

EXPRESSION OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVEL "UNDER THE NET"

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Abstract: In our article, Iris Murdoch's novel Under the Net examines the expression of human and community relationships. Murdoch shows readers how their heroes suffer, alienate, and stand out from society while offering ways to overcome these difficulties. In his novels, he makes it clear to us that it is impossible to be free without recognizing and attaining certain qualities. Murdoch wants the reader to understand that being free is very difficult and that this universal concept is related to love truth and art. Murdoch's hero seeks his freedom throughout the novel, a process very difficult and fraught with obstacles, but he manages to survive and finds his way to the sun. Murdoch sharply shows the reader that it is unthinkable to create a work of art, in this case, a novel, without finding freedom and establishing yourself in society. Murdoch learns about the bitterness and unfairness of life and wants to help his characters achieve not only physical freedom but spiritual, psychological, and emotional independence as well. This contribution aims to highlight the key element of freedom in Iris Murdoch's first novel Under the Net and to show us once again that Murdoch stands for human freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of choice, freedom of expression, and so on, at the same time a time to recognize how difficult and difficult it is to achieve all this.

Keywords: Under the Net, protagonist, topical themes, ideas and characters, contains, epigraph

In Murdoch's works, this term is never separately presented and discussed. It is always associated with love, morals, and art. This article discusses the notion of freedom using the example of Murdoch's first novel Under the Net. It should also be noted that at the very beginning of her career, we see first-person narratives, and that's no coincidence. Through this technique, the protagonist himself addresses the reader and talks to us about all the problems, and consequently, the narrator and reader alike become involved in the long process of the quest for human freedom. Freedom - that is the term that is defined differently by everyone. Iris Murdoch is one of the most renowned and distinguished writers of the second half of the 20th



century. Her works are full of various topical themes, among which freedom is worth mentioning. Murdoch shows us a long, difficult path that her protagonists must radically change and find themselves in a society where people just want to hide somewhere and don't want to fight for their desires and ambitions. In almost every novel by Murdoch, we see the actions of their characters, and the desire to gain love and freedom. This article highlights the main ways in which it is possible to achieve both physical and mental freedom. Murdoch's protagonists do this with love, truth, and art. In the novels we see artists, and we do so consciously because, for the writer, art is one of the best ways, to tell the truth. Art allows them to see the light and the good, but this is difficult because it can only be achieved by attaining complete freedom, which does not exist without art and love. As we can see, these concepts are related. The article shows the development of the main character. It is important to the author that her characters become free and independent and not like people who are trapped in the net with no way out. Murdoch's goal is for her characters to be able to think independently and freely. Once they start thinking about us, readers see the process of their awakening and the return to reality. The goal of the article is to show readers what freedom means to Murdoch's characters and how to achieve it. Under the Net is Iris Murdoch's first novel, published in 1954, and this novel generated a great deal of social interest. Her novels are full of varied and complicated subjects and of course, her first novel is no exception. The author writes about the topics that are often discussed at any given time: art, love, freedom, isolation, alienation, and self-search. The main character of the novel is thirty-year-old Jake Donaghue, who tells his own story. Murdoch likes the first-person narrative, and that's because it has many advantages: as a narrator, you talk to the reader yourself, talk about any topic, and use a variety of words, Iris Murdoch explained at a conference at the University of New York instead in Caen instead. As Murdoch explains, with the first-person narrative it's difficult to create other characters that keep up with the narrative, that form doesn't suit her, and she wants to create novels full of different ideas and characters, with the main character standing behind them. The narration would include additional characters. The advantages of writing in the first person are obvious. They're enormous in a way because then you can gossip endlessly, involving your reader and producing an enormous amount of chatter, which again makes sense concerning the speaker, whose danger is that one character is more difficult to create than others. who can hold their own against the narrator because they are seen through his eyes? And I think my ideal novel I mean the novel that I want to write that I haven't written yet wouldn't be in the first person, because I'd rather write a novel that's more scattered, with many different centers. I've often



thought that the best way to write a novel is to make up the story and then remove the hero and heroine and write over the edge because you want to broaden your sympathy and share your interests¹. In her later novels, Murdoch did this fairly well, and *Nuns and Soldiers* is a good example. Jake is an unsuccessful artist, but a talented one. He earns his living by translating the works of the French writer Jean Pierre Breteuil. It should be said that he does not like this writer, but his novels are a good source of money since he is very popular in society. The question arises, if he does not like this author, what prevents him from writing his book? The answer to this question may be different: laziness, isolation, fear that society will not accept his novel, and lack of courage.

In the novel, he describes himself: My name is Jake Donaghue, I'm in my late thirties and talented but lazy. I make a living doing literary bag work and a little original writing, as little as possible. Writing can be made for a living these days if you do it reasonably well all the time and are willing to write whatever the market demands. (UTN: 21). Already on the first pages of the novel we read that his nerves are on edge and that he hates being alone. I can't bear to be alone for long. (UTN: 21). He is afraid of loneliness, he thinks he is safe with someone and there is no danger, but this is an instinctive behavior to protect his inside while being alone should give him inner freedom. There is a man, Peter Ofinney, simply Finn, his distant relative, who is always with Jake no matter what happens to Jake. A lot of people think Finn is Jake's servant, but that's not true. Finn isn't exactly my servant. (UTN: 7). I think Jake feels protected by Finn, Finn always finds a way out of trouble, and he's a smart person, but Jake doesn't appreciate and understand that he doesn't care about Finn's family, his background, or his life. Finn is just a loyal man to him. For Jake, Finn is the element of this universe. I count Finn among the inhabitants of my universe (UTN: 9). Jake has a wrong image of Finn and somehow thinks that he's suffering from a lack of himself and that's why Finn wants to be around him and not the other way around. Finn misses his inner workings and that's why he follows me as I have a complex and highly differentiated one. (UTN: 9). For Jake, the main problem is assessing the situation, while Finn has always been able to thoroughly assess every little problem and find the solution to every problem. He writes: Aspects have always been my problem. Finn can make objective statements. (UTN: 9) In this short paragraph the author already gives us hints about Jake's problems. Believing in his inner world when he doesn't have it, disrespect for Finn, lack of seeing reality, the fact that he sees Finn as his things rather than an individual, independent person, and sometimes even forgetting about his presence and himself proves in his own words: We sit together for hours, sometimes without saying a



word. I could think of God, freedom, and immorality. I don't know what Finn would think. (UTN: 21). While Jake isn't speaking to Finn, Finn is speaking to Dave, Jake's old friend. Finn talks to Dave about religion and that Ireland is the only country that has a religion and that one day he would return to his country.

Finn always says he will return to Ireland to be in a country that has religion, but he never leaves. (UTN: 22). But at the end of the novel we see that Ireland is very important to Finn and he returns to his country. Finn has his universe and is not dependent on Jake as the main protagonist of the novel thinks. By leaving Finn, Jake analyzes his reality and feels ashamed for never caring about Finn's life and always acting the way he wanted. The relationship between Jake and Finn is important as we see that Jake's main problem is that he has lost his perception of reality, is dependent on others, and has no inner freedom while he thinks completely differently and believes that he has everything this has. If Jake is isolated from reality early in their relationship, he is obsessed with remorse and grief by the end of the novel when Finn leaves him alone. Here we see Jake's awakening and gradually beginning to grasp reality. Kiernan Ryan writes about Jake: A restless, useless, penniless young man searching for what he thinks, who he loves, and where his life is going. (Iris Murdoch, UTN. Introduction by Kiernan Ryan). Who will help him in this search? people around him. It should be noted that the novel contains an epigraph of John Dryden's *The Secular Masque*, and the final lines of that epigraph, this well an old age is out, and time to begin a new, are particularly interesting and worthy of discussion. (John Dryden *the Secular Masque* 1962:6). This inscription is interesting as the author speaks about the changing times. It's pretty good to use the word "change" when the writer is evolving, changing, and evolving throughout the week. We see his transformation, he realizes everything and returns to reality. As for the title of the novel, it could be discussed from different angles, both social and philosophical.

According to Fraser, society is seen as a net that has large and coarse-meshed meshes and in which we humans want to be caught. Society is viewed as the web that keeps catching us but has large or coarse meshes through which we can easily escape, though we are later caught by other, finer meshes. (GS Fraser: *Iris Murdoch and the Solidity of the Normal*. p.83). I think those are the meshes of freedom that the protagonist is blocking and should break out of. In the novel, the web has a philosophical meaning, conveyed through the words of Hugo. Jake describes his relationship with Hugo in the following words: Hugo made me feel like a man who, after vaguely thinking that all flowers are the same, goes for a walk with a botanist. But this parable does not fit Hugo either, for a botanist he not only perceives details,



but he also classifies them. Hugo only noticed details. He never classified. It was as if his vision had been sharpened to the point where even classification was impossible, as each thing was seen as utterly unique. I felt like I was meeting an almost completely honest man for the first time. (UTN: 61). Hugo is a very valuable person to Jake, and his book *Silencer* is based on their conversations. In the book, Annandine-Hugo and Tamarus-Jake voice Jake's main ideas. In their conversations, they convey the core idea of the novel, that it is a waste of time to set up and name something, and that we should act according to the situation, which is unspeakably difficult. The harder we try, the easier it is to get online. All theorizing is flight. We have to be guided by the situation itself, and that is unspeakably special. No matter how hard we try to crawl under the web, so to speak, we can never get close enough to it. (UTN: 81). The net has a double meaning in the novel. One is the web of relationships that someone is trying to escape from, in our case that person is Jake, who is dependent on others and is trying to escape from them and gain free will, and the second is the web of words, concepts, with which we try to describe the truth. Jake is in a constant struggle and it's obvious that he's fed up and wants everything to be his. We can say that Jake's life is an endless struggle for freedom. (*The Black Prince* 1973: 11). If he does not win this battle, he will not be free nor able to create a work of art. Hugo is the person who wants everyone to find their path in life. At the end of their conversation, he talks to Jake: Everyone has to go their way, Jake, said Hugo. (UTN:221). Hugo believes Jake can write a good novel because every man has his duty. Every man must have a job. yours writes. Mine will make and repair clocks (UTN:229). I think Jake is very interested in doing his job, but something is holding him back, he's in an unclear situation and formulating meaningful concepts. In dialogue, *The Silencer* Jake says: Any concept can be abused. Each sentence can express an untruth. But words in themselves do not lie. (UTN: 80). But the main thing is the word, the word that carries the meaning of why it is so difficult, to tell the truth, why it is so difficult for the writer to be free, perhaps because the words have lost their main purpose, the idea has conveyed. Wittgenstein writes: The limits of my language are the limits of my world. (Murdoch: *Sartre Romantic Rationalist* 1989: 68). Jake has the same problem, he has his world and doesn't write, he should be free to name everything, and only then can he continue to write. A writer's job is to call things by their proper names. When words are sick, it's up to us to heal them. (Murdoch: *Sartre Romantic Rationalist* 1989: 64). At the end of the novel we see that Jake manages to call everything by its proper name and understands his function in this life, which is to write, not translate. Jake needs every character. He can't live alone. At the beginning of the novel we see Magdalen telling



him about their marriage, he is surprised and blames himself because he thinks he should have taken better care of her, but it is late now. That's his problem because he doesn't notice anything and has his inner world; Sometimes the reader thinks he needs these people, but he doesn't let anyone come to him. This person is isolated and alienated, and he recognizes this, but not fully. From Magdalen, he goes to Dave, whom he asks for shelter.

Dave is one of the best characters in the novel, a very reasonable and realistic person. He advises Jake to get a job and points to the hospital's white walls visible from the windows. If I were you, Dave said I'd get a real job. He pointed to the hospital's white wall, which loomed very close to the window. (UTN: 26). We can say that Dave feels sorry for Jake as he believes he is capable of being a good writer but he wasted his time. Dave blames society for Jake's laziness and idleness. He believes that only society can awaken him, it should give him the motive to write to gain freedom and independence. The fact that Dave refuses to help him is probably no coincidence, but obvious. If everyone behaves like this, maybe they can end up returning to reality and trying to take care of themselves. Dave says that Jake is a fool as he knows his skills and talent and tries to help him: society should grab you by the throat and shake you and make you do a decent job. In the evening you would have the opportunity to write a good book. (UTN: 28). In their conversation, Jakeironic says that freedom is just an idea. (UTN: 27). Their conversation is significant in that Dave demands that he acts, that it is already time for her to live an independent life and do something important for society. Every character in the novel wants Jake to come back to real life, and they all want Jake to believe in himself. Lefty Todd is the leader of the Socialist Party. Jake and Lefty's first meeting happens to happen at a small restaurant while they're looking for Hugo. They talk for a bit and Lefty tells him that he's heard a lot about him and that he knows he's a talented but lazy man and that he's leftist but doesn't get involved in politics. You are a talented man who is too lazy to work and represents left-wing opinions but does not get involved in politics. (UTN: 9). Lefty offers him to write plays about socialism, which is a very good fact because Lefty is trying to get Jake to write, and from this proposal, we can see that he trusts Jake. Several demonstrations and riots are detailed in the novel, also involving Jake, but they succeed and escape.

The primary function of their relationship is to help Jake see the truth, understand the nature of freedom, and become an independent person. Besides these characters, there are also female characters in the novel who contribute a lot to Jake's development and awakening. Ann Quentin is Jake's old friend who he loves. She used to be a singer, but in the novel, we see her as an actress. At one moment the



reader may think that she doesn't like the theater, knowing that acting in plays is artificial. Jake knows Ann quite well and knows that theater can't achieve anything as everything is artificial, everyone is theatre; Ann is a very noble girl, pure, and beautiful, and doesn't want to believe that Ann has become part of this evil and unrealistic world. In addition to Ann, the author talks about Ann's sister Saddy, who, unlike Ann, is a very artificial woman and also a liar. Each character in the novel has a direct connection to the main protagonist. This is not surprising since in our case we are interested in Jake, who should understand the concept of freedom, should be free from the snares of freedom, understand the meaning of the words, and create his book. A week might not be enough for all of that, but if we consider the things and events he encounters along the way, it's enough for his change. By the end of the novel, everything is in its place as it should have been. Jake indeed loses everyone, but he creates and finds himself, and understands the phenomena of freedom. If he first speaks of Jean Pierre Breteuil as an untalented writer, he finally affirms his talent and sees him as his opponent. Jake realizes that freedom and independence are very important in life. He understood that it was time for him to find his place in this society where he would succeed in creating a real work of art, in Jake's case a novel. Malcolm Bradbury says: A process of renewal has taken place in him. (Malcolm Bradbury 1962:23).

The ending is very interesting as there are many similarities to Jean-Paul Sartre's novel Nausea. In general, there is a great deal of Sartre influence in Murdoch's novels, and the author has written many articles about Sartre singing Negroes; He listens to the melody and realizes that the time has come to write something, perhaps a novel, for others to ponder. Jake, like Sartre's main character, recognizes that he should create something that society accepts, something for the people caught on the web to think about and break free from. Like Roquentin, Jake sitting in Mrs. Tinckham's cafe listening to the radio when he hears Ann's voice. Perhaps this was the last thing that caused his full awakening.

Iris Murdoch managed and described the man who could change his life for the better in a week. This is the metamorphosis that was so necessary for his success. Murdoch's hero is free at the end, which allows him to create a true work of art. In Murdoch's novel *The Black Prince*, we read: Without freedom, there is no art and no truth (*The Black Prince* 1973:11). This free hero will create a novel. According to this novel, it is undeniable that the author herself admires art and literature in particular. She writes: "For both the collective and individual salvation of mankind, art is undoubtedly more important than philosophy, and literature most important of all" (*The Sovereignty of Good*: 1970). Murdoch agrees with Tolstoy and she sees art



as the best way for people to communicate. The author challenges the reader to accept the world with its own positive and negative sides. She wants us readers to fight, never give up, and not be afraid of obstacles. Her novels are full of optimism and she, the author herself, shows us ways how to deal with these problems. The main protagonist of the novel faced many difficulties, but in the end, he found the most important thing - he found his inner lost world. This novel shows us that a man is capable of overcoming any kind of difficulty when he is free. Murdoch's novels are upbeat and she wants her readers to be active, determined, and ready for any challenge. Her characters lead a long and difficult road to finding their freedom. The most important thing is that her readers understand that without freedom, their life is aimless. Her novels end with hope, for example in this novel we are reading right now: It's just one of the wonders of the world. (UTN: 253). Jake understood that life is full of miracles and that fighting is worth it. In *The Sandcastle* we read: All was well now. Everything was right. Everything was right. (The sandcastle: 318); In the end, Mor's family finds peace and they all start a new life. Anne stood on the street and felt relieved of her burden. (Nuns and soldiers: 512). Anne is happy, feels light, and is ready to start her free life. The most important and meaningful thing about Iris Murdoch's novels is that her characters realize how foolish and aimless life is without freedom. In *Under the Net* we read: Freedom is just an idea. (UTN:27). Her Booker Prize-winning Book *the Sea*, the Sea is entirely devoted to this idea: the sea is an image of inaccessible freedom. (The sea, the sea: 263). It's the reality of this life. She writes very skillfully about art and freedom and it's hard not to pay attention to all of this.

On the whole, we can say that anything can happen in this life, but you should never give up, faith, hope, love, and freedom should not be lost. Almost every novel of hers is dedicated to these ideas and we feel hope, hoping that everything will be fine and that tomorrow will bring us a better life, and the final word is always with us, the readers.

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