



# Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* as the Dynamics of Contemporary Society

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## ABSTRACT

*Under the Net*, Iris Murdoch's first book novel, was published in 1954. The article attempts to prove that the novel is the dynamics of contemporary society. This novel is a combination of comic elements and about love, wealth and fame. The novel also blends the picaresque and the philosophical ideas in order to pave ways to our own independent thinking. The main protagonist, Jake makes his own approach to life and became a creative writer which shows his progress as an individual. The protagonist faces the problems and resolves in a sociable ways in an unpredictable manner in this modern society.

**KEYWORDS-** Contemporary ,dynamics, picaresque, philosophical

## Introduction

Iris Murdoch is most known for her works on morality, the unconscious, and the concepts of good and evil. Her first novel, *Under the Net*, was published in 1954 and was named one of the top hundred English-language works of the twentieth century by Modern Library in 1998. Her novel, *The Sea, the Sea*, received the Booker Prize in 1987. Queen Elizabeth II made her a Dame in 1987 for her legendary accomplishments.

Her writings gained her recognition as a notable author of her age. She wrote over many novels (26), a book about Sartre's work, and various articles on politics, philosophical in nature, and social issues. Murdoch has a lengthy career as an educator in philosophy, both as an investigator and as instructor. In addition to two essays, *The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited* (1959) and *Against Dryness* (1961), she is the author of three philosophical books: *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), and *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (1977). She has also created a number of dramas, poesy, and short stories.

There are vast variations between her works and the evolution of her skill which is described as themes in her novels. Her novels often include male thinkers who struggle with ethical choices, gay protagonists, refugees, Anglo Christians experiencing spiritual problems, compassionate pets, fascinated children, and, on occasion, a powerful and almost devilish male characters that sets his desires on the remaining characters. Murdoch is unfortunate because she struggled to fit into one group despite investing her entire existence writing in the other.

### ***Under the Net***

In her work *Under the Net* from 1954, British author and philosopher Iris Murdoch chronicles the wanderings of aspiring author Jake Donaghue over Europe in quest of phantom ideals. The book belongs to the picaresque genre, a humorous style in which a witty, working-class hero rises to the top of society by exploiting his cunning. Donaghue consults his longtime friend and philosopher Hugo Bellfounder for help. The story gives this archaic genre a contemporary twist by portraying Donaghue as a freeloader who, ironically, succeeds thanks to the chance contacts that the turmoil of the modern world offers. The novel is regarded as one of the best pieces of literature from the 20th century and is a part of the contemporary canon.

After a brief trip to France, Donaghue returns to London at the start of the book. His uncle Finn informs him that they were expelled from Madge's home so that her affluent new lover Sammy Starfield could move in. Finding an old professional translation while packing, Donaghue is reminded of Dave Gellman, a philosophical friend he had lost touch with years before. He leaves his bag at Dave's flat and proceeds, on Finn's recommendation, to the residence of singer and ex-lover Anna Quentin. She sends him to her actor sister Sadie since she is preoccupied with a movie production. Sadie, who is evading Hugo Bellfounder, who is in love with her, is found by Donaghue. Hugo comes to mind because of a number of intellectual exchanges they formerly had over the nature of language. Sammy intercepts Donaghue as he is on his way back to Madge's to get his remaining belongings and offers him money to depart amicably. Over the phone, Donaghue gambles the money and earns £633.

Donaghue offers to watch Sadie's house, only to discover later that he has been imprisoned there. He is rescued by Dave and Finn, and after unintentionally answering a call from Anna that implied he was in love with her, he begins to search for Hugo. Hugo is reportedly in a pub, according to a letter left on his door. In their search for him, Dave, Finn, and Donaghue hop from pub to bar while becoming increasingly inebriated. They swim in the Thames and come upon a Lefty Todd-style campaigner. The next morning

when they wake up, Dave remembers that he was supposed to send Donaghue a note from Anna asking to see him right away. She has already left the theatre where she works when he rushes there to find her. He approaches Sadie's door and overhears what appears to be a conspiracy by Sammy and Sadie to use one of his translations for a movie as their own.

Furious, Donaghue asks Finn to help him break into Sammy's Chelsea flat and take the script. When they are unable to locate it, Donaghue uses Mr. Mars, Sammy's dog, as leverage. They stumble upon a newspaper that claims Anna is travelling to Hollywood through Paris. Following Hugo, they eventually found him in a studio in the south of London. There, Lefty Todd is ranting about socialism in politics. Hugo is taken aside by Donaghue, but before he has a chance to speak, the United Nationalists' political march sparks a rush. When the movie set collapses, Donaghue manages to flee by telling Mr. Mars to pretend to be dead and call for a veterinarian. He visits Dave the next day and discovers the money he earned at the casino. He and Dave write Sammy a threatening letter in which they want £100 in return for Mr. Mars. Two letters from Madge that include a lead on a job in Paris and money to cover travel expenses are sent to Donaghue. He and Dave placed a wager on Lyrebird after discovering that Sammy had voided the £600 cheque. Later, he departs for Paris.

Donaghue is horrified to learn that one of his literary competitors, Jean-Pierre Breteuil, has received recognition for his book on July 14th. After learning that Madge's job offer had something to do with the movie business, he politely denies it. While strolling across Paris, he notices Anna but loses sight of her in the throng. He pursues her but ultimately follows a lookalike. He finds out the next day that Lyrebird triumphed against all odds. While Donaghue descends into sadness, Finn takes his share of the riches and disappears.

Donaghue secures employment as a hospital aide in the next weeks. One of his first patients is Hugo, who was injured at a political rally by a brick that was thrown. To escape being fired for getting too close to a patient while working, he goes to the hospital in the middle of the night. Hugo is surprised to find that neither he nor Anna are the object of his ire. The opposite is true—Anna loves him, he loves Sadie, and Sadie loves Donaghue. Donaghue assists Hugo in leaving the hospital, but when his employer notices, he leaves without being formally dismissed.

## Conclusion

At the conclusion of the novel, Donaghue visits Hugo. Hugo has vanished, leaving Lefty with his belongings. He also discovers that Finn has gone back to Ireland, his birthplace. Donaghue is persuaded by Sadie to pay for Mr. Mars and Sammy's reconciliation. Donaghue looks forward to the future of his literary career now that he has reconciled with everyone with whom he had been at odds. *Under the Net* is a book mostly about the spontaneity of contemporary society, and it exploits the protagonist's roaming to demonstrate how problems and resolves emerge in the creative life in an unpredictable manner. By seeing his own narrative through to a satisfying conclusion, Donaghue develops as an artist and becomes ready to start creating creative work.

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