

研究発表要旨

## MURDOCHIAN ENGAGEMENTS WITH SOME JAPANESE THOUGHT AS EXEMPLIFIED IN ‘MOTORIST AND DEAD BIRD’

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Extolling its ego-negating ‘imageless austerity,’ Iris Murdoch described Japanese Zen as ‘impressive and attractive’ in 1992, some 50 years after R. H. Blyth had (in)famously hailed Zen as ‘the most precious possession of Asia.’ This century, though, we witness a skeptical shift: by 2014 Jørn Borup is arguing that Zen has instilled itself in contemporary Western consciousness in a ‘limp, vague and philosophically-neutered fashion.’ The truth? It likely falls somewhere between the two views: this itself being arguably a Zen (or neo-Daoist?) proposition. However controversial its fashionable arc, a keen and deep critical consciousness of certain important aspects of Japanese thought certainly permeates Murdoch’s work. Chiho Omichi has noted ‘Murdoch’s serious interest in Japan’ and correctly (and cannily) suggests that ‘paying more attention to “Japan” in Murdoch’s works might lead to a fruitful discussion’. In this paper, I dutifully attempt to do so.

Trigger Warning: reality and morality must inevitably be discussed: Murdoch writes about being human, after all. If we are not sure what being human is, or what reality and our relationships to it are, including the ways we codify morality, then how can we make literature that is honest and useful? This conundrum preoccupies the parts of Murdoch’s oeuvre to which I repeatedly return, hopeful moth to a promising flame. In particular, I want to demonstrate and emphasise Murdoch’s persistent belief, developed and modified over time, that artful creation, here filtered through some Zen-like musing, can rectify, remedy and heal (or at least soothe) many of the issues our modern ways of living and thinking have brought to the forefront of existence. In pursuit of this aim, Murdoch’s 1977 poem ‘Motorist and Dead Bird’ must specifically be considered, alongside other of her unpublished ‘bird’ poems. Essentially, this paper aims to propose that Murdoch’s attraction to and understanding of some major facets of Japanese thought were pivotal in the clarification and solidification of her unique philosophical and artistic worldview, simultaneously signifying ‘a serious attempt to introduce eastern philosophy to western philosophy’.