

“We see here, as in a parable of mirror, how ‘scientific’ theory and technology may take the place of human beings. *We, who still in spite of everything live in a Greek light,* have yet to see how far science and its satellite theories can actually alter our human world” (emphasis added; *MGM 159*).

“I’m interested Sally thought Apollo alive & well. Somebody was there no doubt, but I felt I didn’t know Apollo well enough to be sure. It’s a terrifying spot” (Letter from Iris Murdoch to Brigid Brophy 13 Apr 1964, Kingston University Archives, reference number: KUAS142/5/58).

IRIS MURDOCH

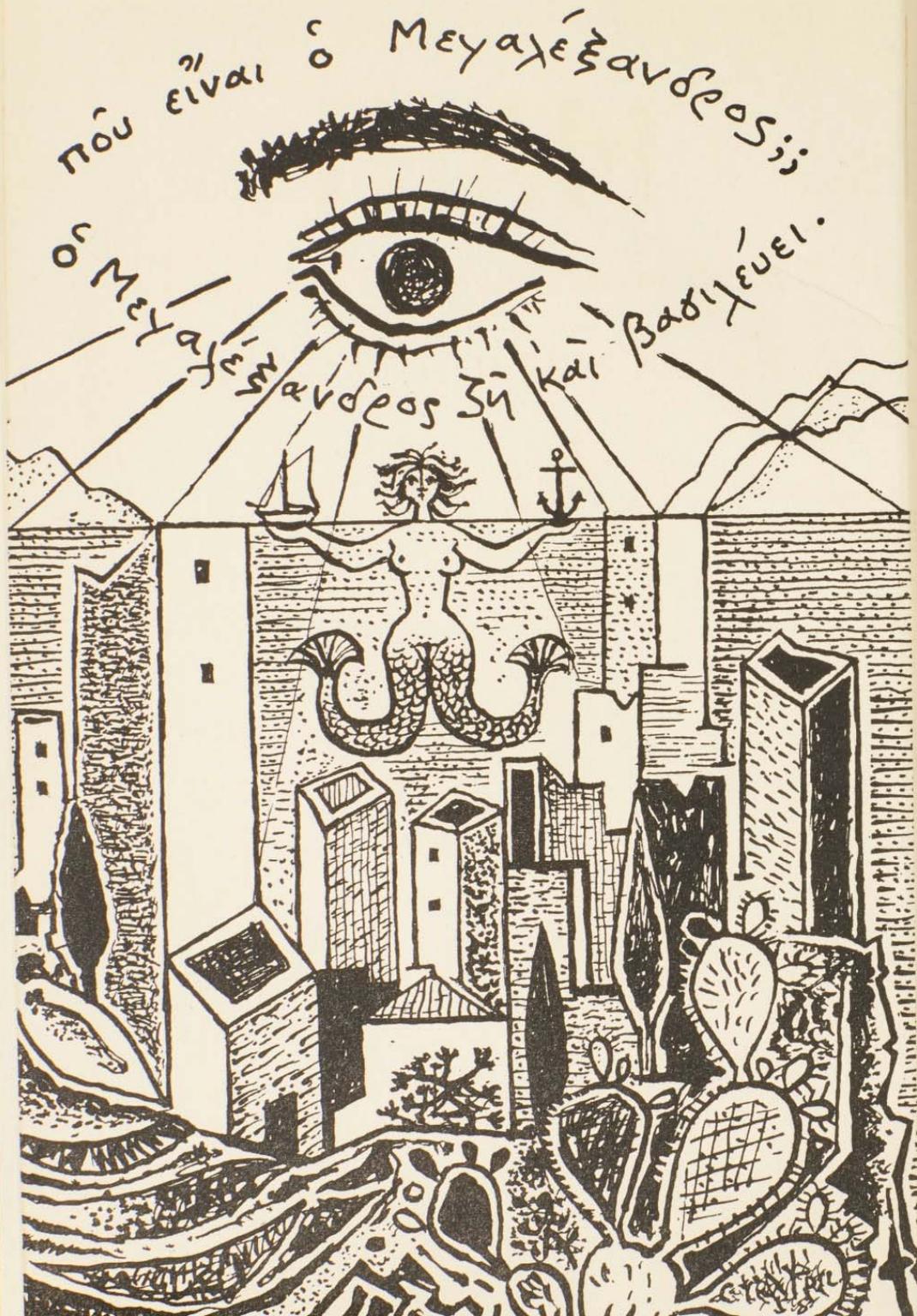
THE FIRE AND THE SUN

WHY PLATO BANISHED
THE ARTISTS



Shadow of a Sun

a novel by A. S. Byatt



MANI

Travels in the Southern Peloponnese

~~PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR~~

Patrick Leigh Fermor



Photographs by JOAN EYRES MONSELL

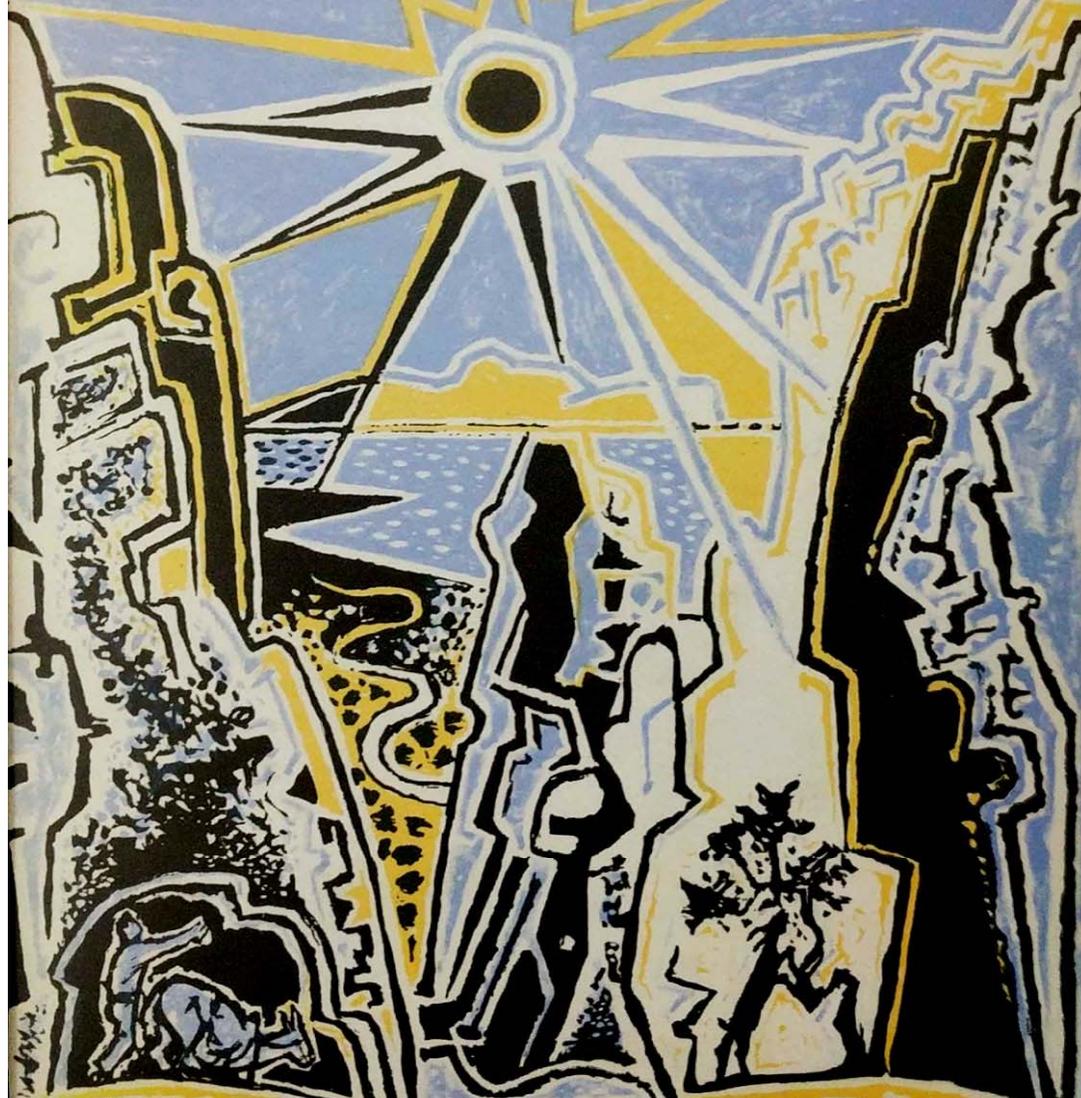
Frontispiece by JOHN CRAXTON

JOHN MURRAY

ALBEMARLE STREET LONDON

ROUMELI

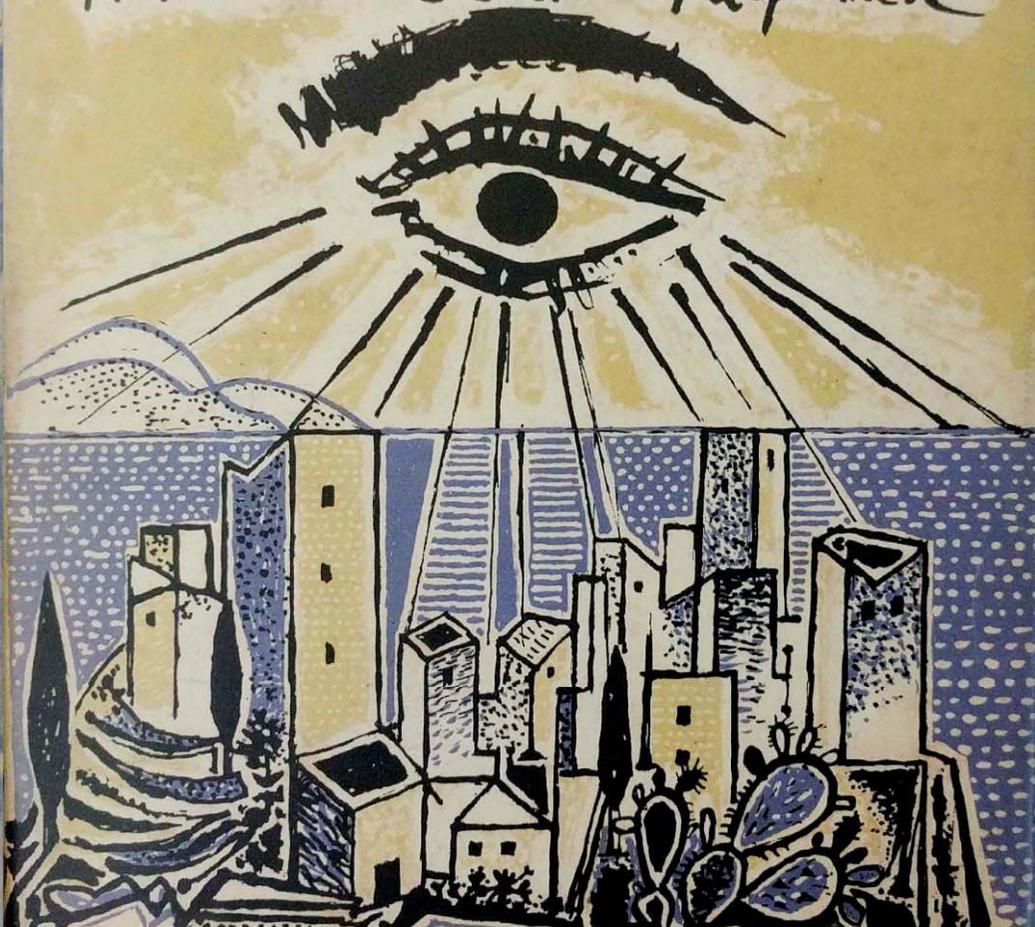
Travels in Northern Greece



PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

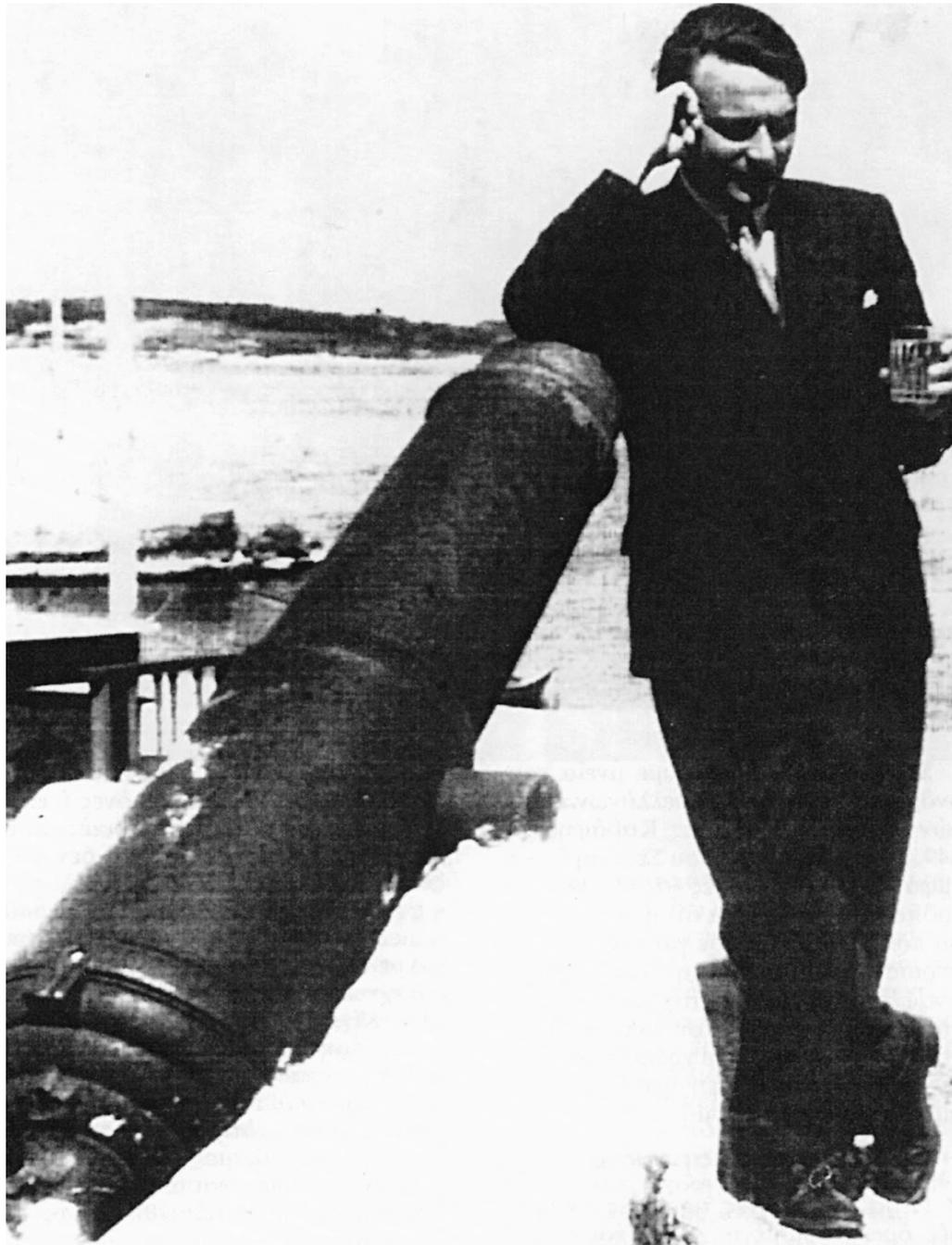
MANI

Travels in the Southern Peloponnese



PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

The *sightless Pharos* [Lighthouse] turns its *blind eye* upon a coast, featureless, level and sandy ... Here we miss Greece as a living body; a landscape lying up close against the *sky*, suspended on the *blue* lion-pads of mountains. And above all, we miss *the Eye* [Greece]: for the summers of indolence and deduction on the northern beaches of our island—beaches incessantly washed and sponged by the *green* Ionian—taught us that **Greece was not a country but a living eye.** “*The Enormous Eye*” Zarian used to call it. Walking in those valleys you knew with complete certainty that the traveller in this land could not *record*. It was rather as if he himself were *recorded*. The sensation of this **immense hairless recording eye** was everywhere; in the ringing *blue sky*, the temples, the supple brushes of cypresses, the *sun* beating in a withering hypnotic *dazzle* on the statues with curly stone hair and blunt sagacious noses. Everything was the subject of *the Eye*. It was like a *lens* fitting into the groove of the *horizon*. Nowhere else has there ever been a landscape so aware of itself, conforming so marvellously to the dimensions of a human existence. (Durrell, *Prospero’s Cell* emphasis added; 131)



John Fowles, Spetses 1953

Some thirty years or more later my translator into Modern Greek, Phaidon Tamvakakis, very kindly gave me a book by Nikos Demou: *The Light of the Greeks (To Phos ton Ellenon)*. It was not until I read the powerful essay and quotations that accompany the photographs there that I began to understand what had happened to me on that then long past January day in 1952. **The Greeks see, feel, apprehend light not as others do, and from the beginning of history to its end ... No other race feels this quite as sharply as the Greeks; so intensely, so all-consumingly ...** On holiday from the school in 1953 I climbed Mount Parnassus alone; ... The clouds had cleared, all was sun, the view sublime, this was certainly the loveliest moment of my life. Inside the crown of violets, beside the cairn on the very peak, was a word traced in pebbles in Greek. **For all Greeks always, and for all of us who truly love their land, it was the only word: φῶς.** (Fowles, “Behind the Magus” 67–68)

The dinner that evening was dreadful, the epitome of English vacuity. Before I went, I had some idea that I might tell them a little about Bourani; I saw a spellbound dinner-table. But the idea did not survive the first five minutes of conversation. There were eight of us, five from the Council, an Embassy secretary, and a little middle-aged queer, a critic, who had come to do some lectures. There was a good deal of literary chitchat. The queer waited like a small vulture for names to be produced.

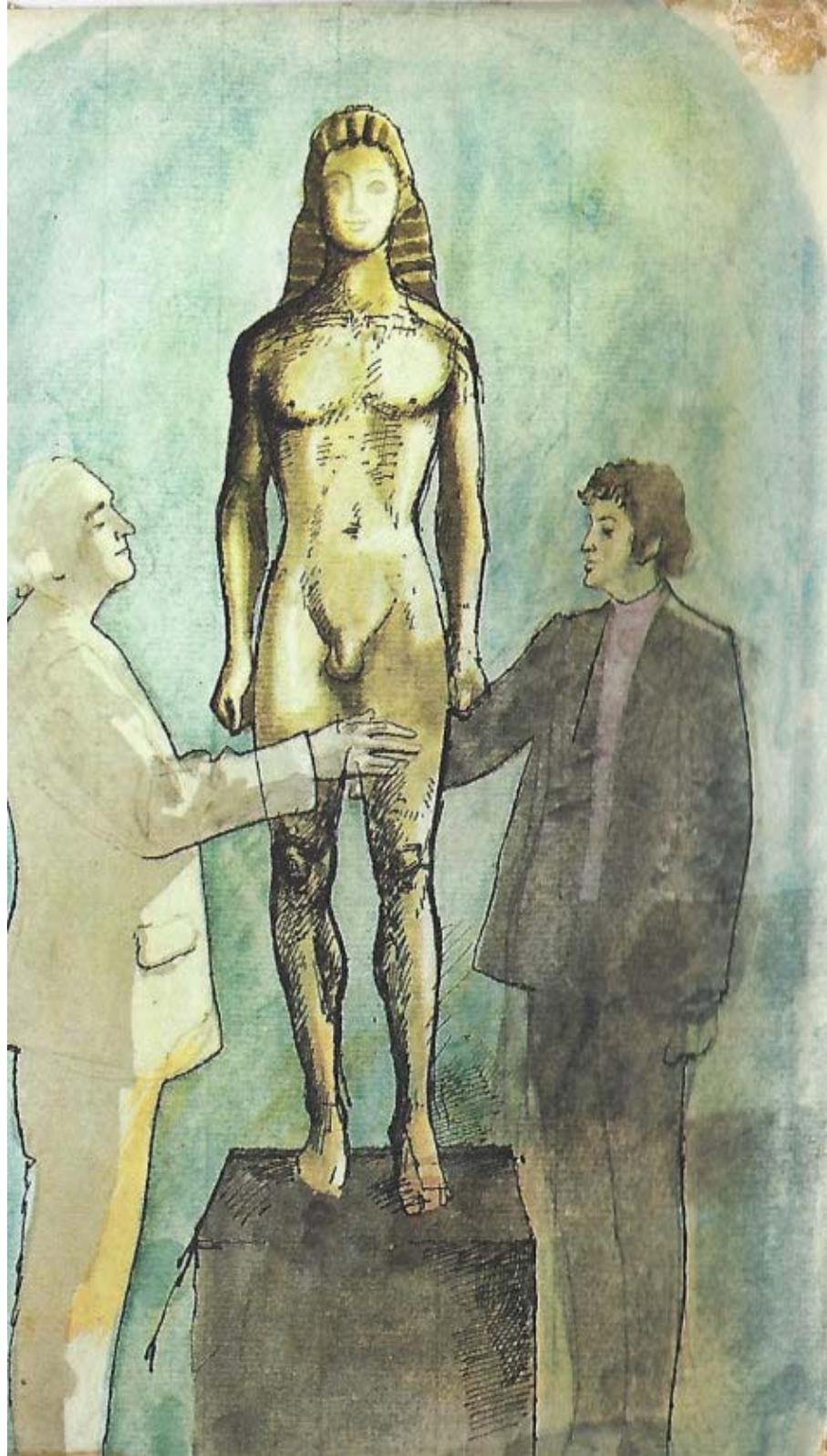
“Has anyone read Murdoch’s latest?” asked the Embassy man.

“Couldn’t stand it.”

“Oh I rather enjoyed it.”

The queer touched his bowtie. “Of course you know what Iris said when she...”

(Fowles, *The Magus* 559-560).

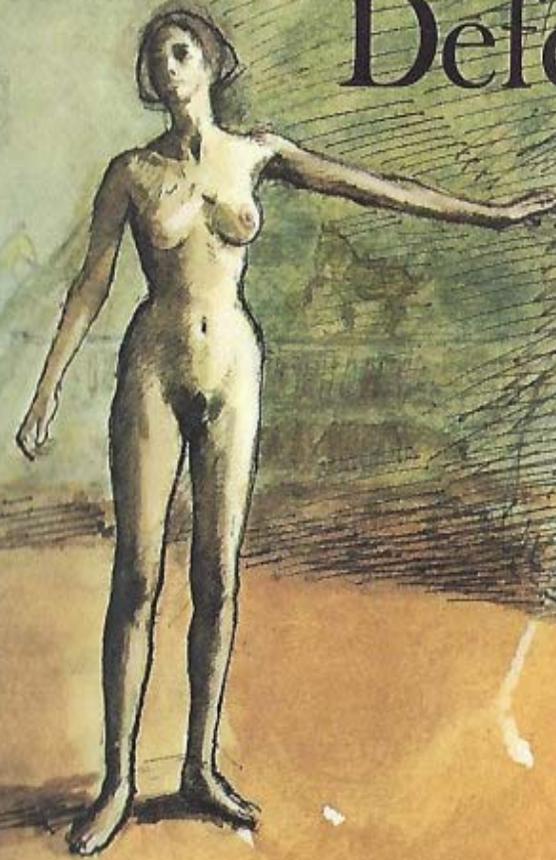


A Fairly
Honour-
able
Defeat

IRIS
MURDOCH

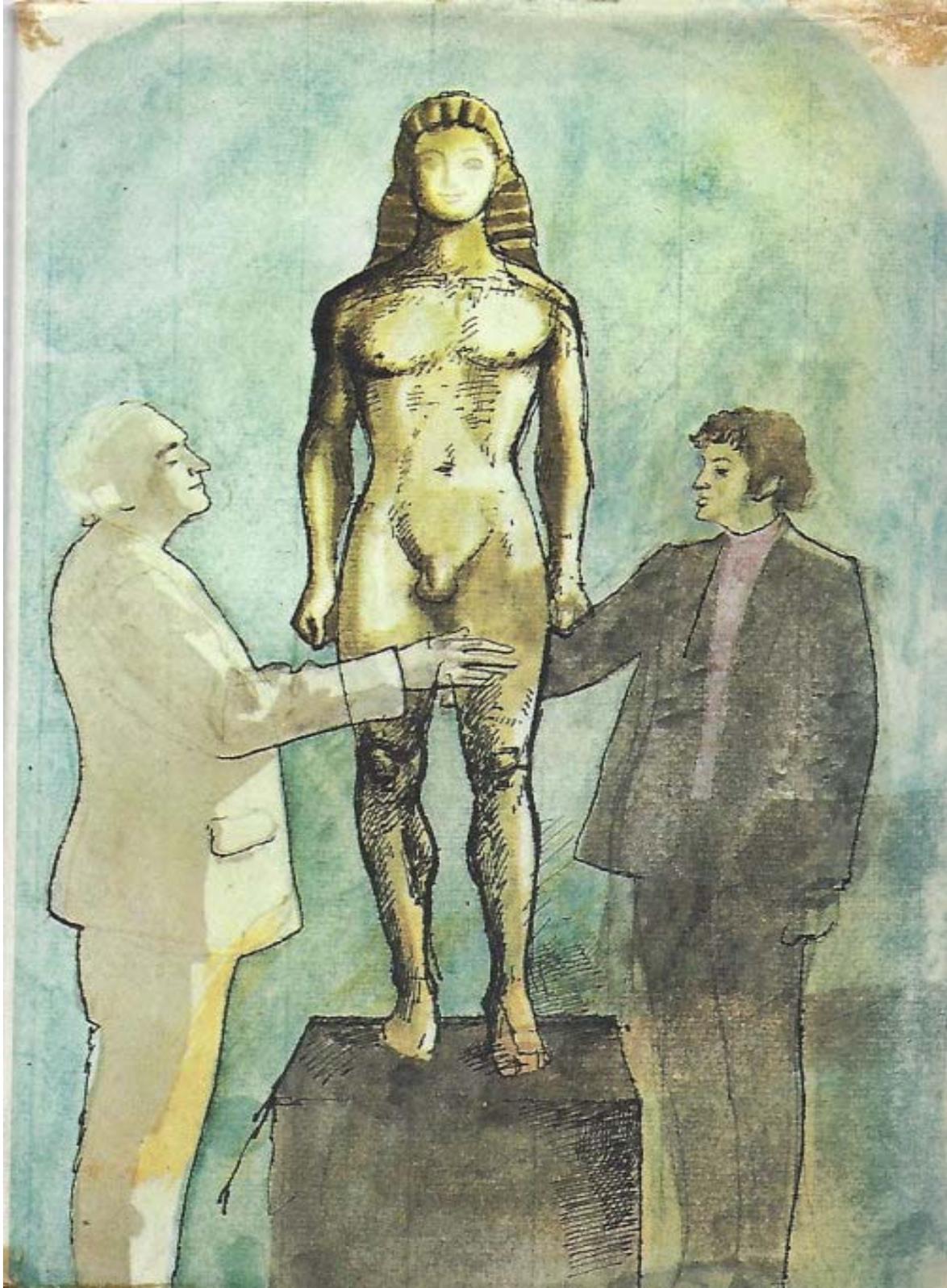
CHATTO
& WINDUS

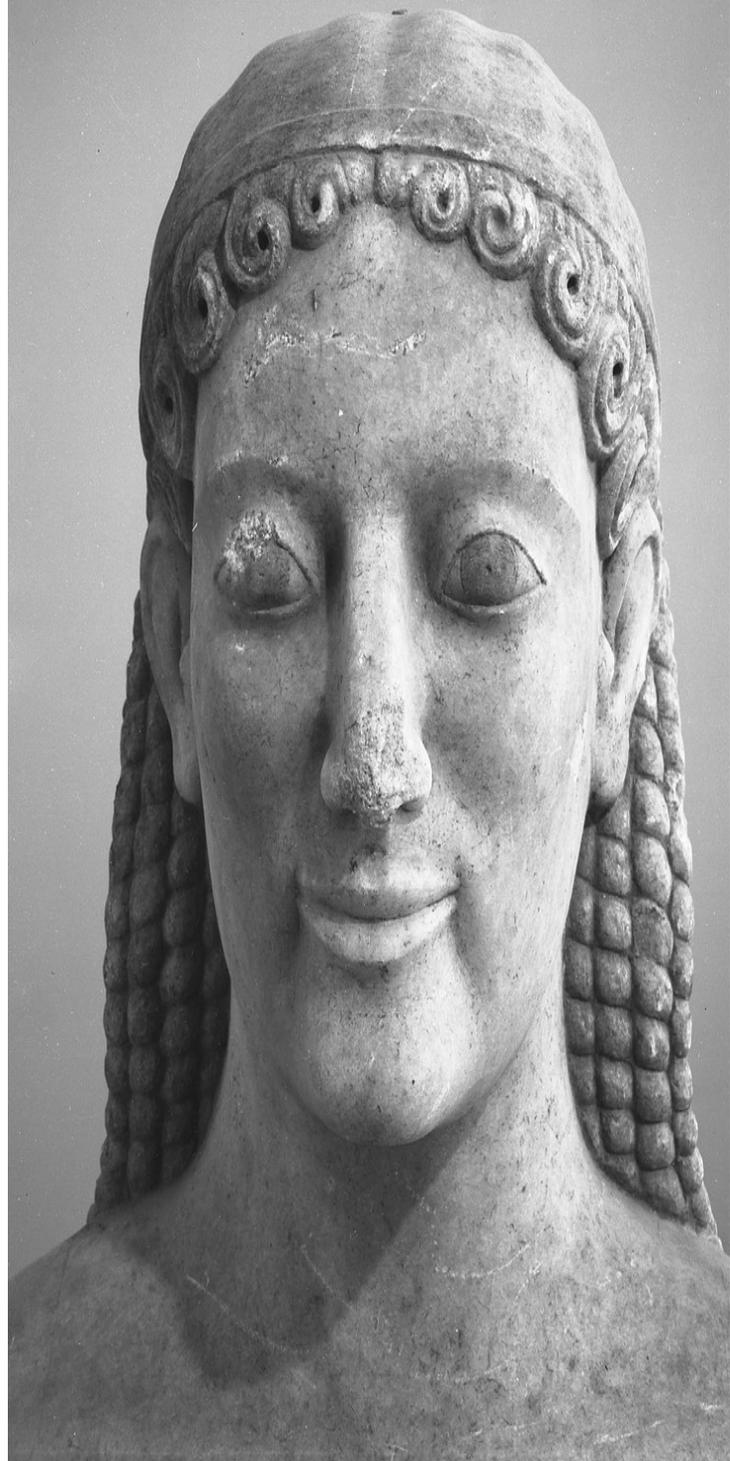
A Fairly Honourable Defeat



IRIS MURDOCH

The next moment she was lying full length in the long grass and there was a great deal too much *light*. *Light* was vibrating inside her *eyes* and she could *see* nothing but *dazzling* and *pale shadows* as if the whole *scene* had been *bleached* and then half *blotted out* by a deluge of *light* ... *Rays* from very far away were being focused through her flesh. Her head fell down into deep grass and she fought for breath. The *blazing light* was rhythmically changing into *luminous flashes* of *black*, tugging the *visible* world away from her ... the *sky* above her through the dome of grass was *lurid* and *brilliant* and *dark*. ... She told herself, and hung desperately onto the thought, I have got *sunstroke* that is what it is, it must be. She got herself onto her knees, panting, gasping, keeping her head down. She did not know whether her *eyes* were closed or not. She seemed to *see* the expanse of green floor ... The great *ray* from afar was pinning her between the shoulder blades and trying to force her down again ... Saliva was dripping from her mouth ... She felt the *sun burning* into the back of her neck as if it was directed through a *prism* ... Gasping and sobbing for breath she got to her feet and as if still *blind* and yet *seeing* began to run as fast as she could along the level floor of the cutting ... Her heart was pounding violently but her *vision* seemed to have returned and the awful *light* was gone. She wiped her mouth (Murdoch, *Defeat* 177–178; emphasis added).





The *kouros*, which was about six feet high, stood on a pedestal with its navel just about level with Simon's eyes. ... His fingers explored the bones of the long straight legs, the hollow of the thigh, the heavenly curve of the narrow buttocks, the flat stomach and the noble pattern of the rib cage, the pretty eye-shaped navel, the nipples of the breasts, the runnel of the back, the shoulder blades. He lightly stroked the feet, probing between the long separated toes, he reverently touched the penis. He looked up into the serene divine countenance, huge-eyed, long-nosed, so enigmatically smiling. After a while fingers were not enough. He had to worship the statue with his lips, with his tongue. He kissed the buttocks, the thighs, the hands, the penis, first hastily and then with slow adoration. (Murdoch, *Defeat* 191)

He walked round to the side of the statue and laid his hand lightly in the small of the back. Then he drew it downward very slowly, outlining the curve of the buttock, and led his fingers gently in onto the interior of the thigh. At that moment he realized that someone was watching him. It was Axel ... regarding the little love scene with gravity ... After a moment Axel moved forward and with great deliberation and absolute solemnity laid his hand on top of Simon's (Murdoch, *Defeat* 191–192).

