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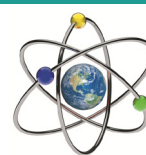
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- 13.00.00 Pedagogika fanlari
- 13.00.01 Pedagogika nazariyasi. Pedagogik ta'limotlar tarixi
- 13.00.02 Ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi (sohalar bo'yicha)
- 13.00.03 Maxsus pedagogika
- 13.00.04 Jismoniy tarbiya va sport mashg'ulotlari nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.05 Kasb-hunar ta'limi nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.06 Elektron ta'lim nazariyasi va metodikasi (ta'lim sohaları va bosqichlari bo'yicha)
- 13.00.07 Ta'limda menejment
- 13.00.08 Maktabgacha ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi
- 13.00.09 Ijtimoiy pedagogika
- 07.00.00 Tarix fanlari
- 19.00.00 Psixologiya fanlari
- 01.00.00 Fizika-matematika fanlari
- 02.00.00 Kimyo fanlari
- 03.00.00 Biologiya fanlari
- 09.00.00 Falsafa fanlari
- 10.00.00 Filologiya fanlari
- 11.00.00 Geografiya fanlari

M

AKTABGACHA VA AKTAB TA'LIMI

Pedagogika, psixologiya fanlariga ixtisoslashgan ilmiy jurnal



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THE TRANSFORMATION OF EXISTENTIAL THOUGHT IN BRITISH LITERATURE: IRIS MURDOCH'S PHILOSOPHICAL HUMANISM AND THE REINTERPRETATION OF FREEDOM

Rahmonqulova Zarnigor Nasimjon qizi

ESL Teacher, Uzbekistan State World Languages University

ORCID: 0009-0008-7189-8934

Abstract: This article analyzes the interpretation and artistic representation of existentialism in British literature through the works of Iris Murdoch. While French existentialism, particularly the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, emphasizes alienation, freedom, and the absurd, Murdoch reinterprets these concepts within moral and aesthetic dimensions. In her novels *Under the Net*, *The Bell*, and *The Black Prince*, existential anxiety is transformed into moral awareness and the search for meaning through love, attention, and ethical responsibility. Murdoch's oeuvre is assessed as a vivid expression of the transition from existential philosophy to humanism, and from the notion of absolute freedom to moral responsibility.

Key words: Iris Murdoch, existentialism, freedom, spirituality, love, morality, British literature, moral imagination.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada Iris Murdoch ijodi misolida ekzistensializmning ingliz adabiyotidagi talqini va badiiy shakldagi ifodasi tahlil qilinadi. Fransuz ekzistensializmi, xususan Jean-Paul Sartre va Albert Camus qarashlari, insonning yolg'izligi, erkinligi hamda ma'nosizlik muammosiga urg'u bergan bo'lsa, Murdoch ushbu g'oyalarni axloqiy va estetik asosda qayta talqin qiladi. Adibaning *Under the Net*, *The Bell* va *The Black Prince* asarlarida ekzistensial iztirob, axloqiy ong va sevgi orqali ma'noga qaytish jarayoni badiiy tahlil qilinadi. Murdoch ijodi ekzistensial falsafadan insonparvarlikka, erkinlikdan javobgarlikka o'tish jarayonining yorqin ifodasi sifatida baholanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Iris Murdoch, ekzistensializm, erkinlik, ma'naviyat, sevgi, axloq, britan adabiyoti, badiiy tafakkur.

Аннотация: В статье анализируется отражение и переосмысление экзистенциалистской философии в британской литературе на примере творчества Айрис Мёрдок. Если французский экзистенциализм, представленный Жаном-Полем Сартром и Альбером Камю, акцентировал внимание на проблемах отчуждения, свободы и абсурда, то Мёрдок интерпретирует эти идеи в нравственно-эстетическом ключе. В её романах *Under the Net*, *The Bell* и *The Black Prince* экзистенциальное беспокойство преобразуется в моральное сознание и поиск смысла через любовь, внимание и ответственность. Наследие Мёрдок рассматривается как яркий пример перехода от философии отчаяния к гуманистическому пониманию свободы и ответственности.

Ключевые слова: Айрис Мёрдок, экзистенциализм, свобода, духовность, любовь, мораль, британская литература, моральное воображение.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of existentialism in post-war Europe marked a profound re-evaluation of human existence, freedom, and moral responsibility. Arising from the intellectual and spiritual disillusionment following two world wars, existentialism articulated the anxiety of a world deprived of absolute meaning. Philosophers and writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Martin Heidegger explored the individual's confrontation with absurdity, alienation, and the inevitability of choice. Their works depicted freedom as both a privilege and a burden – the essence of human dignity and, simultaneously, the source of despair.

British literature, however, absorbed these philosophical currents in a distinctive way. Rather than fully embracing existential nihilism, British novelists sought to reconcile existential awareness with ethical and social consciousness. Writers such as Graham Greene, William Golding, and Iris Murdoch redirected the existential emphasis on individual freedom toward a more humanistic concern with moral vision, compassion, and spiritual



renewal. This moral dimension distinguished the British engagement with existentialism, transforming it from a philosophy of despair into a literature of responsibility.

Iris Murdoch (1919–1999), a philosopher, moral thinker, and novelist, occupies a unique position within this intellectual tradition. Her fiction reflects the existential crisis of modern consciousness – the isolation of the self, the fragility of moral order, and the longing for meaning – yet consistently resists descent into nihilism. Drawing upon both Platonic metaphysics and existential psychology, Murdoch reimagines freedom not as arbitrary self-assertion but as the moral capacity to perceive and love others truthfully. Through psychologically complex characters, intricate narrative structures, and symbolic landscapes, she transforms existential anxiety into moral insight.

Murdoch's literary vision thus represents a synthesis of continental existentialism and British ethical realism. Her novels transform philosophical abstraction into living moral experience, blending metaphysical reflection with emotional realism. In doing so, she creates a distinct literary-philosophical discourse that unites the anguish of freedom with the possibility of love – a reconciliation that restores to modern fiction both its spiritual and ethical depth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existentialism's influence on European literature has been extensively examined, yet its transformation within the British context remains comparatively underexplored. While continental writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus articulated the themes of absurdity, alienation, and moral isolation, British novelists often reinterpreted these concepts through a moral and humanistic lens. This adaptation reflects a broader national tendency toward ethical realism and psychological depth rather than philosophical abstraction.

Among twentieth-century British writers, Iris Murdoch stands out as the figure who most consciously engages with existential philosophy while reimagining its moral implications. Scholars such as Peter Conradi (1986), Maria Antonaccio (2000), and Anne Rowe (2019) have emphasized that Murdoch's fiction decisively rejects Sartre's egocentric model of freedom, which privileges self-definition and radical autonomy. Instead, Murdoch develops a moral psychology centered on "attention" – the capacity to perceive reality and others unselfishly. In her philosophical essays, she defines love as "the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real," a concept that serves as the ethical cornerstone of her fiction.

While Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943) promotes existential freedom as self-creation through choice, Murdoch challenges this notion in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), arguing that true moral life begins when one transcends the self and becomes open to the reality of others. Her position reintroduces the idea of transcendence and the Good – concepts largely dismissed by secular existentialism – into the moral imagination of modern fiction.

Previous research on Murdoch has often concentrated on her philosophical writings rather than on the narrative and symbolic strategies through which her ideas are dramatized. Yet critics such as A. S. Byatt (1976), Elizabeth Dipple (1982), and Bran Nicol (2004) have shown that Murdoch's artistry cannot be separated from her ethics: her use of irony, mythic allusion, psychological introspection, and complex characterization embodies her philosophical vision of moral struggle and redemption.

This study builds upon these insights by exploring the literary dimension of Murdoch's engagement with existentialism. It aims to reveal how existential motifs – alienation, freedom, authenticity, and moral choice – are transformed into moral parables through narrative design, symbolic imagery, and the ethical development of her characters. In doing so, the research situates Murdoch within the broader tradition of British moral realism, demonstrating how her fiction mediates between existential despair and the enduring human aspiration toward goodness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research employs a combination of close reading, narrative analysis, and comparative interpretation to explore the transformation of existential motifs within Iris Murdoch's novels. These methods are essential for bridging the philosophical and literary dimensions of her work, enabling a nuanced understanding of how abstract ideas are transposed into the language of fiction. Close reading allows for detailed textual engagement with Murdoch's narrative style, imagery, and syntax, while narrative analysis provides insight into the moral architecture of her plots – how freedom, alienation, and moral choice are dramatized through character experience and structural design. Comparative interpretation, on the other hand, situates Murdoch's fiction in dialogue with continental existentialists such as Sartre and Camus, revealing her critical yet creative reworking of their ideas within a British ethical framework.



Each novel is approached through three complementary analytical lenses:

1. **Thematic approach:** Identifying central existential conflicts – the tension between autonomy and moral responsibility, alienation and belonging, despair and transcendence – and examining how these conflicts evolve within the narrative.
2. **Character analysis:** Investigating the ways in which Murdoch's protagonists embody moral struggle, translating philosophical abstraction into human psychology. The focus lies on how self-knowledge, guilt, and compassion replace mere intellectual reasoning as routes to ethical awareness.
3. **Symbolic reading:** Interpreting recurring motifs such as water, mirrors, and art as symbolic mediators of spiritual renewal and transformation. Water often represents purification and change; mirrors signify the confrontation with the self; and art, in Murdoch's vision, becomes a vehicle for moral vision and transcendence.

By integrating these approaches, the study combines philosophical reflection with literary interpretation, demonstrating how Murdoch's narrative form itself becomes a philosophical argument. Her fiction does not merely depict existential ideas but reshapes them through character, imagery, and moral context, affirming the inseparability of aesthetics and ethics in twentieth-century British literature.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Under the Net: Freedom and the Illusion of Self

Murdoch's debut novel *Under the Net* (1954) dramatizes the existential search for authenticity and the tension between freedom and moral awareness. The protagonist, Jake Donaghue, is portrayed as a typical Sartrean figure – ironic, self-absorbed, and alienated. Through his restless wanderings and philosophical dialogues, Murdoch exposes the inadequacy of a freedom that is detached from ethical consciousness. The “net” in the title functions as a complex metaphor for both language and ego – the conceptual systems through which individuals entrap themselves in illusion.

Murdoch turns the picaresque adventures of Jake into a spiritual allegory of humility. Each encounter – with Anna, Hugo, and others – tests the boundaries of his self-knowledge. The novel's seemingly comic tone conceals a profound metaphysical argument: existential freedom, when isolated from love and attention, degenerates into moral chaos. By the end, Jake realizes that genuine freedom is found not in self-assertion but in self-transcendence. Murdoch's moral insight emerges through her depiction of humility as vision – a radical redefinition of authenticity that challenges the existentialist celebration of autonomy.

2. The Bell: The Search for Moral Wholeness

In *The Bell* (1958), Murdoch extends her inquiry into moral and spiritual conflict, shifting from the individual consciousness to the collective sphere. Set in the lay religious community of Imber Abbey, the novel juxtaposes sacred aspiration and human frailty, dramatizing the question of whether goodness can exist within imperfection. Dora Greenfield, the novel's central consciousness, embodies the existential tension between freedom and moral duty. Her oscillation between rebellion and submission reflects the modern individual's struggle to reconcile moral order with emotional vitality.

The symbol of the submerged bell, hidden beneath the lake, encapsulates the novel's central theme: the buried conscience of modern humanity. Its recovery represents an awakening – the emergence of moral clarity from beneath the waters of confusion and desire. In contrast to Sartre's heroes who create meaning in an absurd void, Murdoch's characters discover meaning through connection, responsibility, and love. The narrative evolves from existential isolation toward communal redemption, echoing the ethical realism of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Murdoch thus reinterprets existential crisis as an opportunity for grace, transforming despair into the possibility of moral wholeness.

3. The Black Prince: Art, Love, and the Shadow of the Self

The Black Prince (1973) represents Murdoch's most intricate exploration of existential and aesthetic questions. Narrated by Bradley Pearson, an aging writer consumed by artistic ambition and erotic obsession, the novel blurs the boundaries between imagination and reality. Pearson's narrative voice – unreliable, self-justifying, and deeply subjective – illustrates Murdoch's critique of solipsism, the existential trap of living entirely within one's own consciousness. His artistic idealism, tainted by ego and desire, reveals the moral dangers of aesthetic isolation.

The metafictional structure of *The Black Prince* – complete with contradictory postscripts – further emphasizes the instability of perception and truth. The title's archetype, “the black prince,” symbolizes both moral



darkness and the potential for redemption through love. Murdoch's depiction of art as a moral practice stands in direct contrast to Sartre's vision of art as pure assertion of freedom. For Murdoch, the artist's task is not to dominate reality but to attend to it – to perceive with humility. Love, in her world, is not possession but perception; it transforms self-centered passion into insight. Through this fusion of aesthetic and moral vision, Murdoch transforms existential tragedy into transcendence, illustrating her conviction that beauty and goodness are inseparable.

DISCUSSION: MURDOCH AND THE BRITISH HUMANIST TRADITION

Murdoch's sustained engagement with existentialism situates her within the moral and intellectual climate of post-war Britain, alongside writers such as Graham Greene and William Golding, who sought ethical renewal in the aftermath of moral and spiritual disorientation. Yet, while these authors often depicted the individual's struggle within a fallen or corrupted world, Murdoch's distinctive contribution lies in her ability to aestheticize philosophy – to embody abstract moral ideas through the living texture of narrative rather than through theoretical exposition. Her fiction transforms the philosophical debate over freedom, morality, and goodness into emotionally charged human experiences. Murdoch's characters do not merely discuss freedom; they live its paradoxes. Their journeys, marked by self-deception, alienation, and moral revelation, expose the inner complexities of ethical choice and the perpetual tension between desire and duty.

Murdoch's literary style reinforces this moral vision. Her language, rich in irony, metaphor, and psychological subtlety, serves as a bridge between philosophy and art, allowing her novels to function simultaneously as moral inquiry and aesthetic creation. Each sentence reflects her belief that attention – the act of seeing others truthfully – is both an ethical and artistic virtue. Through careful control of narrative voice, symbolic imagery, and interior monologue, Murdoch invites readers to experience philosophy not as abstraction but as lived moral struggle. In doing so, she redefines the British novel as a space where metaphysical reflection and everyday human experience converge.

By integrating Platonic ideals with existential awareness, Murdoch restores to modern literature a sense of transcendence that was largely abandoned by post-war secular humanism. Her fiction revives the notion of "the Good" – not as a dogmatic moral code but as a living reality glimpsed through acts of love, beauty, and unselfish perception. In contrast to Sartre's atheistic existentialism, which isolates human freedom in a universe devoid of meaning, Murdoch's vision grounds freedom in the moral reality of others. Her reimagining of existentialism through a distinctly British lens transforms what was once a philosophy of despair into a literature of compassion. In her moral universe, suffering is not denied or romanticized but embraced as the beginning of self-understanding and ethical awakening.

Murdoch's existential humanism thus emerges as a reconciliation between reason and emotion, intellect and empathy, philosophy and art. Her narratives expose the illusions of ego and the false autonomy of the self, revealing that the path to moral clarity lies in humility and attention. The act of love – understood as the recognition of reality outside the self – becomes both the moral and aesthetic center of her work. Through this synthesis, Murdoch reclaims the moral dimension of fiction as an act of vision, in which to perceive truthfully is itself a moral achievement.

British existentialism, as represented in Murdoch's novels, consequently evolves into a literature that acknowledges the darkness of the human condition while affirming the enduring possibility of goodness. Her characters stumble, fail, and suffer, yet their moral progress lies in their capacity to see. In this respect, Murdoch's fiction continues the ethical legacy of earlier British novelists – George Eliot's moral sympathy, Forster's human connection – while infusing it with a modern philosophical depth.

Through her art, Murdoch reminds readers that the true freedom of the individual lies not in isolation or self-assertion but in moral perception – the ability to see others truthfully and respond with love. Her redefinition of freedom as moral awareness ensures her continuing relevance in both literary and philosophical discourse. By turning existential anxiety into compassion and alienation into attention, Murdoch achieves what few writers have done: she transforms philosophy into art, and through that transformation, restores meaning to the modern soul.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Iris Murdoch's fiction redefines the boundaries between philosophy and literature by transforming abstract moral inquiry into lived narrative experience. Through her narrative artistry, she converts philosophical concepts into psychological realities, allowing readers to witness how existential freedom, often portrayed as isolation in Sartrean thought, evolves into a moral awareness grounded in love, humility, and attention. In Murdoch's fictional universe, freedom is no longer the privilege of an autonomous consciousness but the ethical capacity

to transcend ego and perceive the reality of others. Alienation, therefore, ceases to signify despair and becomes the threshold of moral awakening – a necessary stage through which her characters move toward self-knowledge, compassion, and reconciliation.

Within the broader landscape of British literature, Murdoch emerges as a mediator between the existential pessimism of continental Europe and the moral humanism that defines the English realist tradition. Her creative dialogue with existential philosophy does not imitate Sartre's or Camus's vision of absurdity but reimagines it through the ethical imagination of writers such as George Eliot and E. M. Forster, who sought meaning through human connection. By weaving together philosophical abstraction and narrative empathy, Murdoch transforms existential inquiry into an exploration of moral growth and spiritual transformation.

Her reinterpretation of existentialism contributes to a wider philosophical dialogue that reaffirms the power of art as a medium of ethical vision. For Murdoch, literature is not merely the mirror of human experience but a form of moral practice – an act of attention that disciplines both writer and reader to perceive the world truthfully. The moral life, as her novels suggest, is sustained by the same imaginative capacity that produces great art: the ability to “see justly” and to love what is real. Through her characters' moral dilemmas and redemptive moments, Murdoch demonstrates that imagination is not an escape from ethics but its deepest expression.

Ultimately, Murdoch's fiction asserts that literature, like morality, begins when the self learns to look beyond itself. Art, in her conception, becomes a spiritual exercise in unselfing – a continual effort to move from illusion toward truth, from selfish desire toward love, from chaos toward order. In bridging philosophy and storytelling, she restores to modern literature its moral and metaphysical dimension, reminding readers that the pursuit of the Good is not confined to philosophical systems but lived through the imagination. Murdoch's novels thus stand as enduring testaments to the idea that ethical understanding is inseparable from aesthetic vision – that to read truthfully is already to begin to live more humanely.

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- 13.00.00 Pedagogika fanlari
 - 13.00.01 Pedagogika nazariyasi. Pedagogik ta'limotlar tarixi
 - 13.00.02 Ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi (sohalar bo'yicha)
 - 13.00.03 Maxsus pedagogika
 - 13.00.04 Jismoniy tarbiya va sport mashg'ulotlari nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.05 Kasb-hunar ta'limi nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.06 Elektron ta'lim nazariyasi va metodikasi (ta'lim sohaları va bosqichlari bo'yicha)
 - 13.00.07 Ta'limda menejment
 - 13.00.08 Maktabgacha ta'lim va tarbiya nazariyasi va metodikasi
 - 13.00.09 Ijtimoiy pedagogika
 - 07.00.00 Tarix fanlari
 - 19.00.00 Psixologiya fanlari
 - 01.00.00 Fizika-matematika fanlari
 - 02.00.00 Kimyo fanlari
 - 03.00.00 Biologiya fanlari
 - 09.00.00 Falsafa fanlari
 - 10.00.00 Filologiya fanlari
 - 11.00.00 Geografiya fanlari



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Ingliz tili muharriri: Murod Xoliyorov

Musahhih: Alibek Zokirov

Sahifalovchi va dizayner: Iskandar Islomov

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