

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
Department of Comparative Literature

ASCENDING DECADENCE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DILEMMAS AND PLEASURES
IN JAPANESE AND ITALIAN ANTI-MODERN LITERARY DISCOURSES

A Thesis in
Comparative Literature

by
Ikuho Amano

© 2007 Ikuho Amano

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2007

The thesis of Ikuho Amano was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Reiko Tachibana
Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Japanese
Thesis Adviser
Chair of Committee

Thomas O. Beebee
Professor of Comparative Literature and German

Véronique M. Fotí
Professor of Philosophy

Maria R. Truglio
Assistant Professor of Italian

Caroline D. Eckhardt
Professor of Comparative Literature and English
Head of the Department of Comparative Literature

* Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

Abstract

This dissertation examines the significance of the notion of “decadence” within the historical framework of Modernism, especially in Italy and Japan, which were latecomers to modernity. In contrast to the major corpus of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, which portrays decadence fundamentally as the subjectively constructed refutation of modern material and cultural conditions, the writers of decadent literature in Italy and Japan employ the concept of decadence differently in their process of rendering the modern self and subjectivity in literary discourse. While mainstream *fin-de-siècle* Decadence generally treats the subject as an *a priori* condition for its aesthetics, these writers on modernity’s periphery incorporate heterogeneous spectrums of human consciousnesses into their narratives, and thereby express their own perspectives on the complexities inherent in the formation of modern subjectivity.

Examining historical as well as cultural causalities attributable to the conditions of decadence, such as psychological or mental degeneration, immorality, and excessive self-indulgence, this project argues that the perennial phenomena of decadence reflect the prevalence of a regulatory or totalitarian superstructure whose effect is to stifle, and, paradoxically, to promote the birth of self-awareness as modern individualism. The literary discourse of decadence by the latecomers to modernity clearly replaces any fixed singularity of subjectivity by multiplicities of consciousnesses.

This dissertation analyzes morphologies of decadent subjectivities in selected works of Italian and Japanese decadent literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the formation of the subject, these works commonly engage issues of the reevaluation and valorization of anti-modern and non-utilitarian thoughts,

and the incorporation of cultural and ontological heterogeneities into indigenous literatures. These characteristics shed new light on decadent literature's hermetic mission. The multifarious phases in decadent subjectivities help to articulate modern individuals' disquietudes about the totalitarian tendencies in modern social life. Under the regulatory framework of the scientific objectification of human beings, these Italian and Japanese discourses of decadence, constructed from the perspectives of the socio-cultural periphery, facilitate our understanding of individuals' consciousnesses of modernity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter I	1
Introduction	
Decadence in Modern Japanese Literary Discourse: Subjectivity, Lapse, and Un-Collated History	
Chapter II	34
De-Naturalizing the Subject: The Birth of Modern Subjectivity from Decadent Liminality	
Narrative on Threshold: A Historical Configuration of Morita Sōhei's <i>Baien</i> and Gabriele D'Annunzio's <i>Il Trionfo della Morte</i>	
Chapter III	84
The Decadents' Phenomenology of Modernity: Dialogues, Intersubjectivity, and Community as the Consciousness of History	
Giovanni Pascoli's Visionary Child in <i>Il Fanciullino</i>	
The Sensibilities of <i>kichōsha</i> Writers: Ueda Bin's <i>Uzumaki</i> and Nagai Kafū's <i>Reishō</i>	
Chapter IV	139
Anti-Modern Consumption of Modern Man: Generosity, Dedication, and Defeat in D'Annunzio's <i>Il Piacere</i> and Mishima's <i>Haru no Yuki</i>	
Chapter V	187
The Hyperbolic Other as an Antidote for Decadence: Sacred-Primitive Figures in Sakaguchi Ango's <i>The Idiot</i> and Pier Paolo Pasolini's <i>Teorema</i>	
Conclusion	230
Works Cited	234

Acknowledgements

Completion of this dissertation would have been impossible without the generous support, encouragement, and guidance offered over the years by my professors, editors, colleagues, friends, and family members. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my committee members at The Pennsylvania State University, especially to Dr. Reiko Tachibana, whose consistent support and patience enabled me to reach this stage of my career. Dr. Thomas O. Beebee's guidance with literary theory and critical commentaries on my work has been invaluable. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Véronique M. Foti, who encouraged my literary study by her philosophical expertise, especially through her discussions of alterity in her seminar on Merleau-Ponty. Without Dr. Maria R. Truglio, whose meticulous commentaries on my interpretation of the Italian texts supported my research, I could not have concluded this comparative study. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Department Head, Dr. Caroline D. Eckhardt, for her continuous encouragement and support since my first year in this graduate program. It is not possible to list all the other people who have supported my work in the Department of Comparative Literature at Penn State, yet I am deeply thankful to the other faculty members, staff, and fellow graduate students. Thanks to their presence, I am very sure that I will always remember this department as my academic home.

My final appreciation goes to my mother, Yoshiko Amano, and my sister, Sachiho Amano. I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Minoru Amano, who departed from us without seeing its completion.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Decadence in Modern Literary Discourse: Subjectivity, Lapse, and Un-Collated History

Decadence in Modern Literary and Cultural Discourse

Through a comparative examination of the modern concepts of Decadence and its representations in Japanese and Italian literary discourses, this dissertation explores the ways in which decadent subjectivities fill the social and cultural hiatus that was left invisible in the official histories of these nations as well as in the progressivist/rationalist discourse of modernity. Focusing on empirical investigations of the formation and decomposition of subjectivity in narratives illustrative of *Il Decadentismo* in Italy and of Decadence in Japan, this study aims to elucidate aspects of human consciousness that have been obscured by official histories.

Narratives of Decadentism in Italy and Japan often have been understood as offshoots of French Symbolism and Decadence. Traditionally, studies of Decadent literature implicitly disregarded inquiries into subjectivities, as though they were salient, pre-existing conditions that would assume solipsism as the foundational mindset. This study aims to question such blanket assumptions and to instead articulate complexities in the formation of decadent subjectivities through an investigation of narrative and poetry. The locational focus of this project – modern discourses of decadence in Italy and Japan – distinguishes itself from studies of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literatures in France and England. The mode of discourse underpinned by the socio-cultural maturity of modernity, as prominently observed in French and British cases, reveals that the modern

bourgeois-dominated world is characterized by vulgarized materialism and mental banality and is therefore subject to abhorrence. However, decadent discourses from Italy and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exhibit a far more fluid view of the contemporary world; they witness the ongoing stages of modernity and thereby accommodate human subjectivities in transition.

As one of the most idiosyncratic of modern aesthetic movements, *fin-de-siècle* *Décadence* reinterpreted the notion of “decadence” as an epistemological configuration of history that considered its particular moment in time to be the twilight of civilization. This historical consciousness went hand in hand with a psychological “restlessness and a need for self-examination” that anticipated the imminence of an apocalyptic end of the world (Calinescu 154). This awareness inevitably led to a pessimistic world view of the present age as having arrived belatedly and now being in decline, after the peak of an earlier cultural golden age. The irreversibility of history, then, evokes a collective psychological impasse; at a socially visible level, various forms of degeneration invade peoples’ lives. Such pessimistic views are, however, compensated by the soteriological configuration of the world offered by various religions. For example, the Judeo-Christian tradition interprets history as a cycle, although we cannot escape the linear progression of temporality. Following the eschatological end of the world, a long-awaited messiah will restore the whole world. Encouraged by this future-bound imagination, history has accepted the permutations of epochs and their perennial decays. Thus, decadence historically apprehends contemporaneity as a locus of liminal conditions.

According to Matei Calinescu, the concept of decadence originates in various ancient civilizations, although the Latin noun *decadentia* began to circulate only during

the Middle Ages (151). Enlightenment historian Edward Gibbon implied in his classical study of degeneration, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), that ancient civilization ceased to exist not exclusively due to material conditions, such as the destruction of the empire by foreign intruders, as had been previously assumed. Through exhaustive studies of ancient social life, Gibbon concludes that the fall of the Roman Empire should be attributed to its own *immanent* degeneration. Despite the diminishing validity of this ancient example, the later age of decadence also fuels an avid interest in the “aesthetic life” (Calinescu 170). Replacing collective organicity, the inclination toward the aesthetic life suggests the ascendancy of individualism in a decadent society (Calinescu 170). Although Paul Bourget considers individualism as injurious to the organic structure of society (Nordau 301), individuals’ strong self-assertion undeniably has influenced the aestheticization of life.

Charles Bernheimer points out that decadence is a non-referential scheme that allows poets to map out history: it is “a fraud, a poetic invention masquerading as an epistemological tool” (5). Without a realistic reference, decadence operates as a floating signifier that imagines an “anthropomorphic reduction” of history based on a peak and decay. He believes this reductive artificialization of history is “a pluralistic and overdetermined process” tantamount to a hermeneutic invention (Bernheimer 5).

Adding to classical views of history, *fin-de-siècle* Decadence put special emphasis on the aesthetics of artificiality (Beckson xxiv). For the French Symbolists, such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Charles Baudelaire, the Goncourts, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine, among others, Decadence meant a triumph of artificiality over nature, the linguistic ciphering of hidden human nature and self-consciousness. Theodor Gautier

formulates these elements into an overarching study of aesthetics in his preface to Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*:

The style of decadence [...] is nothing else than art arrived at that extreme point of maturity produced by those civilizations which are growing old with their oblique suns [!] - a style that is ingenious, complicated, learned, full of shades of meaning and research, always pushing further the limits of language, borrowing from all the technical vocabularies, taking colors from all palettes, notes from all keyboards, forcing itself to express in thought that which is most ineffable, and in form the vaguest and most fleeting contours; listening, that it may translate them, to the subtle confidences of the neuropath, to the avowals of aging and depraved passion, and to the singular hallucinations of the fixed idea verging on madness. (17–18)

As claimed by Gautier, for the French Symbolists decadence meant the exaltation of language with a great propensity for artificial deliberation on the quasi-synesthetic effects of words. An oversensuality of language indeed became a synonym for the aesthetics of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature. As Arthur Symons observes in “The Decadent Movement in Literature” (1893), *fin-de-siècle* Decadence conflated the classical idea of decadence as sociocultural decay, as found in Greek and Latin traditions, with “an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over subtilizing refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity” (Symons 135).

Observing the artificial rendition of reality and neurotic sensibilities, critics have argued that the literary movement of Decadence refurbished modern subjectivity. According to Jacques Le Rider, the decadents “refashion[ed] [...] an ego” and “radicaliz[ed] individualism” (1–2). The performativity of Baudelaire's dandy, the grotesque fetishism in Wilde's "Salome," and the encyclopedic hermitism of Huysmans's *Des Esseintes* all manifest self-consciousness. Furthermore, decadent subjectivities imply a certain politico-ideological stance within social life. In *Perennial Decay: on the*

Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence (1999), Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Polotsky acknowledge that the Decadents' fictional/performative self-design, with such traits as "morbidity, a cult of artificiality, exoticism, or sexual nonconformism" (2), contests rationality and positivistic methods in modern society. Shedding new light on human irrationality, Decadent literature dismantles hidden human psyches, as it eloquently stages the *malaise fin-de-siècle* (Symons 136). While fundamentally rejecting modern rationality, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents testify to the maturity of a society in which individualism stands on its own right. Symons postulates that the movement reflects over-maturity:

For its very disease of form, this literature is certainly typical of a civilization grown over-luxurious, over-inquiring, too languid for the relief of action, too uncertain for any emphasis in opinion or in conduct. It reflects all the moods, all the manners, of a sophisticated society; its very artificiality is a way of being true to nature: simplicity, sanity, proportion – the classic qualities – how much do we possess them in our life, our surroundings, that we should look to find them in our literature – so evidently the literature of a decadence? (136)

His theory appears to be highly relevant to decadence as a cultural movement in France, Britain, and Austria, insofar as it emerged following the modern socio-cultural empire; however, Symons's conceptualization fails to account for the correlation between aesthetic movements (or sporadic aesthetic phenomena) and the concurrent socio-cultural developments experienced by such relative latecomers to modernity as Italy and Japan.

Subjectivity within the Discourse of Decadence in Italy and Japan

As described above, the *fin-de-siècle* discourse of Decadence was the artistic refurbishment of a subjectivity handed down from Romanticism. As a point of reference,

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1781) has been regarded as one of the crucial inaugural works of modern subjectivity (Robbins 35). The subjectivity expressed in Rousseau's autobiography was a monumental departure from the confessional literature that had aimed at an epistemological contemplation of the past through an "apologia" (Robbins 35). In that tradition, repentance for one's previous misconduct assumed the presence of God as an ultimate interlocutor. For example, Christian mystics, including such figures as St. Paul, St. Augustine, Dante, St. Bernard, Caterina da Siena, Hildegard von Bingen, and Teresa de Avila, avidly expressed remorseful sentiments towards the past, all while declaring their devotion to God. Their spiritual salvation was thus attainable through a reunification of the past and their own self (De Certeau 53-68). In contrast, Rousseau subverts such confessional modes and traditional formulations of subjectivity. For example, his unrestrained expressions of physical pleasure, sensation, and amoral conduct altogether overthrow the conventional form of "confession." As Linda Anderson and Ruth Robbins point out, however, despite his delinquencies, Rousseau's construction of subjectivity remains incomplete; he is "subjected" to fate and external realities beyond his control (Robbins 35). Through the narrative of the self, Rousseau's secularized "I" constructs nothing but individuality *vis-à-vis* the social milieus that he confronts.

Distinguishing between "the despicable individualism of modern society and the noble individualism of the will to power" (Le Rider 31), Nietzsche upholds antimorality in his *The Birth of tragedy* (1872). In so doing, Nietzsche rejects institutionalized religion as a governing principle for human life while asserting the aggrandizement of subjectivity through poetic renditions of a vigorous individuality, which he symbolically

idealizes through the figure of Dionysus. As can be seen in the writings of Nietzsche and those Romantics who disavowed divinity as a valid agency constitutive of the self, the nineteenth century experienced seminal shifts in the understanding of subjectivity. As Raymond Williams notes, the word “individualism” was coined to designate the self. Nevertheless, the term signifies dual meanings within modern social life: both one’s uniqueness and one’s “indivisibility” from a given social milieu (Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, cited by Robbins 74). This etymological construct of individualism suggests that “decadents” and “aesthetes” – as Max Nordau categorically separates them from a matrix of healthy social life – are indeed identities constructed through a process of socialization of the self (261).

From the nineteenth century until the time of high modernism, the issue of subjectivity was reoriented toward an inquiry into historical temporality. According to David D. Roberts, modernists such as André Gide, Robert Musil, and T.S. Eliot unsuccessfully attempted to describe an “authentic self” that encompasses a “suprahistorical wholeness” (114). To a great extent, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents share the same preoccupation as the Modernists. Huysmans’s *Des Esseintes*, as a foremost example, desires to devour the whole human history of knowledge and art through his obsessive collections of artifacts. On the other hand, Oscar Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* endeavors to preserve his youthful beauty as a reflection of Greek ideals and thereby allows the author’s lamentation for the bygone past to resound constantly. Preoccupied with the gravity of history, these quintessential decadents are destined to annihilate the self that is constructed from the material dimensions of history. Their stories tend to take

on an allegorical form as if to castigate the protagonist's irresistible fascination with an exoticized history concretized by objects.

An inquiry into subjectivity in relation to history is, once again, greatly facilitated by Nietzsche. Through such metaphysical categories as an ultimate affirmation of one's life events known as *amor fati* and the eternal return, he essentially envisions history as a cyclical confinement entrapping human freedom. Nevertheless, the philosophical impasse does not preclude any future-bound possibilities, but instead fictionally dramatizes a locus for an individual to forge his or her own selfhood. For Nietzsche, subjectivity is neither stable nor centered but an ongoing process of "playful, innocent self-creation" (Roberts 116). Through a process of volitional fictionalization, the self becomes emancipated from its preoccupation with history and the finitudes of a temporally constructed vision of the world. The modernists' engrossment with the historical loss of cultural or social centrality is replaced with an affirmation of the ahistorical self. In certain cases, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents assimilate the Nietzschean configuration of an unstable, quasi-Herculean subjectivity. For example, Gabriele D'Annunzio's Giorgio in *Il Trionfo della Morte*, as I will examine in Chapter II, displays multiple facets of the self, oblivious to historically conditioned value systems.

From a linguistic point of view, Nietzsche's hyperbolic as well as fictional enunciation of the self occupies an indispensable position for decadent aesthetics and its shaping of the subjectivity.¹ As Sakai Naoki states in *Translation and Subjectivity* (1997), the notion of subjectivity (*shukan*, *shutai*) is a discursive import for the Japanese, translated from the English "subject," the French "sujet," and the German "Subjekt" (119). To denounce the discourse of Japan's cultural uniqueness at large, Sakai

distinguishes what he calls “the epistemic subject” (*shukan*) from “the practical subject” (*shutai*) that designates “the body of enunciation” (119). “*Shukan*” implicates the politicized notion of subjectivity that intrinsically presumes, in a phenomenological sense, “an object” to be perceived. A line between the subject and the object of its scrutiny originates from an indeterminate “incommensurability” or a “feeling” – a gap or crevice – that is reinforced by a linguistically enunciated difference in repetition. This difference subsequently inaugurates two divided identities and drives the constitution of what Sakai calls the “putative unities” of national languages (and thereby national identities) (143). With these theoretical underpinnings, Sakai construes modern/contemporary subjectivity as resulting from a confrontation with the nation. Somewhat differently, Karatani Kōjin maintains that modern subjectivity arises out of “subjectedness,” but in his case to a transcendental Other, such as God or the Emperor (111–12).

By following these views that subjectivity and the self are constituted of an inextricable subjectedness to a national or to a transcendental presence, the discourse of decadence can be considered an excessive resistance to the collective imposition of an identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that Nietzschean formulations of the self (or rather of its decomposition) fascinated decadent writers from Italy and Japan. Their desire to deviate from normativity or subjection to authority consistently fueled the discourse of decadence under the totalitarian propensities of these modern nations. The decadent subjectivity in relation to totalized social conditions, I argue, does not necessarily rely upon linguistic artificiality, excessive sensuality, or neurotic sentiments, although these may have been the common denominators of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence in Britain or France. Here, I shall propose an archetypal decadent subjectivity constructed within the milieus

of ongoing modernity. Influenced by their social milieus as latecomers to modernity, such countries as Italy and Japan, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, produced decadent literatures that reflect the suffocation and oppression internalized by the subject. Deviating from conventional norms and values, their narratives and poetry portray decadent mentalities that are simultaneously non-deterministic yet open to given socio-cultural environments. Replacing the solipsistic epistemology of contemporary realities, the subject is constructed through an empirical mode of knowing the world. Linguistically, this subjectivity often does not emanate from the straightforward enunciation of an identity in narrative. Situated between Realism/Naturalism and Aestheticism, the narrative and poetry of decadence are a process through which a voice or polysemic voices delineate an identity that may remain fluid.

A Perspective: Decadent Discourse in Light of Italy and Japan's Modern Historical Backgrounds

Whereas a mere juxtaposition of the historical parallelisms observable between Japan and Italy as two culturally distant nations might be sterile, I believe that the consideration of the modern pathways taken by these two countries sheds new light on the literary history from which the discourse of decadence emerged. In Italy, leading intellectuals of the turn-of-the-nineteenth and twentieth centuries were tormented by an inferiority complex, despite their country's past cultural preeminence (Gentile 64). Japan was also a latecomer to modernity *vis-à-vis* the West, and its national leaders feared colonization by the Western powers. After the national unifications, these countries underwent sociopolitical reformations in the 1860s: *il Risorgimento* (the Resurgence – the “resurgence” of nationalism that culminated in the unification of 1860–1870) and

Meiji Ishin (the Restoration – the political restructuring of the nation) respectively. After inaugurating their modern nationhood, Italy and Japan hammered out utilitarian ideologies systematized by such values as nationalism, imperialism, pragmatism, scientific positivism, and objectivism. Along with their increasing social development, these nations called upon their mythological pasts as a foundational resource for constructing modern identities deemed suitable for a modern nation. In Italy, prior to the rise of Fascism, the nationalist movement tried to institute “a religion of the nation” that “would integrate the myth of Italy’s golden age” (Gentile 67), while Japan implemented a modernization program “without sacrificing its national tradition” (Gentile 67). These projects were legitimized for the purpose of seeking a national totality as a valid pathway to the completion of modernity. In Italy, participation in World War I was advocated, for example, by Giovanni Gentile and Enrico Corradini as a positive international engagement commensurate with the nationalist envisioning of modernity, ultimately as the necessary “national palingenesis” (Gentile 71). From the materialistic point of view expressed by Futurist F.T. Marinetti, the war also provided a great opportunity to enrich the nation by invigorating peoples' identity and physique, and promoting agriculture, commerce, and industry (Gentile 71). Further, Gentile points out that in the first decade of the twentieth century, the national slogan, “the New Italy,” underscored modern national ideals, which included such elements as a “heroic pedagogy, created with a spirit of sacrifice, the exercise of discipline, readiness for combat, [and] the sublimation of the individual in devotion to the collectivity” (71). Under the banner of pragmatism and the myth of Italianism, Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime reached a summit of totalitarianism in Italian modernity. Gentile sums up this totalitarian modernity as follows:

Italian modernity, as constructed by fascism, was to be a society of man, in which humanity would recover its dominion over the society of the machine. The totalitarian state and the sacralization of politics, integrating the masses into the nation through the faith, rituals, and symbols of fascist religions, were the foundations of a modern order that would be capable of channeling and using all the energies of modernization to the advantage of national power. (74–75)

In Japan, a similar trajectory of the totalitarian reconstruction of humanity was prevalent.

Guided by the Enlightenment thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi and his influential book *Gakumon no susume* [An Encouragement of Learning] (1887), the country launched its ideological as well as spiritual modernization. Filled with anxiety about having arrived late to modernity, Japan needed to eradicate the spiritual as well as the social bonds dictated by Confucianism. After more than two hundred years of the isolationist policy stipulated by the Tokugawa Shogunate regime in the Edo period (1604–1868), to catch up with the modern West the Meiji government swiftly implemented national slogans such as *bunmeikaika* [civilization in the age of the Enlightenment] and *fukokukyōhei* [enrichment of the nation and empowerment of the military]. Progressivist ideals were ardently promoted through Fukuzawa's philosophy of "rationalism for orders" (Maruyama 57) that became a foundational thought for the Meiji regime. Fukuzawa preached the importance of *jitsugaku* [practical learning] in such areas as medicine and engineering. In the realm of political philosophy, Tokutomi Sohō's *Dainihon bōchōron* [Expansionism of the Great Japan] (1895) played a seminal role by forging the imperialist direction of the nation. According to his theory, all Japanese were unified as subjects of the nation and were responsible for rational thinking and efficient labor. These lines of utilitarian theory proved successful to the development of Japan's modernity, and as seen in the case of Italy, Japan also proved the value of collectivity and

totalitarianism through its victories in war: the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). In the subsequent decades of the twentieth century, as in Italy, the militant regime in Japan dominated the country and effectively employed the myth of Japanism by means of the apotheosis of the Emperor. Simultaneously, the rhetoric of *kokutai* (national polity) was employed to reinforce the idea of a rigidly unified nationhood.

As briefly reviewed above, Italy and Japan envisioned modernity through collectivism in the nation's spiritual foundation and totalitarianism was the method used to achieve it. Recent historians such as Antonio Negri and Kang Sang-jung have denounced the ambition of these totalitarian nations for subjugating constituents under the rubric of a unified country (Kang 113). Just as Negri's and Kang's analyses display the unpleasant truth about modernization processes, it also is legitimate to consider that these countries' modernity became possible only through the eradication of the multiple layers of consciousness that differed from the core national ideology. Therefore, examinations of the cleavage between national ideology (represented by utilitarianism and collectivism) and individual consciousness (displayed in enunciations and behaviors) will help to articulate the significance embedded in the discourses of decadence. In this regard, unlike Baudelairean and Wildean decadents who essentially reject bourgeois/populist values, the decadent mentalities germinated within totalitarian and thus positivistic courses of modernity can be regarded as an ideological rebellion against the invisible sociopolitical oppression that undermines individuals.

Theorizing Decadence: Deviation of Individuals from an Organic Wholeness of Society

Paul Bourget established the notion of decadence as a detrimental phenomenon that brings about a crisis of the social organism. Havelock Ellis, who in 1932 translated Bourget's *Théorie de la Décadence* in *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1885), articulates the term employed in the essay:

Bourget uses [decadence] as it is generally used (but, as Gautier pointed out, rather unfortunately) to express the literary methods of a society which has reached its limits of expansion and maturity – ‘the state of society,’ in his own words, ‘which produces too large a number of individuals who are unsuited to the labours of common life. A society should be like an organism. Like an organism, in fact, it may be resolved into a federation of smaller organisms, which may themselves be resolved into a federation of cells. The individual is the social cell. In order that the organism should perform its functions with energy it is necessary that the organisms composing it should perform their functions with energy, but with a subordinated energy, and in order that these lesser organisms should themselves perform their functions with energy. If the energy of the cells becomes independent, the lesser organisms will likewise cease to subordinate their energy to the total energy and the anarchy which is established constitutes the *decadence* of the whole. The social organism does not escape this law and enters into decadence as soon as the individual life becomes exaggerated beneath the influence of acquired well-being, and of heredity. (Ellis, *Views and Reviews* 51–52)

Bourget's configuration assumes that society can be realized only through its constituents' conformity to a totality. For the efficient operation of social life, individuals are expected to suppress their individuality and to be subsumed in an organic wholeness. Insistence on individuality crumbles the whole; that phenomenon is regarded as “decadence,” which can, in turn, represent the failure of any totalitarian structure of society. Likewise, the literary discourse of decadence is capable of portraying the nonconforming elements (or “cells” in Bourget's term) that escape an organic wholeness.

Whereas French and English theories attribute the phenomena of decadence to the “limits of expansion and maturity” (Ellis 51) in a given society, I argue that nonconforming or dissident forces ceaselessly emerge at any stage of social conditions

when political as well as ideological totality overrides the presence of their constituents. The decadent literatures written between 1890 and 1920 in Italy and Japan suggest that degenerations psychologically fascinate and affect these societies, not only at their full maturity but also at their developing stages. Hence, I venture to propose the reexamination of these countries' decadent literatures as a historically conditioned discourse that implies the languid twilight of cultural maturity. Defining the notion of decadence in relation to temporality validates an objective truth in historicism that grounds its legitimacy on a scientific understanding of a particular era. In this conjunction, Edmund Husserl critiqued the scientific and positivistic orientation in historicism as its "factual sphere of the empirical life of the spirit" results in "a relativism" that involves "skeptical difficulties" (22). An alternative method proposed by Husserl was to comprehend history not in the form of "enduring organic elements" but as "a stream of development" (22). To grasp the latter, there is the possibility of deploying "interior intuition" (22); then, spirituality, or "a unity of interiorly self-questioning moments of a sense and [...] a unity of intelligible structuration and development according to inner motivation" are reached (23). This dissertation aspires to follow Husserl's phenomenological understanding of elements within particular social and historical conditions. Instead of deterministically assuming that a literary work is a reflection of a specific historical moment, this project aims at understanding narratives as a locus where human consciousnesses of socio-cultural conditions delineate concrete pictures of the modern world.

Similarly, decadence can express a non-referential but ideological positioning of the self. The discourse of decadence helps vocalize – either through a metaphorical or a

naturalistic depiction of the world – aspects of human reality otherwise undermined or denied by the totalitarian outlook on social life. Decadent literatures in general reflect dilemmas internalized by individual sensibilities and stifled by dominant social and political ideologies. Representing the individual's vulnerability through images of deviation from normalcy, such as psychological inertia, sexual perversity, and prodigality, decadent literatures propose an alternative morality that transcends institutionalized values, as explained in Nietzsche's evolutionary formation of the self. Because these qualities radically resist modern utilitarian notions such as rationality, productivity, and progression, the Decadent aesthetics transmutes them into a powerful trope. Focusing on this semantic significance of the discourse, Japanese literary critic Shibusawa Tatsuhiko asserts that the negativity in decadence anticipates an oxymoronic positive value, and calls the trajectory "ascending decadence" (*Mishima Yukio oboegaki* 97).

II Decadentismo and Its Legacy in Modern Italy

Being part of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent movement, Italian Decadentism (*Il Decadentismo Italiano*) has been interpreted not as a unified literary movement but rather as discursive literary phenomena active on the threshold of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike the French or British Decadence, in Italy there was no manifesto that elucidated the scope of the movement. Thus, the term refers to a rather clustered literary trend including such figures as Giosuè Carducci, Antonio Fogazzaro, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Giovanni Pascoli. Radically responding to scientific positivism, objectivism, and literary realism, the works of these authors share the Symbolist roots with French Decadence, but also include differing elements. According to Walter Binni,

Italian Decadentism is an offspring of Romanticism, which was “deteriorated” by the literary group *La Scapigliatura Milanese* [The Milanese Disheveled Men, or Bohemians] due to the influence of Baudelaire and Poe’s grotesque (43). Although Binni harshly states that *La Scapigliatura* lacked an organic structure of poetics (43), thanks to Arrigo Boito, Emilio Praga, and the other members of the group, French Symbolism was handed down to the subsequent fruition of originalities prevalent in D’Annunzio and Pascoli. In this genealogical line, as Mario Praz points out, D’Annunzio (and to some extent Pascoli, too) sustains a barbaric locality and primitivism while absorbing the French model as the outsider (421).

The most salient mission of Italian Decadentism was the radical rejection of the positivism that had been dominant since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Philosopher Benedetto Croce’s charge against D’Annunzio and Pascoli needs to be recalled here. He denounced them on the ground that they were perversely injurious to a healthy modern Italian conscience that was congenial to the rest of Europe, and decent as a nation (Gentile 51).² He continues to state that a mentality “made up of mysticism, activism, irrationalism, aestheticism, and imperialism” is a form of decadence (Gentile 51). For Croce, the Decadents deserve castigation because of their aesthetics as the philosopher calls “una fabbrica del vuoto” [a factory of emptiness] without morality and reason (51). His philosophy, in contrast, constantly advocated Classicism for its rationality and resourcefulness for the formation of Italian culture and spirituality (Bruno 56). In his conservative eyes, D’Annunzio, Pascoli, and the others were deserving of the stigmatic title of “the Decadents.”

Despite Croce's negative reaction, as Bruno points out, Pascoli and D'Annunzio should be credited as vanguards of modern aesthetics in Italy for their "essenza lirica e musicale, destinati a proporre in Italia l'istanza della nuova poesia" (Bruno 17; "lyrical and musical essence destined to propose in Italy the petition of the new poetics") as a departure from Classicism. Within the stagnant cultural conditions dominated by positivism, the exponents of Italian Decadentism were an antidote to the country's overdependence on scientific thinking; they were indeed the pathfinders in the course of literary modernity as they announced "il sopraggiungere di una insolita esperienza etica ed estetica in antitesi alle forme ed agli spiriti d'un tempo" (Bruno 17; "the arrival of an unusually ethical and aesthetic experience in an antithesis to the form and the spirits of a time").

Similar to Wilde, D'Annunzio oscillates between Romanticism and Modernism, and his example proves that the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents were, in fact, aesthetically eclectic. As Wilde posits in "The Decay of Lying" (1889), the Decadent aesthetic rooted in "[e]gotism" reflects a civilized and sedentary "indoor life" (169); thus, Nature recedes into a subordinated position in relation to all ranges of artificiality. In contrast, Italian Decadentismo preserves Nature and incorporates it into a dialectics of human intelligence and fantasy (Bruno 238), while the transition from Realism is prevalent in its antipositivistic propensity. Breaking through scientific confinement, as Francesco Bruno states, Italian Decadentism explored human interiority through holistic views of the world: "[I]l Decadentismo novecentesco investe l'intera visione o Weltanschauung condizionata dal nostro essere ed esistere nel l'arco degli anni, che Kierkegaard identificava con la 'malattia mortale,' angoscia perenne stratofoicata nell'anima

dell'uomo" (14; "Nineteenth-century Decadentism invests the internal vision or the world view conditioned by our being and existence in the course of the years, which Kierkegaard identified with the 'sickness unto death,' everlasting anxiety stratified in the soul of man").

Situated in the interstitial position between the continuing Romanticism and emerging Modernism, the poetics of Italian Decadentism played a role in rejuvenating such elements as human intuition, irrationality, and mysticism, which were the mode of thoughts undermined by Croce's rationalist aesthetic program and positivism. Alongside, Italian Decadentism conjoined these marginalized poetic elements with its exponents' own geographically marginal positions relative to the matrix of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence flourished in Paris, London, and Vienna. For example, D'Annunzio's poetic unrefinement may be traced back to his upbringing in the Adriatic coast (Praz 422), and his nature-oriented themes and motives combined with voluptuousness radically contest Crocean rationalism. As prominently observed in D'Annunzio's poetics in general, Italian Decadentism intended to emancipate the reality in humanity from a stifling society where no total liberty exists and people can speak only of religion (Binni 58). Italian Decadentism can be thus considered a repository of temperaments that were refuted by the overriding rationalist ideals: "Questo temperamento alogico, impulsivo, ricco di risorse religiose non determinate, era adattissimo a ricevere una formazione decadente e a trovare in una completa fusione di arte e vita lo sfogo migliore del proprio bisogno di cogliere il mondo senza pensarlo logicamente, senza viverlo come problema posto volta per volta e di fronte al quale ci si deve sentire praticamente creatori e create, con una responsabilità di verità e di aderenza" (Binni 58; "This illogical and impulsive

temperament, full of non deterministic religious resources, was perfectly appropriate to receive a formation of decadence and to find in a complete fusion of art and life the most compelling eruption of the peculiar need to grasp the world, without thinking of it logically, without living it as a persisting problem but openly as what we should practically feel as creators and their creations, with a responsibility of truth and adherence”).

Decadence in the Context of Modern Japan

The word “decadence” was imported from the French word, *décadent*, around 1905 (Nakao 53) and as a neologism it was written in *katakana* (デカダンス), and subsequently was incorporated into Japanese literary discourse. However, in Japan, as early as the ninth century, words and human sensibility that loosely signify “decadence” already existed, and the neologism based on the imported term dislocated indigenous words such as *taito*, *taihai*, *tanbi*, *yūto*, *hōto*, and *daraku* that mean “cultural twilight,” “degeneration,” “aesthetic indulgence,” “playful indulgence,” and “delinquency,” or “downfall.” Since the importation of the word took place, it began to circulate widely in the country’s literary discourse. However, due its novelty, the word became popular among writers and was even abusively used without a clear context. Given that the traditional terms mentioned above disappeared over time from Japanese literature, the neology of “decadence” gained only a blurred meaning.

According to Karaki Junzō’s *Muyosha no keifu* [The Genealogy of The Useless Men] (1964), one of the earliest decadent sensibilities expressed in Japanese literature emerged in the ninth century, when the archetypal decadent figure, Ariwara no Narihira, in *Ise Monogatari* [ca. 950 A.D. *The Tale of Ise* written by an anonymous author], was

presented as a marginalized man who willingly dissociated himself from the mainstream court life in the Heian period (794–1185). Born into a noble line and descended from the Heijō Emperor, Narihira constantly internalized his wretched fate originated from the *coup d'état* led by Fujiwara no Kusuko, a conspiracy resulting in the destruction of Narihira's family, with the disastrous death of his grandfather, father, and uncle. Naturally, the failed political maneuver ruined Narihira's career as a statesman in the court. A famous opening line in chapter nine reads as follows:

昔、男ありけり。その男、身をえうなき者に思ひなして、京にはあらず、
東の方にすむべき國求めにとて行きけり。

(Karaki, *Muyōsha no keifu* 14)

[Once upon a time, there was a man. The man thought himself insignificant, and therefore decided not to live in Kyoto (the capital city of that time) and went East to look for a country to live in.]

Observing the introverted attitude of the Japanese decadents, Karaki postulates that “the men who identify themselves as useless to mainstream society are still capable of transfiguring reality into metaphysics” (18). They embody irony because they are “beautiful in decadence and ethical in their independence” (10). Karaki's theoretical underpinnings are further clarified in his *Shi to dekadansu* [Poetry and Decadence] (1952). He elaborates on the development of decadence, borrowing from Nietzsche's essay on decadence, “The Case of Wagner”:

ニヒリズムを徹底させ、最後まで追ひつめたところ、デカダンスを徹底させて、
下降の底についたところ、そこに「端緒」をつかむ。[...] ニヒリズムを能動的
たらしむるものは生命の充溢である。上昇する生命のヴィルトゥスである。力へ
の意志である。つまりは大いなる情熱である。[...] ニーチェにおいて特にめだ
つことは、自己をふくめてデカダンスのなかから自己を回復してくる道程であ
る。

(Karaki, *Shi to Dekadansu* 12–13)

[There is a chance, on the edge of nihilism, on the edge of decadence at its bottom. [...] What activates decadence is *élan vital*. It is the virtue of life at ascendance. It is the Will to power. In other words, it is prodigious passion. [...] What is

prominent in Nietzsche is a process in which he recuperates the self from decadence.]

Karaki identifies two archetypes of modern decadence. According to his reading of Nietzsche, the notion of decadence signifies a provisional liminal stage. A condition of degeneration does not perpetuate its misery, but its vector ultimately emancipates what Nietzsche considers the yoke of life. There, all institutionalized values are flushed away and the individual thereby confronts the necessity of reconstructing a new selfhood. As Nietzsche himself asserts, what matters are “life, [...] vitality, the vibration, and exuberance of life” (170). In this respect, according to Nietzsche, Wagner and the French Decadents represent “sickness” because their styles display self-sufficiency and surrender the idea that “art is the law.” The autonomy of language in their styles marginalizes the human will; therefore, according to Nietzsche, a consequence is paradoxically the dislocation of the will itself (170). It is significant for Nietzsche, then, that the French Decadents’ art stifles human vitality because their sensual artificiality ironically marginalizes “humanity,” and he finds their art incomplete as it reflects weak Roman nihilism (Karaki, *Shi to dekadansu* 12). Nietzsche’s scheme proposes an ontological template on which an individual reshuffles all ranges of self-evident values that remained hitherto unquestioned. His concept of decadence presupposes a provisional death, which potentially becomes a stepping stone toward the new birth of humanity. Therefore, for Karaki, decadence means neither a hermeneutical device for comprehension of history nor an aesthetic style; the idea signifies a vector of amorphous as well as provisional identities.

Since the late Meiji period, the notion of decadence has been relevant to Japan’s cultural and political discourses, yet without the semantic and philosophical significance

delineated by Karaki. As Noda Utarō recounts in *Nihon Tanbiha bungaku no tanjō* [The Birth of the Japan Aesthetic School] (1975), the earliest discussion of decadence occurred when the literary group *Pan no kai* (1908–1912)³ appropriated the French principle of *l'art pour l'art* (Noda 16). As far as the group's ideological stance is concerned, decadence meant rebellious gestures against the country's obstinate feudalism (Noda 11). In response to social constraints and efforts to decelerate modernization in literature, according to Kinoshita Mokutarō, the group carried out a literary campaign of “Europeanization” (Noda 9). Closely affiliated with the group, Ueda Bin deplored the fact that Japan's literary circles still clung to obsolete paradigms and concepts from the previous ages (Noda 10). The exigency to cultivate a new aesthetic vision was however somewhat blurred by an ambiguity between what the term “decadence” meant in Europe and the Japanese literati's self-indulging life style.⁴ In addition, although *Pan no kai*'s members advocated “decadence,” they did not clearly differentiate between “an exotic mood” and liberalism to combat feudalism (Noda 11). Yet, at least they possessed sensibilities and aspirations to emulate the exoticism explored by Symbolism.⁵ The driving vehicle for their artistic newness was the group's literary magazine, *Subaru* [The Pleiades], published between 1909 and 1913. In these years, as Japan's interface to European literature,⁶ the magazine's contributors wished to construct a universality of art hitherto unavailable in Japan (Noda 13). With an ambition to modernize art, *Pan no Kai* helped transplant the notion of decadence in Japan's literary discourse. Yet, their understanding of the concept was still insufficient for transmitting a sophisticated urban ambience and erudition that would appeal to a bourgeois audience. Although the group arrested the lingering influence of Naturalism and feudalistic mentalities, the term

“decadence” was generally understood simply as a synonym for urban bohemianism because of the members’ hedonistic lifestyle in Tokyo (14).

What social and philosophical discourses, then, allow us to unpack the concept of “decadence” in Japan? Watsuji Tetsurō’s *Porisuteki ningen no rinrigaku* [The Ethics of the man of the Polis] (1948) and *Rinrigaku* [Ethics] (1949) offer a clue into the philosophical discourse on individualism. Based on his research on European philosophers including Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, among others, Watsuji first advocated the notion of individualism as a necessary foundation for Japan’s modernization. Yet, Watsuji later viewed those Western models as incongruous to the indigenous development of individualism in Japan.⁷ As Paul Bourget attributed decadence to empowered individuals who destruct the social organism (Thornton 39), Watsuji also considered the emergence of individualism to be a negative consequence of modern social life in Japan. By postulating the traditional structure of communal society as an organic whole, he contended that individualism was incommensurate with the notion of community. More philosophically, he suggested that individualism signified a negative departure from altruism; in light of the country’s Confucian tradition, individuality always means something antisocial and destructive. While Watsuji’s theory was drawn not directly from Confucianism, his counter-polarization of individualism and community unwittingly implicated a downfall of the traditional value system and thus implied that modernity and the emergence of individualism corrupted the collective society.

In contrast to Watsuji’s negative formulation, from a cultural and political perspective, *dekadansu* (“decadence”) in the early Shōwa period (approximately 1933)

was an ideological banner pronounced by the Japan Romantic School. Inaugurated after the country's failed experiment with Marxist theory, and the dissolution of the leftist alliance of literati (NALP) in 1934, the School shifted its agenda from politics to the nonpolitical domain of aesthetics. According to Hashikawa Bunzō, the School played a cathartic role in addressing its politico-ideological issues of leftism from extra-political point of views. Above all, the School successfully advocated "anti-Imperialism" through a strategic aestheticization of the nation, anti-Meiji Restorationism, and anti-bureaucratism (38). In the process of such political dissidence against the Shōwa militant government, the concept of *dekadansu* manifested itself through a refashioning of the political and ideological identities of essentially leftist intellectuals. More precisely, in his essay "Bunmeikaika no ronri no shūen nitsuite" ["On the End of the Logic of the Meiji Restoration"] (1939), the leading figure of the School, Yasuda Yojūrō, conceptualizes the *dekadansu* as "*botsuraku eno jōnetsu*" [a passion for downfall], an ideological rupture with the cultural and intellectual currents of the time. Through this pronouncement, Yasuda intends to castigate the country's literati who, as he sees them, blindly embrace Marxism and developed Proletariat literature laden with its ideas. He condemns the decadent literature of his time, for it is obsessed with a shallow transplantation of Western intellectualism ("Bunmeikaika" 249–251). Furthermore, his criticizes the literary trend of the 1930s undeniably decadent because it displays two ideologically drastic characteristics foreign to the indigenous culture itself: "leftistization" (*sayokuka*) and "Japanization" (*nihonshugika*) (248). According to Yasuda, the Japanization of literature is rooted in the logic of the Restoration and thereby implicates "the intellect of the colonized nation" (252). What he calls a passion for

downfall, therefore, forges an oxymoronic – “ironic,” as Yasuda puts it – gesture to overthrow the above-mentioned intellectual decadence that saturates the country.

Yasuda’s assertion sums up the *raison d’être* of decadence thus: the Japan Romantic School “discovered decadence and its passion for downfall” as an antidote for the progressivism (*shinposhugi*) and moralism (*shūshinshugi*) embedded in the Restoration (257).

Implicating the paradigm shift, the Japan Romantic School intended to subvert Japan’s cultural and ideological appropriation from the cultural other – Western civilization at large.⁸ To this extent, according to Yasuda, Taishō literature draws on a categorically stagnant cluster imbued with modalities of thoughts and perspectives born out of principles of the Meiji Restoration. Reflecting on a fascination with new material commodity, Taishō culturalism was not only shallow and vulgar but also revealed the reality that Japanese people had been deprived of their cultural roots (*Nihon Romanha no jidai* 203). Yasuda further deplores the fact that Japanese people were blindly infatuated with the process of modernization while driving them to the cultural homelessness (203). As an antithesis to the logic of modernity, Yasuda underscores that the Japan Romantic School intended to restore Japan’s cultural foundation that would eradicate the mentality of the colonized subject (“Bunmeikaika” 259).

During the post World War II period, a similar ideological exigency was developed by the writers of *Buraiha* [literally, the Group of Non-dependence, but widely translated as the School of Decadence]. Without a unified literary style, the members of this group, including Sakaguchi Ango, Oda Sakunosuke, and Dazai Osamu, explored humanity within the early Shōwa period (1926–1989). As soon as the war was over, in

his infamous essay *Darakuron* [On Decadence] (1946), Sakaguchi denounced the postwar Japanese ethos and its hypocritical configuration of the unified subjectivity. Unlike the Japan Romantic School's rhetorical elaboration in criticism, *Buraiha* failed to construct the group's collective theory of decadence and thus remained dysfunctional as a critical enterprise. Even if so, Sakaguchi individually expressed his vision of new postwar humanity that entails a complete de-institutionalization of the self.

What is Decadent and What is Degenerate in the Context of Japan?

From a historical point of view, as exemplified by the Japan Romantic School's vehement claim, nativist intellectuals argued that modernity in Japan required a process of psychological overcoming for their dying cultural past. Upholding decadence was then, in Yasuda's word, a tautological "irony" that necessitated substantial self-examination with radical rhetoric. Furthermore, as aesthetic phenomena (rather than a clearly pronounced movement), Japanese decadent literature between 1905 and 1920 implicated the degeneration of certain literary conventions. Here we can draw an analogy by borrowing from a European case that identifies decadence and non-decadence on the basis of their relative conventionality. Deriving a foundational idea from Désiré Nisard's *Études de mœurs et de critique sur les poètes latins de la décadence* (1834), Julian North proposes that literary decadence subverts Classical ideals (in Nisard's case, Homer and Virgil) and is overwrought with descriptive details and erudite tendencies that result in stifling "contents" (85–88). North points out that Mathew Arnold shared the same view in his preface to *Poems* (1953), suggesting that literary language, when "operating as an autonomous, artificial system, independent of and threatening to the shared human

experience which formed the foundations of a cultural heritage,” equals decadent language (North 93).

These views are helpful for articulating literary decadence within the context of modern Japan as well. As a modern scientific program, Naturalism was considered by critics such as Katagami Tengen as the most progressive literary method penetrating “the truth between man’s [nature] and ethics” (128). Also at an ontological level within Meiji discourse, language was expected to “provide the means for redefining the self,” to construct a “notion of modern Japanese identity” (Washburn 5) through an objective portrayal of reality. These positivist pursuits of realism were replaced by the Aestheticist fascination with *l’art pour l’art* ideals. For example, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s principle of “life as an epic of the senses” (Washburn 71) undeniably subverts the linguistic functions expected by Naturalist writers. Naturalist critics viewed Aestheticism decadent because it gave great credit to antinatural representations of reality and to corruptions of the traditional culture and spiritual life.

Similarly, Naturalist literary critic Akagi Kōhei condemned Japan’s decadent literature for its overemphasized amorality. In his essay “Yūtōbungaku no bokumetsu” [“Eradication of Decadent Literature”] (1916), contemporary writers such as Nagata Kimihiko, Yoshii Isamu, Kubota Mantaro, Gotō Sueo, and Chikamatsu Shūkō were harshly criticized; Akagi stated that their decadent literature (*yūtō bungaku*) has no artistic merits and was poisonous and vulgar (236). According to Akagi, their works overused the images of “Saufen und Huren” (drinking and whoring), and affirmed only indulgent life styles (238–239). Also, he argued that the pernicious trait of decadent literature in Japan proved that the country’s literary works were still shallow and lacked a

profound observation of human reality (240), compared with European counterparts including Oscar Wilde's "refined Epicureanism" (240) and the "subtle emotionalism" displayed by Arthur Schnitzler (242). Furthermore, Akagi's criticism extends to Aestheticism (*tanbishugi*). He argues that Japanese writers overlooked ethical questions and indulged mostly in rhetorical décor, which he calls it "a technique of fake ornament" (239). In conclusion of the essay, he states that his criticism is meant to promote a "healthy development and flourishing" of righteous art (244).

Japanese Marxists also critiqued the Aestheticist representation of decadence. One such commentary was written by Miyamoto Yuriko (1899–1951) against Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), who, thanks to his bourgeois background, was exposed to cultural life in France between 1908 and 1909. His original intention was to learn the Naturalist methods developed by Zola and Maupassant. After discovering Mallarmé and Baudelaire, however, Kafū shifted his interest to Symbolism. Consequently, he borrowed the Symbolist ambience of urban ennui and wrote such poetic narratives as *Fransu Monogatari* [French Stories] (1909). Later in his writing career, Nagai refined his decadent style through depictions of the Edo *demimonde*. In a move unlike the Naturalist accusations based on morality, Miyamoto denounced Kafū, stating that his imitation of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence inappropriately transplanted the French concept into Japan, where modernity was yet to come in its full maturity:

荷風は、明治四十年代にフランスへ行き、当時のフランス文芸思潮の中で、デカダンスは、フランスの卑俗な小市民的人生観にたいして反抗する精神の一表現であるということを見してきました。自分もそういう意味でのデカダニズム、反抗精神の一つの現れとしてデカダニズムを近代人たる自分も持つつもりでいました。ところが、日本へ帰ってみると、日本の半封建の精神とフランスの近代性、フランスのデカダニズムの社会的精神的必然との間に非常な歴史的地盤の相違があって、永井荷風は、自分の見いだそうとした精神のよりどころを、当時の日本の社会对自身のうちに見いだせなかった。封建的な日本と闘ってゆくその自由さえ、

デカダニズムをもって抗すべき近代小市民生活の自主性さえ、日本には確立していない。その結果荷風は、ヨーロッパ風な社会的なものの考えかたは放擲して、自身の有産的境地のゆるす範囲に韜晦して、好色的文学に入ってしまった作家です。社会に発現するあらゆる事象を、骨の髄までみて、そこに出てくる膿までもたじろがずに見きわめる意味でのデカダニズムからははるかに遠くなってしまった。(5)

[Kafu went to France in the 1940s during the Meiji period and noticed that in French literary circles, decadence represented a rebellion against vulgar life philosophies embraced by the bourgeoisie. As a modern man, he intended to follow decadentism as a manifestation of his rebellious spirit. However, after returning to Japan, Kafu could not find his spiritual identity for there was an unsurpassable historical difference between Japan's remaining feudalistic spirit and the modernity and social, spiritual urgency expressed by the French decadentism. Japan had established neither the freedom to fight against feudalism nor the spontaneity of modern bourgeois life that was to be refuted by decadence. As a result, Kafu abandoned the European mode of ideological thinking and indulged in the privilege afforded by his own affluence. He became a proponent of erotic literature. His decadentism thus separated itself from a more critical stance grappling with social phenomena and their venomous elements.]

From her Marxist point of view, Miyamoto denounces Kafū's decadent self-design as a so-called *kōtōyūmin*, a typical portrayal of young bourgeois with the privilege of an artistic education but without any serious social commitment. Miyamoto thus rejects Kafū and his work as unhealthy for the development of Japan's modern literature (5). In Miyamoto's view, Kafū's dilettantism cripples the concept of French Decadence, which is a social as well as ideological instrument that allows writers to wrestle with the bourgeois-dominated modern society.

Despite Miyamoto's criticism, Kafū's dilettantism dismantles one of the paradoxes of decadence. If, as Miyamoto believes, decadence is relevant only to individuals in a mature civil society, such as France in the nineteenth century, then why were Japanese intellectuals and literati in semi-feudal social conditions urged to explore the literary idea in their own mode? Then, within their quotidian reality, what was the objective of self-gratification while indulging in degeneracy and rejecting moral

accountability to realize their selfhood as nonconforming individuals? The following chapters will explore the intersection between the ideologies of decadence and aesthetics.

Problems and Arguments in the Subsequent Chapters

As I have proposed above, modern decadent literatures mirror a complex dialectic between modernity and its resistance. The following chapters will examine morphologies of decadent subjectivities written in Italy and in Japan in the socially and culturally volatile late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, up until the post World War II period. Given their amorphous nature, decadents' sentiments, speeches, and actions constantly oscillate between a fascination with and a rejection of modernity and its processes. The discourses of decadence constructed by these latecomers to modernity reveal the ever-changing modern self and sensibilities *vis-à-vis* external worlds

Chapter II, "De-Naturalizing the Subject: A Birth of Modern Subjectivity from Liminality," investigates the narrative representation of individualism in Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Trionfo della Morte* [The Triumph of Death] (1894) and Morita Sohei's *Baien* [Dull Smoke] (1909), arguing that the use of individualism in these *fin-de-siècle* novels resuscitates social and cultural responses to the consequences of modernity. Providing an overview of Morita's reception of *Il Trionfo della Morte* and his expropriation of the novel into his *Baien*, Chapter II examines the aesthetic limitations of the naturalist *shishōsetsu* (I-novel).

Chapter III, "Decadents' Phenomenology of Modernity: Dialogues, Intersubjectivity, and Community as Consciousness of History," examines the dialogic structures of narrative and the formations of subjectivities that coalesce in multiple

characters' consciousnesses and speeches. Arguing that Giovanni Pascoli's *Il Fanciullino* [The Child] (1897), Ueda Bin's "Uzumaki" [Spirals], and Nagai Kafu's *Reishō* [Sneer] (1910) construct intersubjective voices, I demonstrate that these works refute the assumption that the literary discourse of decadence draws on the solipsism of its protagonists.

Chapter IV, "Anti-Modern Consumptions of Modern Human Beings: Generosity, Dedication, and Defeat in D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere* and Mishima's *Haru no yuki*," examines the subjectivity concretized by the practice of general economy. Through an explication of Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere* [The Child of Pleasure] (1889) and Mishima Yukio's *Haru no yuki* [Spring Snow] (1970), I show that fictional narrative of decadence subverts modern utilitarianism through its descriptions of unconditional expenditure and generosity as an antithesis to bourgeois economy.

Chapter V, "Hyperbolic Otherness as Antidote for Decadence: The Sacred-Primitive Figures in Sakaguchi Ango's "Hakuchi" and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema*," examines representations of "figures" combining traits of primitiveness and sacredness. By exploring Sakaguchi Ango's "Hakuchi" [The Idiot] (1946) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* [Theorem] (1968), I argue that uncanny semi-human figures are deployed as an antidote to post-World War II decadence.

Through such comparisons, these chapters aim at elucidating the emergence of analogous discourses of decadence in Italy and Japan. The entire project provides textual evidence that a diametrical deviance against totalitarian modernity fueled the birth of modern subjectivities and facilitated an enrichment of human interactions outside of official historicity.

¹ Here, I follow the distinction between linguistic “utterance” and “enunciation” developed by Emile Benveniste and Roman Jakobson. Unlike the former, the latter constitutes self-consciousness as well as self-referential linguistic gestures that create the speaker’s identity. Philippe Lejeune discerns these two modes of speech based on the linguistic theory by Emile Benveniste and Roman Jakobson. See chapter I, “The Autobiographical Pact” in *On Autobiography* (3-30).

² Croce’s note from January 1912, in *Memorie della mia vita*, 39.

³ The major members of the group included Kinoshita Mokutaro, Kitahara Hakushu, Nagata Hideo, Hirano Banri, Takamura Kotaro, Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, and Yoshii Isamu, to name a few.

⁴ Noda asserts that *Pan no Kai* became the group that advocates the aesthetic idea of decadence, while the members practiced decadent lifestyle (10).

⁵ As Noda points out, the group introduced new aesthetic sensibilities different from those found in previous Japanese literary works. Kinoshita Mokutarō’s distinction between “emotion” (*jōcho*) and “mood” (*jōchō*) provides a good example. Kinoshita translated the latter term from the German word “Stimmung” (Noda 13).

⁶ For the translations included in the first issue of *Subaru*, see Noda, Utarō’s *Nihon Tanbiha Bungaku no Tanjō* [The Birth of Japan Aestheticist Literature] (340).

⁷ See Robert E. Carter’s “Introduction to Watsuji Tetsurō’s *Rinrigaku*” in *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku* (1-6).

⁸ In light of his statements elsewhere, Yasuda’s comments against the West in “Bunmeikaika no ronri no shūen nitsuite” [“On the End of the Logic of the Meiji Restoration”] contain a series of contradictions. For example, in *Nihon Romanha no Jidai* [The Age of the Japan Romantic School], Yasuda sympathizes with the German classics and their “transplantation” in the group’s literary magazine, *Cogito* (Yasuda 138).

CHAPTER II

De-Naturalizing the Subject: The Birth of Modern Subjectivity from Liminality

Narrative on the Threshold: A Historical Configuration of Morita Sōhei's Baien and Gabriele D'Annunzio's Il Trionfo della Morte

This chapter investigates the narrative representation of individualism as explored by the *fin-de-siècle* Italian writer and poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) and the modern Japanese writer Morita Sōhei (1881-1949). Deeply captivated by D'Annunzio's controversial novel, *Il Trionfo della Morte* [The Triumph of Death] (1894), Morita self-consciously attempted to imitate the famous double suicide scene of the Italian novel in his real life. Although his suicide attempt failed, the incident provided the basis for his own novel, *Baien* [Dull Smoke] (1909). Stylistically situated between the Naturalist I-novel (*shishōsetsu*) and Aestheticism, *Baien* constitutes an intriguing case of literary reception during the culturally turbulent late Meiji, although the novel was not critically acclaimed when it was published. This chapter will examine the aesthetic eclecticism that combines Realism and Aestheticism, and the process of literary acculturation that contributes to shaping the modern subjectivity of the Japanese decadent novel.

European Symbolist and Decadent poetry and prose fiction gained an avid readership within Japanese literary circles around 1905-1910, thanks to translations by aestheticist literati, including Ueda Bin and Ikuta Chōkō. It is not an overstatement that *Baien* was the most concrete and ardent Japanese response to *fin-de-siècle* Decadence because of its dramatic appropriation of D'Annunzian language, which was opulent with aesthetic indulgence, linguistic décor, refinement, and sensuality. These stylistic

novelties, hitherto nonexistent in Japan's literary discourse, brought about a paradigm shift in its literature. While works of French Symbolism and Decadentism by such major poets as Mallarmé, Baudelaire, and Verlaine were collectively influential, nevertheless D'Annunzio's *I Romanzi della Rosa* [The Romances of the Rose] series that includes *Il Trionfo della Morte* – even more than the influential writings of Edgar Allan Poe, J.K. Huysmans, and Oscar Wilde – became especially instrumental in Japan's literary modernization because of the Italian writer's magnificent ornamentation and artificiality in literary expression. As a result of the impact brought about by *Il Trionfo della Morte*, the novel *Baien* became a chimera that bears dual characteristics: the Naturalist contemplation of reality and the Japanese mimesis of the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic sensibilities.

Focusing on the psychology of young intellectuals, both *Il Trionfo della Morte* and *Baien* depict the complex consciousnesses of their protagonists' social and emotional lives, which are suspended between modernity and pre-modernity. The Italian novel is set in the politically ambivalent turn-of-the century, when the fervent Resurgence (Il Risorgimento) of the 1860s-1870s had passed and the political turmoil of Fascism was yet to arrive. The birth of the modern nation, accentuated by such political figures as Giuseppe Garibaldi, King Vittorio Emanuele II, and Camillo Cavour, already had receded into an epic-like memory. Arriving late to national unification and to modernity, Italy strove to emulate the rest of European modern civilization by extolling scientific positivism and objectivism. Nonetheless, the scientific reduction of the world appeared to aestheticist literati as the crisis of traditional humanity. Under such social and cultural currents, according to Walter Binni, D'Annunzio brought “stimuli nuovi nel distacco dale

poetiche italiane precedenti” (“new stimulants detached from the preceding Italian poetics”) (“Interventi sulla relazione di Mario Praz” 19). Because of its abundance of sensuality and violence, D’Annunzio’s decadent aesthetics radically forged a deterministic will to combat positivistic thinking processes.

Similar to Italy during the era of Decadentism, late Meiji Japan also began to hatch new poetic sensibilities beyond what the country’s literati had gained from French Naturalism grounded on scientific positivism. As a ramification of Naturalism, a sub-genre called *shishōsetsu* [translated as ‘I-novel’] began to flourish in Japan around 1907. Unlike the Naturalist ideology that tended toward the scientific dissection of social phenomena, the Japanese I-novel gave expression to the intellectuals’ “sense of emancipation” from moral dilemmas, and thus became a venue for the writers’ apologetic confessions of moral transgression, such as adultery and incest (Arima 73). Obsessed with confessing objective truth, Japanese Naturalists could not develop the full-fledged self, which equals what Kobayashi Hideo calls, in *Shishōsetsuron* [On the I-Novel] (1935), “*shakaikasareta watashi*” [“the socially distilled ‘I’”](381). According to Kobayashi, the failure of the Japanese I-novel ensued from its lack of a passionate philosophy (“*netsuretsuna shisō*”), an exigency to contemplate the location of “an individual within society” and of “man within Nature” (381). Without this fundamental telos in literature, Naturalism in Japan was a cultural locus of “impression” rather than “thought” (384).

From the aesthetic point of view, Naturalism was considered to have reached a stylistic impasse. Abe Jirō in *Mizukara shirazaru shizenshugisha* [Naturalists without

Self-Knowledge] (1910) argued the impossibility of reducing reality into objective facts: “Naturalists are trying to claim their legitimacy (as fervent advocates of a poetic theory) within today’s world of polemics where too many contradictory elements coexist” (143). In this way, Abe emphasized that both Naturalism and Aestheticism (more precisely Dilettantism) were closely intertwined, despite the fact that these literary schools in Japan tended to antagonize each other. Incorporating the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics into the Naturalist semi-autobiographical account, *Baien* is an experimental work that synthesizes the two elements.

From the late Meiji (approximately 1900-1910) perspectives, the Restoration of 1868 was recollected as nothing but a social and political upheaval of the past.¹ The restoration, undertaken by the earlier Meiji oligarchy, the former members of the Satsuma-Chōshū Alliance, maintained a masculine socio-political profile. Furthermore, as was similarly the case in Italy, the founding fathers of the modern nation of Japan, such as Saigō Takamori and Itō Hirobumi, furthered the images of modernity’s fundamentally masculine wrestling with the Tokugawa Shōgunate’s *ancien régime*.

Along with its aesthetic novelty, as is played out through the reception of *Il Trionfo della Morte*, *Baien* mirrors the lack of success, if not total failure, of Japan’s progressivist formulation of modernity. Despite the surface value of utilitarian superstructures, heterogeneous consciousnesses among the Japanese people were too diverse to become unified into a single subjectivity. Under the rationalist ideal for order (Maruyama 57), Fukuzawa Yukichi’s modernist discourse reinforced such Meiji slogans as *bunmeikaika* (civilization in the age of the Enlightenment) and *fukokukyōhei* (enrichment of the nation and empowerment of the military). These two poles were

regarded as pragmatic methodologies commensurate with the political directions pursued by the Meiji government. At the same time, Fukuzawa's radical advocacy of *jitsugaku* (practical learning) marginalized such traditional disciplines as art and literature.² In this context, the novels examined in this chapter, which employ as protagonists decadent intellectuals in arts and letters, reflect historical disquietudes that vocalize a revolt of disjointed subjectivities against the totalitarian national tendencies. What mattered more to the isolated voices opposing the centralized government was their perception of a permanent loss of aesthetic specificity. By means of their protagonists, who are profoundly absorbed in literature (Yōkichi) and music (Giorgio), D'Annunzio and Morita both shed light on the unconscious *élan vital* that essentially refutes a rationalist paradigm of modern social life.

A Brief Synopsis of the Novels

Il Trionfo della Morte evolves around the indulgent relationship of a young intellectual, Giorgio Aurispa, with his voluptuous lover, Ippolita Santis, who is the wife of an affluent aristocrat. From the onset of the story, the third-person narrative recounts their affair which had been blissful but is now in decline. As their intimacy becomes a banal repetition, Giorgio strives to rekindle their love by his sensuous rhetoric and seduction. The narrative juxtaposes his psychological torment, which is caused by his dysfunctional family in a rural setting and his quest for revitalizing his amorous life with Ippolita. The family represents a vignette of moral corruption stigmatized by his father's polygamy. In contrast, Giorgio intensifies his illicit affair with Ippolita, as though seeking an emotional and physical retreat. His love, however, quickly deteriorates soon

after he encounters a festive, and seemingly pagan, procession held by the local peasants. Inspired by the Dionysiac chaos of the procession, Giorgio begins to identify Ippolita with the same atavistic irrationality. From then on, he gradually develops an antagonism against her and becomes obsessed with a fanatic dream of sublimating their love through a notion of togetherness in death. Shrewdly trapping her into his stratagem, Giorgio succeeds in implementing their joint murder-suicide. The last scene describes their end at a protruding sea cliff, vividly portraying their falling bodies and Ippolita's desperate shriek, "Murderer!" (315).

Narrated in the third person, *Baien* revolves around Yōkichi's repressed passion for a beautiful young college student, Tomoko. Echoing *Il Trionfo della Morte*, the opening chapter depicts the protagonist's ill-fated relationship with his family, whom he has left behind in their rural home. After his father's death, Yōkichi's aged mother engages in an immoral liaison with an elderly local man. Yōkichi has doubted the legitimacy of his birth because of this relationship, and he considers his decadent tendencies as a fate inscribed in his immoral familial lineage. At the same time, in his own marriage he fails to play a decent role both as a husband and a father. Leaving behind his wife and newborn daughter, Yōkichi again immerses himself in a vibrant urban cultural life. His experience of Tokyo's modernity, however, turns out to be an uncanny abyss when a *femme fatale* figure, Tomoko, begins to display her coquetry to him. The woman remains inscrutable and Sphinx-like while contriving to captivate him. Tormented by this impaired relationship, Yōkichi begins to liken his psychological condition with that of Giorgio in the Italian book he has read, until his obsession with *Il Trionfo della Morte* grows into a desire to imitate the drastic measures that Giorgio took

for the fulfillment of his love. Nevertheless, Yōkichi realizes the impossibility of fully imitating the *fin-de-siècle* romance due to Tomoko's constant evasiveness and inability to confess her love for him. Despite sensual linguistic play, their repressed love never transcends conventional moral codes. In the story's conclusion, out of desperation and the desire to dramatize their immoral love, Yōkichi and Tomoko decide to take a death-bound journey to a snowy mountain distant from Tokyo. However, as in Morita's real experience, at the end of their wondrous journey the suicide remains unexecuted. The novel's dialectic of death and life comes to its conclusion with Yōkichi's abrupt resolution to "live" (301).

The Reception of the Italian Novel and Intertextuality: Il Trionfo della Morte in Baien

Il Trionfo della Morte (translated into Japanese for the first time by Ishikawa Gian in 1909) appeared in *Subaru*, a literary journal published by The Japan Romantic School. The novel provoked sensational responses from Japanese readers for its shocking depiction of the protagonists' double suicide-murder and the linguistic ornamentation that D'Annunzio used to illustrate their sensuality. The Romantic School and its literary group, *Pan no kai* (The Group of Pan), appraised the novel as a linguistic novelty that broke through the Naturalist impasse and rejuvenated the dreary phonetic as well as poetic dimensions of the Japanese language.³ Morita had access to the English and German translations of the novel around 1904 (Itō 116). Experiencing its unprecedented sensation, Morita's fascination with "the *fin-de-siècle* skepticism" (Tsutsui 17) kept growing, and his passion became transmuted into a desire to create a simulacrum in reality and art. At the time, his infamous suicide attempt in 1908 with Hiratsuka Haruko

(Raichō was her later pseudonym) – a vanguard Japanese feminist writer and activist – provided Morita with compelling material for writing. The double suicide attempt ended unsuccessfully when they were taken into custody by police officers who were searching for them in the mountain forest (Tsutui 17). Their relationship immediately caught public attention, and the incident was called *Shiobara Jiken* (the Shiobara Incident, named after the region) or *Baien Jiken* (the Baien Incident) once Morita’s novel, *Baien*, appeared.

Interestingly enough, Morita’s failed suicide attempt resulted in the irony that Hiratsuka’s involvement with Morita invited the public’s sympathy and admiration of her, praising her as a “New Woman,” whereas Morita appeared in the public eyes rather as a laughingstock (Tsutsui 18). In the postscript to *Baien*, the writer confessed that he wrote the novel primarily to overcome his fear of being “ostracized from society due to the mistake caused by [his] literary imagination and desire to imitate [*Il Trionfo della Morte*]” (305). In 1909 his novel was serialized in a major newspaper, *Tokyō Mainichi*, thanks to the recommendation of Natsume Sōseki, one of the most prominent Japanese writers, for whom Morita was apprenticing. Shortly after the beginning of the serialization, the novel won popularity among the Aestheticist literati (Itō 128).

Morita Sōhei’s “ardent, even morbid” admiration for *Il Trionfo della Morte* is intertextually evident in *Baien* (Sakai 48). As the alter-ego of the author, the protagonist Yōkichi reflects Morita’s literary preference in the scene where he recommends *Il Trionfo della Morte* to the heroine, Tomoko: “始めから終ひまで刺戟の強いものですよ。綺麗な所が目の覚めるほど綺麗なら、汚い所も鼻持ちならぬ程汚い。” (86; “From the beginning to the end, [the novel] is very stimulating. Beautiful passages are very beautiful as though awaking us, but dirty parts are unendurably dirty”). As exemplified

in these lines, the D'Annunzian textuality attracted Morita for its sensorial stimulation, which he understood as an essential quality of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature. Similarly, there are references to Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (85) and to Thomas DeQuincey's *Confessions of An Opium-Eater* (246) as stimulating texts. Believing that *Il Trionfo della Morte* is the foremost among these works, Morita constructs the plot of *Baien* basically as an imitation of the Italian novel. Paralleling the Italian protagonist and heroine, Giorgio and Ippolita in *Il Trionfo*, Yōkichi represents a young decadent intellectual and Tomoko a sensual *femme fatale*. Nevertheless, unlike in the Italian counterpart, the third-person narrative in *Baien* suggests the protagonist's dilemma – his oscillation between the desire for sexual indulgence and the sense of guilt:

常に刺戟を求めて止まらぬ習性のそこには、卑しい欲望の衝動が潜んでいることは争はれない。それを墮落した文学に耽つて養った想像力に依つて、修飾し複雑にし、又鋭利にした。加之、それを弁護することさへおぼえた。 (163)

[It is not possible to deny the fact that there is a hidden impulse of base desire underneath his nature in search of constant stimulation. With his imagination nurtured by decadent literature, he have complicated it, and sharpened it. In addition, he has even learned a way to vindicate it.]⁴

The passage hints at the notion of “decadence” in the late Meiji context in the sense of an excessive indulgence deviating from social and cultural moral codes. What allows the protagonist to vocalize his desire is precisely the imagination stimulated by the works from *fin-de-siècle* Decadence.

Baien is an idiosyncratic case that conflates Naturalist objectivism with Aestheticist subjectivism. Having been accustomed to Naturalist realism, readers around 1910 were puzzled as to whether *Baien* should be classified as a mere personal confession or as art (Tashiro 2). One of the favorable criticisms praised the novel by stating that it dismantles the “universality of man's sentimental life instrumental with the

(late Meiji) *Zeitgeist*” (Tashiro 2). Yet, because it is based on an actual incident, the novel remains within a paradigm of the narcissistic *shishōsetsu* [I-novel]. Nonetheless, the text lays claim to its aesthetic autonomy as well. Imitating *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Morita depicts his love affair; yet, the process of fictionalization departs from the verisimilitudes embraced by the Japanese Naturalist and the Confucian moral codes and thus escapes a less-artistic mode of personal confession. In fact, Morita arguably prioritized the artistic disposition of *Il Trionfo della Morte* and then tried to imitate the novel’s double suicide, as he may have read the book as early as 1904, as noted above, and the suicide attempt took place in 1908. If so, the paradigm shift in Morita’s imitation may be comparable with Oscar Wilde’s formulation in “The Decay of Lying”: “[l]ife imitates art far more than Art imitates life” (307).

The protagonist Yōkichi synthesizes the *fin-de-siècle* temperaments of melancholy as an intellectual and the Japanese sensibility of so-called *kōtōyūmin*.⁵ Prior to 1909, when *Baien* was published, Japanese literature had already established a typology of modern individuals who tended to be drawn to anti-normative social values in favor of sensual experience. Mori Ōgai’s Toyotarō in *Maihime* [The Dancing Girl] (1890) and Tayama Katai’s Takenaka in *Futon* [The Quilt] (1907), for example, can be seen as significant predecessors to Yōkichi. By virtue of its use of literary language as a new stimulus, D’Annunzio’s works (prominently such titles as the trilogy, *I Romanzi della Rosa*, *Le Vergine delle Rocce*, and *Giovanni Episcopo*)⁶ exerted a new influence in Japan’s moralist value system. Prioritizing beauty over social propriety, the D’Annunzian excess of sensuality, intertwined with the ideal of aestheticist dilettantism, challenged and modified the notion of individualism in Japan’s literary discourse. Thus,

the Italian writer's relationship with Japanese literature needs to be understood in terms beyond "literary adaptation" (Miller J. 9) in its usual, more limited sense of just the appropriation of motif and literary style.

Decadent Subjectivities: Romantic Solipsism in the Fin-de-Siècle Models

Inspired by *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Morita's *Baien* dramatizes the psychology of modern decadents that has emerged as a result of their socio-cultural milieu. Unlike the *fin-de-siècle* French and British narratives of Decadence, the work of D'Annunzio and Morita incorporates the uneasiness of the protagonists feel about modern social life into their aesthetics. Although sharing what Arthur Symons calls "the *malaise fin de siècle*" (136) transformed into luxury and languidness, D'Annunzian decadents are unable to commit themselves entirely to the world of artificiality and to the aestheticization of life. As a way to critique modernity, D'Annunzio treats in his novel and poetry the presence of Nature – a counterpart to artificial modern social life – as a tenacious dimension that constructs human reality. As Mario Praz points out in *The Romantic Agony* (1933), D'Annunzio constantly conjures up primitiveness and a bloodthirsty *spirito crudo*, lacking "the temperate zone which [is] labeled 'humanity'" (421). Genealogically linked to the tradition of Romanticism, the Italian form of Decadentism preserves its fascination with a barbaric and rudimentary world of Nature. Romanticism and Symbolism constitute the two main aesthetic resources for this Decadent aesthetics: rawness in nature and refinement in artifacts. Yet, Praz unequivocally differentiates the characteristics of several of the French decadents from D'Annunzian decadence: "[t]he delicate qualities of the more refined of the Decadents, such as Barrès, Remy de Gourmont, and Mallarmé,

were entirely alien to him” (422). Instead, Praz states that writers such as “Lorrain and Péladan” were D’Annunzio’s first model, and that later more obvious influences of Swinburne and Nietzsche became apparent in his works (422).

Nevertheless, as the novels’ protagonists, D’Annunzian characters including Giorgio are far more complex than mere bearers of primitive brutality. Unlike the mainstream decadent narrative of the 1890s, *Il Trionfo della Morte* constructs a fluidity in the protagonist’s subjectivity, and it is constantly unsettled due largely to his complex consciousness of the bourgeois-dominating world that lacks spirituality. In the context of the novel, the protagonist’s decadence therefore signifies a tentative phase of psychological weariness and anticipates a moral resolution. Praz’s reductive reading of D’Annunzio’s narrative, however, undermines the importance of specific developments of this subjectivity, which is concretized by the protagonist’s brutality that mirrors the conflict between his philosophy of life and bourgeois superficiality. Neither primitive brutality nor sophistication overrides the other; instead, I argue that D’Annunzian decadents, including Giorgio, combine the two elements to create a liminal *locus dramatis*. Instead of viewing human decadence as a palpable, fixed attribute, the writer deploys it as a critical enterprise reflecting his contemporary social reality.

D’Annunzian novels, most prominently his trilogy, *I Romanzi della Rosa* [The Novels of Rose], which includes *Il Piacere* [translated in English as “The Child of Pleasure”] (1889), *Il Trionfo della Morte* [The Triumph of Death] (1894) and *L’Innocente* [The Innocent] (1892), can be read as radical and tragic *Bildungsromans* centering on an *enfant terrible* who needs to renounce his strong selfhood. In this context, Barbara Spackman observes a cleavage between D’Annunzio’s protagonist and the rest

of society in *The Decadent Genealogies* (1989). According to her, the *I Romanzi della Rosa* trilogy consciously differentiates modern individuals from the “mass” that is the rest of the world (55). In the trilogy, D’Annunzio in fact diagnoses the modern subjectivity through the protagonists’ objects of desire (mostly sensual female bodies, in this case), and they operate as any modern commodity in bourgeois economy. A similar fascination with materials can be found in Baudelaire, who advocates the usage of wine and hashish to build up an “artificial paradise.” Nonetheless, there are obvious differences between them. On the one hand for Baudelaire, an artificial paradise signifies a polar opposition to reality, while it helps to “enhance individuality” (17). On the other hand for D’Annunzio, the objects of desire constantly menace the stability of the self. As shown in *Il Trionfo della Morte*, the protagonist’s annihilation or loss of the beloved object signifies an indispensable pathway to enacting individuality and selfhood.

For these reasons, I shall consider D’Annunzian decadence as a provisional phase. In contrast, the major *fin-de-siècle* Decadents eradicate any social reality from their art while the primacy of solipsism foregrounds their self-assurance and thus they are capable of pursuing the ideal of pleasure-seeking. Emancipated from the Naturalist preoccupation with verisimilitude, the major corpus of the European *fin-de-siècle* Decadent novels and novellas normally constructs a subjective microcosm that satisfies their protagonists’ thirst for sensory pleasures. Their aesthetic dexterity by means of an artificial paradise is closely intertwined with their escapism from bourgeois dominations. A personal microcosm of sensory pleasure disconnects these protagonists from social reality and thereby underwrites their individuality as separated from the collective masses.

Furthermore, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent sensibility manifests itself through such sentiments as “[b]oredom, melancholy, disillusionment, [and] discouragement” (Weir 84); the decadent psyche thus suggests an absence of communication or interaction between collective and individual lives. In an extreme case, the decadent individualism grows into eschatological pessimism (Calinescu 152). Self-secluding tendencies fall into Max Nordau’s categorical classification of “ego-mania” (261-263).⁷ Imaginary havens can be found in such examples as Des Esseintes’s hermitage adorned by fetish artifacts in J.K. Huysmans’s *A Rebours* [Against the Grain] (1884), where individualism takes the form of an idiosyncratic, supra-historical love for *l’objet d’art*. Praz finds a linkage between this vehement passion and the genealogy of the Romantic tradition (xvii).⁸ Des Esseintes is an incarnation of the rigorous subjectivity that casts a solipsist gaze upon his beloved artifacts. Similarly, Oscar Wilde’s play, *Salome* (originally written in French in 1893 and translated into English in 1894), concretizes an extreme case of solipsism as the prominent *fin-de-siècle* temperament. The infamous *femme fatale*’s desire for Jokanaan (John the Baptist) is completely one-sided, not even an unrequited love but a compulsive craving for the other human body. Salome combines the conditions of an ego-mania (self madness) and an erotomania (love madness), in Nordau’s categories, as proven in her love for the prophet’s beheaded face (Nordau 148). Likewise, Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891) and other works such as Georges Rodenbach’s *Bruges-la-morte* (1892) depict anti-social individualism as a form of self-alienation. In *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (1995), David Weir observes these overall tendencies in *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literatures, noting that their narrative pattern emphasizes “[t]he centrality of characters and limit[s] episodic action and plot complication” (101). Thus, a common

denomination of the literary movement includes a deterministically formulated protagonist's strong persona; consequently, it is hardly possible to identify his or her significant development in terms of spiritual or emotional dimensions.

Provisional Decadence: The Amorphous Self in Il Trionfo della Morte and Baien

Giorgio in *Il Trionfo della Morte* and Yōkichi in *Baien* defy the solipsistic self, a common denominator for the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents. Departing from a fixed self in narrative, these novels deploy images of decayed morality only as a tentative disposition of the central dramatis personae. The virtue of anti-morality lies in the articulation of personal conflicts *vis-à-vis* the social realities that they face. Decadence functions thus as a narrative device that helps adumbrate the protagonists' consciousness, and it implies that these individuals are in one way or another marginalized from the respective social centers. The protagonists' weariness and deviance against social norms are temporary dispositions conditioned by their self-consciousnesses of the given social and cultural conditions, and thus are not a deterministically embraced cultural ideology as in Baudelairean Decadentism.

Positing D'Annunzio's and Morita's depiction of decadence as a tentative psychological disposition, we will benefit from the anthropological concept of liminality. According to the theory of liminality as proposed by Arnold Van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (1909) and its subsequent development by Victor Turner, symbolic rites of passage can be dissected into three stages: "rites of separation, margin (or *limen* = threshold), and reaggregation" (Turner 158). Each stage refers to the subject's relation with the community to which he or she belongs. During the middle transitional phase,

the subject is temporarily removed from everydayness and instead experiences an interstitial situation within which his ontological stability momentarily fluctuates. While being exposed to a liminal stage, the subject undergoes an experience of chaos where the logic of normalcy in quotidian settings does not operate. During this stage, any everyday social standard can be reshuffled; for example, a rigid norm in terms of sexuality or social hierarchy could become ambiguous, to prepare the subject for the forthcoming stage of reincorporation.

The above-mentioned liminality model facilitates our comprehension of the amorphous decadence displayed in Giorgio and Yōkichi. Analogous to the three stages in the rite of passage, their ontological evolution implies their ever-changing personal rapports with social environments and people around them. Decadence provides an almost pretextual condition (separation), while their middle-stage action (margin) implies a liminal stage, and final resolution to commit to or to abort a plan for suicide (reaggregation).

Over the course of the narrative developments in *Il Trionfo della Morte* and *Baien*, decadence operates as a locus of ontological evolution where the individualization of the self from an invisible, anonymous “mass” occurs. Marking an initial point of “separation” from the respective communities, their decadence also represents their tentative identities. In this way, the novels dramatize both the dialectic of communal life and the emergence of individuals; therefore, they subvert a premise of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature as an outright claim of individualism.

Individualism in Il Trionfo della Morte: Escaping Moral Corruption and the Invisibility of the Masses

In *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Giorgio undergoes three different stages of the self: rebellious delinquency, chaotic reshuffling of the deviant self, and, finally, a Nietzschean overcoming of decadence by the double murder-suicide. As Antonio Borgese observes, Giorgio's self-imposed transformation is a conscious labor to achieve his ideal: "lavora con tutta serietà a una 'progressiva e volontaria individuazione verso un ideal tipo latino'" ("he works with all seriousness at a 'progressive and voluntary individuation toward an ideal type of a Latin man'") (79). Despite an initial phase of decadence, Giorgio ultimately embodies the Nietzschean will to power, prioritizing the sanguine honor and aesthetics of action over the indulgence of sensual pleasure.

The novel opens with the typical *fin-de-siècle* ambience of languid boredom. From the outset, Giorgio's illicit relationship with Ippolita is shown as reaching the twilight phase. While he tries to enkindle their love with adorned language, his subtle frustration is already perceptible. Giorgio's reproach to Ippolita, that she feels "quasi una ripugnanza istintiva (12; "a sort of instinctive repugnance" 4) towards him, hints at "un vago sentimento ostile (16; "a vague sense of hostility" 8) on his own part as he imagines Ippolita's dull bourgeois life with her wealthy husband. However, Giorgio is still attracted to her sensual corporeality and is unable to terminate their relationship. At this point, his love for her takes only a form of fetishism: "la fronte, gli occhi, la bocca: divini" (17; "her brow, her eyes, and her mouth – divine!" 9). Praising her "*gravis dum suavis* – la creatura del mio sogno" (65; "*gravis dum suavis* – the woman of my dreams" 65), he utilizes her to boost his sensorial delight as a basis of his identity: "È una sorta di

prodigiosa infermità che fiorisce soltanto nel mio essere [...] (61; “It can only be some monstrous infirmity which flourishes in *me alone* [...]” 48-49). The writing of passionate love letters also stimulates his narcissistic self-indulgence with her as a beautiful object:

Mandami un fiore lungamente baciato, segnami su la carta un cerchio dove tu abbia permutate lungamente la bocca, fa che io possieda nell’immaginazione una carezza tua inviata di lontano... Di lontano! Di lontano! Quanto tempo è ch’io non ti bacio, ch’io non ti tengo fra le braccia, ch’io non ti vedo impallidire? È un anno? È un secolo? Dove sei tu andata? Oltre quali terre? Oltre quali mari?... Passo le ore nell’inerzia, pensando. (53)

[Send me some flower which you have kissed – make a mark on the paper where you have pressed your lips. Let me have, in imagination, some caress that you send me out of the far, far distance. How long is it since I kissed you – since I held you in my arms and saw you grow pale beneath my passionate gaze? A year – a century? Where have you gone? What worlds, what oceans lay between us? I pass the hours in absolute immobility – thinking, thinking (42).]

These hyperbolic expressions reveal his decadent narcissism. Dragging along with his weary passion, in the subsequent chapter Giorgio begins to display his self-consciousness as an individual free from social conventions, while, at the same time, his visit to his family’s rural home is demonstrative of the dialectic between a banal collectivism and an aesthetic individual. Showcasing a series of corruptions and misery, the household fuels Giorgio’s complete detachment from the conventional notion of a family as a communal *Gemeinschaft*. Without any parental tutelage, life appears to be groundless to Giorgio: “[W]hat is my life, after all – to what forces is it obedient? – under dominion of what laws?” (65). All the uncertainties and rancour are indicative of his individuation from the communal life and suggest an entry into the liminal stage.

Tormented by his father’s immorality and parents’ stagnant relationship, paradoxically, the decadent protagonist individuates himself from the family, the matrix of social life in the provincial region of Italy. Simultaneously, the portrayal of the

wretched family reflects D'Annunzio's general detestation of the bourgeoisie. In contrast to the family, likened to what Nietzsche considers a vulgar "mass," Giorgio and his deceased uncle, Demetrio, who was a renowned violinist, enact a blueprint of ideal individuals, an image that D'Annunzio borrows from the Nietzschean *Übermensch*. Giorgio, however, oscillates between Schopenhauerian pessimism and Nietzschean determinism as a neurotic decadent. His desire for death also combines compulsive escapism and narcissism: "Bisogna morire" (98; "There is nothing left for me but to die" 82). Although the narrative obscures the reasons for his suicide, only Demetrio's room appears to Giorgio a mystical *sanctum sanctorum*, a locus for the ideal of aesthetic individualism. The ineffable communion with his deceased uncle implicitly announces a new phase of the protagonist's life. Simultaneously, reminding himself of "[l]a necessità della morte" (120; "[t]he absolute necessity of death" 101), Giorgio consciously detaches his existence from the rest of the family, who now appear to him as "un cieco fermento di materie impure" (123; "a seething mass of impurity" 104). Drawing the line between the self and the other, the separation phase of liminality becomes relevant here. The mystical séance – a form of liminality that defies quotidian dialogues among human beings – between Giorgio and Demetrio's spirit symbolically establishes a bond that unites them, and thereby demarcates their existence from the mass mediocrity:

Tutto ciò che in lui si disperdeva al contatto de'suoi simili; tutti i suoi atti e i suoi gesti e i suoi detti, nel corso del tempo; tutte le manifestazioni varie che formavano lo special carattere del suo essere in rapporto con gli altri esseri; tutte le forme costanti e variabili che distinguevano la sua persona tra le altre persone, e tra la moltitudine umana particolarizzavano la sua umanità; tutti insomma i segni della sua vita tra le altre vite ora mi sembrano raccolti, circoscritti, concentrate nella sola attinenza ideale che lo lega a me. (130)

[All that he gave out in his contact with others, his every word and deed; all the forms – both constant and variable – which distinguished his personality from that

of other personalities, and made him a man apart from the rest of humanity – in short, everything that made his life so different from the ordinary run of lives now seems to me to be gathered up and concentrated in the ideal bond which unites him to me (109).]

Giorgio's demarcation of their existence from "the rest of humanity" becomes further accentuated by his praise of his uncle as a man of purity and loftiness (113). The following passages articulate that Demetrio embodies the Nietzschean superman, the ideal mode of humanity that can control his or her own "fato" (136; "fate" 115). Self-determination should go hand in hand with the negation of any religion, along with an empirical spirit: "Era un mistico, un ascetico, il più appassionato contemplatore della vita interna. Ma non credeva in Dio" (137; "He was a mystic, ascetic, the most passionate inquirer into the inner life, but he did not believe in God" 115). Inquiries into the "inner life" for Demetrio were made possible only by the intermediary role of poetry and music in his life. His aesthetic contemplation of art forms, however, intensifies his neurotic sensibility which seems too vulnerable to survive in the modern world of pragmatism and vulgarity. Inspired by Tennyson's poem, "Tears Idle Tears," which renders languorous the twilight of life, Demetrio's improvisation on the violin is still compelling in Giorgio's recollection. Tennyson's entire poem, but most particularly the final stanza, accentuates the death-bound sensibility derived from the power of art: "O Morte nella Vita, i giorni che non sono più!" (135; "*O Death in Life, the days that are no more!*" 113, italic is added by Harding).

The deaths of Demetrio and Giorgio reflect a psychological predicament simultaneously stemming from the *fin-de-siècle* hyper self-consciousness and the impossibility of completing their aesthetic individuality in the collective modern social life. Their neurotic pessimism and longing for death exemplify the weary sensibility

widely embraced by the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents whom Nietzsche condemned due to their inability to bear the “exuberance of life” (“The Case of Wagner” 170). As Praz comments, D’Annunzio’s narrative transmutes human reality, which is obscured by modern intellectualism, into “nothing more than a [...] material world,” as Goethe’s *Faust* also does (423).

Likewise, *Il Trionfo della Morte* dramatizes Giorgio’s ontological awakening to the natural and even savage dimensions of human realities. For example, the chapter entitled “The Hermitage” opens the protagonist’s new perspective upon the “simple and untrammelled [...] grand freedom of the primordial world” (147) through its depictions of the Adriatic coast. The following passage exemplifies D’Annunzian mode of Decadentism within which the natural world plays a significant role for developing the protagonist’s psychological maturity: “Tutte quelle cose umili parevano avere una vita profonda” (150; “All of which humble thing seemed to Giorgio replete with a sense of profound life” 128). Here, Ippolita’s “grave and sweet” corporeality (143) is also presented as a synecdoche of Nature. The juxtaposition of the intellectualism in the protagonist and Nature, then, constructs a dialectics between the mutually exclusive factors. In this conjunction, *Il Trionfo della Morte* is disjointed from the *fin-de-siècle* exoticism characterized by the fetishism of aesthetic objects and indulgence that discards the presence of Nature. Therefore, gradually the dialectics between Giorgio’s rational thoughts and his fascination with the lover’s body comes to its conclusion with a firm antagonization of his lover and with an attempt to reify her existence by means of the double suicide:

Io penso che morta ella raggiungerà la suprema espressione della sua bellezza.
[...] Ella diventerebbe material di pensiero, una pura idealità. Io l'amarei oltre la
vita, senza gelosia, con un dolore pacato ed eguale. (168-169)

[I believe that in death her beauty will reach its supreme perfection. [...] I should
love her better than in life, free from jealous doubts, with a serene and changeless
sorrow. She would then become an object of thought – purely ideal! (139)]

The reification of the lover as an “object” suggests that the novel shares the *fin-de-siècle* fetishist discourse of Decadentism. In praise of Ippolita, Giorgio's rhetoric often focuses on her body parts in detail: “I tre divini elementi dell sua bellezza – la fronte, gli occhi, la bocca” (213; “The three divine points of her beauty – her brow, her eyes, and her mouth” 176). The narrative of fetishism strips the heroine of her subjectivity and reduces her to an object; as a result of this correlation between them, Giorgio elucidates his subjectivity as the beholder of an individual vision and desire. Here, we can find the novel's subversion of the narrative denomination in *fin-de-siècle* Decadence.

In *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Giorgio's material indulgence is ephemeral, while the tentative decadence in his will to power provides a narrative pretext for his subsequent ontological breakthrough as a Nietzschean individual:

[C]ome ricupererò io la mia sostanza, se una gran parte è nelle mani di costei?
Vano è aspirare a un nuovo mondo, a una vita nuova. Finché dura l'amore, l'asse
del mondo è stabilito in un solo essere e la vita è chiusa in un cerchio angusto.
Per rivivere e per conquistare, bisognerebbe che io mi affrancassi dall'amore, che
io mi disfaccessi della Nemica... (214)

[H]ow am I to recuperate my strength if the greater part of me is in the hands of
this woman? In vain for me to aspire a new world, a new life; as long as love
endures, so long will the axis of the world rest upon a single human being and all
life be enclosed with a narrow circle. To rise up and conquer, I must be free of
love – I must deliver myself from the Enemy (177).]

This claim expresses Giorgio's desire to overcome the yoke of his life represented not only as his captivation by the *femme fatale* but also his constriction within “a narrow

circle” (177). Self-confinement within a tiny microcosm signifies a *tour de force* of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics; in contrast, for the Italian decadent hero, his willful self-annihilation and destruction of the narrow circle are essential for his drastic ascendance in life. The eradication of his decadence entails both his and his lover’s death. D’Annunzio borrows the idea of total self-scrutiny from Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch* in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1885):

Aveva incominciato per ciò assai presto a nutrire l’ambizione segreta che esalta e forvia tutti i veri uomini intellettuali, disdegnandosi della vita comune, curiosi soltanto di conoscere le leggi che governano lo svolgersi delle passioni. Anch’egli, a similitudine di alcuni singolari artefici e filosofi contemporanei con i quali aveva comunicato, ambiva di comporsi un mondo interno dove poter vivere con metodo, in perpetuo equilibrio e in perpetua curiosità, indifferente ai tumulti e alle contingenze volgari. (195)

[[H]e was led to nourish that secret ambition which excites and misleads all truly intellectual men, who, with their fine scorn for the common impulses of life, are only curious to understand the laws that govern the course of the passions. After the example of certain eccentric and superficial philosophers of the day, he too aspired to construct for himself an internal world, wherein he might dwell and move *con methodo* in perpetual equilibrium, perpetual calm scrutiny, indifferent to the tumults and sorrows of the vulgar crowd (130).]

For the protagonist’s individuation from “the vulgar crowd,” overcoming the state of decadence appears to be a necessary process. Giorgio’s intellectual capacity “surpassing [...] the normal individual” allows him to convert sensual pleasure into positive pain (130). What the oxymoronic process of the conversion suggests is the creation of a new value, as seen in Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* who advocates pain for humanity: “Creating – that is the greatest salvation from suffering, and life’s alleviation. But for the creator to appear, suffering itself is needed, and much transformation” (“Thus Spake Zarathustra” 92). Thus, Giorgio consciously alters his perception of Ippolita and views her “exclusively from the sexual point of view” (149). Now she appears to be: “l’essere

inferiore, privo d'ogni spiritualità, semplice strumento di piacere e di lascivia, strumento di ruina e di morte" (184; "the inferior creature, without spiritual value, a mere instrument of pleasure and lust, an instrument of ruin and of death" 149). Reduced to "[la] vita corporea inferiore" (187; "the lower instincts of life" 151), ironically, Ippolita mirrors Giorgio's *own* decadence and their complicity reveals to him "una specie di dipendenza organica" (186; "a sort of organic dependence on one another" 151). To break through his decadence, Giorgio attributes his increasing hatred to her social and cultural otherness stemming from her background. Ippolita's bourgeois upbringing in the popular district, Trastevere in Rome, and the ultra-Catholic background with its fanaticism about "a tutte le pratiche esterne della Chiesa" (227; "all external ritual of the Church" 189) are extrinsic and incompatible to Giorgio. In contrast, he is deeply immersed in the "l'eredità mistica" (218; "hereditary mysticism" 181) that valorizes symbols and abstractions of rituals belonging to the ascetic tradition of the Latin Church (181). The Catholic hegemony, he believes, has marginalized "tutte le sensualità del culto più violente e più delicate" (218; "all the extreme and refined sensuousness of the cult" 181).

Furthermore, the narrative implies that the decadent protagonist's individualization from the vulgarity of the masses entails a process of the derationalization of the self. Corresponding to the theory of liminality, Giorgio undergoes a transitional phase that confuses quotidian norms and values during an uncanny religious ritual. Imploring the Virgin to serve as their savior, a frenzied religious procession reveals to Giorgio a realm of irrationality. In this nightmarish pandemonium, the group of pilgrims incarnates "mostri dellla miseria umana [...] alla bestia immonda e alla

material escrementale” (266; “human monstrosities [...] sunk to the level of vermin” 225), with connotations of deformed physique and shame. Momentarily, he is enraptured by “l’ideale <dionisiaco>” (219; “the ‘Dionysian’ ideal” 181) that he finds in their delirium. Yet, “un popolo senza nome, partecipando a un rito d’origine oscurissima” (252; “a nameless people, participating in rites of most obscure origin” 211), denotes a fathomless primitiveness that totally rejects his ontological ground:

Il sento ch’io ho del mio essere è simile a quello che può avere un uomo il quale, condannato a restare su un piano di continuo ondeggiante e pericolante, senta di continuo mancargli l’appoggio, dovunque egli posi il piede. (256)

[I feel like a man condemned to stand upon a perpetually oscillating surface, and who feels the ground give way beneath his feet wherever he may place them (215).]

Refusing to identify himself with the blind masses, D’Annunzio’s hero resonates with Nietzsche’s critique of Wagnerian musical grandeur. In “The Case of Wagner” (1888), Nietzsche openly expresses a rejection of the delirium transmitted by music, and scorns the Christian principle that demands the listeners’ unquestioned surrender – an invisible thrust formulated as “you ought to, and must *believe*” (161). For Nietzsche, such psychological domination exercised by art (and religion) can be called decadence, because its allurements not only intoxicates but also de-individualizes a human being into the mass:

Life, *equal* vitality, the vibration and exuberance of life pushed back into the smallest forms; the rest, *poor* in life. Everywhere paralysis, arduousness, torpidity or hostility and chaos: both more and more obvious the higher one ascends in forms of organization. The whole no longer lives at all: it is composite, calculated, artificial, and artifact. (170)

The delirious procession has the same effect on Giorgio. Its abject imagery awakens his despair for his lukewarm life and the desire to kill himself. In this sense, death signifies a

haven for an individual who is not subsumed into a faceless mass. As exemplified in Giorgio, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents always find their *raison d'être* in isolation from the “rest” of the social masses. As Spackman observes, decadent individualists desire to be at “the end of the lineage” precisely due to their self-consciousness of being unique (39). Even beyond a paradigm of Decadentism, Giorgio’s desperation to escape the morbid masses (as a metaphor for detestable mediocrity) dismantles the threats of modernity that fundamentally equate a culture of the masses with an undermining of superior individuals. Following Nietzsche, the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were indeed preoccupied with a crisis of individualism, as interpreted in works such as José Ortega y Gasset’s *The Revolt of the Masses* (1929) and Karl Mannheim’s *Ideology of Utopia* (1929).

In this context, Ippolita is the incarnation of a modern threat that endangers the autonomy of the individual. To conquer his “un nuovo mondo” (214; “new world” 177), Giorgio believes in the legitimacy of double suicide. The desire for absolute asceticism apparently diverges from *fin-de-siècle* Decadent sensibilities. Self-castigation presupposes that the underlying mentality in Giorgio is, in fact, highly moralistic, while tentative decadence helps develop that innate quality. Repetitive enunciations of hatred have an incantatory effect on Giorgio’s determination at the crescendo: “La terribile contaminatrice non era soltanto l’ostacolo alla vita ma ben anche l’ostacolo alla morte: a quella morte. Ella era la Nemica d’entrambi” (334; “The terrible corruptrice was not only a stumbling-block to life, but also an obstacle to death – to that death. She was an arch-enemy of both one the other” 274). Simultaneously, Giorgio’s contemplation

appears highly analytical. The rhetoric of hatred, despite its compulsiveness, suggests his rational faculty:

Ella aveva ora tutte le secuzioni e tutte le sapienze; ella aveva appunto quella bellezza che colpisce gli uomini al passaggio e li turba a dentro e risveglia nel sangue l'implacabile brama. (367)

[She was by this time, versed in every seduction, every art; her beauty was of the kind that conquers men at a blow, excites them, and kindles the most devouring passion in their blood (302).]

The combination of the details and the abstraction underwrites the protagonist's intellect.

At the same time, the avalanche of hyperbolic statements traverses his internal voice; it rather shows off the excessive artificiality of his linguistic décor:

[E]lla portava occulto nella sua sostanza un morbo che pareva talvolta illuminare misteriosamente la sua sensibilità; ella aveva a volta a volta i languori della malattia e le veemenze della salute; ella era, infine, sterile. – Si adunavano dunque in lei le virtù sovane delle donne destinate a dominare il mondo col flagello della lor bellezza impure. (367-368)

[Deep in her being she bore a malady which seemed sometimes to render her sensibility marvelously acute; she would exhibit in turn the languors of illness and the vehemence of health. In her, therefore, were united all the sovereign qualities of the women to whom it is given to hold the world in bondage under the scourge of their impure beauty (302).]

This misogynist passage quickly moves on to the denouement. In its absolute hostility, the third-person narrative reflects not only the protagonist's individual sensibilities but also the morbid aestheticism shared by the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents. Both qualities inaugurate the *fin-de-siècle* signature value that separates a man from the crowd. The paradox of the double suicide can be explained as a fear of split personalities; Ippolita is in fact a figurative double, the Doppelgänger, who shares with Giorgio a sin of self-indulgence. As a *femme fatale*, she constructs an almost chiasmic mirror corresponding to his fate rooted in his own sensual beauty and the "i languori della malattia" (367;

“languors of illness” 302). To overcome the lasciviousness exerted by Ippolita, Giorgio’s own death cannot be avoided. The last scene reads abruptly:

– Assassino! – urlò sentendosi afferrare per i capelli, stramazando al suolo su l’orlo dell’abisso, perduta. [...] E precipitarono nella morte avvinti. (382)

[‘Murderer!’ she shrieked again, seized by the hair, thrown on her knees at the very edge of the abyss – lost. [...] Then they crashed down heading into death, locked in that fierce embrace (315).]

The drastic measure of self-annihilation, in its finality, separates Giorgio from the masses.

In sum, *Il Trionfo della Morte* concretizes the notion that being an individual is not an *a priori* condition innate to man. In the modern world governed by the masses, individualism entails, to borrow Nietzsche’s term, the will to power, to wrestle against the temptation to fall into collectivity. Decadent indulgence, on the other hand, provides a detouring itinerary in which the individual can grope for a way to escape the “artificial paradise.”

The Quest for the Modern Self: Individualism in Meiji Japan

Fin-de-siècle Decadence flourished in the elaborative aestheticization of the modern self-consciousness and material experiences. For the Decadents, the notion of individuality remained unquestioned and was rather preposterously assumed as an *a priori* resource for their privilege. It goes without saying that performativity in Baudelairean and Wildean dandies exemplifies an outspoken form of modern individuality and individualism as they demarcate themselves from what they see as the banality of bourgeois social life and mass culture. *Fin-de-siècle* Decadence was then the aesthetic movement that reflected a modern individualism nourished paradoxically by the

raising bourgeois economy, while the advocates of Decadentism were simultaneously the manifest consciousness that refuted it.

This quintessential correlation between Decadence and social maturity as observed in Western Europe, however, was not evinced by Japanese decadent literature in the Meiji period. After the inauguration of the modern nation-state in 1868, the Meiji was a most tumultuous transitional period as Japanese society began to import the concept of individualism into its continuing prevalence of feudalism as the economic principle. Therefore, for Japanese Marxist writers such as Miyamoto Yuriko, in that social stage where full-fledged individuals were not even acknowledged to exist, the European notion of Decadence meant nothing but empty nomenclature (14). Miyamoto's criticism against the Japanese writers of the late Meiji period debunks not only the incongruity of Decadentism without the socio-economic milieus and maturities achieved by France and Britain by the mid 1850s, but also the philosophical concept of an individuality that was nearly invisible in the social sphere (14).

Individualism was not wholly unknown, however. In the Meiji period, the ideas of the new individualism began to emerge in social discourse in close relation with concepts drawn from the indigenous tradition of Shintōism, as well as with the other Asian systems of thought including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Suzuki 165). None of these religious principles became dominant as a dogma throughout Japan's history; instead, their universal egalitarian ideas persisted as a philosophy for secular life, especially before the emergence of a merchant class in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) (Suzuki 169). These religions were widely embraced and disseminated the utopic idea of human emancipation from the constraint of social hierarchies (169).

Throughout the ages, Japanese concepts of individualism have been heavily conditioned by the political and cultural currents and by foreign-imported systems of thought. Janet Walker traces the origin of Japanese individualism back to the aristocratic cultures that were dominant from A.D. 700 to 1200 (4). In literature, the characters Ariwara no Narihira in *Ise monogatari* [The Tale of Ise] and Prince Genji in *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] formed an archetype of individuality within the reticent Heian court life. Surprisingly, these heroes already had displayed the sensibilities commonly observed in the modern decadents. Genji's self-consciousness as an off-centered political figure, his dandyism, and his love for his own beautified space filled with aesthetic objects, together anticipate the common denominators of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents. However, acclaim for his individuality declined when Confucianism dominated the intellectual discourse and regarded Genji's disposition as effeminate and detrimental to the social decency (Tanabe 9). In the subsequent age of warriors, the intellectual discourses continuously valorized masculinity and asceticism over femininity and hedonism. Furthermore, Confucianism, along with Buddhism, consolidated the social and familial hierarchies. Under these cultural conditions, individualism was viewed as injurious to the warriors who were rigidly stratified by the class systems.

The modern notion of individuality was born out of the country's adaptation of the Western notion of *keimō* (Enlightenment). Nevertheless, the Meiji government utilized "the old samurai virtues of loyalty, brevity, and obedience to the emperor," for the sake of its effective governance of the militants and the general public (Walker 24). The official imposition of loyalty was apparently contradictory to the spirit of Enlightenment; however, the notion of loyalty was incorporated into Enlightenment

philosophy by Fukuzawa Yukichi, descendent of a former samurai (warrior) family. His book *Gakumon no susume* [An Encouragement of Learning] (1876) reveals his urgency about advocating education as a way to break through the rigid social hierarchies established during the Edo period. Influenced by Samuel Smile's *Self-Help* (1859, translated into Japanese in 1871) and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859, translated in 1871), Fukuzawa envisioned that the genuine independence and intelligence of the modern human being could save Japan from a despotic government (17-19). In addition, he clearly differentiated the notion of an independence that conforms to the social order from an independence that merely encourages anti-social individualism. What he saw as modern individuals were then expected to become a prominent social component by virtue of their rationality and independence as used for the sake of developing the young nation. Fukuzawa's utilitarian vision of individualism persisted not only during the Meiji period but also throughout the nationalist-militant governance of the nation that underscored the necessity of patriotism, especially during the interwar period between 1894 and 1905, between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War (Walker 26).

The Japanese general public, however, defied the limited "official" notion of individuality. In *Injurious to Public Morals* (1984), Jay Rubin interprets Japan's individualism as greatly stimulated both by the victory in the Russo-Japanese War and BY the reception of European literature. In addition, the widespread optimism of the postwar years nurtured political liberalism. Saionji Kinmochi, a pro-Western prime minister who sympathized with European culture, was prominent in changing the conservative Meiji politics which had long been dominated by oligarchs who regarded

individualism as “pernicious” (Rubin 59). Not only in the political arena but also in public discourses, gradually the idea of individualism became widely accepted. However, it was then concretely understood in terms of the enjoyment of life, instead of education and the moralistic sense (Rubin 59). Although the older generation perceived this newer perspective as harmful to everyday life, the younger generation welcomed it.

Consequently, young people no longer felt guilty in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and began to seek the meaning of life in “free love and women’s liberation which clashed with the traditional family system” (Rubin 59). This rising liberalism radically opposed the Confucian moral valorization of filial piety, respect for social hierarchies, and fidelity in marriage.

One of the changes brought by about the newer concept of individualism was the Japanese public’s perception of love as a form of personal fulfillment. Before the Meiji period, under the orthodoxy of Confucian morality the notion of love was not openly accepted, but was viewed as a selfish “satisfaction of sensual desires” and an obstacle to the “pursuit of [Confucian] knowledge” (Walker 12). The concept of *ren’ai* (love) was introduced into Japanese discourse by a humanist thinker, Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894), for whom love between a man and a woman is an invaluable experience because it emancipates humanity not only from social constraints, but also from the phenomenal world at large. Love is a manifestation of our internal life that promotes our “self-definition” and “self-affirmation” (Walker 82). Idealizing love as a transcendental inner essence, Kitamura believed that human corporeality can be ennobled by sexual love. In response to moralist criticism, his impassioned essay, “Jinseini aiwatarutowa nannoiizo”

[What Does It Mean by Challenging Life?] (1893), argued that human beings are governed by the law of Nature:

一個人は肉をもて成りたる人間あることを記憶せよ。彼はすべての愛縛、すべての執着、すべての官能的感覚に囲まれてあることを記憶せよ。 (57)

[Remember that an individual is a human being who is made of flesh. Remember, he is surrounded by all the yoke of love, by all the attachment (to the physical world), and by all the sensual senses.]

Beginning his contemplation on the nature of love, as expressed in the above claim, Kitamura concluded that an individual is nothing but a beholder of sensorial flesh. Following that view, the philosopher Takayama Chogyū (1871-1904) radicalized the concept of an individual with his insistent emphasis on physical pleasure. His Nietzschean exaltation of the human life instinct was a drastic challenge against the Confucian tradition that generally stifles pleasure as an ontological telos. Takayama's position became controversial as it evinced the "strong subjectivity" of an individual (Suzuki 178-179). Arguing that the traditional ideas on morality and epistemology provide only relative views of the phenomenal world, Takayama extolled sensual pleasures and desires as the ultimate measure for humanity. In the well-known essay "Biteki seikatsuo ronzu" [Theorizing Aesthetic Life] (1901), he asserts that human instinct is the only resource for genuine happiness in life:

何の目的あり手この世に産出せられたるかは吾人の知る所に非ず、然れども生まれたる後の吾の目的は言うまでもなく幸福なるにあり。幸福とは何ぞや、吾人の信ずるところを以て見れば本能の満足即ちこれのみ。本能とは何ぞや、人性本然の要求これ也。人性本然の要求を満足せしむるもの、ここにこれを美的生活という。 (79)

[Although the reason why I was born in this world is beyond my knowledge, it goes without saying that the purpose of life after birth lies in happiness. What is happiness? According to my belief, the only thing is the satisfaction of instinct. What is instinct? It is desire intrinsic in a human being. What satisfies human desire can be named the aesthetic life.]

Inspired by this perspective, Takayama's contemporary, Kinoshita Naoe, further vindicated the correlation between love and sexuality in his novel, *Zange* [The Repentant] (1906). From both naturalist as well as aestheticist standpoints, Kinoshita explained that sexual love is a momentary manifestation of the universal cosmology in a human body. He suggested that every individual bears a responsibility to pass down his or her life to the next generation through their body; therefore, love and sex are essential catalysts that sustain the "eternal life" of the human race (Suzuki 181). In this light, for Kinoshita, restrictive modern institutions are incompatible with the natural law of human beings and only stifle it (Suzuki 181).

From literary perspectives, Naturalism fueled the Japanese inquiry into individualism and the refutation of Confucianism.⁹ In the wake of Naturalism in Japan, Hasegawa Tenkei, one of the school's most prominent proponents, argued that the contemporary corruption of traditional norms and values was an utter "disillusionment" (*genmetsu*) (Rubin 60). Yet, the Naturalism movement in Japan itself failed to grasp social realities and only sought to depict an alleged "truth" in everyday life.¹⁰ Kobayashi Hideo critiques the fundamental absence of the "*shakaikasareta watakushi*" [socialized "I"] in the Japanese Naturalists' works (381). His essay, "Shishōsetsuron" [On the I-Novel] (1935), condemns the Japanese Naturalists' misunderstanding and their misappropriation of French Naturalism, without the necessary theorized realities and subjectivities as the foremost narrative agency to portray their contemporary social life. Kobayashi's accusation also critiques the Japanese Naturalists' "I" as it was born out of "the feudalistic remnant of the self" (395), and thereby, as he sees it, has drifted away from the narrative devices in its French predecessor. Consequently, unlike the work of

André Gide, the Japanese I-novel gave excessive credit to the merely self-conscious “I” rather than to the socialized self (395).

The *fin-de-siècle* Decadents’ seclusion from the surrounding populace allowed their identity to remain intact, sustaining the vigorous private self to polarize it from the public. In 1910s Japan, as a latecomer to modernity, the two domains were yet to be split clearly. Although resisting the utilitarian superstructure of society, in Japan the notion of Decadence in narrative cannot refer to an anti-bourgeois ideology. It is necessary to underscore that the Decadent sensibilities, before the emergence of the proto-capitalist economic system, were germinated by other oppressive factors: the long-lasting feudalism and the rigorous patriarchy in family life.

The Decadent Self as Un-Collated History: Individuality, Love, New Language in Baien

Published after the peak of Naturalism (1907-08), Morita Sōhei’s *Baien* (1910) dramatizes the difficulty of constructing the socialized self in the initial era of Japan’s modernity. To portray this dilemma, Morita designs the story in the Naturalist mode of narrative, and simultaneously borrows D’Annunzio’s sensual aestheticism. These double faces of the novel, I argue, attest to a transitional phase of the socialized self, as the narrative amalgamates the repressed expression of “I” and the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents’ and Aesthetes’ highly subjective configuration of the self. The novels of the so-called social group *kōtōyūmin* in the late Meiji period, including Morita’s mentor Natsume Sōseki’s *Sorekara* [And Then] (1909), Iwano Hōmei’s *Tandeki* [The Indulgence] (1909), and Nagai Kafū’s *Reishō* [The Sneers] (1910), display a symbiosis of Naturalism and Symbolism/Aestheticism that is not prevalent in *fin-de-siècle* European Decadence.

Unlike the later writers of Decadence in the 1920s and forward, including Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Satō Haruo who well appropriate the aesthetic narcissism of *fin-de-siècle* Europe, Morita is technically coarse and his daring imitation of D'Annunzian narrative is overemphasized in *Baien*. Nevertheless, the novel showcases a hinterland of Japan's modernity by depicting the coexisting social conditions and the multiple consciousnesses of everydayness. To concretize these elements, the novel empirically incorporates multiple cleavages as observed in such differences as generations, localities, and moralities. The individualism of the protagonist, as discussed for *Il Trionfo della Morte*, is not an innate human disposition; instead, it is heavily conditioned by the narrative collage of multiple social realities.

The first several chapters of *Baien* pointedly depict the backwardness of rural life in Japan's early twentieth century. From the onset, the protagonist Yōkichi's return to his village home after an absence of three years announces the psychological distance between him as the urban-bred intellectual and the feudal locality he is revisiting. For example, an episode about a legendary curse in the family underscores the pre-modern irrationality that governs the cultural logic still operative in rural life (24-27). Having been exposed to urban life, Yōkichi no longer believes in the superstition (28); instead, what he displays is a hypochondriac tendency:

やや長じては、そんな家の祟りと云ふやうなものに対する恐怖の念は薄らいだが、その代わり疾病の遺伝がありはせぬかと云ふことが気にかかり出した。手を切り足を断ち、木の断株の様に寝た切りで、何から何まで人の世話になつて、それでぢりぢりと命数の尽きるのを待つ。そんな事が堪へられようか。いやそうなるまで、かうして手を束ねて待つてゐる方が、尚更堪へられない。(22)

[After growing up, my fear of the curse on the family was alleviated. But in turn, I began to worry about the possibility of hereditary disease. With neither hands nor legs, I wait for my death, being tied to the bed as though I were a stump and taken care of by someone. Can I endure such a thing? No, it is even worse to

wait for my own death without doing anything.]

Being trapped by his unreasonable worry, Yōkichi juxtaposes it with another concern, that of being possibly a bastard child, as a result of his mother's infidelity (20). He concludes that the familial disgrace and his hypochondria originate from "fate" and that his mother's sinful karma has been passed down to himself (43). His selfhood is visible only in his fear of deviating from patriarchal convention: thus, his possibly illegitimate birth can be "一身の破滅" (29; "apocalyptic to his entire life). Unable to forge a vigorous self-image, Yōkichi expediently reasons that his own degenerative life is a result of "すべての理想に対する信仰を失ったため" (30; "the loss of faith in all the ideals"). While the "ideals" can be interpreted only as norms and values within the rural patriarchal standard, Yōkichi himself cannot play a responsible paternal role, for his attitudes toward his rural wife, Sumie, and their new-born daughter amalgamate pity with disgust (36-37). As they are cousins, the couple's biological relationship is quite close, yet, their marriage fails to tie them together as modern individuals: "要吉は物足らなかった。[...] 男と女とが差し向かひで坐つて、誰の前で話しても差支へのないやうな話でなけりや出来なくなる。それで子供だけは生む。[...] 要吉は取返しの附かぬ物を落して来たやうな心持がした。" (38; "Yōkichi could not be satisfied [with her]. [...] The man and the woman sit face-to-face and cannot engage in anything but formal conversation, which could be heard by anyone. Then, the only thing she can do is give birth to a child. [...] Yōkichi felt as though he had lost an invaluable thing in life"). His frustration renders him unable to partake in his patriarchal responsibility, as well as in their emotional life. The protagonist's decadence can be then attributable to the absence of a vigorous self:

要吉も女の顔の曇ったのが目に着いた。直ぐ女の胸で思つてゐそうなことが要吉のやうな毎も境遇に支配されて、自分で境遇を作ることの出来ない男は、むら

むらと力の抜けた怒気を発して、何うともならばなれと投げやる外はなかった。

[Yōkichi notices that her face is clouded. Immediately he can imagine what she thinks in her mind. He feels that he can neither help it nor ask for her help. As a result of this, a man like Yōkichi, who is always dominated by circumstances and unable to change them, merely renounces everything as it goes, while eliciting spiritless anger.]

Simultaneously, the morbid nature of the social conventions in the rural patriarchy constitutes an obstacle to the protagonist's psychological exuberance as a modern individual. As Sugiura Minpei points out, Japanese intellectuals opted for their version of decadence largely due to their hatred of the feudalistic family system (210). Although *fin-de-siècle* Decadence was a critico-cultural enterprise underpinned by the self as a social component, the Meiji discourse of Decadence, as seen in *Baien*, almost exclusively addresses the issue of morality in light of conventional patriarchy as the transcendental authority.

By juxtaposing the rural and urban, the narrative consciously dramatizes the protagonist's ambiguous self as being torn between the two social spaces. The subsequent chapters of the novel depict the socio-cultural conditions in Tokyo, fundamentally represented as an uncanny, unfathomable embodiment of modernity. Realist portrayals of multiple spaces are in general foreign to the aesthetics of Decadence as it tends to focus on a personal space, such as a house embellished with ancient artifacts. Nevertheless, as also seen in *Il Trionfo della Morte* and *I Romanzi della Rosa* series, Morita shows Yōkichi's psychological dispositions by juxtaposing different social milieus that contributing to causing his dilemma. In this conjunction, the author owes much to the scientific methods of Naturalism in Balzac, Stendhal, and Tolstoy.¹¹ In *Baien*, the two modern spaces cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy, especially as they do not present the rural home as a place of spiritual emancipation, while depicting

the urban space as artificial and alien. As the opening chapter shows, the physical home no longer promises any spiritual sanctuary but elicits a sense of despair and impasse. In contrast, the vignette of central Tokyo reinforces the city's technological modernity and the dislocation of the traditional human psyche. The title *Baien* implies a leitmotif of dull smoke, the unusable portion of modern productivity, lending its image to the setting of the novel, wherein the city appears to be an uncanny modern entropy:

要吉は柱に凭れかかつたまま、砲兵工廠の高い煙突から代赭色した汚い煙がわくわくと立上つて、横に一町許りなだれた末は、空を吹く強い風に吹散らされて消えて行く様を見詰めた。(132)

[Leaning on a column, Yōkichi stared at reddish dirty smoke rising from the high chimney of the arsenal. The current of smoke, after floating about some distance, was being blown away by gusty wind in the sky.]

The passage exemplifies Yōkichi's relentless sentiment of uncertainty, similar to the *fin-de-siècle* psyche of *ennui*. The scene also foreshadows his relationship with Tomoko, a quintessential urban *femme fatale*. The outpouring smoke from the arsenal synchronizes with the protagonist's uneasy feeling for the heroine before their uncertain rendezvous. Tomoko's mysterious behaviors function as a synecdoche for the cityscape that can be likened to a labyrinth. Her daring seduction and evasiveness provide Yōkichi with the experience of modernity itself while it disorients his ontological foundation.

The urban modernity represented by the uncanny *femme fatale* situates the novel in an interstice between Naturalism and Symbolism. With meticulous details, the narrative presents the author's slanderous suicide attempt, as though the Naturalist narrative seeks for causalities in certain life events. Simultaneously, Tomoko's presence announces the emergence of the new femininity in Japan's urban space. Cast in the image of the Sphinx, whose riddle deludes a passerby, Tomoko embodies the uncertainty

in modernity as she represents both rationality and the seduction of materialism through her quick-witted intellect and lascivious body. Shattering the conservative Meiji norms, for example, she spontaneously kisses Yōkichi (121). Yet, soon after her passion captivates him, she repeatedly sabotages their rendezvous by failing to appear and instead keeps sending him delirious letters. At times, she deliberately employs *sōrō bun*, a masculine writing style obsolete in early twentieth century Japan after the literary modernization called the *genbun itchi* movement (the synthesis of written and spoken languages) took place. Her conscious use of masculine expressions eradicates her femininity, and its authoritative tone displays her desire to exercise power over him. Also revealing her passionate love for him, the tonality in her passages is threatening as well. In a closing line, her writing expresses an intent to blackmail him: “私に取りては死が唯一の厳粛なることに残り居候。我寂滅の日は、やがて君が寂滅の日と覚悟したまふや” (191; “For me, death is the only solemn possibility. Please make your resolution, the day of my death is ultimately your day to retire from this world”).

Morita’s linguistic dexterity with hyperbolic expressions upset some conservative literati, including his mentor, Natsume Sōseki, who noted his dissatisfaction with Morita in a diary entry. Although lengthy, the passage is worth quoting here:

煤煙は激烈なり。[...] この男とこの女のパッションは普通の人間の胸のうちに呼応する声を見出しがたし。[...] 彼等が入らざるパッションを燃やして、本気で狂気じみた芝居をしてゐるのを気の毒に思ふなり。此男と此女は世紀末の人工的パッションの為に囚はれて、しかも、それに得意なり。それが自然の極端と思へり。だから気の毒である。神聖の愛は文字を離れ言説を離る。ハイカラにして能く味はひ得んや。行雲流水、自然本能の発動はこんなものではない。

(“Nikki,” cited by Itō 131)

[*Baien* is extremely violent. [...] We cannot find any realistic voice in this man and woman. [...] I feel pity for their burning, unnecessary passion and acting out an insane play. This man and woman are infatuated with the artificial *fin-de-siècle* passion, and they are proud of it. They believe that it is an extreme of nature.

Genuine love transcends language. It is not experienced by mere westernization (of the language). In reality, natural human instinct does not manifest itself like this.]

Sōseki's 1909 novel, *Sorekara* [And Then] expresses similar views through his protagonist, Daisuke: “彼は西洋の小説を読むたびに、そのうちに出て来る男女の情話が、あまりに露骨で、あまりに放肆で、かつあまりに直線的に濃厚なのを平生から怪しんでいた” (199; “He was always being puzzled by the ways in which western love stories of men and women are too explicit, unrestrained, and straightforwardly sensual”). For the fulfillment of love, then, Daisuke has “舶来の台詞を用いる意志は毫もなかった” (199; “absolutely no necessity to use imported expressions”). These critical statements by Sōseki, who was undoubtedly one of the founding fathers of modern Japanese literature, attest to the fact that Morita's linguistic novelty and portrayal of love excessively imitated the *fin-de-siècle* artificiality of literary language, and that this style was yet to meet literary expectations in Meiji Japan.

Although Morita's daringness influenced by D'Annunzio infuriated his conservative maestro, the linguistic newness in *Baien* deserves our recognition for its contributions to literary modernity. Above all, the representation of the heroine Tomoko's craftsmanship of the affair, as well as her mysteriousness and implicit arrogance, helps reveal the emergence of the New Woman and provides a glimpse of the new aestheticism in Japan. Saeki Junko comments on Tomoko's complexities as a breakthrough among female characters in Meiji literature. Unlike the stereotypical portrayal of women – as either prostitutes or pure, virtuous women – Tomoko as an ordinary university student possesses a powerful coquetry and a mesmerizing rhetoric of love. These had been characteristics of “*kurouto*” (“professional women in the pleasure

districts”) in pre-modern Japan; in Tomoko, however, the borderline between an amateur and a professional disappears (326): her frequent and nonchalant lies, broken promises, and compulsive as well as dramatic expressions of emotion can blur the archetypal female boundaries but suggest a ubiquity of these tendencies. According to Saeki, these traits are an innovative female attribute that challenges the Meiji progressivist discourse, which degrades *geisha* and *yūjo* (prostitutes) (324). In recollection of “the *Baien* Incident,” Itō Sei also mentions that Morita had difficulty in finding a European literary model that portrays an impassioned woman like Hiratsuka Haruko, on whom Tomoko was based and that following Sōseki’s suggestion, Morita read Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* and Sudermann’s *The Cat’s Bridge*, yet he found no female character whose personality resembles Haruko (118).

By expropriating the D’Annunzian hyperbolic narrative, Morita succeeds in not only portraying the forensic lover, but also delineating the protagonist’s narrative self in relation to her. The heroine’s diabolic femininity casts a liminal effect upon his *naïveté* and thereby provides him with a pathway to attain self-knowledge. Similar to Giorgio in *Il Trionfo della Morte*, in the course of recuperation from the decadence, Yōkichi strives to break the effect of her allure, and realizes that his self exists in a chiasmic relation with the woman he desires. While the *femme fatale* Tomoko exercises her “monomaniac” nature (211), it actually reflects his own psychological sickness:

今日迄自分が女に依て与へられたものは、不安と猜疑との長い連続に過ぎない。
[...] つまり自分は犠牲に過ぎない。而も同時にその目撃者だから堪らない。これが恋だらうか。こんな恋はない。一種の病気だ。昔から自分一人の病気だ。
(242)

[What is given by the woman is only a repetition of anxiety and doubt. [...]] In other words, I am a mere victim. At the same time, it is unbearable that I am also

a witness of that fact. Is this love? There is no love like this. This is a kind of sickness. From the beginning, this is my own sickness.]

While the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature employs contagious sickness as a leitmotif (Spackman 63), Morita's rhetoric of sickness provides a narrative catalyst that assists in his protagonist's ontological self-realization. Likewise, Tomoko's desire for their double suicide appears to be a dangerous stratagem that entraps him:

実際、自分は女を殺さうと言った。そんな恐ろしいことを口にする自分は、それじゃ怪物か。いや、犠牲に過ぎない。あはれな性に過ぎない。あの女はあの女自身のために死ぬ。死はあの女にとって一種の勝利である。それに自分は – 自分はあの女を手には掛けるかも知れない。が、殺されるものはあの女じゃない。自分自身である。
(259)

[I expressed my volition to kill her. Am I a monster so as to utter such a terrifying thing? No, I am merely a victim. I am only a pitiable victim. That woman will die for the sake of herself. For her, death is a kind of triumph. And then, I might slaughter her. Yet, the one to be killed is not her. It is myself.]

Despite the awareness of the paradox and danger, as an avid reader of the European Decadence, Yōkichi is fascinated with the dangerous aestheticization of their death. Borrowing a model from *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Morita's narrative dramatizes the protagonist's lust, but because they do not consummate their love, the passion transmutes into an empty linguistic play. Although Yōkichi perceives himself as “ローマンスに於いて[の]主人公” (259; “the protagonist of the romance”), the *tour de force* of their passion exists only in the virtual play within the narrative décor. It is notable that Yōkichi's self-consciousness comes to light most prominently through the imitation of D'Annunzian locution, and thereby performatively enunciates the self:

私は詩人である。藝術の徒である。美の崇拜者である。君を殺す、君を滅する瞬間に於いて、われ恋人は何んなに美しく我眼に映ずるか。総て美しきものはその滅ぶる前の瞬間に於いてもっとも美はしいといふにあらざるや。私は許されざるものを見る第一の人であらなければならぬ。
(222-223)

[I am a poet. I am a follower of art. I am a worshipper of beauty. I kill you; at

the moment of murdering, how beautiful my lover would appear to me. I should say that everything beautiful reaches the peak of beauty upon perishing. I should be the first and only person who sees that taboo.]

The passage is reminiscent of Giorgio's fetishism for Ippolita's body. The passage also inaugurates one of the earliest hyperbolic aestheticist declarations in Japan, far earlier than Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's appropriation of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics in the 1920s. In the expression of grotesque beauty, Morita suggests his alliance, not only with D'Annunzio, but also with such writers and poets as Poe, Baudelaire, Swinburne, and Wilde.

As Kamei Hideo examines in *Transformation of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature* (2002), subjectivities in early Meiji narrative still were ambiguous, lacking a clear borderline between the subject and the object, and multiple human consciousnesses were liquidized (Kamei 138-140). In the light of this history, Yōkichi's lucid enunciation of the self *vis-à-vis* the object of desire brought a tremendous paradigm shift to Japanese narrative. The narrative subjectivity in *Baien* is then a synthetic outcome made possible by the author's narrative *res gestae* as the objective factuality, adorned by the subjective formation of the protagonist. As observed in the aforementioned Yōkichi's monologue, the author often shifts his Naturalist verisimilitudes in third-person narrative to a stunningly self-conscious as well as performatively uttered first-person narrative through the protagonist's voice. While the appropriation from D'Annunzian locution can be detected in such cases, human consciousnesses in Japanese narrative came to life through the Aestheticist embellishment of first-person voices.

The final chapter of *Baien*, as noted, recounts the couple's failed suicide in a scene that is set in a mountainous location. Unlike the previous chapters that display Morita's appropriations of D'Annunzio in terms of sensual language, here the denouement foregrounds the author's original, as well as hermeneutical, statement for the *de facto* incident. In contrast to the last scene of *Il Trionfo della Morte*, in which the dramatic double murder-suicide is accomplished at a precipice adjacent to the Adriatic Sea, the snowy mountain in *Baien* resembles Dante's *selva oscura* where spiritual and physical uncertainties disorient the poet's being. Similarly, in the novel, death, as the way to articulate the self, is suspended between a series of dialectics: to accomplish and to abolish; to yield to natural death and to overcome it by the will to power. These dialectics lead to Yōkichi's reflection: “雪崩の下に葬られる – 自然の手に身を委ねるほど容易いものはない。自然の前に人間の意志はない [...]。凡てを混沌の裡に葬ることが出来る。暗黒の裡に – ああ、未だに此处に最後の手段が残つてゐた！” (295; “We might be buried under an avalanche – there must be no other easy way than to concede to Nature. In front of Nature, there is no human will. [...] We can bury everything inside the chaos. Within the darkness – Yes, we still have this last resort!”). Yet, soon after, Yōkichi abruptly decides to discontinue their suicide attempt: “私は生きるんだ。自然が殺せば知らぬこと。私はもう自分ちや死なない。貴方も殺さない” (301; “I do live. I am not sure if Nature kills us or not. I no longer kill myself. I do not kill you either”).

The aborted suicide bears tremendous significance in the history of Japanese literature. The theme of double suicide had seen its culmination in the eighteenth century when Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) incorporated it into his puppet theater of *jōruri*, with such works as “The Love Suicides at Sonezaki” (1703) and “The Love

Suicides at Amijima” (1723). The act of double suicide connotes a couple’s desperate desire to escape social constraints because of their illicit relationship, class differences, and so forth. In a common plot, lovers are forced to kill themselves, for their deaths become a moral obligation when their deeds fail to meet the expectation and teaching dictated by Confucianism. In this context, Yōkichi is a groundbreaking figure whose will disregards the traditional communal norm and value. However, at an intertextual level, the aborted suicide also suggests the protagonist’s (and the author’s) inability to imitate Giorgio’s Nietzschean *Übermensch*. Shortly before making the final resolution, Yōkichi ponders his ontological weakness: “一種の実験として、人殺しの出来るやうな超人でもなければ、又われを忘れて狂暴を敢てするやうな狂人でもない。矢張自分には人間以上の力はなかった。ああ、自分は一生の危機に臨んで居る。” (290; “I am neither a superman who can commit homicide as an experiment, nor a ferocious insane man who can forget myself. In the end, I do not have any extraordinary ability. [...] Alas! I am facing the crisis of my life”). His final decision to renounce his “performance” substantiates the self in narrative, and articulates the meaning of modernity for Japan as an exacerbating delusion for which human beings can no longer indulge in the bliss of eros and thanatos. What replaces suicide is an excessive self-consciousness that seeks for the narcissistic pleasure imagined by tragedy without the physical death (Saeki 336). Without accomplishing their death, *Baien*’s characters are left with neither catharsis nor the sublimation of love:

ああ氷獄！氷獄！女の夢は終に成就した。到頭自分は女に伴れられて氷獄の裡へ来た。－男の心には言ふべからざる歓喜の情が湧いた。最う可い、もう可い！二人は手を取合つたまま、雪の上に坐つてゐた。何にも言ふことはない！

(302)

[Alas, icy prison! Icy prison! Finally the woman’s dream was fulfilled. Finally

I was brought by her to the inside of the icy prison! – Inside the man ineffable delight surged. It does not matter any longer. It is all right! Holding hands together, both of them were sitting on the snow. There is no more to say!]

Their hands held together may suggest the dissolution of the psychological tension between them. Symbolically, their gesture implicates, however, a painful alliance between modern human sensibilities (Yōkichi) and an unfathomable side of modernity (Tomoko). Also semantically, their togetherness connotes an impossibility of singularity in the formation of modern subjectivity. Yōkichi's disavowal of his lucid self is rendered by his truncated suicide, which figuratively laments an invalidity of the traditional modality to take his responsibility in social life. His decision to "live" (301) therefore mirrors the irretrievability of history in the context of modern Japan, while narrating the protagonist's realization that modernity deprives him of the possibility of death as a moral solution. Instead of granting him an escape in death, the unfathomability of modernity, which allows the coexistence of multiple values, compels the protagonist to live with his predicament in his extra-marital relationship with the woman. The absence of the vigorous self and ambivalent representations of the *res gestae* is therefore drawn pointedly from the narrative. Haniya Yutaka's interpretation of Decadence indirectly addresses the issue of the self and representations of physical worlds. He states that the concept of modern Decadence reflects two dimensions of humanity: a human desire to dismantle the internality (the self) and to penetrate the external reality (the objective truth) (214). As a narrative of Decadence, *Baien* explores these issues, and in conclusion proves the impossibility of narrative concretization of the perceiver and the perceived reality.

In contrast with the drastic enactment of the protagonist's subjectivity in *Il Trionfo della Morte*, the more ambiguous self in *Baien* informs the predicament faced by Japanese narrative in the linguistically and literarily transitional late Meiji period. The novel commemorates the interstitial moment through its fusion of multifarious narrative forms and oscillating sensibilities that cannot be fully enunciated through a vigorous self. *Baien* thus is situated between Naturalism and Aestheticism, and thereby anticipates the forthcoming efflorescence of Taishō Decadentism, with such purely Aestheticist writers as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Satō Haruo.

¹ As I discuss in Chapter III, for example, we find in Nagai Kafū's *Reisho* [Sneers] (1909-1910) and Ueda Bin's "Uzumaki" [Spirals] (1910) the sensibilities of dilettantes as latecomers to social and political turmoil in the early Meiji period. In this regard, the decadents and dilettantes are indicative of consciousness of the historico-cultural twilight in the given society.

² See Maruyama Masao's "Fukuzawa ni okeru jitsugaku no tenkai" [The Development of Practical Learning in Fukuzawa], in *Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi]. Maruyama underlines Fukuzawa's pragmatism and opportunism that lead him to negate traditional arts and letters. While paradoxically Fukuzawa favors Japan's mythological narrative, *Kojiki* [The Records of Ancient Matters] (A.D. 712, compiled by Kakinomoto no Yasumaro), he disregards his contemporary arts as useless in the development of modern life.

³ A prominent example is the partial translation of *Il Trionfo della Morte* by Ueda Bin (1905). It displays a daunting attempt to preserve D'Annunzio's Parnassian aestheticism in the Japanese language. See "Enjo monogatari" [The Story of A Sensual Woman] and "Gakusei" [The Voice of Music] that highlight *Il Trionfo della Morte*, in *Ueda Bin Shū* ["The Collected Works of Ueda Bin's Works"] (115-124).

⁴ Translations from *Baien* are mine, unless otherwise noted.

⁵ The Japanese term refers to a kind of people who are materially affluent and erudite, while dissociating themselves from any productive social life.

⁶ These works are especially deemed by Ueda Bin to be D'Annunzio's masterpieces. See *Ueda Bin shū* (124).

⁷ According to Nordau, "ego-mania" is a manifest form of hyper self-consciousness that rejects any reality external to the individual: "the 'I' has actually no knowledge of a 'not-I,' of an external world, and cannot have it because there is no external world at all, that it is only a creation of our mind, existing in our thought as a presentation but not outside our 'I' as a reality" (245).

⁸ Praz maintains that *fin-de-siècle* Decadence is indebted to the morbid tendencies of Romantic sensibility. In his observation, "Decadence" is the aesthetic movement that transmuted the morbidity of Romanticism "into set fashion and lifeless decoration" (xvii).

⁹ In the Edo period, the nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga had already defended the natural self, arguing against the Confucian rejection of individuality (Walker 13). However, my discussion is limited to the critical investigation of modern individuals within the realm of literature.

¹⁰ The vanguard of Japan's Naturalist literature often cited by critics includes Kunikida Doppo's *Musashino* [The Field of Nusashino, 1901]; Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* [*The Broken Commandment*, 1906]; and Tayama Katai's *Futon* [*The Quilt*, 1907]. They are regarded as representative Naturalist works for their depiction of realities.

¹¹ Citing George Lukács's analysis of literary Naturalism, Peter Bürger makes a distinction between "description" and "narration." Bürger states, "[w]hereas in the writings of the great realists the descriptive parts of the work are functionally subordinated to the acting individuals, in Flaubert and in Naturalism generally description becomes an autonomous element in its own right" (103). Similarly, Bürger remarks that in Zola's novels the reader "often remembers the milieu in which the characters move more clearly than the characters themselves" (103). Following these characteristics in Naturalist fiction, I consider that Decadent literature is aligned with the latter case in which the characters' developments and psychology are much more emphasized. In this light, both *Baien* and *Il Trionfo della Morte* definitely fall into the "narration" category of Naturalism.

CHAPTER III

Decadents' Phenomenology of Modernity: Dialogues, Intersubjectivity, and Community as the Consciousness of History

This chapter examines the master narrative of Decadentism as a locus for creating an imaginary community that contests rationalist and dominantly utilitarian modern social realities. My investigation of fictional narratives in this chapter is grounded in the position that the aesthetic movement of Decadence identifies itself fundamentally as the exaltation of individualism. Opposed to this conventional view, yet classified as decadent literature, works by such authors as Giovanni Pascoli, Nagai Kafū, and Ueda Bin construct a dialogic form of narrative that blurs the difference between the self and the other. Underpinned by the primacy of solipsism, *fin-de-siècle* Decadence displayed an opulence of the imagination while playing the role of visionary critic of modern life. The ideal of “art for art’s sake,” credited to Théophile Gautier and his celebrated decadent manifesto of a preface to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1892), privileges a keen perception of external reality *vis-à-vis* material conditions. What the Symbolists and Aestheticists, along with Mallarmé, Baudelaire, and Gautier, exalted was the aesthetics of individualism, which was primarily handed down from the eighteenth-century legacy of Jean Jacques Rousseau.¹ The nineteenth century then refurbished Rousseau’s relatively simplistic individualism with a new linguistic dexterity, advancing the concept of authorial power within artistic production. In the Darwinist Max Nordau’s view, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents were categorized as “ego maniacs” for their drastic individuality, which he also terms “narcissistic solipsism” (Dellamora 530). Insofar as Decadence intended to respond to modernity as an aesthetic project, then, its critical

envisioning of the authorial faculty can be defended as legitimate. Its philosophical posture clearly espoused the Cartesian tradition grounded on the lucid differentiation between subject and object.

Even if the Cartesian dichotomy was a prior assumption for the aesthetic movement, the Pan-European movement of Decadentism was also broad enough to accommodate a wide range of variants. Italian Decadentism (*Il Decadentismo Italiano*), with major proponents such as Pascoli or D'Annunzio, exemplifies the discursive formulation of the local or national movement and therein lacks a goal commensurate with that of French or British Decadentism. This point is partially but succinctly acknowledged by such critics as Marina Paladini Musitelli and Mario Moroni; Italian Decadentism not only aimed at critiquing social values of the time, but also presented “a variety of signs of an epochal crisis of values” (Moroni 69). This observation salvages an undervalued mission of decadent literatures as an open forum where the crisis of modernity can be *intersubjectively* recognized. The response to modernity might imply adherence to tradition and a bygone past, yet without overresisting the irretrievability of history. The poetry and narratives of Italian Decadentism play out nostalgia, quiescent contemplation, and disenchantment with contemporary cultural conditions, while envisioning the future. Without a vehement claim of subjectivity, the intersubjective structure of literary voices was an alternative aesthetic response to modernity.

Communicability among narrative voices is a conspicuous dimension of modern narrative for a number of reasons. Authors consciously dissociate their narrative from the Naturalist obsession with a scientific objectivism that is putatively faithful to social realities. As Stephen Spender's *The Struggle of the Modern* (1963) describes, the most

significant accomplishment by Modernist writers was their paradigm shift – from a firm belief that verisimilitude governs the principle of fiction to an emphasis on language as the resource that creates reality. As a result, what came to foreground narrative is “the mode of perceiving itself [...] as an object of perception” (133). On the same ground, as an anti-mimetic mode of narrative, the dialogism in Decadent literature reveals a mode of authorial perception that no longer presupposes an objective world describable in language. The dialogism in literary discourse is divorced from the Naturalist and Realist induction of external realities and objectivity, precisely for its constant collisions and modifications of meanings. Simultaneously, the dialogism accommodates plural viewpoints while being capable of embedding collective sensibilities that are intersubjectively shared by the participants of a dialogue. From the formalists’ perspective, Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism in “Discourse in the Novel” (1935) points out the heterogeneity within a single literary discourse:

[A] particular belief system belonging to someone else, a particular point of view on the world belonging to someone else, is used by the author because it is highly productive, that is, it is able on the other hand to show the object of representation in a new light [...] and on the other hand to illuminate in a new way the expected literary horizon, that horizon against which the particularities of the teller’s tale are perceivable. (312-313)

In Bakhtin’s theory, “a particular belief system” and “a particular point of view on the world” can include a literary form or a genre from the different periods (390-392). Trans-historical interactions between present and past perspectives, therefore, also construct what he calls dialogism; thanks to the spatial-temporal otherness in a narrative voice, the author may portray an object of representation – for the Decadents, the bourgeois-dominated modern society, for example – from multifarious directions brought about by a temporal hiatus.

The dialogic narratives discussed in this chapter incorporate alterity into their aesthetics of heterogeneity. As an example, Giovanni Pascoli's poetic theory, *Il Fanciullino* [The Little Child] (1897), dramatizes the dialogic interaction of innocence and intellectualism, and two Japanese counterparts, Nagai Kafū's *Reishō* [Sneers] (1910) and Ueda Bin's "Uzumaki" [Spiral] (1910), strongly resonate with Pascolian poetics. Considered as a vanguard of Decadentism in Italy and Japan, these works display various scopes and styles of the *fin-de-siècle* discourse that has been somewhat subsumed by the holistic epithet "decadent." Unlike the extroverted temperaments found in D'Annunzio, Baudelaire, Wilde, and other proto decadents, Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda are distinctively introverted in their aesthetic temperaments. Like Pascoli, who was a "professore piccolo-borghese" ["petit bourgeois professor"] (Salinari 148) and remained in his ivory tower, Kafū and Ueda also were intellectuals whose bourgeois upbringings and university professorships isolated them from socio-economic realities but confined them within their utopian aestheticism.

My analysis of Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda is facilitated by the following philosophical as well as rhetorical discussions of the configuration of otherness: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language; Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenology of alterity; and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia that constructs – to borrow his expression – an "internally persuasive discourse" opposed to "one that is externally authoritative" (345). Their philosophies and theories commonly dwell on the recognition of multiplicities within one single literary discourse. Based on a principle of inclusion, they advocate heterogeneity in the process of the linguistic enunciation of subjectivity within social and literary discourses. As a socio-cultural byproduct, the discourses of

Decadentism by Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda embrace the idea of heterogeneity that helps us understand the cultural politics embedded in narrative voices and their interconnectedness with the other and with external social realities.

This chapter empirically extends the theories of heterogeneity into Decadent literature, and in so doing, attempts to demonstrate the underrepresented mission of Decadentism as a dialogic observer of the given historical moment. My analysis will depend on Merleau-Ponty's elaboration of the plurality of consciousness described in "The Phenomenology of Perception" (1945):

In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are interwoven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person's thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come into being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objection which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws from me thoughts which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time that I lend him thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too. (153)

Merleau-Ponty considers this concept of reciprocity to be the foundational modality of our existence, primarily through our experience of dialogue. Likewise, even individual consciousness as expressed in the poetry and narratives of Decadentism operates upon an awareness of reciprocity with the other. As exemplified in this chapter, the dialogism of Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda renders their dilemmas, frustrations, and also expectancies internalized by the social and cultural conditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their narratives (and poetry, for Pascoli) function as a vocalizing agent for a privileged intellectual community in the arts and humanities and thus move

beyond a personal account of their own life experience as a subjective observer. Their works are an effort to exorcize subjectivity from their socio-cultural observations and to transmute them into a shared experience of the epoch. Dislocating materialism and persistent subjectivity from the center of discourse, the dialogism in Decadent literature engages in a critique of the decaying cultural traditions. Then, alleviating the difference between self and other, their dialogic narratives imagine a kind of utopian communion *par excellence*. Disenchanted with the modern world, their dialogues reconstruct an alternative world, without being trapped by a nihilist pitfall.

Il Fanciullino

As Walter Binni states in *La Poetica del Decadentismo* (1936), Giovanni Pascoli's poetics is difficult to define within the scheme of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence. Unlike D'Annunzio's sensuality in language and theme, Pascoli's poetics is regarded as an amalgamation of Romanticism, and Decadentism, and Symbolism (Schiaffini 198). Echoing Gianbattista Vico and Giacomo Leopardi, who considered the primordial structure of human experience and imagination to be the foremost resource for poetry, Pascoli grounds his poetics on simplicity in language and in the vision of the world he observes.

Pascoli's engagement with Vico and the Leopardian tradition privileges innate sensory perception and the immediacy of pure experience itself. In *Il Fanciullino*, his poetic theory is explicated in the form of a dialogue between the adult poet (seemingly an alter ego of Pascoli himself) and the Child. *Il Fanciullino* is a manifesto that extols sensory perception as the ultimate poetic resource. Through conversation with the poet's

implicitly designated adult rationality, the Little Child's voice dialectically represents such attributes of virtue as simplicity, curiosity, and innocence. Imagined as a physically tangible child, the Little Child, however, also represents an abstract mode of poetic sensibility. From the outset, the figurative Child concretizes a tenacious innocence that does not begin to rationalize but sustains an incessant sense of wonder. In other words, the Child upholds a poetic sensibility free from socially-conditioned prejudice but capable of preserving a visionary experience intact. Addressing the Child in prose narrative², the adult poet's voice in Chapter V explains the dialectic function of the infant's purity *vis-à-vis* the adult's rationality:

Tu sei il fanciullo eterno, che vede tutto con maraviglia, tutto come per la prima volta. L'uomo le cose interne ed esterne, non le vede come le vedi tu: egli sa tanti particolari che tu non sai. Egli ha studiato e ha fatto suo pro' degli studi degli altri. Sì che l'uomo dei nostri tempi sa più che quello dei tempi scorsi, e, a mano a mano che si risale, molto più e sempre più. I primi uomini non sapevano niente; sapevano quello che sai tu, fanciullo. (35)

[You are the Eternal Child, who sees everything with a sense of wonder, everything as if for the first time. The adult man does not see the inward and outward things as you see them: he knows many details that you do not. He has studied and has taken advantage of other people's studies. So that the man of our time knows more than the man of time past, and even more, much more if we go farther back in time. The first men knew nothing; they knew what you know, Child (19).]

Pascoli's rendition of his poetics through the figure of the Child, the embodiment of what he considers to have been the primeval human experience, however, cannot be taken for granted as a literally simplistic concept or theory. The figure of the Child presupposes that the infantile perception in *Il Fanciullino* entails the intermediary presence of the adult poet, a kind of dissimulation enabled by a linguistic play set forth by the other's (the poet's) consciousness. In other words, the imaginary freshness in poetic vision signifies the adult's consciousness that deliberately borrows a child-like simplicity in

poetry. Primordial human experience, which is also privileged by Vico and Leopardi, comes to be rejuvenated as a poetic resource for a new, noetic formulation of Pascoli's poetics. Simultaneously being a sensing and a sensed agent, the Child represents an antithesis to a modernity founded on maturity, intellectuality, embellishment, objectivism, and positivism, which are dispositions attributed to the subjective as well as rationalist viewer of the phenomenal world.

Pascoli's rejection of positivism in poetry becomes progressively apparent in later chapters, for example in Chapter XIII, when the poet critiques pedantry in poetry: "Noi studiamo troppo, per poetare [...]" (57; "We study too much, to write poetry," 57). The poet goes on to argue that simplicity is a virtue of poetry: "Lo studio deve rifarci ingenui, insomma, tal qual Dante figura sé come avanti Beatrice così rispetto a Matelda" (57; "In short, study has to make us naïve (i.e. children) again, just the way Dante represents himself before Beatrice and so too with Matelda" 54). Similarly, not only excessive linguistic décor but also rigidity in literary tradition suffocates the spirit of poetry. The same argument is unequivocally given as "ma quanto a poesia, ciò l'ha soffocata [...]" and "Poi amiamo troppo l'ornamentazione; e questo gusto lo dimostriamo specialmente in ciò che meno lo comporta: nella poesia" (56; "[I]nsofar as poetry is concerned, it has suffocated it. [...] And then, we love ornamentation too much; and we show this taste just where it is least suited: in poetry" 53).

Furthermore, Pascoli's endorsement of simplicity, with a figurative Child, can be extended to his theory of poetry and humanity. As already discussed, the metaphorical infant stage refutes the modern epistemological system, which is grounded on human intellect, in favor of the immediacy of experience itself. The Child experiences the world

of phenomena solely through the sensory perceptions of seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, and smelling. Poetry is fundamentally a linguistic reification of these immediate experiences that fundamentally lack any further purpose. Pascoli's primary interest lies in the preservation of sensations, and this non-utilitarian aesthetics manifests itself in Chapter XVII, when the poet emphatically assails the search for "*gloriola*," or fame in poetry. The poet deplores the fact that he lives in "tempo delle classificazioni e premiazioni" (65; "times of contests; in times of classifications and the awarding of prizes" 67). In so stating, Pascoli implies that art, especially poetry, is in essence indifferent to any external logic of relativism or collective judgment over it. By virtue of ageless innocence, therefore, the figurative Child metaphorically purges the stigma in the modern commodification of art that yields to the principle of market economy and to mass judgment. Hence, the chapter concludes with a symbolic punchline: "[L]a poesia vera fa battere, se mai, il cuore, non mai le mani" (67; "[R]emember that true poetry makes your heart beat, perhaps, but it never makes your hands clap" 69).

From Chapter XVII on, Pascoli further underscores the mission of poetry in relation to his anti-utilitarian position that validates pure experiences. In contrast to his aesthetic ideal, however, the contemporary cultural current undeniably displays the face of pragmatism: "[S]iamo al tempo dei concorsi; al tempo delle classificazioni e premiazioni" (65; "[W]e live in times of contests; in times of classifications and the awarding of prizes" 67). "Giudicano e classificano" (65; "They judge and classify" 67) poetry for the sake of a purpose extrinsic to the poet's pure experience itself. In this conjunction, Pascoli is an exponent of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics for his indifference to modern utilitarian value systems. For Pascoli, poetry is fundamentally

purposeless, an art in its own right. Therefore, in the concluding Chapter, XX, he abhors the politicization of art: “La poesia, per ciò stesso che è poesia, senz’essere poesia morale, civile, patriottica sociale, giova alla moralità alla civiltà, alla patria, alla società” (70; “Poetry, for the very fact that it is poetry, without being moral, civic, patriotic, or social poetry, is beneficial to morality, civilization, nation, and society” 75).

As a way to refute utilitarian modernity, Pascoli constructs an imaginary community through dialogue between the grownup poet and the Child. *Il Fanciullino* may be read as Pascoli’s endeavor to propose a kind of utopic space where a particular literary style and values – apparently pre-modern and non-utilitarian – are shared and regarded as the standard for interpretation, comparable to Jonathan Culler’s theory of literary conventions.³ The poet in *Il Fanciullino* describes a contemporary trend in interpretation, dissociating his own artistic stance from it: “Ai più pare che il bello sia nei fregi e che il poetico sia nella foga oratoria” (63; “The majority think that beauty lies in ornamentation, and poetry in oratorical passion” 65). The poet’s sensibility is then transmuted into the Child, who is capable of addressing the beholder of this same poetic sensibility: “non agli uomini proprio, ma ai fanciulli, come te, che sono negli uomini. Ora codesti fanciulli, dato che in nessuno manchino, in pochi però ascolto. E sai quali sono questi pochi? Sono generalmente poeti” (63; “[Y]ou do not really address the men, but the children like you, who are in the men. Now, those children, although present in all, listen actively only in these few. And do you know who these few are? They are generally poets” 65). As exemplified here, the poet resuscitates his existence *through* the interlocution with the Child and his primordial digestion of experiences. Residing immanently within the poet, the Child holds an ambivalent position, a half-way point

between the other and the poet's alter ego. This symbiosis –this mutually dependent relationship between them – creates dialectic tensions between the two while their dialogic interactions allow the poet (and Pascoli) to express his poetic theory.

The presence of the other embodied by a culturally-unstained infant also provides a channel to open a dialogic contemplation by the rational poet. As a point of entry, our discussion can be facilitated greatly by phenomenology. As Pier Luigi Cerisola points out, Pascoli's poetics can be characterized by behavioral phenomenology, which prioritizes such categories as "ingenuità, freschezza, spontaneità, meraviglia..." (15; "ingenuity, freshness, spontaneity, wonder..."): "[Pascoli] [l]ista aperta di connotazioni psicologiche riconducibili tutte all'area semantica della fenomenologia comportamentistica propria di chi schiude per la prima volta i sensi e l'animo sullo spettacolo del mondo" (15; "[Pascoli] opens a list of psychological connotations that can be brought back to all the semantic areas of behavioral psychology, precisely the one of those who open for the first time the senses and heart to the spectacle of the world"). In so doing, as numerous critics have commented, including Maria Truglio and Rosa Maria La Valva, Pascoli's poetics substantiates the primordial structures of human experience that are derived primarily from sensorial apparatus such as vision, sound, and touch, without any intervention of contemplation or intellectualization of sensations. Furthermore, as Truglio points out in *Beyond the Family Romance* (2007), the Child's pure voice forms a "harmony" through using very concrete imageries as metaphors. This harmonious voice comes to life only interdependently with the others, being relational, contingent, and ambivalent (116).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view on the infantile stage also greatly facilitates my analysis as he considers this early period as a privileged openness in relation to others. In his essay, "The Child's Relations with Others" (1960), borrowing concepts of child psychology developed by Charlotte Bühler, Henri Wallon, and Sigmund Freud, Merleau-Ponty underscores that the pre-linguistic stage of early childhood, specifically between seven and twelve months of age, holds seminal importance for the development of social sensibility (141). In the period of pre-communication, the child's expression (or personality, as Merleau-Ponty puts it) is shaped not as an individual manifestation but as an interrelation with the other beings around him (146). Finding similarities in such emotions as jealousy or sympathy, Merleau-Ponty also posits that the child's sensitivity results from an occurrence of what Wallon calls "transitivism," or the attribution "to the others [of] what belongs to the subject himself" (148). Such a projection of one's own attributes or experience reflects back to the origin, i.e. to the subject. This structure of experience in the infantile stage thus irreducibly presumes interactions with the other, or, as Merleau-Ponty calls them, "syncretic relations with others" (149).

In this theorization, the child's consciousness is neither a manifestation of individuality nor a passive absorption of what he or she senses. On the contrary, the child might be understood as a hub of communication who actively engages in relations with others. Then, what Merleau-Ponty calls the "plasticity of vision" or experience, free from obsessive ownership, opens the child's existence within "the state of neutral indistinction between self and other" (150). In the realm of experiencing art, such a freedom in vision bestows on its beholder an intriguing privilege for attaining accessibility to, for example,

an abstract painting by Picasso, as Merleau-Ponty claims (150). This privilege is derived from an infancy unrestricted by culturally-institutionalized systems of codes:

To the extent that the child is a stranger to [...] cultural tradition and has not yet received the training that will integrate him within it, he recognizes with great freedom in a number of traits what the painter meant to show. If you like, the child's thought processes are general from the start and at the same time are very individual. (150)

The stage of infancy therefore embeds dual attributes: a capacity to interact with others and to open an individual seer's vision. These two traits are indeed prevalent in the Child in *Il Fanciullino* as well. He possesses unspoiled sensation, and the uniqueness of his experience offers him an openness to communicating with the others. La Valva acknowledges the same two-fold traits by observing that the Child represents a somewhat holistic existence that can address an entire humanity: he possesses a "resonant breast from which the voices of other men could echo" and a "soul [that] reach[es] the soul of his fellow human beings" (11), including "the other naïve children" (17).

In light of phenomenology, the Child signifies a figurative example of what Cerisola calls "dentro di sé, [...] *interiore homine*" (15; "inside one's self, human interiority"), which has become opaque as a result of the intellectualization of poetry. In the process of narrative, the Child plays the role of an interlocutor who attentively listens to the mature poet, and at times displays an eagerness to vocalize his own vision: "[...] l'uomo riposato ama parlare con lui e udirne il chiacchiericcio e rispondergli a tono e grave; e l'armonia di quelle voci è assai dolce ad ascoltare [...]" (25-26; "[...] the older and peaceful man loves to talk with him, to listen to his noisy chattering and to answer back in tune with him and gravely; and the harmony of those voices is very sweet to the ear [...]" 3). Their dialogic exchange manifests itself mostly through the adult poet's

addresses to the Child, which then instigate the Child's further responses.

Simultaneously, the poet also sustains his interdependence with his interlocutor:

- Fanciullo, che non sai ragionare se non a modo tuo, un modo
fanciullesco che si chiama profondo, perché c'è un tratto, senza farci
scendere a uno a uno i gradini del pensiero, ci trasporta nell'abisso della
verità... (14)

[Child, who can only reason in your own way, a childlike way which we
call deep, because suddenly, without making us go down the steps of
thought one at a time, you plunge us into the abyss of truth...(15)]

As the adult poet implies, the Child is a metaphorical channel that opens communication by facilitating the other's access to "the abyss of truth." As reflected in the Child's preference for using "similes" (9), Pascoli endorses the use of poetic language that possesses a facile communicability with the audience: "[S]'ingegnava con paragoni tolti da ciò che esso e i suoi uditori avevano più sott'occhio o nell'orecchio" (8; "[The Little Child] tried to work with similes that were very familiar to him and to his listeners" 9).

Within Pascoli's poetics, the accessibility of language holds a prime importance as an instrument to communicate with others – the reader and the audience. The virtue of accessible language lies in its mystical capacity, which facilitates the audience's intersubjective experience of poetry. To the same extent, Chapter III states that poetry can create a commonality among its audience and bring them together: "eccoli i fanciullini che si riconoscono, dall'impannata al balcone dei loro tuguri e palazzo, contemplando un ricordo e un sogno commune" (33; "[T]he Eternal Children will gather, and recognize each other, from the poor ragged curtains of their hovels to the balconies of their palaces, contemplating a common memory and a common dream" 15).

The dialogism in Pascoli's poetics is not only an "intra" textual occurrence. Immersed with "ribelle per la novità o indifferente per la consuetudine" (30; "rebellious

out of love for something new, or indifferen[ce] out of habit” 11), the openness within the Child is “unito all’umanità” (30; “linked to humanity” 11). Concretizing theory through the figure of the Child, Pascoli proposes an archetypal method to create commonality among men of letters and their readers and audience. In the early chapters, for example in Chapter III, commonality (and the sense of community) is drawn in a highly metaphorical rendition: “[I] fanciulli che sono in loro, i quali, per ogni poco d’agio e di tregua che sia data, si corrono incontro, e si abbracciano e giocano” (30; “[T]he children within them, who as soon as there is the chance for a little respite, hasten to meet together and hug each other and play” 11). In the later chapters, for example in Chapter XII, innocence and even primitivism become polarized against rationality and conservatism, which are subtly designated by “Italy.” Critiquing the act of classifying poetry (as a form of positivistic undertaking), the adult poet attributes such a rational attempt to the collective mentality of the country: “[I]n Italia, e altrove, non stiamo paghi a questo compendio. Ragioniamo e distinguiamo troppo. Quella scuola era migliore, questa peggiore” (54; “[I]n Italy, and elsewhere, we are not satisfied with this compendium. We reason and distinguish too much. That school was better, this one worse” 49). Also in Chapter XIV, the poet makes a reference to Italy as an organic whole that possesses a collective *geist*:

[N]oi italiani siamo, in fondo, troppo seri e furbi, per essere poeti. Noi imitiamo troppo. E sì, che studiando si deve imparare a far diverso, non lo stesso. Ma noi vogliamo far lo stesso e dare a credere o darci a credere di fare meglio (58)

[[W]e Italians are, at bottom, too serious and too clever to be poets. We imitate too much. To be sure, by studying one should learn to do things differently, not in the same way. But we want to do the same thing and have others believe or persuade ourselves that we are doing better (55).]

Therefore, the Child enacts an antithesis to adults, metaphorized by Italy as a modern nation that has been still clinging to rigid Classicism. The poet implies that such conservatism needs to undergo a process of rejuvenation, through the unrestricted vision of an unpretentious child. Unlike the majority of adults, who have lost primordial vision and innocence, the Child remains intact and free of contamination by rationality, knowledge, and formality. Likewise, the poet scrutinizes the schools as an obstacle to poetry (54). The Child, antithetical to the adults' rationality, is thus de-nationalized: "[T]u sei del mondo, non sei d'ora mai sempre" (52; "[Y]ou are of the world, you are not of now, but of always" 53). According to Truglio, Pascoli's universalizing regression to childhood hints at "an ethics of inclusion [...] that aims to embrace all humankind within its purview" (112).

The altruism in Pascoli's poetic theory becomes further articulated through the interlocutory function of the Child, whose function can be likened to a medium. Existing immanently within the adult consciousness, the Child is a conscious gesture through which Pascoli defies the Cartesian claim of a subjectivity that grounds one's identity. Even the pure sense of wonder and fresh vision become instruments to convey the other's voice through dialogue. The infantile other resides immanently within the poet and symbolically makes modern rationality revert into the realm of a primordial sense of community. In this conjunction, we can trace Pascoli's conceptualization of poetry as an artifact that plays a "fundamentally social and communal role" (Truglio 125). The mission of poetry for Pascoli is, then, not foreign to the philosophical contemplation of the responsibility toward the other that was developed by Emmanuel Levinas, who proposed that self-sufficiency in the subject entails a process of substantiation through

openness to externality and to the other (99). Similar to Levinas's scheme that a possibility to open one's self begins from proximity to the other, the Child's symbiosis within the adult poet semantically signifies the inclusion of an externality. The Child then bears a hermetic mission to mediate the adult poet's regression to the realm of unconsciousness – therefore, the linguistic play between the two consciousnesses may be comparable to what Levinas calls “the interruption of the ‘*conatus essendi*’ [effort to be] as derived from Spinoza's concept of “the being of being” (97). In this sense, a dialogue is fundamentally an encounter with the other; it is “a way of subordinating knowledge, objectification [...]” (97). Likewise, the Child in *Il Fanciullino*, especially in Chapters VII and XIX, salvages the rational poet from the danger of solipsism by taking up the function of an interlocutor.

Incorporation of alterity within the rational adult, then, implies a metaphorical antidote to modern positivism, as well as to utilitarian formulations of poetry. Pascoli's poetics signifies an effort to liberate poetry from the yoke of rationality in modern social life, while bringing it back to, as Truglio observes, the social and communal function (125). Finally, that poetry emanates not only from infantile innocence and inexperience, but also from the dialectics between such literary dynamics as “play, and contemplation, ‘innocence’ and ‘experience,’ “meraviglia and sagacity” (Truglio 124).

Within the context of *Il Decadentismo Italiano*, Pascoli can be still regarded as a vanguard of the movement's spirit, despite his rejection of sensuality as found in the D'Annunzian oeuvre. Contrasting with D'Annunzio's spectacular public appearance, Pascoli's sensuality is “profonda e torbida” [profound and murky] (Salinari 149). Nonetheless, with his aspiration to follow the Decadent and Symbolist movements,

Pascoli believed in “poesia soggettiva come l’unica possibile” [“subjective poetry as the only possibility”] (Salinari 155). His aesthetic credo manifests itself not only in his anti-positivist stance in his poetic theory, *Il Fanciullino*, but also in such poems as “Il Ceppo” in *Myricae*. This poem in hendecasyllables portrays the Virgin (la Madonna), who enters a cottage with baby Jesus on a snowy night, reflecting an old Tuscan legend about the Virgin wandering from house to house in search of fire.

Pascoli reanimates the story with his emphasis on “[I]l ceppo” [“the log”]. Staying close to the weary Virgin, the log burns itself to relieve the freezing night: “Il ceppo sbraccia e crepita improvviso, il bricco versa e sfrigola via via” (*Myricae* 15; “[T]he log rolls up and crackles all of a sudden, the kettle spills [boiling water] and sizzles more and more”). The liveliness of the log does not last long, as its animation comes to an end (15). Accentuated by the deliberate phonetic scheme, the poem also adds sensory elements into the vignette: the colors (red from the fire and white from the snow outside); the corporeality (the Virgin’s fatigue and the effervescence of the log); and the sounds (the silence of the night and the burning sound of the log). These quotidian images enter the reader’s mind intuitively, opening an extra-rational communication; even the Virgin and Jesus are universalized by “[u]na mamma, figlio mio” (107; “a mamma, my son”), which inevitably provokes the reader’s sympathy for them. Ferdinando Durand’s comment on Pasoli agrees with this point as he underscores the poet’s vision to salvage the mystical presence of intuition: “[N]essuno è più antipositivista di lui, tutto intento a scoprire i sensi arcane della natura, a interrogare il mistero” (Durand 16-17; “[N]obody is more antipositivistic than him, with all intention to discover the archaic senses of nature, to interrogate the mystery”).

Similarly, Pascoli implicitly rejects historical materialism in *Il Fanciullino*. To undermine it, according to Pascoli, history – as a mode of poetry – needs to bear an affective quality to move the audience. Thus he distinguishes a mere chronicle from history: “Bisogna che il fatto storico, se vuol divenir poetico, filtri attraverso la meraviglia e l’ingenuità della nostra anima fanciulla, se la conserviamo ancora. Bisogna allontanare il fatto vicino allontanandocene noi”(51-52; “The historical fact must be filtered through the wonder and the candor of our childlike soul, if we still have it intact. We have to gain perspective on a near event by distancing ourselves from it” 45).

Pascoli’s claim is clearly illustrated in his dialogic poem, “La Cavalla Storna” [“The Speckled Horse”] in *Canti di Castelvecchio*, which recounts his mother’s lament for the death of his father, Ruggero Pascoli, who was murdered when Giovanni was eleven years old. While employing a dialogue that takes place between his mother and a horse, the poet dramatizes the impossibility of discovering the truth of the murder. The mother desperately addresses the animal that Ruggero used to ride: “O cavallina, cavallina storna, che portavi colui che non ritorna” (*Opere* 499; “O little female horse, speckled horse, who used to carry him who does not return”). While the same words are repeatedly enunciated by her, the animal also begins to engage in an ineffable dialogue with her. The horse’s non-linguistic response is, however, accomplished only by gentle gestures: “La scarna lunga testa era daccanto al dolce viso di mia madre in pianto” (500; “The skinny long head was near the sweet face of my mother who was in tears”). The mother’s response to the horse also takes on non-verbal, physical gestures: “Mia madre l’abbracciò su la criniera” (500; “My mother embraces her with the mane”). Immediately

after the affectionate exchange between them, however, the mother's voice begins to demand that the horse identify the murderer who killed Ruggero:

[P]ortavi a casa sua chi non ritorna! [...] Tu fosti buona... Ma parlar non sai!
 [...] Oh! Ma tu devi dirmi una una cosa! [...] Tu l'hai veduto l'uomo che l'uccise
 [...] Chi fu? Chi è? Ti voglio dire un nome. E tu fa cenno. Dio t'insegni, come.
 (500-501)

[[Y]ou brought home the person who does not return! [...] You were good... But you do not know how to speak! [...] Oh! But you must tell me one, one thing!
 [...] You saw the man who killed him [...] Who was he? Who is he? I want you to tell a name. And you make a gesture. God taught you how.]

When about to leave the silent stable, she finally utters the name of the man who she thinks killed her husband – “disse un nome” (501; “she said a name”): “Sonò alto un nitrite” (501; “she said a name: The high neigh sounded”).

The animal's non-verbalized answer derived from the dialogue enacts not only Pascoli's hermeneutical response to the incident as reality, but also the impossibility of verbalizing the magnitude of the tragedy that has been already internalized in the poet. Therefore, while the factuality of the murder is materialized, it is neither simply recounted as a past incident nor historicized as the irretrievable past. The uniqueness of the tragic experience can be enunciated and preserved by, as Giorgio Agamben observes about Pascoli's poetics, “the voice alone” (65). The horse's neigh denotes linguistically a void of meaning; nevertheless, the epistemological emptiness in seeking for an answer is transmuted by the phonetic effect that intuitively affects the reader. This conclusion in poetry can be validated, by virtue of the dialogic structure that allows the coexistence of multiple consciousnesses and viewpoints, which underpin the pre-linguistic structure of knowing beyond any rational retention of the past event.

Reishō [Sneers]

Published between 1909 and 1910 in the *Tokyō Mainichi Shinbun*, Kafū's *Reishō* has been regarded as part of the author's so-called series of *kichōsha* stories (stories about a returnee from the West, as Kafū himself was, or the stories written from the perspective of a returnee).⁴ The novel showcases multiple viewpoints expressed by affluent men in Tokyo, who in their early middle age witness the city's unprecedented modernization since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. The novel defies the conventional structure of a clear plot by placing a greater emphasis on the characters' intra-narrative conversations. Although the story progresses in a linear chronological order, the narrative is often interrupted by the characters' abrupt recollection of past events, epistolary correspondence, literary criticism, and philosophical contemplations of current socio-cultural conditions. This fusion of multiple literary forms occasionally has perplexed critics who question whether the work should be read as social criticism rather than as fiction. In his influential *Kafū the Scribbler* (1965), Edward Seidensticker discredits the novel, stating that *Reishō* lacks any serious intention altogether: "Although Kafū is much admired by his countrymen as a 'social critic,' his criticism of Meiji is seldom profound or moving" (34). However, a recent commentary by Rachael Hutchinson labels Kafū as a committed critic who strives to overcome "the dilemma of reconciling modernity" through a radical essentialization between the Orient/Japan and the West (206). In addition, major Japanese critics interpret Kafū's *kichōsha* stories as an intentional affront to serious cultural criticism. As Yoshida Seiichi states, the *sanbunshi* style (poetic prose writing) in *Reishō* reveals the writer's indignation at both the mental backwardness of Meiji society and Japanese culture of the time as merely a "mime of the West" (70).

Kafū's complex critique of late Meiji Japan was grounded on his belief that the nation was unable to digest the progressive Western culture, while its hasty incorporation of the foreign influence was destroying its traditional beauty. Reflecting such dilemmas, the *kichōsha* stories are antagonistic to the socio-cultural phenomena resulting from the processes of modernization as they are detrimental to the aesthetics of pre-Restoration Japan. Therefore, Kafū constantly returned to a romantic yearning for Edo culture, which he considered as the most significant provider of the cultural and aesthetic identity of Japan. Nevertheless, his unsettled identity as a *kichōsha* oscillates between the eras without genuine sympathy for either one. Isoda Kōichi notes the writer's dilemma as follows:

荷風が外遊から帰って、最も苛立たしく感じたことは、日本社会の後進性、個人主義さえ成立していない日本の現実そのものであった。“江戸”を滅ぼし去ってゆく明治の文明が、ほかならぬ日本封建制の温存の上にしか成立できなかったというディレンマは、荷風の感性を“江戸”に傾斜させると同時に、西欧的な個人主義者としての荷風は、“江戸”の遺制に憤懣を感じずにはいられない人間でもあった。
(113)

[When he returned from the West, what irritated Kafū was the backwardness of Japanese society and the reality that even individualism was not established. It was a dilemma that Meiji civilization, which gradually destroys “the Edo,” could exist only by preserving Japan's feudalism. Simultaneously, that dilemma inclined Kafū's sensibility toward “the Edo,” and he, as a westernized individual, could not help feeling indignation for the Edo's *ancien régime*.]

The *kichōsha* intellectuals who returned to Japan in the late Meiji period commonly experienced the same psychological impasse due to the irretrievability of history and the incomplete process of modernization. For them, Meiji Japan as an idealized “materialist” civilization provoked their frustration precisely for the absence of a clear blueprint that might construct their new cultural identity.

It is important to note, however, that the *kichōsha* Kafū's desire to return to pre-modern aesthetics was awakened by his experience of the West. As Isoda's commentary states, Kafū's immersion in the United States and France paradoxically revealed Meiji Japan's ambivalent hovering between tenacious feudalism and an unaesthetic new civilization. Kafū's psychological predicament, then, takes the course of a willful "regression" not only to pre-modern Edo culture, but also to his decadent life style in the *demimonde*. His complexities thus surpass a mere Occidentalism drawn from a diametric opposition between East (Japan) and West, as his insights into Meiji Japan were nourished during his five-year stay in the United States and France.⁵ Whereas his literary horizon was positively expanded by his exposure to French Naturalism and Symbolism, the heterogeneous cultural experiences of Japan and the West seemingly caused a sense of belonging to neither culture.

As Komori Yōichi points out, Kafū's sentiment for both the West and Japan is a conflict typical of a privileged *kichōsha*. Insofar as he admires the West, he is also forced to suppress his own Asian self (*Yuragi* 172). To be westernized, Kafū's protagonist (and the author himself) needs to "internalize" the ways in which westerners view him (173). This process involves a process of self-degrading, considering himself and the Japanese people as abject, in Julia Kristeva's term, and then stripping his Asian self from his ontological component. With this psychological scheme, Kafū's *kichōsha* stories play out the ideal of "*Datsua nyūō*" ("Departure from (backward) Asia and approach to (civilized) West"), as though Japan's feudalistic backwardness no longer hampered its development. Thus, Kafū needs to cast a derogatory view (*bubetsu no manazashi*) (175) upon his compatriots and on the Orient at large (175).

Kafū's decadence as a writer and its influence in the *kichōsha* stories reflect his frustration stirred by Meiji Japan's unsuccessful modernity with its opposition to his aesthetic ideals. Therefore, his self-designation as a classicist of Edo culture, as often expressed in *Reishō* and his later oeuvre, can be termed an artistic dilettantism that displays an idiosyncratic *kichōsha* sensibility founded on his failed identification with either culture. Despite his tenure at Keiō University and foundation of the literary journal, *Mita bungaku*, in 1910, in his private life Kafū pursued a drastic individualism and constantly rejected Japan's patriarchal social structure, as he avoided settling into a stable marriage. His philosophy of "shison muyō" ("no need of my offspring") underscores his unconventional individualism and desire to retire from the mainstream social cycle of productivity. Simultaneously, Kafū's attitudes may be regarded as reminiscent of what Karaki Junzō calls the self-consciousness of the *muyōsha* (useless man)⁶ expressed in the ninth-century *uta monogatari* ("poetic narrative") *Ise monogatari*. It is quite feasible to situate Kafū as an emblematic figure within the *muyōsha* tradition, especially when he ponders the notorious *Taigyaku jiken* [the High Treason Incident]⁷ in the short essay titled "Hanabi" [Fireworks] (1919), which was published in the literary magazine, *Kaizō* [Reconstruction]. His defeatist sentiment stems from his failure to make a political commitment, in contrast, for example, to Émile Zola, who publicly denounced the injustice of the Dreyfus affair. Unable to fulfill his role as a socially-engaged writer, Kafū willfully condescends to the status of an "Edo *gesakusha*" ("writer of playful and trivial narrative of the Edo period"):

明治四十四年度慶応義塾に通勤する頃、私はその道すがら折々四谷の通で囚人馬車が五六台も引続いて日比谷の裁判所の方へ走つて行くのを見た。私はこれ迄見聞した世上の事件の中で、この折程云ふに云はれない厭な心持のした事はなかつた。小説家ゾラはドレフユー事件について正義を叫んだ為め国外に亡命し

たではないか。然し私は世の文学者と共に何も言はなかつた。私は何となく良心の苦痛に堪へられぬやうな氣がした。私は自ら文学者たる事について甚だしき羞恥を感じた。以来私は自分の藝術の品位を江戸作者のなした程度まで引下げるに如くはないと思案した。(292)

[While commuting to *Keiō* [University] in 1911, I often saw on the way the prisoners' (of the *Taigyaku Jiken*) carriages continuously running in the direction of the court house in Hibiya. I never experienced such an ineffably nauseous feeling as at that time, compared with the other social incidents to which I had been exposed. The novelist Zola became a political refugee because he denounced the injustice in regard to the Dreyfus affair. However, I did not condemn anything with the other literati in this country. My conscience unbearably tormented me. I was extremely ashamed of myself as a man of letters. Since then, I have been thinking that there is no other way than to degrade my artistic dignity to the level of writers (of trivial stories) in the Edo period.]

In relation to *fin-de-siècle* Decadence in Europe, Kafū's willful regression to a *gesakusha* shares the movement's non-utilitarian ideology as its one of aesthetic principles. His fascination with *gesakusha* is due precisely to their indifference to all socio-political affairs ("Hanabi" 292-293). Kafū endeavors to appropriate their trivial but pure aesthetic interests, which may be considered as his self-conscious dissimulation and escapist tendencies. As critics including Seidensticker and Isoda have commented, Kafū's fictional stories are not foreign to his own biographical facts, and the *kichōsha* stories tend to display his cultural criticism through multiple characters' consciousnesses and dialogues.

Written in the form of dialogues, *Reishō* effaces any visible epicenter of a unified narrative voice. The entire unfolding of the story is constructed through four characters' heterogeneous voices in the objective third-person and subjective first-person narrative modes. Although each character does not entirely share the same views and opinions in regard to the socio-cultural milieu of the late Meiji, each of them represents the author's own self as though creating the entire story as a collage. The novel constellates the

following characters, who display Kafū's own biographical as well as artistic profiles: Koyama Kiyoshi, a returnee from the United States who currently holds the position of bank president; Yoshino Kōu, a hedonistic aesthete and novelist who has recently returned from Europe; Nakatani Teizō, a playwright of *kyōgen* and the foremost decadent, portrayed as a Japanese indigenous dandy; and Tokui Katsunosuke, head clerk of a commercial ship and a progressivist who resents his father's patriarchal authority.

Although there is no dominant protagonist, the opening chapter by Koyama Kiyoshi, reporting his reflections on late Meiji society, provides the overarching ethos of *Reishō*. Yearning for the bygone days of political upheaval in the early Meiji (ca. 1868-1880), Koyama elicits a sense of being a latecomer, long after that historically exciting moment. Being an inheritor of his father's bank, Kiyoshi identifies himself with nothing but an empty nomenclature, as if he were “床の間の置物” (5; “an ornament in an alcove”), only taking over the past generation's toil and success. He mirrors the typical late Meiji sentiment that was widespread among the bourgeoisie. Living after the formative years of the modern nation, they tended to feel their belated arrival on the social front and their inability to cross another frontier of modernity. Their decadent life style and mentality reveal a kind of acquiescence without any impassioned desire to tackle a new life. Unable to discover any excitement in his contemporary life, Kiyoshi can be characterized by his “self-consciousness as the second-generation,” a beholder of an individualism learned from the West (Ryū 103). He embodies the social and cultural frustrations collectively experienced by progressive *kichōcha* in the late Meiji (around 1910) (Ryū 103). For example, to the eyes of a returnee, the geishas in a famous Tokyo pleasure-district appear unsophisticated. Also, he is dismayed by his wife's rigidity, as

she cannot understand the concept of equality between men and women (8). Disillusioned with regressive ideas as well as with the stagnant social and cultural life in the late Meiji, Kiyoshi intentionally distorts his identity: “現実に対する失望は種々な方面に於て繰り返される度々、反抗の憤怒はますます理想の程度を高めさせた。最初からして先づ失望を豫期して、覚悟して、冷笑的に理想の程度を高めて行つたのである。” (11; “Whenever he was disappointed with reality in a wide range of aspects, his rebellion against his indignation was transmuted into higher ideals. [...] [He] anticipated a delusion from the beginning, then made resolutions to the result, and [gradually] raised the level of his ideal, with nihilistic sneers). Kiyoshi’s “decadence” is a defensively-designed life philosophy that entails his suppression of any high expectations in life.

The three other characters similarly represent the author’s alter ego from social, cultural, and aesthetic points of view. As the most prominent aesthetes, Yoshino Kōu and Nakatani Teizō resuscitate the author’s cultural criticism and casual optimism. The returnee writer Kōu, almost an avatar of Kafū, appropriates the spirit of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence through his aesthetic sensibility. Having returned from Europe, Kōu exemplifies the *kichōsha*’s fascination with western modern art, although his love for European literature, including works by D’Annunzio and Barrès (45), has uprooted him from his indigenous culture (46). Among all of the characters in *Reishō*, Kōu is the most aesthetically sensitive and capable of engaging in dialogues without fixing his viewpoints. Similar to Pascoli’s *Il Fanciullino*, where the Child’s sensation and the poet’s rationality collaborate, Kōu possesses a fresh sense of wonder, along with rationality and a contemplative mind. However, because of these capabilities, he is highly conscious of the symptomatic side of modernity (47): “近代主義と云ふ熱病は「君は決して後れて居

ないぞ」と云ふ空虚な夢に浮かれさしてくれるけれど、同時に又「後れたら大変だぞ。」と云ふ不安を休む間なく興へる。” (47; “The malady called Modernism deludes us with an empty dream that ‘you are not late,’ but it also provokes our anxiety that ‘you cannot be late’”). Due to this awareness, Kōu situates himself in a liminal position torn apart by his fascination with modernity and his renunciation of its pragmatism.

The *tour de force* of Kōu’s narrative lies in his plasticity, with a multi-dimensional perspective on contemporary cultural conditions, as a critic and an aesthete. While expressing his uneasiness about the public’s superficial imitation of the West, his sensitivities traverse cultural boundaries and thus represent a universal validity from the Romantic perspective. His neutrality, then, constantly plays a reconciliatory role by alleviating the other characters’ unswerving critique of their contemporary Japan. In response to Kiyoshi’s cynical question as to whether he is willing to go back to the indigenous spirit of Japan, Kōu serenely answers:

戻る事が出来たら無用の幸福でせう。今の時代を深く感じてそして吾々は静に自分の足元を眺めて見たら、何も文学者ばかりではあるまい。誰だつて舵のない船に乗つてゐるやうな不安に打たれなければなるまい。舵のない漂ふ船。これが吾々の生きつつある現代といふものでせう。 (134)

[If we could go back to (the past), it would be most blissful. If we sincerely contemplate our time, not only literati but also anybody would feel anxiety, as if we are on the ship without a helm. The ship without a helm. I guess this is the contemporary time in which we are living.]

Borrowing Kōu’s metaphor, Kiyoshi further poses a question: “して見ると、「時代」の船の方向を定める丈夫な舵は何だらう。” (134; “Then, what would be the vigorous helm that determines the direction taken by the ship of ‘the contemporary time’?”). Despite his cultivation of European literature, Kōu’s response provides a nativist answer: “私は寧ろ郷土の美に対する藝術的熱情だと断言したいです。” (134; “I would like firmly to say

that it is rather our aesthetic enthusiasm for the beauty of the homeland”). Kōu’s sympathy for the indigenous culture is, however, derived interculturally, for he points out, as nativist dispositions, Maurice Barrès’s affection for white birch in his home town and Georges Rodenbach’s passion for the sorrowful city of Bruges. Borrowing from these literary examples, Kōu’s mind as a poet begins to synchronize with European literati. His discourse gradually departs from an adherence to regionally conceived cultural conditions, taking up a reconciliatory position that would modify their pessimism about the contemporary world from a universalist’s perspective, which is revealed by his recollection of Victor Hugo’s poem that sings “遠國を走り廻らうとする旅の心の愚かさよ。” (137; “Oh, the stupidity of the traveling mind that desires to wonder around a far-away country”). Then, Kōu further articulates the role of art within the transitional moment of history:

自分は現代に対する絶望と憤怒から解脱して、ひたすら過去の追慕と夢想の憧憬に生きる事ができるやうになつたのかも知れぬ。若し然うであつたとすれば最早高慢らしい議論を戦はして現代を罵りつたり憤つたりする必要はあるまい。罵る暇があつたら自分は静に、やがて吾々の赴くべき未来を夢みねばならぬ。憤る力があつたら間もなく消え滅びてしまふ過去の名残を一瞬間でも命長く生かすやうに勤めねばならぬ・・・・・・これが過渡期の詩人の悲しい任務ではなからうか。
(138)

[Perhaps I have been able to transcend my disillusionment and indignation about the contemporary world, and become capable of living in only nostalgia for the past and yearning for dreams. If this is the case, I no longer need either to curse or resent our time by engaging in pretentious polemics. If I have the time to curse (someone/something), I should dream the future that we should be headed for. If I have energy to resent, I should instead make an effort to enkindle the remnant of the past, even just for another second... Isn’t this a sad mission for a poet of the transitional period?]

Whereas this passage reflects a lamentation for the bygone past, as Harada Tatsushi analyzes, Kafū’s cynicism and pessimism, embedded in the characters’ discourse, ultimately transcend the “official” world of modern materialist civilization (Harada 4).

This psychological vector of self-degradation (*hige*) accompanies pleasure (*tsūkai*) with a sense of non-belonging to the official sphere of modernity. As Kiyoshi states at the onset of the novel, a decadent may feel superior, remaining foreign to the petty pragmatism cherished by bureaucrats and instead being at least capable of “laughing at himself” (Harada 5). The dialogues in *Reishō* originate this downward suppressing of the self, and construct a communal space where their voices share and express uneasiness for Japan’s modernity. Therefore, their decadence denotes neither a materialistic overindulgence nor the drastic individualism that underpinned the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics.

Furthermore, Harada finds a linkage between the cynicism in Kafū’s creation of his decadent characters and the writer’s own crisis of the self (3), an interpretation of the writer’s life and art that remains common both in Japan and elsewhere. However, his *kichōsha* stories, especially *Reishō*, show Kafū’s dilemma stemming not only from his own experience as a *kichōsha*, but also concerns about the universal tendencies of a modernity seen as synonymous with pragmatism and materialism.

A reading of each narrative voice in *Reishō* helps to make clear the authorial intention. As Mikhail Bakhtin states in “Discourse in the Novel,” even if it is presented as “the other’s voice,” narrative speech in the novel reflects the author’s intention. Even impersonal speech in the form of “common opinion [...] and generic languages” remains inseparable from authorial speech: “the boundaries are deliberately flexible and ambiguous, often passing through a single syntactic whole, often through a simple sentence” (308). Thanks to this fluidity, the novel allows the author to incorporate the other’s belief or points of view (312). Such incorporation enables the author to shed new

light on his object of representation and thus to “illuminate in a new way the ‘expected’ literary horizon” so that the “particularities of the teller’s tale are perceivable” (312-313).

The idea of dialogism as delineated by Bakhtin clearly governs the narrative structure of *Reishō*. Thanks to numerous biographical studies on the author, the speeches and perspectives given by Kiyoshi and Kōu can be detected as representations of Kafū’s consciousness of modernity and contemporary culture. The other narrative participants, Nakatani and Tokui, enrich the novel’s multi-dimensional space of socio-cultural discourse. Portrayed as a self-assured dandy (*date otoko*), Nakatani prefers to dress traditionally and to live as a hermit disconnected from modern life (54). He cynically perceives drastic social changes and implicitly despairs about the vulgarity of contemporary material life. Representing the most pointed cultural criticism, Nakatani consciously retires from mainstream social life and “descends” to the *demimonde* because it preserves a playful pre-modern mentality; its artificially-embellished world paradoxically offers the most “unembellished environment” that allows him to feel at ease (56). Nakatani’s nihilism is the most drastic among all the characters, expressing the author’s philosophy of decadence from a socio-culturally marginal position:

最初に己れと云うものを出来るだけ卑しくして、然る後に、一種超越した態度に立つて局外者を眺めて見ると、何につけ自然と巧まずして冷な笑ひが口の端に浮んで来るものである。(56)

[In the beginning, I assume my baseness, as low as possible, and afterwards observe the outsider from a kind of transcendental view. While I am doing so, my sneer naturally appears at the edge of my mouth.]

In contrast to Nakatani’s extreme nihilism, Tokui provides a progressivist critique of Japan’s feudalistic patriarchy. He despises Japan’s institutionalized familial system as “人類幸福の敵” (124; “the enemy of human happiness”) and endorses feminism as a

process of human emancipation while feeling that “まだまだ時期は来て居ない” (125; “the time has yet to come”) within the realities of Meiji Japan. Nakatani has the most altruistic mind in the novel, and thus his discourse tends to address issues concerning the holistic progression of Japanese society. For example, when he bewails the discommunication with his father, he is lamenting a ubiquitous problem in contemporary Japan. For Tokui, their lack of communication is a manifestation of the apathy among human beings and cannot be reduced to a simple familial problem. Speaking about his father’s inhuman nature, the third-person narrator laments: “一言にして云へば父は余りに己の地位から得られる正当の機能に満足し、余りに己の義務を遂行し得る事に安心し過ぎてゐる。人類相互の運命に対する深い同情、悲哀、疑問の観念がない。” (129; “In short, he is too satisfied with the righteous function gained from his own social status; he is too satisfied with executing his own duties. He does not possess the idea of sympathy for mutual human fate, sorrowfulness, and wonder”).

Although somewhat hyperbolic, Tokui’s altruism casts a new light on the decadent and pessimist perspectives expressed by the other characters. As Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism posits, the dynamics between the discourse of decadence and the humanist perspective interacts with “the other’s voice” and thereby opens a new literary horizon hitherto nonexistent. The authorial intention resuscitated in *Reishō* refutes Miyamoto Yuriko’s harsh criticism of Kafū as an individualistic, anti-moral writer lacking in social commitment (20).

Furthermore, “the cultural other” – in *Reishō* dominantly French and Italian – and its literary tradition plays an indispensable role in critiquing Japan’s cultural pathways in modern history. Dissolving the narrative center, cultural alterity guides, for example,

Kōu's critical view of contemporary art in Japan. He hesitates to claim his cultural participation in Japaneseness, while paying homage to the vanguards of modern European literature. In contrast to Japan's hasty modernization that has abandoned its cultural legacy, Kafū reports that Kōu instead shows his sympathy toward cultural "others" as beneficial models to follow:

見よ、写実主義を主唱する事に於て決してエミルゾラに劣らなかつたエドモン及びジユウル、ド、ゴンクウルは最も精密なる十八世紀の研究者であつた。古典の音楽を破壊したワグナアは新しき藝術の開祖であると同時に北欧の最も古き伝説の探求者であつた。伊太利文学最近の傾向を窺つても、ダンヌンチオやパスコリは何れも遠き過去に葬られてしまつた民族的栄光の追慕と記念によつて新しい何者かに到着しやうと力めて居るではないか。紅雨は一番己れに近い徳川時代を回想しない訳には行かなかつた。(59)

[Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, who were every bit the equals of Zola as advocates of realism, were nonetheless, well respected researchers of the eighteenth century. And Wagner, who more than anyone was responsible for the demise of classical music, was both a founder of the new music and also a student of the oldest legends of Northern Europe. And even in the latest trends in Italian literature, both [Gabriele] d'Annunzio and [Giovanni] Pascoli are attempting to come to some new form by preserving the memory of their nation's distant and glorious past. It was, then, only fitting that Kōu should consult the past that seemed nearest to him, the Tokugawa period (*Reishō*, cited in Snyder 126)⁸.]

Further, as Komori argues, Kafū's sympathy regards the Western other as superior, and as a result he suppresses the Oriental self (*Yuragi no nihonbungaku* 172). The same tendency is prevalent in Kafū's writings as observed in *Fransu monogatari* [French Stories]; nevertheless, in *Reishō*'s dialogic structure, neither the apotheosis of the other nor the mortification of the self overrides the entire psyche of the novel. In the course of the narrative, the characters' sympathies neither for Japan nor for the West become stabilized, but sustain a position of neutrality between the dual traditions. Unlike in *Fransu Monogatari*, within which the culturally-estranged narrator's complex identity results in prejudicial statements against the Orient, in *Reishō* the historical revisionism

explored by the European predecessors, including D'Annunzio and Pascoli, paradoxically provokes the narrator's nostalgia for his own cultural legacy.

The incorporation of alterity into Kafū's indigenous identity constitutes what Merleau-Ponty considers intersubjectivity. However, a recent commentary by Asada Akira rejects the coexistence of plural consciousnesses as a "poetic" fantasy that is deceptive about socio-cultural realities. His rejection of an organic totality based on "reciprocity, reversibility, interexchangeability, [and] chiasm" imagines a world of "co-naissance" whose "[e]xcess" cannot be accounted for by Merleau-Ponty's model (Asada 52-53). Although for Asada, the organicity of intersubjectivity signifies only a fictional fantasy, I argue that Merleau-Ponty's formulation of heterogeneity intends to create an irenic fictionality. Beginning as a fictional ideal, the intersubjective communication with the other offers a possibility to construct a new organicity of the self.

Michael Marra comments on the structure of intersubjectivity through language in the Japanese context, explaining that the act of vocalization is a foundational component of a meaning that can be phonetically shared by the participants in a dialogue. Citing Sakabe Megumi's *Kamen no kaishakugaku* [*The Hermeneutics of Masks*] (1976) and *Kagami no naka no nihongo* [*Japanese Inside the Mirror*] (1989), Marra describes a protocol of intersubjectively shared meaning that traditionally had been recognized in Japanese narrative. Rooted in "the realm of forms" (*kata*), the Japanese "act of narrating" (*kata-ri*) possesses a symbolic power. Through an interaction between the narrator(s) and the others, a certain meaning comes to life with "its fullest, deepest, and most meaning presence" by virtue of forms (*kata*) that are known to all the participants in the dialogue. The same phenomenon takes place especially through "song" (*uta*), a "verbal act of a

higher degree” that “corresponds rhythmically to the foundation of community and the universe” (Marra 235).⁹

Within a shared linguistic community, the voice of dialogue becomes predicated on the self (speaker) and the other (the interlocutor or the other speaker) only through what Sakabe calls an “un-pronoun” (*gen-ninshō*), an equivalent to Émile Benveniste’s concept of “empty signs” (Marra 235). In this context, a speaker’s voice is shared collectively because the voice cannot be a speaker’s exclusive possession: “[it] belongs to no one and everyone” (235). In this way, the subject becomes dissolved into plurality, and Marra attributes the phenomenon to a particularity of literary language. The specificity of a grammatical subject (“I,” “you,” and so forth) is replaced by a field of intersubjectivity where “the anonymous or collective unifying function” operates (236). Additionally, Marra attributes the phenomenon to a shared literary experience within Japanese cultural contexts. That is to say, a “[c]ollective consciousness of the group,” similar to the participants in a process of jointly creating linked verses (*renga*),¹⁰ holds *a priori* significance among the given interpretive community. Within this circle, a word intersubjectively provokes certain meanings, images, connotations etc., and all these semantic elements create the subject; as Marra states, “[l]anguage acts as the invisible unifying force that brings a subject to its signification” (236).

As the theory of intersubjectivity delineates, a fullness of meaning comes into existence through an innate openness of the speaker and a shared formality in language such as a particular literary form and tradition. In *Reishō* all the dialogues’ participants share a common identity as decadents, an excess of mainstream society: “凡て實用からばかり物を見てゐるほど、早く結論がついて始末のいい事はない。吾々の如くに世間一般

が目的のない空論に興味を感じて月日を送るやうになつたら、其れこそデカダンスだ”

(204; “It would be easy if we could think of everything in terms of practicality. If the entire society began to spend day after day being interested in purposeless talks like we do, that would be real decadence”). The speaker of the above passage remains unspecified, and the last scene only lines up the characters’ voices without clarifying the speaker of each utterance (203-204). Nevertheless, the novel surprisingly concludes the story with a sarcasm destructive to the irenic conversation. Because Nakatani, the traditional dandy, does not show up at the group’s gathering, the rest of the members (Kōu, Kiyoshi, Tokui) place on the table a wood statue and a doll as though they were his substitute. Kiyoshi cynically announces: “吾々の名論卓説を傾聴させる對手にはこんな適當したものがあるまい。反對もしない代り賛成もしないで柔順しくしてゐるから。” (204; “There is no other suitable audience than these [dolls], to whom we present our fabulous speech. They do not object to us; instead, they do not agree with us either, but at least remain obedient to us”). In the very last scene, they symbolically toast a glass of champagne for the sake of celebrating their own closed community of decadence.

Uzumaki [Spirals]

Published in 1910, “Uzumaki” has been regarded as Ueda Bin’s semi-autobiographical novella. Renowned as a translator, critic, and professor of literature at Kyōto Imperial University, Ueda’s name usually evokes such titles as *Miotsukushi* [Channel Buoy] (1901) and *Kaichōon* [Sound of Ocean Tides] (1905),¹¹ respectively collections of fiction and poetry translated from modern European literary works. As one of the most influential literati, and as the critic who introduced Symbolism,

Parnassianism, and *fin-de-siècle* Decadence in literature to Japanese audiences, Ueda made an immeasurable contribution to facilitate Japanese readers' exposure to modern European literatures. Nagai Kafū's yearning for Europe was indebted to Ueda's *Kaichōon*, along with his many other translations, and their friendship and aesthetic resonance inaugurated the theoretical foundation for Aestheticism in Japan.¹²

Similar to the dialogic structure of *Reishō*, "Uzumaki" showcases cultural criticism from the Aestheticist point of view. The multiple characters' crisscrossing voices display differing observations drawn from their experience of the late Meiji cultural ambience. Despite occasional conflicts, their conversations are imbued with amicability and create a sense of community in the end. Without a clear progression of the plot, the story garners the characters' sentiments, impressions, and opinions that collectively reflect the bourgeois experience of the late Meiji cultural currents.

The main character Haruo, who embraces dilettantism as his life philosophy, lays out a broad framework encompassing the entire story, but without ever dominating the others' narrative voices. While the narrative of *Reishō* dissects Kafū's unified self through four characters (as alter egos), "Uzumaki" narrates Haruo's (and implicitly Ueda's) encounter with others' views and personas. Characterized as an avid advocate of "dilettantism," Haruo provides only a hub of communication where the multitudes of voices and consciousnesses intersect. Ueda constantly writes the word "dilettantism" with kanji characters, 享楽主義^{きょうらくしゅぎ}, with a hiragana rubric reading "kyōrakushugi." In so doing he equates "kyōrakushugi" to dilettantism; however, the Japanese word in general denotes "Epicureanism." I consider that this equation reflects the author's aesthetic philosophy within the concrete cultural contexts of late Meiji. That is to say, aesthetic

enjoyment can be fulfilled without an overly too serious clinging to a single ideological or theoretical standpoint. In Chapter X, Haruo explains that genuine dilettantism entails seriousness in experiencing the given culture, and simultaneously in remaining open to novelty (349):

真の享樂家にはもつと深い苦心が要る。先づ第一に、萬ことを盡く理解しようとする熱望と、宛轉自在の同情心とが必要だ。[...] この何事も不確な世に處しは、もしも飛んだ瞞著に遇ふかも知れないから、之に豫め備へる控目の思想である。

[The genuine dilettante needs much deeper endeavors. First of all, a passion to understand everything well and a generous sympathy (toward the other's culture). [...] Under this uncertain historical moment, we might encounter unexpected deceptions; therefore, [dilettantism] is a philosophy of modesty (349-350).]

Without falling into pessimism and cynicism like the characters in *Reishō*, Haruo is nonetheless skeptical about his contemporary Japan: “維新以来の教育が、国民の趣味性に大打撃を与へて、古来の伝統を中絶した [...]” (349; “[T]he education since the Restoration has destroyed people's aesthetic sensibility and disconnected them from the ancient tradition”). The culturally-stagnant contemporary Japan has resulted from the pragmatic as well as collective education promoted by the Meiji government: “平凡、無気力、均一、無難等が、時を得て、個人性のある、色彩の強い、圭角のある精神を抑へる為だ。” (349; “[The problem permeates] because mediocrity, inertia, totality, and safety, etc., have dominated a vigorous spirit that possesses individuality and colorfulness”). Therefore, the protagonist's dilettantism resists the modern pragmatism as well as collectivism that undermine individual uniqueness. From the outset of the novella, Haruo's subjectivity is represented mostly in the form of sensation, emotion, and thoughts that forge his individuality.

Although Haruo represents individuality in “Uzumaki,” his subjectivity manifests itself as a narrative instrument that facilitates all the characters' intersubjective

communication. Often the characters' statements contradict each other, collide with the others' opinions, and at times are linked whimsically to others' thoughts. Their diverse bourgeois consciousnesses are, however, almost unified into a single commonality through Haruo's narrative, which filters them through his neutrality, flexibility, and curiosity. Unlike Kafū and his characters, Haruo's family is not totally uprooted from Edo civilization (346), but at the same time, he explores Western culture. In contrast to Kafū's longing for the bygone Edo period, Ueda's protagonist chooses Western art as a resource that enriches his existence. His preference for Western art over traditional Japanese art is based on the philosophy of dilettantism – the principle of enjoyment by his spontaneous effort – rather than on cultural revisionism or nationalism. For Haruo, resisting the historical shift is an attitude incongruous to his aesthetics of dilettantism: “[彼]は、時代の推移と共に美しい物の滅んで行くのを、敢えて引留めようとはしない。愛惜の目を以て静に之を目送するばかりだ。” (347; “[H]e does not dare to buttonhole the beautiful things that are dying along with the change of the era. Casting an affectionate gaze upon them, he just sends them off [to the past]”). As Reishō's Kōu sees his contemporary Japan as a “transitional period” (138), Haruo also interprets the epoch as a liminal moment in which the old culture is in decline and the new value is yet to be born (347). Within this fluidity, Haruo displays the historical consciousness of Japan's literati and aesthetes who are no longer able to associate only with their indigenous culture but must also open themselves to the outpouring of influences from the West.

Haruo's fascination with the Edo culture and people (348) does not signify simple nostalgia; instead, the past is utilized to map out his own location in history. The

following third-person comment juxtaposes Japanese tradition with the consciousness prevalent in the West:

春雄が演劇と言はず、美術と言はず、凡て徳川の人情風俗に一種の同情を持ったのは、單に遺傳境遇の所為ばかりでは無い、十八世紀の藝術を始めて真に解する事を得た欧州の現代人と、自ら軌を一にしたのであらう。(348)

[Haruo's sympathy for [eighteenth-century] Tokugawa culture, regardless of theatrical or visual arts, is due not only to the inheritance in his family line. It seems that he identifies himself with the modern Europeans who have genuinely understood eighteenth-century art.]

The narrator suggests that the appreciation of art entails a certain diachronic distance between the works and their audience. Haruo's "dilettantism" connotes his plasticity that similarly allows his appreciation of art not only diachronically but also synchronically between Japan and the West. In "Uzumaki," the principle of dilettantism simultaneously signifies one's openness to the cultural other and the past. It is also important to note that Ueda unmistakably borrows the idea from Walter Pater's aesthetic principle that privileges an experience itself; as he states, he values "moments [...] for those moments' sake" without dogmatizing and fixating them (Pater 153).¹³

The other characters surrounding Haruo all contribute to shape his idea of art and culture. Their conversations and Haruo's observations are resources that save him from solipsism and pessimism. Even their conflicting opinions and viewpoints are, through the protagonist's mind, unified into a harmonious conversation. Miura, son of a banker and a returnee from Britain, is depicted as a pretentious bourgeois who is infatuated with the novelty of Western civilization. His opinions are imbued with cultural essentialism, which is marked by a simple dichotomy between the West and Japan and by the implication of Western superiority. His naïveté, however, does not cause Haruo to feel antagonism against him; instead, Haruo receives him as a reflection of contemporary

reality: “永く英吉利に留学した所為か、[...] [しかし] 根は罪の無い普通の日本人だ”

(351; “Perhaps [his pretentiousness is rooted in his] study experience in Britain, [...] [but] he is in substance a simple and ordinary Japanese”). Also, one of the bourgeois women mirrors Japan’s hasty westernization, without mastering the praxis of aesthetic life. Haruo’s critical eyes are cast upon Madam Nomura’s makeup and opinions: “襟足のところ迄よく研いてあるが、年を取つてからの身嗜と見えて、本当の化粧家のやうに垢抜けはしてゐず [...]” (351; “[E]ven her neck is well polished, but that care seems what she learned only lately so that she does not possess genuine elegance [...]”). In addition, her progressivist theory of women’s education disregards the importance of traditional and contemporary Japanese literature (355). Haruo is aware of her shallowness, but remains undisturbed concerning her inability to understand art, for the same tendency is ubiquitous among “noble women who believe in their modern thinking” (355). Instead of critiquing those women, Haruo attributes their lack of profundity to Meiji Japan’s cultural tendencies: “[...] 功利主義に一点張になつて来た明治の社会は、女子に精神上的の渴望のある事を、一の贅沢として斥ける [...]” (354; “[T]he utilitarian Meiji society refuses to acknowledge women’s spiritual fulfillment as extravaganza”).

Koike, who is a scientist, also displays progressivist ideas by repeatedly advocating Western superiority. For example, he believes that the Japanese should learn European music before they create their own national music (357), a position that undermines the indigenous tradition and implies an incommensurability between Japanese and Western culture. He reasons that the irretrievability of the earlier socio-cultural life should be replaced and satisfied with the advanced Western modalities (357). In contrast to Koike, Murakami, who has graduated from law school, is a pacifist who

disagrees with the drastic idea of westernizing Japanese culture. He implicitly pokes fun at the contemporary domination of scientific positivism: “然し君の方の学問の人からは、兎角さういふ盛な議論がでる。” (357; “[F]rom people in your field, constantly such fervent arguments keep emerging”). Murakami elaborates his pacifist position by stating that the recent movement of the alphabetization of the Japanese language can be likened to the destruction of native English by the Norman Conquest of England (357).

Without siding with anyone, at the end of Chapter XIX Haruo decides to sustain the “其傍観の態度” (“attitude of a bystander”) (357): “唯心の活動を止めずに、絶えず新舊の極端に、懸錘の如く往来して、十分に両極の味を盡さうと覚悟した。” (357; “Without stopping my active mind, and ceaselessly oscillating between the new and the old like a pendulum, I am determined to savor both”). The second half of the novella is devoted to Haruo’s contemplation or savoring of modern European music and literatures. In Chapter XXV, for the first time the third-person narrator straightforwardly articulates the protagonist’s idea of beauty in the context of early twentieth-century Japan:

一体、今日の日本では、一般の人ならまだしも、藝術を口にする者迄が、なんとなく羞かんで、美を憚っている。何故あんなに現実と藝術との美を愛する心に乏しいか、どうも春雄には解せない。外国現代の藝術界は、日本のやうに見窄らしい、ぢぢ穢い、嗇々た空気に満ちては居ない、もつと情熱の盛な、精神上の豪華を競ふ華美やかなものであつて、『美』といふ觀念の拡張した今日では、優美、絢爛の他に、痛快、悲壯等の強い刺激も入つて来て、とにかく平凡貧弱な思想と感情とは、到底相手にされないのではないか。芸術家は精神上的の^{ばとりしやん}貴人である。何も粹狂に、自ら身を下して、平民や賤民の真似をするには、当らない。

(361)

[In general, in today’s Japan, not only common people but also those who dictate art are hesitating to pursue beauty, with somewhat a sense of shame. Haruo cannot understand why they lack love for the beauty of reality and of art. The modern world of art in foreign countries is not filled with goofy and petty tonalities; instead, it is passionate and gorgeous in competing in spiritual luxury. Today, when the concept of “beauty” has been broadened, in addition to elegance and splendor, other powerful stimulations such as sublimity and tragedy have been introduced (to the realm of aesthetics). I surmise that mediocre, poor

thoughts and emotions would be far from regarded as significant. Artists are spiritual *patricians*. There is no use in degrading myself and imitating common people and vulgar people, just for the sake of fun.]

In the above statements, Haruo's (and implicitly the author's) aesthetic ideology shows sympathy toward the West. From this chapter on, Haruo's neutrality departs from a dialectical comparison between Japan and the West, and is replaced by an alliance with European literature and music. A subtle appreciation for the European other begins to pervade the subsequent chapters, with references to the Nietzschean will to power, as well as to the Bergsonian concept of *élan vital*; yet, it does not establish the thesis of the novella.

More significantly, in the second half of the novella, the socio-cultural critique falls back behind the narrative façade and is replaced by Haruo's contemplation concerning his enjoyment of art. Now the only participants in the conversation are members of the hedonistic cliques: the aforementioned Koike, as well as Nagata, also a law school graduate, and Haruo himself. Both Nagata and Koike advocate the ideals of empirical life and thereby constantly stimulate Haruo. Especially, Nagata is significant as the provider of an intellectual opportunity for Haruo. Nagata's philosophical elaboration on Stendhal's *Red and Black*, for example, postulates that Julien Sorel is a type of *Übermensch*, and thereby Haruo realizes that no knowledge exists outside of pure experience (375). Furthermore, Nagata's own theorem sheds new light on Haruo's idea of aesthetic experience in relation to human selfhood: “人間の『我』といふ者は、快不快の感覚が集まつたものになる、あらゆる行為の動機は、楽を求め、苦を避けるにある。” (375; “The self” can be understood as an aggregate of sensation, pleasure, and displeasure. Then, all the motivations of our action are bound to pursue pleasure and to

avoid pain”). He concludes the theory by adding that human rationality should be utilized to construct one’s fate for the sake of pleasure and happiness (375). To articulate his point, Nagata cites an episode in Robert Browning’s unnamed poetry and brings up Hippocrates’s aphorism, “「藝は長し、命は短し」” (“*ars longa, vita brevis*”) (379). Elaborating the episode of Duke Ferdinando and Madam Riccardi, who hesitatingly postpone the fulfillment of their love, Nagata denounces not only the waste of a person’s limited life but also the weakness of the will (379).

Toward the end of “Uzumaki,” especially in Chapters XXXXV and XXXXVI, Haruo shapes his own idea of dilettantism. The most influential thoughts are now derived from Nagata’s discussions on Stendhal and Browning, which lead to Haruo’s reflection as follows: “人生の光榮は瞑想にあると同時に、力行にもある。あまりに分析し思考していくと、あるいは実行の能力を萎縮させないとも限るまい。” (379; “The glory of life lies in contemplation, and at the same time, in action. Our overanalysis and thoughts might inhibit an ability to transform our will into action”). Nagata’s value system beyond notions of good and evil also profoundly affects Haruo (379). In Chapter XXXXVI, Haruo wonders how Nagata, whose professional life is founded on “形式に流れ易く、且つ短命な彼の法律といふ物” (379; “the law, which is formalistic and ephemeral”), has experienced the vicissitudes of his thoughts. In the course of their dialogue, Nagata’s quest for an ultimate life philosophy prompts Haruo to recall the dialogic formation of the self as developed by Morris Barrès: “『聡明の人は唯一種の対話を行ふ。二個の「我」の間の対話である、一時しか続かない現在の「我」と、常に人が努力して到達しようとする真の「我」との対話だ。』” (379; “Profound human beings search only for dialogue, for the intersubjective dialogue between the two ‘selves,’ which

is the dialogue between the transient, current ‘self,’ and the genuine ‘self’ sought for by constant effort”).

Chapter XXXXVI concludes Haruo’s contemplation on dilettantism, placing him in the narrative center. Echoing Walter Pater’s “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*, the third-person narrator states that “人間の最も肝心な事業は、其確信、其熱情、其理想、其個人性を毀傷せずに保存する事である” (379; “the most valuable project in human life is to preserve belief, passion, ideals, and individuality without ruining all these”).¹⁴ To fully enrich life, we should make a ceaseless effort and be absorbed by the “人生の渦巻” (379; “the spiral of life”). This statement delineates Haruo’s “積極の享樂主義” (380; “active dilettantism”) that entails interactions with others:

昔から詩人が隠れたがる象牙の塔に籠もって、あまり主我の生活を送らうものなら、自然大切の「我」が弱くなって、血の気が薄くなる。希臘神話にあるナルキッソスが、泉に映る己が姿の美に見惚れて、水仙の花に変つて了つたやうな真似はしたくない。
(380)

[If I confined myself in the ivory tower, where poets tended to hide since the ancient times, and lived my self-centered life there, my innate “self” would be weakened and degenerated. I do not wish to imitate the way in which the Greek mythology’s Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in the spring, and was transfigured into a daffodil.]

Haruo’s dilettantism here rejects the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents’ solipsistic individualism, and instead necessitates a sense of sharing, for his aesthetic enjoyment is inextricably linked to his consciousness of the contemporary cultural ambience. Nonetheless, his aestheticism belongs to the individual realm and depends on one’s own effort. To enact his *élan vital* in aesthetic experience, “labor” is indispensable: “努力の為の努力、不斷の力争と征服とは真の享樂家が常に奉ずべき教である [...]” (380; “A genuine dilettante cannot forget the axiom that he or she must continue to make an effort for the sake of making an effort, and to struggle ceaselessly for the sake of conquering (pleasures)”).

This ascetic conclusion is then drawn from the interactive dialogues, not the protagonist's solitary and solipsistic contemplation.

Toward the very end of the story, Browning's poetry once again surges up in Haruo's mind for its allegorical significance. Comparing the episode of Duke Ferdinando and Madam Riccardi with his own life, now Haruo anticipates his new relationship with Natsuko, the woman he recently met at a music recital: “自分も[...]新しい生活に入つたのではないか、これから人生の試験に臨むのではないか[...]” (380; “[...] I might be also entering the new life, I might face the examination of life [...]”). At this moment, all the components of Haruo's aesthetic theory – the sensations, the European arts, and the presence of alterity – are gathered to constitute his pleasure:

村上の別荘の庭先で、吹上虹の傍に立って、明るい池の反射を浴びた夏子の姿、上野の楽堂の同じ空気の中で、シャルパンチエの曲に、伊太利亜の光景を夢み、トリスタン、イゾルデに、ドルドラのセレナードに、相思の情の切なさを共に感じたあの夏子・・・・・・・・・・。(380)

[Natsuko's figure, immersed in the reflecting light of the shining pond, standing near the rainbow of the fountain, at the garden of Murakami; Natsuko, with whom I dreamt a view of Italy in Charpentier's tune, with whom I felt love's poignancy in Tristan and Isolde, then in the serenade by Drdla...]

Although Natsuko culminates his aesthetic sensations, Haruo's imagination reinforces the novella's limitation as a male-centered cultural arena that reflects bourgeois value systems. The handful of women in “Uzumaki” are depicted only through Haruo's or another male's gaze, and are mostly subjected to criticism against their cultural shallowness while they serve the male characters' appreciation as aesthetic objects. Imagined by Haruo, Natsuko fulfills his aesthetic desire but never participates in any substantial conversation as a speaking subject.

Despite that deficiency, in contrast to the pathos and sarcasm prevalent in *Reishō*, “Uzumaki” is Ueda’s more positive endeavor to alleviate the diachronic as well as synchronic cultural conflicts between Japan and the West. Although the two stories are similarly filtered through their *kichōshas*’ perspectives, Ueda’s narrative expresses a far more uplifting optimism about Japan’s decaying tradition. The absent element in “Uzumaki” is Kafū’s obsessive concern with dichotomies, such as the modern versus the pre-modern, and Japan versus the West. Similar to Merleau-Ponty’s recognition, the narrative of “Uzumaki” accommodates a plurality of voices while facilitating the protagonist’s aesthetic as well as intellectual self-development. The protagonist’s subjectivity comes to full existence only through dialogic interactions with others. Haruo’s subjectivity is almost an impersonal construct that mirrors the late Meiji cultural consciousness commonly shared by the bourgeois circle of aesthetes and intellectuals.

Situated in the hub of the Meiji, Haruo plays the role of the cultural observer and commentator, whose openness enables the others’ consciousnesses to converse each other, and therein linguistically facilitates what Kamei Hideo calls “un-collated” history – socio-cultural phenomena untranslated into the official history of the modern nation.¹⁵ Haruo’s positive experience of European art, for example, represents a component of the unofficial historical experience undergone by the Japanese people. His narrative is therefore a hermetic facilitator that transmutes individual experience into a collective, intersubjectively-shared experience of the epoch. Unlike Kafū’s ambivalent sentiment that blends his intricate self-consciousness with his hatred for Japan’s modernity, Ueda’s perspective is simple but positive. As expressed in Haruo’s mentality, Ueda eschews making culturally-essentialist judgments but instead maintains openness, precisely to

maximize the possibilities of historically-conditioned aesthetic enjoyment. Furthermore, Ueda's aesthetics greatly resonates with Pascoli's theory of poetry, which metaphorically advocates the primordial structure of infantile experiences. As discussed earlier, in *Il Fanciullino* Pascoli repeatedly names purity of experience as the essence of poetry and in clarification provides a series of counterparts to poetry, such as “*mythous e non logous*, favole e non ragionamenti” (38; “*mythos* and non *logos*, tales and not discursive speech,” 25, italics in the original).

Ueda also prioritizes sensory perception as the most resourceful pathway to the pure experience of art. In the modern Japanese context, his emphasis on sensory perception is highly significant, for it inaugurates an irenic attitude in literary discourse and offers an alternative to the cultural tension between Japan (East) and the West with which Kafū is deeply preoccupied. Giving recognition to the non-rationalized “sense” as the epistemological instrument for experience, Ueda presents the novella as a discourse of historico-cultural connectedness. Citing a seventeenth-century anecdote about Date Masamune, a renowned feudal warrior who sent kisses to Pope Paul V's feet, Ueda underscores that such a romantic admiration for a distant culture is “*佯の無い人情*” (344; “an undeniable human emotion”). The subsequent passage points out that the Japanese have also incorporated foreign cultures into their own tradition: “[...] 萬国の文化を併呑して、いつか自家薬籠中の物と化す日本国民独得の好奇心が促した努力では無いか。” (344; “[All of Japan's acculturation is] a result of the effort made by the Japanese people's curiosity that absorbs any foreign culture and possesses it as their own property”). Such statements provide a more intercultural perspective than the Japanese nativists' lamentation for their cultural past, as expressed in Kafū's *kichōcha* stories.

Finally, “Uzumaki” semantically transforms Japan’s agonistic loss of its indigenous culture into a new possibility of enjoying the other’s culture. Within the unretrievability of history, then, cultivation of the aesthetic self belongs to a realm of individuality that requires passion and enthusiasm; aesthetic sensibility is not an innate disposition but a personal quality that needs to be fostered with effort or labor (380). Similar to Pascoli’s poetic theory, Ueda’s aestheticism is concerned with the materiality of experience itself, rather than its artificialization by means of embellished language. Salinari’s comments on Pascoli describe a similar fundamentally-materialist stance: “Pascoli crede all’esistenza oggettiva delle cose, anzi alla poeticità oggettiva delle cose che il poeta deve limitarsi a scoprire: quindi muove da una concezione del mondo ancora positivistica” (119; “Pascoli believes in the objective existence of things, rather than the objective poetics of things that the poet must limit himself to discover: therefore, he moves away from a concession of the already positivistic world”).

From the social point of view, the dilettantism in “Uzumaki” proposes an alternative to the fundamentally-totalitarian, monopolized structure of modern life. Relying on sensory perception, “Uzumaki” contests dogmatized forms of human thought: rationalism, positivism, utilitarianism, and militarism, to name a few. In this sense, as I have discussed regarding Pascoli and Kafū, Ueda’s dilettantism also is a form of regression that refutes a rational disposition of modernity. Wrestling with the limitations of his native culture that has become stigmatized by its barren social conditions, and choosing to vocalize his frustration aesthetically, Ueda offers to borrow cultural alterity, and thus the novella constructs a cultural kaleidoscope that assembles multiple European

artifacts: Wagnerian symphony, Verdi's opera, D'Annunzian novel, Nietzschean philosophy, Da Vinci's paintings, and so on.

Because of its potential for a universal cognitive effect on an audience, music holds a privileged position in "Uzumaki." Ueda proposes that modern art tends to take the form of music, and that the pleasure and harmony transmitted by music "時と處とに超越して" (369; "transcends the chronotopos") so that human subjectivity becomes emancipated: "人格といふ牢獄に幽閉されて、絶えず肉胎といふ盲目の物質に制馭されてる個人の意志は、「美」の精髓ともいふべき音楽の「はるもにや」に依つて、始めて自我から遊離することが出来る。" (369; "The human will is confined in the prison called a personality and controlled by the blind substance called a body. It can be freed from the self, only by virtue of the musical 'harmony' that should be called the essence of 'beauty'"). The affectivity latent in music facilitates the intersubjective experience of art: "成程壇上の音楽と、壇下の聴衆とは、自から一致交換する所が無ければなるまい。随つて楽堂の裡に、一種の空気が出来て、音楽以外の面白みが生じるのも可。" (365; "Indeed, the orchestra's music and the audience must be unified; in this way, it is intriguing that a kind of atmosphere emerges, and something more than music also arises"). Music is therefore an art capable of facilitating the audience's ineffable communion with the other; through the experience of art, each individual departs from a solitary, compartmentalized humanity, as exemplified in Haruo's sympathy for Natsuko during the recital (368).

As Elaine Gerbert points out in, "Space and Aesthetic Imagination in Some Taishō Writings," early twentieth-century discourse in Japan juxtaposed competing elements such as "urbanization and industrialization," or "capitalism [and]

individualism” (70), creating “divisions between city and country, and social conflict and disharmony” (70). To conciliate these divisions, Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) and Origuchi Shinobu (1887-1953) endeavored to construct a “locus of authentic identity” (70) in their anthropological discourses. Unlike their vigorous assertions of Japaneseness, Ueda’s “Uzumaki” escapes Japan’s ontological impasse that would dictate sharp boundaries between the self and the other. Without the reductionistic positivism, the novella’s amicable, bourgeois discourse accommodates intercultural dialogues, imagination, curiosity, and admiration for the other.

Toward Dialogism in the Narrative of Decadent Literature

The dialogic structure of narrative in Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda’s works accomplishes important missions. Accommodating plural consciousnesses, *Il Fanciullino*, *Reishō*, and “Uzumaki” undermine the solipsistic subjectivity prevalent in the mainstream discourse of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence. As Merleau-Ponty and Levinas have acknowledged, alterity constitutes an indispensable part of the protagonist’s self. Inversely, the protagonist comes into existence through the process of being subjected to others. The dialogism in these narratives shows the idiosyncratic process of negotiation between modernity and anti-modernity. The protagonist’s consciousness of “I” progressively effaces a lucid outline of the self and becomes dissolved into the other interlocutors’ and speakers’ minds. From a humanistic point of view, a fluid play of the self, according to Mihai I. Spariosu, may be thought of as a ludic, irenic mode of literary discourse:

[L]iterature as a form of irenic play can equally assume a culturally transcendental dimension, in the sense that it can go beyond its immediate historical context. It

can become a playground suitable for the creation and imaginative enactment of human values that are often incommensurable with those embraced by the community out of which the literary work arises and to which it is normally addressed. In other words, literary discourse can offer fresh cultural alternatives precisely because it is a form of play, that is, an *as if* mode of activity and being, in which the world of actuality and that of the imaginary become interwoven and create an intermediary world separate from, yet contingent upon, the other two. (29)

In light of Spariosu's statement, the rhetoric of intersubjectivity facilitated by playful narrative elements (the Child, *gesaku* writer, and dilettantism) equals a redemptive project – or a prognostic – antithetical to the crisis of humanity as perceived in the early twentieth century. Regression to a primordial stage of pleasure-seeking signifies the authors' resistance against the overrationalized officiality in modernity, which undermines the purity of human experience itself.

Dennis Washburn situates the modern self in literary discourse as a narrative process that constantly resuscitates and reforms one's identity in both its particularities and universalities (2). While this duality is at play, what modernity inscribes in literary discourse is a collective awareness of cultural discontinuity (2). Negativity in the sense of cultural loss provided modern writers with an urge to compensate for the deficiency by exercising their freedom in art. This creative urge was not solely located in decadent literature, but proliferated as a common denominator of literary Modernism through the first quarter of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, specificities of locally-constructed cultural and historical conditions are important. As Washburn states, literary Modernism concerns both writers' "dislocation and their freedom," and they show an "awareness [that] is at once creative and destructive. It is both emancipation from orthodoxy and convention and a cultural disinheritance, a loss of tradition and meaning" (Washburn 10). While this comment does not attribute the modern predicament entirely to local or

individual experiences, the term “modern” conveys significantly diverse meanings. Decadent literature, given its preoccupation with aesthetics, eloquently revitalizes particular local conditions that are marked by their own literary traditions.

Pascoli, Kafū, and Ueda continue to lament the lost cultural past, yet the literary modernity of their works needs to be evaluated as more than simple nostalgia. As a variant of decadent literature, *Il Fanciullino*, *Reishō*, and “Uzumaki” share the Modernists’ urgency to compensate for cultural loss by means of dexterity in narrative. Their urge transcends an archeological project, though they acknowledge the irretrievability of history. The three authors’ undertakings are in a sense an alchemic project that amalgamates the cultural past with their subjectivity, which is then filtered through, paradoxically, ongoing modernity itself.

¹ See Paul John Eakin's foreword to Philippe Lejuene's *On Autobiography* (xvii).

² *Il Fanciullino* consists of eighteen chapters of prose passages and two chapters of poems. The chapters in prose present poetic theories developed by the adult poet's narrative voice, which also engages in an imaginary dialogue with the Child. Chapters VII and XIX present poems that are spoken through the Child's voice, which converses with the adult poet. In the poem of chapter VII, the Child views the poet as his "dolce ospite" (24; "my sweet host"), while, as in chapter VI, the poet plays the role of an active interlocutor who encourages the Child's participation to enrich his theoretical arguments; for example, the poet's utterance includes the remark "Quale invero sarebbe? Parla!" (24; "In truth, what could it be? Speak!").

³ According to Culler, the meaning of a literary text is not a result of a subjective judgment. Instead, he attributes the guiding source for the reader's interpretation to his or her "literary competence" and "literary convention." For example, conventional elements such as "metaphorical coherence," "thematic unity" and "syntactic structure" in poetry, which are publicly shared, determine the reader's interpretation of the work (103-104).

⁴ The *Kichōsha* [Returnees] stories include: *Fukawgawa no uta* [The Song of Fukagawa] (1909), *Botan no kyaku* [The Peony Garden] (1909), *Kanraku* [The Pleasure] (1909), *Donten* [Cloudy Weather] (1909), *Kitsune* [The Fox] (1909), *Kangokusho no ura* [Behind the Prison] (1909), *Sumidagawa* [The River Sumida] (1909), *Shinkichōsha nikki* [The New Diary of A Returnee] (1909), and *Reishō* [Sneers] (1909-1910).

⁵ Nagai Kafū's five-year stay in the West has been discussed in detail by numerous critics including Isoda Kōichi, Yoshida Seiichi, and Edward Seidensticker, among others. Some of their biographically centered criticisms tend to posit that the writer's rejection of Meiji modernity was caused by his extensive stays in the United States and France. The social maturity of the West (primarily France and Britain), grounded on established individualism, capitalism, and the cohabitation of traditions with the present, undoubtedly influenced Kafū's life and writing. While my analysis owes much to their seminal research, I attempt to situate *Reishō* as a conspicuous bridge between dichotomies such as Japan and the West, pre-modernity and modernity, etc. In this regard, along with Isoda's commentary cited above, Rachael Hutchinson's essay, "Occidentalism and Critique of Meiji: the West in the Returnee Stories of Nagai Kafū," provided me with an insightful point of departure from previous studies on Kafū's works.

⁶ In *Muyōsha no keifu*, Karaki Jun'zō regards Kafū as a conscious student of decadence (*decadan no to*), genealogically the last of the "bunjinbokyaku" – the Edo literati who willfully retire from mainstream social life for the artistic life (74).

⁷ Critics including Matsumoto Hajime attribute Kafū's decadence to his failure to vindicate the leftists who were convicted for their plot to assassinate the Meiji Emperor (39). The incident, recalled as *Taigyaku Jiken* [The High Treason Incident] (1910-1911), resulted in mass arrests and the execution of socialist-anarchist thinkers, most

prominently Kōtoku Shūsui. Afterwards, Japan's intellectual arena became far more repressive for political dissidents. See Nagai's essay, "Hanabi" [Fireworks] (1919).

⁸ The quote is Snyder's partial translation of *Reishō*, which is included in *Fictions of Desire: Narrative Form in the Novels of Nagai Kafu* (126).

⁹ Marra cites Sakabe Megumi's "The Play of Mirrors" in "*Le Masque, le Comportement et le Jeu*." See *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* (234-235).

¹⁰ *Renga* is a form of Japanese collaborative poetry that is composed by a group of poets. The opening stanza (*ku*) is supposed to govern the overarching image or theme of the entire poem. *Renga* largely relies on the participating poets' shared literary knowledge and intersubjective intention to form the poem in a particular direction.

¹¹ *Kaichōon* includes translations of poems by Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Verlaine, D'Annunzio, Rossetti, and Browning, among others. In the preface to the book, Ueda mentions that he employed "sichigo-chō" [seven-five syllable pattern], a traditional *tanka* and *haiku* scheme, to render the elegance created by the Parnassians. In contrast with this renowned poetry collection, *Uzumaki* is a modernized prose fiction.

¹² See Naruse Masakatsu, "Taishōbungaku no mondaiten" [Problems in Taishō Literature] in *Taisho no Bungaku* (61).

¹³ For a full account of Ueda's aestheticism influenced by Walter Pater, see Yano Mineto's essay, "Ueda Bin Sensei" [Teacher Ueda Bin] (388-390).

¹⁴ Also see Chapter X of the novella for a more concrete reference to Pater's "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*. There a quote is given verbatim: "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (349).

¹⁵ For Kamei Hideo's explication of the term in English translation, see <<http://homepage2.nifty.com/k-sekirei/symposium/western/columbia-e.html>> 15 Jun. 2006.

CHAPTER IV

Anti-Modern Consumption of Modern Human Beings: Generosity, Dedication, and Defeat in D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere* and Mishima's *Haru no yuki*

Un-productiveness as the Principle of Decadentism

Nineteenth-century positivist discourses condemned individualism as a dangerous rupture with what was claimed to be the organic structure of pre-modern society. Citing Paul Bourget's theory of decadence as a failure of the productive *Gesellschaft*, Max Nordau asserts that the overt individualism enacted by the Decadents is nothing but injurious to a healthy social life. To judge the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents and Aesthetes, Nordau borrows Bourget's theory of the economy of energy conservation. That is to say, an individual, as a social "cell," should "function with energy, but with a subordinate energy" (Bourget 24, cited by Nordau 301). In this respect, the cult of individualism embraced by the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents can be characterized as an untamed entropy that rejects the productive usage of its energy. Simultaneously, excessive energy was viewed as causing the failure of social organicism, while leading to a state of chaos that "constitutes the decadence of the whole" (Bourget 24, cited by Nordau 301). Classified as a problematic social group, the Decadents and Aesthetes were labeled by Nordau as neurotic "ego-maniacs" (296-337). Nordau diagnoses that egomaniacs irresistibly unleash individuality as a consequence of their mental and physical degeneration, which subverts the social virtue of labor and productivity. As an assertive "single organ," the Decadents and Aesthetes are prone to be instinctive; therefore, they are potentially a menace to the organic wholeness of society (Nordau 313).

Nordau's observation condemns the late nineteenth-century schools of aesthetics altogether as advocates of anti-social dispositions. The Parnassians, the Diabolists, and the Decadents are jointly regarded as "absurd" for their overemphasis on art and immorality and their inclination to anti-nature and untruth (Nordau 322). These symptomatic tendencies stem from their ego-maniac individuality, which, according to Nordau's pathological analysis, is caused by an impulsive nervous system (Nordau 323-324). Further, he underlines the idea that art is the manifested form of their degeneration, a proof of their "basest instincts" and "pernicious[ness]" (325). To add humiliation to the mix, Nordau ends his theory by stating that the Decadents and the Aesthetes, along with the *fin-de-siècle* ego-maniacs in general, "have completely gathered under their banner [...] those refuse[d] by civilized peoples, and march[ed] at its head" (Nordau 337).

The positivist stigma cast upon the Decadents and the Aesthetes is, however, partially erased by a certain valence of Postmodern discourses. The Postmodern acknowledgement of anti-productive activities as part of inevitable human realities legitimately salvages the scathed reputation of art as well as its active exponents, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents and the Aesthetes. The theories of positive consumption and waste of energy, well discussed by Georges Bataille and Jean-François Lyotard,¹ rescue the "cursed" dimensions of counter-modernity dismissed by Nordau. For my study of the decadent literatures of Japan and Italy, the notion of anti-productive expenditure envisioned by Bataille, that "[h]uman activity is not entirely reducible to processes of production and conservation" (118), offers an illuminating point of departure. In so stating, Bataille radically contests the principle of classical utility or use-value. Concurrently, his theory of humanity dispenses a critique of modernity that has extolled

rational modes of human activity. Thus it goes without saying that Bataille challenges the positivist valorization of efficient productivity so as to vindicate human activities that can be reducible to such terms as “generous, orgiastic, and excessive” (124).

The *fin-de-siècle* Decadents’ psyche strikingly resonates with Bataille’s notion of nonproductive expenditure par excellence. Building on the foundation of Bataille’s theoretical consideration of unproductive expenditure, this chapter explicates the anti-bourgeois mentalities radically played out by decadent *personae* in aestheticist-decadent novels. For this purpose, Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *Il Piacere* [translated into English as *The Child of Pleasure*] (1889) and Mishima Yukio’s *Haru no yuki* [Spring Snow] (1967) provide prominent cases in which bourgeois ideologies are refuted through an exaltation of eroticism and aestheticism. The egomaniacal self-sufficiency of the decadent protagonists in *Il Piacere* and *Haru no yuki* remains incompatible with any notion of conventional productiveness – their obsessive individualism, persistent search for aesthetic pleasure, and indulgence in objects of desire together overthrow a modern accountability of production. In their representative oeuvres, the deployment of decadence as an aesthetic ideal and as a cultural response to modernity not only implicates D’Annunzio’s and Mishima’s sympathies toward an anti-utilitarian refutation of labor and productivity, but also helps rearticulate a modern sensibility of Decadentism, which distances itself from the overriding realm of their contemporary *homo economicus*.

Il Piacere is a quintessential literary work of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, and *Haru no yuki* is its seemingly conscious follower; both novels are odes to the ancient mentality of aristocrats who remain indifferent to bourgeois productivity and profitability. As a vindicator of the positivist/bourgeois indictments of un-productivity, Bataille’s notion of

eroticism and non-reproductive expenditure provides a ready guide to our interpretation of the two novels.

In *La Part Maudite* (1947) (partially translated into English as *Visions of Excess* and *The Accursed Share*),² Bataille argues that bourgeois economy has displaced traditional values – which he posits to be in close association with totemism – reflected in the practice of prodigality, sacrifice, and excessive waste. In his anthropological analysis, these forms of empty or wasteful expenditure were an integral part of social stability that underwrote the glory of a community or a tribal group. The emergence of the modern bourgeois economy, according to Bataille, was bound to replace the glorification of waste with a “hatred of expenditure” (*Visions of Excess* 124).

Commensurate with Bataille’s notion of expenditure, decadent heroes reject the bourgeois values of productivity and efficiency. Their principles are essentially hedonistic, and thus they advocate non-productivity in life and the experience of beauty, which also remains indifferent to any other purpose but stands on its own right. In this very conjunction, eroticism provides the decadent protagonists in *Il Piacere* and *Haru no Yuki* with a way to escape the confinement of the bourgeois-dominated modern world. As a variant form of unproductive expenditure, the eroticism in these novels sustains a cohesive value system that governs the anti-modern panorama of the social milieus. Unlike biological reproduction that results from sexual intercourse, Bataille, Lyotard, D’Annunzio, and Mishima commonly dissociate the notion of eroticism from productiveness as it is advocated by the utilitarian principle, but envision the concept fundamentally as a subjective enclosure intertwined with one’s inner experience of eros.³

Mishima and the Chi to bara

In Japan, an array of erotic decadent literatures in the late 1960s displayed the resurgence of sympathy toward their *fin-de-siècle* European predecessors in terms of themes and artistic dexterities. Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, who translated works by Bataille and the Marquis de Sade into Japanese, organized in 1968 a group of writers and theoreticians who were sympathizers with *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature, such as Mishima Yukio, Haniya Yutaka, and Inagaki Taruho, among others. Advocating the confluence of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics with Bataille's theory of eroticism, Shibusawa introduced the genre of erotic decadent literature to Japanese audiences through the group's literary magazine, 血と薔薇 (*Chi to bara*) [Blood and Roses], which was published in 1968-1969. Although the literary circle was unnamed, the magazine metaphorically prompts the members' overall identification with the *fin-de-siècle* literary imagination and its genealogy from European Romanticism. Embracing eroticism as a pivotal aesthetic credo, the group consciously distinguished itself from the previous decadent movements of Japanese literary circles, including *Shirakabaha* (The School of the White Birch) in the 1910s, Taishō Dekadansu or Tanbishugi (Taishō Decadence or Aestheticism) in the 1920s, and *Buraiha* (The School of Decadence) in the 1950s.

In contrast with these forerunners, the group of *Chi to bara* embraced a clear ideological standpoint and literary style. Most notably, the group's writers viewed eroticism as a metaphysical force rooted in sexuality itself, which Shibusawa regarded as an entity completely independent from biological factuality, especially reproductive functionality (Shibusawa, *Chi to bara* 38). Eroticism, according to Shibusawa, belongs to a realm of "play" as well as a type of "luxury," which resuscitates a surplus value not

only attributable to the human experience of sexuality but also clearly distinguishable from mere reproductive function (38). Founded upon this editor's theoretical underpinnings, the first issue of *Chi to Bara* published the manifesto that exalted amorality, eroticism, and upfront resistance against the postwar tendencies of cultural and literary vulgarity in Japanese culture. The contributors to the magazine envisioned that eroticism could articulate their aesthetic creed, which is by and large anti-modern; accordingly, the group considered eroticism as the driving vehicle which would eventually overthrow tawdry contemporary mass culturalism and unfounded, future-bound optimism. A major item in the manifesto read as follows:

一、およそエロティシズムを抜きにした文化は、蒼ざめた貧血症の似而非文化でしかないことを痛感している私たちは、今日、わが国の文化界一般をおおっている衛生無害な教養主義や、思想的専横主義や、さてはテクノロジーに全面降伏した単純な楽天的な未来信仰に対して、この雑誌をば、ささやかな批判の具たらしめんとするものである。エロティシズムの見地に立てば、個体はつねに不連続であり、そこに連続の幻影を垣間見るにもせよ、一切は無から始まるのであり、未来は混沌とした地獄のヴィジョンしか生まないであろう。

(Shibusawa, *Chi to bara* 22)

[We are painfully aware that a culture without eroticism is nothing but an anemic, inauthentic one. As such we intend to utilize this magazine as a critical device against current trends blanketing our culture: innocuous eruditionism, ideological flunkeyism, and simplistically optimistic futurism surrendering entirely to technology. From the viewpoint of eroticism, an individual always stands upon discontinuity. Even if a momentary illusion of continuity is seen, everything is born out of nothingness; hence, the future gives birth to nothing but a chaotic vision of Hell.]

The manifesto elucidated the spectrum of their ideal decadent literature as explored by the magazine. Invoking the same concept of eroticism as configured by Bataille, the manifesto unequivocally sought to critique a Japanese culture that was fatally founded on an array of scientific positivism and shallow culturalism. Furthermore, the manifesto articulates the *Chi to bara* group's epistemological vision of the contemporary world.

Consciously refuting any positivistic methodology, the group envisioned human experience fundamentally as a dynamics of “individuals,” who cannot be subsumed under any scientific rationalization; the group thus posited that the phenomenal world is constituted only by unorganic elements as a “chaos.” As a radical intervention against cultural conformism, the manifesto was undoubtedly meant to rehabilitate anti-modern worldviews, drawing on what Bataille calls an unobjectified “inner experience” embedded in an individual (*Erotism* 37). The prerogative of the “primitive” in Japan’s literary discourse then clearly contests the country’s boast of modernist achievement, that is, the steadfast postwar recovery that was to meant assure the economic success of the following decades. The neurotic interplay between civilization and primitiveness is reminiscent of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence at large. Through conscious imitation of their predecessors, the *Chi to Bara* group dismantled the deficiency of modernity through their literary explication of an untamable eroticism. Furthermore, at a metonymic level, with what the manifesto calls “an illusion of continuity,” the group intended to demystify the modern ontology of individuality, which adopted the bourgeois principle of expenditure that solely aims at reproduction and conservation without generosity toward the others. Deeply sympathizing with Bataille’s theory of unproductive expenditure, the *Chi to Bara* group upheld eroticism as a form of *élan vital* translatable into their literary works. The life force is grounded, essentially, on purposelessness, which remains indifferent to any institutionalized values. In addition, the manifesto antagonizes any modern framework of scientific positivism; for example, the group disagrees with part of Freudian psychoanalysis because Freud’s method “groundlessly” confines human realities in *a priori* categories:

心理学の領域では、アプリオリに正常あるいは異常のレッテルを貼りつけるべき、何らの現実的根拠もないことを確信している私たちは、フロイト博士の功罪を正しく見きわめ、何よりもまず、コンプレックスという言葉にまつわりついた貶下的なニュアンスを取り払わんとするものである。

(Shibusawa, *Chi to bara* 15)

[We ensure that there is no realistic ground on which the prejudice of normality or abnormality is given a priori in the realm of psychology. Therefore we intend to dismantle the merits and demerits in Dr. Freud's work. In so doing, first of all, we seek to eliminate the degrading nuance attached to the expression, "complex."]

The manifesto further implied that Freud's sexual sublimation merely enthralls moralists without addressing the somatic realities of human beings. Likewise, the *Chi to bara* group rejected all ranges of scientific positivism as a despotic imposture, which failed to articulate modern human experience from the perspective of individual sexuality.

Mishima's Debt to fin-de-siècle Decadence

In Japan, decadent literature in the 1960s and 70s was undoubtedly rejuvenated by one of the most active members of the Shibusawa clique, Mishima Yukio (1925-70). He acknowledges his indebtedness to the *fin-de-siècle* European writers, more frankly to Wilde and Huysmans, less explicitly to D'Annunzio.⁴ Mishima was inspired to perpetuate the *fin-de-siècle* legacy of literary Decadentism and thus actively contributed to the growth of *Chi to bara*. While the magazine's title connotes sensuality as somewhat gothic and morbid, Mishima understood literary decadence to be fundamentally tantamount to an ambience of "ennui," and he broadened the concept much more than is generally acknowledged (Shibusawa, *Mishima Yukio Oboegaki* 60-61). For Mishima, the imageries of decadence amalgamate eroticism and traditional Japanese aesthetics on the one hand, and combine the historical notion of civilization's decay and ennui on the other.

Haru no yuki [Spring Snow] (1967), the first novel of his tetralogy *Hōjō no umi* [The Sea of Fertility] (1965-1970),⁵ perfectly blends the effeminate beauty and eroticism encapsulated by the manifesto of *Chi to Bara*. As Mishima claims referentiality to *Hamamatsu chūnagon monogatari* (“The Tale of Hamamatsu Counselor,” written by Sugawara no Takasue no Musume c.a. the mid eleventh century), the novel is intertextually reminiscent of the medieval narrative. The basic plot of these two works evolves around the forbidden relationship between an aristocratic young man and a woman betrothed to a loyal prince. According to Mishima’s closing note to *Haru no yuki*, “the dream and reincarnation” governs the textuality of the novel (467), and concomitantly, the novel links what the author imagines to be the ideal of decadentism with a plenitude of “*tawayameburi*” (feminine elegance) and “*nigimitama*” (spirit of elegance) (500).

Mishima’s idea of decadence is closely interwoven with Bataille’s theoretical notions of eroticism and expenditure. According to Shimizu Tōru, Mishima consciously adopted Bataille’s anthropological vocabulary, and in particular he uses the terms “禁忌” prohibition (“prohibition”), “違反” (“taboo”), and “不可能性” (“impossibility”) (Sadoya 148). In Mishima’s reading of Bataille’s *Eroticism*, these notions are inseparable from the theoretical underpinnings that regard life fundamentally as a form of “非連続性” (“discontinuity”) and “個人” (“individuality”) (“Erochishizumu” 506). In Bataille’s interpretation, eroticism provides a drastic intervention for disjointed individual lives while actualizing a “momentary illusion” (Sadoya 145) of the continuity of life. The eroticism in sexual intercourse, for example, will erase only temporarily the individuality – a single entity disjointed from others – of human beings. The ephemeral joining of

“the disjointed” becomes possible, then, through the negation of everydayness, which is regulated by the norms and values in modern social life. In this conjunction, the spirit of decadence elevates eroticism with the virtue of disruption because the excess of desire penetrates the reality of “discontinuous life” (145), as it disrupts serenity and thereby boosts transgression from the modern standards of reason and sanity. It should be noted here that the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent discourse – and decadent literature by Japanese writers – equally exhibits a fascination with eroticism, precisely for its vector pointing at the realm of taboos and the transgression of social norms.

The notion of “excess” is highly pertinent to decadent aesthetics. Incommensurate with positivistic as well as regulatory tendencies in modernity, the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents refuse to conform to the normative value system on which bourgeois morality and productivity are founded. Conscious of being remnants of social entropy, the Decadents take pride in remaining “useless” within the capitalist logic of production, reproduction, and profit-making. A prominent example from *fin-de-siècle* literary work includes, as Nicoletta Pireddu point out, the protagonists of Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *Il Piacere* [The Child of Pleasure] (1889), for their “practice of unconditional giving” (175). Their acts of excessive generosity, by means of physical and monetary offerings, remain outside the modern notion of productivity and pragmatism. This anti-modern, self-destructive practice reappears in Mishima’s *Haru no yuki*.⁶ I shall attempt to explicate Mishima’s zealous reaffirmation of prodigality and consumption as expressed in the novel. Simultaneously, revisiting D’Annunzio’s romance further clarifies Mishima’s debt to the Italian writer/poet and demonstrates the Japanese writer’s effort to emulate his *fin-de-siècle* forerunners.

IL PIACERE

D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere*, the first novel of his trilogy, *I Romanzi della rosa* (The Novels of the Rose), which consists of *Il Piacere* [The Child of Pleasure] (1889), *L'Innocente* [The Innocent] (1892), and *Il Trionfo della Morte* [The Triumph of Death] (1894), recounts a decadent hero's excruciating passion for two women. At the outset of the novel, which is set in Rome, the protagonist, Andrea Sperelli, a refined young count, falls in love with Elena Muti, a beautiful duchess who constantly captivates and haunts him as the novel's *femme fatale* figure. Their blissful relationship, however, becomes truncated suddenly when she departs from Rome without giving any explanation. During a period of convalescence occasioned by a duel over Elena, and the midst of his dejection, Andrea becomes acquainted with the sensual Maria Ferrès, the wife of the Minister for Guatemala. Infatuated with her beauty and gentleness, Andrea quickly initiates a new relationship with her. Meanwhile, Andrea discovers that two years after her sudden departure Elena has married the English aristocrat Humphrey Heathfield to remedy her financial devastation. Andrea's rekindled love grows into an obsession to possess her once more while being unable to eliminate a sense of defeat. The prolonged limbo of his love transforms into his desire for revenge on Elena, in response to her indifference and desire to distance him. To cure the pain, Andrea intensifies his courtship of Maria. The novel concludes with Andrea's failure to possess both women. The devastating climax arrives when he utters Elena's name when Maria is in his arms. The final chapter portrays the defeat of the protagonist, which is contrasted to the victorious Elena who is surrounded by fluttering courtiers. The last page symbolically portrays his solitary retirement to his private sphere: "Egli entrò. Come l'armario occupava tutta la larghezza,

egli non poté passare oltre. Seguì, piano piano, di gradino in gradino, fin dentro la casa” (311; “He went in. As the cabinet occupied the whole width of the staircase, he could not pass. So he had to follow it, slowly, slowly, step by step, up to his door,” 358).

In *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nell letteratura romantica* (*Romantic Agony* in English translation) (1933), Mario Praz regards the novel as proving that D’Annunzio reflects the “primitive bestiality” of his provincial upbringing in the Abruzzo region (421). Praz comments further that D’Annunzio generally lacks a capability of “penetrating into subtleties of shades of meaning” (422). Modeling his novel on works by Lorrain and Péladan, D’Annunzio synthesizes barbarism and French Decadence, while also borrowing apparent characteristics from Swinburne and Nietzsche (421-422). For Praz, D’Annunzio appears to be a culturally eclectic case of extremism that synchronizes both the *spirito crudo* (raw nature) (421) and mature civilization of Europe: “D’Annunzio is a barbarian and at the same time a Decadent” (421). Among the recent commentaries, David Weir’s *Decadence and The Making of Modernity* (1996) also harshly states that the novel is an insignificant achievement that deploys an array of “adventure and romantic intrigue” (105) merely as literary embellishment without genuine profoundness.

Contrary to these unfavorable assessments, Nicoletta Pireddu observes the significance of D’Annunzian anti-modern primitivism as the *fin-de-siècle* masterpiece that attests to a dynamics between literary discourse and the modern anthropological research undertaken in the late nineteenth century by such scholars as Paolo Mantegazza, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Maucel Mauss (Pireddu 182). According to Pireddu, their anthropological approaches to primitive civilization and the representation of the “economy of pleasure” in *Il Piacere* equally celebrate the “non-utilitarian” value within

human relationships. Reinforcing the privilege of squandering and loss, Mantegazza's work had a great impact upon D'Annunzio's decadent aesthetics and facilitated his thematic exploration of pre-modern communal life. Modeling Ancient Greece, Mantegazza's research delineated a hedonistic vision of the world that praises a principle of unrestricted expenditure in its own right. It is worth restating that Mantegazza's non-utilitarian principle of economy coincides with Bataille's notion of "économie générale" while opposing that of the "économie restreinte" of reproduction and accumulation (Pireddu 182).

In *Il Piacere* the principle of "general economy" belongs to the privileged circle of nobility. From the outset of the novel, Andrea Sperelli embodies an ideal figure within traditional Italian cultural contexts, "il legittimo campione d'una stirpe di gentiluomini e di artisti eleganti, l'ultimo discendente d'una razza intellettuale" (35-36; "a true representative of a race of chivalrous gentlemen and graceful artists, the last scion of an intellectual line" 23). Culturally cultivated, the protagonist takes over the paternal lineage, which is unlike the major Decadents in the *fin-de-siècle* literature in general.⁷ Despite his celebrated familial background and potential, Andrea's artistic talent and intellectual capacities have never been invested for significant productivity; on the contrary, he unproductively "wastes" away all his personal resources. Imbued with *fin-de-siècle* malaise, he possesses a range of anti-social negativity: "una prostrazione infinita, un senso inesprimibile di scontento, di sconforto, di solitudine" (39; "infinite weariness, an inexpressible sense of discontent, of discomfort, of solitude" 26). Andrea invests his energy "non [...] aveva ancora prodotto nessuna opera notevole" (39; "not to produc[e] anything remarkable" 27) but solely to pursue "pleasure and [...] love" as a dilettante:

“Avido d’amore e di piacere, non aveva ancóra interamente amato né aveva ancor mai goduto ingenuamente” (39; “Eager in the pursuit of pleasure and of love, he never yet really loved or really enjoyed whole heartedly” 27). His pursuit of fleeting pleasure then demolishes “ogni volontà ed ogni moralità” (39; “all guiding will-power and moral perception” 27). Intimately echoing Oscar Wilde’s aesthetic principle that extols fleeting pleasure, Andrea lavishly embodies the *fin-de-siècle* hedonism:

Sotto il grigio diuluvio democratico odierno, che molte belle cose e rare sommerge miseramente, va anche a poco a poco scomparendo quella special classe di antica nobiltà italica, in cui era tenuta viva di generazione in generazione una certa tradizione familiare d’eletta cultura, d’eleganza e di arte.

A questa classe, ch’io chiamerei arcadica perché rese appunto il suo più alto splendore nell’amabile vita del XVIII secolo, appartenevano gli Sperelli. L’urbanità, l’atticismo, l’amore delle delicatezze, la predilezione per gli studii insoliti, la curiosità estetica, la mania archeologica, la galanteria raffinata erano nella casa degli Sperelli qualità ereditarie. (34)

[The gray deluge of democratic mud, which swallows up so many beautiful and rare things, is likewise gradually engulfing that particular class of the old Italian nobility in which from generation to generation were kept alive certain family traditions of eminent culture, refinement and art.

To this class, which I should be inclined to denominate Arcadian because it shone with greatest splendour in the charming atmosphere of the eighteenth century life, belonged the Sperelli. Urbanity, Hellenism, love of all that was exquisite, a predilection for out-of-the-way studies, an aesthetic curiosity, a passion for archaeology, and an epicurean taste in gallantry were hereditary qualities of the house of Sperelli (22).]

With these claims typical of decadent aesthetics, Andrea echoes the individualism prevalent in the earlier protagonists, Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* and Huysmans’s *Des Esseintes*. With his erudition “al culto della Bellezza” (39; “in the cult of the beautiful” 27), Andrea inaugurates modern human accountability, which allows him to “conserve[a] [...] una specie di ordine” (39; “preserve a certain sense of order” 27). The phrase deserves our close attention as it delineates the protagonist’s mindset as an aesthete who oscillates between alignments with rationalist/bourgeois economic principles and infinitely

generous expenditure. I propose that it is necessary to scrutinize Andrea's idiosyncratic, modern self-consciousness as an amalgamation of a utilitarian profit-maker and a hedonist squanderer. His fascination with ordered beauty corresponds to his rationalist life philosophy, yet, as Bataille and Lyotard remind us, squandering belongs to the realm of anti-modern economy. According to his life principle, Andrea espouses not only an aristocratic indifference to labor but also a rationality that valorizes "use-value" in his aesthetic experience. Unlike the prototypical endings of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent stories that conclude with the protagonists' self-destruction, Andrea assures himself with "senso [...] sottilissimo e [...] spirito un certo equilibrio" (39; "a certain strength and equilibrium of mind" 27), while kindling a tenuous passion for pleasure-seeking. Hence, the axiom "*habere non haberi*" (37), transmitted from his father, provides Andrea with a sense of discipline without losing himself: "Bisogna conservare ad ogni costo intiera la libertà, fin nell'ebbrezza. La regola dell'uomo d'intelletto, eccola: *Habere, non haberi*" (37; "It is necessary to conserve at every cost the complete freedom, until the end of intoxication. The rule of the man of intellect, that is: possess without being possessed," 42).

The philosophy of anti-indulgence distinguishes Andrea from the dogmatically programmed aesthetics of Wildean devotion to pleasure, or, as Carolyn Lesjak calls it, "the labors of hedonism" (179). Andrea's pleasure is derived constantly from his hedonistic labor but concentrates on material acquisition and thus remains "ephemeral."⁸ The ephemerality is further reinforced by the dictum, "*habere non haberi*," a hedonistic but frank materialist principle foreign to the Baudelairean formulation of Decadence underlined by subtly tenuous ennui through "symbol and metaphor" (Praz 160).

Baudelaire's concept of an "artificial paradise" involves the languid desire to escape from modern realities, and deliberately seeks a moment of self-dispossession, by means of addictive substances such as narcotic drugs and wine – for Baudelaire, pleasure lies in the principle of renouncing the self throughout.

Il Piacere thus dramatizes the protagonist's encounter with the anti-utilitarian law of generosity, which operates in his Roman social circle. Andrea's physical belonging to the aristocratic circle, however, does not guarantee his automatic inclusion into this "community." I argue that the novel introduces the methods of the *Bildungsroman*, a narrative structure in which the protagonist undergoes an ontological transformation and thereby assumes maturity as a communal member of a given social circle. In this literary genre, a protagonist's formative period of youth centers the narrative process while the rite of passage concludes his fulfilled apprenticeship into the norms and values commonly shared within the community. In this light, the narrative of *Il Piacere* provides a locus of learning where Andrea's lack of experience and immaturity become challenged by the law of the Roman aristocracy, which is demarcated from the bourgeois economy in the city's life. The aristocratic society's shared modality coincides with the principle of generous expenditure, and is exemplified by its members' enthusiasm for auctions, invitations, and exchanges of gifts. They commonly embrace the "gratuitous squandering of emotional value," which is fundamentally external to a "rational or moral finality" of economic transaction (Pireddu 183).

Anticipating the plenitudes of "spending," an early episode at the auction site foreshadows the subsequent narrative unfolding. Upon entering the venue, Andrea feels for the first time an "acute and profound sensation" (33). Immediately Elena recommends

to him a clock ornamented by a small Death's head made of an ivory: "Ciascuna mascella portava una fila di diamante, e due rubini scintillavano in fondo alle occhiaie" (69; "Each jaw was furnished with a row of diamonds, and two rubies flashed from the deep eye-sockets" 34). The forehead of the skull is engraved "*Ruit Hora*" ("Time is running away") and the occipital reads "*Tibi, Hippolyta*" ("To Ippolita") (69).⁹ The ticking sound inside the head seems to give "una inesprimibile apparenza di vita" (69; "an indescribable air of life" 34) to the grotesque head. In response to Elena's suggestion, Andrea wins the bid and obtains the clock. Perplexed yet captivated by the object, he feels as if he "[...] andava errando senza mèta, come un fantastico laberinto" (73; "[is] wandering through a fantastic labyrinth" 37). The clock triggers an ineffable fascination with the unknown lover's passion for the woman called "Hippolyta." Andrea's intuition implicitly announces the overarching theme of the novel as well as that of the Decadent aesthetics in the trilogy, *I Romanzi della Rosa*. The protagonist's perception lingers at the ontological interstices where "un elemento neutro del nostro essere" (68; "some neutral elements of our being" 33), neither physical nor moral, will govern the world. The generosity embedded in the stranger's gift thus transcends the materialism necessitated by pragmatic, contemporary human relationships. The neutrality in the giver's psyche, then, goes back to the primordial structure of generous expenditure without a clear differentiation of "a giver" and "a receiver." In *Il Piacere*, all the transactions of the object occur only in one direction, and the narrative is a process through which the protagonist's possessiveness is constantly refuted. Therefore, the clock with the skull plays a hermetic role of implying that the act of generosity is deceased.

Preempted by the episode at the auction, Elena appears to be an evasive entity who inscrutably allures Andrea. Within the framework of the *Bildungsroman*, Elena is comparable to a *meister*¹⁰ figure who offers the protagonist what Pireddu calls “the practice of unconditional giving” (175). To impart her “teaching,” Elena materializes her beauty, plentiful affection, cunning evasiveness, and occasional cruelty. Echoing Helen of the *Iliad* - the detectable etymon of her name – Elena is a prototype *fin-de-siècle* *femme fatale*. Her “prodotto in lui dal dominio unico” (103; “complete dominion over him” 68), regardless of her physical presence, is a constant menace to Andrea’s mind and body. Elena’s sudden departure culminates her mysterious and sadistic nature, which strips away Andrea’s pride and forces him to entreat her mercy. Her cruelty, however, bears a didactic significance, as Andrea needs to wrestle with the psychological predicament and therefore offers his unconditional love without any prospects of reward. As a result of his dismay, Andrea intensifies his decadent life with debauchery; even this self-indulging period is a narrative pretext, which implicitly instructs him about the way to squander his life and energy. The subsequent chapter depicts Andrea’s severe injury as a result of a duel over a woman; his duel implies another form of squandering, as the act occurs with uncertainties about the consequence. In sum, these forms of expenditure in *Il Piacere* take place outside any logic of conservation and (re)productivity; the consumption of all energies follows a trajectory of, ultimately, waste without functioning as a calculated investment.

As David Weir observes, Elena lacks subjectivity (176), despite her domineering presence and corporeality in the liaison with Andrea. In addition, she is a personified form of primordial human consciousness that plunges into unconditional expenditure.

Her habitual breakings of promises, non-punctual arrivals at rendezvous, and sudden departure altogether demand Andrea's patience and practice of generosity. To the same extent, Elena's return to Rome with her husband, the English nobleman Lord Heathfield, shocks Andrea, yet it also furnishes another form of educational opportunity – a learning of tolerance and even of altruism in order to accept her pragmatism. Her marriage also challenges Andrea's egoistic disposition as she pragmatically escapes financial disaster by utilizing her body as capital. With a pragmatism antithetical to generous expenditure, Elena appears to be a *femme fatale* whom D'Annunzio appropriated from Swinburne's models (Praz 276-277). Her sadism blended with voluptuousness, however, ceaselessly fascinates Andrea. It is Elena's unfathomable ambivalence and metaphorically ambiguous gender role that contests the unrelenting utilitarianism embedded in Andrea, who purportedly represents a conventional image of masculinity. Hence, his learning of generous expenditure contains the author's inquiry into institutionalized sexuality as suggestively expressed in Elena's usurpation of Andrea's masculinity. In the course of the narrative, his psychological adversity further fuels his carnal desire, which may suggest Andrea's nature as a contemporary materialist and a utilitarian. The *mise en abyme* of *Il Piacere* therefore lies in the dialectics between two narrative elements: the opposing principles of economy grounded on pragmatism, and generosity.

As another dimension of general economy, Barbara Spackman observes the decadence in *Il Piacere* as a prominent case of the *fin-de-siècle* "transmission" of disease. While moral corruption already has been a constituent element of Andrea's innate decadence in his aristocratic upbringing, Elena's influence over him complements his

traits as a decadent. Her influence resembles a malady and unveils his naïveté; to this extent, his body and mind are immunized by the injection of the other.¹¹

Gli pareva che di nuovo l'antica lebbra gli si dilatasse per l'anima e di nuovo il cuore gli si vuotasse per non riempirsi più mai, come un otre forato, irreparabilmente. Il senso di questa vacuità, la certezza di questa irreparabilità gli movevano talvolta una specie di collera disperata e poi un disprezzo folle di sé medesimo, del suo volere, delle ultime sue speranze, degli ultimi suoi sogni. Egli era giunto a un terribile momento, incalzato dall vita inesorabile, dall'implacabile passione della vita [...]. (251-252)

[[O]ut of the depth of this lethal tranquility his pain had sprung up afresh, and the fallen idol was re-established higher than ever. She and she alone held every fibre of his heart captive beneath her spells, crushing out his intelligence, keeping the doors of his soul against any other passion, any sorrow, any dream to the end of all time [...] (201).]

Andrea's emotional reaction proves that his hitherto "healthy subject[ivity]" is vulnerable to external influence (Brinkley 79). This passage implicitly conforms to the general configuration of genders in the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literatures: a diabolic female figure victimizes a man, while transmitting a metaphorically contagious disease to him. As exemplified in the passage above, Andrea's naïveté reflects his innate healthiness in personality, and thus elicits a misogynistic fear of female domination. To add to the reading of *fin-de-siècle* gender politics, the protagonist's sensibility is bound to practice his unconditional gifting of his being. Saturated by the principle of *habere non haberi*, Andrea has consciously avoided any regret (25) by not engaging himself in any serious relationship with others. His dogmatic life philosophy is not exclusively dilettantism, yet is closely intertwined with his self-consciousness as a cultivated aesthete. Borrowing from Walter Pater's famous passage in *The Renaissance*, the third-person narrative recounts Andrea's sensationist aesthetics: "[O]ccup[a] sempre lo spirito con nuove sensazioni e con nuove immaginazioni" (37; "[H]e "keep[s] the mind constantly occupied

with new fancies, fresh sensation” 25).¹² Nevertheless, Andrea’s sensibility is opposed to the rigid determinism possessed by the Nietzschean protagonist, Giorgio Aurispa, of *Il Trionfo della Morte* in *I Romanzi della Rosa*: “[...] [Q]ueste massime *volontarie*, che per l’ambiguità loro potevano anche essere interpretate come alti criterii morali, cadevano appunto in una natura *involontaria*, in un uomo, cioè, la cui potenza volitiva era debolissima” (37; “[...] these voluntary axioms, which from their ambiguity might just as easily be interpreted as lofty moral rules, fell upon an involuntary nature; that is to say, one in which the will power was extremely feeble” 25).

The plot of *Il Piacere* heavily relies on metaphorical interactions between the subject (health) and the other (malady), as the thematic entry into the *Bildungsroman*. Here it may be appropriate to recall once again Huysmans’s protagonist, Des Esseintes. The self-sufficiency in his secluded life in the hermitage prevents any significant narrative evolution of the plot. It is solely Des Esseintes’s fetishism that constructs an encyclopedic microcosm out of his objects of desire. Huysmans’s novel defends the weary aristocratic hero from all ranges of external influences; therefore, the hero remains uncontaminated by any sense of the contemporary malady that would disillusion him. In *Il Piacere* the decadent dispossesses the tutelage of a private space, where not only is his materialistic desire satisfied with artifacts, but he is also protected from the external world of others. What replaces the self-sufficient utopia is a harsh interaction between the naiveté of the hitherto-uncontaminated protagonist and the maturity of the *femme fatale* whose “vice” is the governing principle for their social circle. The fruit of their collision is Andrea’s aesthetic education which leads to his unconditional dedication of the self.

The epilogue in this context demonstrates the emptiness which results from the protagonist's squandering of body and mind. While ascending a stairway to retire to his room, Andrea runs into the porters who are carrying a cabinet "faticosamente" (358; "with a good deal of difficulty" 311); the furniture may be a metaphorical sign of human toil invested for the sake of living in a mundane world. He cannot pass the cabinet that occupies the entire space of the staircase, and therefore needs to yield his way to it. The scene symbolically narrates the decadent aesthete's defeat by the pragmatic everydayness in the contemporary world.

Deeply immersed in modern rationalism and intellectualism, Andrea escapes the denominational categories of self-indulgence shared by *fin-de-siècle* decadent heroes. His simultaneous pursuit of multiple women indicates Andrea's utilitarian spirit to possess them. Utilitarian values withstand Bataille's notion of generous expenditure; the tension, adventure, and cabals operate, then, as a result of the two opposing economic principles. Pursuing his lovers' use values, Andrea imagines their particular roles: Elena as a quencher of his aesthetic thirst; Maria as a gentle comfort to alleviate his suffering over Elena's absence. His expediency — an apparent case of utilitarianism — meets a series of challenges that force a substantial alteration of his mindset.

In the course of the narrative, Andrea is exposed to the practice of generous expenditure through his relationship with Elena and Maria. Both women in some way serve as educators for the protagonist who, according to Susan Bassnett, cannot be "sincere or fully in control of himself" (*Romancing Decay* 134) within the context of a *Buildungsroman*. With the disposition of a quintessential *fin-de-siècle femme fatale*, Elena possesses a diabolical power over the protagonist. She ceaselessly stimulates his

passion and challenges his pleasure principle, “*habere non haberi*.” Unable to fully possess her as his ideal object of desire, Andrea enters into an illicit relationship with the innocent Maria. With a maternal affection associated with the Virgin, Maria generously caresses him. She is a personification of unconditional love, whose position is always to “give” without any expectation of return. In contrast to her giving nature, Andrea often displays jealousy of her — a psychological condition attributable to his egocentrism and his monopolization of the other in an economic sense. His feeling takes the form of a somewhat infantile possessiveness, which even develops into his sense of rivalry against Maria’s daughter Delfina: “Quella creatura sottile, così avviticchiata alla madre, [...] gli parve una nemica; gli parve un insormontabile ostacolo che s’inalzasse contro il suo amore, contro il suo desiderio, contro la sua speranza” (176; “The fragile little creature clinging to the mother [...] seemed to him an enemy, an insurmountable obstacle rising up against his love, his desires, his hopes” 130).

Maria constantly mirrors Andrea’s inability to practice unconditional offering and altruism. He takes for granted her beauty, benevolence, and conscientiousness, while at the same time, he indulgently furnishes affection in self-conscious performances. Thus, toward the end, Andrea comes to perceive Maria as his victim. His solipsistic perception of her underscores an unbridgeable difference between them as the subject and the object. Even more, Andrea’s relationship with Maria reaffirms his manifest nature as a *homo economicus*, whose pragmatic purpose focuses on the acquisition and use-value of the object of desire:

Andrea Sperelli si trovava innanzi a uno di quei grandi sentimenti femminili, rarissimi, che illuminano d’un bello e terribile baleno il ciel grigio e mutevole degli amori umani. Egli non se ne curò. Divenne lo spietato carnefice di sé stesso e della povera creatura. (291)

[Andrea Spereli found himself face to face with a real passion – one of those rare and supreme manifestations of woman’s capacity for love which occasionally flash their superb and terrible lightnings across the shifting gray sky of earthly loves. But he did not care a jot, and went on with the pitiless work (247-248).]

Andrea’s affection evolves into a pragmatic calculation to utilize Maria as a replacement for Elena. Nonetheless, in the *dénouement*, his cunning becomes overwhelmed by his excessive love for Elena. The night before Maria’s departure to join her husband in Guatemala, they share their amorous passion for the last time. While grieving over their fate of separation, Maria accepts it as an unavoidable punishment resulting from their illicit liaison: “[E]lla non si rammaricò di aver ceduto all’amante, non si pentì d’essersi data a lui con tanto abbandono, non rimpianse la sua purità perduta” (343; “[S]he never regretted having yielded to her lover; never repented having given herself so utterly to him, never bewailed her lost purity” (296). She suffers from only the fate of separation from [Andrea] “ch’era per lei la vita della vita” (344; “who was the life of her life” 296). Thus Maria represents a quintessential advocate of the practice of unconditional giving, because her “transaction” limits itself to the squandering of love without return. In contrast, Andrea unwittingly reveals to Maria his agonizing love for Elena by calling out Elena’s name:

[E]d egli nascondeva il viso, perdutamente, nel seno, nel collo, ne’ capelli di lei, ne’ guanciali.

A un tratto, ella gli si svincolò dalle braccia, con una terribile espressione d’orrore in tutte quante le membra, più bianca de’ guanciali, sfigurata più che s’ella fosse allora allora balzata di tra le braccia della Morte.

Quel nome! Quel nome! Ella aveva udito quel nome! (354)

[[H]e only buried his face deeper in her bosom, her neck, her hair – anywhere out of sight.

All at once, she struggled free of his embrace, her whole form convulsed with horror, her face ghastly and distraught as if she had at that moment torn herself from the arms of Death.

That name! That name! – She had heard that name! (306).]

The blunder decisively confirms Andrea's inability to offer himself "unconditionally." The dénouement thus implicates the protagonist's altercation in his utilitarian ontology. His decadence subsists precisely on the ground of a dissimulating performance of affection that dismisses generosity, sincerity, and the renunciation of solipsism. The pragmatic psyche remains unchanged and emphasizes a failing case of *Bildungsroman*, which ensues a metaphorical excommunication from the aristocratic circle of the shared value system. The final scene is thus highly symbolic. Andrea's retirement to "fin dentro la casa" (358; "his door" 311) of the compartment signifies his self-imposed castigation and seclusion from the communal circle of aristocracy – a mortification tantamount to metaphorical death.

HARU NO YUKI

Mishima's public image, vividly marked by his ritualistic disembowelment in 1970, seems to have hampered critics' thematic approaches to *Haru no yuki*, the first novel of his tetralogy, *Hōjō no umi* [The Sea of Fertility] (1965-1970). The masochistic, public suicide committed by Mishima oftentimes limits the reader's full appreciation and interpretation. The tetralogy has drawn critics' attention mainly for the author's stated desire to construct a hermeneutical novel which interprets the essence of the world ("Hōjō no Umi" nitsuite" 499). Nonetheless, as Nibuya Takashi states, for Mishima, history per se recedes into secondary importance, and the mission of his oeuvre is an attempt at "salvaging the undefinability of reality" from "vulgarized Romanticism" (Nibuya 102). For Mishima, the task of interpreting history is to grasp its amorphousness, floating between reality and a hermeneutical vision of the world (Nibuya 105). With this

perspective, reading *Haru no yuki* as a shaping of formless historical consciousness, rather than a romantic imagination of the Taishō period, may articulate the author's critique of Japan's given historical moment, mediated by his decadent aesthetics. Here, once again, as demonstrated in the analysis of *Il Piacere*, I shall consult Bataille's non-utilitarian principle as a guide for reading the novel. The practice of generous giving, consumption, and squandering constructs the implicit yet overarching theme of the novel. Pre-modern ideology becomes an instrumental device in *Haru no yuki*, within which the languid decadent protagonist undergoes an affecting contact with the impenetrable logic of anti-modern consumption. The novel constantly subverts modern value systems and morality; to elucidate the ethos of the novel, Mishima's allegiance to Bataille, then to D'Annunzio, as well as to *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, facilitates our analysis that is to expound on an array of concepts such as eroticism, taboo, and transgression.

To dramatize the pre-capitalist ideals of non-utilitarian economic value, Mishima deliberately situates *Haru no yuki* at the threshold of the Meiji and the Taishō periods. In contrast with the socio-economic development promoted by the slogan *Civilization and Enlightenment* (*bunmeikaika*) in the Meiji (1868-1912), the Taishō period (1912-1926) has been seen as, in Tokutomi Sohō's words, the age of "the greatest [...] illness," suffering from the lack of "state ideals and national purpose" (Harootunian, *Japan in Crisis* 10), due largely to the newly rising individualism. Also, according to Nakamura Mitsuo, the Taishō period approximately corresponds to a common sentiment of "powerlessness" permeating intellectuals' psyches (Nakamura and Mishima 145). Commensurate with these views, at its outset the novel projects an image of the widespread mental degeneration of the period: the protagonist Matsugae Kiyooki's

oblivion of Japan's monumental victory in the Russo-Japan War (5) dehistoricizes the national glory actualized by another slogan, *Rich Country and Strong Army* (*fukoku kyōhei*). In the novel, national glory is undermined as the bygone past, as it is commemorated by an old photograph of thousands of soldiers filled with melancholy: “古びた、セピアいろの写真であるだけに、これのかもしれない悲哀は、限りがないように思われた” (7; “Both its age and its sepia ink tinged the photograph with an atmosphere of infinite poignance” 5). Premonitions of impeding national progress and a gradually pervading ambience of epochal decay preempt the unfolding narrative.

Similar to D'Annunzio's Andrea Sperelli, Mishima's decadent protagonist, Matsugae Kiyooki, also undergoes a substantial transformation – from the utilitarian to the man of prodigality. The inexperienced youth tinged with pride and arrogance is also reminiscent of Andrea's naïveté. In addition, Kiyooki shares narcissism with Dorian Grey, another representative decadent hero, created by Oscar Wilde, whom Mishima deeply admired. The aesthetic self-consciousness, then, is closely interwoven with a rejection of labor and productivity altogether, thus remaining within a private membrane in which extreme individualism claims its own right. Akin to Andrea's principle of detachment, “*habere non haberi*,” Kiyooki valorizes his fleeting emotion and ability to dissociate himself from the world external to himself:

彼は優雅の棘だ。しかも粗雑を忌み、洗練を喜ぶ彼の心が、実に徒勞で、根無し草のようなものであることをも、清頭はよく知っていた。蝕もうと思って蝕むのではない。犯そうと思って犯すのではない。彼の毒は一族にとって、いかにも毒には違いないが、それは全く無益な毒で、その無益さが、いわば自分の生まれてきた意味だ、とこの美少年は考えていた。自分の存在理由を一種の精妙な毒だと感じることは、十八歳の（きょうごう）としっかり結びついていて。彼は自分の美しい白い手を、生涯汚すまい、肉刺一つ作るまいと決心していた。旗のように風のためだけに生きる。自分にとってただ一つ真実だと思われるもの、とめどない、無意味な、死ぬと思えば生き返り、衰えると思えば（おご）り、方向もなければ帰結もない「感情」のためだけに生きること。 (21)

[His elegance was the thorn. And he was well aware that his aversion to coarseness, his delight in refinement, were futile; he was a plant without roots. Without meaning to undermine his family, without wanting to violate its traditions, he was condemned to do so by his very nature. And this poison would stunt his own life as it destroyed his family. The handsome young man felt that this futility typified his existence. His conviction of having no purpose in life other than to act as a distillation of poison was part of the ego of an eighteen-year-old. He had resolved that his beautiful white hands would never be soiled or calloused. He wanted to be like a pennant, dependent on each gusting wind. The only thing that seemed valid to him was to live for the emotions – gratuitous and unstable, dying only to quicken again, dwindling and flaring without direction or purpose (15).]

Kiyoaki's decadence constitutes both self-sufficiency and self-indulgence. He conflates the Rousseauian sensibility underscored by "emotion" with the D'Annunzian cult of aesthetic refinement. Both elements bestow on him a formidable individualism indifferent to any external relationship. His deficiency of generosity, then, serves a narrative pretext in which the protagonist's evolution foregrounds the story. With his love of purposelessness in life, Kiyoaki rejects all the ranges of labor, diligence, and productivity. Nevertheless, in the course of the narrative, as in Andrea's case in *Il Piacere*, *Haru no yuki* also sets forth a narrative wherein the protagonist metaphorically "apprentices" himself to the concept of generous expenditure that remains outside of modern capitalist values. Viewing himself as an entropic existence at the opening of the novel, Kiyoaki seems deterministic in rejecting any form of dispensation of his energy.

In *Haru no yuki*, the practice of generous expenditure operates in multiple ways. Even the pragmatic parvenu, Kiyoaki's father, the marquis Matsugae, exhibits lavishness, which may be called the aristocratic display of "glory" in light of Bataille. A notable occasion is a cherryblossom-viewing party where he lavishly invests in an extravaganza for his noble guests. Thanks to his monetary power, the marquis squanders sumptuously

for dinner menus and entertainment; the list of items for the gourmet cuisine takes up several pages in the novel (171-172). Having been brought up in a former military family, Matsugae's aesthetic taste is rather indiscriminating, as reflected in his choice of entertainments: traditional Noh drama; geisha dancing; and modern silent movies (149). The three performance items range from the most ancient, traditional, and intellectual form of Noh to the most democratized, middle-class, and vulgar moving pictures. Another form of generous expenditure appears in a series of investments made by the marquis's friend, the count Ayakura. In response to Matsugae's wish to incorporate the virtues of aristocratic elegance into his familial lineage (22), Ayakura had raised Kiyooki in his household. During those years, the count shared generously with the coarse *parvenu* family the invisible but invaluable property of "elegance"; Ayakura's generosity has been successfully transmitted to Kiyooki's aristocratic disposition and love for elegance. Without the expectation of any return, both monetary and non-monetary investments within the novel take place as a voluntary, even philanthropic effort. Concurrently, as in Bataille's interpretation of generous expenditure, these investments demonstrate the investors' immanent desire to exhibit their aristocratic power.

Haru no yuki largely expounds on the dynamics of aristocratic power politics rendered by squandering and generous expenditure. All the episodes involve economic transactions based on material detachment, forgetfulness, and gracious acceptance. However, the disequilibrium between the marquis and the count triggers the latter's revenge plot that encapsulates the protagonist and the heroine. Matsugae's nonchalant promise, made some years ago, to marry off Ayakura's beautiful daughter Satoko to

“三国一のお婿さん” (373; “a bridegroom without equal anywhere in the world” 305) provokes the count’s indignation. Matsugae added that he would prepare an exquisite wedding procession lining up “金欄緞子” (373; “a trousseau of golden satin” 305), which “綾倉家の代々から一度も出たことのないような” (373; “has never been seen in all the generations of Ayakuras” 305). Offended by the “ascendancy of money and power” (305), Ayakura barely sustains his dignity when he hears Matsugae’s words, which he perceives as “unwitting insults” (305). To seek revenge for this insult, he plots a conspiracy to ruin Satoko’s virginity, leaving all the arrangements to his servant / long-term mistress,

Tadeshina:

聡子が成人したら、とどのつまりは松枝の言いなりになって、縁組を決められることになるだろう。そうなったら、その縁組の前に、聡子を誰か、聡子が気に入っている、ごく口の固い男と添臥させてやってほしい。その男の身分はどうあってもかまわない。ただ聡子が気に入っているということが条件だ。決して聡子を生娘のまま、松枝の世話する婿に与えてはならない。そうしてひそかに、松枝の鼻を明かしてやることのできるのだ。(374)

[“When Satoko grows up, I am afraid that everything will go exactly according to Matsugae’s wishes, and so he will be the one to arrange a marriage for her. But when he’s done that, before the marriage takes place, I want you to guide her into bed with some man she likes, a man who knows how to keep his mouth shut. I don’t care about his social position – just so long as she is fond of him. I have no intention of handing Satoko over as a chaste virgin to any bridegroom for whom I have Matsugae’s benevolence to thank” (306).]

Even with the motivation to revenge, Ayakura’s plot is comprised of the notion of squandering. To recuperate his pride and glory despite the rising monetary power of his rival, he takes the drastic measure of expending his daughter’s virginity in revenge as a type of game-playing. This extreme measure corresponds to the glory-based consumption and gift-giving “potlatch” practiced by the Native American peoples. According to Bataille, the practice of potlatch constitutes “the purpose of humiliating, challenging, and obligating” the rival (*The Accursed Share* 67). In addition, “a solemn destruction of

riches” (68) is also a form of potlatch: by means of “*consumption for others*,” the squanderer acquires power (69, italics Bataille’s). The same power game by prodigality is prevalent in *Haru no yuki*. Ayakura shares the same anti-modern modality of lavishness for the sake of pride and glory. By pretending an excessive indifference to his own daughter — the daughter’s virginity as a precious property within patriarchal society — the count intends to erase a stigma cast upon him by the patronizing bourgeois mentality.

Being unaware of the conspiracy plot, Kiyoaki and Satoko unwittingly practice the generous expenditure that involves their body, mind, and social status. Although he persistently rejects Satoko, Kiyoaki abruptly realizes his love for her when her engagement to Prince Tōin no Miya is officially announced: “『僕は聡子に恋している』” (218; I love Satoko” 178). This declaration occurs precisely as the heroine ascends to an unreachable social status, when she becomes “絶対の不可能 [...] [and] [...] 絶対の拒否” (230; “the lure of the forbidden, the utterly unattainable” 187) – this inaccessibility stimulates Kiyoaki’s desire. Through the royal engagement, Satoko becomes a metaphorically transcendent figure and thereby Kiyoaki’s access to her is harshly hampered. Here, Mishima consciously dramatizes Bataille’s notion of eroticism when “至高の禁” (218; “prohibitions, even the most severe” 179) hamper their facile access to sexual intercourse. The squandering of the self is substantiated by this presence of taboo; the most significant results are the protagonist’s and the heroine’s self-imposed excommunication from the aristocratic social circle.

The more noteworthy cases of expenditure, however, are prevalent at a material level. Satoko becomes impregnated by Kiyoaki, and their child is to be aborted by their families to deflect the scandal. Soon after this incident, Satoko retires into a remote

Buddhist monastery and takes an oath as a nun. Upon learning of this result of their affair, Kiyooki hastens to the monastery to meet her. Although he entreats her, Satoko refuses to see him. At the end of the fourth novel in the tetralogy, *Tennin gosui* [The Decay of the Angel] (1970), after more than sixty years, the octogenarian Satoko briefly reappears and claims that she never knew Kiyooki in her life (*Tennin gosui* 301). In these episodes, Satoko personifies the powerful practice of expenditure without any prospect of return. Her longevity implicitly suggests that she has generously squandered her life for the sake of discarding the illicit relationship, while salvaging Kiyooki from sin. She has sustained longevity only as a nun who has retired from the mundane world. The disavowal of her memory conveys a volitional waste of life, sexuality, and all social privileges; her forgetfulness is indicative of a selfless dedication without assuming any return from her lover. Furthermore, even in the midst of bliss, Satoko anticipates that their relationship is a fleeting pleasure that cannot be greedily exploited: “こんなに生きることの有難さを知った以上、それをいつまでも貪るつもりはございません。” (301; “I’ve known supreme happiness, and I’m not greedy enough to want what I have to go on forever” 246). Here, through her voice, Mishima’s refutation of modern utilitarian pragmatism, as well as his extolling of a generous consumption of life, becomes evident: “私はあの『新しき女』などとはちがいます。” (301; “I’ve nothing in common with these ‘new women’” 246). The disclaimer of modern economic values also bridges the Wildean principle, which acknowledges the ephemeral nature of any pleasure: “[...] もし永遠があるとすれば、それは今だけなのでございますわ。” (301; “[...] [I]f eternity existed, it would be this moment” 246). Accordingly, her female body does not function as a reproductive apparatus but remains exclusively consumed for a momentary pleasure. Her abortion is

therefore a logical consequence through which a utilitarian body politics comes to be thwarted. Accordingly, Kiyooki's sexuality as an inseminator shares the same destiny; an investment of semen for (re)productivity opposes the pleasure principle of decadence, while the abolishment of the fetus reaffirms non-utilitarian squandering through both male and female bodies. Further, Satoko's abortion not only conveys her powerlessness within the patriarchal social circle, but also illustrates Bataille's concept of general economy. Her physical labor (sexual intercourse) remains untransformed into any reproductive cycle, but creates a solely ungraspable surplus (physical pleasure) that evaporates and is therefore generously squandered. Finally, as Pireddu reminds us, generosity entails "forgetfulness" (178) of the offering. As Satoko's amnesia at the end of the tetralogy ensures, she represents a form of generosity indifferent to possession, that is, in this particular case her memory of physical and emotional investment.

Considering all these modalities of generous expenditure in Satoko, I disagree with Michiko Wilson's observation of Mishima as a misogynistic writer. His female characters are, Wilson states, "doomed to outlive him," in order to emphasize his aestheticization of the male characters: "the male must die beautifully and prematurely" (172). Although Wilson dismisses any possibility that Mishima elevates his heroines to "the level of a tragic heroine" as the "unthinkable" (176), Satoko is exalted precisely for her oblivion and the negation of her personal history, so as to embody the primal value that governs the novel — lavish renouncement of all possessions — body, mind, memory, and privileged social attributes.

As the protagonist, Kiyooki also encapsulates the practice of generosity, by the extremity of squandering his mind and body. Nevertheless, he dispossesses Andrea

Sperelli's modern empiricist spirit to grapple with the taboo that prohibits his relationship with the heroine. To replace Elena, the unattainable woman, Andrea enters a period of debauchery, and as a metaphorical transaction, one of his lovers, Maria, must compensate for the deficiency. In *Haru no yuki*, however, the type of expediency and ludic mentality exemplified by Andrea remains irrelevant to the *modus operandi* of the novel. Many critics, including Takahashi Eiri and David Pollock, oversimplify the complexities of Kiyoaki by reducing his ontological profile into a “man of action,”¹³ in contrast to the epistemological observer and his friend, Honda; I argue instead that the protagonist inherits the *fin-de-siècle* susceptibility to external forces. Unlike the protagonists of *I Romanzi della Rosa*, especially Giorgio Aurispa of *Il Trionfo della Morte*, in whom influences from the Nietzschean *Übermensch* accentuate their willfulness, Kiyoaki maintains the characteristics of the defeated decadent hero who possesses *fin-de-siècle* oversensitivity, nervousness, and weakness of will; as a result, he easily succumbs to the patriarchal norm that condemns him as a delinquent. The metaphorical disease of contagious malice, conspiracy, and unconditional generosity — all of them aristocratic attributes of the narratives by D'Annunzio and Mishima — then becomes a dramatizing device for the anti-modern and simultaneously anti-moral *Buildungsroman*. Kiyoaki's agonizing soliloquy reveals a counterpoint at which the general economy of gracious “waste” elicits only a lament for its “unproductiveness.” Left alone without Satoko, Kiyoaki pours out his repentance and excruciating sense of “loss”:

ああ……「僕の年」が過ぎてゆく！過ぎてゆく！[...]僕は一人取り残されている。
愛欲の渇き。運命への呪い。果てしない心の彷徨。あてどない心の願望。……
小さな自己陶醉。小さな自己弁護。小さな自己欺瞞。……失われた時と、失われ
た物への、炎のように身を灼く未練。年齢の空しい推移。青春の情けない閑日月。
人生から何の結実も得ないこの憤ろしさ。……一人の部屋。一人の夜々。……世

界と人間とからのこの絶望的な隔たり。……叫び。きかれない叫び。……
外面の花やかさ。……空っぽの高貴。……それが僕だ！ (430)

[This year was mine – and now it's gone! [...] I've been left alone. I'm burning with desire. I hate what's happened to me. I'm lost and I don't know where I'm going. What my heart wants it can't have... my little private joys, rationalizations, self-deceptions – all gone! All I have left is a flame of longing for times gone by, for what I've lost. Growing old for nothing. I'm left with a terrible emptiness. What can life offer me but bitterness? Alone in my room... alone all through the nights... cut off from the world and from everyone in it by my own despair. And if I cry out, who is there to hear me? And all the while my public self is as graceful as ever. A hollow nobility – that's what's left of me (365).]

The passage attests to the vulnerability prevalent in *fin-de-siècle* Decadent protagonists.

What carries over into Mishima's languid protagonist is the unaccountability of selfhood within the milieu where he dwells. The consciousness of incongruity between the self and the external world is a recurrent motif prevalent in such writers as Huysmans and Rodenbach. Similarly, Kiyooki's devastating soliloquy shows the protagonist's incompatibility not only with patriarchal pragmatism, but also with the self, rejecting any form of productivity.

The subsequent plot sublimates the protagonist's predicament, by the narrative process through which his realization of generosity and the anesthetization of his imageries come to life. In this regard, Mishima is a follower of D'Annunzian aesthetics of gifting,¹⁴ and thus transmutes Kiyooki's mind and body into a generous gift, which is finally dedicated to the other. Desperately longing to see Satoko, who has taken a religious oath, Kiyooki, like Sisyphus afflicted by an eternalized task, exhausts himself by continuous but wasteful visits to the monastery. While repeatedly visiting the snowy country road, he begins to suffer from the high fever that will cause his death at the end of the novel. In *The Gift of Death*, Jacques Derrida postulates that death signifies a generous gift of one's "absolute singularity" (41). By the term "singularity," however,

Derrida does not interpret death as an absolute property of the beholder of life or as a nucleus of one's existence – the idea can be well contrasted with Heidegger, who asserts that “[g]iving one's life for the other, dying for the other” is conditional upon the firm ownership of death: gifting of life becomes possible “if the extent that dying – insofar as it ‘is’ – remains mine” (Derrida 42). Diverging from the Heidegger who centers an individual “irreplaceability” (41) as the absolute significance of death, Derrida expresses an allegiance with Levinas's conceptualization of death fundamentally as a form of “sacrifice”: “the possibility of dying of the other or for the other. Such a death is not given in the first instance as annihilation. It institutes responsibility as a *putting-oneself-to-death* or *offering-one's-death*, that is, *one's life*, in the ethical dimension of sacrifice” (Derrida 48).

In light of Derrida, death opens a new dimension that is to accommodate alterity. From this perspective, Kiyooki's death constitutes the spectrum of the other, to the extent that he renounces life in exchange for passion, dedication, and sincerity for the otherness of the lover. Furthermore, his death reflects the domineering power of a patriarchal social circle that interlocks its constituents and thereby functions as a synecdoche for the victimization of modern man within any social convention. Absolute obedience and propriety toward the prince (thus implicitly toward the Emperor as the transcendental authority) are imposed by the paternal dominance of the marquis Matsugae upon his son Kiyooki. To escape this rationalized “otherness,” the protagonist graciously steps out of the aristocratic community and metaphorically ostracizes himself into the snowy province. Yet, the exigency is far more rooted in spontaneous dedication to the lover who philosophically constitutes, in Derrida's light, “the other.” Kiyooki's sense of urgency to

meet Satoko amalgamates the notion of “responsibility” with his own “誠”

(449; “sincerity” 373). To demonstrate his sincerity, he chooses to walk the freezing road

to the monastery on foot. Again, his desire is enunciated for the other:

[...] もし聡子が会ってくれないとすれば、そのとき僕は自分を責めるに違いない。
「誠が足りなかった。[...]」と。そうだ。誠が足りなかったという悔いを残すべきではない。命を賭けなくてはあの人に会えないという思いが、あの人を美の絶頂へ押し上げるだろう。そのためにこそ僕はここまで来たのだ。 (449)

[[I]f I [...] wasn't able to see Satoko, I'd feel it was my fault. I'd tell myself it was because I was insincere. [...] There's no reason to have [...] regrets. I have no other choice but to risk my life if I want to see her. To me, she's the essence of beauty. And it's only that which has brought me this far (373).]

In the subsequent part of narrative, Kiyooki's altruism coalesces in the decadent cult of beauty, while proving his unfeigned sincerity. The oxymoronic elements then grow into a generous squandering of life. Death as a manifest instance of general economy is in fact tantamount to what Lyotard calls “a force” (*puissance*) irreducible to an equation with the “profit” (61) made possible by an initial investment (of labor, in the economic sense).

The renounced “use-value” of life creates a non-usable portion of excess, resulting from the act of self-sacrificing for love. It is possible to surmise that Kiyooki destabilizes the simple surface value of life as a utility while transforming it into, as Lyotard calls it, “an original gift, an irreversible relation of inequality, making all equalities and equalizations illusory” (145). Rejecting entropic equations, Lyotard and Bataille acknowledge that “[l]abor-force is *exorbitant*” (145, italics Lyotard's). Similarly, in *Haru no yuki* the excessive force of death traverses an annihilation of the body as mere material. The sincerity in his dedication is then intertwined with the premonition of forthcoming death – an eschatological moment of decadence enters here – to display ephemeral beauty toward the end of the novel. To visualize the beauty, the climactic scene in which

Kiyoaki wanders through the Yamato plane exhibits a pageantry of sensual images: the ancient poetic *locus amoenus*, flurrying snow, and the protagonist's physical beauty culminate in this *mise-en-scène* within the novel. The untimely spring snow concretizes his egoistic carnal desire that transmutes into his selflessness while fusing with the other, while the panorama encapsulates all the feminine beauties as Mishima wishes to render Japan's aesthetic ideal of *tawayameburi* (elegance) or *nigimitama* (gentle spirit). The vision of a harmonious world transcends the mundane world and thus Kiyoaki's internal voice reads: "[...] これほど澄み渡った、馴染のない世界は、果してこれが住み馴れた「この世」であろうか?" (450; "[C]ould such a still and perfect world, which eschewed all intimacy, really bear any relation to the familiar world he knew?" 374).

Simultaneously, the generosity of the life-giving impulse creates a pathway to inaugurate an aestheticization of modern subjectivity. While passing the snowy country road, a diaphanous image of Princess Kasuga lingers in Kiyoaki's vision as he recollects his childhood. Shortly before he dies, the image surges in his mind, as if resuscitating his life as an embodiment of beauty. The plenitude of female beauty at its full bloom has made a great impact on him since his childhood. The return of the visionary sensation reconnects the beauty and his very own existence mediated by his detachment from life. Anticipating his imminent death, Kiyoaki reassures himself that he has remained faithful to "感情" (451; "emotion" 375). The constellation of beauty, emotion, and generous expenditure disavows a modern capitalist value system for profit-making. Here, Mishima implicitly alludes to Bataille and Lyotard, who acknowledge the existence of surplus values irreducible to any equation grounded in rationality. Finally, the notion of the self also appears to be irrelevant when his lover's alterity enters into the protagonist's hyper

self-consciousness. What appears to be “decadent” – literally decaying - is the nucleus of the modern self that Japanese Naturalist writers endeavor to construct.¹⁵ The novel is therefore an implicit contestation against their immaturely constructed positivistic belief that the modern human condition can be depicted by an accountability of one’s reason in relation to presumed moral standards. To respond to the Naturalist and the other politico-ideological configurations of human beings, Mishima thus presents a radical antithesis by offering an anti-modern psyche that overthrows any form of pragmatism. The novel is the author’s preeminent effort at assembling the entropy of human realities, which are abandoned by the overriding ideal of modernity, and ultimately celebrates the defeat of modern subjectivity.

Beauty as Contagion

Mishima inherits the D’Annunzian formulation of elegance and beauty as an outcome of contagion. Both Matsugae Kiyooki and Andrea Sperelli represent what Edward S. Brinkley calls the “healthy subject “(79) that becomes susceptible to external contaminations such as a malice and conspiracy. *Il Piacere* and *Haru no yuki* equally dramatize the naïve protagonists’ contacts with metaphorically contagious diseases embedded in the social communities to which they belong. Employing the dialectics between health and malady, D’Annunzio and Mishima reinforce the *fin-de-siècle* obsession with *femme fatales*, an archetypal female image whose diabolic sensuality is thirsty of blood; their exploitation of male vulnerabilities may be construed as an ironic affirmation of Cesare Lombroso’s radical diagnosis that postulates woman as a ferocious as well as an atavistic being.¹⁶ According to the Italian criminologist, the female’s

primitiveness contains a “germ of ferocity” and affects male desire when she “provokes the primitive link between desire and violence, between eros and blood” (Bernheimer 147). Whereas D’Annunzio and Mishima alleviate the Lombrosian extremity in constructing female ferocities, their heroines play a radical role as a *meister* who ironically damages the male protagonists and ostracizes them from their respective social circles. The ambivalent dual faces of *fin-de-siècle* femininity, as David Weir observes in Elena of *Il Piacere*, end up effacing female subjectivity (124). Remaining a quasi-asexual being, Elena and Satoko transmit the logic of entropy that is untranslatable into any form of rationalization but only through their beauty.

As Barbara Spackman analyzes in her *Decadent Genealogies*, the rhetoric of disease is prevalent in *fin-de-siècle* literary discourse, prominently in such works as D’Annunzio’s trilogy *I Romanzi della Rosa* including *Il Piacere*, Baudelaire’s essay “*Le peintre de la vie moderne*,” J.K. Huysmans’s *A rebours*, Nietzsche’s preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, and Freud’s *Studies on Hysteria*. Then, according to Spackman, the rhetoric of disease underscores the immediacy of somatic experience and provides nineteenth-century literary discourse with a referential ground of interpretation, before Freudian psychoanalysis proclaims the presence of the human unconscious.¹⁷ Although Mishima never openly claimed his literary indebtedness to D’Annunzio, the Japanese writer often employs motifs of flesh favored by the Italian write, including depictions of physique, disease, and convalescence. It is certainly possible to surmise that Mishima materializes these motifs for his exploration of body politics as expressed in the essay, “*Taiyō to tetsu*” [Sun and Steel] (1968). Also, the language of corporeality predicates a powerful trope coherent with the notion of general economy in *Il Piacere*

and *Haru no yuki*. Andrea Sperelli's convalescence can be seen "as the scene of artistic creation, [...], and that of sickness as the production of mere symptoms, of hysterical conversion" (135). The contamination by diseases implicitly asserts the beholder's renouncement of the body, which generously yields to the other's domination, as exemplified by Andrea's injury over the duel. Similarly, Kiyoaki's convalescence signifies the sumptuous consumption of not only his body but also mind:

(快復)期の病人がおそろおそろ不養生をするように、清顕はもはやそれによって心を動かされぬことを試すために、ことさら聡子の思い出にかかずろうた。
(204)

[Kiyoaki, like a recuperating invalid who cannot resist endangering his health despite his fears, began to test his emotional stability by deliberately provoking memories of Satoko (166).]

The period of convalescence, which presumes a painful expenditure of physical energy, implicates the remnant of lingering vitality and a potential to full recovery that might exceed the initial level of energy. In this respect, the recovering period equals a temporal liminality and corresponds not to a simple mathematical equation between a discharge of energy and an intact recuperation of it, but to the expectation of a new surplus. Therefore, convalescence may be interpreted as the qualitative transfiguration of an invested energy into one's ontological newness, or, as Spackman calls it "a 'purer' contemplation" and "a sort of secular conversion" (42). Andrea's and Kiyoaki's investment of their bodies, by means of sexual intercourse and injury/illness, operates in the narratives a powerful trope, which recounts not only the temporal unfolding through their full recovery but also an excess that was previously nonexistent. Lyotard's notion of "libidinal economy" well accommodates this excess:

"Expenditures" are far from being [...] absolute liberations from the reproductive cycle: the outpourings of pulsional intensities pouring towards an alleged *outside*

always give rise to a double process: on the other hand, a more or less important proportion of these libidinal quantities is compensated by a return, the *daksina*, payment for the lay, for the session, for words themselves, when they concern the small change of language, the concept; on the other hand, this process dissipates an *irreversible* and *unusable* quantity of pulsions as heat, as smoke, as *jouissance*, in any cycle of this type. These are on the circle, then, effects of transmutation, barely interrupted by expenditure as pure loss, i.e. by extravagant *jouissances*.
(201)

For *Il Piacere* and *Haru no yuki*, the concept of *jouissances* is highly coherent as the novels concretize it through the protagonists' aesthetic experience. Inextricably interwoven with eroticism and thus with Bataille's concept of "taboo," for the decadent heroes, beauty itself is a floating signifier, lacking any use-value and purpose. Eroticism, then, according to Bataille, is the surviving example of non-utilitarian expenditures in the modern period; it cannot be "entirely reducible to processes of production and conservation" (118). Eroticism neither conserves energy nor transforms it into a distinct product; instead, it simply discharges to squander energy. In the process of expenditure, as Lyotard states, an irreversible and unusable excess is simply wasted away.

Without a reproductive mechanism at work, the image of hermaphrodites often fulfills the decadents' fascination with excess. For Lombrosian positivism, dual sexualities within one body reflect "the influence of degeneration" that "tends to [...] confuse" sexual differences "through an atavistic return to the period of hermaphroditism" (409, cited by Bernheimer 150). While hermaphroditism is a vexed confusion of purportedly distinct biological genders for Lombroso, the virtue of the image belongs precisely to its excessiveness, which remains indifferent to any practical use-value. In *Il Piacere*, the poet Andrea writes *Story of the Hermaphrodite* by "imita[ndo] [la] struttura la Favola di Orfeo del Poliziano, ed ave[ndo] strofe di straordinaria squisitezza, potenza e musicalità specialmente nei cori cantati da mostri di

duplice natura: dai Centauri, dalle Sirene e dalle Sfingi” (94; “imitat[ing] [...] the [...] structure [of] Poliziano’s *Story of Orpheus* and contain[ing] lines of extraordinary delicacy, power and melody, particularly in the choruses of hybrid monsters – the Centaurs, Sirens and Sphinxes” 53). These legendary creatures express the implicit excess of their ambiguous sexuality that amalgamates human bodies with mysterious inhuman attributes. In contrast to the typical *fin-de-siècle*, anxiety-provoking creatures, in *Haru no yuki* a subtle image of hermaphroditism is employed to eradicate a difference between the subject (the protagonist) and the object (the lover), providing the narrative with a *jouissance* in the consummation of love:

そのとき清顕はたしかに忘我を知ったが、さりとて自分の美しさを忘れていたわけではない。自分の美しさと聡子の美しさが、公平に等しなみに眺められる地点からは、きっとこのとき、お互いの美が水銀のように融け合うのが見られたにちがいない。拒むような、いらいらした、とげとげしたものは、あれは美とは関係のない性質であり、孤絶した固体という盲信は、肉体にではなくて、精神にだけ宿りがちな病気だとさるのであった。(113)

[At that instant, although totally engrossed, he was still keenly aware of his own good looks. Satoko’s beauty and his: he saw that it was precisely this fine correspondence between the two that dissolved all constraint and allowed them to flow together, merging as easily as measures of quicksilver. All that was divisive and frustrating sprang from something alien to beauty. Kiyoaki now realized that a fanatical insistence on total independence was a disease, not of the flesh but of the mind (88).]

What diffuses the premise of a subject-object borderline is his “engrossment,” or *jouissance*. The surplus energy of their physical contact draws upon a reminiscence of a hermaphroditic duality which obscures the differences between the sexes. Mishima’s configuration of sexuality is highly akin to Bataille’s concept of eroticism, which provides an instance when the law of the “disconnection of life” — signifying biological and sociological realities of human individuality – momentarily comes to a halt.

Mishima postulates the notion of sexuality in relation to eroticism thus: “われわれの限定

された個人の非連続の秩序を確立する規則的生活、社会生活の形態の解体”

(“Erochishizumu” 506; “The deconstruction of our regulated life and the form of our social life, which consolidate the order of our discontinuity as individuals”). Bodies connected to the other thus escape the compartmentalized self-sufficiency of modern life. The recurrent image of the diaphanous in Kiyoaki and Satoko illustrates Mishima’s concordance with Bataille’s theory of eroticism. The lovers’ liaison, illustrated through the vanishing borderline between the subject and the object, claims a metaphorical exchange of generosity; free from any power politics, to borrow Lyotard’s words, they “*give out* more than [they] *expen[d]*” (145, italics Lyotard’s).

The practice of generous expenditure has outlived *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature and remains a recurrent motif and theme for the discourse of decadence. The modern genealogy of this discourse can be traced back to Huysmans, Wilde, D’Annunzio, and, later in the twentieth century in Japan, Mishima, Sakaguchi Ango, Murakami Ryū, and Shimada Masahiko, among others. They acknowledge that the anti-modern/rational generosity and wagering body/life are the essential modality to fulfill aesthetic experience. For Mishima, these values should be actualized by one’s concrete action, and he calls the process a positive “衰滅の自己肯定” (484; “affirmation of deterioration”). In his short essay, “Tōi koe, tōi heya: Americateki Dekadansu” (“Other Voices, Other Rooms: American Decadence”), Mishima explicitly states his notion of “decadence” from historical, cultural, and literary points of view¹⁸:

デカダンスを十九世紀末の時代的必然性からとらへて、今では時代おくれの偏向だと考へてゐるのは文学史家の固定した考へ方でどんな時代とどんな国家にも、交替的に衰滅を欲求する文学的傾向はあらはれる。ただその欲求に、破壊精神の旺盛な活力はなく、衰滅する主体の豊潤な感覚的生活と、知的な誇りとによる、衰滅の自己肯定だけが在るときに、デカダンス藝術と呼ぶに値ひするのである。

(484)¹⁹

[It is an inflexible view to conclude that decadence is an obsolete tendency. That is the literary historians' mode of thinking, which considers the movement as a reflection of the *geist* of the late nineteenth century. In any age and any nation state, we find literary tendencies that desire perennial decay. Nonetheless, such desire does not have the vitality of the spirits of destruction. Decadent aesthetics comes to life only when the degenerating subject achieves a futile life with sensitivity, along with an affirmation of deterioration through his intellectual pride.]

In relation to our consciousness of historico-cultural decays, one's act of unconditional expenditure could rescue his or her existence unless otherwise adrift. As expressed in the oxymoron, "an affirmation of deterioration," Mishima inherits this *fin-de-siècle* legacy of an ambivalent yet hyperactive substantiation of the self, through his dramatization of beauty. In the evolving course of the narrative, D'Annunzio's and Mishima's protagonists willfully renounce their bodies and subjectivities that are aggregates of passive historical and social constructs; to replace the deteriorating passiveness, their generous self-sacrifice, which is founded on the principle of general economy, articulates their exuberant individualities and spontaneities. The discourse of decadence constructed by D'Annunzio and Mishima unmistakably involves these dual narrative phases, wherein, dialectically, generous dedication to the other prevails as a superior virtue. What mediates the practice of sacrifice is, then, the protagonists' unrelenting pursue of the beautiful taboo that inevitably endangers them. Finally, the conflict between aesthetic desire and modern normativity transforms a *homo economicus* into a *homo eroticus*, then, finally into a *homo ludens*, who finds pleasure not only in squandering life but also in *wagering* it. The "reward" is an aesthetic satisfaction without any use-value; it only reaffirms the decadents' attraction toward fleeting moments of pleasure.

¹ See Georges Bataille's "The Notion of Expenditure" in *Visions of Excess* (116-129) and Jean-François Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*, especially Chapter II, "Tensor" (43-94).

² The chapters especially relevant to my analysis include "The Origins of Capitalism and the Reformation" and "The Bourgeois World," in Part Four, Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share* (115-142).

³ For Bataille's formulation of eroticism as an inner experience, see Chapter I in *Erotism* (29-39).

⁴ Tsutsui Yasutaka's essay, "Danunchio ni muchū" [Infatuated with D'Annunzio] in *Danunchio ni Muchū* (11-46) explores Mishima's appropriation of D'Annunzio, by examining the similarities in their impacts as celebrities and literary styles.

⁵ Mishima's tetralogy *Hojō no umi* [The Sea of Fertility] includes *Haru no yuki* [Spring Snow] (1965), *Honba* [Runaway Horses] (1967), *Akatsuki no tera* [The Temple of Dawn] (1970), and *Tenjingosui* [The Decay of the Angel] (1970). The four novels were first serialized in magazine, *Shinchō*, in 1965-1970, and subsequently published in book form.

⁶ There is no clear linkage between the two novels. Nevertheless, Mishima's avid reading of D'Annunzio's work largely explains why the Japanese author's repeated motifs are strikingly akin to those of the Italian writer/poet: the decadent aestheticism underpinned by moral corruption within an aristocratic social circle, a psychologically languid protagonist, an image of convalescence, etc. Tsutsui Yasutaka's "Danunchio ni muchū" [Infatuated with D'Annunzio] provides a list of D'Annunzio's literary works to which Mishima had access in Japanese translation and in the original French.

⁷ The familial lineage in the decadent heroes is a leitmotif in D'Annunzio's *I Romanzi della Rosa*. The major corpus of *fin-de-siècle* Decadent literature, as Barbara Spackman points out, however, deliberately obscures the protagonists' blood line in favor of their uniqueness as self-conscious individuals. She states: "D'Annunzio's protagonists represent the culmination of a genealogical line rather than its rupture. This predicament of the protagonist mimes that of the decadent writer; as he attempts to create a rupture he realizes that his "modernity" consists precisely in fact that he represents – he wishes to represent – the culmination of all that has gone before him. [...] The decadent rupture is caused by declaring oneself the end of the lineage, its culmination and fulfillment" (39).

⁸ Pireddu explicates the semantics of the axiom, "*habere non haberi*," in relation to a framework of "acquisition and consumption." She states that "[...] in order for Andrea to possess without being possessed, he must enjoy the objects of his desire for their fleeting character, expending them as gifts, hence without opposing the force that propels them" (185).

⁹ The name Hippolyta bears a significant intertextuality with the final novel of D'Annunzio's trilogy, *I Romanzi della Rosa*. As chapter II of this dissertation discusses, Ippolita is the protagonist Giorgio's lover; she is forced to commit a dramatic double

suicide from atop a precipice into the sea beneath. The narrative is very suggestive of this linkage by touching upon a rival bidder for the clock: “Two or three others bid against him, notably Giannetto Rutolo, who being in love with Donna Ippolita Albonico, was attracted by the dedication: Tibi, Hippolyta” (34). Specifically, “Albonico” is the surname after marriage carried by Ippolita in *Il Trionfo della Morte*.

¹⁰ Renato Barilli suggests that *Il Piacere* centers on an “educazione sentimentale” (sentimental education) passed down from the *Bildungsroman* tradition from Goethe’s *Werther*, *Wilhelm Meister*, and Ugo Foscolo’s *Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (42). See Chapter II, “*La Scoperta del Piacere*,” in *D’Annunzio in Prosa*, 40-63. While Barilli points out that *Il Piacere* portrays the protagonist’s emotional growth, I focus on the material condition, which indirectly affects his mind.

¹¹ Chapter IV, “Pandora’s Box,” in Spackman’s *Decadent Genealogies* includes meticulous discussions on the use of contagious disease in *Il Piacere* and the other novels in *I Romanzi della Rosa* (152-210).

¹² Andrea’s attitude as an aesthete echoes Pater’s “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike” (152).

¹³ See Takahashi Eiri’s “‘Hōjō no umi’ o yomu to iu monogatari” [“The Tale of Reading *The Sea of Fertility*”] (134-145) and David Pollock’s “Arayuru mono e no hihiyō,” [“Criticism on The All”] (146-163). Both critics consider Kiyoaki as the man of action. For example, Pollock describes the protagonist as comparable to “a shite” of Noh drama, juxtaposing him with the passive observer, Honda (152).

¹⁴ The gate to D’Annunzio’s private residence, “Il Vittoriale degli Italiani,” on Lake Garda, shows his motto, “Io ho quel che ho donato” [“I have what I donated”]. The motto is “a practice typical of sixteenth-century heraldry, which began to appear in his work in 1916” (Andreoli 46). Although the correlation between the motto and the practice of generosity in *Il Piacere* (1889) may be indirect, it is noteworthy that D’Annunzio’s aesthetics is closely intertwined with his own practice of gifting.

¹⁵ For the formation of subjectivity in early modern Japanese literature, see Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*.

¹⁶ See Charles Bernheimer’s accessible interpretation of Cesare Lombroso’s misogynistic study of women in *La donna delinquente: la prostituta e la donna normale* (1893) (146-149).

¹⁷ Spackman states: “Something speaks through the subject, but in the pre-Freudian texts that are the most ambitious proponents of this discourse, it is not language, not yet the unconscious. Behind the disturbed syntax, the disturbing contents of decadent texts, there

hides a diseased, degenerate body. Post-Freudian symptomatic readings rely on an analysis of psychic mechanisms to interpret texts, and nineteenth-century medicolegal anthropological studies (as their authors call them) ground their interpretive code on a description of somatic reaction, not the unconscious. These pre-Freudian texts are as blissfully unaware of that dark continent as they are of discipline to boundaries” (1).

¹⁸ Mishima’s editor’s note, published in *Hihyō* [Criticism], displays the writer’s keen interest in the literary theme and motifs of “decadence.” As Shibusawa Tatsuhiko suggests, overuse of the term decadence might reflect Mishima’s unsettled conceptualization of the aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century. See *Mishima Yukio Oboegaki*, 58-59.

¹⁹ Originally published as a book review, “Tōi koe, tōi heya: Americateki Dekadansu” (“Other Voices, Other Rooms: American Decadence”), in *Toshoshinbun*, May 7, 1955.

CHAPTER V

The Hyperbolic Other as An Antidote for Decadence: Sacred-Primitive Figures in Sakaguchi Ango's *Hakuchi* and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema*

This chapter investigates two cases of narrative representation in post-World War II fictions of decadence in Italy and Japan. As *fin-de-siècle* Decadence delved into its willful deviation from normality (Gilman 159), this legacy of the genre was handed down to almost all the modern fictional discourses of decadence. This chapter focuses on the concrete reification of decadent images, which, taken together, become transformed into a literary device that Erich Auerbach calls “*figura*” (type). To make a distinction from a narrative “trope,” Auerbach defines the concept of *figura* as a tangible form that carries out a hermeneutic mission to belatedly articulate historical truth embedded in the text, while it also prefigures the future in history: “*figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical” (29)¹. The concept of *figura* facilitates our understanding of particular imageries that embed a semantic significance of “creation, revelation, redemption,” concepts which are reminiscent of the theological triad (Auerbach 146).

This chapter aims to articulate the literary function of *figura*, which possesses dual characteristics of primitiveness and sacredness. Within the settings of the postwar social milieus permeated by psychological decadence, Sakaguchi Ango's novella “Hakuchi” [The Idiot] (1946) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's novel *Teorema* [The Theorem] (1968) employ idiosyncratic characters who are uncannily barbaric, yet capable of generating spiritual messages. These works share little in common with the aesthetics of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, although the artificiality in their narrative remains as a *tour de*

force. Despite being written with different motives, both fictions narrate the common reality of a humanity devoid of passion or dedication to the other, qualities which are shamefully replaced by vanity and hypocrisy. To unveil these forms of human decadence, Pasolini and Sakaguchi center on the primitive-sacred *figurae* in the novels.

The following analysis will be drawn from a close reading of Sakaguchi's "Hakuchi," written during the postwar chaos after Japan's defeat in World War II, and Pasolini's *Teorema*, published in the midst of the postwar industrialization and economic boom of 1960s Italy. They equally propose to recuperate archaic human vitality and spiritual authenticity in their narratives, using figures that synthesize the dual traits of primitiveness and holiness. With their radically anti-modern configurations of ideal humanity, Sakaguchi and Pasolini show their unequivocal frustration against the rationalistic and pragmatic values that govern their contemporary world. Their decadence, then, unlike that of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, signifies a non-aesthetic human reality and thus deflects attention from the linguistic décor to portray their contemporary spiritual degeneration. Out of despair, Sakaguchi and Pasolini scrutinize the absence of the solid subjectivity and vitality that would be fundamental to human decency, in their views.

In "Hakuchi" and *Teorema*, the primitive-sacred figures play an essential role in revealing a series of hypocrisies and ontological emptiness, by means of their diabolic sexual appetite. This chapter will consider these functions through the *figura* of the unearthly, non-human other who disrupts rationalist conventions and helps construct (or destructure) subjectivity out of decadence, as Sakaguchi and Pasolini wrestle with the question of subjectivity from their positions of skepticism. The weak self stigmatized by

social conditions deserves castigation; for Sakaguchi, self-deception and hypocrisy are rooted in the cunning of the nationalist militants and the blindness of the masses (SAZ 4: 53),² and for Pasolini, the bourgeoisie's self-sufficiency and material obsession should be condemned as they dislocate humanity (HM xvi).³ The primitive-sacred intruder into this everydayness is represented as a metaphorical messenger, a Hermetic figure. The idiosyncratic locutions with the *figura* possess an instigating power toward reconstructing postwar subjectivities that have been degraded by the gigantic, uncanny force of history. For both authors, decadence means the despicable realities wherein human beings hypocritically indulge in egoism without nurturing their socially-responsible selfhood. Sakaguchi identifies the problem with Japan's collective self-deception that renounces the individual self, while Pasolini regards the dominance of bourgeois capitalism as the fundamental root of human degeneration.

As the Romanian scholar of comparative religions Mircea Eliade states in *Symbolism, The Sacred, and The Arts* (1985), modern art has discovered "the sacred manifested through the substance itself" (83). Whereas his analysis focuses mostly on the plastic art forms, such as sculpture, painting, or architecture, the idea of "substance" also provides a foundation for contextualizing the "primitive-sacred" in "Hakuchi" and *Teorema*. According to Eliade, after Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God" in nineteenth century, modern humanity has withdrawn from the "hierophanization" of substance (83). The epistemic venue that had been underpinned by religion was replaced with scientific thought that rationalized the presence of sacredness within any substance as mere "matter." According to Eliade, "[e]mptied of every religious value or meaning, nature could become the 'object' *par excellence* of scientific investigation" (83).

Simultaneously, modern aesthetics has blended the elements of linguistic conventions and primitivity, as Eliade states that it “destroy[ed] traditional artistic language and attraction towards the elementary modes of life and matter [...] with archaic conceptions” (84). This artistic framework fits perfectly into the paradigm of Sakaguchi’s and Pasolini’s discourses of decadence, which foreground the pure materiality of the human body and sexuality as primitive, and at the same time recognize the transcendently-sacral existence within it.

Unlike the *fin-de-siècle* artifacts that focus on décor, Sakaguchi and Pasolini configure the concept of “decadence” as literally a phenomenon of degeneration and the degradation of the human will to power, and simultaneously as a slogan through which society’s stagnancy undergoes rejuvenation. Sakaguchi’s indignation is caused by Japan’s obsolete militant ethics, institutionalized loyalty to the Emperor, and artificial morality, which are culturally codified and reinforced by the Japanese people themselves, for no purpose but their self-indulgence in political conspiracies and fake reasoning (“*kenbōjissū*”, and “*taigi meibun*”) (55). Under the militant regime during wartime, these factors had all been bound together with the concept of *kokutai* (the national polity) – the nation as an organic body that possesses a unified subjectivity. The systematic figuration of power imposed upon the national constituents stripped away their ability to act as self-determining agents, by a predominant discourse that extolled the nation as a unified body where all the constituents partake of the same wholeness. Under the Shōwa militant regime the Emperor was the foremost symbol of this unified national body, and ultimately the deified summit of patriarchy. Similarly, in *Teorema*, Pasolini disentangles what he sees as a typical Milanese bourgeois mentality in the 1960s, codifying various

human dispositions that blindly pursue their passionless life in late capitalist society. Arriving late at modernization, northern Italy saw a drastic industrialization in the postwar decades. Within that social milieu, Pasolini's depiction of a Milanese family epitomizes their bourgeois materialistic obsessions, vanity, and narcissism, while they cling to feeble conventions and to patriarchy.

"Hakuchi" and *Teorema* are the authors' fictional efforts to exorcize these stifling elements of contemporary humanity. Decadence provides a point of departure as a resource not of aesthetic self-consciousness but rather of political or ideological unconsciousness. At a sub-textual level, "Hakuchi" and *Teorema* envisage that postwar decadence equals a form of human degeneration through which the cowardly avoid confronting their politico-ideological responsibilities. The figure of primitive-sacredness, reified by the narrative as *Deus Ludens*, brings a rupture in history as an antithesis to human naïveté and to hypocrisy. The process is a necessary rite of passage, and the figures invalidate all rationalistic thoughts, including intellectualism and pragmatism. Sakaguchi's and Pasolini's primitive-sacred figures, however, with neither mercy nor catharsis, announce humanity's crisis by revealing its ontological emptiness. Their devastating visions of post-war modernity, then, implicitly refute the exuberance found in the Nietzschean construction of the self, and perpetuate decadence without any metaphorical convalescence.

Writing Ahistoricity through Primitiveness: Sakaguchi Ango's Hakuchi [The Idiot]

Sakaguchi Ango's novella, "Hakuchi" [The Idiot] published in 1946, fictionalized the logic of Japanese hypocrisy that was interlocked within the cultural norms and value

systems promoted during wartime. As the most outspoken member of the so-called *Buraiha* (“The School of Decadence,” also, literally, “The Party of Independence”), Sakaguchi made contributions to post-war literary history by his daring subversion of wartime ethics and the moral codes that had been stipulated by Japan’s militant government. A few months before the publication of the novella, in his celebrated essay “Darakuron” [On Decadence] (1946) Sakaguchi denounced the nation-wide tendencies toward collective dissimulation that “個を没入せしめた” (SAZ 4: 53; “undermined each individual”), and in his post-war works, including “Darakuron” and “Hakuchi,” he problematized the emptiness of Japanese subjectivity, while suggesting that the war provided a chance to ameliorate that condition. Sakaguchi argues that the castration of the individual will was realized by a small number of Machiavellian political geniuses (SAZ 4: 53), namely the aristocratic-regent clan of the Fujiwara Family in the Heian period (794-1185 A.D.), and he implies that the family’s political legacy has long outlived their time. Since ancient times, the political domination and manipulation of the entire country by certain lineages had been the essence of Japanese politics, and its governing principle blinded the masses. Sakaguchi then personifies the relationship between the politics and history of Japan as follows:

少数の天才は管理や支配の方法に独創をもち、それが凡庸な政治家の基本となつてこの時代、この政治を貫く一つの歴史の形で巨大な生き者の意志を示してゐる。政治の場合に於て、歴史は個をつなぎ合せたものではなく、個を没入せしめた別個の巨大な生物となつて誕生し、歴史の姿に於て政治も亦巨大な独創を行つてゐるのである。この戦争をやつた者は誰であるか、東条であり軍部であるか。さうでもあるが、然し 又、日本を貫く巨大な生物、歴史のぬきさしならぬ意志であつたに相違ない。日本人は歴史の前ではただ運命に従順な子供であつたにすぎない。政治家によし独創はなくとも。政治は歴史の姿に於て独創をもち、意慾をもち、やむべからざる歩調をもつて大海の並みの如くに歩いて行く。

(SAZ 4: 53-54)

[[T]he few brilliant minds, ingenious in the way they use the laws of administration and control, take on the personas of the mediocre politicians, then pierce each era and each government with an expression of the will of an almighty being, stringing together a single historical will. For governments, history is not a matter of bringing individuals together, but rather one of absorbing individuals into the concept of an almighty being so that the shape of history, like government, will move to an almighty creativity. Who was it that conducted this war? Was it Tojo's branch of the military? It may have been in part, but it was also without a doubt that almighty being running through Japan: the irretrievable will of history. The Japanese people do nothing more than submissively accept their destiny at its feet. Even if politicians are not geniuses, politics under the veil of history possesses ingenuity, a unique will and an unstoppable momentum that carries it forward like a wave in the open ocean (Smith 1)⁴.]

Sakaguchi's anthropomorphism of Japanese history attributes responsibility for the war, dialectically, to both the militant regime and the general public that was (hypocritically or unwittingly) incognizant of individual responsibilities. His equation of history to a wilful human being alludes to the concept of national polity, the fictional presentation of the nation as a human body. Individual subjectivities and wills are subsumed into the body as a symbol of unified subjectivity. Nonetheless, Sakaguchi grapples with the problem from apolitical as well as ontological standpoints. Remaining outside the Marxist circles and revolutionary impetus, he does not attribute the dislocation of individuals to the particularity of politics or ideologies. Rather, he envisions Japan as a metaphorical "body without organs" (131), one capable of being operated by uncanny, transcendental power, without substance. While Sakaguchi's propensity to embody history ambiguates the logic of politics, Ian Smith's essay, "Sakaguchi and the Morality of Decadence," well articulates his position by expounding on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "assemblage of power" (184). Through the critique of the "abstract machine of overcoding" (Smith 3) that was made possible by iconographic symbols such as the Emperor and by the traditional philosophy of *Bushidō*

(the way of militants, ethics of military men), Japan has succeeded in sustaining its historical continuity. Smith proposes that Sakaguchi intends to “deterritorialize” the coded forms of tradition in his postwar discourse of reconstructing Japanese individuals who can be legitimately emancipated from the status of “*shinmin*” (“the subject subordinated to the Emperor”). According to Smith, Sakaguchi emphatically pronounces the necessity of Japanese individuals’ willful *daraku* (“lapse”) through multiple forms of amorality/immorality, in a drastic rejection of institutionalized forms of virtue, including worship of the Emperor as well as places such as the Yasukuni Shrine, which is consecrated to dead soldiers and war officials, or other promulgations of concepts such as women’s chastity and fidelity to their husbands, and other moral precepts. These instruments of political expediency were at most useful to remind the Japanese people of their subjugated position. However, Sakaguchi avoids directly denouncing these discourses of morality and ethics. The truly problematic are his countrymen themselves, who consciously or unconsciously dissimulate their own wills in order not to face the logic of subjugation and the responsibility of self-governing. According to Sakaguchi, the transcendently paternal Imperial will and the self-imposed constraints of Bushidō ethics have provided the Japanese people with a symbolic order that has compelled their blind submission to authority. In this regard, his essay “Darakuron” plays out the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave – the common Japanese people attain their identity only in relation to the Emperor and to authority. For Sakaguchi, the country’s master history signifies this mechanism within which a hypocritical self-subjugation to the other renounces the genuine human self. Accordingly, his ardent dictum, “生きよ墮ちよ”

(SAZ 4: 58; “live, fall!”) does not denote aesthetic self-indulgence; it enunciates a will to disentangle the self-binding logic of counterfeit morality.

Sakaguchi proposes in “Hakuchi” a catastrophic subversion of the overcoded structures of Japan’s traditional morality and ethics. As a fictionalized explication of the thesis he developed in “Darakuron,” “Hakuchi” dramatizes sexual *jouissance* and an *élan vital* emancipated from Japan’s conventional moralist confinement. Set in chaotic wartime Tokyo, the story evolves around the idiosyncratic interaction between the protagonist, Izawa, a would-be bohemian artist, and the Idiot, the beautiful but mentally handicapped wife of Izawa’s psychopathic neighbor. This female character, whose name is simply dubbed “the Idiot,”⁵ functions to substantiate the annihilation of empty morality, and thereby inaugurates a sense of postwar Japanese subjectivity. During the harsh air raids by the Allies, Izawa suddenly discovers the mentally deficient woman in his apartment, and soon after, she becomes a permanent parasite. Responding to her unspoken desire to remain in his room, Izawa secretly accepts her as though she were “まるで俺のために造られた悲しい人形” (SAZ 4: 72; “a pitiful doll created for me”) and then simply as “女の肉体” (SAZ 4: 73; “female flesh”). Her body, the pure material of sensory pleasure, allows the protagonist to engage in his guiltless indulgence with a married woman. The Idiot’s corporeality without rationality metaphorically overthrows the gender politics regulated by the Confucian dictum, “節婦は二夫に見えず” (SAZ 4: 55; “A woman of fidelity does not associate with two husbands”).

The Idiot is constantly portrayed as a primitive creature, quasi-inhuman, completely devoid of rationality, sanity, or intellectuality. All the normal ranges of human emotions or concerns are replaced with her purely somatic desire:

白痴の女はただ待ちもうけてゐる肉体であるにすぎず、そのほかの何の生活も、ただ一ときれの考へすらもないのであつた。常にただ待ちもうけてゐた。伊沢の手が女の身体の一部にふれるといふだけで、女の意識する全部のことは肉体の行為であり、そして身体も、そして顔も、ただ待ちもうけてゐるのみであつた。驚くべきことに、深夜、伊沢の手が女にふれるといふだけで、眠り痴れた 肉体が同一の反応を起こし、肉体のみは常に生き、ただ待ちもうけてゐるのである。眠りながらも！けれども、目覚めてゐる女の頭に何事が考へられてゐるか云へば、元々がただの空虚であり、在るものはただ魂の昏睡と、そして生きてゐる肉体のみではないか。
(SAZ 4: 74)

[[T]he idiot woman existed as a mere piece of flesh who waits for (the man's body), while she was not at all concerned about any aspect of life. Always, the body was only waiting. Whenever Izawa's hand touched a part of her body, she was conscious only of intercourse, and her entire body and her face were only waiting for him. Surprisingly, late at night, a touch of Izawa's hand triggered the same reaction of her sleeping body. Even while sleeping, her flesh was always being awake and only waiting. Even while sleeping! However, even while being awake, what she thinks was anyway empty. And what one can see in the woman was only her sleeping soul and ever active flesh.]

The absence of the Idiot's more complex human attributes displays a clear gesture to strip away all the types of moral obligation and responsibility that institutionally suffocated wartime Japan. Without full human consciousness or awareness of conventions of decency, she enacts a radical antithesis to social, moral, and ethical codes and thus remains free from any institutionalized form of subjugation. The Idiot's presence reveals that Izawa represents qualities that are her polar opposites, that is, rationality and hypocrisy, which are constructed by his pragmatism *vis-à-vis* “世間の見栄” (SAZ 4: 72; “vanity conditioned by the society's eyes”). In contrast, as Shukumi Lin keenly observes, insofar as the Idiot is mere flesh lacking in subjectivity, she cannot be the other (*tasha*) (101). Citing Merleau-Ponty's “The Phenomenology of Perception,”⁶ Lin explains this paradox: “Izawa does not touch upon a body that deserves to be called the other. What he touches is the flesh, which merely has female sexual organs” (101).

Through the relentless exertion of her primitiveness, the Idiot figuratively embodies an “ahistoricity” that is innocent of any of the social and ethical codes constructed through human history. The third-person narrative introduces her as “気違いの女房”⁷ (SAZ 4: 63; “the madman’s wife”); she is thus linked to madness, which is one of the human attributes dislocated into the social margins in the eighteenth century, as Foucault describes it in *Madness and Civilization*. Her presence therefore implicitly eradicates the rationalism that would set up a deterministic border between sanity and insanity within hygienic modern social life. Sneaking into Izawa’s compartment, she insistently remains in his *oshiire* (closet) (SAZ 4: 67-68). Her idiosyncratic behavior is indicative of a backward, animal-like nature, a rejection of life governed by reason. The space she inhabits predicates her condition as marginalized, especially since within a Japanese house an *oshiire* can signify a dark and hidden realm where a supernatural being might reside. Likewise, the Idiot’s physical appearance also shows disconnectedness from the contemporary world: she possesses “然るべき家柄の娘のような品の良さで、目の細々とうっとうしい、瓜実顔の古風の人形か能面のような美しい顔立ち” (SAZ 4: 64; “elegance as though [she were] a daughter of a noble family, and her beautiful oval face [is] like a classical doll or a Noh mask, which is accentuated by her thin eyes filled with ennui”). The synthesis of madness, mental vacancy, and a beautiful appearance transcends history, while evoking unspecified images of antiquity. Her corporeality, especially her face, rejects contemporaneity. While resembling a Noh mask, she may prompt recollections of well-known Noh repertoires such as *Hanjo* and *Sumidagawa*, which center on a leitmotif of insane women. In literary convention, madness can convey a hidden sanity, and thus insanity can be only a surface mask for the authentic self.

Nevertheless, Sakaguchi's Idiot escapes such cultural conventions, too. Her mask-like face does not conceal rationality, emotion, or intelligence: “料理も、米を炊くことも知ら[なかった]。配給物をとりに行っても自身では何もできず、ただ立っているというだけで[あった]” (SAZ 4: 65; “She does not even know how to cook, how to steam rice [...]. [E]ven when picking up the rations, she cannot do anything herself but only stands there [...]).

The Idiot's inability to carry on linguistic communication separates her from any socio-historical context and reduces her to a primitive “object,” mere “肉体” (“flesh”), as Izawa perceives her (SAZ 4: 73). Her conversational incapability might invite a feminist criticism of the work as phallogentric. For instance, Hélène Cixous's essay, “The Newly Born Woman,” argues that female passivity has been demanded by patriarchal society to counterbalance male activeness; patriarchy's binary logic is based on a male-centered symbolic order through which female passivity has become perpetuated: “[e]ither woman is passive or she does not exist. What is left of her is unthinkable, unthought” (Cixous 39). Such condemnation, however, would be incongruous to this novella, which sets her *raison d'être* outside modern rationality. The materiality of the Idiot's body remains irrelevant to traditional binary logic that assigns gender roles. Reduced to a purely sexual object, her body concretizes Sakaguchi's view of the human being fundamentally as flesh. During an air raid, the Idiot shrieks as if she were an animal. The similes in Izawa's soliloquy that describe her as “芋虫” (SAZ 4: 76; “a bug”) and “泥人形” (SAZ 4: 77; “a doll made of mud”) persistently establish a dichotomous relation between them: the viewing subject and the viewed object. The Idiot's primitiveness in lacking language escapes from any feminist critique of female voicelessness as a sign of imposed passivity

in patriarchal societies, for the narrative establishes her as an inhuman. According to Shōji Hajime, her body without voice represents a metaphorical “quiescence” in contrast to the protagonist’s “mobility” (207). These contesting characteristics suggest Sakaguchi’s hostility against Japan’s intelligentsia whose restless pursuit of cultural trends and excessive mobility underscores their shallowness.

“Hakuchi” can be interpreted as a radical challenge against the Cartesian formulation of the self, “cogito ergo sum.” Unlike this precept, the Idiot’s subversive existence represents Sakaguchi’s original tenet, as repeatedly proclaimed by his postwar works, that is to say, rationality vexes human realities. Out of despair, Sakaguchi assails the Japanese intelligentsia:

新聞記者だの文化映画の演出家などは賤業中の賤業であつた。彼等の心得てゐるのは時代の流行といふことだけで、動く時間に乗遅れまいとすることだけが生活であり、自我の追及、個性や独創といふものはこの世界には存在しない。[...] 要するに如何なる時代にもこの連中には内容がなく空虚な自我があるだけだ。流行次第で右から左へどうにでもなり、通俗小説の表現などからお手本を学んで時代の表現だと思ひこんでゐる。事実時代といふものはただそれだけの浅薄愚劣なものでもあり、日本二千年の歴史を覆すこの戦争と敗北が果たして人間の真実に何の関係があつたであらうか。最も内省の希薄な意志と衆愚の盲動だけによつて一国の運命が動いてゐる。 (SAZ 4: 66)

[News reporters or producers of cultural films have the most degrading jobs. What they acknowledge is only fads, and their life means only being up-to-date. In their world such notions as the pursuit of subjectivity, individuality, and originality do not exist. [...] In short, in any age, these folks embrace not substance but emptiness in the self. Depending on trends, they are quite flexible while believing that expression of the age can be modeled by popular novels. In reality, “the age” signifies such shallowness and silliness. What does this war, which would overthrow Japan’s history of two millennia, and the defeat, have to do with the truth of human beings? A nation’s fate is mobilized only by the shallow will and the silly masses’ blind action.]

Although the passage focuses on a limited range of people, Sakaguchi critiques Japan as an entity that constitutes blind masses as well as the emptiness of the intelligentsia. Their modalities of existence are, at any rate, a failure, either yielding to Machiavellian

politicians (“Darakuron,” SAZ 4:54) or firmly believing in “the empty self” (SAZ 4: 66). In contrast, the Idiot’s primitive flesh, deprived of any historical or rational context, signifies quasi-sacredness, purity, and innocence. Izawa’s self-awareness, however, mirrors at best a “half-way realization [...] concluded only by [the] brain” (Shōji 205), as when he poses a self-indulgent question without any empirical learning: “なまじい人間らしい分別が、なぜ必要であろうか。[...] 俺にもこの白痴のような心、幼い、そして素直な心が何より必要だったのだ。” (SAZ 4: 70; “Why do I need rationality, halfheartedly? [...] What I need is the mind of the Idiot, an innocent and honest mind, much more than any other thing”).

The lack of rationality in the Idiot reaffirms Sakaguchi’s precept in “Darakuron”: “生きよ墮ちよ” (SAZ 4: 58; “live, fall”). In praise of decadence, what he avows is the emptiness rooted in all politico-ideological and historical discourses, which are fundamentally fictional constructs. Izawa’s encounter with the Idiot’s simplicity in her flesh and deficient mind therefore holds a central importance in the novella. After escaping the air raid, Izawa and the Idiot arrive on the outskirts of the town. Feeling at ease, the Idiot nonchalantly falls asleep as she displays her face, which is likened by Izawa to that of a pig that carelessly snores (SAZ 4: 84). To Izawa’s eyes, the superimposed image of the Idiot and the animal reinstates a pure materiality of flesh that transcends all worldly affairs. Simultaneously, the scene reclaims Sakaguchi’s faith in the physical materiality of the human being, which could be reducible only to basic necessities: to sleep, to eat, to have sex. At the moment, the lingering imagery of a pig reminds Izawa of a childhood memory of an incident in which he sliced a pig’s rump. The cruelty flashes back in his mind: “豚は痛そうな顔もせず、特別の鳴声もたてなかつ

た。尻の肉を切りとられたことも知らないように、ただ逃げまわっているだけだった”

(SAZ 4: 84; “The pig neither showed any pain in its face nor uttered any outcry in particular. As if being unaware of the fact that its rump was sliced off, the pig was only running around”). What follows is a stream-of-consciousness narrative, which forges an analogy between the pig and the Idiot:

崩れたコンクリートの陰で、女が一人の男に押さへつけられ、男は女をねじ倒して、肉体の行為に耽りながら、男は女の尻の肉をむしりとつて食べてゐる。女の尻の肉はだんだん少くなるが、女は肉慾のことを考へてゐるだけだった。

(SAZ 4: 84)

[Behind concrete rubble, a girl is held down by a man. While subduing her and indulging in sexual intercourse, he plucks her rump and eats it. Although the flesh of her buttock gradually decreases, she is only absorbed by sex.]

Despite its cruelty and obscenity, the passage gradually elucidates Izawa's perception of the Idiot. Reduced to primitive material, her flesh not only disentangles his mind, leaving him with no interest in even “微塵の愛情” (SAZ 4: 84; “the slightest affection”), but also reveals his disinterest in life altogether: “この女[に] [...] 未練もなかったが、捨てるだけの張合いもなかった。生きるための、明日の希望がないからだった。” (SAZ 4: 84; “I was not attached [to her] [...], but also not even motivated to dump [her]. It was because I did not have any hope to live tomorrow”). Narratologically, the Idiot is a figurative instrument whose function is to announce Izawa's essential emptiness. Without catharsis, he goes on to remark: “米軍が上陸し、天地にあらゆる破壊が起り、その戦争の破壊の巨大な愛情が、すべてを裁いてくれるだろう” (SAZ 4: 85; “Once the Americans disembark and all kinds of destructions occur in Heaven and Earth, those *gigantic affections* of the war would judge everything”) (italics mine). This statement elicits Sakaguchi's fundamental skepticism about any historical materialism that asserts the notion of progress, along with all types of institutionalized knowledge founded on

rationalism. While debunking the lack of individual subjectivity, the novella reasserts Sakaguchi's respect for history's transcendental autonomy beyond human rationalism.

The Idiot embodies a counter-discourse to the discursive formation of Japan's modernity. Her imbecility, diabolical sexual energy, and lack of a clear subjectivity are attributes of abnormality in modern scientific contexts. Nevertheless, an array of anthropological studies acknowledges the significance concealed within irrational human conditions. Although considered unusual, "idiots" in pre-modern communal society were sometimes viewed as embodying a sacred quality, as when people believed that idiots possessed supernatural powers, such as the ability to predict the future or to reincarnate into an animal that was beneficial to the community. Those idiots' sacredness stems from their social position of abject alienation from the ordinary domains of everyday life (Akasaka 114). In this anthropological light, the Idiot in "Hakuchi" functions to supplement the protagonist's rationality with an inscrutable realm of irrationality.

In the process of constructing a unified nation state, the Japanese government instrumentalized the human body as a symbol of rationality, reinforcing rigid gender differences between men and women. As part of the governing principle, patriarchy was emphatically dictated as the foundational order for the stability of communal and individual life. Further, as Yōrō Takeshi states in *Shintai no bungakushi* [The Literary History of the Body] (1997), the semiotic functions of the body promoted a new social order after the Meiji Restoration. Examples of institutionalizing the body include the use of military uniforms and physical training as well as forms of medical diagnosis judging health and sickness, which all reflect the positivist values of modernization (Yōrō 53). Yōrō argues that, through the implementation of these new ideas of the body, modernity

dislocated the materiality of the body from our perception of it within quotidian settings. In the realm of philosophy and literary discourse, the body has been subordinated to the mind since the eighteenth-century Edo period (Yōrō 91). Dominating the body are psychologized or spiritualized configurations of human beings.

All these contexts clarify Sakaguchi's commentary on Japan's modernity as it is refuted in "Hakuchi." As he argues in "Darakuron," his critique of the collective Japaneseness exceeds an anti-modernist framework, such as that of the Japan Romantic School, which attributes the country's decadence to its problematic politico-cultural relation with the West. Sakaguchi's critical vision proposes that the problem is more pervasive within Japan and has affected the country's politico-ideological autonomy. Along with "Darakuron," in many of his postwar essays including "Tennō shōron" [A Short Essay on the Emperor] (1946) and "Yokubō ni tsuite" [On Desire] (1946), Sakaguchi contends that the Japanese are inherently unable to present themselves as a self-determining agency. What debases their mental autonomy is rooted in "feudalistic hypocrisy" [*hōkenteki giman*] (SAZ 4: 86), which deliberately allows the country to dodge its genuine desires, regardless of political or individual interests. According to Sakaguchi, the Emperor (Hirohito, who was on the throne 1926-1989) was an instrument expediently utilized by the Japanese – rather than only by the militant regime itself – to evade their responsibility to express their own will. In the short essay "Tennō shōron, which was published several months after the Emperor's *Ningen sengen* [Declaration of the Human Being],⁸ Sakaguchi analyzes the process by which the country ended the war:

日本は天皇によって終戦の混乱から救われたというのが常識であるが、之は嘘だ。 [...] 今度の戦争でも天皇の名によって矛をすてたというのは狡猾な表面にすぎず、なんとかうまく戦争をやめたいと内々誰しも考えており、政治家がそれを利用し、人民が又さらにそれを利用しただけにすぎない。 (SAZ 4:86)

[It is a deceptive statement that Japan was rescued by the Emperor from the postwar chaos. [...] It is only a cunning surface phenomenon that the nation renounced [further] battle in the recent war. All Japanese were actually hoping to discontinue the war, and the reality is that politicians utilized [the Emperor] and further the people made use of him.]

Sakaguchi then states that the Emperor's divinity – imagined and officially claimed by the militant government – should be exorcized (86). The same ideological stance is prevalent when Sakaguchi claims that Japanese people need the vigorous presence of *Kami* (God) whose religiosity can override the transcendental authority fabricated by crafty politicians (87). Nevertheless, he still insists: “日本的知性の中から封建的欺瞞をとりさるためには天皇をただの天皇家になってもらうことがどうしても必要で、[...]すべての神格をとり去ることが絶対的に必要だ” (SAZ 4: 87; “In order to strip away feudalistic hypocrisy from Japan's intellectual thought, it is imperative that the Emperor becomes the simple Imperial family. [...] [I]t is indispensable that we take away all the sacredness from the Emperor”). While Sakaguchi does not subject religion itself to condemnation, the institutionalized divinity of the Emperor needs to be annihilated. Hence, he is careful not to condemn Japanese traditions, including the Emperor, militant ethics, or female chastity themselves; what he views as a crisis of humanity lies in what Smith calls the “political assemblage” of these traditional instruments into a symbiosis of the political oligarchies, such as the Fujiwara clan or the Shōwa militant government, and the common people of the country. Sakaguchi repeatedly accuses this complicity between Japan's politics and the people's lack of autonomy; in other words, the symbiosis nurtures nothing but the latter's slave mentality.

Within these contexts, the Idiot's primitive body can be interpreted as a manifestation of a historical rupture, which allows the protagonist to escape from Japan's nationwide decadence of the will-to-power. Unlike the Japanese people who have succumbed to politically manipulated value systems and renounced their subjectivity, then, the Idiot's flesh substantiates pure instincts, free from all constraints of political and national frameworks. It may be helpful here to recall the etymology of the Greek word ἰδιωτης, *idiōtēs*, which denotes "a private citizen, individual", from ἰδιος, *idios*, "private" (Kykkōtēs 223). The Idiot thus designates a private existence within wartime Japan where "the Imperial government dictates the difference between morality and amorality" (Lin 95-96).

In modern and contemporary literary contexts, mentally disabled characters often signify not mental impairment in a clinical sense, but an ironic concealment of superiority over others in a communal life setting. To wrestle with the crisis of humanity, the irrationality of inhuman figures has served as a powerful trope for Melville, Dostoevsky, Kafka, or Musil (Deleuze 82). As Gilles Deleuze elaborates in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, contact with an inhuman allows a human being to escape the particularity of a social institution and to enter into a new realm where multiple possibilities or values coexist. Similarly, in Sakaguchi's "Hakuchi," what Deleuze calls "a zone of discernibility" (84) is erased by the life-threatening air raid during which Izawa is forced onto the edge of life and death. Because of his uncertainties about the state of emergency, his life instinct drives him into an idiosyncratic, liminal zone, wherein he becomes fascinated with death and the halfway-human figure of the Idiot. Here, the Idiot's primitiveness empowers the vulnerability of Izawa by momentarily substituting his

rationality with irrationality; because of his survival instinct, Izawa must renounce the rational self and normative value systems. By virtue of the freedom belonging to the Idiot, Izawa steps into her realm of irrationality and shifts into the zone indiscernible from her. This transition projects an imaginary ahistoricity of Japanese modernity; momentarily, the experience of rationalist modernity recedes to the unreal. To compensate for the historical sense of failure, the harshness of the war in the air raid is materialized perfectly as a future-bound space, as the narrator cherishes its destructive force and spatial instability as “健全な健忘症 (SAZ 4: 73; “healthy amnesia”). As the result of the human encounter with the inhuman, what the third-person narrative elucidates is Japan’s disenchantment with modern rationality that rewards people only by reintroducing a counterfeit formulation of subjectivity. Out of despair, not only Sakaguchi but also his contemporary writers and critics, including Mishima Yukio, Kobayashi Hideo, and Takeda Taijun, regard the war as, in one way or another, some kind of Grace, through which the deadlocked conditions of Japan’s modern history became emancipated. Although employing various representations, these writers identify the war as a soteriological ending that annihilates the country’s cultural identity crisis in relation to the West. The most striking affirmation of the war can be found in Takeda’s essay, “Metsubō ni tsuite” [On Annihilation] in which he enthusiastically vindicates the physically devastating effects of the war: “大きな慧知の出現するための第一の予告が滅亡であることは滅亡の持っている大きなはたらき大きな契機を示している” (“In order that the most grand wisdom emerge, first annihilation is necessary. And this fact implies the significant function of apocalypse and the gigantic potential concealed in the apocalypse”; Takeda 399).

Similar to Takeda, who views a moment of devastation as a great turning point for the rejuvenation of a civilization within circular history, Sakaguchi materializes the war to de-historicize Japan and its people's mentality. The Idiot's flesh, for its primitive materiality, hyperbolically dramatizes the historical potential of the war, through which all human inventions about socio-historical value can be annihilated. In this sense, Sakaguchi implicitly disdains the Japan's Romantic School for its valorization of mythological and poetic ethos, which was meant to overcome Japan's modernity and its push toward drastic westernization. For Sakaguchi, although Japan's modernity is not trustworthy, the romantic mythologization of the past deserves far more scrutiny because myths and historicized values are bound up with politics; they were the best instruments employed to subsume people under the façade of the unified nation. Therefore, the Idiot metaphorically destabilizes and escapes the grid of history as her mind and flesh can conceive neither hypocrisy nor self-deception. The life-threatening air raid sets forth not only its apocalyptic atrocity – and thus future-bound circularity – but also a soteriological release – as the end of history – from the burdens of the past.

According to Deleuze, if there is a reason for us to write, it is to eradicate “[t]he shame of being a man” (1). As he succinctly states, so in “Hakuchi” the process of becoming non-human takes place through the discovery of “the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation” (Deleuze 1). As the interaction between Izawa and the Idiot exemplifies, Japan's postwar literary discourses tend to blur the borderlines between the primitive/rational and the civilized/rational as a counter-discourse to the horrendous experience of the war's atrocity. Sakaguchi's use of ambivalence is, however, a far more holistic antidote to the country's relentless dissimulation of its own history.

Where a dichotomous vision between civilization and primitiveness persists in modern scientific positivism, *fin-de-siècle* Decadent discourse gave credit to the latter. The *fin-de-siècle* Decadents' fascination was not limited to historical decay, as represented by the case of the Roman Empire, but extended to primitiveness in civilizations and cultures (Calinescu 163-164). While the Decadents viewed pre-civilized worlds as a valid locus for emancipating unconscious desire, and thus as a resource for their imagination, the rationalists vilified them as instinct and atavism. One of the onslaughts against primitiveness was expressed by an Enlightenment philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798-1857). His positivist posture was handed down to the ethnographic anthropology developed by Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857-1939), who counterpolarized rationality and primitiveness respectively as the foundational attributes of the West and the non-West. His research postulated a teleological evolution of primitive people's minds, which supposedly progressed toward the Western mind. Furthermore, a moralistic cultural study by Max Nordau (1849-1923), influenced by the criminology of Cesare Lombroso, specifically assails the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetes as a prominent case of degeneration for their instinctiveness, archaicness, and maniac obsession with self-consciousness.

Unlike the above positivist thinkers, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-), a founder of Structuralism, salvages primitiveness in his term "la pensée sauvage." Contrary to Levy-Bruhl, who identified human propensities to superstition and concrete details with the inability to conduct abstract thinking, Lévi-Strauss defends primitive indigenous people's mythical thoughts as reasonable, since their detail-oriented observation in fact constructs a higher structure of a symbolic order. Similarly, in the modern Japanese literary context,

Kobayashi Hideo vindicates primitiveness and savagery as indicative of a positive potential (Oshima 509-510). Whereas positivist thinkers disapprove of the primitive as a menace to modern rational thought, Kobayashi, like Lévi-Strauss, defends it as a valid track for a more abstract, and thereby rational, modality of human cognition.

However, along with his nationalist tendencies (Oshima 510), Kobayashi's effort to salvage the "unconscious, mythological, and poetical mind" as the virtue of a primitive stage of human language loses its validity in Sakaguchi's scheme of "literal" primitiveness. In "Hakuchi," primitiveness rejects all the possibilities of abstraction but sustains its backwardness intact within the ahistorical figure of the Idiot. Her sexual desire, which is not mediated by a human consciousness of correlation with the other, articulates the author's unsettled dispute over social norms during wartime. The Idiot's nonchalant pursuit of physical *jouissance* – a basic human desire – figuratively escapes the regulations stipulated by the Japanese regime of quasi-Fascism and its military police, whose function resembled that of the German Gestapo. During World War II, adultery by married women was subjected to the government's strict discipline, and men who engaged in illicit relationships with women were regarded as traitors against the Imperial nation and the Emperor, and thus subject to punishment. The eradication of frivolous affairs was schematized to obtain the public's absolute obedience and to reinforce the sense of a state of emergency.

Sakaguchi's critique of Japan's artificial morality was consistent throughout his literary career. His postwar essay "Yokubō ni tsuite" [On Desire] (1946), praising Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, assails the Japanese militant regime's suppression of basic human desires and European civilization as "墮落" (SAZ 4: 141; "decadence"). While he

mainly critiques Japan's social regime, he fundamentally disdains all types of social order, in favor of "human animality": "人間の動物性は社会秩序という網によってすくいあげることが不可能で、どうしても網の目からこぼれてしまう。そして我々はそういう動物性を秩序の網にすくいあげることができないので悪徳であるというのであるが、然しその社会生活の幅、文化というものが発展進歩してきたのは、秩序によるよりもその悪徳のせいによることが多いのである。" (SAZ 4: 140; "It is impossible to filter human animality out by means of the social order; then, because that [excessive] animality escapes the social order, we name it vice. Nonetheless, the enrichment of social life and cultural progress owes more to vice than to order"). According to this proposition, Izawa's decadent sexual liaison with the Idiot denotes infidelity and civil disobedience; because of its vice, their idiosyncratic relation embeds the possibility of future-bound progress.

By the absence of human attributes in her flesh, the Idiot enacts Sakaguchi's rhetorically hyperbolic rebellion against wartime totalitarian tendencies; yet, those tendencies were not necessarily imposed on people only by government authority but also internalized by their over self-consciousness underpinned by rationality. Izawa represents the typical hypersensitive citizen who is sensitive to others' view of him; he is disturbed by "本質的な掟" (SAZ 4: 72; "an essential rule") in which other neighbor women, including prostitutes, are regarded as far more decent than the Idiot. Finally, Izawa anticipates the scandal that would incriminate him for his illicit complicity with the idiot woman:

俺は何を怖れてゐるのだらうか。[...] 怖れてゐるのはただ世間の見栄だけだ。その世間とはアパートの淫売婦だの妾だの妊娠した挺身隊だの家鴨のやうな鼻にかかつた声をだして喚いてゐるオカミサンたちの行列会議だけのことだ。そのほか

に世間などはどこにもありはしないのに、そのくせこの分かりきった事実を俺は全然信じてゐない。不思議な掟に怯えてゐるのだ。(SAZ 4: 72)

[What am I afraid of? [...] I am afraid of only the vanity of society. That society includes only the prostitutes residing in the apartment, someone's concubines, pregnant members of the self-dedicated squad, or assemblies by housewives yelling with noisy voices like ducks. Although there is nothing beyond it, I do not believe in this self-evident fact at all. I am afraid of their strange decree.]

The Idiot represents a self-reflexive mirror in the course of Izawa's ontological transformation. Her presence reflects his fear of the possible social indictment describable only as a "strange decree." The relentless suffocation and sense of being under constant surveillance experienced by Izawa recalls Michel Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's panopticism that relies on both the prisoners' physical imprisonment and their internalization of the prison keeper's gaze cast upon them (*Discipline and Punishment* 144). Wartime Japan became a fear-provoking space, highly comparable to the conditions of the panopticon. Izawa's fear epitomizes the Japanese people's renunciation of their own will as individual subjects. As a way to overcome this self-imposed suffocation, Sakaguchi proposes the necessity of decadence by portraying an unmitigated image of human sexuality. By means of his axiomatic statement of "生きよ 墮ちよ" (SAZ 4: 58; "live, fall") in "Darakuron," and the concretization of this mandate in "Hakuchi," Sakaguchi critiques the Japanese people's hypocrisy that leads to self-castration and aversion from their "真実の道義や義務や責任の自覚" ("Gakudō shōron" SAZ 4:10; "genuine awareness of ethics, duties, and responsibilities").

In the concrete dramatization of these arguments, the narrative sets forth a liminal stage for Izawa's self-transformation. Initially, Izawa represents the self-deceptive mentality of the masses, while the Idiot represents a catalyst who reveals the emptiness of official power. This initial subject-object relation is illustrated in Izawa's remark to

himself: “白痴の女が焼け死んだら – 土から作られた人形が土にかえるだけではないか” (SAZ 4: 77; “If the Idiot is burned to death (by the air raid) – a mud doll turns back to soil, that’s it”). Her non-linguistic expression of instinctive fear also startles him: “ああ人間には理智がある。如何なる時にも尚いくらかの抑制や抵抗は影をとどめているものだ。その影ほどの理智も抑制も抵抗もないということが、これほどあさましいものだとは!” (SAZ 4: 75; “Alas! Human beings have reason; regardless of the moment, we still maintain a slight self-control and resistance [against our instincts]. How abject it is that she lacks even a shade of these inhibitions!”).

The *raison d'être* of the Idiot's primitiveness lies in her absolute disconnection from all types of social confinement or historical continuity. In the essay “Zoku Darakuron” [A Sequel to “Darakuron”] (1946), Sakaguchi points out that “decadence”⁹ substantiates solitude as the most prominent human reality. The state of decadence entails a complete isolation and abandonment of the rest of the world, including one's father and mother (SAZ 4: 275). For Sakaguchi, decadence is ultimately synonymous with “孤独” (SAZ 4: 275; “solitude”), a condition free from all of one's social and historical identities.¹⁰ The Idiot's inhumanity thus isolates him, as well as her, from the rationality of the external world. Out of shame and fear that others will discover his relation with his neighbor's mentally handicapped wife, Izawa procrastinates his escape from downtown Tokyo, where the Allied bombings have become progressively more intense (SAZ 4: 79). In contrast with the Idiot's nonchalance, his effort to conceal her displays his vanity. Toward the climax of the novella, Izawa's expedient rhetoric expresses his conceit:

「僕はね、ともかく、もうちょっと、残りますよ。僕はね、仕事があるのだ。僕はね、ともかく芸人だから、命のとことんのところで自分の姿を見凝め得

るやうな機会には、そのとことんのところで最後の取引を試みることを要求されてゐるのだ。僕は逃げたいが、逃げられないのだ。この機会を逃すわけには行かないのだ。もうあなた方は逃げて下さい。」 (SAZ 4: 79)

[I will remain [here] for a while, anyway. Well, I have work to do. Because I am an artist anyway, *I am required to wager my final existence at the limit of life* as to where I can reflect on myself. Although I want to run away, I cannot do so. I just cannot renounce this opportunity. Please, you all go ahead and escape [from here].]¹¹

The passage depicts Izawa's fabricated self with his shallow pride in his role as an aesthete. His self-aggrandizement, however, rests on nervousness and cowardice, unlike the performativity and confidence displayed by the *fin-de-siècle* decadents. In essence, Izawa embodies only egoism, without a solid self: “早く、早く。一瞬間がすべてを手遅れにしてしまふ。全てとは、それは伊沢自身の命のことだ。” (SAZ 4:79; In the nick of time, everything becomes too late. Everything means Izawa's life itself). He can depart only after all the neighbors leave, because “さもないれば、白痴の姿を見られてしまふ” (SAZ 4:79; “otherwise, they will notice the Idiot”). Unlike the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent heroes' self-consciousness and desire to stand out from the masses, Izawa is pathetically concerned with the public eye, even when the sounds of explosions from the American aircraft and the anti-aircraft guns fill earth and heaven (SAZ 4: 80).

For the petty coward, the state of emergency during the air raid functions as a significant antidote. As theories of liminality posit, an extraordinary instance provides a moment for transgression, through which the members of a given community undergo an ontological rite of passage. Due to the surrounding chaos, through which the subject's identity and normative thought systems crumble, the community's members momentarily experience a spatio-temporal emancipation. British anthropologist Victor Turner acknowledges this “release” as the primal function of liminality: a temporal displacement

of the subject from “normal constraints [...] mak[es] possible the deconstruction of the ‘uninteresting’ constructions of common sense, the ‘meaningfulness of ordinary life’” (161).

In this regard, the narrative synthesis of primitiveness and the life-threatening air raid in “Hakuchi” displaces any accountability for sanity, common sense, and everyday values. Instead, the Idiot substantiates the presence of sacredness, or what the anthropological theory of liminality considers a rite of passage, as she brings in an alternative to Izawa’s wretched self-consciousness and solipsism, and thereby facilitates his transformation. The third-person narrative delineates Izawa’s ontological newness through his illogical affection, as a result of his belated escape from the air raid. In response to his sudden determination that they will survive together, for the first time the Idiot shows him a voiceless but willful response:

その顔きは稚拙であつたが、伊沢は感動のために狂ひそうになるのであつた。ああ、長い長い幾たびかの恐怖の時間、夜昼の爆撃の下に於いて、女が表した始めての意思であり、ただ一度の答へであつた。

(SAZ 4:82)

[Although her nodding was infantile, Izawa was almost insane because of the marvel. Alas, during the long, long repeated time of terror, under the air raid of day and night, that was the only will that she expressed, and the only answer.]

The Idiot’s primitive lack of linguistic communication suggests Sakaguchi’s effort to construct a new postwar humanity beyond the burdens of rationality. In the last scene, the narrative reinstates the Idiot’s pure materiality of flesh, superimposed with a symbolic image of an animal – a pig. Simultaneously, her non-human existence furthers the protagonist’s solitude, as though he is now completely dissociated from the human world

of rationality. Her flesh therefore represents a visual message announcing the emptiness in the protagonist's rational self.

As Sakaguchi's theory of decadence emphasizes one's moral downfall, his Idiot's non-rational existence is given a privilege reserved solely for physicality. Unlike the aesthetics of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, primitivism and atavism dissociate Sakaguchi's postwar contemplation of decadence from any nostalgia for the cultural past. For Sakaguchi, *daraku* ("decadence") bears dual meanings: a necessary evil to realize the nature of humanity, and an empirical challenge against rationalist/moralist constructs of the self.

Bourgeois Entropy Assailed: The Primitive-Sacred Guest in Pier Paolo Pasolini's

Teorema

Pier Paolo Pasolini's novel *Teorema* [Theorem] (1968), which was first conceived as a play in verse and subsequently transformed into a film and a novel (Siciliano 313), articulates his exposition of the sarcastic but solemn theorem: "bourgeois [life] is in entropy" (Siti 57). Despite his upbringing as a northern bourgeois, Pasolini openly assailed Italy's northern industrialist mentality as "corruption" (Rohdie 48) through his numerous works, including critical commentaries published in major newspapers such as *La Corriere della Sera*. His essay, "Lo stile indiretto libero in italiano" [translated in English as "Comments on Free Indirect Discourse"] (1963), accuses the country's bourgeois mentality as follows:

The most odious and intolerable thing, even in the most innocent of bourgeois, is that of not knowing how to recognize life experiences other than his own: and of bringing all other life experiences back to a substantial analogy with his own. It is a real offence that he gives to other men in different

social and historical conditions. Even a noble, elevated bourgeois writer, who doesn't know how to recognize the extreme characteristics of psychological diversity of a man whose life experiences differ from his, and who, on the contrary, believes that he can make them his by seeking substantial analogies – almost as if experiences other than his own weren't conceivable – performs an act that is the first step toward certain manifestations of the defense of his privileges and even toward racism. (*Heretical Empiricism* 87)

The bourgeois vex Pasolini because of their anti-altruistic dispositions that can be summarized as their “intolerance of everything but not [them]sel[ves]” (*Heretical Empiricism* xvi). Their rejection of heterogeneous social dynamics, Pasolini argues, proves their apathy for social realities other than their own economic interests. In a weekly news magazine *L'Espresso* in 1975, Pasolini critiques the politico-ideological inertia that pervades Italy's bourgeois: “They refuse to push themselves into new and dangerous zones, to accept new layers of reality” (*Heretical Empiricism* 26).

Pasolini's indignation led him to write the novel *Teorema*, which draws on his observations of bourgeois life that are transmuted into an intensified “parable,” as he declares within the story: “[Q]uesto non è un racconto realistico, è una parabro degli avvenimenti” (20; “[T]his is not a realistic story, this is a parable of events”). The novel thus takes an allegorical form, through the metaphorical depiction of the characters who are constellated to form a harsh critique of bourgeois realities. The story centers on an affluent Milanese household and the family members' individual liaisons with the “Guest,” an uncanny but an alluring young man. Hitherto interlocked within their individualistic life, all the family members irresistibly succumb to sexual relationships with the Guest, whose mysterious and quasi-inhuman charm devastates their previous identities and psychological stabilities. Portraying Italian bourgeois life essentially as the country's disgrace, the novel goes beyond a simple caricature – Pasolini diagnoses the

decadent naïveté embedded in the bourgeois family by twofold responses: castigation of their empty realities, which have been uprooted from spirituality, and even more harshly, abandonment of their humanity. Within this program, the Guest [“l’ospite”], with his primitiveness and sacredness, momentarily unites the disjointed strata between his ahistorically mysterious life force and the lifeless bourgeois desire for material success.

From the outset, *Teorema* portrays a grotesque typology of the bourgeoisie. As Pasolini disclaims verisimilitude (*Teorema* 20), critics generally consider his works anti-naturalistic (Rohdie 10); however, he invests considerable pages to depict the characters, including their life philosophy, temperament, and physique, while the members of this Milanese industrialist family can represent a stereotype of the northern Italian bourgeoisie that Pasolini rejects. One of the main characters, Paolo, who is in his late 40s or early 50s, represents the bourgeois patriarch in his self-assurance, which is displayed in his familial and corporate lives. His ownership of a factory highlights his financial success and stability, and his vigorous physique visually accentuates them: “è molto giovanile [...]” (“he is very youthful”) and “il viso è abbronzato e i capelli sono appena un po’ grisi, il corpo ancora agile e muscoloso, come appunto quello di chi ha fatto in gioventù e continua a fare, dello sport” (10; “the face is tanned and the hair is hardly gray, and the body is still nimble with muscle, as exactly that of someone who has done and continued sports since his youth”). Further, Paolo’s material affluence and pursue of wealth are apparent in his attachment to a status symbol – his Mercedes (10). Lucia, Paolo’s wife, leads a sedentary life while being deeply concerned with her own physical beauty, as she believes this is her class privilege: “il suo destino di sedentaria, il suo culto

per al bellezza [...] le spetta come in una divisione dei poteri [...]” (19; “her sedentary fate, her cult of beauty [...] belongs to her as in a division of powers”).

Their young and confident son, Pietro, bears a sign of falseness in his face: “ha nella fronte non grande [...] con gli occhi già invigliacchiti dall’ipocrisia” (12; “he has a forehead which is not big [...] and coward eyes originating from hypocrisy”). Pietro’s bourgeois upbringing is also inscribed in his physique: “È piuttosto pallido, e si direbbe che la sua buona salute sia dovuta solo al fatto che egli conduce una vita molto igienica” (37; “He is rather pale, and it could be said that his good health must be the only result of his conducting a very hygienic life”). Unlike her brother, the younger daughter, Odetta, displays an incessant dismay and uncertainty that have driven the youthfulness out of her life: “Come i bambini dei poveri, che sono subito adulti, e sanno già tutto dell vita, qualche volta anche i figli dei ricchi sono precoci – vecchi della vecchiezza della loro classe” (15; “As with the children of poverty, who become adults quickly, and who already know everything of life, sometimes also rich children are premature – old of the old age of their class”) and she lives “come una specie di malattia” (15; “as a type of malady”). The Milanese family members’ psychological degeneration is – except for Odetta – masked by their care of the body, such as the enthusiasm for sports shown by Paolo and Pietro, while obsessive self-preoccupations remain prevalent in them.

In its display of hostility against bourgeois decadence, however, *Teorema* dissociates itself from the *fin-de-siècle* temperament and from the Decadents’ aesthetics of visual and linguistic décor. In the form of a parable, the novel constantly delineates the bourgeois life as spiritual emptiness. Within these contexts, the primitive-sacred figure, the Guest, invoked by the author, without a clear narrative context, for he “visits”

the family's decadence from an inexorably ahistorical realm of the other. The Guest's arrival is suddenly, and almost intrusively, announced at the family's peaceful lunch table by a telegram that reads: "SARÒ DA VOI DOMANI" (22; "I WILL BE AT YOUR HOME TOMORROW"). The uncanny telegram is delivered by a postman who resembles "l'Angiolino" [the Little Angel] and seems to be "una specie di jolly" [a jolly type] (21). Without any utterance, the postman foreshadows the arrival of an unfathomable being, a magical force who combines the angelic (sacred) and the jolly (primitive).

The Guest's uncanny presence has devastating effects on all the family members' psyche and physique. Shortly after his arrival, as their amicable relation with the Guest grows, they become unable to resist his attractiveness. The narrative depicts each character's process of responding to his seduction and of developing a strong attachment to him. The Guest allures them by neither intellectual nor spiritual quality, but by the quasi-epiphanic materiality of his existence, without any linguistic enunciation of seduction. The etymon of *Teorema* helps articulate the semantics of the Guest: the word signifies in Greek a "spectacle, intuition, theorem [...] from *theorein*, to look at, to observe [...] from *theoros*, spectator" (Viano 200). Similar to the absence of the Idiot's linguistic capability in "Hakuchi," the Guest also discards language as a primary means of communication, while his presence itself speaks to the family as a sign that penetrates their pragmatic superficiality. The Guest communicates through means such as his gaze, posture, and love making, as if to enter the family members' realms of unconsciousness. Furthermore, in the novel's scheme as a parable, the Guest concretizes the presence of a transcendental gaze that critiques the emptiness of bourgeois discommunication and

apathy; his presence devastates the family's bourgeois value systems, assembling the members together in a quasi-incestuous communion through his own existence.

The Guest injects a metaphysical as well as metanarrative force that represents Pasolini's political exigency founded upon communist egalitarianism. By virtue of his hyperbolic unusualness, beyond ordinary humanity, the primitive-sacredness of the Guest contaminates the bourgeois ontology that has hitherto seemed to be harmlessly demarcated from harshness of social realities. Commensurate with his critique of homogenous bourgeois mentalities (*Heretical Empiricism* 87), Pasolini intends to "deterritorialize" their indifference to the others within society by the fictional intervention condensed in the Guest, whose primitive-sacredness can be deciphered as a radical rupture with the stagnant everydayness of materially oriented bourgeois life. Furthermore, the Guest destabilizes the history of the bourgeoisie that has been constructed on a modern individualism fundamentally uninterested in others' well-being. As Pia Friedrich comments on the Guest in her essay, "Teorema: The Bourgeoisie from the Inside":

Many of the attributes of the arcane feature of the Guest are derived from the religious inventory: the Revealer, Innocence, the Destroyer, the Adorable One. [...] [T]he identity of the mysterious Visitor¹² seems to be without precise philosophical implications: All the elements of the parable, not to mention the basic allegorical sense, make him rather the "mediator" of an authenticity that is primitive and instinctual spontaneity of being. The Guest is the hypothetical means to a life marked by absolute fidelity to one's own nature, prior to any moralistic social conditioning. (93)

To realize "absolute fidelity to one's own nature," the Guest plays a drastic role in recuperating human nature through sexual debauchery. Through his promiscuity, the family members are forced to enter an abyss of primitiveness and sacredness hitherto unknown to their bourgeois logic. The magnitude of this new experience then begins

their ontological awakening, although their physical and spiritual sensations prove irretrievable after the Guest's departure and leave them with only an excruciating pain.

Of all the tragic responses of the family members, the most intense lament appears in Lucia's internal soliloquy addressing the Guest: "Tu hai reimpito di un interesse puro e pazzo, una vita priva di ogni interesse. E hai districato dal loro oscuro nodo tutte le idee sbagliate di cui vive una signora borghese" (103; "You fulfilled a pure and crazy interest, a private life of every interest. And you unraveled their obscure knot of failing ideas, in which a bourgeois woman lives"). Following an intense liaison with the Guest, she emancipates her innate carnal desire that has been repressed within the artificial bourgeois values. Similarly, Paolo, Pietro, and Odetta are all bound to suffer from the reshuffling of their unconscious bourgeois identities. Above all, the homosexual experience that Paolo and Pietro undergo problematizes their bourgeois notions of normality, which are underpinned by heterosexuality. Their transgression subverts Catholic doctrine and thus emblematically connotes the men's "nonbelonging" to their previous social standards (Ward 29). Among all the family members' awakenings, Paolo's transformation suggests the most fundamental and symbolic change: "da possessore a posseduto" (80; "from [the one] who possesses to [the one] possessed).

The Guest's primitiveness and sacredness affect not only the psychology of the bourgeois; more fundamentally, as in Pasolini's ideological statement, his idiosyncratic traits challenge the continuity of bourgeois hegemony. At the midpoint of the story, the buffoonish postman once again delivers a message, this time ordering the Guest's departure. Upon receiving the message, the Guest solemnly declares his need to take his sudden leave, for the first and only time verbally: "Egli ne comunica a voce alta il

contenuto: ‘Devo partire, domani.’” (94; “He communicates in a loud, restrained voice: ‘I have to leave, tomorrow’”). As the Guest departs from the house, the story shifts its focus to the family’s devastating psycho-physical backlash. Withdrawing from this unique opportunity to grasp a *vita nova*, the family members are altogether doomed to a wretched state of decadence: Paolo loses his passion for a productive life and symbolically punishes himself by renouncing his factory to the workers; Pietro torments himself by attempting to recreate the Guest’s image in his abstract painting; Lucia wanders the city in search of younger men to feed her newly awakened sexual appetite; Odetta, suffering from catalepsy, becomes hospitalized. Comparable with Adam’s and Eve’s banishment from Eden as a result of yielding to their temptation, *Teorema* terminates the bourgeoisie’s blissful existence and castigates them with unprecedented psychological devastations. A passage cited from “Exodus” in the novel foreshadows the conclusion from its outset: “Dio fece quindi piegare il popolo per la via del deserto” (5; God therefore had led the people through the desert). In this context, the Guest serves Pasolini’s intention to purge what he despairingly calls “petit-bourgeois pseudohumanism” (*Heretical Empiricism* 27).

By transforming the Milanese bourgeoisie into the condemned Biblical subject through the primitive-sacred Guest, Pasolini exemplifies the literary device that Erich Auerbach calls “*figura*” (type). With his concrete form as an attractive young man, the Guest causes violent revelations among the family members and compels them to renounce their consciousness of their privileged social class. The Guest’s disappearance, then, signifies their ontological emptiness, incurable by any spiritual experience; what they crave is the concrete materiality of the Guest himself, rather than their genuine

reconstruction of the human self. The outcome of their bourgeois efforts is thus depicted only as their self-imposed banishment from the privileged social platform.

The most notable case of failed transmutation is narrated toward the ending of the novel. The Milan Central Station, located in the central district of the city, connotes a figurative space where all divisions of social classes diffuse and thus heterogeneous human values coexist one next to the other. Before reaching the station, Paolo has already donated his factory to the workers. At the station, Paolo gradually strips himself into complete nakedness, suggesting his desire for spiritual rebirth and the renunciation of his bourgeois self. At the moment, with his naked body, he enters in the realm of his interiority, where his solipsist bourgeois self completely disconnects him from the contemporary reality that is constructed by multiplicities of others. The story concludes with his desperate shout: “È un urlo che vuol far sapere, in questo luogo disabitato, che io esisto, oppure, che non soltanto esisto, ma che so” (200; It is a yelling that wishes it to be known, in this uninhabited place, that I exist, otherwise, that I simply do not exist, and I know). The scene reconfirms the impossibility of redemption, and therefore bourgeois self-sufficiency ultimately obtains nothing but the author’s harsh castigation. Even the conscientious servant, Emilia, fails to attain cathartic redemption. Her repressed identity, originating from her peasant background, is abruptly rewarded by a miracle, her levitation. Her quasi-sainthood, however, belongs to a transcendental realm where the contemporary logic of bourgeois economy holds no validity. In the end Emilia quietly buries herself in the soil; her gesture to disconnect herself from life symbolizes the incommensurability of altruism with the contemporary world that is dominated by egoistic materialism.

Within the context of Italy in the 1960s, especially in the light of Pasolini's ideological leftism, *Teorema* can be interpreted as a harrowing reconfiguration of Italy's social reality with its class divisions. Simultaneously, an undercurrent in the text is the author's sense of urgency to depict contemporary humanity's inauthenticity and absence of spirituality. The novel as a parable involves a subjunctive mode of fictionalization of social realities: as Sam Rohdie posits, *Teorema* is Pasolini's hypothesizing: "what if" the sacred returned to this world, what would be the consequences for the bourgeois who firmly believe in material progress only? (169). The family's contact with the Guest, then, constructs a synecdoche of the barren bourgeois psyche in a microcosm, as Pasolini vehemently criticizes them for their "bruta[l] pragmati[sm]" (*Heretical Empiricism* 29). As we have seen, he utilizes the synthesis of primitiveness and sacredness in order to castigate the bourgeoisie, not only for their politico-ideological tendency to exclude the other social classes but also, more fundamentally, for their indifference to the need to live as authentic human beings. Pasolini's "what if" experimentation involves a harsh essentialization of social classes divided into exploited workers, innocent peasants, and the exploiting bourgeoisie. Underscored by the author's ideological passion, *Teorema* portrays northern Italy's bourgeois as an unpardonable as well as incurable malady within society, where multiple arrays of class-consciousnesses and realities constantly struggle against each other. The hyperbolic *figura* of the Guest was necessitated by Pasolini's rejection of the privileged social classes and by his fictional yet uncompromising rebuke of their decadence as representatives of humanity.

Towards “Hyperbolic Otherness”: An Intervention for Solipsist Decadence in Hakuchi and Teorema

As examined above, the primitive-sacred characters employed by Sakaguchi and Pasolini are empirical antidotes to the decadence of humanity, which has been corrupted by postwar social milieus. Unlike the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents, who, despite their antagonism against positivism and consumer culture, still utilize traditional cultural codes by transmuting them into an aesthetics of artificiality, Sakaguchi and Pasolini are quite explicit in condemning their respective national histories and cultural legacies. Their synchronic blends of radical newness into history have aggravated certain readers and critics. Pasolini’s works invite, for instance, negative commentary from critics like Paolo Valesio, who regards the writer’s style as “a symptom” that lacks a process of “filter[ing] his individual talent through tradition” (167). Similarly, Sakaguchi, whose nickname was *nikutaiha sakka* [writer of flesh/body], contentiously rejected Japan’s cultural past. Yet the values of radical postwar writers such as Sakaguchi and Pasolini consist in their uncompromising rejections of the past and of a present that is masked by hypocritical discourses with which they cannot identify. To wrestle with social and cultural otherness from within, their primitive-sacred figures inject the hyperbolic stimulants necessary to reveal the social unconsciousness of hypocrisy.

As Paul Ricoeur claims in *Oneself as Another* (1992), the use of hyperbole in literary discourse allows the author to introduce “the systematic practice of excess in philosophical argumentation” (337). According to Ricoeur, hyperbole dispenses a powerful “strategy suited to producing the effect of a break with regard to the idea of exteriority in the sense of absolute otherness” (337). His conceptualization of this otherness is illuminating for its inclusion of multiplicities, or as he calls it, “the

polysemic” (317, italics Ricoeur’s). His philosophical consideration of hyperbole accounts for the linguistic impossibility to claim univocal divisions between the other and the self. He thus explains the other “within” the self as follows:

[L]et us posit that the *phenomenological* respondent to the metacategory of otherness is the variety of experiences of passivity, intertwined in multiple ways in human action. The term “otherness” is then reserved for speculative discourse, while passivity becomes *the* attestation of the otherness. (318, italics Ricoeur’s)

Ricoeur here contends that the certitude of otherness helps prevent the self from assuming a privileged position as in the Cartesian philosophy of cogito, while the presence of the other constitutes part of one’s self. Alongside this neutrality of the two, it is possible to claim the difference between the self and the other only through qualitatively-foreign experiences with their multiple centers of otherness (318).

The diversity of otherness, passivity, and the intertwined self and other altogether constitute the narrative of “Hakuchi” and *Teorema*. Izawa and the Milanese family, with their respective degenerate conditions, are able to fully assert their existence only through their idiosyncratic contact with two figures, the Idiot and the Guest. The otherness characterized by primitive-sacredness, with its multitudes of existence with neither a unified self nor an ontological center, provide heterogeneous experiences for the self. The almost vertiginous experience of sexuality brought about by the primitive-sacred invalidates the pretentiousness of the self as exemplified in egoism of Izawa and the Milanese family. Simultaneously, due to their expressed political exigencies, “Hakuchi” and *Teorema* materialize the mutual dependency of the self and the other. For Pasolini and Sakaguchi, as in Ricoeur’s formulation, a transparency of subjectivity is not only inconceivable, but also deserves total negation. Therefore, the Milanese bourgeois family

and the pseudo-intellectual Izawa are portrayed as remaining “passive” throughout the narrative. As Ricoeur also states in *Figuring the Sacred* (1995), subjectivity awaits to be “the summoned”: “[T]he self is constituted and defined by its position as respondent to propositions of meaning issuing from the symbolic network” (262). The otherness embodied by the primitive-sacred challenges an illusory cohesion and deterritorializes it into a realm of polysemic heterogeneity.

In sum, the ontology outlined here entails far more than one’s self-sufficient solipsism; rather, it constantly invites a symbolic injection of internally foreign experience, which awakens the inauthenticity of the past self. Narrative interplays between the self and the other in *Teorema* and “Hakuchi” point toward the pervading decadence in postwar milieus that lack the vitality that seeks for human authenticity. For Sakaguchi and Pasolini, postwar Japan and Italy are cultural settings that maliciously germinate self-centered arrogance. For the sake of humanity’s recuperation, the hyperbolic other empirically invokes multifarious experiences of consciousness and unconsciousness. Yet, for both writers, the decadence of humanity appears to be too extensive to eradicate by literary discourse, and therefore the need remains to force human beings to undergo actual heterogeneities of experience. Their narrative attempts, however, ironically ossify an illusory selfhood and reject dramatizing the self’s utopic interaction with the other.

¹ Auerbach further explains that “*figura*” has a function to contextualize and to authenticate historical events by means of its concrete and tangible form, as with, for example, Beatrice of *Vita Nova* who appears to Dante: “the individual earthly event is not regarded as a definitive self-sufficient reality, nor as a link in a chain of development in which single events or combinations of events perpetually give rise to new events, but viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality; so that the earthly event is prophecy or *figura* of a part of a wholly divine reality that will be enacted in the future” (72).

² The abbreviation “SAZ” refers to *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū*.

³ The observation is given by the editor, Louis K. Barnett, in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Heretical Empiricism*.

⁴ Ian Smith’s essay, “Sakaguchi Ango and the Morality of Decadence,” includes his translation of Sakaguchi’s “Darakuron.” This long quotation is derived from Smith’s translation.

⁵ With an explicit reference to Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* (1869) in the novel’s title, however, Sakaguchi’s female character offers a subversive version of human innocence. Unlike Prince Myshkin, who is characterized by altruism, self-sacrifice, and asexuality, Sakaguchi’s female character, “the Idiot,” provides the novella with a conscious subversion of the widely-known figure.

⁶ Lin refers to the chapter six, “The Body in its Sexual Being,” within Part I: The Body, in Section I in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

⁷ Within the novella, Sakaguchi employs the terms “idiocy” and “madness” almost interchangeably (for example, see page 68). However, he usually describes the woman as “the Idiot,” while her husband is called “the Madman.”

⁸ Renouncing his divinity, the Emperor Hirohito’s speech known as *Ningen sengen* was broadcast on national radio, on January 1, 1946.

⁹ In his original text in Japanese, Sakaguchi employs the term “daraku,” which literally denotes “fall” or “lapse” rather than “decadence,” as generally deployed by Anglophone translators and critics.

¹⁰ The *fin-de-siècle* Decadent heroes also tend to be highly conscious of a lack of genealogical roots. Nevertheless, their self-consciousness as unique aesthetes becomes irrelevant for Izawa in “The Idiot.” I argue that he offers a figurative incarnation of the Japanese renunciation of solid individuality, and thus the narrative implies that all socio-historical roots hamper his self-awareness.

¹¹ As noted previously, the translation is mine. The italicized part provides a figurative translation that prioritizes the semantics of the sentence.

¹² While some critics, including Pia Friedrich, occasionally use the term “the Visitor” to refer to the young man who stays at the Milanese home, I will be consistent in using “the Guest,” a translation more faithful to the original Italian term “l’ospite.”

Conclusion

The decadent literatures of Italy and Japan share the narrative elements commonly advocated by *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics in their representation of subjectivity and individuality, but interpret them differently. Traditionally, literary critics have assumed that the major works of French and British Decadence inaugurate the common denominator of the decadent movement. However, the historico-cultural conditions experienced by Italy and Japan around the turn of the century caused them to develop their own literary characteristics of decadence, which clearly diverge from the movement's matrix. Situated at the cultural periphery within the Pan-European and international context, Italy and Japan were yet to come to their summit of modernity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Hence, the literary discourse of decadence, in the cases of Italy and Japan, can be interpreted as a cultural phenomenon independent from the actuality of a given society's decline, as it can also emerge from individuals' consciousness of the particularity of the epoch and its socio-cultural condition.

Reflecting an individual's concrete experience, *fin-de-siècle* Decadent aesthetics extolled a highly subjective view of the world. Its artificial, decorative portrayal of modern life and exoticism reflected the movement's general disposition toward hyper self-consciousness, and finally, to solipsism. Unlike these general characteristics in *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, the Italian and Japanese works examined in this project delineate the self as a tentative phase heavily conditioned by the social and cultural environments

in which the protagonists situate themselves. Their mental or physical degeneration reflects their psychological disquietudes about the individuals' contemporary milieus. Without a permanent authenticity, their state of decadence may be likened to a period of convalescence, from which their existence is to be reconstructed. In this conjunction, the state of decadence equals a type of liminality within normativity momentarily collapses and aggregates with non-quotidian experience, and the protagonist's decadence is narrated in a subjunctive, "as-if" mode of narrative play. The non-quotidian experience takes forms of self-indulgence that subvert modern norms and standards, such as adultery, debauchery, squandering of resources, attempted suicide, unlikely imagining, and so forth.

These subversive activities are a powerful narrative device through which the authors' critique of modernity is metaphorically or symbolically forged. The protagonists' anti-moralistic as well as anti-modern behaviors are a manifest form of their (and the authors') desires to escape the stifling conditions of modernity that dictate unwelcome expectations and life standards. As in Paul Bourget's theory of decadence, the collective social structure stipulates the social constituents' conformity to formalized components, including such social units as nation, social class, family, gender, etc. The official governance of modern society entails subjection to these totalized superstructures of society. For the sake of a healthy social organism, individualities must be suppressed and their energies must be governed towards effective productivity.

Almost all the Modernist stories of decadence subvert normativity; simultaneously, mainstream narratives of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence tend to conclude their plots with an allegorical castigation of the deviant protagonists, through, for example, banishment from society, physical death, or emotional devastation. As prominent

examples, Huysmans's *A Rebours* and Wilde's *Salome* underscore the protagonists' solipsistic egoism throughout, and the stories conclude with the punishment of their excessive desires. These cases demarcate the realm of the ego-maniac decadents, and preserve it from the vulgarity of the modern bourgeois-dominated reality. Unlike this utopic self-seclusion made possible by narrative, the Italian and Japanese works in this study problematize the collective social conditions of the epoch as they stifle the multiple spectrums of the individuals' spiritual as well as aesthetic ideals. Their decadence reflects the psychological crisis they feel about modernity and its *Zeitgeist*. The struggles and dilemmas lying between their ideals and realities are resources for their aesthetics of decadence, within which they construct an ephemeral microcosm of pleasure. Their "artificial paradise" – in Baudelaire's sense, designed to enhance individuality – is therefore a springboard from which the protagonists reconstruct their identities and confront their responsibilities within society.

Exploring the representation of dilemmas and pleasures, this project has focused on issues of subjectivities. Because they are situated outside the totalitarian wholeness of organicism, the decadents are bound to identify themselves as "useless" in light of modern utilitarian principles. Their subjectivities appear as forms of self-abasement and deviance against social normativity, through subsequently their decadence takes on an itinerary of ascendance in a metaphorical sense.

Among the Italian exponents of *Il Decadentismo*, the anti-positivists D'Annunzio, Pascoli, and Pasolini (an artistic offspring of Pascoli) injected linguistic novelty into the country's literary discourse. Their narratives and poetry radically modified the notion of decadence, which was assumed by the *fin-de-siècle* movement of Decadence to be an

ontologically static condition. Influenced by the Italian models, much of modern Japanese decadent literature – especially works that were written in politically and culturally turbulent historical moments – deploys imageries of decadence to delineate the fluidity of human existence and the self. Their psychological exigency to forge subjectivity in literary discourse borrows the artistic resources of the cultural other, the West.

In Europe, *fin-de-siècle* Decadence was an aesthetic movement that addressed the psychological restlessness that permeated the new social and material conditions. In response to the objective as well as positivistic configuration and regulation of human beings, Decadence articulated the excess of human disquietudes through a conscious aestheticization. Subjectivity was a presupposed point of departure to dramatize the degeneration of morality and the aesthetic sublimation of negative forces. Nevertheless, modern Japanese discourses of decadence, except for the so-called Taishō Decadence which imitated the aesthetics of *fin-de-siècle* European Decadence, did not appropriate an identical semantics of the concept, due largely to the absence of lucid ways to enunciate the self and subjectivity in literary discourse. Accordingly, as observed in Italian Decadentism, modern Japanese literature predicates “a vector” of decadence not as a quiescent ontological finality, but as an interstitial state of mind. In the context of modernity, dramatization of the self is inextricably correlated with Japan’s everlasting identity crisis, internalized in relation to the transcendental other, the West. Japan’s collective psychological predicaments repeatedly flourish in its literature, although its proposed solution of pleasure-seeking succeeds only in reinscribing the ephemerality of self-indulgence.

Works Cited

Primary texts

- D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Contemplazione della Morte*. Rome: Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, 1942.
- . *L'Innocente* [The Victim]. Trans. Georgina Harding. Sawtry: Dedalus/Hippocrene, 1991.
- . *Il Piacere* [The Child of Pleasure]. 1889. Milan: Mondadori, 1995.
- . *Il Trionfo della Morte* [The Triumph of Death]. 1894. Milan: Mondadori, 1995.
- . *The Child of Pleasure*. Trans. Georgina Harding and Arthur Symons. London: William Heinemann, 1898.
- . *The Triumph of Death*. Trans. Georgina Harding. London: Dedalus, 1990.
- Huysmans, Joris-Karl. *Against Nature*. Trans. Margaret Mauldon. Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Iwano, Hōmei. *Tandeki* [The Indulgence]. 1909. Tokyo: Nihon Kindai Bungakkan, 1968.
- Mishima, Yukio. *Confessions of A Mask*. Trans. Meredith Weatherby. Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1958.
- . "Erochishizumu" [book review of Bataille's *Eroticism*). *Mishima Yukio hyōron zenshū* [The Collected Works of Mishima Yukio]. 4 Vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989, 1: 505-508.
- . *Haru no yuki* [Spring Snow]. 1967. Tokyo: Shinchō, 1969.

- . “‘Hōjō no Umi’ nitusite” [On “The Sea of Fertility”]. *Mishima Yukio hyōron zenshū* [The Collected Works of Mishima Yukio]. 4 Vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989, 2: 498-500.
- . *Spring Snow*. Trans. Michael Gallagher. New York: Vintage, 1991.
- . *Taiyō to tetsu*. [Sun and Steel]. 1968. New York: Chūōkōron, 1987.
- . *Tennin gosui* [The Decay of the Angel]. 1970. Tokyo: Shinchō, 2001.
- . “Tōi koe, tōi heya: Americateki Dekadansu,” *Mishima Yukio hyōron zenshū* [The Collected Works of Mishima Yukio]. 4 Vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989, 1: 484-485.
- Morita, Sohei. *Baien* [Dull Smoke]. 1909. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1971.
- Nagai, Kafu. *Furansu monogatari* [French Stories]. 1910. Tokyo: Shinchō, 1989.
- . “Hanabi” [Fireworks]. 1919. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Criticism]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003. 286-297.
- . *Reishō* [Sneers]. 1910. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1951.
- Pascoli, Giovanni. “Il Ceppo.” *Myricae*. 1903. Milan: Rizzoli, 1994. 106-107.
- . *Il Fanciullino* [The Little Child]. 1897. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1996.
- . “La Cavalla Storna.” *Opere* I. 1903. Milan: Rizzoli, 1970. 498-501.
- . “The Little Child.” *The Eternal Child: The Poetry and Poetics of Giovanni Pascoli*. Trans. Rosamaria LaValva. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999. 3-77.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Teorema*. 1968. Milan: Garzanti, 1968.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Confessions*. Trans. J. M. Cohen. New York: Penguin, 1970.

- Sakaguchi, Ango. "Darakuron." [On Decadence]. 1946. *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* [The Collected Works of Sakaguchi Ango]. 17 Vols. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 52-60.
- . "Hakuchi" [The Idiot]. 1946. *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* [The Collected Works of Sakaguchi Ango]. (SAZ). 17 Vols. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 61-85.
- Ueda, Bin. *Kaichō'on* ["Sounds of Ocean Tide"]. Tokyo: Shinchō, 1997.
- . *Ueda Bin Shū* ["The Collected Works of Ueda Bin"]. 1 Vol. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1966.
- . "Uzumaki." 1910. *Ueda Bin shū*. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1966. 342-380.
- Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying." 1889. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's*. Ed. Karl Beckson. New York: Vintage, 1966. 167-194.
- . *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act*. New York: Dover, 1967.
- . *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London, UK: Penguin Classics, 2003.

Secondary texts

- Abe, Jirō. "Mizukara shirazaru shizenshugisha" [Naturalists without Self-Knowledge]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Meiji and Taishō]. Ed. Chiba Shunji, et al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003. 141-145.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The End of the Poem*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Akagi, Kōhei. "Yūtōbungaku no bokumetsu" [Eradication of Decadent Literature]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Meiji and Taishō]. Ed. Chiba Shunji, et al.

- Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003. 236-248.
- Akasaka, Norio. *Ijinron Josetsu* [An Introduction to Foreign Men]. Tokyo: Sunakoya, 1985.
- Andreoli, Annamaria, ed. *The Vittoriale degli Italiani*. Trans. Shanti Evans. Milan: Skira, 2004.
- Anzoino, Tommaso. *Pasolini*. Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1971.
- Ara, Masahito, et al. *Taishō no bungaku* [Literature of Taishō]. Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1981.
- Arima, Tatsuō. *The Failure of Freedom: A Portrait of Modern Japanese Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969.
- Asada, Akira. *Kozo to Chikara* [Structures and Powers]. Tokyo: Keiso, 1983.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. New York: Meridian, 1959.
- Avincola, Sandra. *Il Decadentismo: La Coscienza della Crisi*. Rome: Nuova Òmicron, 1997.
- Bakhtin, M. M. "Discourse in the Novel." 1935. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. 261-422.
- Barilli, Renato. "La scoperta del piacere." *D'Annunzio in Prosa*. Milan: Mursia, 1993. 40-63.
- Barnett, Louis K. "A Preface to Heretical Empiricism." *Heretical Empiricism*. Ed. Louis K. Barnett. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. i-xii.
- Bassnett, Susan. "A Passion for Dismemberment: Gabriele D'Annunzio's Portrayals of Women." *Romancing Decay*. Ed. Michael St. John. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. 128-140.

- Bataille, Georges. *Erotism*. Trans. Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights, 1986.
- . *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1988.
- . "The Notion of Expenditure." *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*. Trans. Alan Stoekl. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1985. 116-129.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *Artificial Paradise: On Hashish and Wine as Means of Expanding Individuality*. Trans. Ellen Fox. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- . *Flowers of Evil*. Trans. Keith Waldrop. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2006.
- Beckson, Karl. "Introduction." *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*. Ed. Karl Beckson. New York: Vintage, 1966. xvii-xl.
- Bernheimer, Charles. *Decadent Subjects*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002.
- Binni, Walter. "Interventi sulla relazione di Mario Praz." *L'Arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio Vezezia-Gardone Riviera-Pescara, 7-13 ottobre 1963*. Ed. Emilio Mariano. Milan: Mondadori, 1968. 418-420.
- . *La Poetica del Decadentismo*. 1936. Milan: Sansoni, 1996.
- Birken, Lawrence. "Freud's 'Economic Hypothesis': From Homo Oeconomicus to Homo Sexualis." *American Imago* 56.4 (1999): 311-330.
- Borgese, Giuseppe Antonio. *Gabriele D'Annunzio*. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1983.
- Brinkley, Edward S. "Homosexuality as (Anti)Illness: Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and Gabriele D'Annunzio's Il Piacere." *Studies in 20th Century Literature* 22.1 (1998): 61-82.
- Brooks, Linda Marie, ed. *Alternative Identities: The Self in Literature, History, Theory*.

- New York: Garland, 1995.
- Bruni, Luigino and Pier Luigi Porta. "Economia Civile and Pubblica Felicità in the Italian Enlightenment." *History of Political Economy*. Annual Supplement to Vol. 35 (2003): 361-385.
- Bruno, Francesco. *Il Decadentismo in Italia e in Europa*. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998.
- Bürger, Peter. *The Decline of Modernism*. Trans. Nicholas Walker. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992.
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
- Carter, Robert E. "Introduction to Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku." *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1996. 1-6.
- Cerisola, Pier Luigi. "Introduzione: l'estetica di Giovanni Pascoli." *Giovanni Pascoli: saggi di critica e di estetica*. Ed. Pier Luigi Cerisola. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1980. 7-37.
- Cesare, Tony. "Pasolini's Teorem." *Film Criticism* 14.1 (1989): 22-25.
- Chikamatsu, Monzaemon. "The Love Suicides at Amijima." 1723. *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*. Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Columbia UP, 1961. 387-425.
- . "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki." 1703. *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*. Trans. Donald Keene. New York: Columbia UP, 1961. 39-56.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Newly Born Woman." *The Hélène Cixous Reader*. Ed. Susan Sellers. New York: Routledge, 1994. 35-45.
- Constable, Liz, ed. *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999.

- Contini, Gianfranco. *La Letteratura italiana:otto-novecento*. Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1992.
- Croce, Benedetto. *Memorie della mia vita*. Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, 1966.
- Crowell, Steven. "Rationalism in History." *Diacritics* 33.1 (2003): 3-22.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Literary Competence." *Reader-response Criticism*. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980. 101-117.
- Dale, Peter N. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- De Certeau, Michael. *Heterologies: Discourse of the Other*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.
- Dellamora, Richard. "Productive Decadence: 'The Queer Comradeship of Outlawed Thought.'" *New Literary History* 35.4 (2004): 529-546.
- Del Principe, David. *Rebellion, Death, and Aesthetics in Italy: The Demons of Scapigliatura*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1996.
- De-Palma, Daniela. "Vita e mito in D'Annunzio e Mishima." *Il Veltro*. 32.5-6 (1988): 549-559.
- DeQuincey, Thomas. *Confessions of An Opium-Eater*. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Wills. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.
- Durand, Ferdinando. *Il Motivi Profondi della Poesia Pascoliana*. Florence: Casa

- Editrice G. D'Anna, 1969.
- Eakin, Paul John. "Foreword." *On Autobiography*. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989. vii-xxviii.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Symbolism, The Sacred, and The Arts*. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. New York: Crossroad, 1985.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Views and Reviews: A Selection of Uncollected Articles, 1884-1932*. London: D. Harmsworth, 1932.
- Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. "Beyond 'The Subject': Individuality in the Discursive Condition." *New Literary History* 31.3 (2000): 405-419.
- Fowler, Edward. *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishosetsu in Early Twentieth-century Japanese Fiction*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- . *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Trans. Robert Hurley, et al. New York: The New Press, 1997.
- . *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Trans. Colin Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- Friedrich, Pia. *Pier Paolo Pasolini*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Fukuzawa, Yukichi. *Gakumon no susume* [Encouragement of Learning]. 1872-1876. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2005.
- Gautier, Theodor. "Preface to The Flowers of Evil." *Flowers of Evil*. Trans. Keith Waldrop. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2006. 17-18.
- Genette, Gérard. *Figures of Literary Discourse*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York:

- Columbia UP, 1982.
- Genep, Arnold Van. *The Rites of Passage*. 1909. Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960.
- Gentile, Emilio. "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism." Trans. Lawrence Rainey. *Modernism/Modernity* 1.3 (1994): 55-87.
- Gerbert, Elaine. "Space and Aesthetic Imagination in Some Taishō Writings." *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy 1900-1930*. Ed. Sharon A. Minichello. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1998. 70-90.
- Giles, Steve, ed. *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*. London, UK: Routledge, 1993.
- Gilman, Richard. *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet*. New York: Farrar, 1975.
- Gioanola, Elio. *Introduzione al Novecento : simbolismo, decadentismo, avanguardia*. Milan: Colonna, 1997.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust: part one and part two*. Trans. Carl R. Mueller. Hanover: Smith and Kraus, 2004.
- Gordon, Robert S. C. *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996.
- Haniya, Yutaka. *Haniya Yutaka shisōronshū*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004.
- Harada, Tatsushi. "Thinking from Kafū Nagai: Descending and Construction of the People." 8 Nov. 2007
<<http://www.andrew.ac.jp/sociology/teachers/harada/profile/sociology1/kafu>>.
- Harootunian, Harry D. *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974.
- . *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*.

- Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000.
- Hashikawa, Bunzō. *Nihon Romanha hihan josetsu* [Prolegomena to the Critique of the Japan Romantic School]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998.
- Husserl, Edmund. *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*. Ed. Donn Welton. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999.
- Hutchinson, Rachael. "Occidentalism and Critique of Meiji: the West in the Returnee Stories of Nagai Kafū." *Japan Forum* 13.2 (2001): 195-213.
- Isoda, Kōichi. *Nagai Kafū*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980.
- Itō, Sei. *Nihon bundanishi: taitōha no hitotachi* [A History of Japanese Literary Circles: People of the Decadent Schools]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996.
- Jewell, Keala Jane. *The Poiesis of History: Experimenting with Genre in Postwar Italy*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
- Kamei, Hideo. *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*. Trans. Michael Bourdaghs, et al. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2002.
- . "Un-Collated History." 15 Jun. 2006
 <<http://homepage2.nifty.com/ksekirei/symposium/western/columbia-e.html>>.
- Kang, Sang-jung. *Nashonarizumu* [Nationalism]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2001.
- Karaki, Junzō. *Muyōsha no keifu* [A Genealogy of Useless Men]. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1964.
- . *Shi to Dekadansu* [Poetry and Decadence]. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1952.
- Karatani, Kōjin. *Nihon kingdai bungaku no kigen* [The Origin of Modern Japanese Literature]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1988.

Katagami, Tengen. *Bungei kyōiku ron* [On Literary Education]. Tokyo: U of Tamagawa P, 1973.

---. “Mikaiketsu no bungaku” [Literature without Solutions]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Meiji and Taishō]. Ed. Chiba Shunji, et al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003. 125-129.

Kawamoto, Saburō. *Taishō gen'ei* [Illusory Images of Taishō]. Tokyo: Shinchō, 1990.

Kinoshita, Naoe. *Zange* [The Repentance]. 1906. Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1991.

Kitamura, Tōkoku. “Jinsei ni aiwataru to wa nan no iizo” [What Does It Mean to Challenge Life?]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Shōwa]. Ed. Chiba Shunji et al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2004. 48-61.

Kobayashi, Hideo. *Shishōsetsu ron* [On the I-Novel]. *Kobayashi Hideo zenshū* [The Collected Works of Kobayashi Hideo]. 14 vols. Tokyo: Shinchō, 2001, 3: 378-408.

Komori, Yōichi. *Yuragi no Nihon Bungaku* [Influx of Japanese Literature]. Tokyo: NHK Books, 1998.

Komori, Yōichi, et al. *Towareru reikishi to shutai* [Interrogated History and Subjectivity]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003.

Kykkōtēs, Hierotheos. *English-Greek and Greek-English Dictionary*. London: Humphries, 1942.

La Valva, Rosa Maria. *The Eternal Child: The Poetry and Poetics of Giovanni Pascoli*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999.

- Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Le Rider, Jacques. *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in fin-de-siècle Vienna*. Trans. Rosemary Morris. New York: Continuum, 1993.
- Lesjak, Carolyn. "Utopia, Use, and the Everyday: Oscar Wilde and a New Economy of Pleasure." *ELH* 67.1 (2000): 179-204.
- Lévi-Bruhl, Lucien. *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1975.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Alterity and Transcendence*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.
- . *Humanism of the Other*. Trans. Nidra Poller. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966.
- Lin, Shukumi. "Moraru to yobu atarashii gainen no sōzō: 'Hakuchi' to Ango no sengo" [Creation of the New Notion Named the Moral]. *Ekkyōsuru Ango* [Deterritorializing Ango]. Ed. Sakaguchi Ango kenkyūkai. Tokyo: Yumani, 2002. 89-107.
- Lombroso, Cesare. *Criminal Man*. Trans. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.
- Long, Margherita. "Tanizaki and the Enjoyment of Japanese Culturalism." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10:2 (2002): 431-469.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *Libidinal Economy*. Trans. Iain Hamilton Grant. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993.
- Mann, Thomas. *Death in Venice and Other Stories*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Viking, 1998.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*.

1929. Trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. San Diego: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, 1985.

Marinetti, F. T. "Contro Vienna e contro Berlino," *L'Italia futurista*. 25 July, 1916.

Marra, Michael. *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader*. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P,

1999.

Maruyama, Masao. *Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Fukuzawa

Yukichi]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2001.

Matsumoto, Hajime. *Kafū gokuraku* [The Heavenly Kafū]. Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1998.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Child's Relations with Others." *The Primacy of*

Perception. Trans. William Cobb, et al. Evanston: Northwestern UP,

1964. 96-155.

---. "The Phenomenology of Perception." 1945. *Basic Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin.

New York: Routledge, 2004.

Militello, Joseph F. "Cosmopolitanism and Decadence in the Westernized City: Achebe,

Ngugi, and Mishima." *POMPA* 2001: 51-58.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. 1859. New York: Norton, 1975.

Miller, Henry. *Reflections on the Death of Mishima*. Santa Barbara: Capra P, 1972.

Miller, J. Scott. *Adaptations of Western Literature in Meiji Japan*. New York: Palgrave,

2001.

Minichiello, Sharon A, ed. *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and*

Democracy 1900-1930. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1998.

Miyamoto, Yuriko. "1946nen no bundan" ["Literary Circles of the Year 1946"]. 5 Apr.

2006. <http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000311/files/2977_10071.html>.
- Moroni, Mario. *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004.
- Murasaki, Shikibu. *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji]. Trans. Setouchi Jakuchō. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007.
- Nagashima, Yōichi, ed. *Return to Japan: From "Pilgrimage" to the West*. Aarhus: Aarhus UP, 2001.
- Nakamura, Mitsuo and Mishima Yukio. *Taidan: Ningen to Bungaku* [A Dialogue: Man and Literature]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2003.
- Nakao, Seigo. *Regendered Artistry: Tanizaki Junichiro and the Tradition of Decadence*. Diss. New York U, 1992.
- Naruse, Masakatsu. "Taishō bungaku no mondaiten" [Problems in the Taishō Literature]. *Taisho no Bungaku*. Ed. Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryō Kankōkai. Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1988.
- Nathan, John. *Mishima: A Biography*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000.
- Natsume, Soseki. "Sangatsu mikkano nikki" [A Diary Entry, March 6]. Ed. Itō, Sei. *Nihon Bundanshi: Taitōha no hitotachi* [A History of Japanese Literary Circles: People of the Decadent Schools]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996. 130.
- . *Sorekara*. Tokyo: Shinchō, 2007.
- Nibuya, Takashi. "Mishima to riarisumu" [Mishima and Realism]. *Eureka* 11 (2000): 96-108.
- Nicholls, Peter. *Modernisms*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Birth of Tragedy." *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of*

- Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1967. 15-144.
- . "The Case of Wagner." 1888. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1967. 153-192.
- . "Thus Spake Zarathustra." 1885. Trans. Thomas Common. *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. New York: Modern Library, 1954. 21-368.
- Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryō Kankōkai, ed. *Taishō no bungaku* [Literature of the Taishō]. Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1981.
- Nishida, Kitarō. *Zen no kenkyū* [An Inquiry into the Good]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003.
- Noda, Utarō. *Nihon Tanbiha bungaku no tanjō* ["The Birth of the Japan Aesthetic School]. Tokyo: Kawade, 1975.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993.
- North, Julian. "Defining Decadence in Nineteenth-century French and British Criticism." *Romancing Decay*. Ed. Michael St. John. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. 83-94.
- Oka, Yoshitake. "Nichiro sensō-go niokeru atarashii sedai no seichō" [The Development of the New Era after the Russo-Japan War]. *Shisō* 512 (1967):137-40.
- Ōoka, Makoto. "Sōseki no shōsetsu ni miru ren'ai" [Love Seen in Sōseki's Novels], *Gunzō Nihon no sakka* Ser.1. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1991. 312-318.
- Origuchi, Shinobu. *Kodai kenkyū*. [Studies on The Ancient]. Vol. 3. Tokyo: Chūkō, 2002.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of The Masses*. 1929. Trans. Anthony Kerrigan. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1995.
- Ōshima, Hitoshi. "Kobayashi Hideo, Apologist for the 'Savage Mind.'" *Comparative*

- Literature Studies* 41.4 (2004): 509-519.
- Pascoli, Giovanni. *Giovanni Pascoli: Saggi di Critica e di Estetica*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1980.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Heretical Empiricism*. Trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.
- . *Lutheran Letters*. Trans. Stuart Hood. Manchester: Carcanet New P, 1983.
- . *The Ragazzi*. Trans. Emile Capouya. New York: Grove P, 1968.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Pazzaglia, Mario. *Pascoli*. Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002.
- Pireddu, Nicoletta. "'Il divino pregio del dono': Andrea Sperelli's Economy of Pleasures." *Annali d'Italianistica* 15 (1997): 175-201.
- Pollack, David. "Arayurumono e no hihyō" [Criticism on the All]. *Eureka* 11 (2000): 146-163.
- . *Reading Against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
- Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. 1933. Birkenhead: The Fontana Library, 1962.
- Riall, Lucy. *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Figuring the Sacred*. Trans. David Pellauer. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1955.
- . *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Rimer, J. Thomas, ed. *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals During the Interwar Years*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.

- Robbins, Ruth. *Subjectivity*. New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Roberts, David D. "Suffocation and Vocation: History, Anti-History, and the Self,"
Alternative Identities: The Self in Literature, History, Theory. Ed. Linda Marie Brooks. New York: Garland, 1995. 109-138.
- Roda, Vittorio. *La strategia della totalità : saggio su Gabriele D'Annunzio*. Bologna: M. Boni, 1978.
- Rodenbach, Georges. *Bruges-la-morte*. Paisley, Scotland: Wilfion Books, 1986.
- Rohdie, Sam. *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.
- Rubin, Jay. *Injurious to Public Morals*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1984.
- Rumble, Patrick and Bart Testa. *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*.
 Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994.
- Ryū, Kenki. *Kichōsha Kafū* [The Returnee Kafū]. Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1993.
- Sadoya, Shigenobu. *Mishima ni okeru seiyō* [The West in Mishima]. Tokyo:
 Tokyōshoseki, 1981.
- Saeki, Junko. "Shinwa no hōkai" [The Collaption of the Myth]. *Iro to ai no hikakubunkashi* [A Comparative Cultural History of Erotic Love and Romantic Love]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1998.
- Sakaguchi, Ango. "Gakudō shōron" [A Brief Essay on (Ozaki) Gakudō]. *Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū* [The Collected Works of Sakaguchi Ango]. (SAZ). 17 Vols.
 Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 3-10.
- . "Tennō shōron" [A Brief Essay on the Emperor]. (SAZ). 17 Vols. *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* [The Collected Woks of Sakaguchi Ango]. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 86-87.

- . "Yokubō ni tsuite" [On Desire]. (SAZ). 17 Vols. *Sakaguchi Ango Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* [The Collected Works of Sakaguchi Ango]. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 139-144.
- . "Zoku darakuron" [A Sequence to "On Decadence"]. (SAZ). 17 Vols. *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū*. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1999, 4: 270-278.
- Sakai, Naoki. *Translation and Subjectivity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- Salinari, Carlo. *Miti e coscienza del Decadentismo italiano*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960.
- Santato, Guido. *Pier Paolo Pasolini: L'Opera*. Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1980.
- Sasaki, Hideaki. "The Couple Who Imitated The Triumph of Death in Real Life – A Marriage of Decadent Literature and Zen." *The Force of Vision: Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, 1995: 47-53.
- Schiaffini, Alfredo. "Giovanni Pascoli: disintegratore della forma poetica tradizionale" [Giovanni Pascoli: disintegrator of the traditional poetics]. *Giovanni Pascoli*. Ed. Calogero Colicchi. Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1973. 198-204.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1969.
- Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-De-Siècle Viena*. New York: Knopf, 1980.
- Scott-Stokes, Henry. *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*. Rev. New York: Noonday P, 1995.
- Seidensticker, Edward. *Kafū the Scribbler*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1965.
- Shibusawa, Tatsuhiko. *Mishima Yukio oboegaki* [The Memoires of Mishima Yukio]. Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1986.

- Shibusawa, Tatsuhiko, ed. *Chi to bara korekushon*. [The Collection of Blood and Roses] Vol 1. Tokyo: Shichō, 2005.
- Shōji, Hajime. *Sakaguchi Ango*. Tokyo: Chūsekisha, 2004.
- Siciliano, Enzo. *Pasolini*. Trans. John Shepley. New York: Random House, 1982.
- Siti, Walter. Walter Siti, "Pasolini's 'Second Victory'." *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed. Patrick Allen Rumble and Bart Testa. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994. 56-77.
- Smile, Samuel. *Self-Help*. 1859. Chicago: Belford, 1881.
- Smith, Ian. "Sakaguchi Ango and the Morality of Decadence." 5 Apr. 2006.
<<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/Smith/SAKAGUCHI.html>>.
- Snyder, Stephen. *Fictions of Desire: Narrative Form in the Novels of Nagai Kafu*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 2000.
- Somigli, Luca and Mario Moroni. Eds. *Italian Modernism*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004.
- Spackman, Barbara. *Decadent Genealogies: the Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Spariosu, Mihai I. *The Wreath of Wild Olive*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997.
- Spender, Stephen. *The Struggle of the Modern*. London: Hamilton, 1963.
- Sugawara, no Takasue no Musume. *Hamamatsu chūnagon monogatari* [The Tale of Hamamatsu Counselor]. Trans. Ikeda Toshio. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2001.
- Sugiura, Minpei. "Dekadansu bungakuto 'ie' no mondai" [Problems of Decadent Literature and Patriarchy]. *Sakkaron* [On Writers]. Tokyo: Kusakisha, 1952. 200-230.

- Suzuki, Sadami. "Nihonkingendai ni okeru kojinchugi" [Individualism in Modern and Contemporary Japan]. *Kojin no tankyū*. [In Search of An Individual]. Ed. Hayato Kawai. Tokyo: NHK, 2003. 161-196.
- Symons, Arthur. "The Decadent Movement in Literature." 1893. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's*. Ed. Karl Beckson. New York: Vintage, 1966. 134-151.
- Takahashi, Eiri. "Hōjō no umi o yomu to iu monogatari" [The Tale of Reading *The Sea of Fertility*]. *Eureka* 11 (2000): 134-145.
- Takayama, Chogyū. "Biteki seikatsu o ronzu" [Theorizing Aesthetic Life]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Meiji/Taishōhen* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Criticism]. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2003. 75-90.
- Takeda, Taijun. "Metsubō ni tsuite." *Kindai bungaku hyōronsen: Shōwahan* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Shōwa]. Ed. Chiba Shunji, et al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2004. 386-399.
- Takemura, Tamio. *Taishō bunka teikoku no yūtopia* [The Utopia of the Taisho Cultural Empire]. Tokyo: Sangensha, 2004.
- Tanabe, Seiko. *Genji Monogatari no otokotachi*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1993.
- Tanaka, Miyoko, ed. *Mishima Yukio*. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1980.
- Tashiro, Hayato. "Geijutsu e no shōnin: *Baien* dōjidaihyō o chūshin ni." [Witness to Art: Contemporary Criticisms on *Baien*]. *Kenkyūronshū: Research Journal of Graduate Students of Letters*. Sapporo: Hokkaido UP. n.d. 1-14.
- Thornton, R.K.R. *The Decadent Dilemma*. London: Edward Arnold, 1983.
- Truglio, Maria. *Beyond the Family Romance: The Legend of Pascoli*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007.

- Tsutsui, Yasutaka. "Danunchio ni muchū." *Danunchio ni muchū* ["Infatuated with D'Annunzio"]. Tokyo: Chuōkōron, 1994. 11-46.
- Turner, Victor. *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience*. Tucson, AZ: U of Arizona P, 1985.
- Valesio, Paolo. *Gabriele D'Annunzio: the Dark Flame*. Trans. Marilyn Migiel. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffé. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966.
- Viano, Maurizio Sanzio. *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
- Walker, Janet. *The Japanese Novel of the Meiji Period and the Ideal of Individualism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.
- Ward, David. *A Poetics of Resistance: Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini*. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1995.
- Washburn, Dennis C. *The Dilemma of the Modern in Japanese Fiction*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.
- Watsuji, Tetsurō. *Watsuji Tetsurō no rinrigaku* [Watsuji Tetsurō's Ethics]. Trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter. Albany: State U of New York P, 1996.
- Weir, David. *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*. 1996. Amherst, MA: U of Massachusetts P, 1995.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana, 1988.
- . *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

- Wilson, Michiko N. "Three Portraits of Women in Mishima's Novels." *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 14.2 (1979): 157-181.
- Yano, Mineto. "Ueda Bin Sensei" ["Teacher Ueda Bin"]. *Ueda Bin shū*. Tokyo: Chikuma, 1966. 383-390.
- Yasuda, Yojūrō. "Bunmeikaika no ronri no shūen ni tsuite" [On the End of the Logic of the Meiji Restoration]. *Nihon kindai bungaku hyōronsen: shōwahan* [The Collected Works of Modern Japanese Literary Criticism: Shōwa]. Ed. Shunji Chiba, et al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2004. 247-260.
- . *Nihon romanha no jidai* [The Age of The Japan Romantic School]. Tokyo: Shingakusha, 1999.
- . *Sakka no jiden: Yasuda Yojūrō* [An Autobiography by the Writer]. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 2000.
- Yōrō, Takeshi. *Shintai no bungakushi* [Literary History of Body]. Tokyo: Shincho, 1997.
- Yoshida, Seiichi. *Nagai Kafū*. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1992.

Curriculum Vitae

Ikuho Amano

Education

- Ph.D., Comparative Literature, The Pennsylvania State University, December 2007.
- M.A., Comparative Literature, The University of Georgia, August 2000.
- B.A., Journalism, The University of Georgia, August 1997.

Publications

- Book review of Kamei Hideo's *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature.* *Literary Research/Recherche littéraire* 21.41-42 (2004): 331-334.
- "Refiguring the Frontier Mind of Mitsuko Coudenrove-Kalergi." In CD-ROM Proceedings of the Seventh International ISSEI (The International Society for the Study of European Ideas) Conference. University of Bergen, Norway, October, 2000.

Teaching Experience, Penn State

- Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced Japanese (JAPNS 001, 002, 003, 110, 402), 2001-2007.
- Japanese Literature and Culture (JAPNS 120), 2005, 2006.
- Independent Study (JAPNS 496), Japanese Literature and Culture, 2006.
- Elementary Italian (IT 001), 2006.
- Introduction to Asian Literatures (CMLIT 004), 2003, 2004.

Conference Presentations

- "Unbearable Graveness of Being Rational: Ahistorical Flesh of the Primitive in Sakaguchi Ango's *The Idiot*." American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, March 2006.
- "Expropriation of the Invisible: D'Annunzio's Venetian Aquascape in Akutagawa's *Water of Ōkawa River*." American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, March 2005.

Grants

- Dissertation Support Grant, Research and Graduate Studies Office, College of the Liberal Arts, The Pennsylvania State University, \$5,000, Fall 2005.
- Travel Grants, Research and Graduate Studies Office, College of the Liberal Arts, The Pennsylvania State University, \$350 each, 2001, 2004, 2006.