

Reflection in Iris Murdoch's Under the Net

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Reflection in Iris Murdoch's Under the Net

In her novel *Under the Net*, Iris Murdoch examines the nature of reality through the thoughts and relationships of the novel's main character, Jake Donaghue. A recurring theme in the novel is the idea of reflection, in both senses of the word: Jake is continually thinking about ideas, and he is also forever trying to see himself as he really is. Many of the instances of reflection in the novel occur near rivers or are connected in some way to currents. As we shall see, Iris Murdoch uses reflections in *Under the Net* to represent the mirror opposites of reality and appearance. The Novel As Reflection

In examining Murdoch's use of reflections in *Under the Net*, it is perhaps useful to briefly discuss the novel as a reflection itself. Jake is ostensibly the author of the novel, and it is presented as a sort of [documentation](#) of selected episodes in his life. The novel is at least in part based on real people (Hugo Bellfounder, for example, is based on the German linguistic analyst Ludwig Wittgenstein), but it is of course a work of fiction; as such, it merely reflects reality. Jake is similarly only a reflection of the novel's true writer, Iris Murdoch. Murdoch's protagonist is male and we see the characters and events in the novel from a man's point of view, but in reality this point of view is actually a woman's.

Murdoch [presents](#) the story in this way to emphasize the connection between truth and fiction: fiction is a reflection of reality, but neither can be defined without the other.
Contingency and Non-Contingency

When he first introduces himself to the reader, Jake informs us that he is "[talented](#), but lazy". We soon learn that he is not simply being overly self-critical; ...

... middle of paper ...

...e made up of moments which pass and become nothing. Yet through this shaft of nothings we drive onward with that miraculous vitality that creates our precarious habitations in the past and the future. So we live; a spirit 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. (p244)

Contingency and non-contingency, like reality and appearance, are mirror images of each other that are interconnected; one cannot exist without the other. Despite the contingency and uncertainty surrounding our everyday reality, we press on as part of the dialogue of life, and Under the Net stands as a fascinating exploration of this uniting of concepts.
References Used Murdoch, Iris (19). Under the Net.

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