



Biography and betrayal

Christopher Cowley

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Abstract John Bayley was married to Iris Murdoch for 45 years. In the last few years of her life, Murdoch developed Alzheimer’s, and John Bayley wrote a memoir about their life together, including the difficulties of looking after her with the disease. Although the *Memoir* was generally well-received, some critics called the publication an act of betrayal, because of the intimacy of some of the revelations, because of the public reduction of a great mind to a sick old woman, and especially because of Murdoch’s inability to consent or respond to it. I agree, but I think it was even worse than that. I want to distinguish the ‘shallow’ betrayal of a ‘three-dimensional’ person in the narrow timeframe of the present (where the lack of consent is perhaps the main issue) from a ‘deep’ betrayal – and I will argue that Bayley is guilty of both. Deep betrayal essentially involves a close intimate of the victim betraying the ‘four-dimensional’ person across her whole life, as well as betraying the relationship between them. Such a betrayal inevitably casts a shadow back on our understanding of the earlier relationship between Bayley and Murdoch.

Keywords Iris Murdoch · Biography · Betrayal · Marriage

John Bayley was married to Iris Murdoch for 45 years, and by all accounts theirs was a loving and intimate friendship. In 1998, Bayley published *Iris: a Memoir of Iris Murdoch* (henceforth the *Memoir*), recounting many episodes from their married life together, but also chronicling her more recent decline into severe Alzheimer’s. The memoir was widely praised, although some critics accused Bayley of betraying Murdoch. I am inclined to agree that it was a betrayal, but I think the betrayal was

Christopher Cowley (✉)
School of Philosophy, University College Dublin, Dublin 4, Ireland
E-Mail: christopher.cowley@ucd.ie



a more complicated – and indeed a more destructive – phenomenon than the book’s critics think. I want to explore the nature of betrayal in this particular context.

1 The background

Some details about the timeline will be relevant. Iris Murdoch married John Bayley in 1956, when she was 36 years old. Over the course of her life, she wrote 26 novels, and several important works of philosophy, perhaps the most famous of which was *The Sovereignty of Good* (2013 [1970]). Bayley was a successful Oxford academic, rising to be Warton Professor of English in 1974, in which post he remained for almost 20 years.

Murdoch was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 1995, and she deteriorated rapidly. Bayley kept a diary throughout this period, which included descriptions of Murdoch’s decline and of their changing life together. In September 1998, Bayley published the *Memoir*. The first three quarters of it, entitled ‘Then’, comprise a series of extended recollections about Murdoch and about their long marriage; the last quarter, entitled ‘Now’, comprise diary extracts from the last two years of Murdoch’s decline. By 1998, Murdoch was severely demented: she did not recognise him, could barely communicate, and she needed help with all activities of daily living. Throughout this time, she remained at home, with Bayley looking after her. In late 1998, Bayley moved her to a nursing home, where she died in February 1999 (aged 79). Bayley went on to write two more memoirs about her in the following years, thereby completing what is now known as the ‘Iris trilogy’.¹ Bayley remarried in 2000, and died in 2015.

The *Memoir* sold well, and was widely reviewed and mostly well-received.² Anne Rowe (1999) wrote a ‘Critical Reception’ with some examples of praise, centred on three themes: it was a moving love story, it was a tribute to Murdoch herself and to her work, and it was an important contribution to the public discussion about the reality of dementia and of caring for people with dementia. Although some critics were worried by Murdoch’s lack of consent and about the intimacy of some of the revelations, Rowe tells us that Bayley insisted that Murdoch “was neither diminished nor degraded by the disease”, and that his effort had been important in fighting the stigma and the silence surrounding Alzheimer’s. Certainly the Alzheimer’s Society of Great Britain endorsed the book. In an interview from the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, Bayley also felt that Murdoch would have approved because he “had hoped to show something of what it means to be good” (Rowe 1999, 10). In her philosophical work, Murdoch had been famously interested in goodness; in

¹ *Iris and Her Friends: A Memoir of Memory and Desire*, Abacus Books 2000; and *Widower’s House*, Duckworth 2001.

² The US Edition was retitled *Elegy for Iris*. At first glance this is odd, because elegies are for dead people and Murdoch was not dead at the time of writing. It *might* be argued that the ‘real’ Murdoch was already dead, and that Bayley was only looking after a ‘shell’. Importantly, however, Bayley himself did not believe this. He was looking after Murdoch, the *same* Murdoch to whom he had been married for 45 years. She remained “her old self” (p. 36).



the *Memoir* Bayley claims that the Alzheimer's "has only been able to exaggerate a natural goodness in her" (Bayley 1998, 83).

One criticism of the 'Then' period is that there is also too much of Bayley's perspective and too little of Murdoch's. As Megan Laverty points out, there is very little discussion, for example, of Murdoch's relationships with others, and all we are left with is Bayley's amused bafflement and occasional jealousy (Laverty 2001, 133). This alleged self-absorption carries over into the 'Now' part. Gertrude Himmelfarb writes: "even though one does not question Bayley's love and devotion, even when he rebukes himself for sometimes being insufficiently loving and devoted, these confessions have the effect of enhancing his own image of almost superhuman patience" (Himmelfarb 1999, 35). Carol Sarler from the *Observer* writes: "Mr Bayley wrote a book in which he described, in the most intimate detail, what a marvellous job he was doing in caring for her" (Sarler 1999). So the perspective of the *Memoir* is already problematic (almost to the point of suggesting that *John* would have been a more honest title than *Iris*).³

Sarler's very title says it all: "In the name of love, shut up". She accuses Bayley of writing something that was "demeaning, diminishing, reducing and insulting to the point of common assault". She also charges critics and readers with a failure to be alarmed by the revelations:

And I ask you this: were you to be placed beside a strange man at dinner, who launched into such a dignity-defying conversation about a woman he loves, would you not feel just a little repelled?

Sarler's theory is that the *Memoir* was an act of revenge. Bayley had watched Murdoch's success and fame eclipse his own for so many years, and now he was in the position to have literally the last word. In what follows I'm not going to speculate further about Bayley's motivation. I happen to share Sarler's intuitions about this, but her conclusion is hard to corroborate, and is not relevant to the philosophical point I want to make about the nature of the betrayal. I'm also going to disregard Bayley's justification referring to the importance of the public discussion about dementia and about caring for people with dementia. However objectively valuable the contribution was, it could not justify the betrayal, if the betrayal was as serious as I consider it – and that remains for me to argue. Instead, he should have left the biography to someone who was *not* Murdoch's husband, someone like Peter Conradi, who wrote an authoritative biography of Murdoch only three years after her death, one which was much more restrained in the intimacy of description.⁴

³ Peter Bradshaw (2002) makes the same point about Richard Eyre's 2001 film adaptation of the *Memoir*.

⁴ Interestingly, Conradi's (2001) long and detailed biography only has one proper reference to Bayley's *Memoir*, on p. 591, and he is careful not to cast judgement. (The half-dozen other references to the *Memoir* are to some information in it.) Conradi writes: "Those closest understood that [writing the *Memoir*] helped [Bayley], hurting no one. [...] Hundreds of carers of Alzheimer's victims [...] showed appreciation for John's breaking of a taboo. Others felt Iris was cast in this very public role of quixotic benefactress without her consent".



2 Shallow betrayal

I want to examine the nature of betrayal; more specifically, I want to argue that Bayley's publication of the memoir actually constitutes *two* overlapping kinds of betrayal, which I will call 'shallow' and 'deep'. The depth metaphor allows distinctions in three aspects: the *nature* of the betrayal, the *conception of the victim* of the betrayal, and the *moral wrongness* of the betrayal. I will start by sketching out the structure within which a Betrayer betrays a Victim. (For the sake of clarity in the use of pronouns I will refer to the Betrayer as male and the Victim as female.)

Shallow betrayal is the more familiar kind, and this is what the above critics accuse Bayley of. All betrayal logically begins with the Victim's reasonable trust in and reliance on the Betrayer, or with the Victim's reasonable understanding of the conditions of the partnership. One paradigm case of shallow betrayal within marriage would be covert infidelity, since it breaches the conventional expectation of exclusivity and openness. As it happens, Murdoch had a number of sexual partners during her marriage, but Bayley knew about some of them; although jealous, he did not seem to take them as a serious betrayal, but instead as part of the tacit agreement between them. Another paradigm of shallow betrayal would involve the Betrayer (a spy, for example) actively and covertly undermining the Victim's interests (e.g. financial interests). A third paradigm would involve sensitive or personal information, disclosed under the Victim's reasonable assumption of confidentiality; or an event of personal embarrassment or sensitivity that the Victim reasonably expects the Betrayer to keep confidential. If the Betrayer sells the information or describes the event to a third party without the Victim's consent, *whether or not* this harms or embarrasses the Victim and/or a fourth party, this is a clear shallow betrayal.

If for any reason the Victim is not in a position to give or withhold consent, then there will be a strong onus on the Betrayer to clearly establish (i) that the putative betrayal is in the Victim's best interests, or (ii) that the Victim would have consented because the betrayal would instantiate or promote values that she long upheld; or (iii) exceptionally, that the betrayal would be in the public interest (e.g. a case of whistle-blowing).⁵ Bayley clearly invokes both the second and third as justification.

In my terminology, a shallow betrayal can only relate to a 'three-dimensional' conception of the Victim; I will discuss 'deep' betrayal and the 'four-dimensional' conception in the next section. According to the three-dimensional conception, the Victim can be entirely characterised by her 'near-present' physical and mental and relational states: what she looks like now, what she believes and desires now, what her skills are now, what relationships she finds herself in now, whom she trusts now etc. In the case of sensitive information (including information about embarrassing events), what matters is the Victim's *near-present* consent, or lack of consent, to its distribution; or what matters is the breach of *near-present* trust. I use the expression

⁵ The Betrayer might seek an *excuse* for the betrayal by arguing e.g. (i) that he had not been aware of the sensitive nature of the information (and could not be reasonably expected to have been aware), or (ii) that he had been acting under a credible and imminent threat on his life or health, as when a spy is tortured for his sensitive information. Of course, the Betrayer's attempted excuse or justification might lead to a new conversation with the Victim about the sufficiency of the excuse or justification.

‘near-present’ – I do not mean what metaphysicians call a ‘time-slice’, but rather a time-span during which the identities of Betrayer and Victim do not change significantly, and during which the relevant memories will not be lost or their meanings obscured.

Bayley’s shallow betrayal of Murdoch was compounded by the particular nature of the demented Murdoch herself. Not only was she unable to give or withhold consent because of the dementia (and the absence of any advance directive), not only did she trust him with a lifetime’s worth of private events and information, but in addition she was famous for her privacy, as Bayley himself acknowledges several times.⁶

Most people, I think, would reasonably assume that Murdoch would not have consented to the betrayal of her privacy, *especially* by her own husband. As Claudia Mills asks: “Can friends write about friends, while still remaining friends and being true to the expectations and obligations of friendship?” (Mills 2004, 101)⁷ Either Bayley genuinely felt that Murdoch would have consented, or he did not care. But Bayley’s betrayal is particularly hurtful since the betrayal comprises a detailed description of the loss of what Murdoch was most famous for, and with which she most identified – her extraordinary intellect and creativity. I’m confident, therefore, that she would not have consented to the *Memoir’s* representation of her as *reduced* to common biological needs and a minimally childish mental life for a full quarter of the *Memoir*, however well-intentioned. As Sarler put it:

Each of us, stripped to our bare intimacies, is stripped of those things that make us different from others; reduced from what we have that is special to that we have which is commonplace. In this knowledge do we enter into deeply private relationships; in love and trust do we expect the privacy to remain precisely that. (Sarler 1999)

Here are two egregious examples of Bayley’s demeaning revelations; I hesitate to cite these because I do not want to be complicit in the *Memoir’s* voyeurism, but the examples will help focus the later discussion. The first is based on a sexist, nerdy Oxford joke. An old male acquaintance of Bayley’s started writing to him to commiserate and to describe his struggles with his own wife’s dementia. In one letter he said: “I used to view the female form divine in a rather different light. Now I just find myself hosing it down every morning”. In response Bayley “giggles” when

⁶ Indeed, he describes them as often leading parallel lives, with him unaware of many of her activities and companions. She never consulted Bayley on her novel-writing, for example (with one exception). Bayley writes: “She went on then secretly quietly doing her work, never wishing to talk about it, never needing to compare or discuss or contrast, never reading reviews or wanting to hear about them, never needing the continual reassurance from friends or public or the media which most writers require” (Bayley 1998, 164-5).

David Streitfeld (1998, 12) cites this passage and then comments: “The irony of saying this while simultaneously suggesting she smells a little ripe because she can no longer bathe herself seems to have escaped him”.

⁷ When it comes to her family, Mills answers the question later: “I don’t think I could publish a memoir about my family, either my childhood family or my family now. For me, it would be too much of a betrayal” (Mills 2004, 116). Important here is the relativisation of “for me” – for much of her article she is more sympathetic with those who do write about family members because they have “story-telling needs”.



the quotation comes to mind while “washing between [Murdoch’s] legs” (Bayley 1998, 85). Can Bayley really claim that Murdoch would have consented to this? The second example is Bayley’s description of Murdoch’s delight in the children’s TV show *Teletubbies*, and Bayley’s accompanying baby-talk: “I tell her she is nearly four years old now – isn’t that wonderful?” (Bayley 1998, 265). This is surely more than ‘playing along’ with Murdoch, and it is more than ‘putting on a brave face’ for the reader. To my ear, publishing such details was an act of simple cruelty.

Finally, the shallow betrayal was aggravated by the fact that Murdoch was still alive at the time of publication. Could Bayley really not have waited another year or two until she was dead? Perhaps her prognosis in 1998 was indeterminate. Although the living Murdoch was too demented to be in a position to *feel* humiliated by the *Memoir* readers’ new intimate knowledge of her, there is an important sense that she *was* humiliated by such public knowledge. Central to the idea of humiliation is the undermining of generic human dignity, as in the paradigm case of slavery. However, humiliation becomes all the more potent when it is focused on a target individual, and on the precise contours of her individual dignity, *beyond* her generic human dignity. In Murdoch’s case, her individual dignity rested greatly in her past activity as a successful novelist and philosopher, and it was the loss of those rich areas of her self that made her situation so tragic.

It might be said that those without self-awareness cannot be humiliated. However, such a ‘focused’ humiliation is certainly possible without self-awareness, and is indeed exacerbated by the lack of self-awareness, since any conceivable response to the humiliation – a response that could re-assert the individual’s particular dignity – is no longer available.⁸ Indeed, there is even a risk of humiliation in the very attitude required for detached non-expert observation of a vulnerable person in one’s charge, even when the observations are never published. I’m thinking of Ingmar Bergman’s 1961 film *Through a Glass Darkly*, in which a novelist takes notes about his schizophrenic adult daughter’s behaviour with a view to possibly incorporating some of the ‘material’ in his next novel.

Now Bayley might claim that in the end, *he* knew Murdoch much better than any of us, that *he* best understood what loyalty *to Murdoch* required after 45 years of marriage, and therefore we should defer to *his* judgement about what she would and would not have consented to. Certainly, in the *Memoir* itself, he never even considers the possibility that the publication might constitute a betrayal, or that it could be seen as a betrayal. In relation to Bayley’s *Memoir*, Richard Freedman puts the thought like this:

There were a few hostile reviews, but on the whole people found it moving and appropriate. They assumed that Bayley would know what was consistent with the sort of trust he and his wife shared, and they welcomed what he had to

⁸ I am here taking a position on the debate surrounding ‘unconscious harm’ – can one be harmed by something if one never finds out about it, let alone if one never suffers directly from it? Some would claim that the demented Murdoch was ‘beyond’ any reputational harm that Bayley’s *Memoir* would generate. As will become evident below, I disagree, and am drawing on something like the following intuitions: (i) it would be wrong to *mock* the demented Murdoch, even if she did not *feel* mocked; (ii) that Murdoch *has* dignity that can be lost even if she is unaware of or unconcerned about any loss of dignity.

tell about the experience of the disease and caring for a loved one who had it.
(Freadman 2004, 138)

I think that is a big assumption. And with regard to the second half of the sentence, Freadman does not acknowledge that the undoubted public benefit might still not be enough to justify the betrayal. Be that as it may, we seem to have reached an impasse between Bayley and his critics, one that would require a lot more evidence to resolve either way. The nature of shallow betrayal seems to be relatively clear, and enough is in place for me to move onto the main focus of this paper – deep betrayal.

3 Four-dimensional identity and deep betrayal

To understand deep betrayal we first need to discuss what I will call ‘four-dimensional identity’. The basic idea should be familiar. I’m holding a photograph of a young boy; I point at the picture and say “that’s me when I was ten years old”. The physical and psychological characteristics of me and the boy are very different, but we can say that I and the boy are the same organic *individual*, leading a single *life*, in virtue of tracing a single spatio-temporal path from then and there to now and here.

We can contrast a ‘three-dimensional’ account of a person at a given time or stage in their life (where a stage involves the ‘near-present’) with a ‘four-dimensional’ account of the person across their whole life, from birth to the present. A biographer such as Peter Conradi would write about the four-dimensional individual Murdoch, and would seek not only to document the changes from one three-dimensional description to another (and to speculate about the influence of other people and events on those changes), but also seek to capture what the whole person ‘amounted to’ across their life. Of course there is plenty of room for disagreement between a biographer and his subject, if she is still alive and competent, about issues of small-scale or large-scale interpretation of the events in the subject’s life; just as there would be room for disagreement between two biographers about a single subject. But such disagreements presuppose the existence of some four-dimensional, more or less discoverable, more or less articulable, more-or-less coherent account of the individual and her life.⁹

We can then distinguish two conceptions of Murdoch. First, there is the three-dimensional conception of Murdoch-in-1998 (i.e. a time-indexed conception), whom Bayley shallow-betrays when he publishes the *Memoir* in 1998. Her inability to

⁹ Two comments here. (i) There is an open question about the degree to which the biographer *discovers* his subject and to which he *creates* his subject. This is a central problem in the philosophical areas of hermeneutics and the philosophy of mind and action. I hope I can remain agnostic on this point. (ii) The biography of a living subject can only ever be a work-in-progress, since it will be vulnerable to new events in the subject’s life after publication. However, even *after* the subject’s death, the biography remains vulnerable to the revelation of new facts. Think about the present status of any biography written about the English TVstar Jimmy Savile *before* his 2011 death and the posthumous revelations of his widespread sexual predations.



consent in 1998 (and her inability to publicly defend herself, her inability to leave Bayley) is mainly what makes the publication a shallow betrayal, together with the plausible speculation that she would not have consented if she had been competent enough to understand the content of the *Memoir*.

Second, there is the four-dimensional ‘biographical’ conception of Murdoch across her whole life, up to the present. Here we would have Murdoch defined much more centrally by her literary and philosophical achievements, by her personal values and ideals (through different stages of her life) as articulated in her work and in her self-descriptions, and by her major life choices (where to live, what job to do, with whom to have long-term friendly relations). And because three quarters of the *Memoir* is about ‘then’, it is clear that it mostly concerns Murdoch’s four-dimensional personhood. And presumably Bayley could assume that many of his readers would already have been familiar with Murdoch’s life and achievements across three decades.

The distinction between a three-dimensional and a four-dimensional conception can also be applied to a particular *intimate relationship*. We can describe a couple in the near-present, in terms of their shared values and activities now, their mutual annoyances now, the conflicts between their relationship obligations and other obligations to third parties etc. This three-dimensional conception of a relationship is much more contractual; and shallow betrayal can be understood as a kind of breach of contract. But we can also speak of a four-dimensional conception of the relationship across time, what the relationship has amounted to on the whole, what its defining features have been – again, the sorts of questions that a biographer would ask. Of course there is a large overlap here: in writing the biography of Murdoch, Peter Conradi also had to write about Bayley and had to write about marriage between them. Murdoch’s four-dimensional identity could not help but be partly constituted by her marriage to Bayley. And yet the marriage was also more than the ‘sum’ of the four-dimensional accounts of Bayley and Murdoch.

Deep betrayal takes place paradigmatically within a long-term intimate relationship. It involves the betrayal of the four-dimensional subject and the betrayal of the four-dimensional relationship. But the identity of the betrayer is key here, in a way that it is not in a shallow betrayal. For it is Bayley who deep-betrays Murdoch and their marriage *from within*. In addition, while deep betrayal is possible within any long-term intimate relationship, in a marriage it is perhaps worse because of the explicit public commitment that launches the marriage.

In support of my understanding of deep betrayal, I want to introduce two quasi-technical ideas: Avishai Margalit’s concept of a “thick relation” and Hilde Lindemann’s metaphor of “holding”. Margalit (2017) argues that a ‘true’ betrayal (roughly corresponding to my ‘deep’ betrayal) can only take place between people in a long-term “thick relation”. A thick relation is oriented by belonging – unlike a professional relationship, which is oriented by achievement. And the distinctive feature of such a true betrayal is that any harm or offence “serves as good reasons for questioning the meaning of the thick relation” (Margalit 2017, 83). Through the thick relation, the identities of the two individuals become entwined to such a degree that a discrete ‘contractual’ betrayal between two logically separate entities is no longer possible. Just as it becomes impossible to separate the individual entirely from the

relationship, so too does it become impossible to separate the act of betrayal from the relationship. Not only does the true betrayal pose a threat to the future meaning (and future existence) of the relationship, argues Margalit, the present *and past* meaning of the relationship is undermined, regardless of what actually happens from here on.

In Margalit's terms, undermining the meaning of a thick relation could mean undermining either the thickness or the relation (Margalit 2017, 88). To undermine the relation means undermining the specific *form* of the relation, as partly determined by the set of expectations and norms that publicly characterise that that type of relation, and partly determined by the set of norms that have evolved as constitutive of *this particular* relation. To undermine the thickness means that the relation will be open to dilution or rupture, where dilution might assume the form of questions about the past and on-going meaning of the relation: "Was I wrong about our relationship in the past? I thought we were friends, but were we?" (Margalit 2017, 93). In the case of Murdoch, I would argue, the deep betrayal is compounded precisely because she could not ask these questions, and did not have the option to dilute or rupture her marriage to her Betrayer (hence an overlap with shallow betrayal). But we the readers of the *Memoir* can and should ask these questions. The effect of betrayal on a thick relation is to be contrasted, continues Margalit, with the natural end to a friendship through drifting apart, with or without fault, with or without symmetrical loss of affection. The important part is that "Drifting away affects the future of the relation, but it does not affect the meaning of the relation in the past" (Margalit 2017, 104). I will develop this basic idea in the next and final section.

Because of Murdoch's dementia, Bayley had to assume the role not only of physical caregiver, but also the role of 'holding' Murdoch's identity. I am taking the metaphor of 'holding' from Hilde Lindemann (2009), who describes the importance of friends and family members in visiting a demented patient even if the patient no longer recognises them or even seems to benefit from their visit. The visits cannot be reduced to questions of visible pain or pleasure, their function is more to 'hold' the patient's humanity as someone *worth visiting*, rather than as someone whose childish needs merely deserve to be *managed*. I think Lindemann's metaphor can be extended by suggesting that the friend or family member's visit helps to 'hold' the specific identity of the dementia patient. In all observable respects, the patient has been gradually losing their identity, and seems to have lost all connections to her past and to her past relationships. It is the friend's visit that preserves something of that identity, perhaps reinforced by the friend placing photographs of the friends and family (and the patient's younger self with those friends and family) around the patient's room. Using Lindemann's metaphor, we can say that Bayley had an additional role as husband: to hold Murdoch's *entire* identity despite its observable deterioration; not only Murdoch's individual identity, but also her identity as an artist and scholar. And such a role essentially requires a particular a sense of discretion and privacy, on pain of compounding the deep betrayal. So in publishing the *Memoir*,



Bayley was betraying his marriage to Murdoch, in a way that, for example, Peter Conradi could not have done.¹⁰

The *Memoir* was adapted into a film in 2001.¹¹ The film was striking in portraying Murdoch at only two stages of her life (using two actors): as a young promiscuous Oxford student, and as an old woman in decline. However finely acted, the film only hinted at the *main business* of Murdoch's life – her writing of literature and philosophy. Instead, Murdoch becomes the prototype of dementia, and the Bayley character steals the show in his full patient heroism. As Peter Bradshaw (2002) puts it in his review, dementia “occupied a very tiny and irrelevant part of Murdoch's life. [...] this movie remembers virtually nothing of Murdoch in her magnificent prime”. The film, therefore, surely constituted another deep betrayal of the four-dimensional Murdoch. Even if the film was not made by Bayley, he was the one who gave permission to use the *Memoir* (and presumably he was the one to take the royalties from it).

4 Our re-evaluation of Bayley

In this final section I want to return to Margalit's point about the vulnerability of the shared past to re-evaluation, as in the betrayal victim's rhetorical question: “Was I wrong about our relationship in the past?” This re-evaluation is to be contrasted with the friends who drift apart (without betrayal), where the significance of the shared past remains unaffected, and can be fondly remembered.

What does it mean, in general, for a *present* event to influence the meaning of the *past*? There are at least three ways, and the third way will be of most interest here. The first has to do with the revelation of deception. The used-car salesman was so friendly, so persuasive; and yet within a couple of months, the car started having problems requiring expensive repairs. I now conclude that he must have known the car's true state at the moment he sold it to me, but chose not to warn me about the risks. My present knowledge of the car forces me to re-evaluate the friendliness of the salesman in the past. My false belief about the underlying facts of the car and the salesman has now been corrected. This seems unproblematic. The second way has to do with events that are indeterminate until confirmed by a later event. So if A shoots B, and B lies in critical care in hospital, the legal status of the shooting will not be confirmed for a few days or weeks, until B lives or dies, in which case it will become – retroactively – a case of either *murder* or *attempted murder*, with a great difference in penal consequences for the perpetrator. Again, I am not taking this as particularly controversial.

For the third way, I will support the Margalit insight with the metaphor of the ‘shadow’ from a classic article by George Pitcher (1984). Pitcher took the example of Bishop Berkeley and his son. The son died at the age of 14, much to Berkeley's

¹⁰ Although Conradi was a friend of both Murdoch's and Bayley's, so similar questions about betrayal will arise in connection to his book – to what degree it might have betrayed one and/or the other, and to what degree it might have betrayed *Conradi's* own friendship with them.

¹¹ Directed and co-written by Richard Eyre, and starring Judi Dench and Jim Broadbent.

distress. A first plausible use of the ‘shadow’ metaphor would see Berkeley’s *subsequent* life as taking place under the shadow of the past event. But Pitcher argues that in addition, when Berkeley later recalls the happy times spent with his son *before* the son’s death, Berkeley cannot help but recall those times as also cast in the shadow of the (at the time) unknown future death. Berkeley cannot now ‘re-live’ the (at the time) ignorant joy in later recollection: *all* of Berkeley’s life, before and after his son’s death, has been undermined by the tragic early death.¹²

I suggest that the same sort of thing can be said about Bayley’s deep betrayal of Murdoch through the publication of the *Memoir*. Once the book is out, it will influence the way we come to think of Bayley, not just in 1998, but throughout his whole four-dimensional life. A lot of us may remember watching or reading about Bayley, long before 1998, and although we didn’t know it at the time – although *he* didn’t know it at the time – he had always been the type of man who would one day write the humiliating *Memoir* about his own wife, about a vulnerable person in his care, about the famous novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch; and worse, the type of man who would not even see it as a betrayal. This shadow undermines all the evidence of Bayley as a genuinely loving and devoted husband for most of their 45-year marriage.

It might be objected that this is too quick. Whatever we are inclined to say about Bayley in 1998, he has surely *changed*, as people do over a long life. Before 1990, say, all the evidence suggested that he was loving and devoted. Perhaps there is a story we can tell about how the thankless and relentless care-giving from 1995 hardened him to a point where he would write the *Memoir*; perhaps we can speculate (and seek evidence for) his growing professional jealousy over the decades, leading him to seek revenge through the *Memoir*. But in either case, surely the past and the significance of the past – as constructed from evidence available at the time – cannot be retroactively altered.

In response, I’m saying that any biographical understanding of Bayley has to start with the *Memoir* as the *culmination* of his engagement with their relationship together, a relationship that was a central identity-conferring commitment in *his* life. Around about 1995 or 1996, he must have said to himself: “I think I should write a memoir about her”, and that decision was informed by the sum of his experience of the marriage together. I deny that the *Memoir* is to be objectively ‘weighed’ against the earlier acts of love as part of an overall assessment of Bayley’s changing character, because like Bayley, our perspective is from the later date, and therefore cannot help being tilted toward the attribution of greater weight to more recent events, casting a shadow on the earlier events. It is not enough to assert that he was a good husband, up until the point he started the *Memoir*; of course he changed – the change is obvious in the bare fact that he did not write anything like the *Memoir* earlier. But, within our understanding, the precise contours of that change are less

¹² The example of Berkeley was about the shadow of grief. Another example might involve the shadow of evil. Twenty years after leaving secondary school, I hear that a former classmate was arrested for murder. I have not seen the classmate since leaving school, and I pull open the yearbook to remind myself who he was. And there he is: *not* as I remember him, for my present knowledge of his murderous present casts a shadow over the image of the then innocent teenager in the yearbook.



relevant; we are left with the 45 years of married life culminating in the person who felt, in 1998, that writing the *Memoir* was a good idea. And that last deep betrayal casts the shadow backwards, undermining the previous impression of the four-dimensional Bayley that we had formed.

One perhaps troubling implication of my account is that the present and past is permanently revisable, and the full meaning of our lives may be as yet unpredictable. All we can speak about with some confidence is the four-dimensional significance of our intimate relationships to date: if I am currently satisfied that I am getting it about right with my partner, I can only hope that my understanding of our relationship does not deteriorate to a point where I will be tempted to deep betray her without even realising the extent and the depth of the betrayal.

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