility that Crimond has come back into their lives for the sole purpose of taking Jean away from her husband for the second time.

Part 1 (through page 51) Analysis

Within the space of just 51 pages, the reader is introduced to a bewildering number and variety of characters. Some, like Conrad Lomas and Professor Levquist, are mentioned only once or twice. Others, such as Leonard Fairfax, are used only to explain the relationship between two characters. By the end of the first section, the reader discovers that the following characters are important to the story line: David Crimond, Duncan Cambus and his wife Jean, Rose Curtland, Gerard Hernshaw, Jenkin Riderhood and Tamar Hernshaw. The secondary characters are Gulliver Ashe and Lily Boyne. Another important element of the story is "the Book," the illusive life's work of Crimond.

The story line is approached through the differing perspectives of the numerous characters in this novel. The immediate introduction of David Crimond foreshadows his influence and importance in the development of the plot. Both the multiplicity of characters and the lack of Crimond's personal perspective may, at first, obscure Crimond's role. However, flashbacks to the past hint at future relationships and renewed conflicts. The fact that his presence at the ball is so disturbing to Gerard, Jenkin and Rose serves as foreshadowing of the dark story that eventually unfolds.

Another device that the author uses quite effectively is to give only vague references to the passage of time. The reader is never told how many years have passed between incidents, but only that "time passed." In a sense, time is made irrelevant, and as a result, the novel gives every event the intensity of remaining in the present now.

Part 1 (through page 101)

Part 1 (through page 101) Summary

When Duncan and Jean Cambus arrive at their home in Kensington from the Commen Ball, Jean tells her husband that she is leaving him once again for David Crimond. Nothing that Duncan can say will change her determination to leave him.

The book, which Crimond is writing, becomes interwoven into the lives of seven of the novel's characters - David Crimond, Duncan and Jean Cambus, Rose Curtland, Gerard Hernshaw, Jenkin Riderhood and young Tamar Hernshaw. Crimond comes from an obscure background, has little money and lives frugally. When he begins to discuss his desire to write a book about his political ideas, his friends agree to give him financial support. Through this pact, the Crimondgesellschaft comes into being, although the members simply refer to themselves as the Gesellschaft, or Brotherhood.

As the years pass, Crimond continues to receive a salary, even as his political views diverge radically from that of his supporters. At first, the members of the brotherhood view it as a promise they must keep. More and more, their views change. The members begin to see the whole enterprise as a ridiculous, irrational and intolerable situation

Part 1 (through page 101) Analysis

The reader is brought into the intense drama of Jean and Crimond's first affair through Duncan's reminisces. The past is brought into the present with an immediacy that blurs the passage of time. The painful events of the past have produced a lasting physical and psychological mark on Duncan. In fact, the damage is deep enough to foreshadow the ominous development of renewed conflict. Duncan has become a danger both to himself and to Crimond.

Crimond, admired for his brilliant mind and ascetic lifestyle, allows himself to be persuaded to accept financial support from his friends. However, he feels no obligation at all to explain his political views nor does he give them any idea of what the book will be about. He even declines to report on the progress of the book, and as the years pass, no book appears. The book is not merely a project, but the symbol of objective good that the brotherhood has substituted for faith and religion. The brotherhood naturally begins to feel a growing sense that their faith has been betrayed and that Crimond has perpetrated some hoax. These feelings grow stronger when the news of his second affair with Jean Cambus begins to spread. The continuing flashbacks to the past and the dark memories of the first affair begin to affect the members of the brotherhood as they begin to question the strength of their faith in Crimond.

Part 1 (through page 115)

Part 1 (through page 115) Summary

Tamar Hernshaw and her mother Violet are engaged in an argument about money. Tamar tries to explain to her mother that giving up her studies would be a difficult sacrifice. A telephone call informs them that Gerard Hernshaw's father, Tamar's great-uncle, has died, but there are no provisions in the will for them. Tamar resumes her customary docile role in relation to her mother and then agrees to Violet's demands that she drops out of Oxford.

Jean has left her husband, Duncan, for Crimond. She questions Crimond about his work. He tells her that "the book" is not quite finished. Jean becomes impatient with his lack of enthusiasm for her presence in his home, and she bursts out in an impassioned speech. She tells Crimond that he is the only being whom she can love absolutely and completely. Both her life and death, she assures him, is intimately bound up with his life and death. He does not respond immediately to her words. He wants to be more cautious. Jean acquiesces to his conclusion but adds that if their love dies, they can always kill each other, as he once said during their first affair.

Part 1 (through page 115) Analysis

The volatile relationship between Tamar and Violet is not just confined to these two people but mirrors the conflicts that are just underneath the surfaces of other relationships. It spreads its poisonous consequences to several other characters in the novel. Tamar is forced against her will to do her mother's bidding. Violet effectively denies both her daughter and herself a viable future by demanding that Tamara drop her studies at Oxford. While the problem is on one hand financial in nature, it also involves a difficult relationship between mother and daughter. Violet fears that her illegitimate birth, as well as the illegitimate birth of her daughter, is a double premonition of future problems. On the other hand, Tamar fears that Violet resents her very existence because she symbolizes failure and social disgrace. The illegitimate motherhood of Violet, illegitimate herself, is indicative of a cycle of destiny. She has repeated her own mother's fate, and the implication is that Tamar may also continue this repetition.

The reader meets Crimond for the first time, but the impression he leaves is not a pleasant one. Crimond is a man of intense and punishing self-discipline. His powerful will exerts a strong influence over the main characters. While the author uses the technique of interior monologues to expand and explain the lives of the other characters in this novel, Crimond is the only one whose inner thoughts, hopes, fears and memories are left unspoken. He is viewed through the perspectives of other characters. Whether he speaks or acts, his thoughts remain out of the reader's reach. Just as the definition of the "good" is at once both revealed and hidden, reflecting the character of a supreme

being existing outside the boundaries of human existence, so Crimond in his writing about the good society must also remain mysterious and remote. He is a symbol of a brooding and uncertain deity watching over the affairs of mankind, essentially unknowable.

Crimond has seduced Jean for the second time, and when she arrives at his home, he appears reluctant to acknowledge the love, which she so passionately expresses to him. Crimond has a brilliant mind, but he is cold and manipulative, perhaps even to the point of being abusive. Jean appears totally oblivious to his indifferent responses to her declarations of love and everlasting loyalty. Again, god-like, he does not directly answer her appeals and her passion. Crimond, though, is an unappealing god. A repressed sense of inner violence in his outward indifference foreshadows the inevitable destruction of their relationship. Although Jean does not yet realize it, the book is the real center of Crimond's life.

Part 2 (through page 165)

Part 2 (through page 165) Summary

The Commen Ball is already a distant memory. On a foggy evening in late October, Gerard Hernshaw is visiting Jenkin Riderhood at his home. The two members of the Brotherhood discuss the possibility of reconciling Jean and Duncan. They settle on the idea of sending Tamar Hernshaw to talk to Jean and perhaps to persuade her to return to her husband. Both friends are concerned about Crimond's penchant for violence and the possibility of someone being killed, even accidentally.

Gulliver Ashe finds himself still unemployed despite the fact that Gerard found him a job. He lost it almost immediately. He plays the penniless writer who only wants to write and live alone. Lily is pleased to have him as a friend because she sees him as a social asset. There are no romantic feelings involved in this relationship. She is really interested in Crimond and is convinced that once he tires of Jean, she will have the opportunity to conduct a love affair with him.

Gerard invites Tamar to his home in order to persuade her to intervene in the affair between Crimond and Jean. After Tamar's visit to Crimond and Jean, Crimond closely questions Jean. He is very suspicious of the young girl and believes that Tamar has been sent by Jean's "set" in order to break their relationship. He even suggests that Jean has organized some sort of conspiracy so that she can rekindle their love affair.

Part 2 (through page 165) Analysis

Not only is Crimond brilliant and ascetic, but he is also prone to violence. Jenkin and Gerard therefore exercise great caution and decide to send in the waif-like, unassuming and non-threatening Tamar Hernshaw as the mediator between Jean and Duncan. While both men view Crimond as a possible danger, Jenkin has a much softer and friendlier attitude toward Crimond. Gerard is positive that Crimond is a destructive and evil charlatan. This faintly foreshadows changes to come. The relationship between the kindly Jenkin and the handsome Gerard is slowly changing into something else. Only Gerard seems to feel the emotional tension building between them, and it leaves him confused.

The story of Gulliver and Lily is a subplot in the novel. Here are two young people who are slowly drawn to each other through the events in their lives. Initially, they are both interested in other people. Lily wants Crimond, and Gulliver is interested in a homosexual relationship with Gerard Hernshaw. Their friendship becomes a substitute for the other relationships that they actually desire. Yet, at the same time, there is a genuine sense of affection between the two. In the course of the novel, their relationship serves as the symbol of conventional love and happiness.

Jean's love for Crimond knows no bounds. She is completely caught up in his world and is happy simply to exist on the periphery. Nothing can deter her from the feeling that Crimond is the only man whom she can love completely. There is both desperation and irony in her willingness to disappear and merge into Crimond's being. Her desire for such intensity in her relationship with Crimond was the cause of the first affair's breakdown, but Jean never questions the circular and familiar pattern she once again initiates. Here again is a cycle of repetition affecting characters' lives.

On the surface, the characters are given the freedom to act and choose as they please. Even their sexuality seems to be at their whim. Gulliver, Gerard and Jenkin all appear to be bisexual. Yet the reality is much darker. They are all subject to apparently random forces, influences and events that actually restrict their lives and impoverish their ability to make genuine choices.

Part 2 (through page 216)

Part 2 (through page 216) Summary

In the meantime, Duncan begins to avoid his friends as much as possible. He is obsessed with his wife and her lover. He finds himself continually ruminating about all the events that transpired during their first love affair and the injuries he sustained in a fight with Crimond. He thinks that he should have destroyed his rival when he had the chance so many years ago. Tamar still comes to visit him just as she regularly visited their home when Jean was still his wife.

A few days later, the friends assemble together for the Guy Fawkes party at Gerard's home in Notting Hill. Lily and Gulliver have also been invited. Even Violet Hernshaw, Tamar's antisocial and perennially complaining mother, attends the party. Shortly after this party, Tamar leaves her office early one evening for Duncan's flat. He expresses his doubts that Jean has ever really loved him. Suddenly, Tamar bursts out and declares her love for him. This statement inevitably leads both of them to his bedroom, where they make love for the first and last time.

Part 2 (through page 216) Analysis

All the characters of the novel, both major and minor, except for Crimond and Jean, have gathered together in a celebration of Guy Fawkes Day. This event recalls the Commen Ball of the midsummer season. The occasion does not only bring the joy of friendship to the foreground, but it also serves to highlight Crimond and Jean's alienation from their friends and supporters. The weekend party also proves to be a turning point in the lives of Duncan and Tamar, as well as Gulliver and Lily. The author frequently breaks from giving the characters long interior monologues, or long descriptions of their clothes and persons, to large social settings where most of the characters are present.

Part 2 (through page 267)

Part 2 (through page 267) Summary

One evening, Gerard Hernshaw attends a meeting of the Gesellschaft. This time Crimond's supporters are determined that something must be done about the book. The members come to the conclusion that Gerard has to arrange a meeting with Crimond and discuss the specifics of the book.

The friends meet again some time later at Rose Curtland's home, the Boyars, for a reading party. One morning Gerard and Jenkin have breakfast together and then go for a walk. The conversation once again turns to Crimond and the book. Jenkin assures his friend that Crimond has been working on this book throughout the years. Gerard suddenly gets the feeling that somehow their very lives are bound up with Crimond and his book. The scene turns to a more pleasant diversion. The guests at the country house party all go skating on the frozen pond and then return to the house for teatime. Gulliver and Lily find themselves spending more time together and enjoying each other's company.

Part 2 (through page 267) Analysis

As the years have passed, and no book has been produced, the enormous weight of its presence becomes a negative force in the lives of the brotherhood. Gerard has been delegated to meet with Crimond in part to relieve some of that pressure and in part to try to understand his perspective and understanding of the world.

Gulliver and Lily's relationship changes over the weekend party to a romance. Their story is a subplot within the novel. There appears to be little connection between these two people and the rest of the characters. The story of their romance is a pleasant diversion from the darker plotline involving the emergence of Crimond as the center of the novel. There is an ironic twist in the story line as these two unlikely people find common ground and begin to engage each other in a genuine relationship. Other relationships such as Jean and Duncan's, or Gerard and Rose's, ought to end in a "happily ever after" ending, but the characters fail to accomplish such a resolution. In what way does Gulliver and Lily's relationship differ from the others? Both Gulliver and Lily desire someone else, but they find solace and strength in a quiet relationship with a similar soul. The author seems to say that strong passion defeats happiness and that what we want is not always what will make us happy.

Part 2 (through page 313)

Part 2 (through page 313) Summary

At the house party, Tamar appears dazed and sick. She hardly eats and refuses to participate in the planned activities of the weekend. On Sunday, everyone attends the local church where the priest, Father McAlister, leads the service. He notices Tamar's distress at once and insists on speaking privately to her. She confesses to him that she is pregnant.

Sometime after the party, Crimond arrives at Gerard's house for a discussion of the book. The meeting begins awkwardly, but the atmosphere changes when Crimond announces that he is still working on the book. Gerard tells him that the brotherhood feels that some sort of progress report is needed on the development of the book.

Gerard assures Crimond that the brotherhood is not interested in interfering with his work. A discussion develops around the subject of Crimond's political views. Crimond also explains the reason for his alienation from his Oxford friends. "Because of the book. I didn't want to waste time arguing with people who understood *nothing*."

A visit between Rose and Jean brings the book into the foreground as well. Jean shows Rose Crimond's work lying on his desk. Rose is surprised to find that she does not feel an instant hostility to this object which has for so long dominated their lives. Later on, Jean and Crimond have a long discussion about their relationship and their plans after the book is completed.

Part 2 (through page 313) Analysis

The main thesis of Crimond's famous book is revealed in this conversation and debate between Gerard and Crimond. The book exerts an enormous influence over the lives of each character in the novel. There are two reasons for its influence. In the first place, Crimond's philosophy of how to achieve a civilized society is a symbol of the objective good to which the Oxford graduates subscribe. Faith in orthodox religion has faded. Something else needs to serve as the repository of man's hopes and dreams. Second, Crimond's reputation as a brilliant philosopher, the intensity of his personality and his charismatic influence over people all reverberate in the lives of the Oxford set. They believe that the range of his thinking and the brilliance of his ideas will most certainly influence the political thoughts of generations to follow. His brilliance is also a reason to fear and loathe him. Ultimately, Crimond symbolizes cold and heartless intellectualism that fails to acknowledge the passionate nature of mankind.

Tamar's unexpected pregnancy also carries with it fear and loathing, a symbol of her own illegitimate birth. She is repeating the cycle of her mother and her mother's mother. Yet, her unborn child is also a symbol of human connection and the human need to live

in relationship. Her unborn child connects her, not only to Duncan, but also to Jean and Crimond.

Part 2 (through page 364)

Part 2 (through page 364) Summary

Gideon Fairfax, Gerard's brother-in-law, tells Violet that he and his wife Pat want to adopt Tamar. They love Tamar as their own daughter, and since they have only a son, they still want a daughter. They see Tamar as the perfect choice to be their child whom they can provide with the life that they believe she deserves. Violet strongly resents his proposal and insists that their only motive is to demonstrate their wealth in the face of her poverty. Gideon has a difficult time understanding Violet's persistent refusal to permit them to help her only daughter. In the meantime, Tamar, pregnant and isolated, visits Lily Boyne and asks her for advice. Lily agrees to help Tamar obtain an abortion. When Tamar leaves Lily's home, Gulliver arrives. He proposes marriage to her, but she does not yet give her assent.

Several members of the Brotherhood have a difficult meeting with Crimond to discuss his progress on the book. The discussion revolves around their divergent political views, and the meeting ends with Rose in tears and Gerard in complete confusion.

Violet knows that there is something wrong with her daughter. She calls it Tamar's "strange affliction." However, after Tamar announces that she is leaving for a few days, she returns in apparent good health once again. She soon descends into a deeper depression, though, when she realizes that she has killed Duncan's child, and she berates Lily for hurrying her into the decision to have an abortion.

Crimond announces to Jean that he has finished the book. She is surprised that he has finally completed his masterwork and finds herself suddenly fearing for Crimond now that the focus of his life is gone. She proposes a move to Europe, but he refuses to go. Finally, after several difficult days, he proposes a suicide pact. He wants them to die together.

Gerard goes to Jenkin's place for another visit. He tells Jenkin that Crimond's book is finished and is almost ready for publication. After some discussion, Gerard bursts out with an impassioned announcement that he loves Jenkin. He proposes that they live together. The proposal is unexpected but not unwelcome to Jenkin. Just as he recovers his composure and begins to discuss Gerard's proposal, Tamar arrives. The two friends part company with the promise to meet again.

Part 2 (through page 364) Analysis

The novel finally moves from introspective monologues and long discussions with friends into a series of events, which begin to happen one after the other. There are changes in most of the relationships. Gideon and Pat want a daughter; Tamar does not want her unborn child. She breaks the cycle of unmarried motherhood, but then she regrets her choice. Lily Boyne plays an important role in determining the Tamar's future

and, by implication, that of Jean and Duncan. Her role is a hidden one, and the consequences of her advice and help are not immediately perceived.

Crimond and Jean have set out to commit themselves to death, rather than to life, as the outcome of Crimond's work. In contrast to this relationship, there appears to be a renewed emotional life between Jenkin and Gerard. A proposal to live together is made and left for future discussion. These events foreshadow a radical change within the Brotherhood just as Crimond's philosophical masterpiece comes to completion.

Part 2 (through page 415)

Part 2 (through page 415) Summary

Tamar confesses her secret to Jenkin. She tells him that she feels responsible for Duncan's destroyed marriage and believes that giving birth to his child would ruin all chances for reconciliation with Jean. While Jenkin tries to comfort the anguished young woman, his thoughts are really on Gerard's proposal. At the same time, Gerard is also thinking about Jenkin. The decision is yet to be made.

On that same evening, Crimond and Jean are out in the country, not far from Rose Curtland's estate. They intend to carry out their suicide pact. The plan is to drive toward each other at high speed in separate cars and then to die together in a high impact collision. The plan fails when Jean swerves into a stone fence. Crimond coldly tells her that her lack of commitment means the end of their relationship. He gets into his undamaged car and drives away, leaving Jean to stumble for help on her own. Rose rescues her, but Jean refuses to tell her what happened. The only information that she will supply is that she and Crimond are finished.

Gerard and Jenkin go to Duncan's home and inform him about the accident and the end of his wife's love affair. He agrees to travel to Rose Curtland's estate to see Jean. They silently reconcile with each other. The end of Crimond's affair with Jean now opens the way for another relationship. Crimond writes a short note to Rose suggesting that they meet. When Rose goes to see him, he proposes marriage to her. She is disturbed by this change in events, and after some confused thought refuses his proposal.

Part 2 (through page 415) Analysis

Relationships appear to be fluid, changing upon a moment's notice for reasons which the reader cannot fully fathom. Crimond's brutality comes into evidence as he coldly ends his love affair with the injured Jean and leaves her to find her own way home again. His proposal of marriage to Rose is equally cold, but there is a rationale behind his behavior. It is not hidden motives or secret love that moves Crimond, but the search for another life as he leaves the book in his past. The book becomes a remote object in his mind, a symbol of life and relationships in the past. He reaches out for Rose as the symbol of renewal and hope for the future. Rose searches in vain to find an answer and does not realize that the book is the external force that brings such disturbing changes, not only into her life, but the lives of Duncan and Jean as well. Through this, the author reveals her belief that human beings are not only imperfect, frail mortals in their encounters with life but are also subject to contingency and chance, forces beyond their control.

Part 2 (through page 470)

Part 2 (through page 470) Summary

Gulliver and Lily have been experiencing some problems in their relationship. Their conflict stems from Gull's realization that he is just a penniless unemployed actor and writer who will become dependent on his wealthy lover for his financial welfare. He decides to leave Lily and boards the train for Newcastle. As he waits for the train to leave, his thoughts are a confused jumble of desires and plans. He finds a snail under his seat and feels compelled to put it into his pocket.

At Boyars, Jean and Duncan make a pretense of achieving a quick and amicable reconciliation. Although Duncan becomes more and more aware that he still loves his wife, Jean remains silent and reticent. He tries to console her as she grieves the end of her affair with Crimond. They return to their home in London, and life begins again for them. They have promised each other to work toward the mutual goal of achieving happiness. Both of them desperately want to believe that love has returned to their troubled and turbulent marriage.

Duncan receives an unexpected letter from Crimond informing him that there remains unfinished business between them. The letter contains instructions for the date and time of a proposed meeting. Duncan decides to meet his nemesis but keeps the rendezvous secret from his wife. During this time, Tamar decides to visit Jean while Duncan is at work. She reveals that Duncan has been unfaithful to Jean and that, in fact, a child was conceived during their brief affair. Tamar also tells her friend that she had an abortion. Instead of feeling shocked and betrayed, Jean feels a secret pleasure in the knowledge that Duncan was equally unfaithful to his marriage vows.

On the day that Duncan goes to meet Crimond, Jean finds the letter on his desk. Fearing the worst, she quickly telephones Jenkin and pleads with him to go to Crimond's house as quickly as possible. In the meantime, Duncan is already in conversation with Crimond. His rival proposes that they fight a game of Russian roulette by revolver, and Duncan agrees to the deadly plan. Crimond fires first, but the chamber is empty. It is Duncan's turn. As Duncan aims and fires at Crimond, Jenkin suddenly appears in front of him and is instantly killed. Duncan quickly erases all evidence of his presence at the scene and demands that Crimond take all the responsibility for Jenkin's accidental death. He feels no remorse as he leaves.

Part 2 (through page 470) Analysis

Death returns to the lives of Jean, Duncan and Crimond. Death is a major element in this novel. In fact, most of the characters are forced to deal with death in one way or another. The eccentric Crimond has lost his reason for living. His book is finished, and there is nothing more he can add. All meaning for Crimond is tied up in the book. He

conceives of a plan in which he will achieve his longed-for goal of death while at the same time implicating his hated rival as a murderer. His plan backfires. Instead of finding release in death, Crimond is finally humiliated by Duncan. His lover's husband proves to be equally cold and heartless, refusing to be held accountable for Jenkin's death. Crimond has a complete breakdown when he sees that Jenkin has died in his place. His weakness gives the advantage to Duncan, who brutally orders him to clean up the scene of the shooting and to take all responsibility for the accident. The choices made by these characters reverberate with menace and threat to their future well being. Man is not a rational creature after all.

Part 3 (through page 517)

Part 3 (through page 517) Summary

Spring has finally arrived. The Brotherhood believes that Crimond has murdered Jenkin but escaped official responsibility for his death. Gerard visits Rose, and together they discuss all the events of the past months. Duncan and Jean have moved to France. Tamar has converted to Christianity under the guidance of Father McAlister and seems to have recovered from her torment. Both Rose and Gerard continue to mourn Jenkin's death.

Tamar's newfound faith has given her the strength and determination to oppose her mother, Violet Hernshaw. She cleans up their filthy apartment with the help of Gideon and Pat Fairfax. Father McAlister is invited for tea. The four people confront Violet, and Tamar leaves her mother for the security of a new life with Gideon and Pat.

Part 3 (through page 517) Analysis

The Brotherhood is no more. Crimond's masterpiece is finished, and with its completion the reason for maintaining the Brotherhood has disappeared. Jean and Duncan are exiled in France, trying to salvage what is left of their ravaged relationship. Jenkin is dead. Rose and Gerard form a renewed bond of friendship and mutual care as he plans to resurrect the idealism of their youth by writing a book as an alternative to Crimond's thesis of renewal through revolution.

Tamar's life finally begins again as she accepts the Fairfaxes' offer to adopt her. Violet is forced to confront her fears of abandonment, and she must now find a way to cope with the loss of the daughter she never wanted nor appeared to love. The spell of religious conversion has been cast, and Tamar succumbs to its bewitching promise of a new life, while Violet is compelled to find a new way to relate to her daughter.

Tamar's Christianity is a foil to Crimond's book. While the book results in death, Tamar's Christianity is an affirmation of life. Father McAlister is satisfied that the rituals of Christianity have the power to make life-affirming changes even though neither he nor his convert actually give assent to the orthodox faith. Christianity serves as a symbol of hope and renewal, but it is not given the power to affect real change. That power must be left to the imagination and fears of each individual.

Part 3 (through page 568)

Part 3 (through page 568) Summary

Duncan and Jean are living in the south of France. Each is preoccupied with the events that have caused both such pain and turmoil. Yet, both husband and wife feel a secret security that the entire story will never be made known to the other. While they frequently speak about Crimond, one carries a truth that is never revealed. Duncan feels no remorse for Jenkin's death, and Jean remains unaware of his role in the accident.

Rose and Lily are together at Boyars. They discuss Tamar's conversion to Christianity, Jeans' strange car accident and Gulliver's possible whereabouts. Lily confides in Rose that she believes in the magical ability of snails to send messages between people. She says that her grandmother possessed the power of a witch over these creatures.

Tamar has had a change of heart in regard to her mother and is attempting to reconcile their differences. As time has passed since her conversion to Christianity, the fervor of her newfound faith has diminished. She begins to question the validity of Christianity's claims and wonders what really gave her such renewed hope and another chance at living the good life.

Rose and Gerard spend some time together again. Their conversation naturally turns to the recent developments in the lives of their friends. Gideon and Pat have adopted Tamar, and she has resumed her studies at Oxford. Gulliver and Lily have agreed to marry. They try to solve the puzzle of Jenkin's death and its meaning for their lives. They speculate about the extent of Crimond's responsibility in his death. Then, the discussion turns to Crimond's book. Gerard admits that he is very impressed with the book and tells Rose of his decision to write a long critique. She agrees to be his research assistant.

Part 3 (through page 568) Analysis

The relationship between Duncan and Jean remains doomed. Both husband and wife find their innermost thoughts filled with the past. Yet, there can never be full restoration without the revelation of the truth. Jean is bound to a man who she once thought was gentle and kind. He is revealed to be as ruthless and heartless as the lover she was forced to leave. The irony of her situation seems to escape the beautiful and otherwise intelligent Jean. The reader is left questioning the forces behind Duncan's change of character.

Tamar can no longer believe in the consolations of Christianity. However, she acknowledges that something has happened in her life as the result of Father McAllister's intervention in her personal crisis. Her salvation is not belief in the dogmas of the traditional Anglican faith, but the experience of ritual and the sacredness of the words spoken to her. She feels free to abandon the orthodox tenets of her newfound

faith, but she holds onto the experience, which brought renewal and hope. Christianity is viewed as a magic ritual, rather than as assent to a particular set of doctrines. This form of Christianity finds its solace, not in a future eternal life, but in renewal of life here and now. In opposition to Crimond's intellectual and cold work, Tamar's Christianity addresses the emotional and mystical aspects of humanity. The mystic also appears in the idea of the snail as a communicator. Gulliver has reunited with Lily, and the magical communication of the snail appears to be the reason.

Part 3 (through page 601)

Part 3 (through page 601) Summary

When they part, Rose and Gerard are left to their private thoughts and inner regrets. Rose knows that her years of loving Gerard will never result in marriage. Gerard continues to mourn for Jenkin and the relationship that he will never have with his friend. He goes to his house in order to feel Jenkin's presence. Among his papers and books he finds a letter from Crimond containing just one short sentence, "It was an accident." These words initiate another series of soul-searching questions. Finally, Gerard comes to a renewed resolution about his life. He vows that he will take care of Rose.

Lily is in south London on her way to see Crimond. She still feels a deep attraction for him in spite of her upcoming marriage to Gulliver. Lily pleads with Crimond to love her in return, but he rejects her and tells her to find happiness without him. She returns to Gulliver with a renewed determination to make the best of their future. During the conversation, they reveal to each other the strange circumstances of finding a snail in an unusual place. Without giving Gulliver any further details, Lily recalls to herself how she mumbled an ancient snail charm as she returned it to the garden. She is convinced that she possesses the magical powers of her grandmother. Somehow the charm made communication between the two snails possible. Now the wedding day has finally arrived.

Part 3 (through page 601) Analysis

Rose and Gerard each long for their halcyon days at Oxford more than two decades earlier. They mourn deeply for their losses, failures and regrets, but there is also a renewed conviction that life is good. Gerard sees a future for himself as he begins to think about his perspective on Crimond's book. Rose casts herself into the role of a submissive and willing helper in this task.

Crimond continues to hold a charismatic fascination for yet another female character in the novel. Although the basis of Lily's attraction to him is not clearly evident, his power over the opposite sex continues to hold sway even in his weakened position. His character is still marked by an aggressive coldness as he rejects Lily completely. She demonstrates strength in the face of such rejection and is able to return to Gulliver. Her secret knowledge that she possesses some kind of supernatural power gives her a sense that the future is not only possible, but also good. The snail serves as the symbol of human control over seemingly random forces, but a control given only to a fortunate few. It is a magical element, signifying mankind's need of magical things. Even this supposedly happy ending is only a resignation to second best. Lily really wants Crimond, the symbol of intellectualism; she settles for the younger Gulliver, and their relationship's mystical nature. Rose wants to marry Gerard. She accepts the lesser role

of research assistant and friend. Duncan and Jean want happiness, but they are resigned to a diminished life in France.

The characters are constantly thwarted in reaching their desired goals. Accidents, death and the randomness of life ensure that conventional happiness is not possible. Where goals appear to have been attained in the lives of Gulliver, Lily and Tamar, it is through a magical ritual of some kind. This affirms the need for the magical or the spiritual in life to attain any happiness. Pursuit of the purely intellectual results in only frustration and death. Tamar finds new life and hope in the rituals of Christianity. Gulliver and Lily find contentment through magical incantations to snails. The novel includes a spiritual dimension as an important part of human life. However, the novel does not affirm the existence of God, but merely the existence of a possible goodness.

Characters

David Crimond

Crimond is one of the original members of the Oxford set, probably in his mid-fifties. Unlike his fellow classmates, Crimond comes from a humble lower-class background, and his upper-class friends are not only impressed with his frugal, ascetic lifestyle, but also with his brilliant ideas and Marxist philosophy. However, his elusive character and radical political perspective eventually alienates him from his wealthier, extroverted friends even as he continues to receive an annual financial subsidy from them. His charismatic personality draws women to fall in love with him. Few are able to resist his magnetic charms. At the same time, Crimond proves to be a cold, demanding and abusive lover, casually indifferent to the needs of the women who love him. His life is focused completely on the writing of "the Book," which both he and the Brotherhood believe will change the world. Crimond is primarily known to the reader through the perspective of the other characters. The author never permits us to enter into the inner chamber of his mind. Crimond is a symbol of cold and dispassionate intellectualism, and his drive for death, which brings death to others, shows the negativity of this denial of human spirituality.

Duncan Cambus

Duncan is a member of the Oxford set and one of the Brotherhood supporting Crimond in his quest for historical immortality as a political genius. Physically large and imposing, his true character is seemingly at odds with his bear-like outward appearance. Duncan is portrayed as a man tortured by his obsession with his wife and her lover. He is passive and helpless in the face of Jean's determination to leave him for Crimond. His anger is directed entirely at his wife's lover, and he continues to love Jean despite her unfaithfulness. While he succumbs once to Tamar's waif-like sexual charms, this is only a momentary lapse. Tamar barely registers on his emotional radar, and after the short-lived affair Duncan assumes his habitual aloofness toward her. He remains obsessive about Jean and Crimond, and he has no interest in anything else. He carries on an intense inner relationship with Crimond, which he is careful never to reveal outwardly. In the end, his rage and desire for revenge turns him into a man as cold and heartless as Crimond. Although he is directly responsible for the death of the kindly Jenkin Riderhood, he reveals himself to be as callous of heart, and as incapable of conscience, as the man he hates. Duncan's blind fury against Crimond is not enough to save him. He lacks connection with the spiritual side of humanity.

Jean Kowitz Cambus

Jean is the beautiful, forty-ish daughter of a wealthy Jewish industrialist and the wife of a member of the Brotherhood, Duncan Cambus. Twice seduced into a love affair with

Crimond, in the end she is forced to leave her lover and return to her husband. Although endowed with intelligence as well as beauty, Jean prefers to surrender and submerge herself entirely into the lives and hearts of the men in her life. She believes in divine luck and the possibility of perfect love. She is willing to give of herself, body and soul, both in life and death to her lover. In the end, however, she trades the union of eternal love in death for the mere possibility of temporal happiness. For all her natural gifts in personality, beauty and brains, Jean Cambus remains a colorless, limp character. Her passionate pursuit of Crimond is, ironically, a passionate pursuit of the passionless.

Gerard Hernshaw

Gerard is a member of the Brotherhood and probably the most outwardly attractive of the group. First impressions of Gerard Hernshaw would lead to the conclusion that he is equally a man of inner emotional and personal integrity. Instead, the readers find an indecisive character that wavers and second-guesses his self at every turn, preferring to dwell at length on sad childhood memories of a pet parrot his exasperated parents gave away. He is bisexual. Sinclair Curtland, a fellow Oxford graduate, is the first passionate love in his life. When Sinclair dies in a glider accident, Gerard turns to his lover's younger sister, Rose, for sex and affection. His connections to the other characters in the novel are based almost solely upon the deaths of his lover, his father, his parrot and finally, his friend, Jenkin Riderhood, to whom he had proposed a sexual relationship. Gerard's constant turning toward death shows the perspective that human beings should concentrate on life, not death.

Jenkin Riderhood

Jenkin is a member of the Brotherhood and a graduate of Oxford. Jenkin is a Master of history at a boys' school in London. He is colorless and unremarkable in appearance and reclusive by inclination and nature. He is motivated solely by the love and connection he feels for his friends, and he has no other ambition but to simply live a quiet life. He is guileless to the point of naivety and always thinks the best of others. He is a gentle, kind soul who believes in the moral code of Christianity while rejecting its orthodoxy. Although the author describes Jenkin as having had love affairs with women, his sexuality appears more ambiguous. He does not reject Gerard's proposal for a homosexual relationship outright. Unfortunately for both men, the proposal never receives an answer, since Jenkin dies prematurely and tragically at the hands of the man he was trying to rescue.

Tamar Hernshaw

Tamar is a young, brilliant Oxford graduate student whose only real passion involves her studies. She has an uneasy, volatile relationship with her mother Violet and constantly searches for a father figure to fill the void she feels as an illegitimate child. She verges on the hysterical when problems arise in her life, and she feels guilty easily since she

assumes that she is responsible for other people's happiness. Her thin waif-like appearance makes her seem non-threatening, and Gerard and Jenkin commission her to act as the mediator in the Brotherhood's plan to reconcile Jean and Duncan. Unfortunately, she falls in love with Duncan, albeit momentarily, and their short-lived sexual affair results in a pregnancy. The abortion of her unborn child brings Tamar to the edge of a total breakdown, and it is only her conversion to the ritual of the Anglican Church that finally saves her.

Rose Curtland

Rose is a member of the Brotherhood, a single woman of about fifty years old, aristocratic and wealthy by birth and unsuccessful in achieving her dream to be married to Gerard Hernshaw.

Lily Boyne

Lily is a wealthy widow in her thirties who is obsessed with David Crimond but settles for a relationship with Gulliver Ashe. She believes that she has inherited the powers of a witch from her grandmother.

Gulliver Ashe

Gulliver is a penniless actor who first has an interest in a relationship with Gerard Hernshaw, but who later falls in love with Lily Boyne.

Gideon and Patricia Fairfax

Gideon is a wealthy Jewish art dealer and financier married to Patricia, Gerard Hernshaw's sister.

Professor Levquist

Professor Levquist is Gerard Hernshaw's old classics tutor at Oxford. He is Jewish by birth, but he has adopted the Scandinavian suffix "quist" as a protective camouflage in British society.

Father McAlister

Father McAlister is the Anglican priest at the parish church of Foxpath. He counsels Tamar and influences her decision to convert to Christianity.

Violet Hernshaw

The illegitimate daughter of Gerard's uncle Matthew Hernshaw, Violet is a beautiful woman of about forty years old, promiscuous when young and mother of Tamar Hernshaw.

Sinclair Curtland

The older brother of Rose Curtland, Sinclair is instrumental in supporting Crimond in his life's work as a political philosopher. He is also the major influence in the formation of the Brotherhood. He is Gerard Hernshaw's lover, and he dies in a glider accident, which occurs prior to the events related in the novel.

Reeve Curtland

A second cousin to Rose Curtland, Reeve Curtland is a widower with two teenage children. He is romantically interested in Rose.

Conrad Lomas

Conrad is a young American student at Cambridge and Tamar's boyfriend at the beginning of the novel. The relationship fails. He is reintroduced again at the end of the novel.

Annushka

Annushka is Rose Curtland's elderly housekeeper at Boyars.

Leonard Fairfax

Leonard Fairfax is the son of Gerald and Patricia Fairfax, cousin to Violet and Tamar Hernshaw.

Objects/Places

The Book

The Book is the focus of the novel. This is the book written by David Crimond outlining his vision of political and social revolution. It symbolizes the cold intellectualism that drives many of the characters, particularly Crimond. The Book is considered negative, its existentialism ending in a desire for death.

The Tower

The tower is the property owned by Duncan and Jean Cambus, located in the county of Warwick in Ireland.

Jenkin's House

Jenkin's house is a small terraced home in London where Gerard and Tamar often visit.

Staffordshire Dogs

The Staffordshire dogs are porcelain dogs owned by Jenkin.

Grey

Grey is a pet parrot that Gerard Hernshaw owned when he was a child.

College Scarf

The college scarf is an old Oxford scarf belonging to Gerard and given to Tamar Hernshaw as a talisman.

Boyars

Boyars is the familial estate owned by Rose Curtland.

Foxpath

Foxpath is the village near Boyars.

The Pike

The Pike is the pub in Foxpath.

The Parish Church

The Anglican Church in Foxpath is pastored by Father McAlister and attended by Rose and her friends.

The Stones

Rose owns a special collection of colored stones. She gives these as occasional gifts to her friends.

Mousebrook

Rose Curtland's mauve tabby cat is called Mousebrook.

Catherine Wheels

Catherine wheels are a type of firework used during the Guy Fawkes Party and symbolic of death.

The Roman Road

The ancient road near the village of Foxpath was built by Roman legionnaires.

Snails

Snails are instrumental in reuniting Lily and Gulliver. Snails are magical creatures that Lily Boyne can control through incantations.

London

London is the capital of Great Britain and home to the majority of the novel's characters.

Themes

Death

The characters in this novel all have a death wish in one form or another. Death remains consciously at the edge of their inner thoughts and often intrudes into their lives. From Sinclair Curtland's accidental death prior to the events of the novel to Jenkin Riderhood's equally accidental death near the end of the novel, death becomes not so much a part of life, but life is viewed as an interruption of the endless process of death in which all beings are engaged. How is it done? This question grips the imagination of Gerard Hernshaw as he views the dead body of his elderly father. When does that moment come? After all the care, the communication, the help, the soothing of the dying, suddenly there is a small moment, and death is there with its utter solitude, its loneliness and the end of all that kept one in life.

Death reminds man of his mortality and of the irrefutable fact that the dead are finally in a state of utter powerlessness and helplessness. The elderly Professor Levquist reminds his students that mortality and death must be acknowledged in old age. Death also comes to the young, though. Lily Boyne's first husband dies and leaves her a wealthy widow. Rose Curtland's entire immediate family has died, and she is the last of her line. Tamar destroys the child she conceived by Duncan and mourns its passing. Crimond's vision of a renewed society is through revolution and death. Out of chaos there is renewed hope and renewed life. Even the parties, at which the friends gather together in celebration, have the central theme of death. Guy Fawkes Day is one example.

Being is in a constant state of process, a dynamic moving toward the inevitable end of life and into the flow of death. Darkness appears to generate life, but as its source, death is also life's conclusion. Life requires a constant ordering of events, but there are too many random events to allow order to rule. Therefore, only death finally brings order to life - a dialectic theme of Murdoch's novel. In death there is a manifestation of continuity and order that is lacking in life. Thus, there is no real struggle against death in this novel. There is a fatalistic acceptance of its inevitability.

The nature of death also makes one question the nature and value of life. Crimond desires to end his life once he has no purpose. As the ultimate representative of the rational, a life without purpose to Crimond is no life at all. He fails to see the joy or purpose in the mere act of living, and so his point of view is ultimately one that embraces death.

Redemption

The presence of death leads to the necessity of some form of redemption, or a search for meaning, in this life. Life is viewed as temporary state in the flow of death. In an

important sense, death itself is viewed as a form of redemption since it brings the griefs, trials and difficulties of this life to an end: "Death dries the tears of the dead." Father McAlister brings redemption to bear on the death of Tamar's unborn child and urges her to see her child as the Christ child, the Redeemer in the Christian faith. Through death, a redemptive life is made possible. The fatal gunshot that accidentally kills Jenkin also brings a form of redemption into the lives of Duncan and Jean, and Gerard and Rose. He dies in the winter, and in the spring, renewed hope, renewed purpose and renewed ambition are seen in the lives of the remaining Brotherhood.

Goodness

The idea of goodness is the companion theme to those of death and redemption. Most of the characters, with the exception of Duncan and Crimond, are torn between their attraction to the moral legacy of orthodox Christianity (represented in the novel as the Anglican Church) and their secret fear that they have no right to claim that heritage for themselves. Murdoch, ever the philosopher-novelist, believes passionately in the existence of the objective good. She portrays humanity as weak and moved by forces beyond individual control and as rational creatures forced to live in a random universe. Mankind, however, desires the objective good. In the novel, the Book represents the objective good to the Oxford graduates. They see Crimond as the political philosopher leading society into a revolution toward reform and goodness. The Book gives a possible way of living in a new way. To be sure, it is a way without the transcendent good, but it still retains the spiritual dimensions of society's "old ways." The new way includes a sense of the real but as yet indefinable good. The good society is possible, and so the characters give unquestioned financial support for about two decades to a project they are neither permitted to review nor debate. In that sense, objective goodness represents another aspect of the possibility for universal redemption

Jenkin Riderhood, Tamar Hernshaw and Father McAlister are representative of the subjective good. Each of these three characters is drawn to Christianity. Jenkin has rejected its orthodox doctrine but clings to its moral ideals. Tamar reaches a similar conclusion about orthodox Christianity but primarily views the sacraments and liturgy as possessing the power of renewal. Father McAlister, while outwardly preaching the orthodox religion, inwardly questions the value of doctrine in the life of the church. Thus, Christianity can never become the basis for goodness and, by extension, for redemption. Nor can it provide freedom from the universal drift into death.

Style

Points of View

The novel is a narrative told in the third person, and it involves the differing perspectives of both major and minor characters. The novel is so full of detail that it is difficult at times to understand the individual viewpoint of each character. The characters have secret inner lives, which are not necessarily connected to the external events in the novel. Some thoughts have no influence at all on the plotline, while others are central to the unfolding of the novel. However, this development often occurs in such a manner that no one can imagine the outcome. Thus, the perspective of the characters appears to change without rational warrant.

The points of view of the novel's characters are not connected to previous events, thoughts or relationships within the plot itself. A character's perspective can suddenly change because the author introduces a completely irrelevant memory. Thus, the characters tend to exhibit eccentric ideas and the situations in which they are placed appear inconsequential to the overall development of the story line. Scenes alternate between two or three people in conversation and large social events such as the Commen Ball at Oxford, the Guy Fawkes Day Party or the Reading Party. It is not always clear which perspective is central to understanding the novel. However, the reader never enters Crimond's mind. He is always viewed from the external perspective of other characters.

Setting

The broad setting for this novel is postwar Britain. The author does not specify a particular decade, but the events seem to take place in the eighties. Therefore, the members of the Brotherhood are very likely students at Oxford in the late fifties and early sixties. However, there are no indications in the novel of any events external to the plot and the characters. Therefore, it is rather difficult to accurately give a historical timeline for the book. The author concentrates on the internal settings of estates and towers, roads and streets, city and country. Most of the scenes take place indoors, usually at someone's London residence. Since the novel concentrates on numerous conversations and inward musings, plus endless details of home interiors and characters' clothing, there are few actual events that move the story forward. The setting is as much psychological as it is a place and a time.

Language and Meaning

A safety net of illusion is necessary to save those characters who have slipped into moral ruin. Murdoch believes that psychological magic is the only solution for the modern citizen living and struggling in a confusing world. However, psychology alone cannot bring meaning and redemption into modern life. Only the language of religion

and literature is potent enough to cast the required redemptive spell. Religion and literature utilize the mysterious resources of language, and both have the power to enchant the disenchanted. In Murdoch's view, language and ritual possess the intrinsic power to reinterpret modern experience for disillusioned mankind. While religion is acknowledged as the initial necessary source of symbols, its rituals have only a limited capacity to console and motivate. Literature uses the power of language to reinterpret and enhance these ancient symbols. However, the author has gone one step further. Murdoch invents her own spiritual symbols. For instance, snails are not universally recognized as magical symbols, yet she employs these earthbound creatures to rescue the failing relationship between Lily Boyne and Gulliver Ashe. Such a spiritual dimension in an otherwise godless world is necessary in order to soften the dark story lines of the main characters in the novel. The question naturally arises as to her motive in employing such symbolism. The arbitrary use of such symbols could be seen as a declaration that the nature of reality is unknown. In fact, anything at all can become real. Thus, the meaning of the magical leads to a disturbing randomness to the plotline.

Structure

The Book and the Brotherhood is structured around an idea - the attainment of the objective good - rather than on a plotline with believable characters. Ideas, not human beings, dominate this novel. There are no definitive time lines; the phrase "and time passed" is used to indicate the order of events. Thus, the novel has a timeless quality, or related to events both past and present. Conversations, descriptions of clothing and home interiors, introspective inner dialogues and detailed accounts of social gatherings give this novel a structure which in not primarily based on events. In fact, at times the events appear to be almost incidental to the details that dominate the story line. The author uses the art of fiction to promote her philosophical ideals and invents eccentric characters to participate in unlikely stories in order to bring her philosophy to the forefront. "The utopian impulse is essential, one must keep faith with the idea that a good society is possible." (p. 299)

Quotes

"Your 'moral ambition' or whatever you call your selfish optimism, is just the old lie of Christian salvation, that you can shed your old self and become good simply by thinking about it - and as you sit and dream this dream you feel that you are changed already and have no more work to do - and so you are happy in your lie." p. 25

"Death dries the tears of the dead." p. 54

"'You leave the future to me, now that you've utterly desolated and defiled it. But you still have to live your own foul enslaved future day by day and minute by minute - quite apart from anything lese, your stupidity amazes me.' Duncan, with some difficulty, hauled himself out of his armchair. 'Everything about this infatuation, everything that I imagine about you and Crimond being together, fills me with *loathing* and *horror* and *disgust*.'" p. 74

"'Crimond, understand, I have left a husband whom I esteem and love, and friends who will never forgive me, in order to give myself to you entirely and forever. I hereby give myself. I love you. You are the only being whom I can love absolutely with my complete self, with all my flesh and mind and heart. You are my mate, my perfect partner, and I am yours. You must *feel* this now, as I do, as we did last night and *trembled* because we did. It was a marvel that we ever met. It is some kind of divine luck that we are together now. We must never part again. We are, here, in this, *necessary* beings, like gods. As we look at each other we verify, we *know*, the perfection of our love, we *recognize* each other. *Here* is my life, here if need be is my death. It's life and death, as if they were to destroy Israel - if I forget thee, O Jerusalem. . .'" p. 114

"Jenkin's sexual aspirations, usually unsuccessful and now in eclipse, were toward the other sex. But a great love involves the whole person and Jenkin's attachment was perhaps in the true sense Platonic. Gerard was like a perfect older brother, a protector and guide, an exemplar, a completely reliable, completely loving, resource, he had been, and had uniquely been, for Jenkin, pure gold. Perhaps these were precisely the reasons why he wanted to get up and run. To test himself in a Gerardless world. Reverently to remove something so perfect just because it was perfect." p. 133

"Gulliver's heart still beat fast for Gerard, but he never expected to be *that sort* of favorite, it being generally known that Gerard did not now have them." p. 137

"Gull had never had a woman friend before. This was the only thing that had happened lately that was not ill-omened and awful, and even over this some ambiguous cloud was hanging. He could not believe in anything that would not soon be spoilt. It had not been Gull's idea, it had been Lily's. This fact had already been discussed. In the late summer when Gerard was in Greece and Rose in Yorkshire, and Gulliver was just beginning to despair, he received a card from Lily asking him to lunch at a restaurant in Covenant Garden." p. 141

"Tamar could not help wishing that some magic could mend it all. Why couldn't money solve everything? Money here seemed to glow with rationality, sense, justice, and almost virtue. But it was impossible. Tamar could not either leave her mother or save her. It was like something awful in a fairy tale. The money to pay the debts could only come from Tamar's work. No other money would do. There was no place here for common sense or reasonable compromise. Tamar's ordeal would not make Violet happy or grateful. Yet anything else was unthinkable." p. 161

"Jean was not without occupation however. She was finding herself, now that she was with Crimond, simply more and more in love. She was living *upon* love. When she was alone, she would for long times shudder and tremble with it. She had never experienced presence so vividly before, the total connection with another being, the interpenetrating of bodies and souls, the intuitive absolute of mutual self-giving, the love of two gods. The obliteration of self, the dazzling blindness of the love-act which was both part and all of their lives, constituted a mystery or ritual with which she lived in a continuous present of anticipation and remembrance. The silences together, the sleep together, made her weep with joy or sob inwardly with tenderness. Part of her security was Crimond's absolute sovereignty in all matters." p. 167

"As the light of the rockets went out and the echo of explosions ceased, Duncan moved over to where Tamar was standing, and extended his hand quietly sideways towards her, and for a moment her small hand clasped his." p. 205

"A great heat came out of Duncan's body, so that Tamar, pressed against it, felt almost scorched. Her love and pity for him merged into a swift dizzy physical joy of self-giving as she felt herself strongly enclosed by his arms, his faintly rough cheek scraping hers and his large hot hand laid upon her throat." p. 214

"Now, suddenly, here was Lily Boyne, flashing past them, returning from a distance at express speed, waving one leg while spinning on one foot, leaping high into the air and landing on the tips of her skates, seeming to move not on the surface of the ice but above it. Gerard cried out, 'Lily, Lily, you're a *star*!'" p. 259

"One of the things which Tamar told the priest in the sun-lit snow-lit church was that she was pregnant." p. 285

"'It's the wasteland next.'" p. 296

"'Men are half alive now, in the future they'll be puppets. Even if we don't blow ourselves up the future will be, by your nice standards, terrible. There will be a crisis of authority, of sovereignty, technology will rule because it will have to rule. History has passed you by, everything happens fast now, we have to run to stay in the same place, let alone get a step ahead to see where we are. We've got to rethink everything.'" p. 296

"The utopian impulse is essential, one must keep faith with the idea that a good society is possible.'" p. 299

"After the love-making Tamar's state of mind, which had been clear and single, even a peace of mind, became a dark battlefield of incompatible emotions." p. 323

"'Your whole picture of western civilization is a "theory," said Crimond to Gerard. 'Your whole way of life supports poverty and injustice, behind your civilized relationships there's a hell of misery and violence. What do dissidents do when they come to the west? They grieve, they fade, they find it all utterly hateful, they can see it. There's something called history, I don't mean a concept invented by Hegel or Marx or perhaps Herodotus, I mean a strong relentless process of social change. That is what you simply refuse to notice. You think reality is ultimately good, and as you think you're good too you feel safe. You value yourselves because you are English. You live on books and conversations and mutual admiration and drink - you're all alcoholics - and sentimental ideas of virtue.'" pp. 335-336

"'Why be slaves of time? Jeanie, it's a short walk, this life. Why do people value it so? We have our great love, it is something timeless, let us die in our love, inside it, together, as if we were going to bed.'" p. 353

"'Look, Jenkin, this is serious, it's the most serious thing in the world, in my world. I want to get to know you better, much better, I want to come closer to you, I want us to share a house, I want us to live together, to travel together, to be together, I want to be able to see you all the time, to be with you - I want you to come home to me. I'm not saying this is possible, I'm telling you what I want, and very very much want - and if you consider what I say and understand it you'll see why it is I don't want you to go away.'

"There was a moment's silence. Jenkin stared at Gerard, not exactly with amazement, but with a bright, even radiant, open-mouthed open-eyed attention, 'Gerard - is this a proposal of marriage?'" pp. 360-361

"Tamar gave a very long deep shuddering sign and went on in a dead listless voice, 'Oh I don't mean I had the child and drowned it or anything. It was never born. I had an abortion.'" p. 364

"Jenkin had never had a homosexual relationship or dreamt of considering his close friendship with Gerard in that light - nor did he now allow himself to wonder what exactly it was which now existed and previously had not. What he felt was a sudden increase of being. Gerard had *called* to him, and the echoing call stirred things in deep places. Come live with me and be my love. Perhaps, after all, this changed everything?" pp. 370-371

"Jean began to pray. Crimond, oh Crimond, Crimond. How could she kill her lover? If she could only die and he became a god. The bright eyes were near, hypnotic, glaring, dazzling, filling her vision, directly ahead of her, rushing, charging towards her. She thought he's not going to swerve, it isn't a test, it's the real thing, it's the end. Jean began to scream, she screamed into the roaring of the engine. She could see now, not just the eyes, but the car, illumined now by her own headlights, a black car, with a figure in it, coming, coming. *The box, the box, the box*. Oh my love." pp. 378-379

"Crimond had leapt through the gap and was standing on the road. He said, 'I am going now. You may do as you please. I shall not see you again.'" p. 381

"Of course Duncan continued to wonder whether Jean had really left Crimond voluntarily, and whether, on any day, if he were to whistle she would run back. These were doubts and speculations which, constituting an intelligible pain, he had to live with. His hatred for Crimond was something else, obsessive, primaeval, poisonous, deep, living within him like a growing beast, living with his life, breathing with his breath." p. 425

"What mattered now was loving Duncan and being happy. In this light the loss of Crimond could seem almost like something mechanical, an inevitable happening, now past, which had not altered the flow of her life." p. 441

"When he saw the guns Duncan understood the scene, he understood the significance of the two long tables set end to end. He felt a quick cold death terror, a heavy pain alienating his body. Then a weird excitement like a sexual stirring. He came forward almost with an air of curiosity. Crimond had placed the revolvers side by side on the table. He was pale again and put his hand to his throat, undoing another button on his shirt." p. 462

"Jenkin was lying on the floor on his back. There was a neat round hole in the centre of his forehead at which Duncan had aimed when he was aiming at Crimond. Jenkin was clearly dead." p. 468

"The shock of this frightful blankly inexplicable disaster brought back to Rose her view of Crimond as something black and lethal." p. 477

"Crimond was the name of the curse which Gerard was under. He could think of nothing and no one else and could not see how this degrading and tormenting condition could change." p. 484

"About the dead child Father McAlister, to his great satisfaction, was at last able to do something definitive. He had said all sorts of things to Tamar, he told her to keep the child with her, not touched, not agonized about, as a sad presence, lived with, not hated, not feared, not frenziedly yearned for. He told her to think of the child as the Christ child." p. 492

"Jean and Duncan were looking at each other in silence, as they often did now, a grave serene silence punctuated by sighs and slight twitching movements like those of animals luxuriously resting, pleasurably stretching their limbs a little. They had escaped." p. 518

"'I love snails," said Lily, 'my grandmother attracted them, they came into the house. Of course snails do get in everywhere, I found one in my flat the other day. My grandmother could tame wild things, they came to her. She used the snails for telepathy.'" p. 532

"Many many things which seem separate but are connected or will connect. The foundations are shifting, we're about to see the largest, deepest, fastest change, the most shattering revolution, in the history of civilization." p. 561

"'History is a slaughterhouse, history as a wolf that wanders outside in the dark, an idea of history as something that has to be, even it's terrible, even if it's deadly.'" p. 563

Topics for Discussion

Referring to examples from the lives of Tamar Hernshaw and David Crimond, explain how the novel reflects the state of postwar Britain in its perspective on inherited wealth, status, class and education.

Does the author promote the idea that morality is equated with sentimentality, or does Iris Murdoch believe in an objective goodness? Base your answer on examples from the novel.

Explain how the death of Sinclair Curtland affects the subsequent events in the lives of Crimond, Jean and Duncan.

Does Jenkin's death represent a form of redemption in the lives of Crimond and Duncan? Why or why not?

Explain how the decisions of Lily Boyne influence the lives of Tamar Hernshaw and Jean Cambus.

Does the feminist Jean Cambus have realistic ideas about love? Why or why not?

Does the author believe that man has free will or that man is entirely subject to random events and contingencies? Pick one of the major characters and follow that character's story line to support your answer.

Explain how the technique of situational irony is used in the account of Tamar's pregnancy.

Although Iris Murdoch has peopled this novel with numerous major and minor characters, which one is most central to the story line? Give reasons for your choice.

Explain the novel's perspective on the cooperative roles of Christianity and literature as two important variables in the development of modern civilization.

The author uses several idiosyncratic symbols to suggest that a supernatural force compels man to act in certain ways. How many magical symbols can you find in the novel? What does the mystical mean in the book, and how is it contrasted with intellectualism?

Does Gerhard Hernshaw's sexual ambiguity enhance or detract from the development of his character? Why or why not?