

Looking forward to Murdoch's Centenary

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It has been just over a year since the Iris Murdoch Research Centre was inaugurated at the University of Chichester and, looking back at what has been achieved in 2017 by both the centre and Murdoch scholarship worldwide, it seems clear that there is a growing base for our centenary celebrations in 2019. The highlight of this past year has been the first major conference at Chichester, following on from the seven previous at Kingston, where we had over a hundred attendees, of whom over 60 gave papers on a fascinating range of subjects: most focusing on 'Gender and Trauma', the theme of our conference. I was particularly pleased to be able to welcome Paul Hullah and Wendy Jones Nakanishi from the Japanese Society. The movement of the centre to Chichester was outlined by Frances White in the previous newsletter and, since then, we have taken on PhD students (with two to follow in February) and we have a visiting scholar with us from China.

The centenary comes at something of crossroads for Murdoch scholarship. After suffering a decline in popularity after her death in 1999 (certainly in fictional terms) it now appears that there is something of a resurgence of interest in her work. There have been several events organised by those outside the society in recent months, and Frances White and I were delighted to be invited to discuss Murdoch's philosophical work at Durham University in February this year. The symposium, organised by the 'InParenthesis' working group based at Durham, aim to bring together the work of Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Mary Midgley; we were delighted that Mary was able to join us and be part of the discussions. We returned to Chichester assured that the legacy of these women, and of Murdoch in particular, will continue to grow and develop. Murdoch's fictional work has recently been praised in a variety of national papers in the UK, and A.N. Wilson's talk at the conference in September assured us that her novels will endure. Although there is much more to be done, we envisage 2019 being a key year for widen recognition of her work. The next year will bring several major publications, including the much-awaited volume on Murdoch in the 'Writers and their

Work' series by Anne Rowe, now Visiting Professor at Chichester, and Gary Browning's 'Why Iris Murdoch Matters', and other collections.

The central event of 2019 will be our centenary conference; to be held in Oxford from the 13th – 15th July. We are delighted to be working with both St. Anne's and Somerville Colleges who will be hosting us during this time. St. Anne's College will be providing the main venue, and our accommodation, and Somerville have kindly agreed to host an exhibition of major items connected with Murdoch. Alongside this we are aiming to arrange a public lecture in Oxford on the afternoon or evening of the 12th July which we hope to have this confirmed early in 2018. As the Murdoch archive at Kingston University is moving into new accommodation in early 2019 we aim to have an exhibition and events there later in the year. Events in Chichester are also being planned with a longer exhibition to feature in the Autumn of 2019 to coincide with other activities. We would be keen to have a revival of her work for the stage, but this is very much in the planning stage at present. As 2019 will also be the 20th anniversary of Murdoch's death we are now, for the first time, able to apply for a blue plaque to be placed on a building connected with her. We believe her flat in Cornwall Gardens, London would be the ideal location. The regular newsletter from the Society will continually update these plans and flesh out the detail.

So much to do in anticipation! We very much hope that all members of both the Iris Murdoch Society, and the Japanese Society will be able to be together in the Summer of 2019 to celebrate her life and work; and at your conference in Japan that year.

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(Lead Editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*)