

The Role of Women in Iris Murdoch's Novels: Under the Net and A Severed Head

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ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce zkoumá postavení žen ve dvou románech Iris Murdochové – *Pod síťí* a *Uřatá hlava*. První část práce se zaměřuje nejen na období, kdy oba romány vznikly, ale také na autorku samotnou, její život a dílo. Ve druhé části jsou rozebrány jednotlivé ženské postavy obou románů, jejich charakteristické rysy, postavení, vzájemné vztahy i vztahy s muži.

Klíčová slova: postavení žen, vztahy, žárlivost, láska, nevěra, přátelství, podřízenost

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the role of women in the two novels of Iris Murdoch – *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head*. The first part focuses not only on the period, in which both novels were created, but also on the author herself, her life and work. In the second part, all the female characters of the both novels are analyzed, including their characteristic traits, roles, relationships between each other, and their relationships with the men.

Keywords: position of women, relationships, jealousy, love, infidelity, friendship, subordination

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

Iris Murdoch, a novelist and a philosopher, is the most famous British author who struggled with Alzheimer's disease. In her work, she mainly focused on motifs of good and evil, sexual relationship and morality. During her long writing career, she wrote 26 novels. This thesis focuses on two of them – *Under the Net*, a novel published in 1954 and *A Severed Head*, published seven years later.

This bachelor's thesis consists of three parts. The first part presents the information concerning the author herself. In detail, in the first chapter may be found a short biography and a list of her most famous novels, as well as the brief summaries of the plot of the novels.

The second chapter focuses on the era of creation of the novels. This chapter describes the role of married women and their attitude to work. It also includes author's shocking attitude to morals, which are also perceptible in her novels, because Murdoch drew inspiration from her life and her own experience.

An analysis of an untypical role of women is presented in the last chapter. In the second half of the 20th century, Murdoch shows the dark side of women; their promiscuity, self-reliance, but also, subordination. Moreover, she depicts women who are ahead of their time, whether by their education, freedom, independence or an entrepreneurial spirit. Of course, she portrays also women whose position is really subordinate and who are being used by men.

The aim of the work is to show which women in the novels are in a subordinate position and wherein their subordinate role lies in. It, also, shows which of these women manipulate men and in which manner.

The analysis of the role of women is based on the opinions of selected authors of books dealing with Iris Murdoch and her work. Further, examples are demonstrated by fragments of the books.

1 IRIS MURDOCH

This chapter describes a life and work of Iris Murdoch. It also includes a short biography of the author as well as a description of the plot and a brief summary of her novels *A Severed Head* and *Under the Net*.

1.1 Life

Iris Murdoch, a novelist and philosopher, was born on 15th July 1919 in Dublin and died on 8th February 1999 in Oxford after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease. Murdoch was not only a great novelist; she was also a playwright, critic and professor of Oxford University.

She grew up in London and studied at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. During the Second World War, she was a member of the Communist Party, but she was disappointed with its ideology and resigned from office.¹

"From 1938 to 1942 she worked at the Treasury as an assistant principal, and then for the United Nations relief organization UNNRA (1944-46) in Austria and Belgium."² For one year she was unemployed entering a postgraduate studentship in philosophy under Ludwig Wittgenstein, a philosopher and professor of Cambridge University. Until 1963, she worked as a tutor of St. Anne's College, Oxford.³

Iris Murdoch lived a complicated emotional life. When she was 37 years old, she married John Bayley, a critic and novelist. They had a long and happy marriage, though childless. She published 26 novels and received many honors. The Booker Prize for her book *The Sea, the Sea* (1978) is the most famous. "Iris Murdoch was awarded the CBE in 1976 and in 1987 she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire."⁴

Under the Net, her first novel published in 1954, captivated the audience by a fantastic ingenuity, sense of humor, mystery and symbolism. The book being considered her famous novels are: *A Severed Head* (1961), *The Unicorn* (1963) or *The Black Prince* (1973). Also,

¹ Fauserová, Veronika. "Magic Realism in Iris Murdoch's Novels." (Master's thesis, Masaryk University, 2011), 18.

² Petri Liukkonen, "Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)," accessed March 11, 2015, <http://authorscalendar.info/imurdoch.htm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Booker Prize Foundation, "Iris Murdoch," accessed March 08, 2015, <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/people/iris-murdoch>.

the two philosophical books *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) and *The Fire and the Son* (1977) are very important.⁵

“Murdoch’s novels typically have convoluted plots in which innumerable characters representing different philosophical positions undergo kaleidoscopic changes in their relations with each other.”⁶ Throughout the book, the plot and the characters develop, and the reader is often surprised, by the way the book ends.

Conradi argues: “Her novels are not just stylized comedies of manners, with artificial complications, but reflect life experience, albeit wonderfully transmuted.”⁷ The novels are deeply emotional, Murdoch used much of a description of noise and light, and the characters are very psychologically sophisticated.

1.2 Murdoch’s Attitude to Women

Dame Iris Murdoch used a male narrator very often in her novels. Although she lacked a feminist sympathy, she wanted to show, also, a dark side of men. Especially in the novel *Under the Net*, she wanted to show what sort of people men often are. In the novel *A Severed Head* she depicts the topic of men’s violence on women.

She says: “When I’m writing I don’t think of myself wholly as a woman... I’ve tried to avoid writing as a woman because it does create its own narrowness.”⁸ By her literature, Murdoch tried to escape from women’s world. She herself identifies more with her male character rather than with the female one. Kim and Westhall argue that the subordinate female characters are related to Murdoch’s own submissive personality.⁹ In her novels, she used much of irony, sexuality and complex relationships.

She also wanted to point out the way women, too often, lived and their inadequate education. She also depicted a male’s dominance and female submission.¹⁰

⁵Fausarová, Veronika. “*Magic Realism in Iris Murdoch’s Novels*.” Master’s thesis, Masaryk University, 2011, 19.

⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Dame Iris Murdoch,” accessed March 08, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/398048/Dame-Iris-Murdoch>.

⁷Conradi, Peter J. *Iris Murdoch: A Life: The Authorized Biography*. (London: HarperCollins UK, 2001), 17.

⁸Fiander, Lisa M. *Fairy Tales and the Fiction of Iris Murdoch, Margaret Drabble and A. S. Byatt*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 11.

⁹ Kim, Rina & Claire Westall, ed. *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 114.

¹⁰Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 5.

1.3 Work

1.3.1 A Severed Head

A Severed Head is a witty, ironical and satirical comedy of manners, love, desire, incest and friendship. The novel is full of pairing and switching of partners in every possible situation.¹¹

The plot is set in London. The major character in the novel, 41 year-old Martin Lynch-Gibbon, is married to an older beautiful woman Antonia, and is having a love affair with his young mistress Georgie.

Their marriage is rather a relationship between a mother and a son than the relationship between two lovers. Paradoxically, Martin, who himself is cheating on his wife, feels to be aggrieved when Antonia wants to divorce him because of her psychoanalyst and Martin's friend, Palmer.

Martin is a person who always desires for something he cannot have at that moment. As well as he desires for Antonia when she wants a divorce, he desires for emotionally cold Honor Klein, Palmer's sister. Martin ends his affair with Georgie, discovers incest between Honor and her brother, and a romance of Antonia and Martin's brother, Alexander.

At the end of the story, three new couples emerge. Georgie is leaving the town with Palmer, Antonia and Alexander become a couple, and Honor Klein stays in London with Martin.¹²

1.3.2 Under the Net

The first published novel *Under the Net* is a comic adventure of London's artistic bohemians.

The major character is a young feckless writer and translator Jake Donaghue, who disentangles from the net during the story. Jake has so much to learn about himself and his life.¹³ The plot takes place in the streets of London and in Paris.

¹¹Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 135.

¹² Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed March 10, 2015, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=E9UCICKMqzMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=a+severed+head,+iris+murd och&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=gZlAVbijM8PlaOPTgIAB&ved=0CCEQ6wEwAA#v=onepage&q=a%20severed%20head%2C%20iris%20murdoch&f=false>.

One day Jake and his friend Finn find out that they are ejected from the flat. A reader may see how Jake is trying to find the solution to this situation, how he and his friends find out very interesting information and in which way they handle them.

During the crazy adventures of these friends, Jake meets his former love Anna, her sister Sadie and also his old friend Hugo.

The whole story is entwined by the love quadrangle. At the end of the story, Jake's literary career begins. There is a visible development of the characters, the well worked-out plot and, also in the character of Jake one can find a reflection of the author herself.¹⁴

¹³Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 36-37.

¹⁴ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed March 10, 2015, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=mkG9MVjWVjoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=under+the+net,+iris+murdoch&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=yZlAVZncL9PaaNXhgIgb&ved=0CCEQ6wEwAA#v=onepage&q=under%20the%20net%2C%20iris%20murdoch&f=false>.

2 A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following chapter delineates the society of Great Britain in 1950s and 1960s. The first part shows a general description of a situation after the Second World War focusing, especially, on the role of women. The second part shows attitudes of Iris Murdoch to this era and her breaking the barriers.

2.1 What It Is Like to Be a Woman in Britain in the 1950s and 60s

The age of the 1950s and 1960s was an era of respectability and conformity. Very few women worked after getting married. According to Holloway: "In the 1950s and 1960s, economic independence was still a dream for a most women."¹⁵ He, also, claims that in 1951 women formed 31% of labour force and in 1961 they formed 33% of labour force in Great Britain.¹⁶

The Second World War changed the role of women in Britain. During the war, women had to work in factories, while their husbands had to be in the war. After the Second World War, the society expected a return of men back to the factories, and of women back to the households. Some of them, of course, did not like this expectation; women found out that they can be self-contained also without men. After the Second World War the number of divorces, also, grew up.

Before the war, and still after the war, majority of the women usually stayed at home, caring for their children and keeping house. The man was considered a head and breadwinner of the family. Very often, women had no money for their own, and they had no career. For women, it was unusual to go to university, and mostly, secondary schools prepared girls for their life of housewives.¹⁷

Castelow claims that "lessons were given in cookery, household management, darning, sewing and even how to iron and shirt properly. Girls were trained to look after their husband, their children and the house."¹⁸

¹⁵Holloway, Gerry. *Women And Work In Britain Since 1840*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 181.

¹⁵Ibid., 197.

¹⁶ *A Historic UK*. "The 1950s Housewife," accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/The-1950s-Housewife/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

There was a high saleability of women's magazines in 1950's. Pilcher argues that women's magazines functioned as "trade press of the professional housewife and mother."¹⁹

The marriage was a priority for many women in 1950s. They married very young; an average age of brides was usually 24 in 1950s, and 23 in 1960s.²⁰ Things which are commonly used today were very unusual or unfamiliar for people in the past. For instance contraceptive pills, as well as an abortion were unknown terms. The first available contraceptive pills appeared in 1960s.

2.2 Iris Murdoch's Attitude to Era of the 1950s and 60s

Iris Murdoch breaks the barriers of the morality by her novels. In the novel *A Severed Head* she wrote about a marital infidelity of Martin and Antonia. She mentioned there a theme of homosexuality between two secretaries of Martin. She had courage to write about violence, about an abortion of young Georgie and about incest between Palmer and his half-sister Honor. She became a harbinger of a sexual revolution in Britain by her novel *A Severed Head*.

After publishing the novel *Under the Net*, she became to be compared with the "angry young men".²¹ The main theme of the novel is independence and an emancipation of women. She also wrote about free love and mentioned exploiting women by men. A theme used through the both novels is drinking of alcohol.

¹⁹Pilcher, Jane. *Women in Contemporary Britain: An Introduction*. (New York: Psychology Press, 1999), 116.

²⁰ Mann, Jessica. *The Fifties Mystique*. (Sherffield: The Cornovia Press, 2013), 121.

²¹Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 36.

3 THE MAIN FEMALE CHARACTERS

The focus of the bachelor thesis is to depict the main female characters of the two Murdoch's novels. Firstly, the novel *A Severed Head* is analyzed, followed by the analysis of the novel *Under the Net*.

3.1 A Severed Head

In this chapter, the main female characters of *A Severed Head* and their relationships with men are described. There are three central female characters. The strongest character is an anthropologist Honor Klein. Chapter will depict, also, Martin's mistress, Georgie, and Martin's wife, Antonia.

3.1.1 Honor Klein

Martin Lynch-Gibbon characterized Honor Klein as a poor old spinster.²² He certainly had not known that this woman would change the destinies of all the characters of the novel.

Dr. Honor Klein is a well-educated and experienced anthropologist, with many male abilities. Her face is not very pleasant: "heavy, perceptibly Jewish, and dour, with just hint of insolence. The curving lips are [were] combined with a formidable straightness and narrowness of the eyes and mouth."²³ It is a very interesting fact that woman with the appearance of Honor Klein can be so influential with men and can enrapture the two men in the novel.

When Martin firstly saw Honor, she resembled a shapeless sack. Martin expected that Honor would speak with a German accent, but he was surprised by her deeply cultured English.²⁴

Gindin describes the character of Honor Klein as: "The primitive human creature, avoiding the traps and the generalization most human beings succumb to, is given a forceful, dramatic and bizarre presence in the figure of Honor Klein."²⁵ He also claims that "Honor,

²² Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed March 10, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Carlebach, Julius. *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in United Kingdom*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 332.

²⁵ Gindin, James. *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 189.

“a severed head”, a representation of primal human force without the addition of civilization or rationality is the id.”²⁶ According to S. Freud, the basic principle of an id is a delight while the main goal is an immediate satisfaction of the needs.²⁷

On one hand, Honor Klein repulses the men by her appearance; on the other hand, she can enchant the two men in the novel. In comparison to beautiful Antonia and ultra-feminine Georgie, Honor controls herself perfectly all the time, her education is better than education of Georgie or Antonia, who does not have any.

Both, Georgie and Antonia, are beautiful women, surrounded by many things. They care about their clothing, hairstyle and they use accessories. Honor has an androgynous appearance with oily hair and black hairs above the upper lip. The only moment she speaks about a decoration of the flat is the moment when she uses the samurai sword.

As well as Georgie, she is not seen in any social context except for her work or visiting her brother, Palmer. Her position is very powerful, she is equal to men characters and she controls them.

As for Martin, she functions as a God-figure. She is persuasive woman who represents the main emotional force; actually she is the only person, who sees pretence of the other characters.²⁸

There are three very strong moments through the novel. The first very strong moment comes when Honor demonstrates a brutal power of her samurai sword to fascinate Martin. She also mentioned that the samurai connects the sole with a longing for power and control.²⁹ Martin is fascinated, this act brings him under her influence, and it shows her androgynous character.³⁰

This leads to another crucial point. Martin found out that Honor had presented Georgie to his brother; he is angry and gets drunk. He attacks Honor in the wine cellar and hits her three times. She accepts it bravely. Glicksberg claimed that this assault was a discharge of

²⁶Gindin, James. *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 192.

²⁷Cakirpaloglu, Panajotis. *Úvod do psychologie osobnosti*. (Praha: Grada Publishing a.s., 2012), 115.

²⁸Gindin, James. *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 192.

²⁹Ibid., 194.

³⁰Kirca, Mustafa. *Iris Murdoch and Her Work: Critical Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 76.

“[...] his pent-up frustration and hatred and a confession of his unconscious passion for her.”³¹

At the moment, when Martin finds Honor naked in the bed with Palmer, he becomes obsessed with her much more and is fascinated by the theme of incest. He returns to the image of naked Honor, obsessively.³² He understands that Honor is not a virgin and that he would not be the first man who would seduce her. Leeson claimed that Honor not only mothers Martin, but she becomes a sexual object for him.³³ She performs as a detached observer, and the most important detection is her incestuous relationship with her half-brother.³⁴

Honor Klein is the most important protagonist of the novel. She plays a commanding role. Honor is a mysterious character, with an ability to get the information, which she wants or needs to know, from other people. For instance, she asks Georgie about her relationship with Martin, and Georgie tells her truth. Owing to her motionless posture Martin does not know what she thinks and has on her mind.

According to Brower: “[...] ferocious figure of Honor Klein, whose role has sometimes been found incongruous. But incongruity is her function. With her flashing samurai ritual, her incestuous relations with her brother, and her tough, direct speech, she cuts out cant, she shocks with the truth, she reveals all and is ashamed of nothing.”³⁵

According to Honor, Martin should face the truth. She tells him, that he cannot cheat the dark gods (meaning Antonia) and that people must pay for everything in their lives.³⁶ Honor “[...] functions as a voice of truth and responsibility”.³⁷

³¹Glicksberg, Charles I. *The Sexual Revolution in Modern English Literature*. (The Hague: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), accessed March 26, 2015, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=aravBQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Glicksberg,+Charles+I.+The+Sexual+Revolution+in+Modern+English+Literature&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=g5tAVeDpK4nuaJTNGaAM&ved=0CCEQ6wEwAA#v=onepage&q=Glicksberg%20Charles%20I.%20The%20Sexual%20Revolution%20in%20Modern%20English%20Literature&f=false>.

³² Ibid.

³³Leeson, Miles. *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist*. (London: A&C Black, 2011), 60.

³⁴ Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 52.

³⁵Brower, Reuben Arthur. *Twentieth-century Literature in Retrospect*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 78.

³⁶ Spear, Hilda. D. *Iris Murdoch*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 43.

³⁷Hague, Angela. *Iris Murdoch's Comic Vision*. (Cranbury: Associated University Press Inc., 1984), 52.

Kirka claimed that Murdoch in her novels shows terrifying manipulative characters who wield their power over the lives of others with superior knowledge, abusive behaviour, divisive intellectual or sexual power to achieve intractable ends. Honor Klein can be categorized as such a person.³⁸

Though she appears as emotionally cold and childless woman, she evinces maternal instincts to young Georgie. Georgie claims that she never taught her. Honor was the director of her studies; she organized her work and helped Georgie with her moral problems. Honor knows Georgie socially and cares about her. Georgie sent her a strange letter. Honor comes to her flat, as well as Martin, with the words: "I was afraid of this." Their dependence is like an intellectual mother-daughter relationship.³⁹ This mother-daughter relationship is visible at the moment of disclosure of the relationship of Georgie and Martin, and, as well at the moment of meeting Georgie and Alexander, or during the goodbyes at the airport.

An image of a head appears throughout the novel. Honor Klein is a severed head of the story. Gerstenberger connects the profession of Dr. Klein with the Celtic ritual of severed heads.⁴⁰ Freud claimed, the severing of the head primarily denotes castration⁴¹ and actually, Honor Klein is the only female character who is not subordinate to men. On the contrary, she emasculates Martin by her work with the samurai sword.

Her role is equal to the male characters. She is not a typical feminine character; she is a collector of severed heads and as a professional anthropologist she knows the history of 'savage' tribes who collect severed heads as trophies. She represents a totemic figure for other characters and controls the actions of Martin and Palmer. She plays a role of mother for both, Martin and Palmer.⁴²

Honor Klein as an instigator of the sexual marry-go-round disturbs Martin's life and consolidates his dominance and causes all of the characters to consolidate their inner lives

³⁸Kirca, Mustafa. *Iris Murdoch and Her Work: Critical Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 68.

³⁹Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 52.

⁴⁰Gerstenberger, Donna Lorine. *Iris Murdoch*. (Cranbury: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 34.

⁴¹Leeson, Miles. *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist*. (London: A&C Black, 2011), 58.

⁴²Kim, Rina & Claire Westall, ed. *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 124-125.

and outer relationships. Honor's role as an enchanter figure de-feminized others. Her usage of language puts her in the position of enchanter, goddess and master of all.⁴³

Kirca puts Honor in contrast to Antonia who is "more sexy attractive force." They are both referred to as severed heads. According to Kirca, Honor is a powerful and dark character that "initially repulses Martin with her foreign, even animal-like, Jewish or Oriental face".⁴⁴

"Martin gradually becomes more aware of Honor as their paths cross and she intercepts him tactlessly"⁴⁵ at the moment when he is trying to push Georgie into the garden through a French window. As the voice of truth, Honor complicates a life of Martin Lynch-Gibbon by a disclosure of Martin's relationship with the young mistress.

The second turning point occurs when Martin finds out that Honor Klein presents Georgie to Alexander, and they are planning a marriage. Martin attacks Honor in the cellar which shows his hidden passion for her as mentioned before. The more Martin is losing his mistress, the more he desires for Honor.

"The self-consciously enlightened bed-hopping of the novel brings to the narrator of the novel and Honor Klein together by the end of the book, both wiser for their experiences and ready, perhaps, if the final page is any indication, to accept the contingency of life without the kind of crippling self-dramatizing that has provided the action of the novel."⁴⁶

Martin's attitude as a narrator changed. Thanks to Honor and her voice of the truth, Martin understands that the life is unpredictable and people must pay for everything in their lives. Firstly, he had a wife and a mistress. At the end of the novel, he lost them both and he begins a new life with Honor Klein.

3.1.2 Georgie Hands

Georgie Hands is a young mistress of Martin Lynch-Gibbon. She is twenty six years old and is a graduate of Cambridge. Georgie works as a lecturer in economics. Her position in the story is a little bit different than the position of any young woman in 1961. Lovibond

⁴³ Kim, Rina & Claire Westall, ed. *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 122-123.

⁴⁴ Kirca, Mustafa. *Iris Murdoch and Her Work: Critical Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 76.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 76.

⁴⁶ Gerstenberger, Donna Lorine. *Iris Murdoch*. (Cranbury: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 34 - 35.

pointed out that Georgie is not seen in any social context except for her work or connection with Honor Klein.⁴⁷

The role of Georgie Hands is very subordinate, according to Hague she is a victim.⁴⁸ Martin noted whereas his sister Rosemary and Antonia play a role of women, Georgie plays no role. She has her own mind.⁴⁹ Antonia is based within the society, but Georgie is apart from it.⁵⁰ Although her family background is not visible there, Georgie's education shows the probability that her family is wealthy. There are not shown family relationships, as well as any friendships with women. She finds the friend in a character of Honor Klein but their relationship seems to be a relationship of mother and daughter rather than friendship.

On one hand, her character seems silly and naive; on the other hand, she is very beautiful and strong woman. She keeps the relationship with Martin in silence; moreover, she gave up a child because of a married man. At the beginning of the novel, Georgie has long dark hair; she is independent and full of energy. By the end of the story, she had changed, she cut her long hair, and she lost her independence.

What is very important for understanding of Georgie herself, and also for understanding of her relationship with Martin, is the background of her flat. "The room was heavy with a stifling smell of Kashmir poppy and sandalwood."⁵¹ A ramshackle effect and general untidiness of her flat represent her relationship with Martin. It shows that their relationship, as well as her flat, is not well-arranged and it is untidy. Their relationship is not official, so they must hide their love away from everyone, as well as people do not want to show their untidy flat to the outer world.

Empty bottle of wine and remnants of meal show the intimacy which Martin never achieved with his wife. Her room also evokes Georgie's vivid life, which is emphasized, also, by her colourful and provocative clothes.⁵²

Georgie's vivid life and provocative style of her clothes is caused, also, by Martin's passion for giving her provocative presents. "I loved to give Georgie outrageous things,

⁴⁷Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 52.

⁴⁸Hague, Angela. *Iris Murdoch's Comic Vision*. (Cranbury: Associated University Press Inc., 1984), 58.

⁴⁹Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁵⁰Leeson, Miles. *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist*. (London: A&C Black, 2010), 67.

⁵¹Spear, Hilda. D. *Iris Murdoch*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 40.

⁵²Ibid., 40.

absurd garments and gewgaws which I could not possibly have given Antonia, barbarous necklaces and velvet pants and purple underwear and black openwork tights, which drove me mad.”⁵³ Martin has a bad conscience, which is an evident fact there, and he tries to buy Georgie’s favour by gifts which show her the subordinate role.

The disclosure of her relationship with Martin is an unsuccessful attempt to make her position powerful but the visitation of Antonia and Palmer makes Georgie’s position more subordinate again, because Antonia is the one, who still has a lover, as well as a husband, while Gerorgie is starting to lose her lover.

Both women who Martin loves at the beginning of the novel are childless. Lack of children advances the theme of sterility. While Antonia seems to be unable to be pregnant, Georgie gives up the child. The abortion was the source of grief for her, and as a result, she has suicidal tendencies. Bove claimed that the topic of children devastates both women.⁵⁴ Georgie’s pregnancy is the only thing that makes her role more powerful than the role of Antonia.

Both Antonia and Martin address Georgie as a child.⁵⁵ Actually everybody treats her like a child because it is easy to manipulate her, and in the hospital she really looks like a little girl. “The [this] want of children appears to instigate the characters’ parental behavior toward one another and, perhaps, their childish behavior.”⁵⁶ In the relationship of Martin and Georgie, the way in which older or dominant person addresses younger or subordinate one is visible; he addresses Georgie as ‘child’ or ‘my child’. This way of addressing is typical for Mrs. Murdoch.⁵⁷

Georgie Hands, as well as the majority of characters in the novel, changes partners very often, during the story.⁵⁸ Firstly, she keeps a hidden love affair with Martin Lynch-Gibbon.

⁵³Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁵⁴Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 136.

⁵⁵Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 53.

⁵⁶ Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 136.

⁵⁷Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 74.

⁵⁸Glicksberg, Charles I. *The Sexual Revolution in Modern English Literature*. (The Hague: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

After a disclosure she gets engaged to Alexander Lynch-Gibbon and, at the end of the novel, she travels with Palmer Anderson to America.

Martin adores Georgie for her ingenuity, for her independence and for being such a contrastive person comparing to Antonia. While Antonia always behaves ladylike, Georgie is rumbustious. He, also, likes Georgie's playing no role, which is new for him. Although he asserts that he loves her so much, he just wants to possess her. The fact that their love has changed by the abortion, because pure love would not change, is an evidence of Martin's possessive love. Martin uses Georgie only for his delight and Georgie must entail the grief on her own, which can cause, also, her loneliness. On one hand she seems to play no role, on the other she plays the role of child for other characters in the novel.

Martin calls himself a selfish husband, but he is selfish as well as a lover. He just takes and does not give. He does not understand Georgie; moreover, he has never tried to understand her.⁵⁹ Georgie would like to trade her vivid life for the life of a married woman but Martin does not want a divorce. Her unhappiness is caused by "Martin's neglect and lack of love."⁶⁰

Georgie has an obsession of seeing New York. Probably, she wants to escape from the reality of her hidden love. Martin promised her to visit New York but he canceled it. Alexander promised to go there on honeymoon but he, as well as Martin, canceled the trip. Martin loves her as a secret mistress and in the letter to Georgie he acknowledges that he is selfish and inconsiderate. When Honor Klein reveals the affair between Martin and Georgie, Martin's love for Georgie is practically destroyed.

Martin does not want to present Alexander to Georgie because Alexander used to take all of his girls away from him. The first shock for Martin is the moment of finding Georgie with Alexander. It is the first, and also the last moment, when Georgie's position is more powerful than the position of Martin.

Martin suffers a blow when he finds out that Alexander is planning on marrying Georgie.⁶¹ On one hand, Georgie wants to make Martin be angry by her engagement; on the other hand, she was pleased that somebody is willing to marry her. The engagement does not

⁵⁹Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁶⁰Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 53.

⁶¹Glicksberg, Charles I. *The Sexual Revolution in Modern English Literature*. (The Hague: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

make Martin angry, but it makes Antonia very angry. Antonia even makes Alexander reject Georgie, which is leading to suicide. Martin loses any desire for his mistress after the engagement.⁶²

Alexander actually has never loved Georgie. He loved Antonia and the engagement with Georgie was just a revenge to Antonia because she wanted to marry Palmer.

Since their first meeting, Palmer Anderson was like a father to Georgie. Palmer visits her in the hospital too. He reprimands her and calms down her like a child. In the hospital, he also offers her the service of a psychoanalyst. Palmer and Georgie become closer. Palmer wants to leave and persuades Georgie to go to America with him. When Martin sees her at the airport, he notices that Georgie lost her independence.⁶³

Among the other characters in the novel, Georgie is in the most subordinate position because she herself allows the others to use her. Both Lynch-Gibbons make Georgie's role subordinate. She is utilized by them both. Martin utilizes her for his delight, and Alexander utilizes her because of the revenge to Antonia. Palmer travels with Georgie, probably in an effort not to be alone and Georgie needs to have somebody who will support her. She does not preclude the fact that everybody treats her like a child; actually she herself behaves like a child. For instance her suicide attempt was just an attempt to draw attention to her.

3.1.3 Antonia Lynch-Gibbon

Antonia Lynch-Gibbon is forty-six years old, she is rich and well-connected. She visits her psychoanalyst, Palmer Anderson, regularly. Although Antonia has no idea that her husband is cheating on her, she is cheating on him too. After her confession, Antonia and Palmer treat Martin as his parents.

She is older than her husband, Martin, and represents a mother figure.⁶⁴ “Martin notes how Antonia resembles his mother, how he married her because she reminded him of his

⁶²Kirca, Mustafa. *Iris Murdoch and Her Work: Critical Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 76.

⁶³Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁶⁴Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 135- 136.

mother, and is sometimes mistaken for his mother as well as mothering him.”⁶⁵ Martin’s subordination to Antonia’s maternal role makes her position high-powered.

Although Antonia looks older than she really is, she is considered beautiful, and is used to an admiration. Antonia has long goldish hair and a distinctive mouth. She is tall with a light inclination to be plump.⁶⁶ On one hand, she represents warmth and safety in the novel; on the other hand, she is fierce, coquettish and passionate. Antonia is very promiscuous and possessive. She wants to have a husband, as well as a lover at the same moment.

Although she has no education, she speaks three languages and culture has a great importance to her. Also, she has a good taste and great aesthetical feelings. She focuses on details like pelmets or statuettes and antique furniture.

When Martin looks at the salon in their house at Hereford Square, everything was Antonia. Silken carpets, fluffy cushions and other things.⁶⁷ It shows her representation of a mother figure again because the mother is usually the person who creates a cozy home.

The description of Georgie’s room, as well as Martin’s and Antonia’s house, is important for understanding his relationship with the two women. The candles in Georgie’s flat represent the sense of life, spirituality and his warm feelings toward Georgie. Things in Antonia’s home “[...] suggest a formal tie which he sees the existing between himself and his wife through their joint possession and through his appreciation of Antonia's delicately restrained housewifery.”⁶⁸

She is a kind hostess, who needs to grow on everybody, even on mistress of her husband.

Antonia always behaves politely and ladylike, very often, she uses diminutives as ‘darling’, ‘honey’ or ‘dear’. Because of her kindness and friendliness “[...] people were always falling in love with Antonia and wanting to tell her all their troubles.”⁶⁹

Antonia does not get on well with other women. When she meets her sister-in-law, Rosemary, they dissimulate that are friends. Despite the feigned friendship, she spends a lot of time with Rosemary during her visitation, and they cooperate while they had

⁶⁵Kim, Rina & Claire Westall, ed. *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing*. (New York:Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 125.

⁶⁶Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 03, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Spear, Hilda. D. *Iris Murdoch*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 41.

⁶⁹Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 01, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

arranged Martin's new flat. Antonia really does not get on well with Honor Klein, and at the moment she meets Honor Klein, Antonia is afraid of her. It is, probably, caused by the Honor's influential position and by her relationship with Palmer.

The only woman she gets on well with is Georgie, because Antonia perceives her as a child, and again, she shows her role of mother figure.

Martin feels in a powerful position within his marriage. He rather takes than gives. Ironically, when Antonia arrives home from the appointment with her psychoanalyst, she announces her husband that she wants a divorce. Martin realizes how beautiful Antonia really is, and he starts to be jealous. He is sure that he possesses Antonia, as well as Georgie, but actually, he does not possess any of them.⁷⁰ "Martin tries to make use of both Antonia and Georgie in his solipsistic manner but Antonia gives him a jolt when she tells him about her love for Palmer Anderson."⁷¹ After her confession, Martin understands that he is losing his wife, and as a result of this, he loses an interest in his mistress as well.

Antonia Lynch-Gibbon and Palmer Anderson need go with their love public. They want to live together, and they need Martin's acquiescence. After the announcement, Antonia and Palmer become parental figures for Martin and he perceives them as such. Actually, everybody in the novel is unsettled by the decision of Antonia and Palmer in some way. In Freudian terms, the Antonia and Palmer Anderson's relationship presents a kind of castration for Martin Lynch-Gibbon.⁷²

Palmer is an honest man, and he influences Antonia very much. She must tell the truth about their relationship because he persuades her that it is suitable. Later, she confesses she is afraid of him. After the break-up of the relationship with Palmer, Antonia returns to Martin. He notices that Antonia is changed. At the beginning, she was young, cheerful and a single-minded woman. Now, she is at the subordinate role and has a face-full of wrinkles. Palmer, openly, represents power while Alexander Lynch-Gibbon represents power

⁷⁰ Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 135- 136.

⁷¹ Bajaj, Kum Kum. *A Critical Study of Iris Murdoch's Fiction*. (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors 2001), 228.

⁷² Kim, Rina & Claire Westall, ed. *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices: Appropriating, Resisting, Embracing*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 121-123.

secretly. According to Kirca, Antonia is another severed head, “pivoting all the men around her with her sexual Oedipal power.”⁷³

Martin’s brother, Alexander, has made a bronze sculpture of Antonia’s head. The sculpture should represent a kind of Alexander’s possession which emasculates Martin. He understands this symbol of possession at the end of the novel, when Antonia drops a bombshell of her long-standing relationship with Alexander.⁷⁴

Her relationships with men are complicated. Antonia is very passionate and promiscuous. During the story she maintains the relationships with all the male characters from the novel, as well as Georgie. At the beginning, she is married to Martin Lynch-Gibbon but their marriage is not happy. It is not based on love or desire, but it has a form of friendship, which is underscored by their separate bedrooms at home.

Her second partner is a psychoanalyst, Palmer Anderson. Their relationship is probably based on Antonia’s need of permanently talking to somebody. Although they both, Palmer and Martin, feel to be in a powerful position in this relationship, Antonia is cheating on them with Alexander Lynch-Gibbon. “The final pairings show the powerful Antonia openly enjoying her long-term affair with the brother-in-law Alexander, after exerting her golden sexual attraction over all the men.”⁷⁵

3.1.4 Rosemary Michelis

Rosemary is thirty-seven years old, and she is the sister of Martin and Alexander Lynch-Gibbon. In Martin’s words, her attractiveness can be called petit. Despite her Lynch-Gibbon face, she is charming. She has a hulking nose and a big mouth. Her Lynch-Gibbon face is compensated by fair skin. According to Martin, she is cute but she gives an impression of a caricature.

Martin, also, claims that she loves catastrophes. Delighted with what had happened, black suited Rosemary greets him with words: “Oh, Martin, I am sorry!”⁷⁶ She is surprised by

⁷³Kirca, Mustafa. *Iris Murdoch and Her Work: Critical Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 73-74.

⁷⁴Ibid., 75 - 76.

⁷⁵Ibid., 77.

⁷⁶Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 03, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

Martin's flippant behavior. Rosemary is pleased that Martin should get divorced, but because she is a lady, she pretends sorrow.

Rosemary got married young and against the wishes of her family. Her husband subsequently left her. She is divorced now, and she sympathizes with everybody whose marriage disintegrates. She does not have any beloved person at this moment. Rosemary is rich and attractive for men. Martin claims that she might be involved in continual amorous adventures.⁷⁷

In the comparison with Antonia, Rosemary does not shine. She is not so beautiful and is a little bit more staid than Antonia. Rosemary is very caring and meddling. She wants to organize lives of other people and she appoints herself as Martin's housekeeper. Very often Rosemary is better informed than Martin, especially about his new flat.

The fact that Rosemary does not get on well with Antonia is visible during the dialogue with Martin at the station. "Don't let Antonia cheat you about the furniture and things. I suppose as she's the guilty party it should all really belong to you."⁷⁸

As well as Antonia, she plays a role of woman, and she is based within the society. She might seem to be the head of Lynch-Gibbon family. But the real head of their family is Alexander.

Although she is an independent and a rich woman, her role is subordinate, as well as the role of Georgie. There is one difference though. While Georgie is utilized by other characters, Rosemary herself creates her subordinate position, by having a need to care about someone constantly.

3.2 Under the Net

The following subchapter describes the main female characters of the novel *Under the Net*. It focuses on the manner of their living, relationships they go through and the roles they play in the novel. The most important female character in the novel *Under the Net* is Mrs. Tinckham, but further, there are also very interesting characters of sisters Quentin or Magdalen.

All the female characters of the novel *Under the Net* can feel alone, because they are not seen with any boyfriends, and they are not seen with any women's friends either.

⁷⁷Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. (London: Penguin, 1976), accessed April 03, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁷⁸Ibid.

3.2.1 Mrs. Tinckham

Mrs. Tinckham is an owner of the small newspaper shop. Her shop is dirty and dusty, and people can buy there newspapers in foreign languages, magazines for women or science fiction. Jake claims that he has never seen anybody to buy them. The only person who reads them is Mrs. Tinckham. Quiet music from a small radio accompanies the atmosphere of the dusty shop.⁷⁹

The newspaper shop is the only place where Mrs. Tinckham is seen, and visitors of the shop are the only people she is connected with. Although her education is not mentioned in the novel, she seems to be clever, because she reads a lot.

In the shop, there is a lot of cats. The cat's family permanently grows wider and at the moment Jake enters the shop cats, sleepy and pensive, they are sitting on the counter. Mrs. Tinckham is sitting among her cats and is smoking. She is smoking constantly, and she lights each cigarette from the previous one. When the cats go out, they do not go further than ten steps from the shop. Similarly, Mrs. Tinckham is not seen elsewhere than in her shop. In the novel, there is no reference to Mrs. Tinckham's family, which may lead to the idea that the cats might represent a family to their owner. Mrs. Tinckham tries to persuade her cats to have kittens with a Siamese tomcat. She succeeds, at the end of the novel.⁸⁰

Her shop does not serve as a real shop; however, it serves as "[...] an accommodation address, and it is a rendezvous for people who like to be very secretive about their affairs."⁸¹

According to Bove, Mrs. Tinckham is one of five good people in twenty-four novels of Mrs. Murdoch.⁸²

"She takes him into her shop when he is homeless and acts as a sounding board for his new discoveries about the complexities of life and love."⁸³ This behavior shows her kindness and probably her loneliness too. She might represent a friend for many of her customers.

⁷⁹ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 09, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 41.

⁸³ Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 41.

People trust her and by police questioning she proves to really be a trustworthy person. For many customers, she is the only trustworthy confidant.⁸⁴

Mrs. Tinckham is very kind to Jake and he, sometimes, deposits his possession in her store. He compares the reliability of Mrs. Tinckham with a natural law and Mrs. Tinckham with an earth-goddess, surrounded by incense. Jake is devoted to her. He wonders how much Mrs. Tinckham knows about her customers and he, also, adds that “woman who does not talk is a jewel in velvet.”⁸⁵

The fact that she knows much information about her customers makes her position very powerful but her kindness does not allow her to use the information. She plays a role of a detached observer. In the position of the sounding board, she has an overview about lives or affairs of other people. She is a reliable woman who the people confess to. She is very discreet, which is comparable to medical confidentiality.

In the last chapter, her role of the sounding board is very visible. Although Mrs. Tinckham is not a close friend of Finn, she knows more than his real close friend Jake. Finn had been thinking about going home and he had confided to her while Jake knows nothing about his plan. He feels to be ashamed of knowing so little about Finn. “[...] Jake’s narrow perception of otherness contrast with the characteristics of good which Mrs. Tinckham displays.”⁸⁶

Mrs. Murdoch uses animals as symbols of animacy and essential quality in *Under the Net*. One of the natural creatures used as a symbol is the stolen dog, Mars. At the end of the novel, another important animal symbol appears. When Jake comes back to the shop of Mrs. Tinckham and all of his nets have been disentangled, he finds out that Maggie had given birth to four kittens. The shop of Mrs. Tinckham is a shrine for Jake but the birth of kittens does not mean Jake’s salvation. According to Gindin it functions as an animate a fact in a contrast to misleading illusions of all Jake’s deliberate attempts.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 41.

⁸⁵ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 09, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁸⁶Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 42.

⁸⁷Gindin, James. *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 182.

Mrs. Tinckham wanted to have kittens of her cats with Siamese tomcat. At the end, she is successful but she cannot understand why all of them are not the same.

“So Maggie’s done it at last!” [...] “What puzzles me”, said Mrs. Tinckham, “is why those two should be pure Siamese and the other ones quite different, instead of their all being half tabby and half Siamese.”⁸⁸

It is the one of the wonders of the world for them both.⁸⁹

3.2.2 Anna Quentin

Anna Quentin is former love of the main character of the novel, Jake Donaghue. For Jake, Anna is a mysterious human being. Her face is soft and incessantly kind, full of desire, though, balanced without an indication of dissatisfaction. Anna is six years older than Jake, and according him, she is irresistible. Jake firstly met Anna when she appeared as a singer with her sister Sadie. When Jake heard about her last time, she sang in night club folk songs, which according to Jake, characterizes her perfectly.⁹⁰

When Jake meets her in a mime theatre, he notices that she changed by the time. According to him, she looks worried. Her neck shows her age, she has some wrinkles around her eyes, and her hair is lightly grizzled. When Jake sees the transience of her beauty, he becomes aware of the fact that he never loved her so much.⁹¹

Anna was very passionate and had a lot of love affairs in the past. Jake claims that Anna is one of the women who cannot reject love. She loves men and they love her back. She has an odd talent for establishing relationships, and she endows her suitors with long term attention, which does not bind her with anything serious. She permanently cheats on her suitors. Jake saw through her early, and he thought about a marriage with her. Life means just serious and tragic issues for Anna, and love means a pursuit and it is related to understanding.⁹²

⁸⁸ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 10, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

Anna does not seem to be a perfect love object; moreover, Luprecht connects the theft of Mars with Jake's inability to cage Anna with any kind of relationship.⁹³ The former love affair between Anna and Jake means, for him, a meaningful romance a few years later.

Lovibond claimed that Anna has no personality; she appears as an object of memory and yearning. Jake perceives women as inexperienced, unintelligibly speaking, naive and simple. Anna is an exceptional case for him. In view of the fact, that Anna having fallen for Hugo, she struggles for embodies his views in the mime theatre.⁹⁴

In the book *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy* Lovibond states: "Women are not pictured as entirely brain dead."⁹⁵ They have an interest in abstract ideas. While Anna orients her interest towards the mime theatre, Sadie to her Hollywood career.

Although Anna is a talented singer, she does not want to sing any more. Singing falls under the same category as speech for her. It is a form of corruption. She concentrates more on silence and simple speech because she believes in Hugo's ideas. Anna talks to Jake about her mime theatre. "Mime is pure art...It's very simple and it's pure."⁹⁶

Leeson claims: "*Under the Net* is an attempt to defy the barriers that language puts upon us; an attempt to be alone in the world, as it is only then that reality enforces itself and the novel ends in self-realization."⁹⁷ Jake's form of self-realization resides in his writing career, which begins at the end of the novel. The mime theatre shows an overcoming of the language barriers, and self-realization of Anna. Her self-realization is influenced by Hugo's ideas and her feelings to him, which make her position a little bit subordinate.

According to Broackess, Anna and Jake are based on Iris Murdoch herself. He also claims that they should be disciples of Hugo.⁹⁸ Anna, as well as Mrs. Murdoch, has her own career, which they began as unmarried women, and they are probably at the same age category. Mrs. Murdoch married at thirty-seven, which was unusual in the 20th century. Anna refuses any serious relationship or marriage which was unusual too.

⁹³ Luprecht, Mark. *Iris Murdoch Connected*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 54.

⁹⁴ Lovibond, Sabina. *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 51.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁹⁶ Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 40.

⁹⁷ Leeson, Miles. *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist*. (London: A&C Black, 2010), 9.

⁹⁸ Broackes, Justin. *Iris Murdoch: Philosopher*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 133.

Firstly, Jake is trying to find Anna because he needs her help. Later, he is trying to find her because his former feelings re-appeared and he wants to get Anna back.

When Jake firstly met Anna, she was a singer, but her interest in dramatic arts has been reinforced during the years. She wants to destroy her old manner of life which lacked truth, and she wants to build a new life and do art based on Hugo's theories. Jake firstly did not recognize Hugo's influence in Anna's speech.⁹⁹ Although she is very independent woman, she is suggestible to her love for Hugo. After the disclosure of her feelings to Hugo, Jake understood that Anna is a separate person and she is not a part of him.

A great resonance is also given to details. When Hugo sees Anna in the mime theatre after years, she pulls on a pair of red gloves, as if in warning. Later, she pours out her unrequited feelings for Hugo. In the Tuileries, Jake takes and is unable to return a pair of Anna's shoes. This probably represents the time or decisions, which people cannot retribute.

Mirroring is very often used in the novel. During the Bastille Day celebrations, Jake sees the image of unreachable Anna in the Seine. He throws a Belfounder rocket into this image. This mirror scene represents difficult communication and direct perception.¹⁰⁰ The Belfounder rocket floating away probably represents, as well as a pair of Anna's shoes, the past time or decision made. Paris represents bittersweet memories of lost love for Jake.¹⁰¹

Her only relationship seen through the novel is the former relationship with Jake. Anna does not refuse her suitors but she does not requite their love. She is interested in her own career; firstly, as the owner of the mime theatre, and later, as a singer.

Anna's role is to show that also woman can be independent in 1950's, which was not so usual, because at that time, women had nearly no career and no money for their own.

She is an independent woman, who is not obsessed with a desire for marriage. She is an owner of the mime theatre, so probably, she is an entrepreneur. Before she became an owner of the mime theatre, she was a successful singer. She has not wanted to be in love or did not have a serious relationship. She does not need men for her success. Anna's role, as well as her sister's, Sadie, is to be an independent female character.

⁹⁹ Spear, Hilda. D. *Iris Murdoch*. (New York:Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 23.

¹⁰⁰ Araújo, Sofia de Melo&FátimaViera, ed. *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher Meets Novelist*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 60.

¹⁰¹ Bove, Cheryl Browning. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 38.

3.2.3 Sadie Quentin

Sadie is the younger sister of Anna Quentin, and she is the truth contrast of her. As well as in the case of Anna, the novel does not give any information about Sadie's education or the family background. Only the relationship with her sister is visible within the novel.

Although Sadie is not as talented a singer as her sister, she has a personal charm and an edge, which is what Anna lacks. She is a shiny and a dazzling person.¹⁰²

As well as most of wealthy women in 1950's Sadie cares about herself. She wants to look beautiful and she visits hairdresser's regularly, which was popular female activity during that era. When Jake meets her in a hairdressing salon, she looks gracefully even with hair in a hairnet.

Sadie seems to be kind but she is a self-seeking person. Sadie needs to be interesting for other people, for instance, by complaining about her being under time pressure or by speaking about Hugo, who chases after her.

Under the Net is full of failed couples. Failed couples very often relate to the character of Sadie. In the first category, there is Jake and Sadie, and Hugo and Sadie, in terms of beloved. Also, the relationship of Sadie and Sammy is important; they seem to be allies. The last failed couple is Anna and Sadie. They are sisters but they do not like each other very much. One of the reasons is that Sadie is jealous of Anna; another reason is that they see each other as rivals in love.¹⁰³

The meeting Sadie means a possibility that Jake may see Anna again for Jake. In hairdressers, when Jake firstly meets Sadie, he does not look at real Sadie; he looks at her reflection in the mirror in rosy glass.

According to the authors of Iris Murdoch, *Philosopher Meets Novelist*: "His conversing with a mirror image is suggestive of the way in which he gets the romantic relations existing between [...] Jake, Hugo and Quentin sisters."¹⁰⁴ Actually, he understands that a love quadrangle exists later.

¹⁰² Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 16, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

¹⁰³ Araújo, Sofia de Melo & Fátima Viera, ed. *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher Meets Novelist*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 60.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

“I could see Sadie’s face contracted into a look of intelligent venom. She looked like a beautiful snake; and the curious fantasy came to me that if I were to look under the drier at the real face and not at the reflection I should see there some terrible old witch.”¹⁰⁵

Through the reflection in the mirror, Jake sees Sadie’s jealousy of his friendship with Anna. The scene, when Jake talks to Sadie’s reflection in the mirror, may represent his unawareness about Sadie’s feeling. Jake, also, claims how beautifully they look together in the mirror.

Sadie is wealthy and successful actress, who does everything, which can help her in her Hollywood career. She is glad when everybody dances to her tune, and she wants to increase her social class position. Sadie is respected because she is very intelligent and cunning. By her intelligence, she resembles to men, and she is in a powerful position. Her intelligence helps her to be equal to men and “[...] she was impressed by men whom she imagined to be intellectuals.”¹⁰⁶ This is the reason of Jake’s conjecture that Sadie loves Hugo. According to Jake, Sadie is not Hugo’s type, but Sadie is exactly a type of woman who can love Hugo.

Although Sadie and Anna are sisters, they are completely different. In comparison to Anna’s mime theatre, Sadie’s flat is tidy and she loves showing her wealth through expensive equipment of her flat. Jake is surprised when he finds *The Silencer* in Sadie’s bookcase. The reason why she owns this book is, probably, the same as the reason why she imprisoned Jake in her flat. She loves him and needs him around.

Jake succeeds in escaping from Sadie’s flat but he forgets *The Silencer* there. He decides to return to the flat. When he comes back, he is listening to the dialogue between Sadie and Sammy. He finds out that Sadie and Sammy are allies and that they have their dishonest plan. During their discussion Sadie’s selfishness and her effort to do everything to get the better social position is visible. They used Madge to get Jake’s translation because they want to earn money. Sammy noted that Sadie has no honor. During their dialogue Sadie also mentioned that she likes Jake.¹⁰⁷ This statement pleased him. The fact that Sadie and Sammy own Jake’s translation makes Sadie’s position even more powerful. Jake tries to get back the typescript by stealing Sammy’s dog.

¹⁰⁵ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 16, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

In her final letter, Sadie shows how much she likes to be admired by suitors. She writes to Jake the information about many letters she gets, probably, in an effort to arouse his jealousy. She is successful because Jake becomes aware of his feelings to Sadie.

In the final letter, we can find the fact that she cannot use only important information in her speech, but she speaks in long sentences which are full of insignificant information.

Sadie does not care for others and their feelings. She is interested just in herself and her career of the Hollywood star. She is an emancipated woman who is independent and uses opportunities to get a better social position. Often she acts tactically, and she is able to double-cross others.

Sadie is not seen in any successful love affair during the story. Her relationships with men are complicated. Her friendship with Sammy exists just because she uses him for her benefit. Actually, she uses also Jake, because she needs somebody who would protect her from Hugo. Sadie also wants Jake to be around her. Her relationship with Hugo is also very complicated. On one hand, she is probably afraid of him, because he is her boss; on the other hand, she makes herself more interesting being in the position of a victim.

Her position in the novel is very powerful. It is caused, partly, by her high intelligence, and partly by her self-seeking and the way she uses men.

3.2.4 Magdalen Casement

Madge is a landlady of Jake Donaghue and his friend Finn. It is not clear if Madge was Jake's girlfriend in the past or not, however, they lived in Madge's flat practically rent-free. It is evident that Madge is very kind person who likes men around her.

Her education is not mentioned in the novel and she works as a typist, but actually, her employment is to be herself. Magdalen is interested in women's magazines and the cinema. She is that type of woman who knows that she is desired. Her appearance is important for her. She uses make-up and follows the latest fashion trends of clothes and hair style.

According to Jake, she is not beautiful but she is pretty and attractive. "Her prettiness lies in her regular features and fine complexion, which she covers over with a peach like mask of make-up until all is as smooth an unexpressive as alabaster."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 17, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

Her hair is changed according to the latest fad but her prettiness lies in her eyes. A change of her hair is visible later, in Paris. Madge is an ideal of a pretty girl, so sometimes, she is, a photographer's model. Jake claims that Magdalen makes a lot of money.¹⁰⁹

She ejects tenants of her flat because she wants to get married. When Jake sees her after the ejection, he notices that her clothes are different. He also understands that he should care after her better and he felt an impulse to make her a proposal of marriage. Not only her clothes changed but also her behavior was different. She would marry a diamond bookmaker Sammy Starfield. Jake notes that Madge is not a type of girl who Sammy would marry because she was not rich, shiny or famous.¹¹⁰ Sammy's interest in the marriage with Magdalen was a turning point in her life because she wanted to get married and Sammy was willing to marry her. Madge sees an opportunity here. Magdalen, as well as Sadie, is materially minded, so she accepts Sammy's proposal. Sammy's love was not pure because he was capable of changing Madge for money.

Magdalen is not tough; she is a warm-hearted woman, a kind and sensual person who is willing to help other people. She suffers the consequences of her kindness when she gives Jake's typescript to Sammy, originally with the intention to help Jake in his career.

She wants to influence people but nobody dances in her tune. Madge supposed that she, not Sadie, would be the person who will influence Sammy, but she becomes the victim of their dishonest plan. Although Sammy, as an ally of Sadie, used Madge, she sticks up for him. "You don't understand Sammy [...], he's an unhappy muddled sort of person."¹¹¹

Magdalen is angry because Sammy and Sadie played dirty tricks on her, but she is not sad because she lost Sammy which shows her self-seeking behavior.

Madge invites Jake to Paris and she pays all expenses connected with Jake's journey. This, again, shows her goodness. When Jake sees her in Paris, he notices that Magdalen again changed. She seems to be beautiful for him.

A body language and her appearance are important for the character of Magdalen. "The door opened, and I saw Madge reclining on a chaiselongue in an attitude which she had clearly taken up some time ago in expectation of my arrival."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 17, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

She likes making information interesting and dramatic, and often, she behaves like she stands before a camera. She wrote a dramatic telegram to force Jake visit her in Paris. When Jake sees her in Paris, “she had a withdrawn feline look of a woman who is conscious of her power and seeing herself as Cleopatra.”¹¹³ An impression of her looks of Cleopatra is emphasized by the change of her hair. She changed long waves in her hair to straight bobbed hair.

Although Madge seems to be very strong person, in Paris, her loneliness is visible. “Under my look her dignity dissolved, and I could see unfolded in her face how deeply moved, relieved, and delighted she was to see me.”¹¹⁴

Once again she shows her kindness; at the moment when she offers the position of a scriptwriter, probably in an attempt to subjugate Jake. She planned every detail. “It’s all come out in a beautiful pattern. [...] It’s all fixed. The job’s yours.”¹¹⁵

Magdalen tries to make her position more powerful by offering him a job, but actually, she is the one, who is crying. At the end of the dialogue between Magdalen and Jake in Paris, she expresses her feelings to Jake and her jealousy towards Anna. Jake likes her so much but he does not love her. He rejects the job offer, as well as Madge’s love.

In the relationships with men, she is not successful; she needs somebody who would support her. It might seem that her only aim is to be married. Her long for marriage forces her not to be choosy, on the contrary, she would rather marry everybody. Whether for love, desire, for money or for any other reasons. Madge tries to bind men by her kindness and by being helpful to them.

She seems to be the youngest character of the novel and her role is the most subordinate. Though, Magdalen herself creates her subordinate position. Madge always needs to be with some man, but despite the fact that they just utilize her. Sammy was with Madge just because of practical purposes and Jake rejects her help. She panders to men because she needs them for her happy end.

¹¹³ Murdoch, Iris. *Under the Net*. (London: Penguin, 1977), accessed April 18, 2015, <https://books.google.cz>.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to show which female characters were in the subordinate role and which of them, on the contrary manipulated men.

The bachelor's thesis, also, presents certain similarities of characteristics or positions of the selected women from both novels.

Women in the novel *Under the Net* are little bit more independent but still, some of them are inferior to men.

The character of Rosemary in the novel *A Severed Head* is similar, by her role, to the character of Magdalen. Rosemary needs to care for men, which is the reason of her subordination. Of course, the character of Magdalen makes her position so subordinate, but in a different way. She eagers for marriage and she needs to own man. She keeps begging the men and because of her kindness they use her.

By a desire for marriage, Magdalen can be likened to Georgie as well. They both are just mistresses and not wives. Men use them for their delight, beauty and naivety. Georgie is a very passive person and she needs a man who would support her.

There are also women who are to some extent independent, and who, virtually, do not need men. The character of Honor Klein is the strongest character of the novel *A Severed Head*. As well as the main female character of the novel *Under the Net* Mrs. Tinckham, Honor Klein and Mrs. Tinckham are independent women with their own career. They both have the role of detached observers and help other characters, but in a different way.

As well as Honor Klein and Mrs. Tinckham, the Quentin sisters are both independent women. While Anna is independent in her career and also in her life, her sister Sadie needs to own men and uses them for her career of a film star.

What is very interesting is the position of Antonia of the novel *A Severed Head*. On one hand, Antonia is a strong character, who is sociable; on the other hand, it is not too difficult to manipulate her. However, she is the manipulative person too and manipulates with her husband.

In the novel *A Severed Head*, the subordinate position of women, as well as their promiscuity, is more visible. *Under the Net* depicts women's career and their desire for independence. Despite the fact that Iris Murdoch was not a feminist author, she depicted women who are ahead of their time. Although she showed their independence and the way they manipulate men, their inferiority still predominates.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNNRA United Nations relief organization