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Mapping the Individual: A Psychogeographical Reading of Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*

Bireyi Haritalandırmak: Iris Murdoch'un Ağ Romanının Psikocoğrafik Bir Okuması

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Abstract
Introduced firstly by Guy Debord, the founder of the Letterist International, in 1955, psychogeography intersects with the study of the psychological and emotional effects of an urban city on individuals. Proposing that both space and psychology complete one another, psychogeography, as a term juxtaposing psychology and geography, seeks to unearth the estrangement and the dehumanizing impacts of global urbanism consolidated by advanced capitalism and industrialization. In this sense, psychogeography focuses mostly on the act of walking so as to comprehend the ongoing conflict between the mind and city and suggests walking as a conscious activity can function as a protest and subversion against the commodification and repressive constraints of the city. Likewise, Iris Murdoch's debut novel titled *Under the Net* captures the story of Jake Donaghue and his unstable psychology alienated and decentred by the formation of an urban city, that is, London. Thus, this study aims to analyze Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* in order to emphasize the fragmentation and displacement of individuals in accordance with the global urbanism by employing a psychogeographical lens.
Keywords: Pscyhogeography, Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*, London

Öz
İlk kez 1955 yılında Letterist International'ın kurucusu Guy Debord tarafından ortaya atılan psikocoğrafya, bir kentin bireyler üzerindeki psikolojik ve duygusal etkilerinin incelenmesiyle kesişmektedir. Mekân ve psikolojinin birbirini tamamladığını öne süren psikocoğrafya, psikoloji ve coğrafyayı yan yana getiren bir terim olarak, ileri kapitalizm ve sanayileşme ile pekişen küresel şehirciliğin yabancılaştırıcı ve insanlığı soyutlaştıran etkilerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlar. Bu anlamda psikocoğrafya, zihin ve şehir arasında süregelen çatışmayı anlamak için çoğunlukla yürüme eylemine odaklanır ve bilinçli bir faaliyet olarak düşünülen yürümenin şehrin insanı metalaştırmasına ve baskıcı kısıtlamalarına karşı bir protesto ve yıkım işlevi görebileceğini öne sürer. Benzer şekilde Iris Murdoch'un *Ağ* adlı ilk romanı, Jake Donaghue'ın Londra gibi bir kent oluşumunun etkisiyle yabancılaşan ve yersiz yurtsuzlaşan dengesiz psikolojisinin öyküsünü ele almaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Iris Murdoch'un *Ağ* romanını psikocoğrafi bir bakış açısı kullanarak küresel kentleşme doğrultusunda bireylerin parçalanmasını ve yerinden edilmesini vurgulamak amacıyla analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikocoğrafya, Iris Murdoch, *Ağ*, Londra

Introduction

Coming into existence within the second part of the twentieth century, the Situationist International could essentially be defined as an intellectual movement characterized by its reactionary attitude against the growing consumerism and the capitalist mode of production, which eventually paves the way for the emergence of numerous metropolises and urban cities. This is because "…the Situationist International operated from the understanding that capitalism has established for itself a virtually totalized social field, one in which all areas of life are articulated for the survival of the given means and relations of production" (Ball, 1987: 25). Inspired considerably by the critical tendency of libertarian Marxism and such artistic movements as Dada and Surrealism towards the ultimate development of capitalism and consumerism, the Situationist International as a movement strove essentially to critique modern capitalist society and to call the attention to the inevitable culmination of alienation consolidated by the money-based world. Accordingly, the Situationists themselves, as claimed by Peter Wollen, promoted the improvement of workers' councils in accordance with the revolutionary atmosphere (Wollen, 1989: 27). The Situationist International, a movement led by avant-garde artists and political thinkers, proved to combine both Marxist and surrealist standpoints in order that they could subvert the overarching impact of repressive and rational framework of modern capitalist society. Accordingly, the reason why the Situationists are comprised of such avant-garde artists and theorists is because Dada and Surrealism were brought into existence as a counter argument to the prevailing notion of reason, science, and reality.

Following the First World War, both Dada and Surrealism, therefore, aimed at protesting the excessive reinforcement of scientific rationality and absolute reality. Similarly, David Hopkins approves that both movements differentiate themselves from the bourgeois art and puts at the centre mental exploration and discontinuity (Hopkins, 2004: 1). By incorporating dreamlike vision and irrational logic of life into their arts and cultural production, these movements prove to be within the same line with psychogeography, which promotes a conscious act of walking against the dissolution of objective reality. Similarly, Tina Richardson suggests, in *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*, that the surrealists have had some influence on modern urban walking by incorporating the concept of automatic writing into navigating city spaces. They promoted a type of walking that was guided by subconscious desires and urges (Richardson, 2015: 3). Considering their critical reception of oppressive and bourgeoisie society whose sentiments are, as believed by the Situationists, intertwined with the nationalist impetus leading to the emergence of the two World Wars, these avant-garde movements helped to liberate the individuals from the restrictive and gloomy atmosphere of the capitalist society by means of experimental foundation of images containing unconscious, delusive, and illogical representations.

In view of anti-capitalist mode advocated by the Situationists against the reification of human nature and the commodification of culture, what the Situationists produced in order to emphasize the changing face of modern city and life due to advanced capitalism and excessive commodity fetishism was the coinage of the term 'psychogeography'. Coined for the first time in 1955 by Guy Debord, who founded the Letterist International in Paris whose members later created the Situationist International, psychogeography could be regarded as the investigation of the psychological effect of geography on individuals that inhabit it. Accordingly, Merlin Coverley states, in *Psychogeography*, that it could be regarded as the fusion of psychology and geography whose existence proves to be convenient for the study of geographical influence of urban place on the individual (Coverley, 2006: 10). Given that geography plays an important role in affecting the psychology of the resident, psychogeography is an analytical tool through which the Situationists understand the negative effects of postmodern urbanism on the individuals. It assists them in scrutinizing the alienation and purposelessness that modern people experience within a capitalist urban city that demolishes their meaningful connection to the city.

Speaking of geographical influence that is mechanized by consumerist technology and callous urbanity, psychogeography constructs a ground leading the individual to explore the city and become aware of post-war urbanism and self-alienation by means of walking. What differentiates a psychogeographer from the walking of the flaneur is that a psychogeographer primarily embraces a critical approach towards the isolating and repressive emotions that the capitalist society imposes on the modern individual as opposed to a flâneur's indifference and apolitical standpoint against the reduction of life and the reification of modern city. According to Coverley, the act of walking emerges as a reaction to the atmosphere of the modern city thanks to its reliance on rapid mobility and comprehensive gaze, thereby letting the individual subvert the established occurrence of the city by creating new routes and discovering the forgotten parts that are considerably ignored by the residents of the city (Coverley, 2006: 12). In terms of the political tendency of psychogeography characterized by its strategic walking,

the term comes to judge the spectacle which proves the existence of the capital as represented by the metropolis; for instance, skyscrapers and highways, based on the spectacle, basically symbolize how the landscape is turned into a senseless and uncanny imagery in the amidst of post-war period. Likewise, Adam Barnard states as follows:

> The spectacle is the notion that all human relations are mediated by images from advertising, film, the mass media, and print media driven towards controlling people's activities and consciousness. The need for production and consumption of commodities (both material and cultural) is ensured by the reign of the spectacle that is the enemy of a directly lived and fully human life (Barnard, 2004: 5).

Thus, a psychogeographer is blatantly inclined to interpret what s/he sees as the production of commodified human life and feels stuck in a city surrounded by an authoritative projection of material spectacle. With the aim of ridding himself/herself of the oppressive construction of urban cities, a psychogeographer is continuously in the habit of redrawing his/her own map of the city psychologically, and the act of walking gives himself/herself a sense of freedom and offers an individual resistance against the excessive consumption and isolation of the post-war society.

A Psychogeographical Reception of Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*

Iris Murdoch's debut novel titled *Under the Net*, published in 1954, a time coinciding with the years following the Second World War, concentrates primarily on Jake Donaghue, a hack writer and translator, and his search of identity, belonging, and meaning within 1950s Britain. The novel is set in London. It plays a significant role in comprehending how Jake, striving to make his living out of translating the mundane works of a French writer named Jean-Pierre Breteuil, is continuously in the habit of struggling with existential questions and constructing a sense of reality, as well as commitment to his friends in the amidst of post-war metropolis. Therefore, central to the novel is the philosophical framework of fragmented relationships and disconnected individuals that the protagonist, Jake, experiences following the horrific consequences of the Second World War. As stated by Bove and Rowe, after the war, large parts of London—Murdoch's "beloved city"—were destroyed, stripping it of much of its former character. As society became more mobile and technological advancements accelerated, people's connection to specific places diminished. Murdoch recognized this growing fragmentation and deeply understood how important place is to shaping both personal and national identity. She was keenly aware of how the physical environment affects people aesthetically, spiritually, and morally, and of the harm that can arise when someone is never rooted in a place or is abruptly separated from it (Bove & Rowe, 2008: 1). In view of the changing façade of London both physically and metaphorically, it appears as a city damaged by the war and haunted by the traumatic collapse of reality, meaning, and interpersonal communication. The acceleration of new urban cities deprived of its traditional identity and soul causes the modern individual to find himself/herself in a conundrum. Bárbara Barreiro León also touches upon the location of new spaces leading to the emergence of amnesia and identity crisis: "Urban spaces are created far from historical centres, built deprived of both history and memory. The individual, therefore, is unable to find a relationship between these "anti-cities", familiarity and daily life" (Barreiro León, 2017: 57). Murdoch's novel serves, in this way, as the microcosm of the non-traditional foundation of urban cities such as London. It essentially produces a profound narrative grappling with the juxtaposition of Jake's detached mind and labyrinthine atmosphere of London. In this respect, the psychology of Jake Donaghue, a modern individual characterized by a loss of belonging and home, and the urban landscape of London complement each other.

Given the significance of the urban landscape of London and its psychological impacts on the modern individual, Jack Donaghue, an idle but an enthusiastic writer, is inclined to walk around the city and reflect upon what he sees or observes, emphasizing the close relationship occurring between the landscape and the act of walking:

> I am the sort of man who will prefer to walk for twenty minutes rather than wait five minutes at a bus stop for a five-minute bus ride. When I am worrying about something inactivity and waiting become a torment. But as soon as some practical scheme, however hopeless, is on foot I am content again, and shut my eyes to everything else. So as I strode now along Welbeck Street I felt that I was doing something useful, and although my heart, as well as my head, was aching, I was by no means in a frenzy (Murdoch, 2002: 128).

Not only does the act of walking function as a soothing activity that liberates Jack from his sadness and the dull constraints of everyday life, but it also allows him to contemplate on the growing consumerism in the metropolis: "The address I had been given was on that part of the Mall that lies between the Doves and the Black Lion. On Chiswick Mall the houses face the river, but on that piece of Hammersmith Mall which is relevant to my tale they turn their backs to the river and pretend to

be an ordinary street" (Murdoch, 2002: 38). Based on Jake's statements regarding his observation of the landscape around him, Jake does not appear to be a mediocre walker but a conscious citizen who is quite aware of the changing face of the city consolidated by capitalism as can be understood from the increase of malls and shopping centres. The materialistic outlook of London, full of signs such as shopping malls, is quite far from being an ordinary city. London, appearing as a space of commercial, might be interpreted as the postmodern city, an example of which is exemplified by Yalçın: "The hedonistic and speedy individual of the twenty-first century, who has a desire to mask what is bad, has shaped the city in his own way with the development of fashion, the entertainment sector, the internet and technological opportunities, and has turned the space into an object of consumption" (Yalçın, 2023: 174). Likewise, the streets of London pretending to be an ordinary street imply that natural construction of the city, which should normally be connected with rivers and trees, is avoided; instead, the city becomes the space of imitation of what is real. The streets of London through which Jake walks serve as the simulation of an ordinary street and symbolize a metaphorical disconnection from nature, history, and tradition.

In this respect, Jake's habit of walking with a sense of urbanism and environmental features could be argued to intersect with Guy Debord's concept of dérive. Carl Lavery, in the same manner, considers the dérive to be a performance of walking formed by the Situationists (Lavery, 2018: 3). Usually translated into English as 'drift' or 'drifting', a dérive can be heralded as a walking strategy against the oppressive captivity of capitalism and produces an individual freedom with the aim of evaluating their existence and conceiving how environment and spectacles are designed in a way that the people become passive objects before the urban capitalism. According to Debord, a dérive differs from an ordinary roam or voyage in such a way presupposing an awareness of psycogeographical influence of the environment and a strategic resistance against the artificial construction of the spectacle (Debord, 2006: 62). Accordingly, Jake Donaghue continually prefers to take long walks across the city instead of driving or traveling by bus. He tends to experience the metropolis himself and interrogate the complexity of the landscape, as well as his messy psyche. Similarly, Adolfo Lagomasino proposes that the Situationists define the 'dérive' as a form of walking aimed at disrupting the repetitive nature of capitalism by introducing fresh experiences. While typically seen as an individual activity, this practice extends beyond personal encounters, encouraging conscious and public interactions as well (Lagomasino, 2020: 1). In an act of dérive, walking becomes a key to the understanding of the psychological influence of an environment on its residents. This leads, in *Under the Net*, to reconcile with the commodification of personal relationships and the estrangement of individuals from their own human nature starting with the consumerist landscape.

Following the Second World War, Jake might be symbolized as a psychologically lost person in a chaotic and alienated world; for instance, he fails to construct efficient relationships with his peers, and Finn emerges as the only person befriending Jake by means of his servant-like behaviors towards Jake himself, except his insincere and dishonest relation with Magde, Anna, Sadie, and Hugo. As suggested by Paul Chatterton, the major outcome of the globalization intersects primarily with the growth and expansion of reification, urban industrialization, marketization, enterprise, and individualization in every corner of life conducted by a centralized structure (Chatterton, 2016: 6). Likewise, in the story set in an industrial and capitalist city identified with a dehumanizing sense of home, Jake does not possess a permanent residence but makes use of his acquaintances' flats, which signifies his lack of both metaphorical and physical "home". Without a waged job, Jake considerably represents an outsider identified with a void of purpose and meaning in the postmodern era. In the context of dérive, Debord's definition proves to justify Jake's daily stroll as his commitment to psychogeographical walking suggesting that during a dérive, one or more individuals temporarily set aside their usual relationships, work, leisure activities, and other regular reasons for moving and acting. Instead, they allow themselves to be guided by the allure of the surroundings and the chance encounters they come across (Debord, 1958: 62). In a similar vein, Jake Donaghue, who does not have a meaningful responsibility and a regular job, performs nothing but observes what awaits him in the metropolis of the 1950s such as cafes, pubs, parks, and rivers by walking: "At last I began to want my breakfast. I began walking in the direction of Madge's hotel, and sat down en route at a café not far from the Opera. Here I began to notice the more mundane details of the busy city; and after I had been sitting there for a while a sort of stir upon the pavement just beside the café began to catch my eye" (Murdoch, 2002: 189). As claimed mostly by the intellectuals embracing psychogeography and its critical reception of the urban city, that Jake recognizes the monotonous architecture of London and the dull reconstruction of post-war city is vividly provided by his own experience of conscious walking and philosophical observance. As the city turns into an literalization of both postmodern and poststructuralist thinking resisting the fixed meaning and principle (Bentley, 2014: 181), the act of dérive explains the need to find a natural belonging to the city and meaningful life by discovering its spaces. Just as writing transforms language into a material reality and visibility, walking implicitly serves as a tool through which Jake epitomizes the psychological effects the city creates on him and finds his own pace.

In view of the major criticism of the Situationists and the essence of psychogeography concerning the transformation of everyday life into an object of capitalism and consumerism, the protagonist of the novel, Jake, is stuck in the rapid amendment of the city into a competitive and dehumanized topography and finds himself maintaining his life in London, a city striving to be restored to its peaceful atmosphere after the war. The fact that Jake is incarcerated by the urban metropolis and his surroundings that are quite gloomy and mechanic is primarily manifested in the newly constructed buildings such as modern hospitals and high-rise buildings: "Dave's mansions are tall, but they are overhung by a huge modern hospital, with white walls, which stands next to them. A place of simplicity and justification, which I pass with a frisson" (Murdoch, 2002: 26). That Jake is surrounded by massive architecture and buildings creates an uncanny feeling like a Gothic cathedral and causes him to marvel at the threatening outlook of the hospital, which represents both science and rational competence of the modern day. Günter Gassner similarly declares that the emergence of a tall building boom represents a pivotal stage in capitalist urbanization, as it highlights the conspicuous efficacy of buildings as a realm for sustained reinvestment (Gassner, 2017: 756). The hospital here takes the place of the capitalist system as a social institution and forms a confinement out of which modern individuals like Jake are unable to escape.

What culminates eventually in the failure of communication is the alienation of modern individual to his/her fellows, who are firstly estranged from their own human nature. Within Murdoch's story, every character is unable to form strong ties with one another; for instance, Jack loves Anna, Anna is in love with Hugo, Hugo is infatuated with Sadie, and Sadie loves Jack, a kind of circle that refers to the complex relationships lacking a complete affection and healthy social intercourse. Therefore, individualization can be argued to stem from the money-based interaction in the consumerist world and from the egocentric involvements derived from the prioritization of 'I' within the post-war capitalism. To exemplify, Jack might be claimed to exploit his friendship with Finn by making use of him as a servant:

> It's somehow clear that we aren't equals. His name is Peter O'Finney, but you needn't mind about that, as he is always called Finn, and he is a sort of remote cousin of mine, or so he used to claim, and I never troubled to verify his. But people do get the impression that he is my servant, and I often have this impression too, though it would be hard to say exactly what features of the situation suggest it (Murdoch, 2002: 7-8).

Given that Jake is in the habit of treating Finn as his servant, there is no doubt that people are inclined to see their acquaintances as superiors or inferiors instead of constructing equal relationships. It is highly possible to assert that individuals within the metropolis which consists of different groups of people and alien backgrounds maintain their attachments to other people as long as their relationships provide a kind of benefit or a pragmatic return. It means that human beings become, in addition to modern landscape, objects that could be abused by their equals because of their meaningless lives. Accordingly, the relationship between Jake and Finn justifies the existence of dysfunctional alliance between the individuals residing in the commodified metropolises. Thus, Jake and other characters are estranged from one another consolidated by their self-alienation. It can be argued that their self-alienation derives partly from the inhumane façade of the city, which is not familiar to the residents anymore. Likewise, Guy Debord focuses initially on the significance of the spectacle imposed by the capitalist landscape of the metropolis by arguing that "The spectacle's estrangement from the acting subject is expressed by the fact that the individual's gestures are no longer his own; they are the gestures of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator does not feel at home anywhere, because the spectacle is everywhere" (Debord, 2014: 11). Here, the spectacle is replaced by the images reflected by the urbanism of city architecture, and the individual is excessively exposed to the reception of material construction of isolation by means of an artificial environment. Where Jake Donaghue resides is symbolized as a place characterized by massive urbanization and labyrinthine surrounding to which he must adapt himself. Christine Wick Sizemore speaks of the sophisticated structure of London utilized by Murdoch in *Under the Net* by stating "It conveys a portrait of a city as a place of intricate pathways and blind alleys, as a dark maze of streets and a darker underground maze of subways" (Sizemore, 1989: 121). As the double imagery of Jake's mind, the urban city in which he lives is shown to be a space without any vivid order and to lack a familiar characterization due to the quick change of capitalist city. Maria Beville discusses, in *Zones of Uncanny Spectrality: The City in Postmodern Literature*, that the city turns into an uncanny space in postmodern literature, which is in the habit of changing and becoming 'other' day by day, addressing its identity as a simulacrum consisting of various imitations both familiar and unknown (Beville, 2013: 604). What Beville demonstrates is that the city tends in the post-war capitalism to alter its own outlook, which causes the individual not to hold on to the city. This is mostly because the subject in the city is turned into a spectral and alien figure who happens to recognize the inanimate reconstruction of the metropolitan city. That is why, Jake Donaghue, who is quite fond of walking, encounters the discontinuity

of the modern city, and his psyche is distorted by the mechanic imagery of lifeless space. Jake as the protagonist of the novel is exposed to pessimism and the desperation of low-spirited nature of the new city: “If you have ever visited the City of London in the evening you will know what an uncanny loneliness possesses these streets which during the day are so busy and noisy” (Murdoch, 2002: 102). Depending on Jake’s portrayal of London, the city offers a framework that cannot be mapped due to its chaotic and complex topography and possesses a dual nature comprised of both lonely crowds and estranged desolateness through its vastness.

When a psychogeographical interpretation of London within Murdoch's story is taken into consideration, London, replete with consumerist images, high-rise buildings, and labyrinthine streets, produces an unprecedented space which Jake is not familiar with and tries to understand. The new urban city results for Jake in the dissociation and annihilation of the concept 'home':

> If you have ever visited the City of London in the evening you will know what an uncanny loneliness possesses these streets which during the day are so busy and noisy. The Viaduct is a dramatic viewpoint. But although we could see for a long way, not only towards Holborn and Newgate Street, but also along Farringdon Street, which swept below us like a dried-up river, we could see no living being. Not a cat, not a copper (Murdoch, 2002: 102).

Here, Murdoch makes it obvious that London is devoid of vitality and fictionalizes the city lifeless and deserted, an urban city emptied of actual human presence. The city of London, which is active and commercial during the day, transforms into an alien space at night without the human or an animal contact. This excerpt, too, depicts the liminality of postmodern urbanism between presence/absence, noise/silence, and vividness/solitude. That is why, where Jake lives reflects his own inner landscape. London is no longer his own. There is an inevitable parallelism between the physical and psychological landscape in accordance with the disconnected city and psychic void. Alienated to his own environment because of the prompt transformation of the city into a postmodern urbanism, Jake continuously finds himself walking down the streets and prefers to spend most of his time on the streets so as to create a sense of belonging and resist against the dehumanizing and alienating impact of chaotic London: "Well, I'd be very glad,' I said. 'The lease of my present place has just expired and I'm pretty well on the streets" (Murdoch, 2002: 58). Rather than choosing spectral and dull apartments, Jake is well-versed in the streets, and walking, as he thinks, helps him to reconcile with the alien city. In the aftermath of the Second World War followed by the rising trend of postmodern capitalist society, Jake is the lost figure seeking to negotiate an identity and a sense of belonging in a city full of intimidating and uncanny novelties, culminating in the subversion of reality, truth, and certainty. As Henri Lefebvre notes, in *The Urban Revolution*, that the urban environment is characterized as the locus where individuals engage in pedestrian movement, encounter various assemblages of objects, and navigate through intricately woven activities that may become indistinct and entangled. This entanglement of situations gives rise to unforeseen and novel occurrences (Lefebvre, 2003: 39). Likewise, Jake is intimidated by uncanny atmosphere of the city and the sickening crowds as he states: "I am afraid of crowds, and I should like to have got out, but now it was impossible to move" (Murdoch, 2002: 213). The city is now a projection of a claustrophobic society and causes him to suffocate in a repressive and crowded space adorned with alien faces. The metropolis such as London engenders an inevitable intimacy with other people lacking an emotional affection as can be detected in Jake's relationships with other characters in the novel.

As the capital of consumerist commercialism, London could be said to perpetuate into Jake's mind and debunk the familiarity of what represents his own London. After returning from his trip from Paris, another city reputable for its emotional collapse after being distorted by the urban planning, Jake comments upon how he detests coming back to London, which is mostly because London does not look like what makes London as London for himself. In the amidst of the story, Jake continues to complain about London's lack of reason and its randomness in terms of construction: "There are some parts of London which are necessary and others which are contingent. Everywhere west of Earls Court is contingent, except for a few places along the river. I hate contingency. I want everything in my life to have a sufficient reason" (Murdoch, 2002: 26). Both London and his mind are constructed as a 'net' that he is unable to grasp and to solve by asking existential questions. According to Jake, London has lost its originality and innate identity and has become a city of contingent abstraction indicating that London is currently a 'London' that is built upon the necessities of high capitalism and low humanity. Ali Madanipour notes, in *Connectivity and Contingency in Planning*, that

> In the context of contingency, diversity and uncertainty that characterizes complex urban societies, spatial planning is an instrumental formal process that seeks to shape and manage the future of spatial conditions and relations. The

> planning process involves setting up a series of temporal, spatial and institutional connections, which, it is argued, have been subject to rupture, shrinkage and fragmentation, and so they are themselves contingent, and frequently limited to being symbolic rather than substantive connections. Planning, therefore, is as much about symbolic connectivity as about the substantive transformation of spatial conditions (Madanipour, 2010: 351).

That the city is built based on the Enlightenment assumption of order and decorum because of Western capitalism considerably harms the soul of the city and reconstructs a geography adorned with an excessive imposition of images, signs, and objects. As a matter of fact, London is turned into an inorganic city that refutes the constructed meaning of reality. Though being full of constricted buildings and possessing a crowded population, London in the post-war era becomes an empty space, because its historical sites and characteristic structure symbolizing national and individual memories are ruined by the urbanism of city planning. Pechman also claims that the urban represents a departure from conventional notions of the city, serving as both the creator and outcome of a void that remains unfilled, and a discourse devoid of historical connections, as it does not pertain to the physicality of the city. Instead, it constitutes a novel framework of ideas, with unique linkages and concepts, coined to describe an emerging self-generating new societal structure (Pechman, 1991, as cited in Baptista, 2013).

In a similar vein, London's emptiness stands crucially for the continuous void within Jake's psyche that he struggles to fill: "So we live; a spirit that broods and hovers over the continual death of time, the lost meaning, the unrecaptured moment, the unremembered face, until the final chop that ends all our moments and plunges that spirit back into the void from which it came" (Murdoch, 2002: 275). What Jake does repetitively is to contemplate upon existential nihilism of the postmodern period and mention the meaninglessness of human life, which might be the reason why he refuses to own a permanent residence and a regular occupation. “These Postmodern cities are amnesiac spaces where people feel almost out of their own. Time is not Important anymore; all what really matters is to be found along the Strip, in a certain casino or in that Chapel. The individual feels abstracted from this world” (Barreiro León, 2017: 61). Just as London is shaped based on a contingent planning, Jake lives his life spontaneously without belonging to anywhere both mentally and physically due to his amnesiac identity. Jake Donaghue, as an idle walker, projects the presence of a new-born imagery of a man alienated from the real world. According to Baptista,

> In the contemporary capitalism of border dissolutions and the cult of the market, the gaze has become a cadaverous traveler. Impregnated with rapid and disposable images, this passerby of the end of the twentieth century does not go beyond his (or her) place due to excess and avidity. The windows and doors are closed and the televisions inform him what is happening in his house, on the street, in his country, in the world, in himself, in the other, and in the wrinkles of his body, fixing his gaze on a single point, on a single reality producing factory (Baptista, 2013: 58).

Therefore, Jake is left in a world dominated by the infinite desire of trivial demands, altered landscape, and isolating individualism within the capitalist urbanism, thereby causing him to experience a sense of nothingness and senselessness. Allan Kilner-Johnson emphasizes that the main character of the story is a reflective protagonist seeking meaning and structure amid the chaos of personal relationships and social interactions (Kilner-Johnson, 2025: 2). The world, specifically London, is the ultimate epitome of a chaotic space in which money-based relations are dominantly unavoidable as Jake states "And as I walked a great truth became apparent to me. Nothing in the world was more important than money" (Murdoch, 2002: 202). Jake's statements highly summarize how a postmodern person is lost in an individual void whose ideals and aspirations are replaced by unreal connotations of global capitalism and urbanisation.

In view of Jake's loss of identity regarding London and his sense of belonging, he dedicates himself to walking and going to pubs whenever it is possible. While going to pubs and drunkenness serve as a pastime and escape mechanism allowing him to rid himself of his distorted psyche and alienation, the act of walking is used as a strategy by Jake in order to draw a mental map of London and to battle against the individualism of the urbanity. By walking down the streets of London, Jake aims to get used to the chaotic and artificial landscape of the city. Although London causes him to lose his identity and home, exploring London forms a ground through which he can find himself again and his lost home. He creates an imaginary map of London and tries to find a meaning in his existence within the labyrinthine metropolis. Furthermore, walking the city, as declared by Coverley, becomes "the return to the street promoted by the situationists who railed against the systematic and totalising perspective of the governing authorities" (Coverley, 2006: 105). Walking the city of London helps Jake to rewrite his own individual history and redraw a personal map of the metropolis to which he can adapt as opposed to the emergence of dystopian inactivity. Considering the importance that psychogeography attributes to the close relationship and psychological influence

between the city and the person inhabiting it, walking is transformed into a subversive act against the neutralisation and suppression of the surveillant consumerism, thus making Jake an active subject resisting the objectification of the individual.

Conclusion

Consequently, Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*, set in London within the post-war era, produces a vivid gist into how and why an individual such as Jake Donaghue is deprived of a stable sense of identity, belonging, and meaning at the heart of metropolis. The chaotic and heterogeneous landscape of the city possesses alienating impacts on the individuals preventing them from constructing an autonomous and healthy identity. In view of the intersectional bond between an individual and the place where s/he lives, people might experience a sense of disengagement from reality and meaningful life. In this respect, London where Jake Donaghue abhors residing traditionally reflects the formation of a labyrinthine and mechanised urbanism, a city involving a net of sophisticated and perplexing architecture and landscape. Jake's mind is, therefore, intertwined with the complex and indeterminate nature of London, ushering in a loss of stable identity of both the city and the resident. The foundation of a new urban city, quite fluid and fragmented, affects the citizen both mentally and physically by estranging him/her from their sense of home and human nature. Characterized by his inability to maintain functional relationships and to construct belonging to his environment, Jake, both explicitly and implicitly, embodies the dehumanization and objectification of the contemporary world. The novel represents the city as the reflection of postmodern instability and artificiality and demonstrates how urbanity subverts the traditional sense of ‘home’ as a haven. Nevertheless, Jake's perpetual act of walking, coinciding with the core sentiment of psychogeography as a political resistance against the spectacle of urbanism, emphasizes his intention to discover every corner of London and compensate for his aimless existence. The fact that he embraces the role of an idle walker allows him to create an imaginary map of London through which he can combine his home and identity. In this way, walking functions as a strategy for Jake to be able to discover his own self and its dependence on topographical familiarity. Thus, *Under the Net* portrays a comprehensive imagery of the direct relationship between the city and psychology and refers to the estranging effects of postmodern urbanism on an individual based on the record of Jake Donaghue's dysfunctional life in a city decentred and fragmented.

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