

# Report on the 8<sup>th</sup> International Murdoch Conference University of Chichester, England

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The 8<sup>th</sup> International Murdoch Conference, devoted to the theme of 'Gender and Trauma' and held on 1-2 September 2017 in Chichester, celebrated a new collaboration between that city's university and the Iris Murdoch Archive Project at Kingston University in London, with Chichester University having become an international focal point for Murdoch research and Kingston University continuing to host the archive and visiting researchers.

It was a joyous, exuberant occasion characterized by stimulating, enlightening presentations of the highest quality followed by vigorous exchanges of views. The organization was impeccable. Many participants enjoyed on-site accommodation at Chichester's University's Bishop Otter campus. Breakfast and lunch was provided at the university refectory. A wine reception and the launch of the eighth issue of the *Iris*

*Murdoch Review* was held on the evening of September 1<sup>st</sup>, followed by the conference dinner at 'Bill's' restaurant in the city. The sun literally shone on this conference: its two days blessed by good weather of bright skies and mild, pleasant temperatures.

Plenary speakers included Professor Emeritus Anne Rowe (Kingston) who spoke on her twenty years' experience of teaching Iris Murdoch, A.N. Wilson, author of *Iris Murdoch as I Knew Her*, who provided personal reminiscences, Professor Gary Browning (Oxford Brookes), who talked of Murdoch as a 'history woman,' and James Jefferies, an independent scholar, who has embarked on – and nearly completed – an ambitious project to provide an on-line digitalized map of persons and places mentioned by Murdoch in her work. Here is the link to his project: <https://irismurdoch.info>

Over the course of the two-day conference, there were eighteen panel discussions, with each panel consisting of three separate presentations lasting twenty-minutes followed by a question-and-answer session.

On this occasion, the usually numerous Japanese contingent was limited to three members of the Iris Murdoch Society of Japan: the Society president, Paul Hullah, Fiona Tomkinson, and Wendy Jones Nakanishi. All three gave presentations. Still, it was an international gathering, with other attendees hailing from the States, Hungary, Sweden, Ireland, Norway, the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Australia, the Netherlands and Finland.

The beginning and ending of the event provided opportunities for outdoor instruction and contemplation that one can imagine Murdoch herself might have enjoyed. For the numerous participants who had arrived in Chichester the day before the conference was to open, on August 31<sup>st</sup>, a walking tour of the city was arranged by Dr. Miles Leeson – the new Director of the UK Iris Murdoch Society and editor of its *Review* upon Anne Rowe's retirement from these positions – followed by an informal dinner. During the tour, a professional guide pointed out the Roman and medieval foundations of this beautiful old cathedral city.

Anyone interested was invited to join an optional walking tour of London held on the day following the conference – 3 September – to visit sites featured in Murdoch's novels and particularly in *The Black Prince*. It was organized and led by Chery Bove, co-author (with Anne Rowe) of the seminal study entitled *Sacred Space, Beloved City: Iris Murdoch's London*.