

研究発表要旨

**‘Mishima’s Dog Blocking the Waterfall’:  
Iris Murdoch and Yukio Mishima’s *The Sea of Fertility***

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The influence of Japan on the British-Irish author Iris Murdoch was complex and pervaded both her novels and her philosophical writing. Recurring themes in her writings are Japanese fox mythology, Buddhist beliefs and practices and the Heian classic, Lady Murasaki’s *The Tale of Genji*/ 源氏物語 (*Genji monogatari*). In this presentation I shall focus on an area of influence as yet unexplored by Murdoch scholars – that of Yukio Mishima. Mishima is explicitly referenced in Murdoch’s final novel, *Jackson’s Dilemma*, where the artist Owen Silbury indulges his sado-masochistic tendencies with fantasies about Mishima’s suicide by *seppuku* wishing that there was a photograph of it in existence. (There is in fact a photograph of Mishima’s severed head). However, I shall argue, more obliquely in her fiction of the 1970s and 80s where we can find allusions to his masterpiece *The Sea of Fertility*, especially the first volume *Spring Snow*/ 春の雪 (*Haru no Yuki*) (English translation 1972).

I argue that in *The Sea, the Sea*, a novel with multiple Japanese references, the mysterious suicide of a James, a homosexual soldier who practises Buddhism, has some intentional similarities to that of Mishima, and that descriptions of the sea are influenced by those of Mishima in *Spring Snow*.

In *Nuns and Soldiers*, a key episode from *Spring Snow*, the ominous appearance of a drowned black dog in a waterfall during an early encounter between the star-crossed lovers Kiyoko and Satoko, is echoed in the appearance in a French canal of first a drowned and later a drowning dog being sucked into the ‘horizontal waterfall’ of a tunnel. The latter incident almost leads to the death of one of the characters, Tim Reede, but turns out to be instrumental in bringing about a happy ending for him and his widowed lover Gertrude. (The title of the novel might seem to combine two very disparate groups of people, yet these two groups are united in their common renunciation – the soldier risking premature death and the nun renounces carnal relations and an ordinary life in the world.)

A major theme of the novel is that of heroic confrontations with death resonating with Mishima’s attitude in the days leading up to his suicide, but the deliberate reworking of the incidents suggests a more life-affirming ethics celebrating everyday happiness.