IDEOGRAMS IN MODERN PERSPECTIVE:
THE RECONFIGURATION OF TEXTUAL SPACE IN
ANGLO-AMERICAN AND JAPANESE MODERNISMS

A Dissertation in
Comparative Literature

by

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ABSTRACT

Existing somewhere between images and material objects, ideograms—written signs—embody ideas, not sounds as in an alphabet. In the early 20th century, the semi-pictographic figures of Chinese ideographs and their synthetic forms of composition attracted the attention of more than a few Modernist poets and writers. This study concerns three Modernist writers, two Anglo-American and one Japanese, Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947), and argues that their ideogrammic theories of composition transformed Modernist conceptions of textual space. In particular, this research examines their tropes of textual organicism, which I define as a sense of textual entities as autonomous, equating an artwork to an organism and seeking the creation of holistic harmony and totality within the artwork itself. The close alliance between the figures of a body and a text in these writers’ works means that their theories of composition can be contextualized in both Eastern and Western literary traditions: the Japanese organic conception of language as buntai (literally, sentence + body) and the Western discourses of social and aesthetic organicism. The transforming figures of textual organicism demonstrate a paradigmatic shift of spatio-temporal perception from Romanticism to Modernism, driven by Eastern and Western textual interactions.

Three distinct metaphors represent these writers’ arts of ideogrammic composition: Fenollosa’s line system, Pound’s machine organum, and Yokomitsu’s view of the nationalist/capitalist mechanism as chimerical monstrosity. These organicist metaphors exhibit an ingrained urge for totality and, therefore, inevitably locate the intersection of
their aesthetic search for ideogrammic totality in relation to particular political discourses (such as Hegelian cosmopolitanism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese Nationalism). While foregrounding the aesthetic and political tensions in the Modernists’ efforts to reorganize textual, conceptual, and social space, this study highlights their aesthetic resistance: the ideogrammic pleasure in articulation; the potential for interactive communication via image, visual figuration, and bodies; and the synesthetic experience of wholeness in life. Ultimately, I propose the Modernist ideogram as an emblem of these writers’ compositions, reclaiming their own textual and physical presence against the fragmentation and the incomprehensibility of the modern period.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations ........................................................................................................ vi
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vii
Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. viii

## Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
Deciphering Ideograms:  
Textual Organicism from Romanticism to Modernism

## Chapter 1 ............................................................................................................................... 33
Line, Space, and Chinese Ideographs: Ernest Fenollosa

- On the line: Fenollosa-Dow vs. Ruskin ........................................................................... 34
- Line System ....................................................................................................................... 46
- Fenollosa’s Chinese Ideographs ....................................................................................... 56
- Toward Modernist Space and Language ........................................................................... 76

## Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................... 79
Ezra Pound’s Ideogrammic Organization of Form  
in the Modernist Space-Time

- Pound’s Ideogrammic Method .......................................................................................... 81
- Organum of Machine Music ............................................................................................ 96
- Pound and Ideoplasty ...................................................................................................... 114
- From The Cantos ............................................................................................................ 131

## Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................................... 134
Japanese Modernists’ Rediscoveries of  
Body, Text, and National Language

- Tanizaki-Akutagawa “Novel-without-Plot” Debates ....................................................... 138
- Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist Language ....................................................................... 154
- Yokomitsu’s Materialism in Shanghai ........................................................................... 165
- Yokomitsu’s Formalism and After .................................................................................. 186

## Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 194
Why Ideograms?

## Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 200
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCR</td>
<td><em>ABC of Reading</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATH</td>
<td>Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWC</td>
<td><em>The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry</em></td>
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<td>CWL</td>
<td>“The Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry”</td>
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<td>ED</td>
<td><em>The Elements of Drawing</em></td>
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<td>EPM</td>
<td><em>Ezra Pound and Music</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>Epochs</td>
<td><em>Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art</em></td>
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<td>EPJ</td>
<td><em>Ezra Pound &amp; Japan</em></td>
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<td>EPVA</td>
<td><em>Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts</em></td>
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<td>Fs</td>
<td><em>Frankenstein</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td><em>A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GK</td>
<td><em>Guide to Kulchur</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HG</td>
<td><em>Ten no tebukuro</em> [Heaven’s Glove]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td><em>Literary Essays of Ezra Pound</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td><em>Machine Art and Other Writings</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td><em>Modern Painters</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td><em>Oxford English Dictionary</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td><em>Selected Prose, 1909-1965</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYRZ</td>
<td><em>Teihon Yokomitsu Riichi zenshū</em> [The Authorized Complete Works of Yokomitsu Riichi]*</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td><em>Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot &amp; The Great Digest</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 The Family of Image and Chinese Ideographs,
from W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Iconology* ........................................ 4

Fig. 2 Line Drawing of Japanese Brush Stroke,
from A. W. Dow’s *Composition* ........................................... 39

Fig. 3 Line System,
from E. Fenollosa’s “Preliminary Lectures” ......................... 54

Fig. 4 Articulating Lines,
from E. Fenollosa’s “Preliminary Lectures” ......................... 57

Fig. 5 Bergson’s Upended Cone,
from H. Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* .............................. 88

Fig. 6 *Kaomoji* (face mark) .................................................. 195
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Finally, I want to thank my family for their wholehearted support.
INTRODUCTION

Deciphering Ideograms:

Textual Organicism from Romanticism to Modernism

Through its multi-layered ambiguity and complexity, the ideogram, a written sign embodying an idea, attracted attention from Modernists. In their poetry and theories of writing, the Anglo-American Modernists Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972), as well as the Japanese Modernist Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947), explored the poetic potential of ideograms. Despite the differences in their socio-historical conditions, their idiolects share an organicist desire for textual totality, a fascination with figurative language, and a belief in the dynamics of language as a thing in and of itself.

What intellectual milieux led these Modernist writers to the (re)discovery of ideograms? What literary paradigm has been actuated through ideograms or the conception of language inspired by the ideogram?

This constellation of writers demonstrates the Modernist fascination with textual organicism, a concept of textual autonomy that equates an artwork to an organism and seeks holistic harmony and totality. The present study elucidates how Fenollosa’s, Pound’s, and Yokomitsu’s discourse of ideograms closely aligns the figures of body and text in the intellectual crosscurrents of two axes: a diachronic development from Romanticism to Modernism and the synchronous textual interactions between East and West.

In order to show the concatenation of the organicist figures of the ideogram,

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1 Japanese names will follow Japanese orthography: the last name followed by the first name.
circulating between Eastern and Western Modernist poetics and stylistics, I focus on each writer’s theories of composition, the art of “putting together,” or making a synthesis of artistic elements. Arthur Wesley Dow, with the help of Fenollosa, devised a new technique of art education and defines *Composition*, the title word of his work (1899), in the preface:

Compositional harmony of drawings in the “appreciation of fineness of relations” among lines, masses, and colors (Dow 86). Specifically, they discovered and elucidated the beauty of lines and spacing in the Japanese arts. Ezra Pound also speculated about the integration of an artwork in his musical theory of composition; his time-comprehensive notion of organized space developed into his conception of the machine *organum* and the gigantic organization of intellects in the ideogrammic method. Japanese Modernist writers also pursued organic totality in their writings by considering the beauty of textual appearance, the visual aspect of letters, and the line formatting on a page. Due to the modern transformation of the Japanese writing system, which allowed the flexible incorporation of different linguistic signs (*kanji*, *hiragana*, *katakana*, and Roman alphabets), the Japanese Modernists elaborated upon their own aesthetics of composition by examining their medium of expression: the Japanese language.
By weaving together the varied discourses of “composition,” my project considers the Modernist fascination with and desire for the harmonious totality of an artwork as an autonomous textual entity. In other words, I primarily focus on the conception of an artwork as an organism with an autonomous form, logic, and a unique course of growth. In the Western literary tradition, this notion of an autonomous artwork would be best explored in the context of social and aesthetic discourses of organicism. Especially, as I explore through Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, the Romantic paean for the autonomy of the organism helps scholars to discover the tension between Romantic wholeness as a symbol and the failed totality of allegory as textual fragments. Furthermore, from the Eastern and Western comparative perspective, the Modernist conception of textual autonomy may find its potent counterpart in the Japanese animistic belief in language as “*kotoba*” or “*kotonoha*” (leaves of speech), just as the **body** (*buntai*, i.e. literary style) consists of two ideograms in Japanese: **sentence** (*bun*) and **body** (*tai*). In the crossing figures of body and text (i.e. textual organicism), this study deciphers ideograms, composite textual spaces, which were interwoven within both Western and Japanese Modernisms.

I analyze Chinese ideographs (*kanji* in the Japanese language system)—due to their synthetic qualities and emphasis on visual materiality—as the primary carriers of the figures of textual organicism. In contrast to the European alphabet, a phonetic system that transcribes sound, Chinese ideographs incorporate material things and immaterial ideas with visual figurations. A chart given in W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (1986) provides a succinct overview of the classifications of languages that can be categorized as images. I have added the category of Chinese ideographs to
Mitchell’s diagram.

Fig. 1 The Family of Image and Chinese Ideographs  
(Modified from Mitchell 27)

In the realm between words and images, between ideas and likenesses, Chinese ideographs retain their rudimentary connection to material objects. For example, the Chinese character 人 presents a simplified figure of a man standing on two legs. The pictographic appearance and the juxtapositional mode of composition of Chinese ideographs often reveal their etymology. More complex logograms can be created by combing two or more ideographic parts.

人 + 犬 (dog) = 伏 (lie down)  
人 + 木 (tree) = 休 (rest)  
人 + 言 (speech/language) = 信 (trust/faith)  
人 + 夢 (dream) = 儼 (ephemeral)

I use the term “ideogram” as a comprehensive idea of signs exploring the physicality of language or the spatial appearance of letters in-between material objects and ideas. The Modernist poets fully approved of the potential of the ideogrammic image: the synthetic qualities of Chinese ideographs and their striking visual figuration. In comparison to the Western concept of a metaphor as verbal imagery, Fenollosa pioneered
the exploration of the poetic and philosophical signification of Chinese ideographs, focusing specifically on the durational residue of visual figurations in Chinese poetry and the verb-noun quality of a Chinese ideograph as a “moving picture” (CWL 355). Ezra Pound, who became familiar with Oriental cultures via Fenollosa, further developed Fenollosa’s detection of the paratactic nature of ideogrammic composition as the poetic theory of juxtaposition. His ideogrammic method was devised in the early 1930s by applying the poetic principle of juxtaposition to the organization of knowledge. My analysis of the use of kanji by Japanese Formalists will also highlight the poetic exploration of the textual appearance and material physicality of ideogrammic language.

Fenollosa’s and Pound’s discourses of ideograms have been studied by previous scholars, most often in terms of Pound’s poetics. Hugh Kenner’s groundbreaking The Poetry of Ezra Pound (1951) analyzed the interconnection between Pound’s Imagism/Vorticism and Fenollosa’s theory of the ideogram as a moving image. Following Kenner, Donald Davie’s Articulate Energy (1955) contextualizes Fenollosa’s ideogrammic discourse as one of the most syntactic experiments in Western poetry. The ideogrammic emphasis on the material or physical aspects of language and the juxtapositional dynamics of images were followed by the genre of concrete poetry. Laszlo Géfin’s Ideogram: History of a Poetic Method (1982) explores Fenollosa and Pound’s connection to the Objectivism of William Carlos Williams, and Allen Ginsberg, inter alios.

My analysis, which builds upon these earlier studies of Western Modernist poetics, re-contextualizes Pound’s ideogrammic method amongst Fenollosa’s theory of art composition and contemporary Japanese Modernist stylistics. I demonstrate the links
between organic and organicist tropes of ideograms in the interaction between Eastern and Western Modernist theories of composition. Specifically, I focus on Fenollosa’s emphasis on the line as an essential factor of art composition that simultaneously interconnects and integrates textual space. By conceiving the ideogram as such a composition of lines, my argument will also delineate the tropes created by the Modernists to reorganize textual, conceptual, and social space. In particular, I locate three organicist metaphors: Fenollosa’s line system, Pound’s machine organum, and Yokomitsu’s view of the nationalist/capitalist mechanism as chimerical monstrosity. I maintain that the interconnections among these metaphors show a paradigmatic shift in spatio-temporal perception from Romanticism to Modernism, a shift driven by Eastern and Western textual interplay.

1. The Romantic Organicism and Textual Autonomy through Frankenstein

My exploration begins with the early modern formation of the notion of autonomy in Western intellectual history. I introduce the concept of textual organicism via Mary Shelley’s Romantic fantasy, Frankenstein (1818/1831). My reading of Frankenstein both illustrates a linguistic paradigm shift between the Enlightenment and the Romantic period, and explores the tensions between speech and text, symbol and allegory, totality and fragmentation. I argue that these tensions prepared the way for the Modernist fascination with ideograms.

In Frankenstein, the nameless monster is a chimerical organism, composed of fragmentary body parts articulated and animated into a single living entity. Given life
by an enlightening bolt of natural science, the creature’s haunting presence undermines the rationality of the creator, Frankenstein, and his hope for a harmonious life. What is remarkable throughout the novel is the gap between the monster’s hideous appearance and its impressive intellect. His unutterable ugliness is the major factor that alienates him from society and ultimately motivates his revenge. Contrarily, his reasoned eloquence and physical/intellectual abilities are comparable to those of the biblical Adam, endowed by God with the gift of language: the namer of the world. Frankenstein’s conflict is clear in his response to seeing the creature whose life he is responsible for:

His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. (Fs 149)

Frankenstein’s depiction of the monster as “the filthy mass that moved and talked” reveals his conception of autonomy as otherness, as a being that cannot be identified with “I-myself.” The incompatible gap between the monster’s appearance and spirit indicates the semantic equivocality of his presence: the supernatural ugliness of the monster, his uncanny appearance as signifier, contradicts his speech and spirit as signified. In the novel, this semantic equivocality illuminates a linguistic crisis in the period of Romanticism: the monster’s textual otherness imitates Frankenstein’s logocentric speech, but, through his grotesque visual/physical manifestation, ends up threatening Frankenstein’s subject position.

Considering the monster as textual organism, the intricate workings of the dual meanings of articulation—utterance and jointing—are suggestive of the monster’s equivocal presence. Just as the monster was created physically by joining the corpses of human bodies, the text of Frankenstein is composed of several letters which comprise the
writing or the “corpse” of the narrative. The chimerical presence of the monster as a textual corpse links the Western discourses of organicism and writing, upon which the aesthetic concept of autonomy was founded.

The Romantic fascination with organicism is rooted in a pursuit of wholeness and expressed as the “grounding systematics for understanding all holistic structures” (Armstrong 2). Prior to the period of Romanticism, for example, Francis Bacon’s Novum Organum, or The New Organon (first published in 1620), attempted to build a new scientific system of learning by introducing the inductive method. This Baconian scientific system of knowledge blossomed into a variety of branches of the natural sciences and introduced the particularization and specialization of knowledge, which impacted fields ranging far beyond the natural sciences. The concept of the tableau, through which Michel Foucault analyzed the 17th- to 18th-century formation of the encyclopedic catalogues of knowledge, is also an example of an organicist, holistic system.

The Romantic notion of wholeness was developed through criticism of the analytical thinking of the Enlightenment. In opposition to the Cartesian mind-body division, for example, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) speculated about the autonomy of living organisms and presented the concept of a monad as multiplicity in unity. He called the created monads entelechies, “the sources of their own actions and, so to speak, incorporeal automata,” which “have in themselves a certain perfection” and “are endowed with a self sufficiency” (150). According to Leibniz, the human body shares such entelechies and, therefore, presents a living microcosm of the universe as a “divine machine or natural automation” (158). In the “Critique of Teleological Judgment,” the
second part of *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), Immanuel Kant also explores the notion of an autonomous organism, endowed with an “inherent formative power” and embodying its purpose in itself (22). Kant’s idealist proposition of organic unity in opposition to mechanical unity significantly prepared the way for the Romantics’ appreciation of organic wholeness. Moreover, the synthetic conception of a unity comprehending multiplicity was a driving principle of Romantic irony that flourishes within the dialectical interaction between one and many, the particular and the universal. Friedrich Schlegel, in *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798), succinctly expressed the paradoxical principle of Romantic irony: “An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts” (*Philosophical* 33).

Romanticists utilized the self-sufficient and self-purposive principle of autonomous organismism, built on the metaphorical identification of the universal whole and the human body. Specifically, Romantic poets/writers, sharing the organicists’ drive for wholeness, pursued the totality of symbols in their works. For example, drawing on German Idealist and Romantic thinkers such as Kant, Schiller, and the Schlegel brothers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge discussed in *The Stateman’s Manual* (1816) the poet’s ability to use his/her imagination to create a new synthesis in his/her art. Coleridge’s conception of the symbol incorporates a form of organic synthesis in paradoxical coexistence of the two opposing qualities. The symbol “enunciates the whole,” while serving as “a living part in that Unity” (673). Coleridge thus views the symbol simultaneously as the part and the whole.

The Romantic concept of a symbol as an organic harmonious whole is one of the
most reliable gauges for judging how well an artwork meets Classical and Romantic ideals. In *Frankenstein*, for example, Captain Walton’s admiration for Frankenstein’s personality offers a prototype of the symbolic, harmonious intellect:

> Sometimes I have endeavored to discover what quality it is which he possesses, that elevates him so immeasurably above any other person I ever knew. I believe it to be an intuitive discernment; a quick but never-failing power of judgment; a penetration into the causes of things, unequalled for clearness and precision; add to this a facility of expression, and a voice whose varied intonations are soul-subduing music. (*Fs* 30)

Frankenstein’s rational judgment, clear intellectual ability, and fluent musical speech portray him as an acute observer of facts and a seeker of truth. More specifically, Frankenstein is endowed with the Romantic gift of the poet, who is, as described by Ralph Waldo Emerson in “The Poet” (1844), “the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty” (27). Emerson also describes the poet as “a sovereign, and stands on the centre” and claims: “the poet is he who can articulate it” (27; 33). Similarly, Frankenstein’s articulateness—his words flowing with “rapidity and unparalleled eloquence”—marks him as representing Romantic subjectivity (*Fs* 29). Indeed, Frankenstein, as poet and author, articulates corpses into life and animates the monster with his words.

While Frankenstein’s logocentric presence stands for the Romantic notion of a symbol as an organic harmonious whole, the subversive relationship between Frankenstein and the monster reveals the tension between symbolic speech and written text/glyphs. In other words, the creature, who repeatedly compares himself to Adam, threatens his creator by imitating and taking over Frankenstein’s gift of language. Furthermore, Frankenstein’s speech, as a subjective utterance, is transcribed into written texts, transformed into written discourse, and released into the allegorical realm of
multiplicity, where letters as signifier determine and sometimes betray textual meanings as signified. Thus, Mary Shelley’s Romantic creation of the monster and the text displaces the symbolic subjectivity of the author into the realm of autonomous textual entity.

The close interconnection of the monster’s body and textual corpus further contributes to an explanation of the early modern formation of textual organicism. Theoretically, one may further elaborate upon the subversive relationship of written text to symbolic speech through the notion of allegory. In “Allegory and *Trauerspiel,*” the second part of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), Walter Benjamin explored the concepts of symbol and allegory by focusing on the contrast between the organicist whole and textual fragmentation. While the Romantic notion of symbol—its immediacy and momentariness—embodies an “indivisible unity of form and content,” the notion of allegory locates a semantic abyss between “visual being” and “meaning” (160; 165). According to Benjamin, the ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning associated with the “amorphous fragment” of the baroque allegory undermines the transparency of European phonetic language and lessens its immediacy as subjective utterance (176). Through the undercurrent of opposition between symbol and allegory, Benjamin further explores the relationship among Classicism, Baroque period, and Romanticism:

> Whereas romanticism inspired by its belief in the infinite, intensified the perfected creation of form and idea in critical terms, at one stroke the profound vision of allegory transforms things and works into stirring writing. [. . .] In the field of allegorical intuition the image is a fragment, a rune. Its beauty as a symbol evaporates when the light of divine learning falls upon it. The false appearance of totality is extinguished. (176)

As the underside of the Romantic perfection of the symbol, the allegory develops the notion of autonomy in textual fragments, in a gulf between the two polarities: signs and
meaning, and image and sound. In fact, the Greek *allēgoria* (i.e. “speaking otherwise than one seems to speak”), from which the word derives, signifies the fundamental displacement associated with addressing the other (*OED*).

In exploring the historical significations of the allegory, Benjamin compares the emblematic figures of the Baroque period to hieroglyphics and contrasts the glyphic complex of the allegory with the unified totality of symbol. Specifically, considering the discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 during Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt, the discovery of hieroglyphics may have had a significant impact on Romantic writers, even enabling them to develop the early modern discourse of textual autonomy. Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), who successfully developed Egyptology, categorized hieroglyphics into three different types of signs: i.e., figurative characters; symbolic, tropic, or aenigmatic characters; and phonetic characters (Irwin 6). Therefore, hieroglyphics, as “a composite writing,” are chimerical in nature. This unfamiliar conception of Oriental language enabled Western intellectuals to ponder the multiple layers of meanings in their own works. The written language of hieroglyphics oscillates between a manifest image-picture and an undecipherable meaning. This semantic ambiguity provokes the readers to an awareness of the arbitrary nature of signs: a presumed correspondence between signifier and signified.

Romantic writers variously explored the textual potentiality of hieroglyphics. In his book *American Hieroglyphics* (1980), John T. Irwin traces the influence of the Egyptian language on the 19th-century writers of the American Renaissance, including Emerson, Thoreau, and Poe. Moreover, intellectuals like Friedrich Schlegel searched for a “real language” by mixing the imagery of hieroglyphics and chimera. For example,
in his essay “On Incomprehensibility” (1800), Schlegel writes:

I mean by this a real language, so that we can stop rummaging about for words and pay attention to the power and source of all activity. The great frenzy of such a Cabara where one would be taught the way the human spirit can transform itself and thereby perhaps at last bind its transforming and ever transformed opponent in chains—I simply could not portray a mystery like this as naively and nakedly as, when with the thoughtlessness of youth, I made Lucinde reveal the nature of love in an eternal hieroglyph. Consequently, I had to think of some popular medium to bond chemically the holy, delicate, fleeting, airy, fragrant, and, as it were, imponderable thought. (260-61)

Schlegel’s explanation demonstrates his organicist drive for the alchemic transformation, a retrieval of ideal totality which was lost and has since become fragmentary and incomprehensible. In his attempt to reclaim the symbol—“the holy, delicate, fleeting, airy, fragrant, and, as it were, imponderable thought”—Schlegel soon finds that “all these things are merely chimeras or ideals” (262). With this recognition, he appreciates the incomprehensibility of the fragments and proposes the dialectical re-formation of the whole through the concept of irony.

Schlegel’s trope of the chimera, an intoxicated mix of arts and science, correlates to Frankenstein’s alchemist pursuit of an ideal beauty that results in the creation of the monster. Frankenstein’s earliest interest in natural science was cultivated through the works of the old alchemists—Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus (Fs 43). Frankenstein’s dedication to ancient alchemy, the arts of amalgamation and synthesis, was later replaced by the modern analytical sciences, whose art is to “dissect, anatomize, and give names” (Fs 41). Nevertheless, he was consistent in his search for the secret of animation: the elixir of life as “the cause of generation and life” (Fs 53). In the course of his passion for “bestowing animation upon lifeless matter,” Frankenstein plays God and creates a chimera (Fs 53).
Frankenstein’s alchemist creation, if taken to signify the Romantic search for symbolic perfection, was subsequently dramatized in the late 19th-century explorations of textual space. In “Crisis in Poetry” (1896), Stéphane Mallarmé, for example, reclaims the Romanticist search for symbolic language when he alludes to an amalgamated figure of “chimera” as a metaphor for an individual text sharing the fragments of the ideal symbolic language.

A chimera [...] all books contain the fusion of some counted repetitions: even if there were only one—the world’s law—a bible of the kind nations simulate. The difference from one work to another offers as many lessons set forth in an immense competition for the true text, between the ages termed civilized—or lettered. (850)

In search of a “universal language” that may express “the idea itself, and sweet, the flower absent from all bouquets,” Mallarmé explores the musical harmony of poetic language among the fragments as well as the silence of the blank space of a text (851). Mallarmé’s metaphor of the chimera, an organism integrating different parts into a single organic system, symbolizes an active, incessant re-creation of language as an autonomous entity.

The Symbolist retrieval of totality in textual space records in itself the poetic development from Romanticism to Modernism. In the same historical period, moving my focus from the alchemist fascination with hieroglyphics to Chinese ideographs, I will further explore the 19th-century formation of textual organicism in yet another textual interaction between the Occident and the Orient.
2. Ernest Fenollosa

The Romantic fascination with Oriental otherness provoked the Imperial exploration of Eastern cultures after the mid-19th century. After the West forcefully incorporated China into the global marketing system through the Opium War in 1839-42, Japan witnessed the arrival of Admiral Perry of the United States in 1853. Foreign demand for trade and domestic attacks on the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate led to a decade-long civil war. The Meiji Restoration in 1868, which officially reclaimed the power of the Emperor, marked the beginning of the Modern period in Japan. Increasing commerce between the West and Japan created *Japonisme*, a cultural fad for traditional Japanese arts in Western countries. At the same time, the massive cultural imports from Western countries brought rapid modernization and westernization within Japan itself.

Having lived through the modern dawn of East-West cross-cultural communications, Ernest Fenollosa dedicated his life to introducing the Oriental arts and cultures to the Western world. Born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1853, he was educated at Harvard and came to Japan in 1878 to teach philosophy at Tokyo University (renamed Imperial University in 1886) (Chisolm 39). Fenollosa introduced his Japanese students to an eclectic range of Western thought, including John Stuart Mill’s utilitarian economics, Francis Lieber’s and Theodore D. Woolsey’s political philosophy, Spencer’s evolutionary theory, and Kant’s and Hegel’s German Idealism (Kurihara 100). At the same time, Fenollosa, like many foreign visitors to Japan, began to collect and purchase traditional Japanese art. He was, however, alarmed by the domestic Japanese ignorance of their own traditional art and began to promote the conservation of Japan’s artistic heritage and
the government patronage of artisans. His 1882 lecture, entitled “Bijutsu shinsetsu” (The True Theory of Fine Arts), advocated for the aesthetic importance of traditional Japanese art and successfully attracted significant public interest in preserving the “national arts.” As a direct result of his advocacy for Japanese art, Fenollosa was appointed the Imperial Commissioner of Fine Arts in 1886, and he also founded the Tokyo Fine Arts Academy and the Imperial Museum.

Fenollosa’s intervention successfully promoted Japanese citizens’ criticism of drastic westernization in the 1880s. The awakening of Japanese nationalism and Imperialism, however, drove foreign counselors away from Japanese governmental posts. Fenollosa found his leadership diminished in the Japanese art academy and he decided to leave Japan in 1890 in order to become the curator of Japanese art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. His Boston period (1890-1896) and the subsequent years traveling between the U.S. and Japan were dedicated to the reformation of American art education and the promotion of the Oriental arts through itinerant lectures. One of Fenollosa’s most significant accomplishments, the compilation of a history of the Japanese arts, was posthumously published as Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art (1912). Another posthumous publication, edited by Ezra Pound, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (1919/1936), also demonstrates Fenollosa’s trans-cultural insights, the product of his decision to interface Eastern and Western cultures.

Due to his extensive activities in Japan, research on Fenollosa has been either primarily biographical or focused on Ezra Pound’s relationship to Fenollosa’s posthumous publication, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (1919). Among them, Lawrence W. Chisolm’s comprehensive study of Fenollosa’s life,
Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture (1963), is essential, since his approach highlights Fenollosa’s key concepts of individuality, synthesis, and imagination in the convergence of Hegelian and Romantic currents.

In Chapter One, I build on the biographical studies of Fenollosa in order to examine the rhetorical/theoretical interconnection between his theory of art education and his discourse on Chinese ideographs. From among diverse aspects of Fenollosa’s intellectual life, I first look at his reform of American art education in the 1890s, performed in collaboration with an American painter and educator in the fine arts, Arthur Wesley Dow (1857-1922). Their new pedagogy of public art education, called the “Fenollosa-Dow system,” was in large part inspired by the compositions of Japanese traditional art. In particular, Fenollosa-Dow emphasized the importance of line and spacing and challenged the early Victorian view of mimetic representation. As a counterpoint to Fenollosa’s art theory, I examine the influential art theory of John Ruskin (1819-1900). Ruskin, a British art and social critic with a far-reaching influence throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, defined the fine arts primarily as “graphic imitation,” and, therefore, his fidelity to nature typically negated the manifest presence of compositional lines and outlines (Ruskin, Art 15). The comparative analysis of their manuals of drawing—The Elements of Drawing (1857) by Ruskin and Composition (first published in 1899) by Dow—will, if only partially, enable me to evaluate Fenollosa’s modern reformation of aesthetic space alongside the influences of Japonisme on late 19th-century art discourses. Specifically, the development of European art movements from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism—their adaptation of flat pictorial surfaces dramatizing the collapse of linear perspective—also frames
Fenollosa’s appreciation of compositional lines and spacing.

Following the discussion of aesthetic space, I will further examine the philosophical orientation of Fenollosa’s conceptions of line and spacing. The spatial composition (synthesis) of lines, which Fenollosa describes as the “line idea” or the “line system,” will be contextualized within the Western philosophical tradition of textual organicism: the concept of textual autonomy with an inherent congruity. In particular, Fenollosa’s elaboration of the concept of wholeness and his musical metaphor of harmony in “Preliminary Lectures on the Theory of Literature” (1898) prompts my exploration of his Romantic fascination with organic articulation. His assertion of individual wholeness, integrating the Romantic notion of a symbol, the Spencerian view of social organism, and the Hegelian idea of synthesis, is a site where Fenollosa channels Western literary and philosophical traditions into his observations about Oriental textual cultures.

After delineating the conceptual link between Fenollosa’s harmonious wholeness and his line system, I finally investigate his grafting of the concept of Chinese ideographs onto both the Romantic and Oriental traditions. Just as Fenollosa’s art composition reformed the Western mimetic concept, his discovery of Chinese ideographs disputes the foundation of the Western language: the linear conception of phonetic language and the analytic function of the copula to be. The comparison between Fenollosa’s analysis of Chinese ideographs and Freud’s interpretation of dream-language illuminates their synthetic thought process. The spatial articulation of Chinese ideographs, with their residual verbal images, reclaims the totality of textual space by creating a sense of simultaneity.

To return to Fenollosa’s biography, after his final trip to Japan in 1901, which
occasioned his last writings on the Chinese written language and Japanese noh, Fenollosa actively continued his lectures and publications on the topic of Oriental arts and American art education (Yamaguchi; Hook). In particular, Fenollosa’s final years were dedicated to the completion of *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, a work posthumously compiled by Fenollosa’s widow, Mary McNeill Fenollosa. As is well known, she later handed Fenollosa’s manuscripts on the Chinese written language and Japanese noh arts to Ezra Pound, one of the leading proponents of Imagism.

Fenollosa’s *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1936), edited by Ezra Pound, has long been accepted as the authorized edition. Recently, however, Murakata Akiko, a Japanese scholar, has questioned the “accepted validity of [the] Pound edition” (345). She returned to Fenollosa’s original manuscripts at the Pound archives at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, and published the revised edition, titled “The Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry.”

Murakata criticized the “dissociation of illustrations from the text” in the Pound edition (347). In fact, the differences in style and critical diction between the two editions are more than subtle. In order to reveal Fenollosa’s voice, which had been largely obscured by Pound’s editing, I will mostly use the revised edition by Murakata for my Fenollosa chapter.

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2 In March 2008, a critical edition of Fenollosa’s *Chinese Written Character*, edited by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling, and Lucas Klein, garnered wide publicity. Saussy’s introduction for this edition is successful in restoring Fenollosa’s text in the context of his aesthetic and socio-political concerns. Specifically, the influence of Buddhism (Tendai esotericism) on Fenollosa’s symbolist tropes, the illumination of his late-Romanticist and Hegelian “fusion of East and West,” and the critical re-evaluation of Fenollosa’s “misunderstandings” of Chinese written characters will advance successive Fenollosa studies.

3 I will refer to the Pound edition when I need to clarify Pound’s interpretation of Fenollosa’s discourses on Chinese ideographs. Furthermore, Murakata’s Japanese translation of Fenollosa’s notes from the Boston period (2001) helped me to access
Developed through the Fenollosa-Dow theory of composition—the art of putting together lines, colors, and masses—Chinese ideograms present an alternative, synthetic form of totality in opposition to the Western concept of representation, i.e. the mimetic principle, linear conception of time, and analytic thinking. The accumulating ideogrammic figurations create the spatial articulation, and their durational simultaneity re-composes the textual space into the organic whole of a single image. This ideogrammic simultaneity will be further examined in Ezra Pound’s poetics. At the same time, while investigating his Modernist departure from Fenollosa’s Romantic diction, my focus on aesthetic space will shift to Pound’s ideogrammic organization of intellectual space.

3. Ezra Pound

The Modernist poets, turning away from the Romantic faith in the symbol, struggled against the ingrained antinomy and incomprehensibility of the Modern period. Just as Fenollosa’s line system attempted to retrieve the synthetic form of composition, the French symbolists also experimented with the totality of textual or perceptual space through the notion of simultaneity. For example, Baudelairean synesthesia, a correspondence of different senses, integrates one’s simultaneous perceptions into a totality of textual space. The synesthetic incorporation of rhythm and image in Symbolist poetry, along with the common intermediary metaphors of music and painting,

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Fenollosa’s original manuscripts in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Some of the quotations in the Fenollosa chapter, therefore, include my own transcriptions, used here with permission of the Houghton Library.
is also indicative of a view of the artwork as an autonomous organism. As one of such symbolist experiments, Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Un coup de dés* (1897) related text and blank space into a rhythmic totality, and its typographical plays led the genre of visual poetry after Futurism.

Upon these symbolist heritages, the Western tradition of textual organicism reached its Modernist stage with the rise of Imagism. Under the leadership of T. E. Hulme, leading Imagists Ezra Pound, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Richard Aldington, and F. S. Flint proposed “direct treatment, economy of words, and the sequence of the musical phrase” (Pound, *LE* 4). The Imagists’ pursuit of “[h]ardness of outline, clarity of image, brevity, suggestiveness, [and] freedom from metrical laws” completed a stylistic renovation of the verbose and prolific sentimentalism of the Victorian *verse libre* (G. Hughes 4). At the same time, the Imagist concept of an image, which Hulme devised through his dialogue with the vitalist discourses of Henri Bergson and Wilhelm Worringer, inevitably engages in the Modernist adaptation of the Romantic discourses of organicism. Specifically, Pound’s definition of an image as an “intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” orients the early 20th-century renovations of aesthetic form in the Modernist re-composition of space-time (*LE* 4). Or, as James F. Knapp succinctly states, “Imagism is the prototype for this artificial recovering of order” (151). By sharing the avant-garde imperative to supersede old perspectives with new languages, modes of representation, and politico-cultural institutions, Imagism heralded many other Modernist attempts to constitute a new system and form of totality.

Anglo-American Vorticism more thoroughly developed Pound’s Modernist re-composition of space-time through the pursuit of image/form. Vorticism, which was
also shaped by Cubism and Italian Futurism, attacked 1890’s aestheticism in favor of mechanical energy and abstraction. Pound challenged the Imagist “stationary image” with the Vorticist “moving image” and championed the “primary form,” the maximum point of “energy expressing itself in pattern” (EPVA 8). More significantly, Pound, who, by the end of 1913, had received Fenollosa’s manuscript of The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, shifted his focus from the Imagist emphasis on “direct treatment of the thing” to the Vorticist process (Levenson 128). As a result, Pound developed his concept of the Vortex as a transformative image momentarily grasped during a change of ideas. In his words, a vortex is “a radiant node or cluster [. . .] from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (GB 92).

In order to examine Pound’s Modernist departure from Fenollosa’s Romantic discourse of Chinese ideographs, I will focus on Pound’s spatio-temporal tropes of composition. For example, his ideogrammic method demonstrates his comprehension of a trans-historical complex of culture as an intellectual diagram. In addition, my analysis of his musical metaphor of machine organum will illuminate Pound’s Modernist urge for the transcendental form of organization.

Among the extensive range of previous Pound studies, I am indebted to several specific volumes for their rich insights. Daniel Tiffany’s Radio Corpse (1995) concentrates on Pound’s transfiguring trope of the image-corpse. His analysis, interconnecting Pound’s poetic and political developments, contributed to my own reading of Pound’s organicist figures of ideogram. For my discussion of Pound’s musical discourses, I found R. Murray Schafer’s edited collection Ezra Pound and Music
most useful. His explanation of Pound’s key musical metaphors, such as “absolute rhythm” and “great bass,” led me to interrelate Pound’s ideogrammic organization with his spatio-temporal grasp of musical composition. Furthermore, Maria Luisa Ardizzone’s introduction in *Machine Art and Other Writings* (1996) succinctly illuminates Pound’s demand for organicity and his use of Baconian, Leibnizian, and Confucian discourses of organicism. Finally, I first learned about Kitasono Katsue and VOU, a Japanese group of plastic poetry writers in the mid-1930s, in John Solt’s *Shredding the Tapestry of Meaning* (1999). Drawing on Solt’s research on Kitasono’s literary background and his correspondence with Pound, I will delineate how Pound’s geometric trope of vortex was revived in the notion of ideoplasty by VOU.

Chapter Two begins with a close reading of Pound’s imagery of the ideogrammic method in *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). I argue that Pound adopts Fenollosa’s discourse of Chinese ideographs *not* in terms of the theory of juxtaposition, but in terms of a form of cultural and historical simultaneity. To contextualize Pound’s concept of ideogrammic simultaneity, I will specifically explore Henri Bergson’s definitions of duration as well as his concept of body-image. The Bergsonian notion of image carried in one’s body-memory reveals the organicist’s demand for historical and cultural totality. Similarly, Pound’s use of the verbal icon of the ideogram in *Kulchur* demonstrates his Modernist’s activation of textual bodies that reconfigure textual space into politico-cultural space.

In the second section, I will focus on Pound’s theory of music composition—his notion of rhythm-shape and “great bass”—which he developed from the Imagist and Vorticist “primary-form.” I will explore the notion of rhythm-shape in comparison to J.
S. Bach’s pattern music as well as George Antheil’s machine music and further elucidate its interconnection with Pound’s trope of machine *organum*. Pound’s essay, “Machine Art” (1927-30), provides a crucial link between his Vorticist fascination with machine dynamics and his growing interest in ideogrammic organization. Just like the process of incorporating machine noises into a musical harmony of *organum*, Pound’s ideogrammic method attempts to seek out articulations among different concepts and achieve the organization of culture.

Section three will focus on Pound’s correspondence with a Japanese Modernist, Kitasono Katsue (1902-78), and the revival of Pound’s Vorticist discourse in the 1930s. Under the massive influence of European avant-gardism, Kitasono developed the notion of ideoplasty or ōka-gainen, literally “response-transformation-notion” (Solt 122). The transformative notion of ideoplasty resonates with Pound’s Vorticist grasp of form in kinetic movement and revitalizes the concept of vortex by adding the plastic potentiality to mould a visible shape. The geometric language both Pound and Kitasono used in their descriptions of vortex and ideoplasty also illuminates a transcendental drive within the Modernist figures of organicism. Their correspondence via the conception of ideoplasty locates a Modernist reunion of Eastern and Western poetics.

My reading of Pound’s spatio-temporal metaphors—the ideogrammic method, machine *organum*, and ideoplasty—will demonstrate en masse the time-comprehensive notion of composition characterizing his Modernist departure from the Romantic discourses of textual organicism. Pound develops Fenollosa’s line system—the organic tangle of lines—into his own ideogrammic method, which organizes multiple threads of discourses into an intellectual diagram. Pound’s transcendental desire for the machine
organum finds an Eastern counterpart in the Japanese Modernists’ conception of the nationalist/capitalist mechanism. My analysis of Japanese Modernists’ rediscovery of ideograms in the final chapter will demonstrate the other side of the East-West textual interaction: the unique historical process of modernization and westernization of Japan.

4. Japanese Modernism

Ten years before Fenollosa crossed the Pacific Ocean for the first time, Japan experienced a drastic change of polity in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Under the slogans of *Bunmei kaika* (“Civilization and Enlightenment”) and *Fukoku kyōhei* (“Rich Country, Strong Army”), the constitutional monarchy of the Meiji Emperor, which took over the Tokugawa Shogunate, propelled the radical modernization and westernization of the country (Buruma 35). Many foreign scholars were invited to occupy university posts, and young domestic elites were sent abroad, especially to Germany. Modern Japanese culture was cultivated by the massive influx of Western intellects into Japan; at the same time, a rising “national consciousness” developed the notion of *Japaneseness* in opposition to the Imperial power of the West and China (Gluck 136). Indeed, the *kokutai* (nation + body, i.e. the national polity), sanctified by the Japanese nativist religion *shintō*, became a powerful ideological dynamo and supported Japan’s Imperial expansion in the first half of the 20th century.

Propelled by the socio-historical imperative to integrate Japan domestically, the premodern Japanese language, an amalgamation of Chinese characters and indigenous phonetic systems, was gradually reshaped into the national language. Specifically, the
genbun itchi (correspondence between spoken and written language) movement, which started around 1880, reduced significations of kanji as figurative language and introduced the Western concepts of phonetic signs as transparent media (Karatani, Origins 47). Furthermore, through contact with the European discourses of Romanticism and Naturalism, the stylistic transformation in the genbun itchi movement brought forth the Japanese Naturalist movement, which established the genre of the confessional I-novel (shishōsetsu).

The three Japanese Modernists I consider in Chapter Three—Tanizaki Junichirō (1886-1965), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947)—wrote against the dominant literary climate of Japanese Naturalism. The tradition of the I-novels, primarily the pursuit of transparent prose that reflects an author’s life as it is, can be described as a literary practice that delimits the use of obvious literary forms, suppressing the opaque or multilayered aspects of written language. In their Modernist resistance to the Naturalist identification between the confessional speech and the arts of writing, Tanizaki, Akutagawa, and Yokomitsu restored miscellaneous literary and stylistic forms to their compositions. Their theories of composition, imbued with modern European literary discourses, remolded the Japanese organic conceptions of buntai (sentence + body, i.e. literary style) into the Modernist conception of textual organicism.

The previous scholarly works on Modern Japanese literature as well as on the individual authors under study are voluminous. For example, Dennis Keene’s Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist (1980) was a pioneering study of the Modernist climate in the early 1920s, especially Yokomitsu’s movement, the Shin kankakuha (New Sense School). My study builds upon Keene’s work and will delineate the late-1920s’
development of Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist Modernism. Moreover, scholars Komori Yōichi (1988), Maeda Ai (1992), and Seiji M. Lippit (2002) explored varied representations of bodies in Yokomitsu’s *Shanghai*. Most importantly, Komori’s “Écriture no jikū” (The Space-Time of Écriture 1987) was essential in contextualizing Yokomitsu’s formalism in association with both the Saussurian linguistic paradigm and Einstein’s theory of the space-time continuum. Sharing the topological importance of bodies in the colonial settlement as territory and materials, however, my reading will closely analyze Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist trope of the “peripheral nervous system.”

Another influential secondary work is Karatani Kōjin’s *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen 1988), which gave me the initial insight to read Tanizaki and Akutagawa’s contraposition as a reaction to the narrative space of the I-novel. My study will contextualize Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist diction in relation to Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s organicist tropes and illustrate Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist resistance to the tradition of I-novels and the Communist literature.

Chinese ideographs, with their figural attachment to material objects, will be identified as Yokomitsu’s major materialist carrier for textual organicism.

I begin Chapter Three with an analysis of the “Novel-without-Plot” debates, conducted in 1927 between Tanizaki and Akutagawa. While they shared a similar corporeal association between body and text, their debates prefigured two nearly opposite transformations of form: Tanizaki’s return to the Japanese classic tradition and Akutagawa’s disintegration into fragments. My comparison of the animistic/organic view of language as *kotonoha* and the Western concept of textual autonomy shows a unique correspondence of the Eastern and Western organicist discourses. In addition,
my exploration of Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s theories of composition situates Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism in the cultural and literary milieux of the early Shōwa period.

In the second section, I will focus on Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist theory of composition, especially “Shin kankakuha no kenkyū” (A Study of the New Sense School 1928-29). Under the tremendous influence of Western Modernism, Yokomitsu, along with other Japanese writers such as Kawabata Yasunari and Kataoka Teppei, attempted to express a new sensation, “自然の外相を剥奪し、物自体に躍り込む主觀の直感的觸發物” (TYRZ 13: 76; “an intuitive explosion of subjectivity that rips off the external aspects of nature to give direct access to the thing in itself” Keene 79). In order to depict the vivid dynamism of things in and of themselves, Yokomitsu called attention to the visual/physical effects of literary forms and styles and their ability to elicit new “sensual” and “material” expressions. Underlying Yokomitsu’s departure from and continuity with Tanizaki and Akutagawa’s organicist figures, my argument illuminates Yokomitsu’s trope of the “peripheral nervous system,” which emphasizes minute details and the visual aspect of language.

Yokomitsu opened up the Formalist debate in 1928 and further developed a sort of New Sensationist materialism against Marxist historical materialism. I contextualize Yokomitsu’s material concept of language and his Baudelairean experience of Modernity through an examination of his colonial novel, Shanghai (1928-32). The intersections of the body-nation-text in the textual space of Shanghai lead me to compare Yokomitsu’s notion of capitalist/nationalist mechanism to Walter Benjamin’s image-sphere, an imaginary sphere of collective bodies integrated in affluent images. By incorporating
the readers’ bodies, texts, and actual socio-political spheres into a global system of nationalist capitalism, Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism reveals the tension between an individual and national body.

In the final section of Chapter Three, I re-evaluate the transforming corporeal metaphors in the Japanese Modernist discourses of composition as allusions to buntai and kokutai, which have been displaced and transformed as a result of the linguistic/socio-cultural transplantation since the Meiji period. Tanizaki’s, Akutagawa’s, and Yokomitsu’s use of the trope of monstrosity as a critical allusion to the chimerical amalgamation of modern Japanese language, echoing the Romantic figure of Frankenstein, allows an envisioning of their resistance to the historical/linguistic realities of the late 1920s to 1930s.

5. Beyond the Aesthetic Approach

Through the synthetic notion of line system, machine organum, and the chimerical monstrosity of nationalist/capitalist mechanism, Fenollosa, Pound, and Yokomitsu reclaimed the “composition” as an articulated form of totality. The articulated whole of an organism consists in the paradoxical coexistence of multiplicity within a unity, or as Theodor W. Adorno succinctly phrases it in Aesthetic Theory (1970): “the redemption of the many in the one” (190). The Modernist concept of textual organicism inevitably exposes the ingrained tension between their Romantic desire for symbolic unity and their fascination with textual otherness, fragments, and multiplicities of meaning. Pound most self-consciously performed this tension in his search for transcendental abstraction
and his multilingual practice of textual collage and translation. Pound’s comment that “the ideograph abstracts or generalizes in the known concrete” shows his ambivalent search for totality in the ideogrammic method and his demand for a transcendental structure within the multiplicity of textual space (MA 89).

The Modernists’ search for totality in textual organicism, because of its underlying demand for a universal whole, creates a space where their theories of composition cross with political discourses. Broadly speaking, Fenollosa, Pound, and Yokomitsu associated themselves with Imperialist/Nationalist investments in the Modern period: Hegelian cosmopolitanism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese Nationalism, respectively. For instance, imbued with the Hegelian idea of synthesis, Fenollosa’s Romantic discovery of Oriental cultures was inevitably engaged in the Imperial climates of his period, particularly Orientalism, a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” as famously defined by Edward W. Said (3). Fenollosa’s Hegelian conviction in the development of Absolute Spirit—the “growth of individual awareness of freedom” (Chisolm 25)—and his Orientalist enlightenment of Eastern cultures are further complicated by his own involvement with esoteric Buddhism. Although Fenollosa’s political and religious commitments are not central to my argument, his practice of intellectual syncretism would be inseparable from his organicist search for individual wholeness.

Pound, in pursuing the idealist harmony as organum, aimed at rebuilding modern cultures upon Confucian harmonious order. However, the same organicist search led him to support Italian Fascism, which Pound believed capable of activating political and

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4 Fenollosa converted to the sect of Tendai Buddhism in 1885 and studied Zen Buddhist philosophies in depth.
economic modes of organization. Scholars have conducted extensive research into the relation between Pound’s poetics and politics, from his Imagist/Vorticist departure, his economic tenets, and his pro-fascist commitments, to his penchant for Confucian classicism. Furthermore, the creation of the Cantos (1925-70) throughout his long career provides rich resources for his various avant-garde identities and their transformations. By incorporating research on Pound’s translation of Chinese poetry and Confucian writings, my focus on Pound’s organicist search and its relation to the conception of Chinese ideographs finds a potent link to recent achievements in Chinese studies (Saussy; Hayot). Specifically, postcolonial interests in Orientalism/Modernism may provide a further theoretical frame to illuminate political undertones pertaining to my study.

Yokomitsu initiated his literary career in the spirit of his New Sensationist rebellion against modern Japanese literary tradition and its national language, but his career concluded with his support of Japanese nationalism especially after the late 1930s. His Imperialist gaze and Asianist sense of colonial affinity, revealed in Shanghai, offers a glimpse of the cultural and political tensions within the Orient. Yokomitsu’s later works—although not covered in this study—further dramatize Japan’s oscillating cultural and imperial identity, seeking hegemony over neighboring Asian countries. Specifically, his unfinished work Ryoshū (Sentimental Journey 1937- ) highlights his Nationalist confrontation of Western civilization and ideological return to Japanese indigenous cultures, including Shintoism. Furthermore, his wartime sketches in Yoru no kutsu (Night’s Shoes 1947) inscribe his intellectual transformation into a ruralist nativism after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. The relation between Yokomitsu’s political
transformation and his stylistic changes in these later works complement my own exploration of the Modernist use of Chinese ideographs and its implicit connection to Japanese national identity.

Thus, Fenollosa’s, Pound’s, and Yokomitsu’s cross-pacific dialogues over the concept of Chinese ideographs, even if partially, illustrate the multi-layered tensions in organicist discourses and their proximity to the Imperial/national movements in the Modern period. The uniqueness of my project lies in elucidating the Modernist conception of the ideogram in the intersection of the figures of body and text in textual organicism. In particular, the chimerical constitution of the Japanese language as an amalgamation of different language systems differentiates my argument from Chinese literary studies per se. The multiplicity of the term—ideogram, a Chinese ideograph, and kanji—in itself locates the very tension and ambiguity of the linguistic-cultural-political identity, which I elaborate through the ideogrammic language.

From Romanticism to Modernism, between East and West, I weave the entangled figures of textual organicism surrounding the Modernist discourses of the ideogram into a text, which I present here for this study. The Modernists’ fascination with textual organicism—their ideogrammic pleasure in articulation; the potential of interactive communication via image, visual figurations, and bodies; the synesthetic experience of wholeness in life—demonstrates their ingrained urge for totality. The Modernist ideogram is thus an emblem of their compositions, reclaiming their own textual and physical presence against the fragmentation and incomprehensibility of the Modern period.
CHAPTER ONE

Line, Space, and Chinese Ideographs: Ernest Fenollosa

This chapter explores Ernest Fenollosa’s theory of art education in the late 1890s and its link to his writings on Chinese ideographs. Because of its enormous influence on Ezra Pound, scholars focus on Fenollosa’s work on Chinese ideographs but tend to dissociate their discussions from his own significant contribution to and interest in East Asian Art. That being so, what connections can be observed between Fenollosa’s theories of the aesthetic and textual realms? I answer this question by focusing on Fenollosa’s appreciation of the *articulating* function of lines to divide and interconnect spaces.

The three sections of this chapter examine the development and significance of the spatial concept of articulation in Fenollosa’s extensive musings concerning art history, philosophy, and theories of language. This chapter also demonstrates the late 19th-century shift in the spatial paradigm, or how space is perceived and represented. Specifically, this chapter asks three questions: 1) how do Fenollosa’s assertions regarding line and spacing challenge ruling 19th-century conceptions of art?; 2) how does his notion of a line system resonate with the tradition of Romantic and social organicism?; and 3) how does Fenollosa develop his conceptions of line and line system in his discourse on Chinese ideographs? By retrieving the art historical, philosophical, and rhetorical milieux that interrelate Fenollosa’s views of line, space, and ideograms, this chapter not only seeks to bridge Fenollosa’s discourses on art education and Chinese ideographs, but also aims to elucidate late 19th-century theoretical dynamics transforming aesthetic and textual space. In the process, my argument locates a radical shift in early modern
schemes of language and representation, which usher in the age of Modernism.

1. On the Line: Fenollosa-Dow vs. Ruskin

According to Mary McNeill Fenollosa (1865-1954), the second wife of Ernest Fenollosa and a devoted compiler of his works, “[l]ife, motion, colour, impression, composition, spacing—above all, spacing,—these formed, in his creed, the only true lines of growth” (*Epochs* xix). “Spacing”—or, in Arthur Wesley Dow’s terms, “proportion” or “appreciation of fineness of relations” used to create a sense of harmony (86)—is the primary quality Fenollosa appreciated in East Asian Art. In the introduction of *Epochs*, for example, he identifies three elements—line, *notan* (literally dark-light), and color—that create a “union of harmonious shape with proportion”:

> We find that all art is harmonious spacing, under special technical conditions that vary. The spaces must have bounds, hence the union of harmonious shape with proportion. The eye follows the bounds, and the hand executes them; hence line, which thus becomes the primary medium for representation. (*Epochs* xxiv)

Among the three compositional elements (line, *notan*, and color), Fenollosa puts particular emphasis on a line that creates boundaries and spaces. His emphasis on compositional line which form and transform space was still controversial in the late 19th century. Lawrence W. Chisolm, in his groundbreaking biography *Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture* (1963), notes that Fenollosa’s “emphasis on ‘harmonious spacing’ as the key to all design [. . .] drew opposition from influential quarters” (178).1

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1 Chisolm scathingly enumerates such influential actors and deeds as “tax-conscious school boards who opposed all art in education as an unnecessary frill”; “moralists who saw art education as properly didactic, its role to illustrate divine love, ethical conduct,
By investigating the ways in which Fenollosa challenged the late 19\textsuperscript{th}-century art discourses, I evaluate the uniqueness and historical significance of Fenollosa’s assertions of the primacy of line and spacing.

Considering the historical significance of Fenollosa’s conception of line, it is crucial to understand the British art academic tradition, from which the American system of art education derived. The work of John Ruskin (1819-1900) provides an overview of British art in the early to mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century. His wide range of criticism in search of moral truth and social justice covers art history, architecture, economics (industrialism and capitalism), geology, and more. In regards to art criticism, Ruskin was highly renowned for his defense of J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), who expressed the elemental forces of nature with dramatic uses of color. Ruskin also supported the Pre-Raphaelites, who revived minute pictorial details and brilliant colors within intricate compositions (Hewison 23). Ruskin’s seemingly contradictory, shifting critical concerns over half a century dramatize the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century theoretical debates within the British fine arts.

In direct contrast to Ruskin, Fenollosa belonged to a new generation of American art critics trained in industry-oriented art education. His art experience can be traced back to his brief training at the Massachusetts Normal Art School, the first professional and vocational art institution in the U.S. (Wygant 57). The school was designed to train art teachers for the upcoming wave of public art education and focused on teaching the art of drawing and ornamental design, which combined “geometry and nature” (Wygant 58). The emphasis on the importance of decorative outline and “flat ornamental filling of

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and virtuous suffering”; “utilitarians who wanted only manual training and mechanical drawing (precursors of ‘vocational arts’)”; “and finally, [...] academic art teachers and their publishers and suppliers who felt their traditional methods threatened” (178).
\end{quote}
abstract space” would have prepared Fenollosa to appreciate the beauty of Oriental arts (Hook 19).

Furthermore, twenty years later in 1891, Arthur W. Dow, who was educated in this tradition of art-design, met Fenollosa, who was then the curator of the Boston Museum. After his introduction to the traditional Japanese art, Dow developed a new pedagogy of public art education: the Fenollosa-Dow system. The combination of the publication of Dow’s Composition (first edition, 1899), a widely-influential manual of drawing, and his educational activities as a director of fine arts at the Teachers College, Columbia University, contributed to the creation of a new generation of American artists, including, among others, Georgia O’Keeffe and Max Weber (Masheck 1-2).

Meeting the American public’s interest in industrial art design, Fenollosa’s discovery of the beauty of Oriental art challenged the mimetic notion of representation developed in the British art academic tradition. For example, in his enlightening lecture on the Japanese arts in November 1891, Fenollosa contested Ruskin’s view that art should be representative, that there should be a likeness of art to nature. In favor of Japanese designs, Fenollosa declared:

“If then John Ruskin comes to me and wars before my eyes the argument from religion, saying, ‘every tender leave of grass—being fashioned by God’s hand, how dare you commit the blasphemy in art of modifying or idealizing or unfaithfully neglecting a single detail,’ I shall answer him as an Oriental [. . .]. (“Lessons” bMS Am 1759. 2 [54]: 8)”

Fenollosa’s reference, even if only partially grasping Ruskin’s varied aesthetic concerns, addresses Ruskin’s fidelity to nature, a grounding principle of mimesis in the Western art education. Fenollosa goes on to compare the mimetic style of art teaching to bringing a

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2 Dorothy Hook also points out the emphasis on abstract “geometrical space filling” in both the American art education in the 1870s and Japanese woodcut paintings, especially those by Hokusai (19).

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child “before the uncatalogued treasures of the British Museum Library, and saying ‘study what you find’” and asserts the need for “order and selection” in the art of representation (“Lessons” bMS Am 1759.2 [54]: 9). What we glimpse here is a radical shift in the conception of art and representation; through his contact with Oriental art, Fenollosa is attempting to introduce a new criterion for the beauty of art—“composition”—an artistic quality emphasized and highlighted by Dow.

A close focus on Ruskin’s view of line in contrast with that of Fenollosa illuminates the radical shift in the concept of representation in Western art of the late 19th century. For example, *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), a manual for drawing written to respond to requests for Ruskin’s advice, demonstrates Ruskin’s principles of art education as well as his criteria for great art. The preface of the work plainly expresses his focus: the training-sight. As Ruskin explains,

> the chief aim and bent of the following system is to obtain, first, a perfectly patient, and, to the utmost of the pupil’s power, a delicate method of work, such as may ensure his seeing truly. For I am nearly convinced that, when once we see keenly enough, there is very little difficulty in drawing what we see [. . .].

(*ED* 13)

The significance of sight, *seeing keenly*, initiates Ruskin’s mimetic system of drawing. In his groundbreaking work, *Modern Painters* (1843, first volume), for example, Ruskin proposes the mimetic concept of fine art by defining it as the “art of representing any natural object faithfully” (*MP* 1: 87). Nature is an affluent source of beauty and

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4 By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
5 According to the introduction by E. T. Cook, “during the sixteen years of its currency (1857-1861, 1892-1904),” it [*The Elements of Drawing*] has gone through sixteen thousands—a considerable circulation for a book of this kind to attain” (Ruskin, *ED* xvii). Robert L. Herbert also points out that the “generous sections on color from the *Elements of Drawing*” were adapted to Ogden Rood’s *Modern Chromatics* (1879) and “highly influential in the development of Neo-Impressionism” (Ruskin, *Art* xiii).
imagination, which illuminates the higher “truth” of life, thus Ruskin demands of the artist to be not only “a seeing and feeling creature” but also faithful to nature (Ruskin, Art 17).  

After the credo on the importance of sight and precise mimetic ability, Ruskin’s *The Elements of Drawing* provides step-by-step instructions, the goal of which is to cultivate “lightness of hand and keenness of sight” (*ED* 31). In contrast to the primary focus on lines in Fenollosa-Dow’s art education, Ruskin’s exercises begin with the practice of shading with minute ink lines, moving on to outline drawing with a soft pencil, and copying limited natural objects with a focus on light and shade. Concerning the subsequent color exercises, the readers are directed to start from the training in gradation, a subtle art of coloring and shading.

Believing that nature has no outline, Ruskin is particularly careful about the practice of lining and outlining. His parenthetical comments, “no pupil in my class being ever allowed to draw an outline, in the ordinary sense” (*ED* 14), is based on his philosophy that

> Nature relieves one mass, or one tint, against another; but outlines none. The outline exercise, the second suggested in this letter, is recommended, not to enable the pupil to draw outlines, but as the only means by which, unassisted, he can test his accuracy of eye, and discipline his hand. (*ED* 15)

By conceiving an outline merely as the “edge of the shade,” Ruskin instructs students to draw lines to present delicate, minute textures of natural objects (*ED* 14). Light and

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6 However, Ruskin’s emphasis on the accurate observation of nature does not necessarily mean the wholesale imitation of natural objects, as in geology or natural science. Rather, Ruskin appreciated the artists’ mental vision and imagination in addressing the higher “truth.” Therefore, he states: “the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas” (*MP* 1:92).
shade created through a mass of lines become the fundamental components for presenting nature in its variety and beautiful harmony.

Ruskin’s exercises in line drawing—the Western art of ink and pen—provide an intriguing contrast with the Japanese brush stroke, incorporated by Fenollosa and Dow into their innovative art education system. As is represented in the art of calligraphy, lines created by Chinese and Japanese brushes express massive notan with aqueous grays. Fenollosa appreciated the infinite varieties of calligraphic brushstrokes and insisted that “[e]ven in a single line, there can be thickening and thinning, there is darkening, which is just the way a singer sings—and just what Japanese only does with brush” (“Insufficiency” bMS Am 1759.2 [43]: 3). In other words, just as a soloist can create immense varieties in volume and in keys, an artist may unfold diverse expressions with a single brush stroke. For example, Figure 2 demonstrates the ample potentiality of a single line for expressing the round shapes of the animals and their curved soft contours.

![Fig. 2 Line Drawing of Japanese Brush Stroke (Dow 77).](image)

While Ruskin negated outline in his mimetic approach to the objects/nature, Japanese calligraphic brushstrokes utilize lines as a central medium of their art. A melodious

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7 According to Dow, the Japanese term notan (“dark-light”) should be differentiated from light and shadow as “a single fact of external nature” as well as from the principle of chiaroscuro in Western paintings (68).

8 By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
flow of a line is inseparable from the objects in themselves; the strokes of the brush compose and embody animals.

In contrast to the centralized calligraphic line, Ruskin’s line is compared to a “well-managed horse,” which follows the rider’s direction at will. According to Ruskin, the outline should be

*equal*, not heavier in one place than in another. The power to be obtained is that of drawing an even line slowly and in any direction; all dashing lines, or approximations to penmanship, are bad. The pen should, as it were, walk slowly over the ground, and you should be able at any moment to stop it, or to turn it in any other direction, like a well-managed horse. (*ED* 32)

Ruskin’s line exercises aim at attaining control of the pen and brush, control reflected in a slow speed. Although both Ruskin and Fenollosa-Dow assign the same painstaking exercises, the effects achieved through Ruskin’s line drawing are designed to negate the aesthetic value of the line itself. The finished work should reveal neither the lines per se nor the movements of a brush, since, according to Ruskin: “The idea of that form is not given in nature by lines at all, still less by black lines with a white space between them” (*MP* 105). Ruskin’s descriptive mode of representation, which nurtured British landscape painting as well as 19th-century realism, claims to diminish the manifest material and artistic components of a work of art.

Opposing the Ruskinian negation of the line, Fenollosa-Dow’s art theory centralizes the line as the architectural frame of the composition. Fenollosa’s exposition of Sesshū’s Chinese-ink painting in *Epochs* eloquently conveys the beauty of the spatial presence of a line.⁹ According to Fenollosa, Sesshū’s line is “rough, hard and splintery,

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⁹ Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506) was one of the prominent Japanese masters of ink-painting (*suibokuga*). Sesshū adapted his technique from Chinese landscape painting and established two characteristic styles of ink-drawing: the sharply angular brushwork where
as if his brush were intentionally made of hog bristles irregularly set” (*Epochs* 2: 81). The vital force of Sesshū’s broken line, “while feeling for the grandeur of spaces, scornfully rejects the perfect polish of the taper and of the edge,” and its massive qualities of *notan* (dark-light) fill the space of the painting (*Epochs* 2: 81). He further continues:

> But though Sesshu’s line dominates mass and colour, his notan taken as a whole—that is, notan of line as well as notan of filled space—is the richest of anybody’s except Kakei’s. […] Sesshu is more “spare of flesh,” as the Chinese would say; the structure is the architecture. Nevertheless his lines are so thick that they carry great notan value in their masses, which thus serve as something more than salient accents. (*Epochs* 2: 82)

Here, the line, which delineates the contour of natural objects as marginalized bounds in the Ruskinian tradition, gains an elevated role in determining and creating spaces. Sharing Fenollosa’s massive conception of the importance of the line, Dow also defines the term as not only the “boundaries of shapes” but also the “interrelations of lines and spaces” (67). The interfacial concept of the line enacting the space thus brings to light in the issue of *spacing*, or in Dow’s terms, composition, as the “appreciation of fineness of relation” (86).

The shift in perception and representation of a line—from the Ruskinian marginalized *out*-line to Fenollosa-Dow’s line as enriched *body* of the composition—belongs to a broader shift in representation, evident in the mid- to late-19th century. For example, the Pre-Raphaelites had already challenged the classic academic composition built upon the principle of *chiaroscuro*, the use of light and shadow adopted in Western painting since Raphael. Succeeding the Raphaelites, the Impressionist appreciation of momentary perception and the Post-Impressionist inclination to abstraction increasingly

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lines are “strong, straight or angular, and almost never curve” and the *hatsuboku*, or ‘splashed ink’ style where gray ink is spread freely on paper to make a composition out of empty space (Addiss 60-61; Tanaka 127).
undermined the mimetic tradition. Among these 19th-century reconfigurations of aesthetic and textual space, the transition from the Ruskinian painterly tradition to Fenollosa-Dow’s line compositions invited radical Modernist experiments in image and designs: “Make It New” as Ezra Pound put it.

Moreover, the East-West cultural interaction, in particular, a cultural fad called *Japonisme* that had been around since the late 1850s, directly and indirectly contributed to the shift in the spatial paradigm. Specifically, the graphic use of line, color and space in Japanese wood-cut printing (*ukiyo-e*) impacted the artistic techniques of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and Modernism. These Eastern-influenced art movements explored new dimensions of expression which conform neither to the principle of chiaroscuro nor to the linear perspective. The changes resulted in shifts of both one’s perception and representation of fine art. As Klaus Berger points out in *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse* (1980), the spectacular influence of the Japanese arts “led towards the threshold of a new way of seeing” (5):

The Impressionists’ interest in expanding space, in an expanded angle of sight, in an atmospheric blending of objects, and in the pursuit of incompleteness and open form, has already been ascribed to the stimulus of Japanese prints. These demonstrated the possibilities of displacement, twisting, abbreviation and free expansion of ‘objective’ space: that is, of a coexistence of different scales—without, of course, a trace of Impressionism. (5-6)

The Impressionists’ skills in mastering space are, for example, foregrounded in the techniques of Claude Monet (1840-1926) in using of contrastive pure pigments and visible traces of brushwork to intensify pictorial surfaces with the pervasive effects of light.

The Impressionists’ experiments in space soon developed into the Post-Impressionists’ creation of flat surface as color plane. Not a few of the distinctive
Post-Impressionists—such as Georges Seurat (1859-91), Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)—have borrowed their pictorial compositions as well as their inspirational motifs from Japanese woodcuts and decorative arts. Their “use of abstracting basic forms”—“[t]he power of line, expression through the arabesque, planer tension, rhythm conveyed through pattering, dissection of colour, discontinuity”—explores compositional space with a new awareness of form and line (Berger 6). Clearly, the Fenollosa-Dow art education system was in close alliance with not only the Japanese arts but also the European Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art movements. Before collaborating with Fenollosa, Dow formulated “bold new ideas about abstraction and synthesis” in companionship with the radical colorists Paul Gauguin, Paul Serusier, and Emile Bernard in Pont Aven (Green and Poesch 60).

Among these Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists, specifically, James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) illustrates the Modernist awareness of aesthetic space. Whistler is an American-born, British-based painter and etcher, who claimed the importance of artistic composition with his leading aesthetic credo “art for art’s sake.” Whistler’s abstract landscapes in the Nocturne series had a compositional resemblance to Japanese woodcut printings, in particular, to those by Hiroshige (Ono 72-86). Famously, one of the Nocturne series, Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket (ca.1874), triggered John Ruskin’s notorious attack on Whistler’s art as “flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face” (Parkes 593).10 Ahead of Fenollosa and Dow’s art reformation, Whistler challenged Ruskin’s mimetic fidelity to nature in favor of the Modernist

10 Ruskin’s criticism provoked Whistler’s suing of Ruskin for a libel in 1878. The trial that elicited loud public controversy resulted in Whistler’s victory, but he won a mere farthing for nominal damages (Parkes 593).
attention to autonomous aesthetic space.

Fenollosa himself was aware of these Impressionist and Post-Impressionist stylistic interactions with Oriental painting. For instance, he evaluates the aforementioned Sesshū’s brushstroke in comparison with the brush magic of Sargent and Whistler (Epochs 2: 82). In his article, “The Place in History of Mr. Whistler’s Art” (1903), too, Fenollosa highly appreciates Whistler’s “massy drapery line” as well as his technique of condensation, the “power to reduce even a mass of foreground figures to a fine—and correct—impressionistic blur of a single tint” (16). Fenollosa’s comment that Whistler “out-Sesshus Sesshu” piquantly shows his comparative focus on the modern dynamics between Eastern and Western art (16).

Fenollosa and Dow built their theory of composition upon the forerunners of the late 19th-century experiments in aesthetic space: the Impressionists’ negation of a naturalist depth of representation, the Post-Impressionists’ abstraction in colors and forms, and Whistler’s emphasis on flat surfaces. In addition, from his evolutionary standpoint as one putting the history of world art in perspective, Fenollosa even qualifies his Orientalist affirmation of the aesthetic values of the line by exploring the lineage of the decorative art tradition from the classic Greek to Italian pre-Raphael period. In terms of the revival of the decorative art, furthermore, the Fenollosa-Dow system of art education belongs to the same current as Art Nouveau (ca.1890-1914), which was a “revolt against the historicist, realist, and rational approaches to form and subject-matter” (Farr 66). These varied approaches epitomize the gradual detachment from the “objective” or “descriptive” mode of representation, which coincides with the collapse of linear perspective, and the awakening of early Modernist aestheticism—art for art’s sake.
Thus, in direct and indirect crosscurrents with the Japanese art and calligraphic cultures, the newly-discovered concept of design—the art of composition of lines, notan (dark-light), and colors—propelled the genre of graphic art in the 20th century. However, the significance of the Fenollosa-Dow spatial concept of line and composition must be further examined not only in the context of art history but also in its coordination with the development of philosophical or theoretical space, because what is at stake is the very interconnection bridging Fenollosa’s aesthetic concerns in Oriental art to the textual space of the Chinese ideographs.

In the next section, I will investigate the Western literary and philosophical undercurrents which led Fenollosa to appreciate the textual space of Chinese ideographs. Erwin Panofsky, in *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, has claimed: “‘aesthetic space’ and ‘theoretical space’ recast perceptual space” (45). So, how could textual space—the interlinear proportion of space and visual appearances of letters—not share the same perceptual space? For example, the Japanese traditional arts are often marked by their attention to the decorative qualities of lines and color as well as the compositional significance of space, “often empty space allied with asymmetrical compositions” (Addiss 9). Similarly, Stephen Addiss points out that traditional calligraphic five-line or three-line poems (respectively, waka and haiku) suggest “emotion and a sense of movement and change” (9); the asymmetrical empty space in-between lines intensifies the same effect.11 Since Fenollosa’s fascination with line and space in East Asian arts pointedly anticipates his later interest in ideograms, I pursue the coordination between aesthetic space and textual space in his conception of the “line idea” or “line

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11 In contrast, Addiss points out that the “paired lines of most Chinese and Western poetry” address symmetry, which often “implies rationality and timeless balance” (9).
system”—the philosophical diction he developed from his appreciation of line and spacing.

2. Line System: The Philosophical Tradition of Textual Organicism

Whistler’s early Modernist pursuit of aestheticism and Fenollosa-Dow’s notion of composition—“putting together of lines, nōtan, and colors”—centered on a belief in autonomous artwork in the realm of aesthetic space. In other words, Fenollosa and Dow attempted to discover the unique laws and conditions to make an artwork beautiful and complete in itself. By elaborating on Fenollosa’s view of composition further as the synthetic form of textual space, my argument will explicate the underlying organicist discourses surrounding his conception of line idea and line system.

Fenollosa’s philosophical speculations about line and spacing initiate my study of the concept of autonomous space. Leafing through his manuscripts, I found that one of the most noticeable characteristics is his aural-oriented style of writing, for instance, his use of ample metaphors in plain language. Throughout most of his 40-year career, Fenollosa earned a living as a teacher and a lecturer; therefore, it is not surprising that many of his unpublished texts on Oriental art and art education were originally composed as lectures. In one such unpublished manuscript, titled “The Lessons of Japanese Art” (1891), Fenollosa elaborates on the beauty and abstruse significance of the concept of the line. He claims:

Beauty of a line does not mean any superficial adornment, nor any prescribed conformity to supposed laws of curvature, nothing small, mean, negative or general. It embodies, rather like great music, something new, individual, self-complete, ennobling, o[v]ermastering, presenting its own law to itself.
The sequence of adjectives in the final two lines depicts a distinctively independent form of beauty, which Fenollosa termed a “line idea.” He also phrased the same concept as a “line system” and a “line organism” and, in many of his lectures, theorized it as the key notion of composition governing Chinese and Japanese paintings.

In the same lecture, Fenollosa further describes his “line idea” as a synthesis of lines unifying spatial recognition:

Now it is just such a synthetic whole which underlies the potentiality of a line idea. The lines or forms of things as regarded by science are steps in a serial thinking, a causal chain. But when we have a group of lines such that as each is added, a new substance or thought comes into being, unthinkable except in just that combination, then we have before is beauty of lines, an individual line idea. (“Lessons” bMS Am 1759.2 [54]: 15)

In opposition to the scientific grasp of line as linearity or causality, a line idea presents a unique textual configuration of lines that composes a synthetic whole. This conception of the line idea was built on Fenollosa’s aesthetic exploration of the articulating role of lines; these lines simultaneously divide space, interconnect one part to other parts, and integrate the whole. Developed from Fenollosa’s harmonious spacing or, borrowing Dow’s term, “proportion” or “appreciation of fineness of relations,” Fenollosa’s line idea—or properly, a line system—here aims at an organic form of synthesis (86).

Fenollosa’s synthetic conception of line system investigates a new way of perceiving and constructing space. His rich philosophical diction orients this spatial composition of lines in terms of the Romantic and Hegelian discourses of wholeness. For example, in “Preliminary Lectures on The Theory of Literature,” presented on January 25th 1898,

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13 By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Fenollosa elaborates upon his “line system” through the notion of individual wholeness. Composed during a period of Fenollosa’s burgeoning interest in Chinese and Japanese textual cultures, this essay not only demonstrates his thoughts on the aesthetic qualities of literature, but also establishes a vital link between his aesthetic interests in spacing and ideogrammic textual space.¹⁴

In the essay, Fenollosa values in literature the qualities of “inherence, uniqueness, individual wholeness, and harmony” and specifically appreciates the literary characteristic of wholeness (“Preliminary” 135). According to Fenollosa, there are four different approaches to the conception of wholeness: 1) a mathematical wholeness, “variable, and relative to the accidental nature of the grouping” (129); 2) wholeness in terms of chemical composition, where the whole has different qualities from the sum of its parts (130); 3) dynamic wholeness concerning both quality and quantity, typically that of a living animal, whose parts “could not exist as parts, unless they worked together in a specific way” (130); 4) a perfect wholeness in the name of individuality. These definitions of wholeness, among other things, show Fenollosa’s holistic interest in the relation between the parts and the whole in a literary work.

Most highly, Fenollosa esteems the fourth category of individual wholeness as the primary quality of a literary piece. The third type of wholeness, “organic integration” or “organic unity,” is critically based on 19th-century discourses on organicism, especially

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¹⁴ In 1898, while teaching English and English literature at the Higher Normal School in Tokyo, Fenollosa once more started to study noh acting and singing, and later he used these skills to translate noh scripts. The next year, he further undertook the study of Chinese characters under the tutelage of Mori Kainan (1863-1911), a distinguished scholar and creator of Chinese poems (kanshi) in Meiji Japan. Fenollosa went back to the U.S. in 1900, but while continuing his study of Chinese history and literature at Columbia University, he is said to have finished, circa 1901-1903, the basic manuscript of “The Chinese Written Language as a Medium of Poetry” (Yamaguchi 315-28).
those of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). By developing his own notion of individual wholeness beyond the static abstraction of Spencerian mechanical organism, Fenollosa describes the dynamic interrelation between the whole and the parts in the fourth type. Fenollosa writes:

He [the author] must see the whole and the parts together, as one individual. If he sees the parts first, there is no chance that they will form a true individual. If he sees the whole first, without the parts, then it is only an abstract idea, not inherent to the literature, but external to it. [...] The wonderful fact is that just that concrete idea, that literary individuality, can exist only just in that perfect combination of the parts. Each defines the other, because each is the other. (“Preliminary” 133)

According to Fenollosa, individual wholeness not only signifies the organization of parts into a whole, but also indicates a form of close coordination which makes it impossible to separate the parts and the whole, inside and outside (“Preliminary” 132). For instance, this form of organic coordination between parts and whole may be considered via the nature of a Chinese ideograph as a compound. An ideograph 本 (basis) functions in its difference from 体 (human + basis, body). Similarly, 休 (human + tree, to rest) functions in its difference from 林 (tree + tree, grove), 沐 (water + tree, bathing), and so forth. A single Chinese ideograph needs to be deciphered as a part of an intertextual network; the whole can be constantly created and recreated through the interaction between the parts and the whole.

Fenollosa’s holistic pursuit of wholeness recalls the Romantic notion of a symbol, which diffuses, blends, and fuses the living parts into a harmonious wholeness (Coleridge 681). Indeed, he compares literature to a transparent, crystalline gem—an emblematic Romantic metaphor—in which “every part is seen clearly working in every other part” (“Preliminary” 134). Built on this Romantic conception of the symbol, Fenollosa
further explicates individual wholeness through the notion of harmony, whose etymology in Greek signifies “jointing, proportion, rule, order, pattern” (“Preliminary” 135). The organic connotation of harmony as “joint,” which leaves its trace in the terminology of English anatomy, specifically caught Fenollosa’s attention. At the same time, Fenollosa gives shades to the meaning of the word harmony by referencing the Chinese characters 理 (rì), “an inherent principle of argument, i.e. natural order,” and 節 (setsu), which primarily means “a joint of bamboo” (“Preliminary” 135). In other words, indicating his growing interest in Chinese textual cultures, Fenollosa imagines harmony as an articulated whole whose elements have “inherent affinities” or a “natural adaptability to unite” (135). After elaborating on the concept of a harmonious whole, Fenollosa claims: “The tissue of a work of literature must be as closely knit, as the substances of organic life. It is alive, all through” (“Preliminary” 136). Fenollosa’s organic interpretation of a harmonious whole crucially echoes the Romantic symbol as an articulated organic entity.

Among the Western discourses on organicism, Lawrence Chisolm succinctly names three universal philosophies that influenced Fenollosa: “Emersonian pantheism, Spencerian mechanism, [and] Hegelian metaphysics” (28). Specifically, Fenollosa’s organicist appreciation of an individual whole inscribes the transcendentalist influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82). According to Hwa Yol Jung, the Emersonian emblematic grasp of nature—“nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part” (Emerson 30)—and Emerson’s “enchantment with Egyptian hieroglyphics” are echoed in Fenollosa’s fascination with Chinese ideographs (Jung 212). As an Orientalist,  

15 More generally, harmony also addresses the “natural adaptation to one another of several things or parts, as of a joint to its socket” (“Preliminary” 135).
Fenollosa attempted to read the language of Nature, viewing an ideogram as a “vivid short-hand picture of the operations of nature,” an idea I will explore further in the next section (CWL 355).

The genesis of Fenollosa’s organic notion of wholeness can be traced back to his undergraduate and graduate years at Harvard (1870-76). For example, his essay “Pantheism,” delivered at a commencement ceremony in 1874, demonstrates a clear syncretism of the Emersonian and Spencerian ideas. While proclaiming the individual within God-Nature as a “living organism” (87), Fenollosa inquires:

[I]s it not time that every atom of matter enfolds the germs of selfhood, just as the future flowers and fruit are wrapped away in the buds of Spring? [. . .] Atom, cell, limb, man, family, society, nation, world, God! These are but the steps which every monad climbs in the thought of the Universal One. The solar system with its wonderful distances is as dense as an individual as my body. I feel the throbs of life in the sun, as my finger-tips do the pulsations of my heart. There is no dividing line between thee and me. Being and force are one, and we are both. (“Pantheism” 87)

Here, Fenollosa’s Pantheist affinity with nature as a living organism explicitly intersects with Leibniz’s view of an individual as a monad and the Spencerian discourse of the social organism. Man as an individual is situated in the midst of cosmic expansion, simultaneously as a whole and as a part. According to Chisolm, in concert with the Anglo-American transcendentalist climate, the American “faith in progress, perfectibility, and science” propelled the popularity of the Spencerian discourse in the U.S. (Chisolm 24). Fenollosa also writes: “The parts of Society, while becoming more and more differentiated, become more and more dependent upon one another, more and more united into an organism” (“Pantheism” 88-89). In this Romantic remark, composed when he was a 21-year-old youth, Fenollosa manifests his hopeful belief in evolution and his Romantic search for a harmonious whole.
Another important critical idea in Fenollosa’s notion of individual wholeness is synthesis, the key aesthetic-philosophical concept dissected by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Chisolm succinctly describes Hegel’s long-lasting influence on Fenollosa, starting from “his early efforts to revive Japanese national art” by applying “a formal Hegelian interpretation to traditional Sino-Japanese canons” (201). For example, just as Hegel elucidated the dynamic development from the Orient to the Christian kingdoms in his lectures on the philosophy of history, Fenollosa borrowed the Hegelian comparative method in *Epochs* and elucidated how Japanese art had developed from Chinese art.\footnote{Not only for Fenollosa, but also for Dow, the influence of the Hegelian notion of synthesis was crucial. To remind ourselves, the title of Dow’s drawing manual, *Composition*, signifies “the ‘putting together’ of lines, masses and colors to make a harmony,” i.e. an art of synthesis (63). Furthermore, the current edition of *Composition* (1997), reprinted from the final 1941 edition, bears on the title page the logotypic word ΣΨΝΘΕΣΙΣ—“Synthesis” in Greek—which signifies “aesthetic condensation and the congruence of form and content” (Masheck 18).}

Hegel’s influence on Fenollosa’s notion of individual wholeness stems more specifically from Hegel’s organicist understanding of poetry as an art integrating both the materiality of painting and the mobility of music. According to Hegel, the first requirement of poetry is that it “be shaped into a genuinely organic whole” and represent the “artistic totality which unites in itself the extremes of the visual arts and music” (145; 143). Similarly, inspired by Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as well as Beethoven’s and Brahms’ symphonies, Fenollosa developed his notion of harmonious wholeness by inter-mediaily incorporating his speculations about music and painting. Describing the grand shift in modern arts toward “the musical and the formal,” Fenollosa succinctly rephrases the rise of new art forms in terms of synthesis:
Here then all modern forms of art are freeing themselves in the line of music, by studying the spiritual wealth that lies in form. It is music; of color and line in painting; of word & rhythm, & imagery in poetry.

It is always synthesis. An artful impression of classic form is to it an old worn-out affectation. Hence we can say; transition from the sculptural and intellectual, to the musical and the formal. (“Modern” 112)

Fenollosa borrows a Hegelian model of the development of art—from symbolic, to classic, to Romantic—and points out a shift from the classic stability of sculpture to the mobility of music, from metaphysical form in abstraction to physical form in dynamics. On another level, this shift coincides with the late 19th-century symbolist reclamation of an organic whole in poetry through synesthetic correspondence in musical rhythm and vivid imagery. This new art form, in the name of synthesis, prefigures Ezra Pound’s Imagist and Vorticist trans-medial exploration of primary form—the maximum point of “energy expressing itself in pattern”—as I will examine in Chapter Two (EPVA 8).

Building on these Romantic, Spencerian, and Hegelian discourses of organismism, Fenollosa developed his notion of individual harmonious wholeness into his “line idea,” an organic composition of lines as the “pure spring and tangle of a line system” (“Modern” 112). By adding one single line to another, the combination of lines with their rhythmic flow and movement creates and integrates space. According to Fenollosa,

[t]he unity [...] is not the single abstract fact of the combination of parts, but the great multiplicity of the cross-effects between any partial grouping of the parts. It is, therefore, concrete, down to the smallest subdivision of the parts. (“Preliminary” 135-36)

In opposition to the Platonic form in abstraction, Fenollosa envisioned the organic whole as line system in the “great multiplicity of cross-effects.” Following this statement, Fenollosa visualized his holistic terms—individual wholeness and harmony—as a
composition of lines, duplicated here in Figure 3.

![Figure 3 Line System (Fenollosa, “Preliminary” 136)](image)

The closely-knit lines of Fenollosa’s individual wholeness and harmony could afford varied multiplicity and uniqueness. Fenollosa imagines a literary piece as such an organism—an autonomous textual entity—which is alive and has its own course of growth. To borrow his own expressions, the line system embodies, “like great music, something new, individual, self-complete, ennobling, o[v]ermastering, presenting its own law to itself” (“Lessons” bMS Am 1759.2 [54]: 6). Fenollosa’s aesthetic speculations about line and spacing are, thus, shaped into the autonomous space of the line system.

As organic texture and as a textual organism, the line system presents a new synthetic form of beauty in the name of individuality. His synthetic grasp of textual space already reveals his developing interest in the textual space of ideograms as semi-pictorial, “synthetic language” (Fenollosa, “Folk” 92). In “Folk Lore Society—June 8th, 1892: Oriental Poetry in Relation to Art,” Fenollosa perceptively observes the interrelation between aesthetic and textual space in Chinese language, remarking that “this synthetic power of words corresponds to synthetic use of the brush in painting—a stroke means much” (92). Fenollosa further observes that “[p]ainting and poetry on one piece of paper—Thus Chinese poetry is pictorial, and painting poetical” (92). By

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17 By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
encompassing the mobility of music and spatiality of painting, Fenollosa’s Chinese ideographs reclaim the individual wholeness of a literary text in its unique combination and closely-knit cross-effects.

Finally, Fenollosa’s vision of the line system foregrounds the textual space of Chinese ideographs literally as a composition of lines. That is, his line system would be well-suited to address the multi-dimensions of Chinese and Japanese characters, created by their rules about stroke orders and page formatting. As Shinoda Kōichirō points out, in Chinese and Japanese writing a stroke of one character is written from up to down and left to right, while sentences in traditional page-formatting run from up to down and right to left. As a result, the movements created in writing will cross in more than three layers (Keishō 102-03). By way of his line system, Fenollosa imagined Chinese ideographs as such an individual textual composition, whose tangles of lines interrelate with each other and compose a closely-knit textual organicism.

In conclusion, the line system, which integrates Fenollosa’s aesthetic theory of composition and his discourse on Chinese ideographs, presents a site where the Romantic fascination with organic articulation was combined with the 19th-century evolutionary discourses of organicism, resulting in an autonomous textual space. The Hegelian dialectic, which recreates the parts and the whole in the name of synthesis, also provides a fundamental dynamic of self-transformation in Fenollosa’s line system. In the next section, by investigating Fenollosa’s theoretical links to Modernist discourses on language, my argument further traces the development of Fenollosa’s line system in the textual space of Chinese ideographs.
3. Fenollosa’s Chinese Ideographs

Fenollosa’s line system, as a closely-knit textual organicism, embodied his belief in the Romantic ideal of individual harmonious wholeness. Simultaneously, Fenollosa paid attention to the organic tangles of lines in Chinese ideographs, which imitate the interconnected beings of natural objects in “the meeting points of actions, cross-sections” (CWL 356). The resemblance of Chinese ideographs to the line system is evident in one of the key passages in “The Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry” (Murakata 2001). Fenollosa writes:

After all, a true noun, an isolated thing in Nature does not exist. Things are only the terminal points, or rather, the meeting points of actions, cross-sections, so to speak, cut through actions, photographic snapshots taken of them. Neither, on the other hand, can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in Nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one; things in motion, motion in things: and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them. (CWL 356-57)

Fenollosa imagines Nature as a closely-knit line system, in which things as nodes comprised by nouns are interrelated by lines of verbs. A Chinese ideograph—a composition of lines—keeps its etymological connection to natural objects in its visual and material appearance and embodies the workings of Nature both as a noun and a verb.

Fenollosa’s photographic grasp of Chinese ideographs as “things in motion” and “motion in things” again draws our attention to the articulating function of lines. As is repeatedly emphasized, a line, which divides and interconnects space, integrates one’s spatial recognition like the vein of a leaf. In his speculation about individual wholeness, Fenollosa appreciated the joint’s articulating function and applied the notion of individuality not only to the whole in its spatial synthesis, but also to the joint as a part. In Figure 4 below, for example, Fenollosa finds individuality created at the intersection of
two or more lines.

Fig. 4 Articulating Lines (Fenollosa, “Preliminary” 142).

Through the articulating joints, the individuality of a part composes the whole. Therefore, Fenollosa states: “when individuality dies, the power of combination dies, the power of reconstruction dies, the power of insight dies, the power of institutions dies [...]” (“Preliminary” 142). Fenollosa’s emphasis on the individual joint as the essential component of the social organism simultaneously highlights the importance of articulation in his theory of composition.

Indeed, the two layers of the notion of articulation—jointing and utterance in words—are the central metaphors in Fenollosa’s theory of composition as well as in his discourse on Chinese ideographs. The second chapter of “Preliminary Lectures on the Theory of Literature,” subtitled “Literature as Unity of Thought,” provides an opportunity to examine his concept of articulation in the realm of language and demonstrates his intellectual development toward a “vitalist gestalt” (Chisolm 201). In his speculation on the relationship between thought and language, Fenollosa describes consciousness as a realm of pre-language, which is “no blank space or empty sheet, but a kinetoscope filled with more or less definite, yet changing images” (“Preliminary” 151). In such a rich realm of mobile images, the cohesive power of language inevitably defines and

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18 Chisolm describes that the influence of Hegel’s universal philosophy on Fenollosa shifts “from rationalistic categories toward a vitalist gestalt” (201). According to Chisolm, Fenollosa kept the Hegelian term “synthesis” to describe “aesthetic experience as a whole, but his attention gradually focused on the psychological processes of creation and appreciation, the flashing glimpse of possibilities uniquely ordered” (201).
articulates the images as thought. As Fenollosa explains, “[e]ven if I recite a number of words at random, some fragments of thought are immediately suggested, even if they do not coalesce” (“Preliminary” 151). Like “spots on a wall” or the “dispositions of stars,” a thought takes form in language, produces context within its linkages, and invites the readers or hearers to interpret its meaning (151). It would not be far-fetched to find a reflection of Chinese ideographs in Fenollosa’s view of thought as mobile images, since ideographic images also embody ideas in themselves.

Fenollosa’s grasp of consciousness as a realm of mobile images is distinctively imbued with the Emersonian notion of a symbol. In “The Poet” (1844), Emerson praises the poet, who, like the biblical Adam, is the “Namer or Language-maker” and “reattaches things to nature and the Whole” with the articulating power of language (34; 33). According to Emerson, the language of the poet “shows us all things in their right series and procession” and grasps transforming nature (33). Therefore, the symbol—the poet’s language—is never a static perfection as in the Platonic notion of idea. Rather, it has the ceaseless flow of a natural process, briefly coded in language but soon decoded in the same current, and it continues to transform itself. In other words, one’s thought is inseparable from the shifting forms of the symbol. Therefore, Emerson claims of humans themselves: “We are symbols and inhabit symbols” (33).

Sharing the Romantic belief in symbolic perfection, however, Emerson’s fluxional notion of the symbol reveals his early Modernist awakening to the crisis in language. By positing a contrast between the poet’s imaginative language and the mystic’s abstruse language, Emerson’s metaphors demonstrate his reservations regarding the restrictive power of language, the supremacy of language over human consciousness. In his
the quality of the imagination is to flow, and not to freeze. The poet did not stop at the color or the form, but read their meaning; neither may he rest in this meaning, but he makes the same objects exponents of his new thought. Here is the difference betwixt the poet and the mystic, that the last nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false. For all symbols are fluxional; all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead. (40-41)

Emerson’s metaphor of the homestead, built of stale, dead languages, represents the stagnation of one’s thought in the so-called “prison house of language.” He remarks: “Every thought is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison” (40). Emerson’s critique of dead metaphor is echoed in Friedrich Nietzsche’s famous attack on truth, proclaiming it a “mobile army of metaphors [. . .] which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour” (878). Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s alertness to the limitation of human consciousness by language leads to the Modernists’ radical stylistic experiments challenging the convention of their thoughts and expressions.

Having developed his philosophical thought through contact with Emerson’s late-Romanticism, Fenollosa shares not only Emerson’s fluxional notion of the symbol, but also his criticism of the inflexibility and fixity of language. Throughout “Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry,” one observes Fenollosa’s Emersonian strain, both in terms of nature as process in organic interrelations as well as in his growing concern for the limitations of language. According to Fenollosa,

acts are successive, even continuous; one causes, or passes into another. And though we may string never so many clauses into a single compound sentence, motion leaks everywhere, like electricity from an exposed fire. All processes in nature are interrelated; and thus there could be no complete sentence but one which it would require all time to pronounce. (CWL 358)

Not unlike the Romanticists, who could pursue the wholeness of one’s experience in the
name of a symbol, Fenollosa suggests that a successive flow of nature cannot be comprehended in the constrained form of a sentence, with its definite beginning and ending.

Having encountered the cultural otherness of the Orient, however, Fenollosa used Chinese ideographs to retrieve the ample, fluid realm of consciousness. He believed that Chinese ideographs enable one to represent an object in its active mode of change and its interrelation with other objects. For instance, in “The Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry” (2001), edited by Murakata Akiko, Fenollosa carefully interconnects his interest in mobile images to the Chinese ideographs themselves. First, he describes the process of perception:

Suppose that we look out of a window, and watch a man. Suddenly he turns his head, and actively fixes his attention upon something. We look ourselves, and see that his vision has been focused upon a horse. We first saw the man before he acted; second, while he acted; third, we saw the object toward which his action was directed. In speech, we split up the rapid continuity of this action, and of its picture, into its three essential parts or joints, in the right order, and say

“Man sees horse.” (CWL 354)

When one uses language—the phonetic language for Western readers—the continuous process of perception is divided into three “joints”: “Man sees horse.” As Fenollosa’s long description suggests, there are uncountable ways to describe the perceptual sequence. In particular, Fenollosa emphasizes that “we might denote these stages of our thought by equally arbitrary symbols, that had no basis in sound; as, for example, by these three visible forms, “

\[ \text{Man sees horse} \]

人 見 馬

(CWL 354)
The three lines of the different signs denote a shift of verbal perception from aural to visual, through which the readers begin to see the meanings of the Chinese characters in their spatial presence.

When comparing the two editions—Murakata’s and Pound’s—of Fenollosa’s work, Murakata’s edition better demonstrates how Fenollosa integrates the fluid realm of consciousness into verbal imagery through Chinese ideographs. The handwritten drawings of the three signs—“||||—”—help the Western readers to understand how these ideograms appear on paper and how they communicate without sound. In contrast, Pound’s edition changes the original phrase “by these three visible forms” into “by three Chinese characters,” omits the handwritten symbols themselves, and thus results in neglecting the significance of visual images for Fenollosa’s argument (CWC 8).

Fenollosa primarily qualifies the Chinese ideographs as mobile images. The Sinologists frequently criticize Western linguists’ limited understanding of the Chinese writing system as purely pictographic or ideogrammatic (Gu 105). Indeed, Fenollosa himself would have been fully aware of his oversimplification in regarding and describing an ideogram as a “vivid short-hand picture of the operations of nature” (CWL 355). Still, what was significant for Fenollosa is to read Chinese ideographs as a pictorial sequence, because Fenollosa believed, following Emerson, that the “quality of the imagination is to flow” (Emerson 40):

First, there stands the man upon his two legs. Second, his eye moves through space—a bold figure—represented by moving legs drawn under the modified picture of an eye. Third, at the end of the eye’s journey, stands the horse upon his four legs.

The thought-picture, therefore, is not only as well called up by these signs as by words, but far more vividly and concretely. Legs belong to all three characters: they are alive. The group holds something of the quality of a
continuous moving picture. (CWL 355)

The Chinese ideographs not only present the figures of objects, but also express the process of time, which is measured by the spatial movement of the eye. The three Chinese characters—“人見馬”—which could have been conceived by Western readers as mere “signs” or “signifiers,” create a vivid and concrete “thought-picture.” Fenollosa’s use of personification that “[l]egs belong to all three characters” reveals his organicist fascination with metamorphosing word and image. Furthermore, in his Hegelian remark that Chinese poetry speaks “at once with the vividness of Painting, and with the Mobility of Sounds,” Fenollosa thus envisioned Chinese ideographs as an autonomous textual entity. Like an organism, Chinese written characters are “alive” and have the agency to affect others.

It should be noted that Fenollosa’s interest in the “thought-picture,” sparked by the Chinese ideograph, intersects with the vitalist explorations of image at the turn of the century. For instance, when Fenollosa states that “there are no things in nature, only processes,” this Emersonian grasp of the fluidity of life aligns with the vitalist ideas of Walter Pater (1839-94) or Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who prioritized the process or experience of life rather than mere things in themselves (“Preliminary” 156). Specifically, Fenollosa’s image of a spiral that expresses the “fluid internality of thought” coincides with Bergson’s definition of duration as a totality of experience (“Preliminary” 156). The intersections between Fenollosa’s organicist discourse of Chinese ideographs and the vitalist discourse will be explored further in Chapter Two, in the discussion of the Modernist view of image and its relation to Pound’s ideogrammic method.

Among the early Modernist inquiries into the relation between thought and image,
Sigmund Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), written around the same period as Fenollosa’s essay on Chinese ideographs, highlights the early Modernist shift in the perception of language. As is well known, Freud distinguishes dreams into manifest and latent contents: “dream-content” and “dream-thoughts.” According to Freud, the language of dream content has different patterns of articulation—termed condensation, displacement, and overdetermination—that need to be deciphered into a logical narrative of dream-thoughts. While the language of dream-thoughts can be compared to the familiar codes of alphabetic characters, the “dream-content” is comparable to hieroglyphs, functioning like a “picture-puzzle” or a “rebus” (312). For the reader’s better understanding, Freud explains the mechanics of the dream-work with an analogy of a pictorial composition:

> Suppose I have a picture-puzzle, a rebus, in front of me. It depicts a house with a boat on its roof, a single letter of the alphabet, the figure of a running man whose head has been conjured away, and so on. Now I might be misled into raising objections and declaring that the picture as a whole and its component parts are nonsensical. (312)

The language of dream-content does not conform to the mimetic conventions of reality. In order to read the rebus, one needs to detour from linear or “grammatical” interpretation. As Freud explains,

> we can only form a proper judgement of the rebus if we put aside criticisms such as these of the whole composition and its parts and if, instead, we try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be represented by that element in some way or other. The words which are put together in this way are no longer nonsensical but may form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance. (312)

Freud emphasizes reading the individual relationship between each component of the rebus rather than interpreting the whole rebus as a single pictorial composition. The difference between the two approaches is subtle but significant, as Freud’s analogy of
pictorial composition suggests a turn from analytical to synthetic thinking. That is, by grasping the process of dream-interpretation as an attempt at synthetic re-articulation, Freud liberates the language of dream-content from the rational frame of a deductive entity.

Freud’s synthetic approach to the psychic realm through the analogy of the pictorial composition peculiarly corresponds to Fenollosa’s process for interpreting Chinese ideographs. Like Freud, Fenollosa asserts that “[w]e cannot think life by analytical process; but thought is more synthetic yet, than life. Its absolute fluidity is something which organisms only approximate” (“Preliminary” 156). Furthermore, just as Freud reads the individual relations of the components of the rebus, Fenollosa attempts to decipher Chinese characters as synthetic compounds of radicals, i.e. combinations of different ideographic roots. It is helpful, here, to look at some of the examples of compounds from Fenollosa’s notes:

伙 (a messmate): man [人] + fire [火]

伏 (to lie down): man [人] + dog [犬]
   a dog crouching at a master’s feet

旦 (morning): Sun [日] rising over horizon.

東 (East): Sun [日] rising behind a tree [木]

(CWL 357, square brackets mine)

I want to emphasize, first, that Fenollosa’s interest in the Hegelian synthesis lies not in the static form of synthesis but in the dialectical process of articulation. As Fenollosa claims, “[t]wo things added together do not produce a third thing, but suggest some fundamental relation between them” (CWL 356). All of the English interpretations above show how a Chinese ideograph needs to be complemented by intransitive and
transitive verbs. Just as Freud’s translation of the language of dream-content into
dream-thoughts produces substantial amounts of narrative, Fenollosa’s interpretation of a
Chinese ideograph presents relations among things or the process by which things affect
others; a single ideographic character as compound elicits a verbal movement that
associates an ideographic part to other parts as well as one character to other characters.

This articulating function of Chinese ideographs is significant to the process of
considering a poem as a synthetic composition, since it creates a sense of simultaneity
and integrates textual space as a closely-knit textual organicism. The ideographic
interchangeability of the parts of speech and verbal qualities of ideographic roots
intensifies this sense of simultaneity. According to Fenollosa, the “Chinese ideographic
roots” not only represent a picture of a thing as noun, but also “carry in their face a verbal
idea of action” (CWL 356). Furthermore, some of the ideographic radicals, such as 言
(to speak [= mind + mouth]) and 八 (to separate [to open]), express “short-hand pictures
of actions or processes” (CWL 356). He continues:

[E]very written character in Chinese [. . .] is not exclusive of parts of speech,
but comprehensive; not something which is neither a verb, adjective, or noun,
but something which is all of these at once, and at all times. (CWL 366)

For instance, Fenollosa gives the example of the character 明, which simultaneously
signifies “sun and moon,” “to shine,” “bright,” “luminosity” (CWL 366); its meaning
depends on its context as well as its syntax. The interchangeability of the parts of
speech, the multi-valance of Chinese written characters, reinforces the verbal quality of a
Chinese ideograph. Thus, the visible traces resounding in the succeeding characters
creates the literary effect of simultaneity, one of the dominating concepts of Modernist
art.
The verbal quality and visual simultaneity of Chinese characters that affect one’s process of reading, again, evoke Fenollosa’s line system: a textual organism which transforms itself in the “great multiplicity of the cross-effects” (“Preliminary” 135). Fenollosa’s organic figures are made explicit when he writes:

[W]e can see, not only the forms of sentences, but literally the parts of speech, growing up, budding forth one out of the other. Like nature, the Chinese words are alive and plastic, because thing and action are not formally separated. (CWL 365)

Within the ceaseless interactions among the parts of speech, Chinese ideographs grow into organic tissues of lines and compose a synthetic whole.

Fenollosa’s grasp of Chinese ideographs as textual organicism, having been developed from his fascination with the organic flow of line in Oriental arts and his philosophical speculations about the line system, further integrates Western discourses of organicism and the Japanese organic view of language. For instance, his organic interpretation of Chinese ideographs brings to mind the Japanese animistic belief in language as *kotonoha* or “leaves of speech.” This perspective describes Japanese poetry as the seeds growing out of the human heart and developing into “leaves of ten thousand words” (Kino 35). Furthermore, Fenollosa’s animistic expression resonates with the traditional Japanese understanding of nature as 自然 that has two pronunciations: *shizen* and *jinen*. While *shizen* signifies physical nature, *jinen* means the spontaneous course of things, just as an acorn follows its own natural course of growth and becomes an oak.19

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19 The organic notion of 自然—*shizen* and *jinen*—infused with the Buddhist sense of transience, is aesthetically grounded in Japanese literature. A famous passage from *Hōjōki* (*The Ten Foot Square Hut*), written by Kamono Chōmei in the early 13th century, compares turbulent human affairs to the flow of a river, in which human beings are born and gone like shifting patches of foam: “Ceaselessly the river flows, and yet the water is never the same, while in the still pools the shifting foam gathers and is gone, never
Fenollosa adopts the Japanese spontaneous grasp of nature and its organic view of language, for example, when he writes: “In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling with mental counters, but to be watching things work out their own Fate” (CWL 355). By grafting the Japanese animistic view of nature and language onto Emersonian Romantic organicism, Fenollosa’s line system as autonomous textual entity thus finds a perfect embodiment in Chinese ideographs.

In conceptualizing Chinese ideographs as a closely-knit textual organism, the repeatedly-used verb *see*, which qualifies Fenollosa’s statements throughout the essay, constantly reminds readers of the visible presence of Chinese characters as a crucial part of the act of reading. In one aspect, this emphasis on vision indicates Fenollosa’s awareness of two different modes of language: oral and written. That is, while solidly built on the Romantic notion of a symbol—a momentary presence of the poet through his/her utterance—Fenollosa’s organicist exploration of autonomous textual entities discovers the durational totality, which cannot be fully comprehended by a momentary utterance of speech. In other words, Fenollosa’s emphasis on the spatial/visual simultaneity in the sequence of Chinese ideographs shows his early Modernist departure from the Romantic notion of the symbol. I will further investigate the Modernist departure from Romantic organicism in the next chapter through Ezra Pound’s transformative notion of form.

When Fenollosa specifically appreciates the visual/spatial simultaneity of Chinese characters, his organicist search for textual autonomy demands that he criticizes linearity, especially the linearity of phonetic language. Like his Romantic and early Modernist
predecessors, Emerson and Nietzsche, Fenollosa criticizes the degeneration of modern languages, which he believes have “become thin and cold” in the utilitarian lives of modern people (CWL 373). According to Fenollosa, “[n]ature has become for us less and less like a Paradise, and more and more like a Factory” (CWL 373-74). Above all, he laments the lack of vital forces in modern language; as he observes, the contemporary phonetic languages are dissociated from the “concreteness of natural processes” and their last stage of decay is “arrested, and embalmed in the dictionary” (CWL 373; 374). In contrast, Fenollosa thinks that the greatest advantage of the language of Chinese characters lies in the fact that “its very pictorial visibility” has been “able to retain its original creative poetry with far more vigor and vividness than any phonetic European tongue” (CWL 373). In short, his intellectual efforts to retrieve the organic flow of language through Chinese written characters precisely underscore his Modernist critique of dead metaphors, since Fenollosa believed that Chinese ideographs retain their concrete etymological origins visibly in their composition and, therefore, keep their vivid connection with natural objects.

Although Fenollosa’s critique of dead metaphors is not particularly unique, his sedimentary view of language illustrates a broader shift in Western conceptions of language, a shift in which Fenollosa was thoroughly engaged at the turn of the century. For instance, in tandem with Emerson’s assertion that “[l]anguage is fossil poetry,” Fenollosa uses the image of excavating the etymological strata of metaphors, which evokes the similar layers of Freud’s dream-language (34). Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Freud’s essay, “Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad” (1925), invites speculations on the importance of this shared metaphor for understanding Fenollosa’s and Freud’s implied
criticisms of the linearity of phonetic language.

Derrida regards dreams as “traces” left on the surface of consciousness and insightfully points out that the mechanism of the dream-work reveals the new horizon of “spacing”; the term he explains in Of Grammatology (1967) as “the articulation of space and time, the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space” (68). While the temporal irreversibility of phonetic language is subject to logical causality, the traces layered over the strata of the psychic realm gain their own concatenations, a spatial union of links:

Now in every silent or not wholly phonetic spacing out of meaning, concatenations are possible which no longer obey the linearity of logical time, the time of consciousness or preconsciousness, the time of “verbal representations.” The border between the non-phonetic space of writing (even “phonetic” writing) and the space of the stage (scène) of dreams is uncertain. (Derrida, “Freud” 217)

In Derrida’s criticism of phonocentricism, speech, whose utterance emerges in the irreversible passage of time, is often associated with linearity, while writing, “commitment of the word to space,” functions within a self-contained textual space (Ong 7). Derrida superimposes the theoretical contraposition between dream-thoughts and dream-content upon that of phonetic language and non-phonetic language. Indeed, the non-linear concatenations of dream-content are comparable to the spatial deployment of writing, whose graphic simultaneity in textual space generates unexpected associations. Derrida discovered the rich, condensed language of dreams through the “spatial synopses of pictograms, rebuses, hieroglyphics and nonphonetic writing” (“Freud” 217). The allegorical multiplicity between signifier and signified in these spatial signs doubles and triples the possible layers of interpretation.

The Freudian discovery of spatial width and depth of writing as against the linear
temporality of phonetic speech, of course, coincides with the early Modernist explorations of textual space. Around the same period as Freud and Fenollosa, Stéphane Mallarmé’s typographical poem, Un coup de dés (1897), had already dramatized the re-discovery of textual space through the poetic appreciation of blank space and play with the words on a page. The Mallarméan grasp of spatial simultaneity was further put to use in the Futurists’ typography, in Guillaume Apollinaire’s Calligrammes, and in the concrete poetry of the 1950s (Webster). More recently, Jerome J. McGann’s editorial interests in textual space and graphic context as “bibliographic code” incorporate spatial or formative layers of meanings into textual analysis.

Fenollosa’s discovery of the poetic potential of Chinese ideographs and his critique of the linearity of phonetic language are situated in this grand shift in the spatial conception of language. Both Fenollosa’s Chinese ideographs and Freud’s dream-content explore spatial articulation, which liberates language from the pre-existing logico-temporal paradigm. Specifically, Derrida’s definition of spacing—“the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space”—resembles Fenollosa’s spatio-durational grasp of a Chinese ideograph as a mobile image, which “speaks at once with the vividness of Painting, and with the Mobility of Sounds” (CWL 355).

Interestingly, having been inspired by the ideographic visual residue that reveals composition as a closely-knit textual organism, Fenollosa himself creates the effect of simultaneity in the text of Chinese Written Language. For instance, Fenollosa explains the poetic power of ideographic overtones by adopting ample metaphors of “illumination” and “light.” In his process of writing, these luminous images accumulate
“light in itself” and integrated the textual space into a single image “like an electronic bulb” (CWL 377). The passage below shows a glimpse of Fenollosa’s practice of ideographic simultaneity, which accrues luminosity in the interlinear spatial disposition:

Thus in all Poetry, a word is like a sun, with its corona and chromosphere revealed; words crowd upon words, and enwrap each other in their luminous envelopes, until sentences become clear, continuous bands of light. (CWL 380)

Fenollosa’s radiant word-images retrieve the Romantic conception of symbol as a transparent, crystalline gem in his notion of line system. The intense condensation of luminous images toward the end of his manuscript accumulates overtones, creates a durational sense of simultaneity, and integrates textual space as a single composition. 20

Taking a broader perspective, Fenollosa’s elucidation of spatial articulation through the synthetic composition of a line system is, if not sufficiently developed, clearly engaged in the late 19th-century attack on Western epistemology, the classified system of knowledge. Michel Foucault’s The Order of Things (Les Mots et les choses 1966), which elucidates the transformation of the discourses of “language” as the system of representation from the Renaissance to the 19th century, provides a potent historical context in which to evaluate the significance of a shift in perceptions of language.

Foucault traces backwards the formation of the modern episteme, a system of knowledge, which “constituted man’s particular mode of being” (Order 385). The major tool he employs to access the shift of episteme is language, a taxonomical space or

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20 As Haun Saussy points out in the introduction of the 2008 edition of Chinese Written Character, Pound deleted Fenollosa’s “recurrent metaphors for beauty or artistic unity”—especially his impressionistic verbiage on the overtones of Chinese ideographs—from his 1919/1936 edition (14). Nevertheless, as Takata Tomiichi elucidated, Fenollosa’s trope of light and illumination—as symbolized by a Chinese ideograph, 耀 (ray)—is succeeded by Pound, as he printed the same character on the title pages of his Cathay (1915), Noh, or Accomplishments (1916/17), and Cantos LII—LXXI (1940) (Takata, Shi 79).
Les Mots et les choses questions the tabula of language, an unquestioned ground upon which things are ordered according to its own internal rules. In his preface, for example, Foucault refers to the surrealist metaphor of the “chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table” (Order xvii). The juxtaposition of un-related objects on the same table would elicit an unexpected sense of beauty, which is otherwise beyond our scheme of cognition. Similarly, Foucault reveals the arbitrariness of the Western intellectual tableau and its transformation through the analysis of language of different historical periods.

Foucault’s historical analysis of the tableau of language, a site in which “language has intersected space” (Order xvii), brings to light the paradigm of European languages Fenollosa criticized through the spatial articulation of Chinese ideographs. In his second lecture in 1898, Fenollosa had already made critical remarks about the analytic principle and dualistic poles in European languages, which divide and classify thoughts into segments. In particular, his criticism targets the Western concept of the copula to be, which established the principle of identification, “A is B,” in Western systems of logic. Fenollosa criticized the copula—to be—as reducing all the potential interconnections between beings into a “barren perception of identity and difference between things, or, at most, of likeliness and unlikeness” (“Preliminary” 155). In Chinese Written Language, Fenollosa likewise attacks the brick-block construction of language, which is established on the identifying function of the linking verb to be:

[T]hought is a kind of brickyard, where the living soil of truth is dug up in lumps, squeezed out, and baked into little hard units called concepts, which we then pile away in rows according to size, and labelled with words, for future use. This use consists in picking out a few of these little bricks, each by its
convenient label, and in sticking them together into a sort of wall, called a sentence, by the use either of white mortar for the positive copula “is,” or of black mortar for the negative copula “is not.” (CWL 375)

Fenollosa’s criticism of language as a construction inevitably conjures up Emerson’s criticism of language as “homestead.” Western metaphysics since Aristotle formulated language in a hierarchy—at its apex is placed so-called truth in the form of abstract concepts, and at the bottom are natural objects. Fenollosa conceives that this analytic mode of thinking is the result of the “tyranny of Medieval Logic over Europe” (CWL 375). In opposition to the analytic law of identity and difference, Fenollosa asserts the importance of the synthetic thinking emblematized by Chinese ideographs, which show the organic interconnections among the parts of speech and create the spatial form of articulation.

Foucault’s historical description of the formation of the modern system of languages, however, demonstrates that Fenollosa’s attack of the copula more specifically targets the language of the Classical period, the hegemony of taxonomical nouns that had been founded on the diminishing function of the verb to be. According to Foucault, the organization of the science of signs as general grammar after the Renaissance was developed on a simple principle of “language analyses” (Order 115). The classification in language—in the case of verbs, for example, the stratifications of verb conjugations in tense and grammatical subject—caused verbs to dissociate from the performative mode of existence. At the same time, the Cartesian proposition of the grammatical subjects invited the pursuit of a better positioning in the world through the stratification of nouns. The following century of the Enlightenment, which achieved the encyclopaedic organization of episteme, thus framed one’s perspective in the shared order of a tableau.
“And so it is within language itself, exactly in that fold of words where analysis and space meet, that the first but endless possibility of progress arises” (Order 112-13). Thus, Foucault explains the 18th-century organization of perceptive space in and through language.

Because a system of identities and differences—a primary logic of classification—was founded on the grammatical equation “A is B,” the taxonomic dominance of nouns in the 17th century was inevitably founded on the linking verb to be. The concept of the copula is, in other words, a dead function which had lost its performative power to represent and elicit the being of things. Foucault explains this diminished role of the verb to be in the Classic period with an analogy of a pictorial tableau:

[T]he essential function of the verb to be is to relate all language to the representation that it designates. [. . .] Comparing language to a picture, one late-eighteenth-century grammarian defines nouns as forms, adjectives as colours, and the verb as the canvas itself, upon which the colours are visible. An invisible canvas, entirely overlaid by the brightness and design of the words, but one that provides language with the site on which to display its painting. (Order 95)

While nouns (forms) and adjectives (colours) determine the appearance of things, the verb to be, which designates the “representative character of language,” is compared to the canvas in and of itself (Order 95). In other words, the canvas is a common ground as textile upon which the beings of the things stand and without which the interconnections among things would be lost. This crossing between the aesthetic and semantic realms of composition may make much more sense in considering the formation of the modern system of language in conjunction with the rule of linear perspective in Western painting after the Renaissance.

Foucault’s interpretation of verbs as a common ground of articulation locates the
potential interconnections between the ideographic verbal residue and the articulating function of the line. That is, if Fenollosa borrows the same analogy of a pictorial tableau, his view of verbs as articulation, or the “transference of power,” would be best represented by lines in-between spaces, the key structure ruling the entire composition (CWL 359). As I have already discussed in section one, Fenollosa restored the manifest presence of articulating lines in a pictorial composition; similarly, he attempted to revive the transitive power of verbs, which, he thought, had been atrophied under the fixed pattern of identification. He claims: “Relations are more real and more important than the things which they relate. The forces which produce the branch-angles of an oak, lay, potent, in the acorn” (CWL 371). Both in his line system as well as in his own discourse on Chinese ideographs, Fenollosa insists on the importance of articulation—of making a relation—that interconnects one part to another and to the whole.

Thus, Fenollosa’s discoveries of the Chinese ideogram—its synthetic ability of articulation, spatial simultaneity, and verbal orientation as mobile images—highlight the broader shift in the relation between language and space. While language in the Classical period was marked by static, taxonomical hierarchies of objects, the so-called modern period after the late 18th-century is characterized by the “reintroduction of the verb” (Foucault, Order 96). Starting from Hegel’s dialectics, the intellectual development from Romanticism to Modernism variously explored the self-transforming dynamics of an autonomous system, which I explored through the notion of textual organism. Among Walter Pater’s notion of undulation, Stéphane Mallarmé’s poetic appreciation of blank space as silence, and so forth, Fenollosa’s line system and his discourse on Chinese ideographs reclaimed the spatial power of articulation in both
aesthetic and textual space.

4. Toward Modernist Space and Language

Fenollosa’s intellectual channel, which I have traced from his spatial conception of a line to his discourse of Chinese ideographs, has conveyed some of the significant characteristics of Modernist art and its language, such as the autonomous concept of aesthetic and textual space, the notion of simultaneity, a shift from analytic thinking to synthetic thinking, and the emphasis on verbal process. These shifts in the spatial paradigm are more or less shared in other artistic and literary movements from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Concerning Fenollosa’s emphasis on the literary effect of simultaneity, for instance, the spatiotemporality of Chinese ideographs integrating the mobility of music and spatiality of painting coincides with Henri Bergson’s notion of duration as a totality of one’s experience. Furthermore, Sergei Eisenstein’s cinematographic technique of montage, also inspired by Chinese ideographs as the synthetic dialectics of images and Japanese kabuki, further dramatizes the Modernist experiments with space and image.

On the one hand, it seems that Fenollosa’s discovery of the aesthetic and poetic values of Japanese paintings and Chinese language may have played a large role in the direct or indirect reformation of Western representation in art and in language. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of textual dynamics between East and West, one cannot neglect another direction of influence. The transformation of Japanese language in the Meiji period (1868-1912) under Western influences demonstrates that the introduction of
the European phonetic concept of language, along with its mimetic principle, resulted in the transformation of Japanese spatial perception and views on language. In particular, the notion of *shasei*, “copying of life,” which was introduced alongside the technique of realism in Western oil paintings, coordinates with the suppression of ideograms in the process of the *genbun itchi* movement (the unification between spoken and written language) since around the 1880s (Karatani). The aesthetic and textual dynamics in the history of modern Japanese language will be investigated in Chapter Three through the Japanese Modernists’ rediscovery of Chinese written characters (*kanji*).

As I will show, Fenollosa’s emphasis on articulation gained further significance in the Modernist discourse of social organism. A side note in Fenollosa’s “Chinese Written Language,” with which I will close this chapter, displays Fenollosa’s conviction in the importance of articulation regarding modern communication:

> So a nerve, a wire, a roadway, and a clearing house are only varying channels which communication forces for itself. [. . .] Laws of structure are the same in the spiritual and the material world. Human character grows with the same stresses and knots as mountain pines. (*CWL* 371-72)

The functional association between “line” and “articulation” is here lucidly projected into the material channels of communication: “a nerve, a wire, a roadway.” Fenollosa’s line-articulation, while traversing material and spiritual spheres, thus aims for closely-knit organic interaction in a human community. The implied comparison of society to global organicism will be highlighted later, in my analysis of Japanese Modernists’ theories of composition. In Chapter Three, Yokomitsu Riichi’s trope of the peripheral nervous system prompts my elaboration of the articulating function of line within social and textual interface.

The theoretical and conceptual associations between Fenollosa’s and other
Modernist discourses can be further multiplied, but I am more invested in pursuing their differences rather than similarities. Specifically, Fenollosa’s direct intellectual legacy to Ezra Pound’s ideogrammic method, a poetic theory of juxtaposition, leads me to investigate Pound’s Modernist departure from Fenollosa’s late-Romantic organicism. In the next chapter, therefore, I analyze Pound’s textual, musical, and geometrical tropes of composition and examine his Modernist pursuit of textual organicism. A few questions would be helpful to guide my argument: 1) How did Pound’s ideogrammic method develop Fenollosa’s line system?; 2) In what way does Pound’s musical theory of harmony share the Romantic ideal of an organic harmonious whole and in what way does it not?; and 3) What metaphors characterize Pound’s organicist search for textual totality? In this vein, my analysis foregrounds and traces the intellectual development from Fenollosa to Pound, as well as from Romanticism to Modernism on the whole.
CHAPTER TWO

Ezra Pound’s Ideogrammic Organization of Form
in the Modernist Space-Time

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Modernist notion of textual organicism, a
desire for textual autonomy, was revived in various poetic discourses. The aestheticism
of the “art for art’s sake” credo, which germinated in mid- to late-19th-century
explorations of aesthetic space, prepared modern artists to be aware of autonomous
textual space. In opposition to the Realistic/Naturalist climates, the French symbolist
poets after Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) attempted to retrieve symbolic wholeness in
textual simultaneity as well as the readers’ perceptual wholeness through the technique of
synesthesia. By way of the vitalists’ appreciation of one’s inner time and perceptual
experience, the Modernist poets experimented with textual autonomy by rediscovering
the inner time and space of textual entities.

Like the early Modernists Emerson, Nietzsche, and Fenollosa, who criticized the
careless use of anemic, dead metaphors, T. E. Hulme (1883-1917), a theoretical founder
of Imagism, denounced the “flat word” that “passed over a board like a counter”
(Selected 38). Instead, he proposed to retrieve the tactile and visual presence of
language like a “wall touched with soft fingers” (Selected 39). Hulme’s advocacy of the
solid plasticity of language later developed into his preference for the hard, dry clarity of
Classicism over the infinite expanse of the Romantic imagination and its emotional
language. Furthermore, his differentiation between Romanticism and Classicism sounds
strikingly similar to the contemporary art criticism of Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965),
who contrasted the organic or naturalist beauty of Greco-Roman and modern Occidental
art since the Renaissance with the geometrical beauty of Egyptian and Byzantine art (Read x-xi). Worringer insists that these organic and geometric types of representation show the antithetical relation between empathy and abstraction: the former standing for the projection of the inner self or the subjective understanding onto the outside world, the latter presenting the transcendental urge for the absolute in the face of unfathomable space.

These bipolar attitudes toward the world become significant in considering the Modernist departure from Romanticism, as well as Pound’s organicist adaptation of Fenollosa’s discourse of Chinese ideographs. While Fenollosa’s organic figures enabled him to syncretize Oriental cultures with Romantic vitalism, Pound develops his ideogrammic method as a schematic tool for organizing the whole intellect. His drive for the mapping of textual and intellectual space originated in the early Imagist definition according to which an “Image [. . .] presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (LE 4). The image integrates one’s amorphous perceptions into a vivid concrete complex and gives the “sense of freedom from time limits and space limits” (LE 4). This momentary grasp of space in Imagism is further developed into the dynamics of transfiguring images in vortex, “from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (GB 92). The revolving vortex gulfs miscellaneous ideas in its current and transforms the world with its velocity and dynamics.

Alternatively influenced by Imagism, Vorticism, and Fenollosa’s *Chinese Written Character*, Pound accomplished his spatio-temporal figures in the ideogrammic method, which aimed to achieve *Paideuma*, the totalization of culture. While illuminating how Pound adopted both Fenollosa’s line system and his discourse of Chinese ideographs, this
chapter delineates the Modernist organization of space-time in Pound’s theory and practice of three modes of composition—textual, musical, and geometric-plastic spheres. All of these discourses of form, which I analyze in this chapter through the figures of image, vortex, rhythm-shape, or ideoplasty, collaboratively express Pound’s Modernist impetus to organize space and time into composition, i.e. a form of synthesis that puts things together and posits parts in relation to the whole. My focus on Pound’s transcendental organization of space-time in search for textual totality not only shows his Modernist alignment with and departure from the Romantic discourses of organicism, but also prefigures his proximity to the totalitarian organization in response to the reigning political contexts of his lifespan.

1. Pound’s Ideogrammic Method: *Paideuma* and Totalization of Culture

*Guide to Kulchur* (1938), one of Pound’s representative 1930s writings, best demonstrates Pound’s domestication of Fenollosa’s organicist discourse in his ideogrammic method. The title word *kulchur*, Pound’s coinage which combines the German term *Kultur* and the English word *culture*, locates his multi-lingual and trans-cultural exploration of a new socio-textual entity, the new concept of Culture he devised through his ideogrammic method (Takata, *Shi* 234-35). Pound’s preface for the New Directions edition (1970) highlights his lifelong attacks on a “doctrine, a doxy, or a form of stupidity” and desire to construct a new *episteme*, a new intellectual form and formation in language (*GK* 7):

*Guide to Kulchur*: a mousing round for a word, for a shape, for an order, for a meaning, and last of all for a philosophy. The turn came with Bunting’s line:
“Man is not an end-product,
Maggot asserts.”

The struggle was, and still might be, to preserve some of the values that
make life worth living.
And they are still mousing around for a significance in the chaos.

E.P.
20 June 1970 (GK 8)

Pound overturns self-centered human presumption from the maggot’s viewpoint and
provokes a reader to confront an inevitable tension when one asserts one’s perspective.

His intellectual life was deeply rooted in his exploration of a form of intellectual
organization—words, shapes, order, meanings, and philosophy of life—that enabled one
to articulate and locate oneself. The preface, written near the end of Pound’s life,
inscribes his ceaseless struggle to establish meaning and form for the world.

In the face of the political and cultural turmoil of the 1930s, Pound explored an
intellectual procedure enabling one to attain the multi-dimensional perspective and
named it the “ideogrammic method.” In Chapter Five of Kulchur, titled “ZWECK or
the AIM,” Pound explicates the method with an aim to reveal “the whole subject from a
new angle” (GK 51):

I occasionally cause the reader “suddenly to see” or that I snap out a remark . . .
“that reveals the whole subject from a new angle.”
That being the point of the writing. That being the reason for presenting
first one facet and then another—I mean to say the purpose of the writing is to
reveal the subject. The ideogrammic method consists of presenting one
facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized
surface of the reader’s mind, onto a part that will register. (GK 51)

This method of presenting multiple facets of the object of one’s concern is reminiscent of
Cubism, which was “arising out of the rejection of traditional Western single-viewpoint
perspective” (OED). The Cubists consciously played in-between two-dimensional
presentation and three-dimensional representation, and they challenged the presumed
totality of our spatial perception. Similarly, Pound’s ideogrammic method presents different possible angles and attempts to undermine the readers’ presumed perspectives. The theoretical correspondence between Cubism and Pound suggests that the ideogrammic method shared the avant-garde impetus toward the re-organization of space. In correspondence with the Modernist reformation of artistic space, the ideogrammic method re-formulates the totality of textual and conceptual space.

A close examination of Pound’s literary trope of image-corpse contextualizes the ideogrammic method in his Imagist revitalization of poetic language, aiming at a “sense of sudden liberation,” and a “sense of freedom from time limits and space limits” (LE 4). For example, his expression, the “dead and desensitized surface” resonates with his Imagist critique of the dead “corpse language” of late Victorian poetry (Tiffany 71). The literary trope of “corpse” and the “re-membering” of cultural body through memory and myth is a recurring trope for Pound. In Kulchur, too, he writes, a “vast mass of school learning is DEAD. It is as deadly as corpse infection” (GK 58). These passages recall the textual figure of the Monster in Frankenstein, discussed in my introduction, where the dead corpse of language needs to be re-articulated and re-animated in a living textual entity as organicism. Similarly, Pound attempted to enliven cultural and textual corpses into an organized entity: Culture. At the same time, his mortal image of corpse—“dead associations” in language (GK 57)—already inscribes the tension between chimerical composition out of fragments and decomposition into fragments.

Pound’s poetic efforts to re-animate the image-corpse in the ideogrammic organization of Culture were established on Fenollosa’s Romantic discovery of
ideograms as an organic form of articulation.\(^1\) Specifically, Pound’s emphasizing of process and relation in his ideogrammic method brings to mind Fenollosa’s appreciation of vivid concreteness and natural process in ideographic roots. Just as Fenollosa claimed that “[r]elations are more real and more important than the things which they relate” (CWL 371), Pound treasures the process of learning:

> To put it yet another way: it does not matter a two penny damn whether you load up your memory with the chronological sequence of what has happened, or the names of protagonists, or authors of books, or generals and leading political spouters, so long as you understand the process now going on, or the processes biological, social, economic now going on, enveloping you as an individual, in a social order, and quite unlikely to be very “new” in themselves however fresh or stale to the participant. (GK 51-52)

Pound criticizes the encyclopedic accumulation of facts as mere information and aims to develop a methodological process. He desires a method for cultivating an ability to interconnect varied phenomena and to posit one’s own perspective in a certain context. His emphasis on process echoes, for instance, John Dewey’s philosophy, which incorporated the learners’ lived experiences into the learning process, rather than working on sheer rote source.

Pound’s organic notion of articulation in _Paideuma_ further underscores his discursive continuity with Fenollosa’s discourse of Chinese ideographs. For example, Pound elaborates the concept of the “New Learning, or the “New Paideuma,” which is

\(^1\) As well, Pound’s critique of the “form of dead catalogues” of knowledge resonates with Fenollosa’s critique of taxonomical classification in language (GK 53). Pound writes:

> We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time. (GK 60)

The imagery of “corpse-language” is insistent here, again. The “anesthetized” things-events on the table inevitably evoke the Foucauldian concept of _tabula_, the static, taxonomical categorization in language, which loses its articulating mobility.
“not simply abridging extant encyclopedias or condensing two dozen more detailed volumes,” but is an organic corpus of culture (GK 27). He borrowed the Greek word, *Paideuma*, meaning education, from a German ethnologist and archeologist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), according to whom “‘Paideuma’ means the mental formation, the inherited habits of thought, the conditionings, aptitudes of a given race or time” (Pound, *SP* 148). Pound also qualifies the term as *Paideuma* “the gristly roots of ideas that are in action” and “the tangle or complex of the inrooted ideas of any period” (GK 58; 57). These organic descriptions of *Paideuma*—Pound’s imagery of entangled, gristly roots—echo with Fenollosa’s expression about the “pure spring and tangle of a line system” (“Modern” 112). Beyond the synthetic totality of textual space, Pound pursues the organic articulation of Culture as *Paideuma*.

Pound’s emphasis on the “articulating process” in *Paideuma* and Fenollosa’s appreciation of the spatial articulation in ideograms illustrate their shared theoretical interest in the concept of simultaneity. The difference is that, while Fenollosa applied the ideographic visual duration to create textual simultaneity, Pound expanded it to explore cultural and historical simultaneity.² That is, his ideogrammic method, by juxtaposing materials from different historical periods, aims to guide readers to articulate various historical and cultural connections. To give an example, in asserting the plastic mobility of thought against the dead catalogue of knowledge, Pound used the imagery of “ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time” (GK 60).

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² Takata Tomiichi argues that Fenollosa’s notion of an organic whole can be compared to Pound’s and Eliot’s insights into the (re)formation of tradition (Takata, *Shi* 298). Pound himself confirms in “Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus” (1933) that “Mr. Eliot and I are in agreement, or ‘belong to the same school of critics,’ in so far as we both believe that existing works form a complete order which is changed by the introduction of the ‘really new’ work” (9).
imagery, while echoing Emerson’s fluxional notion of the symbol, W. B. Yeats’ image of the gyre, Pound’s own notion of the vortex and so forth, articulates different currents of Anglo-American Modernist discourses in the readers’ process of reading. Performing such cultural and historical simultaneity self-referentially in Kulchur, Pound attempted to interweave multi-layered interconnections among different concepts through the ideogrammic method. Similarly, he constructed his writings after the 1930s—Make it New (1934), ABC of Reading (1934), and the masterpiece The Cantos (1925-70)—as such an entangled, “critical opus as an organic whole” (Ardizzone 2).

In creating texts out of the effects of simultaneity, the workings of memory play a central part in Pound’s textual practice. The duration of time recalled as past is always working within one’s memory, and learning—as well as reading and writing—intervenes between one’s personal experience and cultural, collective memory of textual corpses. In other words, by sharing textual memory, an individual can engage in history as a collective memory of the whole. Pound imagined the ideogrammic method as just such an interactive thinking-process, in which the reader’s experience itself completes the formation of the cultural body. He asserts:

It may or may not matter that the first knowledge is direct, it remains effortlessly as residuum, as part of my total disposition, it affects every perception of form-colour phenomena subsequent to its acquisition. (GK 28)

By alluding to Eliot’s notion of tradition, i.e. a ceaselessly renewed collective memory, Pound presumes the totality of one’s experience in the sedimentary spheres of memory as residue. Memory (or the totality of history/knowledge), created and recreated in the interactive process between one and others via texts, is neither chronologically linear nor spatially expanding in the two-dimensions. It is, rather, spatial with sedimentary depth,
a swirl whose surface can be only grasped in the depth and dynamic of the whirl itself.

The theoretical correlation among the totality of experience, memory, and simultaneity in Pound’s body of work can be best explored through Bergson’s notion of duration and body-centered conception of image. Henri Bergson (1859-1941), a French philosopher, developed a vitalist philosophy whose emphasis on intuition, élan vital, as a principle of organic evolution, and the weight of time over space have significantly shaped the works of such British Modernists as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and Joseph Conrad (Gillies 1996). In particular, T. E. Hulme, the founder of Imagism, was famous as Bergson’s early champion and translator. Hulme’s dialogue with Bergson’s intuitive grasp of experience is reflected in his corporeal concept of image as well as in the Imagist appreciation of a vivid, precise language (Gillies 44-45).

One of Bergson’s key theoretical contributions is his differentiation between space and duration (la durée). To put it briefly, Bergson regarded the notion of space as a positioning in a limited sphere and released time from this positioning in space. The fixed, spatial positioning of time would be exemplified, for instance, by clock-time, which divides its flow into segments of hours, minutes, and seconds. Instead of the arbitrary and homogeneous order of succession, he conceived duration as the endurance of being. In his seminal work Time and Free Will (1888), Bergson explains the notion of duration:

We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space. (Key 60)
In the imagery of penetration and interconnection above, one notes again the resonance of Fenollosa’s line system. More precisely, Bergson built his notion of duration upon the Romanticist discourse of the symbolic whole and similarly envisioned duration within synthetic interaction between the parts and the whole.

Bergson continued to develop this notion of duration throughout his career. In *Matter and Memory* (1896), for example, he explored the duration of one’s bodily experience in terms of memory, imagined as an upended cone built on the sensory plane of one’s body (*Key* 135; *vide* Fig. 5 in Notes).³ In *Creative Evolution* (1907), he compares duration to a swelling snowball, which accumulates and “goes on increasing—rolling upon itself” (*Key* 171). These imageries of duration are varied in shape; still, one’s durational memory is imagined as a set of translucent, concentric layers, whose center is one’s body. Through this durational notion of body-memory, Bergson succeeded in outlining a concept of simultaneity that negates the linear succession of time but recalls the past within one’s body-memory.

Bergson’s differentiation of simultaneity from juxtaposition further clarifies the

³ According to Bergson, S is the loci of one’s body as “sensori-motor equilibrium”; the base AB is one’s recollections in their totality. Furthermore, “between the sensori-motor mechanisms figured by the point S and the totality of the memories disposed in AB there is room”; the general ideas—miscellaneous images and perceptions—oscillate continually between the summit S and the base AB (*Key*, 134-35).

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Fig. 5 Bergson’s Upended Cone (*Key* 135).
durational concept of totality in textual space. According to Bergson, juxtaposition in a straight line sets up a causal relation posited in space; in contrast, simultaneity (or pure simultaneity) can be imagined as translucent layers of memory in which one is included and penetrated with and by others. He continues:

[I]t does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (Key 60)

Here, Bergson’s idea of durational simultaneity expands the Romantic notion of organic harmonious wholeness into a time-comprehensive conception of totality. A sense of a simultaneous coexistence of the past and the present within one’s body-experience later evolves into Bergson’s “ontology of becoming”: a “‘fluid’ and moving ‘continuity of the real’” (Pearson and Mullarkey 26).

Bergson’s philosophy broadly affected Anglo-American Modernists. Just as Bergson presumed the totality of one’s experience as memory being carried in one’s individual body, the Modernists pursued the loci of the collective memory (history) in the contained space of textual bodies. The direct adaptation of this Bergsonian trans-historical simultaneity will be found in Eliot’s famous essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919). Eliot proposes a conception of tradition ceaselessly recreated by new individual talents and writes: “the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order” (2396). Pound appropriates Eliot’s conception of tradition and similarly expresses the Bergsonian notion of simultaneity in his Paideuma, the organic corpse of culture attained in the durational memory of human beings. These centralized workings of simultaneity in Modernist writings aim at retrieving the Romantic organic whole by intermediating individual and
collective memory within textual space, loci of collective memories.

In tandem with the Vitalists’ retrieval of symbolic wholeness, Pound further pursued the durational concept of simultaneity in his ideogrammic method. His definition of the ideogrammic method through a Japanese expression, “listening to incense,” provides a body-centered, sensate model for simultaneity. He writes:

To define it ideogramically we may start with the “Listening to Incense.” This displays a high state of civilization. In the Imperial Court of Nippon the companions burnt incense, they burnt now one perfume, and now another, or a mixture of perfumes, and the accomplishment was both to recognize what had gone materially into the perfume and to cite apposite poems.

The interest is in the blend of perception and of association. (GK 80)

The phrase “listening to incense” indicates a traditional Japanese game in which the participants smell the fusion of different scents and cite a poem associated with the scents. Only within one’s memory can one find the subtle mixture and difference; only in its simultaneity can one evoke its poetic association. In his ideogrammic method, Pound intended to grasp an epiphanic moment of perceptual totality which can only be activated in reminiscence, the act of evoking the past in the present.

Most importantly, Pound’s expression “listening to incense” vividly echoes the Symbolist poetic creation, which attempted to express the co-working of different senses as synesthesia. Specifically, the phrase evokes the final stanza of Baudelaire’s “Correspondances”: “Ayant l’expansion des choses infinies,/ Comme l’ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l’encens,/ Qui chantent les transports de l’esprit et des sens” (136; “having the expansiveness of infinite things,/ like amber, musk, benzoin and incense,/ which sing the raptures of the mind and the senses” 136). In Pound’s “listening to incense,” a Bergsonian intuitive grasp of one’s experience is mingled with a Baudelairean sensate joy in communication with language. Pound accomplishes the ideogrammic method as such
synesthetic simultaneity, enacted through correspondence between a body and a text, between one’s individual perception and the collective memory as historical knowledge.

The textual practices of Modernist art and poetry, including those of Pound’s ideogrammic method, however, seem to originate in misapplying the Bergsonian notion of simultaneous totality as one’s body-memory to the alternative totality of textual space. Pound’s ideogrammic theory reveals its fundamental flaw when he equates simultaneity and juxtaposition, which Bergson differentiated in his critique of the spatial division of time. That is, just as Bergson situated the human body at the centre of myriad images in *Matter and Memory*, the ideogrammic method presumes an implied totality of a textual body that interconnects and frames varied ideas in one perspective. However, as long as writing is a linear art posited in textual space, a pure simultaneity cannot be attainable in the textual space, since writing as composition inevitably involves positioning and ordering to make a textual totality. In other words, by equating a reader’s physical body with textual bodies as an alternative space, Pound’s simultaneity is reduced to textual juxtaposition.

Pound’s paradox in creating textual juxtaposition in his pursuit of a simultaneous whole is comparable to the Romantic search for symbol and their alternative creation of and with fragments. A fragment—“a part broken off or otherwise detached from a whole” (*OED*)—inevitably posits and presupposes the whole. The Classic writers, aspiring to Greco-Roman perfection and harmony, regarded fragments as mere incomplete, detached pieces, a residue of the lost symbolic whole. While sharing the Classic paean for wholeness, the Romantic thinkers (especially German Romantic writers/poets as Schiller, F. Schlegel, Goethe, *inter alios*) explored the potential of
fragments as individuals which embody complete, autonomous entities in themselves.

While quoting the key passages from Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829), Rodolphe Gasché explicates fragmentation as “the Romantic vision of the system” (xiii):

In *Athenaeum Fragment* 206 we read: “A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine.” Fragments are individuals, singular organic totalities, that is, systems in miniature. Indeed, as the *Literary Notebooks* remark, “The more organic something is, the more systematic it is.—The system is not so much a species of form as the essence of the work itself.” Or: “A system alone is properly a work.” In short, then, the following equation pertains: fragment = system = work = individual. (xii)

By conceiving a fragment not as a form of disintegration but as an autonomous individual entity, F. Schlegel employs the technique of fragmentation as the key system, which holds his writing together as an ensemble. William Blake (1757-1827), who appreciates minute particulars over abstraction and asserts the importance of individuals, similarly claims: “Singular and particular detail is the foundation of the sublime. [. . .] Minuteness is their whole beauty” (405). In contrast to the static abstraction of the Classic holistic system, the Schlegelian whole after Romanticism ceaselessly re-creates itself within dynamic and synthetic interactions among textual fragments.

The Modernist poets re-staged the Romantic aesthetics of fragmentation in their textual creation. For instance, the early writings of T. E. Hulme inscribe his Modernist reconstruction through the metaphor of fragments as cinders—an ash-heap—composed of the remnants of the lost whole in chaotic plurality. Hulme writes: “There is a difficulty in finding a comprehensive scheme of the cosmos, because there is none. The cosmos is only organised in parts; the rest is cinders” (*Selected* 20). What people think of as the cosmos is an artificially organized system, which can never be the symbolic whole in itself. Modern language is nothing but such an artificially organized system.
According to Hulme, language used to be like a “gossamer web,” which was “woven between the real things” and articulated them in its networking (Selected 18). However, this gossamer web lost its articulating power; language became a counter on a “chess-board laid on a cinder-heap” (Selected 20). Therefore, in his exploration of image as a “hairy caterpillar,” which claws for “beauty, to build up a solid vision of realities,” Hulme tries to re-animate a flat counter-word into a vivid image and explore the sensate physicality of language in the plurality of cinders (Selected 38).

Like his Romantic/early Modern predecessors, Pound dramatized the tension between the symbolic whole and the fragments in his ideogrammic method. As I have already discussed, by applying the poetic method of juxtaposition Pound attempted to evoke an effect of cultural-historical simultaneity and construct the articulated whole of culture as textual organicism. It is debatable, however, whether Pound’s ideogrammic practice could have successfully presented a unified form of multi-faceted culture, or whether his textual composite turned out to be merely a heap of nouns and concepts. In a passage of *Kulchur*, Pound inserts the following apology to his general readers:

> Let the reader be patient. I am not being merely incoherent. I haven’t “lost my thread” in the sense that I haven’t just dropped one thread to pick up another of different shade. I need more than one string for a fabric. (GK 29)

His intention to adopt multiple threads to weave a textual body authentically takes up Fenollosa’s appreciation of the spatial synthesis of lines. However, while developing Fenollosa’s spatial concept of articulation as “cultural and historical simultaneity,” Pound’s fragmentary juxtaposition in the name of the ideogrammic method often turns out to betray its drives for simultaneity and for the durational upholding of cultural memory. His apology reveals a tenacious difficulty in weaving a text out of different
fabrics and composing a multi-linear diagram in the European system of writing as a line art.

His use of the verbal icon called “ideogram” in his writings of the 1930s not only reveals his failed quest for a quasi-simultaneous (i.e. juxtapositional) composition, but also demonstrates his Modernist impetus to organization/totalization, reaching toward the realm of abstraction. For example, in a concluding passage of Chapter Seven, “Great Bass: Part One,” Pound uses the word ideogram as a shorthand sign to suggest the integration of the varied subjects: “These disjunct paragraphs belong together, Gaudier, Great Bass, Leibniz, Erigena, are parts of one ideogram, they are not merely separate subjects” (GK 75). In the text, Pound does not necessarily articulate the associations among the subjects, but just frames them with a metaphorical notion of an ideogram.\footnote{To identify briefly each person/term invoked by Pound here: Henri Gaudier Brzeska (1891-1915), a Vorticist sculptor; Great Bass, Pound’s musical term designating “the frequencies below those which the ear has been accustomed to consider as ‘notes’” (MA 74); Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), a German philosopher and mathematician of monadology; John Scotus Erigena (Johannes Scottus Eriugena), an Irish Neo-Platonist from the 9th century.}

By letting the individual components of his writing constitute an imaginable body of Culture, Pound pretends to incorporate the proliferating images within the verbal icon of “ideogram.” This frame-like usage of the word “ideogram” is often observed in Kulchur, as well as in his other articles of the 1930s. To give another example, when Pound casually says, “[h]aving put down one’s ideogram of culture,” this “ideogram” signifies one’s whole intellect, an intellectual channel to be comprehended in one perspective (GK 304). The technique of collage functions only in a limited textual space on a canvas, whereas the textual space of juxtaposition faces the danger of disintegration into parts. Similarly, Pound proposes the verbal icon of ideogram as a...
meta-textual structure to integrate various topics into an organized form of composition.

Indeed, the coexistence of abstraction in the concrete characterizes Pound’s understanding of Chinese ideographs, as he emphasizes, “the ideograph abstracts or generalizes in the known concrete” (MA 89). From a broader perspective, his penchant for ideogrammic abstraction reveals a contentious organicist drive for totality characteristic of Modernist compositions. Their varied efforts to break up the dominant norm(s)—the Modernist tropes of juxtaposition, fragmentation, multi-laterality, and polyphony, etc.—end up reclaiming totality, sometimes as an autonomous textual entity or in a form of abstraction. In the case of Pound, his ideogrammic method rewrites the Romantic pursuit of symbolic wholeness with an organicist totality or totalization, as is evident in his description of the purpose of the method: “[t]he sorting out, the rappel à l’ordre, and thirdly the new synthesis, the totalitarian” (GK 95). Even if the aesthetic importance of fragmentation is consistent, the underlying urge for totality in Pound’s textual practice of cultural/historical simultaneity characterizes his ideogrammic method as a Modernist organicist undertaking. Pound’s description of Kulchur as a “totalitarian treatise,” by which he means the ideogrammic practice of the “New Learning or the New Paideuma” (GK 27), also poses the question of his organicist form of composition and its potential alliance with the totalitarian/Fascist ethos of the 1930s.

5 In reference to a Sienese painter from the 13th-14th century, Pound also remarks on the significance of the ideogrammic composition in terms of totality. He writes, “the aim of technique is that it establish[es] the totality of the whole. The total significance of the whole. As in Simone Memmi’s painting. The total subject IS the painting” (GK 90, emphasis original).
2. *Organum of Machine Music: From Rhythm-Shape to Great Bass*

Pound’s Modernist confrontation with his Romantic heritage—specifically, his literary practice of fragmentation and its tension with the idealist, symbolic whole—gains significance upon considering his organicist enchantment with the conceptions of totality and totalization. In particular, a close focus on the spatio-temporal dimension of Pound’s organicist figures will help to illustrate his Modernist departure from Romantic organicism. Recall that the symbol as “the momentariness” and “the brevity” exhibits a sharp contrast with the mobile fluidity of allegorical fragments; in fragments, the whole is recreated within the dialectical dynamics among themselves (Benjamin, *Origin*). In this section, I continue to investigate Pound’s spatio-temporal conceptions of form, this time, turning to his theory of musical composition. By tracing the development of his Imagist/Vorticist trope into the musical discourses of “rhythm-shape” and “Great Bass,” my argument identifies his Modernist figures of organicism as machine *organum*. In particular, Pound’s Vorticist fascination with mechanization—an organization in motion—and its relation to the formation of the ideogrammic method highlights the intricate process by which he domesticates the Romantic notion of wholeness and activates a transcendental form of totality.

According to Pound, the ideogrammic method represents a scientific system of

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6 Before he formulated the ideogrammic method, Pound’s search for a form of totality was especially salient in his art and music criticisms in *The New Age*, as well as in his lifework, *The Cantos*. While living at Rapallo in Italy, beginning in 1924, Pound not only engaged in his literary and critical writing, but also attempted to establish an intellectual community where he could put his ideas into practice. One of Pound’s performative sites can be found in his dedication to music; he was known for “his organization of a unique series of concerts which ran intermittently between 1933 and 1939” (Schafer 321).
thinking that enables one to intervene in multi-lateral aspects of culture and pursue the totalization of culture. In his article, “Totalitarian Scholarship and the New Paideuma” (1937), Pound succinctly introduces his impetus towards totality: the “reintegration of the arts in totalitarian synthesis,” especially through the art of music (96). The piece presents Pound’s miscellaneous promotions for the totalitarian Paideuma and his outline of the “different racial vigours,” which shortly thereafter developed into Kulchur (95).

The article and its swift changes of topic can be abstracted in the following observation of the cultural demand of his age:

The first general characteristic of the present phase of life in the arts and in thought is totalitarian. We have sorted out plastic from timed design (in music and metric), we have inspected each art in that which is exclusively its own and we acknowledge the WHOLE-MAN’s right to express his totality in any art he chooses. (95)

The varied topics in this article—the shifting relations among the sister arts, a concept of World literature, East-West communication via translation, a report of a music program Pound conducted at Rapallo, and so on—convey his vision of the “totalitarian PAIDEUMA,” which crosses the borders of different races, historical periods, and media (124). Here, my question is how his musical perspective contributes to his impetus to form the totalitarian Paideuma.7 Pound’s musical concept of “Great Bass” and its correlation to his Vorticist concept of form allow me to demonstrate Pound’s discourse of the machine organum and its transformation into the ideogrammic organization of culture

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7 According to R. Murray Schafer, Pound’s passion for music can be traced back to his earliest career and, like his other concerns, was enormously wide-ranging. Pound wrote and composed several pieces of music, including the opera Le Testament (first performed in 1926), did serious research on Vivaldi, and elaborated on music criticism and theories (x). As a music critic, in particular, between 1917 and 1920, he continued to write a “fortnightly column [. . .] for The New Age under the pseudonym of ‘William Atheling’ (x). His voluminous references to music and his theory of music composition are chronologically arranged in Schafer’s Ezra Pound and Music (1977).
in the 1930s.

Pound’s theory of music composition, “Great Bass,” occupies one of the key corners of his ideogrammic diagram: “Gaudier, Great Bass, Leibniz, Erigena, are parts of one ideogram” (GK 75). In the first of the two chapters of Kulchur, titled “Great Bass,” Pound explains the concept:

Certain sounds we accept as “pitch,” we say that a certain note is do, re, mi, or B flat in the treble scale, meaning that it has a certain frequency of vibration.

Down below the lowest note synthesized by the ear and “heard” there are slower vibrations. The ratio between these frequencies and those written to be executed by instruments is OBVIOUS in mathematics. The whole question of tempo, and of a main base in all musical structure resides in use of these frequencies. (GK 73)

Pound primarily conceives of sound as a frequency of vibration, i.e. time divided in varied lengths. While the tune tends to be conceived in terms of temporal (or simultaneous) arrangement of sounds (just as a chord is graphed as a vertical spreading \( \text{\textbullet} \)), his conception of sound as the “frequency of vibration” pinpoints the horizontal or durational quality of music. Pound repeatedly emphasizes the uniqueness of his durational grasp of sound, as he writes, “[t]he former treatises on harmony [. . .] did not consider that the lateral motion, the horizontal motion, and the time interval between succeeding sounds MUST affect the human ear” (ATH 17). In Pound’s opinion, musical harmony, or, more accurately, the mathematical proportion created among the frequency of each tune, should be created by considering the effect of undertones. He qualifies music as the art of the time-interval in the co-workings of simultaneity and duration.

Pound develops his theory of Great Bass, a low pitch conveyed in the slowest frequency, upon this mathematical analysis of sound as a division of time-elements. Great Bass is like an ultrasound that cannot be heard by the ear, but can affect other
listeners on a semi-conscious level. Pound was intrigued by this subtle ruling of undertones that vitally governs music. R. Murray Schafer, the editor of *Ezra Pound and Music* (1977), insightfully explains the concept as an ordering of time into a whole:

> It does not merely imply a bass in the present sense of the lowest line of polyphony. [. . .] Rather it is a basis which exists like the keel of a ship, exercising a centripetal pull over everything above it. It too, is a temporal, not a formal concept, or more correctly, a temporal concept governing form. I should think it is something more or less between the concepts of time and order. [. . .] *Great Bass* links the elements into an indivisible whole. (*EPM* 479)

Schafer suggests that the notion of *Great Bass* displays Pound’s spatio-temporal grasp of totality. In other words, the musical metaphor of *Great Bass* indicates how Pound imagines and organizes the notion of form that governs *both* space and time.

Pound initially developed this spatio-temporal understanding of *Great Bass* from his early poetic interest in the reunification of *motz el son*, words and tunes. In his early poetic discourses, he tried to apply musical rhythm to poetic meter and, for instance, introduced the term, *the absolute rhythm*, “to describe a rarefied sense of proportion found in select works within a canon of poets who shaped time from the inner necessity of the words” (Hughes and Fisher 128). This notion of the absolute rhythm is reflected in one of Pound’s Imagist liberation credos where he proclaims: “As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome” (*LE* 3). By becoming receptive to the verbal rhythm created by the proportion of tonal duration and of silence, Pound’s Imagism sought the poetic adaptation of an innate flow of music—using natural “cadence” and catching “the rhythm wave”—against the mechanical rule of meter (*LE* 5; 6).

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8 Pound’s long-lasting interest in musical rhythm was developed in his learning of the troubadours’ poetry of Provence and from his translation of a medieval Italian poet, Guido Cavalcanti (Fisher).
Pound’s Imagist attack on the “measured time” and his attempt to release poetic composition from the mechanical regularity of rhyme position him close to Fenollosa, who attacked the linear conception of European languages in favor of the organic flux of verbal images in Chinese ideographs. Furthermore, just as Fenollosa appreciated the ideographic spatial simultaneity whose visual figuration endures in the readers’ act of reading, Pound puts an emphasis on the time-durational aspect of rhythm and paradoxically explores a new spatial dimension of musical harmony as a durational block. For example, in *The New Age*, March 7, 1918, Pound invokes rhythm as a sort of sound-collage, when he writes:

Rhythm-sense is not merely a *temps mesuré*, it is not merely a clock-work of the bar-lengths. Measured time is only one form of rhythm; but a true rhythm sense assimilates all sorts of uneven pieces of time, and keeps the music alive. (*EPM* 471-72).

The polyphonic combination of different length of sounds creates the living musical harmony. The expression, “all sorts of uneven pieces of time,” indicates a residue of sounds as well as the time lag created among the individual sounds. In contrast to the instantaneous understanding of musical harmony as the “simultaneous sounds of different pitch,” the *residue* is both spatial and temporal; it creates simultaneity in its duration (*LE* 6). Just like a trace, moreover, it functions in one’s memory and fills the in-between space—the space between musical notes or words. By highlighting the importance of residue to create a harmony within the horizontal duration, in “A Retrospect” (1918), a collection of Pound’s early notes on Imagism, he also writes: “There is [. . .] in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base” (*LE* 6-7). Pound’s notion of rhythm as residing both in simultaneity and duration represents his earliest thinking about the spatial grasp of time.
in the name of the absolute rhythm.

Concerning his durational conception of rhythm, Pound’s reference to an “organ-based” concept of residue is subtle but significant, as it pinpoints the intersection of his musical spatio-temporality with organicist figures. Consciously or not, Pound activates the word-play of organ and organum, when he develops the Imagist/Vorticist notion of primary form: “an organization of forms expresses a confluence of forces” (EPVA 7). Etymologically speaking, the word organ is derived from the Latin word organum, which initially meant a “mechanical device, instrument, engine of war, musical instrument, hydraulic organ” (OED). The English word organum, on the other hand, usually signifies the polyphonic music of the 9th to 13th centuries (OED). Famously, Johann Sebastian Bach’s baroque refinement of the contrapuntal technique in the art of the fugue was developed on the polyphonic tradition of organum. In the modern period, moreover, the compositional framework or form in Bach’s polyphonic music broadly affected the musical theory and aesthetics of Modernist composers such as Max Reger (1873-1916), Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) (Frisch).

In speaking of Pound’s relation to the musical tradition of organ and organum, his reference to Bach’s music as “pattern music” underscores his organicist interest in musical form and suggests a theoretical coherence between his Imagist/Vorticist exploration of “image-form” and medieval-baroque musical structure. For instance, in an article on Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940), who contributed to the 20th-century revival of European classic music, Pound offers a contrast between “impressionist or ‘emotional’ music as opposed to pattern music” (EPM 38):

I do not mean that Bach is not emotional, but the early music starts with the mystery of pattern; if you like, with the vortex of pattern; with something which
is, first of all, music, and which is capable of being, after that, many things. (EPM 38)

The expression “vortex of pattern” presents the essential link between Pound’s Vorticist/Imagist discourse and his preference for Bach’s music in terms of his demand of structure or form as an organized composition. While criticizing Impressionist music, whose emotional sounds fill one with a nervous stimulus from outside, Pound asserts the significance of the “composition” or “structural frame” in Bach’s music. His critique of Impressionist music coincides with his critique of “flabby”/“flaccid” and “descriptive” expressions in Imagism/Vorticism.9 Moreover, the famous dialogue between W. B. Yeats and Pound concerning a “structure like that of a Bach Fugue” in the finished Cantos drives home Pound’s search for inspiration for poetic form/structure in musical patterns and prototypes (Stock 280).

Indeed, Pound’s theory of music composition precisely develops his Imagist and Vorticist urge for a vivid, primary “form” into an innate pattern of organization. As early as 1911-12, in “I Gather the Limbs of Osiris,” Pound calls rhythm “the inner form of the line” and insists that “this ‘inner form’ [. . .] must be preserved in music” (SP 38). This early interest in the “inner form” in music/verse was later developed into Pound’s spatio-temporal diction of “rhythm-shape.” Pound writes in The New Age, November 25, 1920:

A rhythm unit is a shape; it exists like the keel-line of a yacht, or the lines of an automobile-engine, for a definite purpose, and should exist with an efficiency as definite as that which we find in yachts and automobiles. (EPM 233)

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9 The expressions he uses to criticize the Impressionist poetry and music are markedly similar. For example, he writes that “[p]rogramme music is merely a weaker, more flabby and descriptive sort of impressionist music” (EPM 471) and also states: “[V]ers libre has become as prolix and as verbose as any of the flaccid varieties that preceded it” (LE 3).
The quotation above is important, first, for its lucid allusion to the machine metaphors as a form of composition and, second, for its implied reference to the notion of bass as a base line of the music score. The beauty of geometric curves and straight lines, recaptured in the rhythm-shape as “the keel-line of a yacht,” echoes Pound’s Vorticist fascination with the kinetic dynamics of machines. Departing from the Fenollosa-Dow compositional emphasis on lines, the rigid smoothness of geometric lines looks for the precise composition designed with “purpose” and “efficiency.” At the same time, this Vorticist metaphor of a rhythm-shape should be strictly differentiated from the Futurist enthusiasm for machine noises. Improvised machine noises symbolize to release uncontrolled destructive energy, with which the Futurists aim at overturning pre-existing social structures. Contrarily, Pound’s machine metaphors seek organized harmony after the unleashed blast of Vorticism.

The unique aspect of Pound’s Vorticist notion of rhythm-shape is his grasp of musical rhythm as a spatial configuration. Specifically, when Pound explicates the concept through the sound effects of drumbeats, he foregrounds the rhythm-shape as a baseline which exercises a “centripetal pull over everything above it” (Schafer, *EPM* 479). Pound writes:

> It is possible that if our singers were in early life, or even in their present maturity, given Oriental finger drums, or even common drumsticks, and told to beat out *rhythm-shapes* on the dining-table, they would in time discover an “element” more vital to music than their present training leads them to suspect. (*EPM* 233)

The importance of rhythm as a baseline governing the whole musical composition is relatively new in Western music history. Modernist experiments in music, such as the one performed in Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913), rediscovered the leading
role of rhythm as a bearer of the musical structure” (Walsh 44).\textsuperscript{10} In particular, the Modernist exploration of non-European sounds drastically changed Westerners’ use of percussion in modern music. According to William Walter Hoffa, Pound himself widely studied the “rhythms of the raga and tala of India, Javanese and Mongolian tonalities, Jewish and Arabian harmonies, Russian folk songs, the Hebridean songs of the Kennedy-Frasers, Troubadour assonance, and African and American Jazz rhythms” (67). Specifically, Pound’s familiarity with the use of drums in Indian music as well as his interest in Japanese noh dramas might have developed his spatial grasp of rhythm; for example, the drums in noh, along with the 5-7 cadenced chant, delineate varied spaces within the tension between sounds and pause, words and silence.

The two layers of “rhythm-shape”—the Vorticist machine metaphors and bass—indicate the complex workings of the notion of organum in Pound’s musical and poetic discourses. That is, the machine metaphor primarily qualifies the organum (organ) as an instrument; at the same time, the organum of Bach’s polyphony plays with the basic rhythmic pattern to create miscellaneous expressions of musical harmony. By interweaving these two layers of organum as organ and as polyphonic harmony, Pound develops his Imagist/Vorticist concept of primary form into a cultural metaphor of machine organum.

\textsuperscript{10} Stravinsky’s Petrushka (1911/1947) and The Rite of Spring (1913) experimented on the sound application of cinematic montage and duration by taking a “dissonant musical cell” and infusing “the cell with an explosive energy” (Walsh 44). In terms of rhythm, Stravinsky experimented by “rediscovering the ‘ancient’ idea of rhythm as a bearer of structure” (Walsh 44). Stravinsky’s rhythm marks a clear Modernist transition away from the melodic tonality of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and it is often offered as an example of the “development from Impressionist painting to Cubism” (Adorno, Philosophy 191). Among the Modernist artists gathering at Paris, Pound, who resided in Paris from 1921-24, was introduced to Stravinsky through his companionship with George Antheil.
The organum of the “rhythm-shape” that grasps a mechanical form of unity in the rhythmic base can be further examined in Pound’s dialogue with a young American pianist and composer, George Antheil (1900-59). Antheil and Pound met in Paris in 1923, and Pound had a similar artistic infatuation with Antheil as he had with the late Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Pound promoted Antheil’s avant-garde music, heavily influenced by Stravinsky’s “machine-like, rhythmically propulsive style” (Whitesitt 10). Conversely, Antheil’s musical composition helped Pound to develop his Imagist/Vorticist form into his durational grasp of form in rhythm-shape. According to Linda Whitesitt, Antheil’s musical composition is characterised by the solid sequence of combinations of different percussions—“rhythmically activated musical blocks, which are delineated by different ostinato patterns” (88). Antheil’s conception of rhythm-blocks resonates with Pound’s spatial grasp of rhythm-shape, and they correspondingly employ spatial form as rhythmic patterns.

Most importantly, Antheil’s trans-medial creation of a new musical form, a spatial form grasped in “time canvas,” illustrates a radical shift in the spatio-temporal perception characterizing the Modernist arts. Believing in the primary significance of time in music, Antheil asks rhetorically: “Is not time, and time alone the sole canvas of music?” (qtd. in Whitesitt 97). Antheil’s presentation of time as a musical canvas—specifically, his “fragmentary and block-like” composition (Whitesitt 96)—is often compared to Cubist painting, as Antheil himself describes his musical composition in relation to Picasso’s cubist pursuit of spatial form: “In the Ballet Mécanique I used time as Picasso might have used the blank spaces of his canvas” (qtd. in Whitesitt 106). Just as the cubist painters attempted to pursue the kineto-plastic expressions beyond the
two-dimensional canvas, Antheil looked for the time-comprehensive form which can integrate the “whole musical canvas” (qtd. in Whitesitt 105). This time-comprehensive grasp of space, highlighted in the Modernists’ trans-medial expressions, was termed by Antheil the “Fourth dimension.” The trope of the Fourth dimension, fashioned by Albert Einstein’s innovative theory of relativity and circulated in the Cubists’ as well as Antheil’s theories of composition, illuminates their shared spatial grasp of time which aims to create a new gestalt or totality.  

While emphasizing time as a musical canvas, Antheil proposes his unique concept of composition as mechanism, an organized form of energy. In exploring the inevitable presence of machines in contemporary life, Antheil literally used the machines/instruments in his representative work Ballet Mécanique (1923-25); this work included such instruments as “electric bells, xylophones, loud-speakers” and incorporated machine noises such as “whistles” as well as the “whirring of an aeroplane propeller” (Stock 263). Concerning the mechanistic aspect of the contemporary music, Antheil states:

The second [the Mechanistic music] will be purely abstract and will derive its energy from rhythmic genius of a solitary innovator whose sense of time spaces comes from the present moment of intricate machines which are new arms and legs of steel, and reach out and change the entire epoch. This man must invent new machineries for the locomotion of time, or the musical canvas, in such a

11 The trope of the Fourth dimension was developed from non-Euclidean geometry and adopted in the literary fantasy of science fictions since the late 19th century (Henderson; Robbin). Cubists such as Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), Jean Metzinger (1883-1956), and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) theorized their aesthetic experiments beyond the two-dimensional sphere with the geometric space of the Fourth dimension. Antheil, who would have been familiar with the preceding Cubist works at Paris and with Einstein’s theorem on the coordination of space and time, followed the Cubist diction and described his “Ballet Mécanique” as “the new fourth dimension of music” (789). The importance of Einstein’s space-time theory will be further incorporated in the context of Japanese Modernism in Chapter Three.
way THAT WE HAVE A NEW MUSICAL DIMENSION! (qtd. in Whitesitt 68-69)

Antheil’s machine music delineates the locomotion of the machinery by foregrounding the working time elements, varied rhythm-patterns, and manipulation of silence. The organic imagery of “new arms and legs of steel” tacitly indicates that Antheil’s music composition, despite its shift from an organic body to a machine body, is nevertheless built on the Romantic tradition of organicism, which regards an art of work as an autonomous (textual) entity. Romantic organicism—which sought the harmonious whole in the momentary notion of symbol—transforms itself into a time-comprehensive totality and transcends a historical process within the kinetic dynamism of machines.

Antheil’s mechanistic composition opportunely helped Pound to develop the concept of “rhythm-shape” into Great Bass. Extending his Vorticist interest in the kinetic dynamics of machines and the drum-base grasp of rhythm, Pound published Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony (1924) two years before the riotous culmination of Antheil’s rhythmic experiment in Ballet Mécanique. This work was intended to “boost” Antheil’s career, but resulted instead in expressing “Pound’s personal musical theories and prejudices” (Whitesitt 18). While insisting on the significance of the time-interval and horizontal motion in music, Pound appropriates Antheil’s machine metaphors into Fenollosa-like organic imagery:

By solid object “musically,” I suppose we mean a construction or better a “mechanism” working in time-space, in which all the joints are close knit, the tones fit each other at set distances, it can’t simply slide about. This new quasi-sculptural solidity is something different from the magnificent stiffness or rigidity of Bach’s multi-linear mechanism. (ATH 49)

These familiar expressions, “joints” and “close knit,” were also used in Fenollosa’s line system; however, the tangles of natural flow of lines found in Japanese traditional
paintings, now, crucially change into the joints of the mechanism. Just as the Vorticist fascination with geometric lines displaced the “organic art of the romantic-naturalist European tradition” with a “new abstract and inorganic art,” Pound and Antheil recreated the notion of composition as a mechanical form of organization, with the massive solidity, energy, and motion of machines (Spanos 93).

Pound and Antheil’s conceptions of machine—not as a static structure but as an energetic form of movement—markedly resonates with a fluxional notion of “[v]ortex, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (GB 92). W. W. Hoffa argues that Pound’s fascination with Antheil’s music is nothing but a Vorticist revival during the 1930s. At the same time, however, while retaining the Vorticist fascination with the machine dynamism up until the late 1930s, Treatise on Harmony also locates Pound’s burgeoning interests in the ideogrammic organization of culture and the “Confucius organum.” In the quotation here, he focuses on the other side of mechanism, permanence:

I take it there is another habit of thorough artists. They are constantly searching for the permanent elements in their art. This is a very different thing from being interested in embroideries and emollients and wanting to keep up electroplates.

The thorough artist is constantly trying to form the ideograph of “the good” in his art; I mean the ideograph of admirable compound-of-qualities that make any work of art permanent. (ATH 54)

The passage, inserted in Pound’s theoretical exploration of the machine-imageries, discloses his mounting interest in Chinese ideographic culture and, more significantly, his transcendental desire for permanence. Especially, his reference to the “ideograph of ‘the

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12 Although here Pound differentiates Bach’s “multi-linear mechanism,” a contrapuntal architecture in polyphonic fugue, from Antheil’s machine plasticity, Pound does not seem to make a clear differentiation in Kulchur between Bach’s multi-linearity and Antheil’s plasticity of mechanism.
good” as a form of permanence can be associated with his idealist tendency towards Confucianism. For example, the ideographs of *Chung Yung* (中庸), translated by Pound as *The Unwobbling Pivot* (1945), signifies “what is bent neither to one side nor to the other” (*Chung*) and “unchanging” (*Yung*) (*UP* 6). The Confucian ideal of *Chung Yung*—aspires to hold calm stability in mind; one’s realization of the “inborn nature”—which is called the “process”—should concert with a harmonious order of the universe (*UP* 7). We will further see that Pound’s affinity with Confucian proportion and harmony is strangely grafted onto his likings for mathematical precision and musical harmony.

To put this insight into a broader theoretical perspective, the intricacy of the notion of harmony discussed so far pinpoints Pound’s complex relationship to his own Romantic heritage. As I discussed in Chapter One, Fenollosa developed his spatial notion of the line system from the Romantic notion of a harmonious whole and explored the spatial concept of simultaneity through the ideographic residue of visual figurations. Pound developed a similar durational concept of harmony through the residue of musical sounds. At the same time, having been influenced by Antheil’s machine music, his exploration of “rhythm-shape” as durational block in musical-canvas, revised the Vorticist transformative concept of image into the charged plasticity of machine mechanism, a solid structure in motion. While Pound’s and Antheil’s machine metaphors show their avant-garde departure from Fenollosa’s Romantic organicism, Pound’s Confucian interpretation of mechanism peculiarly intersects with the Classic/Romantic paean for Greco-Roman perfection and harmony. In other words, Pound’s transcendental search for mechanical order and proportion to some degree retrieves the transcendental urge for
abstraction since Plato’s Idealism, as I will explore in greater depth later.

Pound’s apparently ambivalent penchants in *Treatise on Harmony*—his interest in the Vorticist plastic form in action and his Confucian pursuit of harmonious order—are resolved in his notion of machine *organum* and his formation of the ideogrammic method in the early 1930s. *Machine Art and Other Writing: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years* (1996) demonstrates Pound’s organicist incorporation of the Vorticist fascination with mechanism into his ideogrammic method. For instance, in the first section of *Machine Art* (1927-30), titled “The Plastic of Machines,” Pound lists several definitions of machines, which elucidate his revitalizing celebration of the vortex, “the point of maximum energy,” which “represents, in mechanics, the greatest efficiency” (*BLAST* 153). I enumerate here the first three points of Pound’s speculations about machines:

1. The beauty of machines (A.D. 1930) is now chiefly to be found in those parts of machines where the energy is most concentrated.
2. In so far as form is concerned, the static parts of machinery obey, probably, the same aesthetics as any other architecture, and offer comparatively little field for thought about form.
3. Interest for the critic of form will lie mainly in the mobile parts and in the parts which more immediately hold these mobile parts in their loci. (*MA* 57)

Most significantly, Pound conceives the *form* of the machinery as existing not in static object, but in mobile “functions” in which the parts are dynamically coordinated. Furthermore, he appreciates the minute particulars of the machinery, the small “parts” of the mechanism rather than the whole structure in itself. This pleasure in minute particulars is essentially Romantic, where the concept of harmony is embedded in the co-workings of parts and whole. In addition, the importance of the mobile parts also resounds with Fenollosa’s emphasis on articulating distinctive joint as an individual entity. However, Pound’s idea of mechanical harmony supersedes the Romantic harmony of
organic nature, since a machine embodies a form of organization, where only the complete coordination of each part enables it to achieve its *raison d’être*.

Pound’s holistic focus on a machine as an organized system in operation is gradually developed into his ideogrammic method: the activation of the organized cultural body as *Paideuma*. In between the lines of *Machine Art*, one begins to read Pound’s notion of the machine as a socio-cultural metaphor of organized totality. For example, he writes: “Nothing is more difficult for our contemporaries than the disentanglement of their combined or even messy ideas into components” (*MA* 58). In this quote, Pound’s desire for ideogrammic organization is already visible in his fascination with the organized form of machine mechanism, where even the smallest part has to be positioned in accordance with its distinctive role. Furthermore, when Pound writes, “[t]he beauty of the individual or ‘spare’ parts of machinery is at present much higher than that of the “whole machine,” the significance of the minute particulars can be also interconnected with the Vorticist emphasis on “the individual” (*MA* 58). In another passage, Pound further explains the importance of the relation among the parts in composing the machine mechanism:

In looking at any machine one must sort out the essential parts from the parts that merely happen to be there and which keep an assemblage of machines in more or less fortuitous relation to each other. (*MA* 69)

The organized form of machinery in operation, the beauty of effective coordination, and the significance of relation are all central in his ideogrammic method. The Vorticist machine metaphors along with his penchant for *Confucianum Organum*—a term M. L. Ardizzone uses to indicate Pound’s ideogrammic organicity in his late 1930s-40s
writings—thus collaboratively penetrate the Modernist discourse of organicism.  

*Machine Art* also demonstrates how Antheil’s idea of machine rhythm was developed into Pound’s trope of the Great Bass as machine *organum*. In the section “The Acoustic of Machinery,” Pound focuses on the inevitable presence of machine noise in contemporary society and suggests that readers try to perceive to its undercurrent rhythm as a Great Bass: “the frequencies below those which the ear has been accustomed to consider as ‘notes’” (*MA* 74). According to Pound, “[t]he idea that a factory, or at least the more highly organized and organizable parts of a factory can not be ‘harmonized’ is no sillier in 1927, than the idea that a horseless carriage could move, was in, let us say, 1880” (*MA* 72). Concerning the “disagreeable noises” ordinarily imagined in factories, furthermore, he asserts that “they are mainly disagreeable for one sole reason, namely they are not organized” (*MA* 73). In other words, by conceiving “music as a definite entity in itself,” i.e. “as a composition of sound,” Pound tries to cultivate the ears of the artists, “for whom ‘le monde sonore existe’” (*MA* 72; “the sonorous world exists”).

Just as the use of longer duration in Antheil’s music managed to grasp time in spatial solidity, the slower frequency of vibration in Great Bass incorporates the living locomotion of the machinery, the plasticity of form created in the spatio-temporal dimension. Pound pithily states in the “Treatise on Meter”: “Rhythm is a form cut into TIME, as a design is determined SPACE” (*ABCR* 198). Interestingly, Pound’s rhythm form, grasped in time, aligns with Fenollosa’s statement on musical harmony: “What

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13 Maria Luisa Ardizzone, the editor of *Machine Art and Other Writings*, succinctly summarizes the collection of Pound’s notes in terms of organicity. In her introduction, she outlines Pound’s critique of Aristotelian metaphysics through Leibniz’ monad as a plural unity, Bacon’s *Novum Organum* as a command of the rational frame, and the Confucian observation of order and norm (*MA* 1-53).
does music do—? It begins by spacing in time. [M]erely beauty of drum beats—rhythm” (“Insufficiency” bMS Am 1759.2 [43]: 1).14 Just as Fenollosa pursued the harmonious beauty of arts through line and its relation to spacing, Pound’s theory of Great Bass works on the duration that relates one chord to another to achieve an organized form of music composition.

The interrelation between the theory of duration and the lowest pitch of Great Bass is amplified further in the section titled “Sociology,” where Pound gives his readers an introductory lesson to the musical theory of sonority. By incorporating machine noises into music and, more significantly, by organizing unrecognizable aural effects in contemporary life, Pound’s notion of Great Bass becomes a key dynamo to invite people to recreate the world into an organized music, the polyphonic harmony of organum. Pound summarizes the potential of Great Bass as follows:

My addition, if it is an addition, is simply to insist that the recurrences below those which the ear recognizes as sound, can be brought into relation with each other; and that a use of these recurrences in proportion to each other will have some effect on human nerves; and that it can be combined with “higher” recurrences known as notes, and that the resultant disturbance of the atmosphere may even “give pleasure” or at any rate be less nerve racking and wearing than wholly unorganized clatter. (MA 82)

Just as music achieves its harmony by organizing its undertones, the dead corpse of knowledge—the piles of messy ideas and fragments—can be reincarnated into a living whole as textual organicism by retrieving articulations among concepts and putting them in relation.

To conclude, Pound’s musically derived notion of machine organum prefigures an organicist form of totality, which he pursued in his ideogrammic organization of culture

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14 By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
in the 1930s. In Kulchur, he repeats: “The function of music is to present an example of order, or a less muddied congeries and proportion than we have yet about us in daily life. Hence the emphasis is Pythagoras and Confucius” (GK 255). Thus, Pound’s machine organum—which transverses the kinetic dynamism of the Vorticist notion of form, the mathematic proportion, and the Confucian penchant for order—prepares his ideogrammic method as a form of organization of culture. Pound’s transcendental desire for abstraction will now be explored through his geometric trope for composition. The shift from organic to mechanistic autonomy prefigures Pound’s Modernist departure from Romantic organicism, as I will study in the next section more in depth.

3. Pound and Ideoplasty: Toward the Modernist Discourse of Organicism

Pound’s concept of Great Bass as machine organum and his ideogrammic organization of culture delineate the evolution of the organicist figures from the Romantic organic wholeness toward the Modernist geometric/machine organization. Vorticism, through which Pound developed his Modernist discourse of organicism, is the key to understanding the development of Pound’s organicist search for form. For example, the following capitalized passage from the Vorticist magazine BLAST (1914) effectively summarizes the trans-medial pursuit of form in varied Modernist modes of composition:

EVERY CONCEPT, EVERY EMOTION PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE VIVID CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOME PRIMARY FORM. IT BELONGS TO THE ART OF THIS FORM. IF SOUND, TO MUSIC; IF FORMED WORDS, TO LITERATURE; THE IMAGE, TO POETRY; FORM, TO DESIGN; COLOUR IN POSITION, TO PAINTING; FORM OR DESIGN IN THREE PLANES, TO SCULPTURE; MOVEMENT TO THE DANCE OR TO THE RHYTHM OF MUSIC OR OF VERSES. (154)
This Vorticist statement mediates varied modes of composition in both timed and spatial arts, just as I pointed out the commonality between Pound-Antheil’s music discourse and Cubist paintings earlier. I also argued, if not yet fully, that Pound’s time-comprehensive notion of form is associated with his transcendent desire for abstraction and, therefore, shows his Modernist departure from Romantic organicism. Pound’s correspondence with a Japanese Modernist poet, Kitasono Katsue (Hashimoto Kenkichi, 1902-78), will complement this Modernist transcendent search for form. In particular, alongside Pound’s Imagist/Vorticist discourses, Kitasono’s concept of ideoplasty highlights a new phase of the textual interaction between European and Japanese Modernisms.

A year before the start of Ezra Pound’s correspondence with Kitasono Katsue in 1936, Kitasono, together with thirteen other poets, including Iwamoto Shūzo and Miki Tei, founded the VOU Club in Tokyo (EPJ 209). The name “VOU” was the “meaningless spell[ing] which Iwamoto was scribbling automatically on a scrap of paper” (EPJ 209; correction by S. Kodama); it signifies nothing, but is simply pure sound pronounced as either bo-u or ba-u. The early aesthetic inclinations of the Club were heavily influenced by European avant-garde movements, especially Dadaism and Surrealism. However, in response to Pound’s request for an English manifesto for European and American poets, the Club published its own statement in their magazine, *VOU* (no.13, Oct. 1936). Although there is no clear evidence that the manifesto is

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15 Around 1924, Kitasono began to show marked interest in Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, and Dadaism. In 1927, Kitasono participated in the editorial boards of a Japanese surrealist circle, “*Bara・Majutsu・Gakusetsu*” (Rose, Magic, and Discourse), which developed into a Japanese Surrealist magazine, *Ishō no taiyō* (Garments of the Sun), the next year. Furthermore, in the Japanese Modernist poetry magazine, *Shi to shiron* (Poems and Poetics, Jan. 1928), Kitasono co-published “*Nihon ni okeru Surrealism no sengen*” (A Surrealist Manifesto in Japan) with Ueda Toshio and Ueda Motsu (Fujitomi 276).
directly linked to Pound’s poetics, the passage translated by Kitasono reveals the distinct similarity of the group’s approach to Pound’s ideogrammic method:

To the poets of the world:
We have denied, before, that a poem should be written as a mere reflection of society, religion, politics, etc. It is foolish that poetry should be interfered by them (which contribute nothing to the literary theoretical system of poetry).

We try hard to keep poetry as a new system of thinking [away] from the interference of philosophy, natural science, and sociology.

Poetry has its own function, which is to organize, by a scientific method, the most fresh, pure, and newest world of thinking which is able to be expressed by nothing except poetry.

VOU Club (qtd. in Solt 113)

Kitasono’s view of poetry as the scientific system of thinking shares the methodological accomplishment of Pound’s ideogrammic method. The difference is that Pound’s totalitarian drive for organization was activated not only in the field of poetic composition but also in socio-cultural criticism. In contrast, Kitasono was interested solely in developing a theoretical system for poetry as an autonomous textual mechanism.

By denying the existence of poetry as “reflection,” i.e. a mere reproduction of images, Kitasono hopes not to “決して意味に依って詩を書かない” (HG 332; “compose poems not by meaning”), but “詩に依って意味を形成した” (HG 332; “to compose meanings by [the form of] a poem”). His earliest experiment in “Kigōsetsu” (Semiotics) in Shiro no arubamu (White Album 1929), for example, shows that Kitasono attempted to compose a total image of the whole poem by accumulating short lines of nouns/adjectives. The first stanza of the Japanese original runs on the left, with its English translation by John Solt on the right:

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16 Hereafter, all the passages quoted from Ten no tebukuro (Heaven’s Glove, HG) are my translation.
As if the objects and colors are put on a textual canvas one after another, the nouns/adjectives are called into being and arranged to compose a stanza. Kitasono himself writes about these first poetic experiments that

私は新しいカンバスの上にブラッシュで絵を描くように、原稿紙の上に単純で鮮明なイメージをもった文字を選んで、たとえばパウル・クレエの絵のような簡潔さをもった詩を書いていった。つまり言葉がもっている一般的な内容や必然性を無視して、言わば言葉を色や線や点のシムボルとして使用したわけである。(*Collected 119*)

[I chose the letters with simple vivid images and put them on a paper to compose a poem in a terse manner like the paintings of Paul Klee. In other words, I ignored the general content or the inevitability of words and used words as symbols of colors, lines, and dots. (translation mine with reference to Solt 72)]

Kitasono here explains his poetic creation out of visual figurations of letters as signifier, not signified. Applying his explanation to “Semiotics,” a single line of nouns/adjectives superimposes one image after another, just as a painter adds strokes to compose his painting toward the moment of its completion. Kitasono’s insistence on composing poems “not by meanings” but by intensifying intuitive patterns through the accumulation of single, vivid verbal images may recall Pound’s Imagist assertion of “[d]irect treatment of the ‘thing’,” his advocacy of the presentation (vs. representation) of an image as an “intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (*LE* 3; 4).
Kitasono’s poetic experiment of using the physical appearance of language, of course, echoes the Modernist interest in typography. For instance, Pound’s use of capital letters in *BLAST* shows the European Modernists’ typographical exploration of visual/physical aspects of language. Similarly, but more intentionally, Kitasono’s *White Album* experimented in composing a poem out of the plastic forms of words and lines. As a talented designer, illustrator, and editor, Kitasono was very attentive to the graphic appearance of a page. His editorial and poetic awareness of textual space can be compared to Jerome J. McGann’s concept of the “bibliographic code,” a critical approach that considers texts “as autopoietic mechanisms operating as self-generating feedback systems that cannot be separated from those who manipulate and use them” (15). In other words, Kitasono, like McGann, considers that the meaning of a text is produced not only by the signified per se, but also by the editorial or bibliographic forms of a text, upon which letters and lines invite readers to experience the text.

Kitasono’s poetics exhibit an intriguing parallel to Pound’s Imagist/Vorticist evolution toward the ideogrammic organization as a new system of thinking. Through his interest in the graphic plasticity of poetic composition, Kitasono envisioned poetry as a self-complete system of presentation, not depending upon historical, cultural, or philosophical discourses but apprehending a vivid perception of the period in a concrete

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17 As for Pound’s reception in the context of Japanese Modernism, Pound’s earlier literary achievements as well as his marked interest in Chinese and Japanese cultures are appreciatively recognized by Kitasono in his first letter to Pound (*EPJ* 27). More directly, Kitasono’s fellow poet, Haruyama Yukio (1902-94), mentions Pound’s name in his preface to Kitasono’s *Ten no tebukuro* (Heaven’s Glove 1933). According to the Kitasono scholar, John Solt, Kitano’s avant-garde magazine *VOU* (no. 12, Sept. 1936) “featured a translation by Ema Shōko of the first chapter of Pound’s *ABC of Reading*” (113); in the same volume, Pound initiated the ideogrammic method as “the scientific method” and asserted that he would revive the Baconian *organon*, an inductive system of learning.
form of composition. In *Ten no tebukuro* (Heaven’s Glove 1933), Kitasono’s first collection of his poetics, which contains ample references to the European and American Modernist poets and artists, Kitasono describes the poetic domain of his day:

描寫から表現へ、表現から構成へ、構成から秩序それ自體へ。秩序それ自體より描體的擬體へ。描寫的擬體より表現的擬體へ、表現的擬體へ。描的擬體と表現的擬體を含む秩序それ自体の構成的擬體へ。（*HG* 318)

[From description to expression, from expression to structure, from structure to order in itself. From order in itself to a descriptive mimesis. From the descriptive mimesis to an expressive mimesis, *toward* the expressive mimesis. Toward the structural mimesis as an order in itself, which comprehends descriptive mimesis and expressive mimesis.]

Based on his speculation about the parallel between Modernist poetics and modern French music, Kitasono outlines a shift in Modernist representation from descriptive representation, through expressive representation, to structural representation. Although Kitasono does not reference Pound in the volume, his historical recognition of the evolution of poetic representation can be precisely applied to Pound’s avant-garde trajectories: the Imagist rebellion against descriptive language and the advocacy of “direct presentation;” the Vorticist notion of “primary form” and its application to the entire composition as structure; and, finally, the totalitarian command of order as a structured system of organization. Kitasono, who heralded a new phase of Japanese Modernism on the solid imports of Western aesthetic and intellectual avant-gardism, arrived at a similar conclusion to Pound and proposed the scientific exploration of the art of poetry: “哲學的ドメインに於ける詩的エスプリは既に終焉を告げ、詩人は科学的ドメインに於ける詩的エスプリの発見に參與[し]なければならない” （*HG* 318-19; “The poetic *esprit* in the philosophical domain has been already destined to its demise; the poets have to engage in the discovery of the poetic *esprit* in the scientific domain” ).
Though they belonged to different linguistic cultures, Pound and Kitasono shared a historical milieu. Their varied pursuits of textual autonomy in image, form, structure, system, and so on, originated in their rebellion against Impressionism and Naturalism; their adherence to poetic form and to the physical aspect of language advocated poetry as an autonomous textual entity. Furthermore, just as Pound favored the Vorticist notion of mechanism, Kitasono embraced *soshiki*, i.e. organization, machinery, and apparatus. He succinctly writes: “ヌウヴオ・ポエム（新しい詩）とはポエジイ（詩的活動性）が一定の組織を通じて實現する、一定の組織をも含む、自動體を意味するものである” (*HG* 349; “Nouveau poem (a new poem) signifies an autonomous entity [jидё́та́й] in which poesy (poetic activity) embodies a certain organization [soshiki] and comes to fruition through the organization”).

Pound and Kitasono’s literary trajectories inscribe the Modernist organicist evolution from the discourses of image as textual autonomy to those of the system as an autonomous form of organization.

Kitasono’s concept of ideoplasty, which Pound introduced to the West, demonstrates one of the marked organicist expressions of an autonomous textual entity being achieved in the context of Japanese Modernism. Pound extensively quotes Kitasono’s “Notes” on ideoplasty in *Kulchur*, with his own commentary and minor editing. Kitasono’s “Notes” begin:

The formation of poetry takes such a course as:

A. language         B. imagery         C. ideoplasty

That which we vaguely call potential effect means, generally, ideoplasty which grows out of the result of imagery. (*GK* 137)

Ideoplasty, ōka-gainen (応化概念) in Japanese, signifies “idea adjustment” or, literally,

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18 The typographical emphasis was deleted from the original text.
“response-transformation-notion” (Solt 122). Kitasono’s explanation of the “potential effect” that “grows out of the result of imagery” indicates that the ideoplasty is neither derived from the sign itself (language) nor exists as a static image (imagery). It is rather an active correspondence of perceptions: between the reader and the text, the images of the lines, and the ceaseless process of transformation within itself, which takes one shape at one moment and another in the next.

The English word, ideoplasty, adopted as the translation of ōka-gainen, however, has its own cultural etymology. According to the OED, the adjective “ideoplastic” (ideo [producing ideas or images] + plastic; originally used by Durand de Gros [or in another name, J. P. Philips] in 1860) denotes “physiological or artistic processes which are supposed to be moulded or modified by mental impressions or suggestions.” Additionally, the word ideoplastic pertains “to the suggestive function of the imagination” (OED). In short, the modern term ideoplasty is created in response to the spiritual or psychological study of mental faculty and, therefore, it already alludes to an Imagist definition of image as an “intellectual and emotional complex” (LE 4). However, ideoplasty is initially oriented to indicate a “process” of moulding, whereas an image tends to be grasped in its spatial dimension. This difference between image and ideoplasty almost coordinates with Pound’s Vorticist departure from the Imagist static image.

Pound’s notion of vortex as mobile images, devised through his first-hand adaptation of Fenollosa’s discourse of Chinese ideographs, is authentically revived in Kitasono’s ideoplasty. While Pound’s vortex addresses the cluster of ideas, whose form of

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19 A psychological term “complex” also signifies the intricate associations of “emotionally charged ideas or mental factors” (OED).
composition is only grasped momentarily in its pure dynamics, Kitasono’s ideoplasty is elicited in a transitory form of ideas in plastic movement. In *Kulchur*, Pound further quotes Kitasono’s explanation of ideoplasty, as follows:

> What we must do first for imagery is (in this order) collection, arrangement and combination. Thus we get the first line: ‘a shell, a typewriter and grapes’ in which we have an aesthetic feeling. But there is not (in it) any further development. We add the next line and then another aesthetic feeling is born. Thus all the lines are combined and a stanza is finished. This means the completion of imagery of that stanza and then ideoplasty begins. (*GK* 138)

A single line of a poem consists of the individual images, for example, a shell, a typewriter and grapes. The collision of concrete images generates a certain aesthetic impression in the reader’s mind, which presents a small element of an ideoplasty; this ideoplasty of a single line accumulates line by line to compose the whole poem as an organic tangle of lines. In other words, ideoplasty is the art of *composition* of “lines”—its “collection, arrangement, and combination.” Again, this echoes Fenollosa’s line system as a synthetic form of a harmonious organic whole.

*Saboten-tō* (*Cactus Island* 1938) exemplifies Kitasono’s experimentation with poetic lines to create “ideoplasty.” Generally, Japanese writing is written either in traditional vertical lines from right to left or in Westernized horizontal lines from top to bottom. Kitasono’s *Cactus Island* commingles horizontal letters and vertical letters in a vertical page format. To give a simplified example following the word-formatting in *Cactus Island*, the word “Cactus = サボテン [sa-bo-te-n] (↓)” can be formatted as below. A single arrow in parenthesis indicates the top-to-bottom direction of a single letter:
By mixing up the vertical and horizontal word-formatting on a single page, readers experience the text more actively and dynamically. On one hand, the two dimensions of the act of reading intensify lacunae between lines; on the other hand, individual prose-lines find unique interconnections with other lines.

Kitasono explains the poetic *esprit* of *Cactus Island* in “*Shi ni okeru watashi no jiken*” (My Experiments in Poetry 1953) and suggests that the significance of the poem lies in “全体が一つの群運動であるところ” (*Collected* 124; “the whole composition as a single compound [clustered] movement”). He writes:

[(*Cactus Island*, published in 1938 from Aoi publishing co., was composed in stages, starting around 1933. This work presents the experiment of poesy as a collision of one idea with another. As imagined from the volume’s title, the landscape setting of this poem is a location right under the equator. In such an intense atmosphere, I presented the conglomeration of activities of a relentless *esprit*. That is, here the poesy is performed neither in a horizontal nor in a vertical manner, but as a movement of clusters; one of the experimental meanings of the poem could be found in such a compound, group movement.)]

Briefly put, Kitasono designed the volume *Cactus Island* as clusters of prose-line poems.

The horizontal and vertical lines of a prose poem are superimposed one after another; the
dynamics of compositional lines that use the flexibility of the Japanese system of writing enable Kitasono to envision ideoplasty as an intensified undulation en masse.

In order to illustrate the underlying figures of textual organicism that interconnect vortex, ideoplasty, and a line system, Solt’s comment on ideoplasty is notably helpful, as it illuminates Kitasono’s Modernist adaptation of the Romantic organicism. Solt explicates the notion of ideoplasty via Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s concept of “esemplastic,” meaning to “shape into one” (122):

“Esemplastic” according to James Engell, approximates the German *Einbildungskraft*, which includes the concept that an image impresses itself “in the soul or mind where it will naturally mix with and become part of other images that will aggregate, fuse, and be shaped by the active power of the mind into a larger whole or ‘one.’” Pound and Katue shared a belief in the poem as an autonomous object in which the operation of image-integration takes place, and which the reader merely discovers there. (122)

*M. Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature* similarly introduces Coleridge’s term, “esemplastic,” as “Greek *es, eis* into + *hén*, neuter of *heîs* one + *plastikós* capable of molding, plastic” and comments that the word is close to *Ineinsbildung* (389)—“imagination or forming into unity” (Vater 376)—a term used by the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling.” Both German terms, *Einbildungskraft* and *Ineinsbildung*, pinpoint the Romantic transcendental faculty of “intellectual intuition” that sees “the universal in the particular” and grasps “the inclusive identity (or indifference) of the single essence of the absolute and its multiple ways of manifesting, or ‘form’” (Vater 374). In its ideal form of completion, the “esemplastic” form of poetic integration appears close to the Romantic notion of symbol as a unified, articulated whole, which is often depicted with an image of transparent crystal, reflecting and penetrating harmonious lights. Beyond the momentary conception of symbol, however, ideoplasty highlights the plastic mobility
of moulding into a shape, as Kitasono uses it to show an image accruing its intensity.

While Coleridge’s “esemplastic” illuminates a continuation between Romantic and Modernist discourses of organicism, Pound-Kitasono geometric adaptations of harmonious organic wholeness highlight their Modernist departure from the Romantic organicism. The shared figures of analytic geometry in Pound’s Image/Vortex and Kitasono’s ideoplasty locate one aspect of this grand shift. In A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska (originally published in 1916), for example, Pound explains the Vorticist concept of form in terms of four different mathematical expressions: “the arithmetical, the algebraic, the geometrical, and that of analytical geometry” (GB 90). After explaining the gradual process of abstraction with sample equations, Pound emphasizes the significance of the “analytical geometry” in conveying art forms:

Thus, we learn that the equation \((x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2 = r^2\) governs the circle. It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is the universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time. Mathematics is dull ditchwater until one reaches analytics. But in analytics we come upon a new way of dealing with form. It is in this way that art handles life. (GB 91)

The analytic geometry in its basic definition enables one to deal with the geometrical shapes (planes, lines, curves, and circles) using a numerical formula. Set in two-dimensional axes, for instance, the mathematical formula \((x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2 = r^2\) delineates form by formulating the relations among the coordinates. To emphasize the central point here, what mattered for Pound would have been not the actual content of a mathematical formula but its function as a conceptual frame. Sharing the importance of articulation and relation, an undercurrent in Fenollosa’s discourse of Chinese ideographs, the mathematical formula of analytic geometry reveals Pound’s penchant for abstract
functionalism, as observed in his Vorticist adherence to the machine mechanism.

Being fascinated with this potentiality of geometric plasticity, the ability to visualize and mould into shape, Pound pursued a similar plasticity of form in art:

Great works of art contain this fourth sort of equation. They cause form to come into being. By the “image” I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about $a$, $b$, and $c$, having something to do with form, but about *sea, cliffs, night*, having something to do with mood. (*GB* 92)

Just as the mathematical formula delineates a “visual” relationship among $a$, $b$, and $c$ by transcending the individual values of coordinates, the art of poetry looks for the relation among each image—*sea, cliffs, and night*—to compose a single intense image. In other words, Pound’s analogy between Imagist/Vorticist poetry and the language of analytic geometry illustrates his pursuit of pure abstraction in order to formulate the relations of individual concrete images. Pound dissolved this tension between abstraction and figurative concreteness through his encounter with Fenollosa’s Chinese ideograms, since he believed that “the ideograph abstracts or generalizes in the known concrete” (*MA* 89).

Borrowing an ideographic scheme, he also insists that “[a] real thought (Leibnitzian monad of thought [. . .], etc.) as distinct from a mere cliché or imperfect verbal manifestation consists of a pattern or group of related images” (*MA* 103). Thus, the ideogrammic method as a scientific method intended to find a (quasi-universal) relation among concrete historical phenomena and to systematize ideas within the transcendental drive.

Whether he shared Pound’s Imagist/Vorticist expectation for geometrical plasticity or not, Kitasono also explained the notion of ideoplasty with the metaphor of a “heart-shaped space,” encircled with two right angles or with two mysterious curves. Following his definition of ideoplasty, differentiating it from a mere image, Kitasono
continues:

Man has thought out to make a heart-shaped space with two right angles. This great discovery in plastic, also that of the conics in mathematics are two mysteries brought by man’s intellect.

The relation between imagery and ideoplasty makes us suppose the heart-shaped space which is born by the connection of the same mysterious two curves. We standardized these two curves and got a necessity. (GK 137-38)

Looking through his plastic grasp of ideoplasty as an interactive formation of ideas, I imagine that Kitasono’s description of a “heart-shaped space with two right angles” dramatizes a leap between textual geometric figures (with curves or right angles) and its poetic evocation as a “heart-shaped space.” In other words, ideoplasty is activated in an active correspondence between textual images and a reader’s perception, since the associations and feelings that a reader sees in a “heart-shaped space” on a page depend on the reader’s individual and cultural experiences. To emphasize, this ideoplastic interplay very much relies on the visual/material presence of signifiers on textual space. Just as two heart-shaped spaces, painted in red and black, would evoke different perceptions for readers, so do different formats/letters on a page. I will analyze the importance of visual figurations in the mechanism of reading in depth in Chapter Three, where I argue that Yokomitsu Riichi rediscovered ideogrammic language.

The coexistence of the figurative concreteness and the conceptual abstraction dramatized in Pound and Kitasono’s language of analytic geometry reveals the Modernist transcendental drive to grasp space-time in a single perspective. According to Pound, the circle drawn with the equation 

\[(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2\]

presents “the” circle, a pure form released from any positioning in space and time. This concept of form has a close association to the Platonic “idea” as a universal figure in its highest abstraction, since
Plato authentically invoked the geometric language “to transcend earthly matters, to facilitate understanding of the ‘idea of good,’ ‘essence,’ and ‘knowledge of the eternally existent’” (Hickman 14). In “The Wisdom of Poetry” (1912), too, Pound uses the theorem of a circle to illustrate the functions of poetry:

\[
(a-r)^2 + (b-r)^2 = (c-r)^2,
\]

I imply the circle and its mode of birth. I am led from the consideration of the particular circles formed by my ink-well and my table-rim, to the contemplation of the circle absolute, its law; the circle free in all space, unbounded, loosed from the accidents of time and place. [. . .] For the initiated the signs are a door into eternity and into the boundless ether. (SP 362)

For Pound, the language of analytic geometry, which is, in its supreme form, loosed from the conditions of space and time, presents the universal law beyond individual variants. I have already observed that the undercurrent of Pound’s transcendent desire in the Imagist/Vorticist discourses has bloomed into his totalitarian demand for an organization or a mechanical, scientific system. Pound’s ideogrammic method is the end product of his pursuit of a concept of image/form freed from space and time constrains in Imagism/Vorticism. At the same time, as if returning to the Classic/Romantic paean for Greco-Roman perfection, his ingrained urge for symbolic abstraction is channelled into Confucian Organum and enters into the realm of universality and eternity.

Pound’s inclination to support conservative Anti-liberalism or Fascism in his pursuit of totality can be, thus, contextualized in his avant-garde drive to transcend time by grasping it in a spatial gestalt as form. Moreover, Pound’s Modernist implementation of mathematical language suggests his desire for a sort of trans-national currency and, therefore, exhibits the other side of his multilingual practice of polyglot and translation. Living in a different linguistic culture but breathing in the atmosphere of European Modernism, Kitasono also has an insistent attachment to the physical aspect of textual
composition, i.e. to Japanese language that mingles Chinese ideogrammic writing, native phonetic signs, and the newly imported European alphabet. Simultaneously, Kitasono’s ample use of geometric metaphors inscribes his Poundian command of mathematical transcen
dence. Borrowing his own words, in an advertising book-band attached to his Ensui shishū (Conical Poems 1933), Kitasono introduces his poetic experiment as “数学的構成” (L’esprit 591; “a mathematic composition”) made of “言語と言語との張力” (591; “a tension between one word [cf. language] and another”) and further asserts that such mathematical composition is “捨象的ポエムの永久性を確保する唯一のロジック” (591; “the only method to retain the permanence of abstract poems”). Not to mention, by writing from both sources of inspiration simultaneously—the mathematic drive for abstraction and textual amalgamation—Pound and Kitasono recapture the Romantic tension between symbol and fragments.

Pound and Kitasono’s use of geometric language locates another East-West textual interaction that transcends geo-textual borders. That is, while their adherence to the visual aspect of language apparently resists translation, visual or geometric figurations cross the borders of languages. In particular, Kitasono’s fascination with the imagery of a cone and conics invites our attention to another correspondence with the Vorticist icon, a cone pierced through by an axis.

In mathematics, conics or conical sections produce ample shapes, such as circles, ellipses, parabola, and hyperbolae. Endowed with the geometric beauty of a circle, curves, and
straight lines, the Vorticist icon addresses fully the plastic potentiality of cones. Pound further associates the icon with the dynamo, whose energy engulfs the world and time into a great vortex. In *BLAST* (1914), Pound alludes to

**THE TURBINE.**

All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us, RACE, RACE-MEMORY, instinct charging the PLACID, NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE. (153)

The turbine-like figure spinning around the shaft is apparently still on the page, but is quickly revolving. Just as a turbine converts natural energy into power for machines, Vorticism aimed to suck ossified past traditions into the destructive whirl of a vortex and release a new living energy through each individual as a vortex. This Vorticist imagery of a cone as a whirlpool of individual and cultural memories provides an intriguing adaptation of Henri Bergson’s upended cone as a locus of body-image (*vide* Fig. 5). Just as Bergsonian totality is activated in the duration of personal and cultural experiences, the revolving vortex more drastically grows into “Race-Memory” and collides with the vortex of other races.

In Kitasono’s ideoplasty, one finds one such confluence of the great vortex, which evolved from European poetic theories, but was practiced in Japanese language. The Vorticist figure of a spinning cone, in which the past and the future balance at the revolving point, is lucidly projected in one of the prose lines of Kitasono’s *Cactus Island:*

エズラ・パウンドの世界が矩形になり螺旋形になり遠ざかる。するとウキンダム・ルイスの世界が廻転しながら傾斜しながら太鼓の音とともに近づいて来た。（Collected 30）

[Ezra Pound’s world grows rectangular, spiral-shaped, and distant. Wyndham Lewis’s world, while spinning and inclining, approaches with the sound of drums. (*qtd* in. Solt 133)]
The direct reference to Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis represents the two sides of the Vorticist language: Pound’s use of the abstract language of geometry and Lewis’s fascination with machine music. Built upon the Vorticist language, Kitasono’s ideoplasty radically performs the geometric/plastic figurations of signs as dots and lines, as projected in the textual undulation of prose lines in *Cactus Island*.

The vortex eddies out from Western avant-gardism, trans-pacifically intermingles with Japanese traditional and modern literary currents, and creates its own stream as Japanese Modernism. The complications of the aesthetic and politico-cultural achievements of Japanese Modernism—their amalgamated cultural heritages of Western, Chinese, and native literary traditions; the politico-historical realities of Imperial Japan in the late 1920s to early 1930s; and their reformation of the national language—will be further elaborated in the next chapter. The poetic correspondence of Pound and Kitasono in the 1930s, as I have outlined with the comparison of vortex and ideoplasty, prefigures one case of such East-West textual interactions.

4. From *The Cantos*

Came Neptunus/ his mind leaping/ like dolphins,/ These concepts the human mind has attained./ To make Cosmos—/ To achieve the possible—Muss., wrecked for an error./ But the record/ the palimpsest—/a little light/ in great darkness— (*Cantos* 815)

I close this chapter with the above excerpt from Pound’s final installment of *The Cantos* CXVI (1969), in which he confesses the remains of his Modernist and Totalitarian dream to make “Cosmos,” a harmonious organization of human intellects enacted through his ideogrammic method. After Mussolini passed into the realm of history, what was left is
the “palimpsest,” a text which was written over and over, but still leaves its traces on the surface (815). By conceiving his own Cantos as one of such palimpsest, i.e. the strata of lost history and memories, Pound’s lines further disclaim his literary dreams of a luminous textual microcosm: “Justinian’s,/ a tangle of works unfinished./ I have brought the great ball of crystal;/ who can lift it?/ Can you enter the great acorn of light?” (815). By referring to Justinian the Great (483-565), the emperor of the Byzantine Empire whose efforts culminated in restoring the glory of the Roman Empire, but simultaneously prepared its disintegration after his demise, Pound laments his unfulfilled work, his attempt to weave “a tangle of works” into “the great ball of crystal.” Living through the illusion of Romantic ideals, however, Pound continues: “And I am not a demigod,/ I cannot make it cohere” (816). By denying to be an Emersonian Poet who articulates the world in his symbolic language, what is left is, I think, a poet and a man: his life presented “[a] little light, like a rushlight/ to lead back to splendour” (817).

I have elucidated the Modernist figures of organicism in Pound’s three modes of composition: textual, musical, and plastic ones. These modes of composition respectively demonstrated the ideogrammic organization, the organum of machine music, and the ideoplasty that applies the transcendental language of geometry. In evaluating these trajectories in terms of the Modernist distance from Romantic organicism one last time, I propose that the uniqueness of the Modernist pursuit of “form” lies in Modernists’ transcendental imaginings of process or the shifting realities in the spatial/simultaneous grasp of time. The Modernist expressions of simultaneity, which I have occasionally marked out in collaboration with the Bergsonian notion of duration, Antheil’s musical grasp of time as form, and Pound’s and Kitasono’s Vorticist/ideoplastic forms in kinetic
movement foreground the Modernist transcendental drive for a time-comprehensive notion of form. Ultimately, Pound and Kitasono’s proposal of autonomous mechanism can be considered to be the Modernist epitome of textual organicism.

In the next chapter, I will further trace this time-comprehensive notion of textual organicism in the context of Japanese Modernism. Two conflicting drives for textual totality as an organic composition, which I have highlighted through Pound’s multilingual textual practice and theoretical orientation towards abstraction, were shared by Japanese Modernists. Indeed, the Japanese writers were almost doomed to establish their theories of composition between their concern for an amalgamated Japanese language and urgent search for a “national language.” In the same current, I will discuss the Modernist rediscoveries of the ideogrammic language by investigating their implied association with the transformation of Japanese national/Imperialist identities. The Modernists’ crossing figures of texts and bodies—buntai (sentence + body, i.e. literary style) and kokutai (nation + body, i.e. national polity)—uncover the underlying tensions between textual image and political body. Given the fast-changing socio-political realities of the Imperial Japan, my argument will narrate the Modernist activation of the socio-political sphere through textual space.
CHAPTER THREE

Japanese Modernists’ Rediscoveries of Body, Text, and National Language

Western expressions of textual organicism—the fascination with the autonomy of language and the organicist desire for composition—find their unique counterpart in Japanese modern discourses of literary style as 文体 (buntai). The Japanese word, buntai, is composed of two ideograms: 文 (sentence) and 体 (body). According to Shinjigen, an etymological dictionary for Japanese Kanji (Chinese characters), 文 represents the shape of a collar and signifies “figures of twilling,” “designing/pattern,” and “appearance” (445); 体 (in the old character 體) means “the articulated bones,” i.e. skeleton and signifies “limbs,” “figures,” and “form” (54). In short, buntai is the articulated body of figures, patterns, and texture: texts woven into a tangible form.

The conception of buntai specifically illuminates a peculiarity of the Japanese language: the importance of the physical/visual aspect of language. The Japanese language involves a conscious choice of written signs from among Chinese ideograms (kanji) and indigenous phonetic signs (hiragana and katakana). Especially after the Meiji period (1868-1912), newly-imported European vocabularies were increasingly transcribed in katakana; the overflow of transplanted vocabularies drastically changed the appearance of the textual surface. Japanese language, as such an amalgamation of different linguistic systems, has a rare flexibility in notation; at the same time, modern Japanese writers were alert to the chimerical artificiality of their writings, which cultivated their demand for a definitive national language. Therefore, based on this physical conception of buntai as textual bodies, modern Japanese writers remoulded their
literary style, re-fashioned the Japanese system of writing, and, thus, simultaneously established the *kokugo* (national language).

The three Japanese writers—Tanizaki Junichirō (1886-1965), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947)—whom I will discuss in this chapter enable me to highlight the Modernist reformation of *buntai* and the national language in their coincidence with Western Modernist discourses of textual organicism. Tanizaki and Akutagawa established their literary careers before the Great Kanto earthquake, which erupted in the Tokyo area in September 1923, and Yokomitsu belonged to a new generation, *Shin kankakuha* (New Sense School or New Sensationism), which emerged soon after the earthquake.¹

Yokomitsu, my primary target among the three writers, reflected on the origin of the New Sense School in 1941, and describes the post-quake revolutionary atmosphere that ushered in the new phase of modern Japanese literature. According to Yokomitsu,

眼にする大都會が茫茫とした信ずべからざる焼野原となつて周圍に擴ってゐる中を、自動車といふ速力の變化物が初めて世の中にうろうろと始め、直ちにラヂオといふ聲音の奇形物が顯れ、飛行機といふ鳥類の模型が實用物として空中を飛び始めた。これらはすべて震災直後わが國に初めて生じた近代科学の具象物である。焼野原にかかる近代科学の先端が陸續と形となつて顯れた靑年期の人間の感覺は何らかの意味で変わらざるを得ない。（*TYRZ* 13: 584)

[Unbelievably, what one saw was the metropolis expanding as immense burned fields, in which the transformed speed called automobiles, for the first time, began to pervade the world. Immediately, the deformed vocal sounds called the radio appeared, and the avian toys called airplanes actually began to fly in the air. All these are the concrete phenomena resulting from modern science, which emerged in our country for the first time right after the quake. A]

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¹ In the year following the Kanto earthquake, two literary magazines appeared in the Japanese literary scenes: *Bungei sensen* (Literary Front, 1924 June-1932 July), developed by Communist/proletarian writers, and *Bungei jidai* (Literary Age, 1924 October-1927 May), formed by the *Shin kankakuha* (New Sense School or New Sensationism) (Inoue, Kamiya, and Hatori 432; 435).
perception of the world, which has been elicited from a tip of the modern technology covering these burned fields, cannot help causing a certain change in young people.]²

As Yokomitsu vividly describes, after the earthquake, the impact of Western material culture such as radios, automobiles, and airplanes prevailed over the ruinous cityscape. The rapid restoration led to the “appearance of a new, mass society, the construction of a rootless urban space, and the eclipse of the individual by large industry and big capital” (Pincus 55). Specifically, the appearance of mass media drastically changed Japan’s socio-cultural atmosphere toward Shōwa Modernism.³

Tanizaki’s, Akutagawa’s, and Yokomitsu’s theories of composition, which I will discuss in this chapter, were all developed after the earthquake within the drastic westernization and modernization of the ensuing infrastructure. Therefore, despite their different political and aesthetic approaches to literature, Tanizaki, Akutagawa, and Yokomitsu’s reformations of buntai exhibit the shared socio-historical imperative to re-organize the cultural body through literary forms. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine how and to what end these radical socio-cultural changes re-created the Modernist notions of buntai. In the previous quotation, for instance, Yokomitsu depicts the transformation from an organic to a mechanical society, when he describes modern high technologies such as “transformed speed,” “deformed vocal sounds,” and “avian toys.” If these tropes of displaced machine-bodies distinctively feature Yokomitsu’s

² All the quotations from Teihon Yokomitsu Riichi zenshū (hereafter, abbreviated as TYRZ) are my translation. As well, all other Japanese citations in this chapter are my translation, unless specifically noted.
³ For example, the radio broadcast by Tokyo Broadcasting Station started in 1925. In 1927, Nihon Victor Record Co. was founded. Furthermore, in 1925, a popular magazine Kingu [king] heralded the rise of popular literature, and the enpon (one-yen book) boom began with the publication of a paperback edition of Gendai nihon bungaku zenshū (The Complete Collection of Modern Japanese Literature) in 1926. (Y. Kobayashi 194-97.)
Modernist sensibilities, then what kind of literary and cultural forms did Yokomitsu propose through his New Sensationist theory of composition?

I answer these questions by contextualizing Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism amongst Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s organicist figures of composition and by marking Yokomitsu’s Modernist departure from the Japanese modern literary tradition. Three literary debates in the late 1920s will allow me to illuminate these writers’ differing reactions and their investment in the form of the textual body: 1) the “Novel-without-Plot” debates between Tanizaki and Akutagawa; 2) Yokomitsu’s New Sense School and his resistance to Japanese Naturalism; and 3) Yokomitsu’s Formalist debates against the Communist/proletarian writers. All of these debates investigate the relationship between Japanese language and form; the transfiguring corporeal metaphors in the debates—a close alliance of body and text in the notion of Japanese buntai—will demonstrate the Japanese Modernists’ shifting relationship to their own literary tradition and their Modernist urge to retrieve their own cultural identities through the arts of composition.

Because of the time-responsive nature of these literary controversies, my focus shifts from the textual forms of these writers’ compositions to their organicist tropes as allusions to the Japanese socio-cultural bodies. In particular, due to the stringent socio-historical pressure of the late 1920s, Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism is galvanized in the active dynamics between textual space and socio-cultural space. For instance, I trace the articulating function of line—through which I analyzed Fenollosa’s artistic and textual compositions—within Yokomitsu’s trope of the peripheral nervous system and, through the organicist trope, examine his Modernist relationship to Japanese
capitalist/nationalist society. His rediscovery of the visual/physical forms of Chinese ideographic characters likewise links his Modernist challenge to modern Japanese language with his nationalist investments during the late 1920s and the early 1930s; I analyze the process whereby Yokomitsu’s grasp of letters as materials and materialist interest in the mechanism of reading—an interactive correspondence between texts and readers—result in the notion of kokutai (nation + body, i.e. national polity) in his colonial novel Shanghai (1928-32). By elucidating the relations between the figures of textual body and national body, my analysis untangles these intricacies of Japanese Modernists’ conceptions of buntai in the crosscurrents of the East-West discourses of textual organicism. At the same time, my argument illustrates the interaction between textual space and socio-cultural space, which transformed the entire cultural entity as well as the national language of Japan.

1. Tanizaki-Akutagawa “Novel-without-Plot” Debates

I begin my exploration of Japanese modern buntai by elucidating the pre-modern Japanese literary climate and its connection to Modernist organicist composition. The “Novel-without-Plot” debates, conducted between Tanizaki Junichirō and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke in 1927, highlight the global configuration of Japanese modern literature and language in the mid to late 1920s and exemplify the two competing views of how to construct the novel. Their approaches, respectively, show how the early Modernists resisted the modern literary tradition of I-novels and reacted to the post-quake transformation of the Japanese literary and socio-cultural milieu.
In the “Novel-without-Plot” debates, Tanizaki argued for a well-organized and structured plot, while Akutagawa advocated for poetic fragments as a viable form for a novel. Despite their apparently opposing approaches to “constructing (centering)” and “fragmenting (decentering)” the novel, according to Karatani Kōjin, author of the influential *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (1993), their controversy is a symptom of a Modern shift in the construction of narrative space (155). More specifically, this shift was a reaction against the naturalized “homogeneous space of one-point perspective,” which became established in a tradition of “I-novels” (162). By comparing Tanizaki and Akutagawa, who developed their literary careers within a similar cultural and literary milieu, I will re-evaluate their Modernist challenge to the tradition of I-novels. At the same time, their corporeal metaphors for language—the notions of *buntai*—elucidate an interchange between traditional Japanese organicist figures and the European Modernist notion of textual autonomy. As I demonstrate later in this chapter, Yokomitsu followed these earlier forays by integrating the Eastern and Western organicist figures in his New Sensationist formalism.

Before analyzing Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s competing views of composition, I will begin with an introductory overview of their organicist conceptions of *buntai*, literary style as textual bodies. In the essay, “*Bungei ippanron*” (General Theory of Literary Arts 1925), which was written for the series “Lectures on Literary Arts” of *Bungei shunjū* (Literary Chronicle), Akutagawa defines the unique qualities of the literary

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4 As critics point out, in their intricate rivalry both Tanizaki and Akutagawa were attached to the remnants of the Edo culture in the downtown districts of Tokyo. Furthermore, they were significantly influenced by Western thought, especially 19th-century Russian and French novels, and departed from the dominant current of Japanese Naturalism (Inoue and Komori, 124-26).
Arts by comparing literary art to the soul of the body:

Language, or a mere arrangement of letters in itself, does not necessarily make a literary art. Now, if we compare a literary art to a human being, language or letters would correspond to a body. However, even if the body is without blemish, the body without a soul is nothing but a corpse. Similarly, we cannot name language or a mere arrangement of letters as a literary art, unless it has something that qualifies it to be a literary art.

Akutagawa’s analogy already centralizes the implied linkage between writing and body in the notion of *buntai*. By building on the cultural association of text and body, Akutagawa asserts that what makes mere writing into a literary art is a soul. In the Tanizaki-Akutagawa debates, Akutagawa further identified this soul as a poetic spirit (*shiteki seishin*) and asserted the need to reveal the “pure” aesthetic beauty of literary arts in a “novel without plot,” which is, according to his definition, “最も詩に近い小説” (“Literary” 150; “the novel most similar to poetry”).

Akutagawa’s emphasis on a poetic spirit apparently contrasts with Tanizaki’s body-centered view of narrative structure. However, since Akutagawa states that “魂は [. . .] 只肉体を通じてのみその正体を示す” (“General” 461; “a soul reveals its presence only through a body”), the so-called poetic spirit does not preexist the material presence of language or letters. Another excerpt from “*Bungei ippanron*” exemplifies Akutagawa’s revitalized organic view of composition as *buntai*. He writes:

もう一度文芸と言うものを一人の人間にたとえば、この三要素はとりも直さず、骨だの筋肉だの皮膚だのに当ることになると思います。骨だの筋肉だの皮膚だのは骨、筋肉は筋肉、皮膚はまた皮膚と言うよう
に独立して働くものではありません。[... 言語の意味と言語の音と文字の形との三要素も常に全体として活動することは少しもそれと変わりません。（“General” 466-67）

[If we compare a literary art to a human being, once more these three components would correspond to bones, muscles, and skin. These would not work individually as a mere bone, muscle, and skin, but function in coordination as a single entity. [...] The coordination among the meaning, sound, and shape of a word as an entity can be understood in the same manner.]

Akutagawa compares literary art to a human being and proposes that literary art conveys its life through three components: “（一）言語の意味と（二）言語の音と（三）文字の形” (“General” 466; “1) meanings of words; 2) sounds of words; and 3) shapes of letters”). His metaphor of body-organ and its coordination already locates an intriguing intersection with Western discourses of textual organicism, just as Fenollosa adopted Spencerian discourses of social organicism to pursue his conception of literary art as an individual whole.

When Akutagawa nominates one of the three elements, “shapes of letters,” in addition to the coordination of meanings and sounds, his explanation underscores his awareness of the significance of the visual forms of letters in the Japanese art of composition. Just as the notion of buntai—especially the character 体 (tai or tei)—represents the physical aspect of written texts, similarly, two Japanese words, 字面 (jizura, letters + face) or 体裁 (teisai, body + [cut-out] form), signify the visual. These vocabularies illustrate the solid association between body and text as well as the importance of visual figurations in the Japanese language. This immediacy of visual figuration differentiates the Japanese language from the European transcendental grasp of language.

In his primary understanding of a written text as a corporeal form, Akutagawa stands
closer to Tanizaki, an epicurean of bodily perceptions who showed a marked attachment to rhythm and visual forms of language. For Tanizaki, form was something tangible, like bone and flesh, taste and texture; his emphasis on the visual aspects of letters, rhythms, and euphonies indicates his sensate grasp of beauty, which can only be cultivated in one’s durational experience. A passage from Bunshō tokuhon (A Reader on Style 1934) skillfully evokes Tanizaki’s appreciation for the beauty of letters and shares his involuntary memories from the 字体 (jitai, letter + body, i.e. letter face) of waka, a traditional form of Japanese poetry consisting of 31 syllables—5 7 5, 7 7:

私がしばしばそれらの和歌を思い出すのは、大半はその美しい字体のためである。私はその字体を思い出しながら、その和歌を思い出し、それが書いてあった骨牌の手触りを思い出し、それを弄んだ幼年時代の正月の晩を思い出して、云いようのない懐かしさを覚える。(39-40)

[I frequently remember those poems, primarily due to their beautiful letter face. While recalling the letters, I remember the poem, and the texture of cards upon which letters are written, and then I recollect an evening of the New Year of my childhood when I play with them. These evoke nostalgia in me.]

The quote relates the aesthetic expression of synesthesia—the symbolic totality of one’s experience—like that Pound treasured in the Japanese expression, “listening to incense” (GK 80). The beauty of the letters of Japanese waka is inseparable from the tactile experience of the cards upon which the letters are written and further prompts Tanizaki’s recollections of his childhood. The sequence of recollections suggests Tanizaki’s sensate experience of Japanese letters, which allows him to interconnect different perceptual experiences and elicit the totality of his memory in its association. This pleasure in the physical forms and concrete objects was, for example, embodied in his

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5 Tanizaki refers to the traditional Japanese card game, uta-karuta. One hundred waka poems of Ogura hyakunin isshu (compiled in the 13th century by Fujiwara no Teika) were written on two sets of cards. While a reciter reads the first three lines of a poem (5, 7, 5), the players compete to take the card with the last two lines of the poem (7, 7).
pursuit of an ideal female figure. Therefore, his experience of beauty stays in the corporeal and sensate realm.

The underlying emphasis of Tanizaki and Akutagawa on the visual/material presence of language is deeply enrooted in the Japanese organic view of language. Specifically, Tanizaki, who treasured traditional forms, grounded his corporeal conception of language in the Japanese animistic view of language. In another passage of Bunshō tokuhon, Tanizaki explains how he came up with his short story “麒麟” (kirin):

あれば実は、内容よりも「麒麟」という標題の文字の方が最初に頭にありました。そうしてその文字から空想が生じ、あゝ云う物語が発展したのでありました。ですから、一つの単語の力と云うものも甚だ偉大でありまして、古の人が言葉に魂があると考え、言霊と名づけましたのもまことに無理はありません。これを現代語で申しますならば、言葉の魅力と云うことでありまして、言葉は一つ一つがそれ自身生き物であり、人間が言葉を使うと同時に、言葉も人間を使うのであります。

(I actually came up first with its title, “麒麟” (Kirin), rather than its content. The letters themselves had invited my imagination, and it grew out into the narrative you know. Therefore, the power of a single word is more than ought to be neglected, and it is not at all incomprehensible that ancient people thought language had its own soul and named it 言霊 (kotodama). Rephrasing the term with a modern expression, it would denote fascination with languages. An individual word is in itself a creature; just as human beings use language, it so happens that language employs human beings.)

Tanizaki explains that his short story, “Kirin,” was elicited from the title word, which invited his imagination. The story grew just like a creature; kotoba (i.e. language) follows its own course and sometimes affects other beings with its own will and power. Tanizaki associated this autonomy of language with the Japanese animistic belief in the power of language as kotodama.

言霊 (kotodama) literally signifies 言（to speak）+ 霊 (soul/spirit) and it has long imbued the Japanese literary tradition with an organic view of language as ことのは
(kotonoha), i.e. 言葉 (kotoba, leaves of speech). To quote a famous passage from Kino Tsurayuki’s kana-preface for Kokinshū, a collection of waka poems from the 10th century,

[the seeds of Japanese poetry lie in the human heart and grow into leaves of ten thousand words. Many things happen to the people of this world, and all that they think and feel is given expression in description of things they see and hear. When we hear the warbling of the mountain thrush in the blossoms or the voice of the frog in the water, we know every living being has its song.

It is poetry which, without effort, moves heaven and earth, stirs the feelings of the invisible gods and spirits, smooths the relations of men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors. (35)

By comparing Japanese poems to green leaves, the ancient poet wishes that waka could flourish forever as ten-thousand leaves. The Western logocentric language characterized by Adam’s gift of naming and eliciting the natures of things may seem to connote a similar performativity to the Japanese organic/animistic notions of language. In Japanese poetry, however, one’s feelings can be embodied only within the form and rhythm of waka; souls and things can only be mediated through the tangible form of poetry. Whereas Western language divides itself between form and content, or matters and ideas, the Japanese language unifies the Platonic division as “leaves of speech” (kotonoha) in the organic figures. Things and words are familiar with each other in Japanese language, as the poets often compare their feelings to the changing expressions of nature in the four seasons.

Tanizaki and Akutagawa’s restoration of the organic conception of Japanese language in their theories of composition corresponds with their critiques of the modern Japanese language constructed after the Meiji period (1868-1912). The massive cultural and intellectual imports from the West drastically changed the conceptual paradigm of the Japanese language, its relation between form and content. For example, in Shōsetsu
shinzui (The Essence of the Novel 1885), the first distinguished literary theory after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) claims: “文は思想の機械なり、また粧飾なり” (101; “Style serves both as a vehicle and an adornment for thought” 50).

Based on the Western notion of phonetic language which holds that a letter serves sound, Tsubouchi proposed the novel to be an expression of one’s inner feelings and ideas. In this vein, he asserted that the art of the novel should depict (mosha) the manners of human lives and “見えがたきものを見えしむる” (48; “make the invisible things visible”). The Platonic precedence of idea over form in the European mimetic tradition thus founded the modern notion of novels; Tsubouchi’s mimetic conception of the novel, “influenced by Victorian literary discourse (represented by Matthew Arnold),” heralded the start of Japanese realism (Suzuki 21).

Furthermore, based on Tsubouchi’s modern definition of the purpose of the novel and further guided by the influence of European Naturalism, Japanese Naturalism bloomed in the last decade of the 19th century and proposed to describe reality “as it is.” While European Naturalism was endorsed by scientific objectivism, Japanese Naturalism ended up describing the reality of the minutiae of one’s daily life through the subjective mode of narrative. More importantly, in believing that language can be a transparent medium to reveal one’s inner self, the I-novels echo the penetrating influence of European Romanticism. For example, Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943), who started his career as a Romantic poet and ended it as a Naturalist writer, claimed in the preface for his Tōson shishō (1904): “生命は力なり。力は聲なり。聲は言葉なり。新しき言葉はずなはち新しき生涯なり” (565; “Life is power. Power is voice. The Voice is
words [*kotoba*, i.e. leaves of speech]. New words are therefore new life”). The Romantic identification between the author’s subjective feeling and his/her expression was grafted with European Naturalism and established the I-novels as the genre of confessional novels. Therefore, as Nakamura Mitsuo succinctly remarked, “私小説が写実主義で偽装されたロマン派文学であった” (*Fūzoku* 59; “the I-novels are Romantic literature disguised as realism”). This naturalized convention of confessions in the name of the I-novel governed the Japanese literary scene from approximately the late 1890s to 1910s.

Having started their careers in the heyday of Japanese Naturalism, both Akutagawa and Tanizaki criticized the naturalized conventions of the I-novels and attempted to liberate their prose from “the limited essay-like function of straightforwardly projecting the author’s own experience on to the ‘fictional page’” (Yamanouchi 92). Akutagawa was one of the preeminent writers of allegorical short stories in Taishō Japan (1912-26); his elaborate style and carefully controlled vocabulary shine in his sophisticated adaptation of Eastern and Western classic tales and mythos. Tanizaki started his literary career with the sensual aestheticism of “Shisei” (Tattoo 1910) and his stylistic delicacy skillfully evoked erotic sensuality and other rich narrative effects. Akutagawa’s intellectual pursuit of the egotism and alienation of human beings and Tanizaki’s passionate dedication to—especially female—sensuality, illustrate different aspects of modern life. However, both writers developed their aestheticism in their attempts to recover literary form and structure.

The Tanizaki-Akutagawa debates, which arose in 1927 and were cut off by Akutagawa’s suicide in July of the same year, represented and prefigured two possible
directions for Japanese Modernism after the Kanto Earthquake. During the post-quake socio-cultural changes of the late 1920s, Tanizaki moved to western Japan and preserved his aesthetic hold in classic literatures, traditional theater arts, and the merchant life of western Japan. Through his nostalgic recollection of beauty, he attempted to restore a historical continuity to Japanese culture by preserving forms (kata) found both in daily lives as well as in the classic arts.

In the Tanizaki-Akutagawa controversy, too, Tanizaki’s corporeal metaphors are underscored by his sensate attachment to physical bodies and his passionate devotion to the cultural bodies of the older Japanese traditions. Having found that (modern) Japanese writers are in general distinctively deficient in their ability to construct, Tanizaki asserted in the debates that tasteful novels can be primarily pursued in “物の組み立て方、構造の面白さ、建築的の美しさ” (“Jōzetsu” 145; “the manner of composing elements, an intriguing structure, and architectural beauty”). He further rephrases this beauty of construction as the “physical stamina” of a text and retorts to Akutagawa:

失礼ながら私をして忌憚なく言はしむれば、同じ短篇作家でも芥川君と志賀君との相違は肉體的力量の感じの有無にある。深き呼吸、逞しき腕、ネバリ強き腰、——短篇であっても、優れたものには何かさう云ふ感じがある。長篇でもアヤフヤな奴は途中で息切れがしてゐるが、立派な長篇には幾つも幾つも事件を疊みかけて運んで来る美しさ、——蜿蜒と起伏する山脈のやうな大きさがある。私の構成する力とは此れを云ふのである。（“Jōzetsu” 156）

[If I may be so bold as to be personal, the difference between Mr. Shiga and Mr. Akutagawa although both write short fiction, has to do with the presence or absence of signs of physical stamina in their works. Powerful breathing, muscular arms, robust loins—such attributes are found even in short stories if they are superior pieces. In the case of full-length novels, it is the anemic ones that run out of breath in the middle, while the great novel has the beauty of an unfolding of event upon event, the magnificence of a mountain range rolling on and on. This is what I mean by ability to construct. (qtd. in Karatani, Origins 161)]
Based upon his conviction that “芸術は一個の生きものである” ("Jōetsu" 155; “an art is a (living) creature”), Tanizaki, like Akutagawa, attributes human physical qualities to the artistry of a novel. Through his admiration for the 19th-century European novels, such as those written by Stendhal and Balzac, Tanizaki proposes a solid narrative structure for the novel. Ultimately, his conception of *buntai* is considered equivalent to the physical plasticity of textual construction.

While Tanizaki dedicated his artwork to the physical form and beauty of life, Akutagawa built his works with carefully selected vocabularies and aimed to serve the Aristotelian notion of an art as *techne* or craft. In his autobiographical work, “Daidōji Shinsuke no hansei” (Daidōji Shinsuke: The Early Years 1925), Akutagawa confesses his bookish attitude:

こう言う伸輔は当然又あらゆるものを本の中に学んだ。少なくとも本に負う所の全然ないものは一つもなかった。実際彼は人生を知る為に街頭の行人を眺めなかった。寧ろ行人を眺める為に本の中の人生を知ろうとした。それは或は人生を知るには迂遠の策だったのかも知れなかった。が、街頭の行人は彼には只行人だった。彼は彼等を知る為には、——彼等の愛を、彼等の憎悪を、彼等の虚栄心を知る為には本を読むより外はなかった。(22)

[Shinsuke thus quite naturally learned everything he knew from books—or at least there was nothing he knew that didn’t owe something to books. He did not observe people on the street to learn about life but rather sought to learn about life in books in order to observe people on the streets. This might have been a roundabout way of doing it, but to him passersby on the street were nothing but passersby. In order to learn about them—their loves, their hatreds, their vanities—he had no choice but to read books [. . .]. (158)]

Having learned about people and their lives from books, Akutagawa, a frequent visitor to the Western literature corner of the *Maruzen* bookstore, dedicated his life to creating an elaborate narrative world in language. While balancing the tension between a massive
influx of Western thoughts and traditional cultural frames, Akutagawa pursued his obsession with adaptation by writing a series of allegorical short stories.\(^6\)

Akutagawa’s post-quake writings, however, tragically manifest his loss of cultural frames and reveal his neurotic inability to achieve a gestalt, the totality of his cultural experiences. Accordingly, his style disintegrates into apophistic, poetic fragments. What is left for him are nerves, which perceive sporadic stimulations and sensations, as Akutagawa himself confesses in “Haguruma” (Spinning Gears 1927): “僕は芸術的良心を始め、どう云う良心も持っていない。僕を持っているのは神経だけである” (186; “I have no conscience at all—least of all an artistic conscience. All I have is nerves” 214). The stylistic fragmentation of his later autobiographic works, in one aspect, reveal Akutagawa’s literary and personal failures at adapting to post-quake Tokyo, but it also addresses the incomprehensibility of the socio-historical and linguistic realities of the late 1920s, which could no longer be contained in the artificial cosmos of a narrative.

Tanizaki’s corporeal imageries of flesh and bones exhibit a sharp contrast with Akutagawa’s nerves, neurosis, and fragmentary accumulations. However, their shared concept of textual bodies also pinpoints the intersection between the organic conception of Japanese classical language and the Western Modernist discourses of textual organism. Tanizaki’s belief that “言葉は一つ一つがそれ自身生き物である” (Bunshō 107; “an individual word is in itself a creature”) resounds with a familiar Modernist understanding of arts as an autonomous textual entity. Similarly, when Akutagawa uses the metaphor of body-organs in describing the harmonious form of

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\(^6\) Akutagawa’s obsession with adaptation might have been caused by his own familial complication, as he himself was an adopted son. Due to his mother’s madness, he was adopted into the family of his mother.
coordination in the literary arts, his organicist analogy can be, for example, compared to Fenollosa’s notion of art as a harmonious organic entity.

Above all, Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s organicist metaphors of composition indicate their Modernist imperative to retrieve historical and cultural continuity by reconstructing the integrated textual body. In this vein, despite their different reactions to the post-earthquake loss of cultural and literary stability, these two Taishō intellectuals’ enforced transfigurations reveal their Modernist tensions. This is similar to Pound’s conflict between the organicist search for totality and multi-lingual practice of fragmentation. In other words, Tanizaki’s proposal of the solid narrative structure of composition and his return to Japanese cultural traditions are somewhat similar to Pound’s demand for a cultural frame in his ideogrammic method. At the same time, Akutagawa’s stylistic fragmentation and nervous disintegration are comparable to Pound’s textual practice of juxtaposition and collage, which sought a new form of textual totality.

Upon focusing more closely, however, one finds that Tanizaki and Akutagawa’s underlying critique of the modern Japanese language takes a unique shape in the form of monstrosity of language trope. For instance, when Akutagawa discusses the coordination of three components of compositions—meanings, sounds, and shapes of letters—he casually refers to the deformed textual figure as a monster:

骨だの筋肉だの皮膚だのは骨は骨、筋肉は筋肉、皮膚はまた皮膚と言うように独立して働くものではありません。どれも皆一つになった全体として働くばかりであります。もし骨は動いても、筋肉や皮膚は動かないとすれば、その人間は片輪——所ではない、生けるが如く死せるが如き怪物になるほかはありません。（“General” 466-67）

[These would not work individually as a mere bone, muscle, and skin, but function in coordination as a single entity. If there happens to be a case where...]

150
a bone moves without coordinating muscles or skin, such a human being has to be a defect, or more than that, has no choice but to become a deadly monster.]

Akutagawa’s insistence on the unity of sounds, meanings, and shapes of letters in artwork underscores his cautious alertness to the chimerical amalgamation of modern Japanese language. Once the coordination is broken, what is elicited is the defected corpse of writing, the rampant sprawl of textual organicism. Similarly, Tanizaki in Bunshō tokuhon severely attacks the Japanese scholars’ careless transplantation of Western syntax and vocabulary into their writings:

彼等の文章は読者に外国語の素養のあることを前提として書かれたものでありまして、体裁は日本文でありますけれども、実は外国文の化け物であります。そうして化け物であるだけに、分らなさ加減は外国文以上でありまして、あゝ云うのこそ悪文の標本と云うべきであります。(70)

[Their [scholars’] essays are written on the premise that the readers are well versed in foreign languages. Although they apparently look like Japanese writing, they are indeed monstrous foreign writings. Since they are monstrous, their unreadability outstrips foreign texts. Such cases are the very epitome of bad writing.]

These references to the monstrosity of language evoke the chimerical figure of the Monster in Frankenstein, whose deformity arouses fear and disgust in all who see him.

The complications between the Romantics’ search for the symbolic harmonious whole and ambivalent fascination with chimerical textual organicism and fragmentation to some degree coordinate with Tanizaki and Akutagawa’s organic view of composition as textual bodies, their critique of the amalgamation of the Japanese language and composition out of that amalgamation.

Most importantly, Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s tropes of monstrosity, which reveal their critique of the massive linguistic transplantation after the Meiji period, disclose their underlying concerns regarding the national language. Especially for Tanizaki, a
historical recognition that modern Japanese thought and society had borrowed Western intellectual ideas arouses his insistent demand for a national language. For instance, his essay on composition notably involves his search for “Japaneseness” (nihonjin rashisa), an advocacy of cultural authenticity and historical continuity that differentiates Japanese from other national peoples. In particular, Tanizaki severely attacks the translational styles, the careless implantation of Western syntax and vocabulary in Japanese writing. Tanizaki again criticizes the overflow of Western linguistic scheme in Japanese scholarly writing:

自分の国語を以て発表するのに不向きなような学問は、結局借り物の学問であって、ほんとうに自分の国のものとは云えない。それば、早晩われわれは、われわれ自身の国民性や歴史にかなう文化の様式を創造すべきでありましょう。（Bunshō 71）

[A discipline which does not see fit to present in one’s own national language is after all a borrowed discipline and not one of one’s own country. Thus, sooner or later, we should create a cultural mode, which fits our own nationality and history.]

Tanizaki’s defense of Japaneseness shows his respect for disciplines grounded in the Japanese cultural constitution and cultivated in its own historical continuity. His claim for Japanese cultural authenticity is politically charged and is even similar to the nationalists’ investments in creating their own cultural authenticity. For instance, one may recall that the Japanese nativist religion of Shintō sanctified the Imperial authority as the descent of Sun-goddess in the Meiji period; given the revived cultural authority, the kokutai (national polity) under the rule of the Japanese Emperor ideologically propelled its Imperial expansion (Gluck 138). In his tacit engagement with political/cultural authenticity, Tanizaki’s traditionalist affinity with the nationalist convention is comparable to T. S. Eliot’s advocacy of tradition as a norm. Moreover, although
Tanizaki explored beauty in physical sensuality while Pound pursued it conceptually. Tanizaki’s adherence to the beauty of form might be seen as akin to Pound’s fascination with the Confucian *organum*, which I discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

To conclude, in their critique of the modern Japanese language of I-novels, their restoration of the traditional organic figures of language, and their underlying concerns for the state for the national language, Tanizaki’s and Akutagawa’s discourses of *buntai* (textual bodies) prefigure a paradigmatic shift from the modern to Modernism. After Tanizaki-Akutagawa’s recession from Tokyo’s literary circles, the mainstream of younger Modernist and proletarian writers guided the development of Shōwa literature. Among them, Yokomitsu Riichi, one of the founders of the New Sense School, took over the post-Akutagawa leadership in the genre of the novel and struggled to pursue Japanese formalist aestheticism. Thus, I will hereafter focus on the Japanese formalist debates of the late 1920s, in which Yokomitsu challenged the languages of the I-novelists and proletarian writers. His New Sensationist theory of composition, while implanting European avant-garde formalisms in the Japanese literary arena, implies a Modernist departure from Tanizaki-Akutagawa’s generation. At the same time, while tracing Tanizaki’s corporeal metaphors for narrative structure and their contrast with Akutagawa’s neurotic fragmentation in Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism, I will explicate Yokomitsu’s Modernist reformation of the national language through his rediscovery of the ideogrammic language.
2. Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist Language

In 1931, Yokomitsu Riichi reflected back on his stylistic transformation from the championing of the New Sense School, the Japanese formalist debates, to New Psychologism (Shin shinri shugi), and expressed it as “國語との不逞極る血戰” (TYRZ 16: 369; “a rebellious, bloody struggle with the national language”). His implied distance between himself and the “national language” specifically indicates his challenge to and negotiation with modern literary form and style, especially in the I-novels. By delineating Yokomitsu’s resistance to Japanese Naturalism, in this section, I evaluate his New Sensationist rediscovery of the ideogrammic language as a Modernist undertaking to retrieve Japanese cultural identity within the physicality and materiality of language. Furthermore, while demonstrating the continuity of Yokomitsu’s generation with that of Tanizaki and Akutagawa, my analysis of Yokomitsu’s displaced machine bodies highlights the intersection of Eastern and Western organicist figures in his New Sensationist trope of the “peripheral nervous system.” Yokomitsu’s hint that he would like to revive and re-incorporate Chinese ideographs (kanji) as the Japanese national language situate his New Sensationist formalism within Japan’s political tensions with the West and China.

“Shinkankakuha no kenkyū” (A Study of the New Sense School), written around the same time that Yokomitsu engaged in the Formalist debates, was published in 1928-29 as part of the lecture series on literary composition by the Bungei Shunjū Co. This essay, mostly composed by Yokomitsu himself, succinctly conveys the position of the New Sense School on the history of modern Japanese literature, especially in the context of a
transformation of the modern Japanese language as a result of the *genbun itchi* (the unification between spoken and written language) movement.

The *geunbun itchi* movement, which sought to unify spoken and written language, was originally performed as a reformation of literary style, but its procedure was closely entangled with the establishment of the national language after the Meiji Restoration. Karatani Kōjin argues that the *genbun itchi* movement started as a proposal that “Chinese characters be abolished” and that it was a “movement to reform the writing system and do away with Chinese characters, *kanji*” (*Origins* 46). Like the former *Kenyū* group, known by its art of euphuism and rich reference to Chinese and Japanese literature, Yokomitsu proposed the literature of the New Sense School as a countermove to the European phonetic language as well as to the language of Japanese Naturalism being established as a result of the *genbun itchi* movement.

Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist emphasis on written expressions—his pursuit of literature for writing, not for “speaking” or “explanation”—not only signifies a confrontation with the language of Japanese Naturalism but also reflects his Modernist mental-scape. He disapproves of the out-of-date tone of Japanese Naturalist literature and believes that the literature should illuminate the velocity and dynamism of the current
Their literature is, all and sundry, mousy, feeble and monotonous, as old as a mini pipe and sick with a chronic palsy. It is no wonder for a literature living in the worn-out common sense of the day before, whereas the present society increases its tri-dimensional spatial expansion by intersecting a daily doubling velocity with a roaring dynamics. It goes without saying that the writers of Japanese realism cannot endure such a mass of social energy.

In the face of the velocity and dynamism of the quickly-changing society in post-quake Tokyo, Yokomitsu finds the plain, two-dimensional descriptions of the Naturalist literature inadequate. Therefore, he attempts to express “四つのダイメンション——即ち空間と時間” (TYRZ 14: 320; “the fourth dimension —that is, space and time”) through the form of a novel and, for that, insists on depicting objects in “最も意識的計画的に” (TYRZ 14: 320; “a most conscious and intentional manner”). In order to express the sensate effects of expression, furthermore, the New Sensationist writers put emphasis on “how to express reality” as letters on a page: “問題は表現にあるのだ。[...] あらゆる作家に取って、殊に小説作家に取っては、問題は、いつも、紙の上に、活字に依って、如何に表現するか、にあるのだ” (TYRZ 14: 318; “The question is in expression. [...] For every writer, especially for a novelist, what matters is always how to express it on paper through the use of letters”). Thus, Yokomitsu foregrounds the importance of the physical/material presence of letters that constitutes textual space.
In opposition to “古い情緒の纏綿する自然主義といふ間延びのした舊スタイル” (TYRZ 13: 584; “the old flabby style of Naturalism that effuses old sentiments”), Yokomitsu calls his scientific approach “新しい客観主義” (TYRZ 14: 322; “New Objectivism”). This New Sensationist description of reality, to some degree, succeeds the aesthetic credo of the Naturalist/Realist tradition: “ありのままに描け!” (TYRZ 14: 313; “describe it as it is!”). At the same time, however, Yokomitsu clearly overturns the naturalized notion of “the writer = I myself,” when he states:

作家自身が、科学的な反射鏡となることによって、現代のこの眩しい混沌を、立体的な正確さのうちに描き出すことであり、この眩しい混沌それ自身の渦巻く舞踏のなかに、人類の正しい方向を指摘するだろう。（TYRZ 14: 322）

[By turning the writer himself into a scientific reflector and by describing this dazzling chaos with stereoscopic accuracy, it [New Objectivism] points to the right direction for human beings in the billowing dance of dazzling chaos itself.]

Yokomitsu regards the writer as a “scientific reflector,” as functioning like a concave or convex mirror. The writer functions as a mechanical device at the meeting point between reality/society and written text. This artificial position of the writer can be compared to that of the cinematographic camera, and critics typically point out the use of the camera-eye in Yokomitsu’s earliest New Sensationist works, including “Hae” (The Fly 1923) (Komori, Kōzō 441-53). Specifically, Kobayashi Hideo perceptively remarks that Yokomitsu’s work “以前は現実と共に流れていた肉眼を、現実の手から奪って掌の上にのせた。忽ち肉眼は擬眼となった” (161; “deprived an eyeball, which used to concur with reality, of the hand of reality and put it on his own palm. Immediately, the naked eye has become an artificial eye”). In contrast to the naturalist writers who asserted to view and write their lives from their own viewpoints, Yokomitsu’s New
Objectivism aims to detach his viewpoint as a mechanical agency.

Yokomitsu’s trope of displaced bodies will be analyzed in more depth in my discussion of his colonial novel, *Shanghai*. My aim here is merely to demonstrate that his figure of a machine body exhibits an intriguing transformation away from Tanizaki’s attachment to a flesh-body as well as his corporeal metaphors of narrative construction. Nevertheless, Yokomitsu certainly shares Tanizaki’s architectural view of composition, which regards a literary work as an organic entity in itself. Echoing Tanizaki’s admiration for the accumulative power of construction, Yokomitsu similarly asserts that there is an “organic integration of a work” and continues:

自分はさきに芸術家の仕事は建築士のそれに似てゐると云つたと記憶するが、まさに然りである。建築士の仕事ほど、組織的で、計画的で、統一的な仕事は滅多にあるまい。それは極端に細心であらねばならないと同時に、不斷に青空を破る全體の規模を、念頭に置いてみなければならないのである。技術の尖端的な発達とその適應とが、常に数学的な正確さを持って貫かれてゐなければならないのである。作品の組み立てーー作家の心構へもまたその通りなのだ。（TYRZ 14: 335）

[I have mentioned that the work of an artist is similar to that of an architect, and indeed it is. There would be seldom or never a work, which should be as organized, designed and integrated as an architectural one. It has to be quintessentially fastidious and, at the same time, always keep in mind the whole dimension breaking into the blue sky. The development of high technology and its application must always be consistent and mathematically precise. Composition for writers should take such a strong stand.]

By comparing the art of composition to architecture, Yokomitsu proposes an “organized, designed, and integrated” composition with “mathematic precision.” Tanizaki’s and Yokomitsu’s generational difference may be comparable to that between Fenollosa and Pound, since the latter two similarly pursued the organicist view of composition, one through a natural organic imagery and the other through the mathematical precision of machine organization.
It is remarkable that Yokomitsu’s organicist view of composition was borrowed directly from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846). While substantially quoting Poe’s essay on “The Raven,” translated by Ishihama Kinsaku, Yokomitsu supports his formalist prioritization of form over content, signifier over signified (*TYRZ* 14: 340-46). Poe’s early Modernist recognition of artwork as a mathematical construction has guided subsequent European Modernisms, especially French Symbolism by Charles Baudelaire—the first translator of Poe into French—and Stéphane Mallarmé. Likewise, the massive network of European literary and philosophical discourses was transplanted and resulted in the formation of Japanese Modernism; Yokomitsu and other young New Sensationist writers themselves variously attempted to contextualize their works within a wide range of influences, from French Symbolism to avant-garde aesthetics including Structuralism, Cubism, Dadaism, and so on.7

In particular, Yokomitsu’s metaphor of 末梢神経 (*masshō shinkei*), the peripheral nervous system, accentuates his apprehension of the 1920s’ capitalist society and offers an intriguing parallel to the Modern discourse of Charles Baudelaire (1821-67). Yokomitsu objects to the negative connotations of “periphery” and “neurosis,” which were associated with European decadence or the frivolous pleasure of sensation, and centralizes the trope of the peripheral nervous system in his formalist discourse.8

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7 The New Sense School can be aesthetically contextualized in the lineage of European Modernism, as Yokomitsu himself remarks in *Shin kankakuron* (An Essay on New Sense 1925), “未来派、立體派、表現派、ダダイズム、象徴派、構成派、如実派のある一部、これらは総て自分は新感覚派に属するものとして認めてある” (*TYRZ* 13: 79-80; “Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Symbolism, Constructionism, a school of Neo-realism [*Nyojitsuha*]—all pertain to the New Sense School”).

8 The trope of the peripheral nervous system was circulating since the emergence of the
Example, as a result of the “neglect, dismissal, and in the egregious case, oblivion” of the peripheral nervous system (TYRZ 14: 352), Yokomitsu observes:

[A dull sentence; a work only with a figurehead; the work of a skeleton without flesh; the work with a fine construction but without any organic movement; in short, a weird literature that precludes a subtleness of the faculty particular to the arts of literature.]

Yokomitsu’s description of the defective literary work echoes Akutagawa’s caution about the monstrosity of chimerical language, which loses its organic accord among the “meanings, sounds, shapes” of letters. Calling such defective works “自己疎外の文學 [. . .] 咒はれた文學” (TYRZ 14: 352; “the literature of self-isolation, the cursed literature”), Yokomitsu insists that an organic totality of a literary work can be attained only with hegemonic coordination between the central nervous system and the peripheral nervous system.

Indeed, Yokomitsu’s highlighting of the peripheral nervous system conveys his respect for Akutagawa’s sensitive control of vocabulary, as Yokomitsu later dedicates a section to his senior writer’s preeminent artifice of composition (TYRZ 14: 361-68).

What exactly Yokomitsu means by the “peripheral nervous system” is best exemplified

New Sense School in 1924. For example, a New Sensationist critic, Akagi Keisuke, observes that “末梢神經の顫動” (377; “a peristalsis of the peripheral nervous system”) is penetrating Modern life. Inagaki Taruho, in his essay “Masshōshinkei yoshi” (So Good are Peripheral Nerves 1925), criticizes the contemporary demand for the “soundness” of literature in defense of “ディレッタンチズム、現実逃避、技巧主義、末梢神経” (382; “dilettantism, escapism, rhetoricism, and the peripheral nerves”). Inagaki’s essay highlights the Formalist significance of “末梢神経の遊戯” (383; “a play of the peripheral nerves”).
when he explains the difference between the sensual effects aroused by the two different
Chinese characters that mean blue, 青い (aoi) and 蒼い (aoi):

「青い顔」と書くのと「蒼い顔」と書くのは、諸君に取って、同一の
聯想と感覺を觸激するだろうか。決してそうではないだろう。初夏の
明るい昼下り、太陽の光線を避けて無花果の青い葉蔭に立ってゐた諸君
の戀人の健康な顔は、「青い顔」ではあり得ても、決して「蒼い顔」
ではあり得なかっただろう。そして、諸君が同じ彼女と截づたひの夜の
道を歩いてゐた時、突然冬に近い月光の中に浮き出した彼女の健康な
顔は、「蒼い顔」ではあり得ても、決して「青い顔」ではあり得なかっ
ただろう。(TYRZ 14: 337-38)

[Do the expressions, “青い顔” [aoi kao] and “蒼い顔” [aoi kao], evoke the
same associations and sensations for your readers? That should never happen.
In a bright afternoon of an early summer, your love is standing under the
green shadow of a fig tree avoiding the rays of the sun; her healthy face could
never be “蒼い顔,” but it could be “青い顔.” And when you are walking with
the same girl on a nightly stroll along the bush, a wintry moonlight flashes on
her healthy face; that face could be “蒼い顔,” but never “青い顔.”]

Even a difference of a single Chinese character could shape a different context.
Yokomitsu provides another example—蔵 (kura) and 倉庫 (souko)—both mean storages,
but evoke different socio-cultural milieux.² He thus insists on the crucial need to attend
to the diligent workings of individual letters, which he calls the peripheral nervous
system in the art of composition. Finally, Yokomitsu defines the form of literature as
“作品の構成を整頓するリズムを持った言葉の羅列” (TYRZ 14: 334; “a sequence of
letters with a rhythm which arranges the composition of a work”). In order to better
illustrate Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist emphasis of form, I will share another example,

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² Yokomitsu explains the difference between 蔵 (kura) and 倉庫 (souko): “the former
immediately reminds us of a white-walled storehouse, for example, one of the Sake
warehouses, the latter rather reminds us of a storehouse in the factory area to store steel
materials. […] In short, the former evokes some feudal associations in us; the latter is
associated with a certain aspect of the class struggle, which is now coming into
culmination” (TYRZ 14: 338).
where Yokomitsu picks out a figure of a fat capitalist who “gets angry” and questions:

この場合彼はどんな風に怒ったか？ その怒りは如何に表現すれば最も生きて現はされるか？ 對象をヴィヴィドに描かんとする良心的作家はこの怒った瞬間の具體的な姿にこそ全注意を傾けねばならぬ。そこから一つの具體的なモメントを引き出すのだ。その一つのモメントを把て、それを表現することによって怒ってゐる彼の全面目が躍動するような銳い表現を持たなければならぬのだ。で、自分なら、かう書く。
「葉巻が彼の掌の中で握り潰された。」ただそれだけ！(TYRZ 14: 371)

[How did he get angry? How can we express his anger in the liveliest manner? The conscientious writer, who attempts to depict an object in a vivid manner, must pay all of his attention to the concrete figure at the moment of anger. He should extract one concrete Moment from the figure. He has to come up with one keen expression that, by grasping the Moment and by expressing it, activates one’s whole angry presence. So, I will write like this:
“A cigar was crushed in his palm.” That’s all!]

According to Yokomitsu, by describing the hand crushing a cigar, the readers can envision the living, concrete figure of the capitalist in a particular moment of his anger.

In order to elicit the figure vividly, Yokomitsu thus insists upon “先づ對象を、形に於て、形の運動に於て表現する” (TYRZ 14: 379; “depicting every object in form and in the dynamics of form”).

Despite the difference of the linguistic and literary context, the New Sense literature that bloomed in the post-earthquake capitalist society incorporates the Modern perceptions of photograph and film and becomes an important Japanese counterpart to European avant-gardism. As do many Modernist works, the New Sensationist compositional techniques include gaps between sentences, use repetition and rhythm frequently, and show their conscious control of the temporality of textual movements. For example, the foregrounding of dynamism and velocity echoes Futurism; Yokomitsu’s momentary grasp of a “form” in vivid concreteness fundamentally shares the Imagists’ interest in gestalt, since both the New Sense School and Imagism, in their own respective
ways, were built on the French symbolist tradition. More significantly, Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist emphasis on the ideogrammic materiality of language and its ability to evoke a visual resistance to the readers’ perception shows a marked correspondence with Victor Shklovsky’s Formalist “defamiliarization” of language, the goal being “to make the stone stony” (219).  

While validating his formalist advocacy of the peripheral nervous system among the Western formalist discourses—Shklovsky’s Russian Formalism, Wilhelm Worringer’s Formprobleme der Gotik (Form in the Gothic 1911), Paul Ernest’s Der Weg zur Form (The Way to Form 1906), and so forth (TYRZ 13: 153-55)—Yokomitsu, like his predecessors, Tanizaki and Akutagawa, consciously took advantage of the peculiarities of the Japanese ideogrammic language. He asserts:

その国にはその国の文学がある以上、その国の形式論が独独特な長所を持つ全て現れなければ、文学は発展しない。日本の文学は象形文字を使用するとすれば、殊に、独独特の形式論が発生すべき筈である。（TYRZ 13: 154）

[As long as a nation has a national literature, the formalism of the nation should take advantage of its uniqueness, without which there is no progress of literature. If Japanese literature uses ideogrammic characters, then it should specifically develop its own unique formalism.]

Yokomitsu’s respect for the visual forms of individual letters allows him to rediscover the visual aspects of Japanese language and rightfully elucidates the New Sense School as a literature for writing, which “自然主義的リアリズムの文学に対する反抗として、その最初の華やかな狼火を挙げた” (TYRZ 14: 312; “lit its first flaming beacon as a

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10 Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984) cautions in “Art as Technique” (1917) that one’s perception becomes habitual and automatic; through the technique of defamiliarization, he proposed that “[a]rt is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important” (219). Similarly, Yokomitsu’s conscious use of the ideogrammic language took advantage of the visual materiality of Japanese written language and attempted to arouse a “sensate resistance” to the readers’ perception (Mishima 40).
resistance to the Japanese Naturalist realism”). Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist literature, as the new *genbun itchi* movement, reclaims the significance of Chinese ideogrammic characters and attempts to re-direct the Naturalist flat language into a time-responsive apparatus as a scientific reflector. As he explains, “即ち、すべて形あるいは形の運動が諸君を印象づけたのだ。常識による説明ではない。装置である” (*TYRZ* 14: 374; “[i]n short, what impresses us is form or the movement of forms. Not the explanation on a common sense. But an apparatus [or a machine]”).

In a broader context, Yokomitsu’s rediscovery and revival of Chinese characters (kanji) not only illustrates his resistance to the modern language of Japanese Naturalism, but also situates his New Sensationist reformation of the national language within the geo-political tension against the West and China. That is, while the formation of modern language and literature driven by radical Westernization meant to liberate Japanese writers from bulky and unwieldy allusions to the Chinese literary tradition, the Japanese Modernists re-discovered ideograms as if they were retrieving their own cultural identity, and in that spirit. Since kanji inevitably reflected the change in Japan’s relation to China, from a former spiritual suzerain to a potent colony, it also indicates a process in which kanji is remolded into the national language. Japan’s shifting colonial relation to China—the Japanese imperial invasion of the continent and the Asianist disguise of affiliation—further complicate the political implications of Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist undertakings. Indeed, his “rebellious, bloody struggle with the national language” is addressed more intensely in his colonial novel, *Shanghai*, in the dramatization of the tension between an individual and the national entity (*TYRZ* 16: 369).
Thus, the essay “A Study of the New Sense School,” written around the same period as his Formalist debates in 1928-29, illuminates the historical significance of Yokomitsu’s New Sense School as a Modernist reformation of Japanese national language. In the next section, I will further examine the materialist layers of Yokomitsu’s conception of “form” in *Shanghai*. There, I analyze his trope of the peripheral nervous system in relation to Baudelaire’s and Walter Benjamin’s discourses of modernity. Contemporary scientific discourses of physics and semiotics of the late 1920s, which helped Yokomitsu to develop his definition of form as a “sequence of letters with a rhythm,” also help to demonstrate the complex discursive formation of Yokomitsu’s materialist formalism from the 1920s to the 1930s.

3. Yokomitsu’s Materialism in *Shanghai*

*Shanghai* was based on Yokomitsu’s one-month experience in the city of Shanghai, China, in April 1928 and was originally published in installments in the literary magazine *Kaizo* (Reconstruction). According to Mizushima Haruo, the title Yokomitsu actually wished to use was not *Shanghai*, but *A Materialist* (1: 54); indeed, the novel is pervaded by Yokomitsu’s formalist/materialist desire to depict things in “リズムを持った意味の通じる文字の羅列” (*TYRZ* 13: 151; “a meaningful sequence of letters with rhythm”).

Materialism, the theory that matter alone exists, looks at all phenomena as a result of

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11 An episode of Akutagawa’s trip to Shanghai shows a remarkable contrast to Yokomitsu’s experience. Soon after Akutagawa arrived at the city in 1921, he was hospitalized for three weeks (Kikuchi, Kubota, and Sekiguchi 244). Yokomitsu was encouraged to visit the city by Akutagawa himself. Yokomitsu actively enjoyed roaming the city and likely experienced a similar lifestyle in Shanghai as the Japanese expatriates residing there (Inoue and Komori 476-77).
some material interaction and completely negates the presence of immaterial substances, including minds and spirits. Specifically, the dialectical and historical materialism propounded by Marx and Engels regards the socio-historical process as a product of class struggle. To offer a rudimentary definition, Marxism is based on the theory of a dialectical relation between the material/economic foundation and the socio-legal development of the superstructure; through the dialectical development of history, Marxism seeks to develop a classless society by overthrowing the capitalist society and liberating the proletariat.

The massive influence of the Russian Revolution in 1917 reached Japan in the early 1920s. Marxism captivated the young Japanese intelligentsia, who were concerned about the class disparities and social injustices of capitalist society. After the Kantō earthquake, specifically, the proletarian writers created the magazine *Bungei sensen* (The Literary Front) to provide an outpost for their literature. Furthermore, the organization NAPF (*Nippona Proleta Artista Federacio*), founded in 1928, and its magazine *Senki* (Battle Flag 1928-31) marked the heyday of the Japanese proletarian movement, which lasted until the Japanese military authorities began to suppress domestic Communist activities in the early 1930s. The conversion (*tenkō*) of the Communist writers from Communism to enforced silence or, in some cases, to a nationalist support of Japanese militarism demonstrates the aggravating attempt at thought-control during the early 1930s (Nakamura, *Contemporary* 28-30).

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12 It was in the early 1920s when Marxism took the initiative of the proletarian literature, marked by the appearance of the proletarian magazine *Tane maku hito* (The Sowers 1921-23). But under the influence of the Christian Enlightenment and democratic movements in the Meiji period, socialism was introduced to Japan as early as the Shino-Japanese War in 1894-95 (Nakamura, *Contemporary* 28-54).
Yokomitsu, who represented the post-quake Modernist aestheticism, consciously led the New Sense School to confront not only the out-of-date literature of Japanese Naturalism, but also the Communist/proletarian literature. In 1928-29, Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist emphasis on form over content provoked the Japanese Formalist debates. In the debates, Yokomitsu specifically protested against Communist writers who pursue the ideology of expression but neglect the qualities of expression. In a series of essays such as “Shin kankakuha to konminizumu bungaku” (The New Sense School and the Communist Literature 1928) and “Yuibutsuronteki bungakuron ni tsuite” (About the Materialist View of Literature 1928), Yokomitsu criticizes the ideological dogmatism of Communist literature. He inquires:

われわれは総て、現実の物象に従って変化しなければならぬ。架空の推測的理論は時間に支配させられた現実の物象ではない。われわれは文学に於て、時間に支配される現実的物象を対象とすべきであるか、或いは、時間を無視し空間を無視した架空的推測理論を対象とすべきであるか、勿論、それは前者である。（TYRZ 13: 101）

[We have to change in accordance with the material phenomena of reality. The fictitious, speculative theory is not the material phenomenon governed by temporality. Should we deal with realistic material phenomena ruled by time? Or should we deal with the fictitious, speculative theory that disregards space and time? Of course, we should take the former.]

In line with his New Sensationist formalism, Yokomitsu insists that writers be scientific reflectors that accurately reflect the “material phenomena” which change with the passage of time. Since the New Sensationist literature accurately reflects the dynamic changes of the modern capitalist reality in the material forms of letters and, therefore, has

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13 The Japanese Formalist debates, which were first conducted among Yokomitsu, Kurahara Korehito, and Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, later involved more writers, such as Nakagami Yoichi, Tanikawa Tetsuzō, Abe Tomoji, inter alios. They respectively pursued their own views of the relationship between form and content, literature and life, aestheticism and the socio-ideological responsibilities of writers. (Hirano, Odagiri, and Yamamoto 361-404)
a greater effect on renewing the readers’ consciousness, Yokomitsu asserts that it is the authentic advocate for historical materialism.

Despite the rivalry between himself and the Communist/proletarian writers, the materialist weltanschauung penetrates Yokomitsu’s New Sensationalist formalism. For example, in “Moji ni tsuite” (On Letters 1929), subtitled “About Form and Mechanism,”

Yokomitsu conceives letters as “material” and discusses an act of reading as an exchange of energy between a body and a text:

[Letters are material. [. . .] But as long as letters are material, they follow a mechanism and have contents. How can we gauge the contents of materials called letters? According to our senses and perceptions, we perceive them as energy in the material forms of letters as 山 [mountain] or 海 [sea]. [. . .] In other words, the contents are the energy between readers and letters and it is also evident that the energy is altered not via the forms of the letters but in the readers’ brains.]

Yokomitsu’s view of letters as “materials” elicits a mechanism of reading between writer and the readers. They exchange energy (ideas) via textual site of written language.

The actual content of an ideogram 海 (sea) is varied due to one’s perception, experience, and memory. Therefore, Yokomitsu defines the contents as “形式から受ける讀者の幻想” (TYRZ 13: 115; “the readers’ illusion perceived from the forms”) and asserts that form is so essential to any literary work because these material expressions govern how much accurate meaning the readers perceive.
According to Komori Yōichi, Yokomitsu’s materialist grasp of letters vividly reflects the late-1920s’ discourses of both Einstein’s physics and Saussure’s semiotics. In “Écriture no jikū” (The Space-Time of Écriture 1987), for example, Komori argues that Yokomitsu’s focus on the exchange of energy between the reader and material text presupposes Einstein’s theory of the space/time continuum, according to which “物質とは、空間及び時間を中に容れている形式ではなく、それ自身が空間と時間を成立している” (Golley 113; “material is not mere form that contains space-time, but in itself consists of space-time”). In other words, material letters occupy certain positions in space and time (i.e. in duration); Yokomitsu refers to the autonomy of letters when he defines form as a “meaningful sequence of letters with a rhythm” (TYRZ 13: 151). One of Komori’s commentaries is specifically insightful in explaining the durational interaction via visual letters:

この「物體」が、再び言葉としての機能を回復するために、つまり死んだ言葉・言葉の死骸から再生するためには、「われわれ」読者が、その「文字」を「見る」なければならない。読者が「文字」を「見える」で、それが「文字」であることを知覚し、言語記号として解読するコードとコンテクストを発動させ、自らの意識の連続的な流れ、ベルクソン的な意味での「持続」の相にとり込んだときに、「初めて」その「文字の形式」から、その実在する「石とは全く異なった、文字の規定する内容を感ずる」ことができる、と横光は主張していたのである。（“Écriture” 469)

[In order to reanimate the dead letters, the corpse language, we the readers have to see the letters. Once we the readers see the letters, perceive them as letters, activate the code and the context of interpreting letters as linguistic signs, and take them in our stream of consciousness as in a Bergsonian durée, we can for the first time feel the contents from the forms of letters, as something that is utterly different from the existing stone.]

According to Komori, the interaction between the reader’s perception (content) and material letters (form) in Yokomitsu’s theory depends on the relative correspondence between signifier and signified, and it further involves a complex alteration between the
written text and vocal speech.

Saussurre’s paradigm that “自立した記号体系として言語を捉えようとする” (Komori, “Écriture” 479; “tries to perceive language as an independent sign system” was introduced to Japan by the year 1928.\textsuperscript{14} Influenced by the structuralist autonomy of the language-system, the continuum of space-time as a unified entity, and the Marxist paradigm of dialectical materialism, Yokomitsu envisioned a mechanism of reading that takes place as an exchange of energy between letters as materials and readers. In other words, the interaction between the textual space of letters and bodily space of readers activates a shared spatio-temporal sphere, where all material phenomena are inevitably involved and interrelated in its dynamics. By expanding the autonomy of (textual) space-time, furthermore, Yokomitsu envisaged the world and its historical processes as a global mechanism, a form “working in time-space,” in Pound’s expression (ATH 49).

This exchange of energy between written texts (materials/form) and the readers (idea/content) may locate the minutest activities of the peripheral nervous system in a gigantic mechanism such as a social organicism. However, while Pound’s machine represents a beauty of precision and organized harmony, Yokomitsu’s mechanism, which he sees as the global historical process, alludes to the monstrosity of nationalist capitalist reality in Imperial Japan. For example, Yokomitsu underscores the imminent pressure of historical realities that Japanese Modernist writers had to face in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when he writes, “[w]e should deal with the realistic, material phenomena

\textsuperscript{14}Saussure’s Gengogaku genron (Course in General Linguistics, trans. Kobayashi Hideo) was published in 1928; in the same year, Yokomitsu’s contemporary, scholar and poet Toyama Usaburō, published Shi no keitaigaku teki kenkyū (A Morphologic Study of Poetry 1928) and Shi no keitaigaku josetsu (Introduction to the Morphology of Poetry 1928) (See Komori, Közō 469-70; 477-90).
ruled by time” (*TYRZ* 13: 101). In fact, it cannot be overemphasized that Yokomitsu added his New Sensationist literature to the formalist discourse during the period when the Japanese government severely limited writers’ rights to freedom of speech.\(^\text{15}\) As the demand of militaristic Nationalism rose, Yokomitsu could not help but perceive the pervasive influence of Japanese socio-political realities. He writes:

然もわれわれは現実に生存してゐる以上、現実から飛躍することは絶對に不可能である。われわれはいかなるものと雖も、此の故に資本主義的國家的現実の速度から影響を受けねばならぬ、と同時に、われわれの個性は此の現実の速度に従って変化して行く以外に、道はないのだ。（*TYRZ* 13: 100）

[As long as we exist in reality, it is absolutely impossible to leap beyond the reality. Therefore, whoever we are, we have to be under the influence of the speed of the reality of capitalist nationalism; at the same time, there is no other way but to change our individuality in accordance with the speed of this reality.]

Yokomitsu inevitably confronted the capitalist nationalism of the Japanese empire when he pursued his materialist objectivism in *Shanghai*. In the text, he dramatized one individual’s conflicted response to the immense presence of the socio-historical mechanism through the Baudelairean experience of Modernity as a sequence of shocks. At the same time, Yokomitsu himself experienced a change in the face of capitalist/nationalist realities, as is illustrated by the stylistic transformation in *Shanghai*, which inscribes his abandonment of New Sensationist materialism in the early 1930s.

Now, I enter the world of *Shanghai*, facing the rioting crowd of the May 30th movement in 1925, which preceded and anticipated anti-Imperial movements in China.

\(^{15}\) In 1925, the year following the Kanto earthquake, the notorious Public Order Law (*Chianijihō*) was enacted, and it became a prelude to the suppression of the Communist movement. In the early 1930s, the death of Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), following his torture by the police, prompted the “conversion” of many Communist writers. Externally, after the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan promoted the invasion of Manchuria, which caused the Manchurian crisis (*Manshū jihen*) in 1931.
The narrative begins with the famous opening passage:

満潮になると河は膨れて逆流した。火を消して蝟集しているモーターボートの首の波。舵の並列。抛り出された揚げ荷の山。鎖で縛られた栈橋の黒い足。(7)

[At high tide the river swelled and flowed backward. Prows of darkened motorboats lined up in a wave pattern. A row of rudders drawn up. Mountains of off-loaded cargo. The black legs of a wharf bound in chains. (3)]16

The waves and flow of water, the major metaphors repeated throughout the novel, introduce the revolutionary undercurrents of the semicolonial settlements, which will later grow into massive population floods, mobs of people. The personification of the boats and wharf as 首 (neck/prow) and 足 (legs) symbolically anticipates the dismembered and displaced bodies in the novel. The sequence of noun clauses also serves to accumulate the foreign landscapes, and the collage of images creates a quickly shifting, cinematic scene. In addition, the substantial use of the Chinese ideogrammic characters intensifies the readers’ perception of letters as material objects.

Yokomitsu’s cinematographic composition, which is literally created by the “sequence of letters” as materials, can be compared to the readers’ experience of the photo montage.17 Walter Benjamin’s essay on Baudelaire illuminates Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist style in *Shanghai*. In “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” (1939), Benjamin compares the haptic and optic experiences of the photo-snapshots to the experience of walking through the crowd in the Modernist city:

16 All the English citations from *Shanghai* (2001) are translation by Dennis Washburn.
17 The influence of the cinematographic techniques of montage, long-shot, and close-up is manifest in Yokomitsu’s early works of the New Sense School such as “Nichirin” (The Sun in Heaven 1923), “Hibun” (Stone 1923), and “Atama narabini hara” (Heads and Bellies 1924). Yokomitsu, along with Kawabata Yasunari and film director Koromogasa Sadanosuke, established the New Sensationist film league (*Shinkankakuha eiga renmei*) in 1926. (Inoue, Kamiya, and Hatori 39-42)
Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous intersections, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from the battery. Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man “a kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness.” (175)

A Baudelairean man in the crowd finds himself at the intersection of a city network, where nervous impulses ceaselessly run through him like shocks of electricity. We find a model of the Baudelairean spectator in Sanki, a Japanese expatriate, “白皙明敏な、中古代の勇士のような顔をしている[参木]” (7; “a man with the fair skin and intelligent face of some medieval hero” 3), who primarily guides the readers into the politico-economic turmoil of Shanghai. While describing the man’s love affairs with several different women, the text invites the readers into the foreign backstreets of Shanghai.

Benjamin’s expression, a “man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy,” and his reference to a “kaleidoscope” resonate with Yokomitsu’s famous definition of new sense: “自然の外相を剥奪し、物自体に躍り込む主観の直感的触発物” (TYRZ 13: 76; “an intuitive explosion of subjectivity that rips off the external aspects of nature to give direct access to the thing in itself” Keene 79). Expressions take shape in an interface when the subject’s sensibility touches the material objects/realities, just as sensations on the skin run as an electric energy from the peripheral to the central nervous system. Thus, the New Sensationist writers, acting as scientific reflectors revivify tangible sensations in the vivid dynamic forms of letters.

Interestingly, when Benjamin centralized the Baudelairean experience of shocks as one of the key symptoms of Modernity, he also painted the poet as a fencer whose
“blows” are “designed to open a path through the crowd for him” and who, at the same time, targets “the phantom crowd of the words, the fragments, the beginnings of lines from which the poet, in the deserted streets, wrests the poetic booty” (“Baudelaire” 165). Just as Benjamin finds a similarity in the dual experience of shocks—walking through the city crowd and the tactile/visual experience of language—the readers would experience the dual photographic shocks in Shanghai, first as Sanki’s physical sensation in contact with the pressing reality and, second, as the readers’ own experience of forms of letters (especially the visual image of the ideogrammic language).

The dual experiences of shocks—i.e. Sanki’s bodily experience on the street and the reader’s textual experience of letters—interactively elicit a material site of exchange in Shanghai the city and the novel. Although not a few critics discuss the representations of bodies in Shanghai, Gregory Golley’s essay specifically focuses on the meditative importance of bodies as “時空間、歴史、そして地形が集約される、相対的で不安定な装置” (118; “the relative instable apparatus upon which space-time, history, and location are concentrated”). While closely analyzing the various strata of consumption of bodies in the geopolitical space-time continuum in Shanghai, Golley writes:

つまり、横光の身体は、言語論と現実論の枢軸である。具体的に、テクストの物質性と外部の物質的な現実とのツナガリは、読者の身体である。身体とは内面でもなく外面でもない。その間で交換する場であり、横光にとって重要な相互関係性が顕在化する所である。(118)

[In short, Yokomitsu’s bodies coordinate at the axes of discourses about language and in realities. More concretely, the materiality of the text and that of the external reality are connected to the readers’ bodies. Bodies are neither interiority nor exteriority; bodies are a site of exchange, an in-between. And for Yokomitsu, it is a place where significant interactions take place.]

Golley’s remark that “身体とは内面でもなく外面でもない” (118; “[b]odies are
neither interiority nor exteriority”) is especially insightful, since it corresponds with the experience of shocks in the Baudelairean discourse of Modernity. That is, the spectator’s sensations in the presence of the mass are tactile/visual experiences perceived on the skin; similarly, the readers appreciate a visual and tactile experience of language on the textual surface. Yokomitsu’s Materialist formalism revives this interfacial exchange between bodies and textual images.

This Materialist ontology of skin locates a site where the interaction between textual images and human body activates a shared political sphere. At the same time, within the interfacial site of skin one may locate the tension between collective and individual identity in the capitalist/nationalist mechanism of the late 1920s. In the case of *Shanghai*, throughout the novel the expatriates’ physical identities are repeatedly connected to the national presence of the Japanese empire. Sanki, who was discharged from his workplace, speculates on the presence of multinational expatriates exploiting the land and people of China:

ここでは、本国から生活を奪われた各国人の集団が寄り合いつつ、世界で類例のない独立国を造っている。だが、それぞれの人種は余りある土貨を吸い合う本国の吸盤となって生活している。此のためここでは、一人の肉体は、いかに無為無職のものと雖も、ただ漫然といることでさえ、その肉体が空間を占めている以上、ロシア人を除いては、愛国心の現れとなって活動しているのと同様であった。[…] 彼が上海にいる以上、彼の肉体の占めている空間は、絶えず日本の領土となって流れていたのだ。
——俺の身体は領土なんだ。此の俺の身体もお杉の身体も。—— (58)

[[E]ach respective race of people made their living here as suckers on the tentacles of a giant octopus, pulling in a huge amount of wealth for their home countries. Thus, with the exception of the Russians, even people who were idle, unemployed, or simply aimless could be thought of as an expression of patriotism simply by their mere presence in Shanghai. […] because he was in Shanghai, the space his body took up was always a territory of Japan.

*My body is a territory. This body of mine. And Osugi’s body.*
The image of the “suckers on the tentacles of a giant octopus”—a boneless mollusk of an uncanny amorphous shape lacking a solid crust or skeleton—represents the monstrous entity of the national empire and its subjects. Each expatriate is tied to the national body, and Sanki’s words, “[m]y body is a territory,” succinctly reveal his identification of his body with the territory of Japan.

It should be emphasized that the imagery of the suckers rather grotesquely reverberates Yokomitsu’s metaphor of the peripheral nervous system. Both the sucker and the peripheral nerve focus on the interface between one’s physical body and external objects. While the nerves are the sensory organ that receives stimuli from the outside, however, the vicious adhesion of the suckers exposes the grasping and devouring nature of the colonialists. Yokomitsu elaborates on this interfacial ontology of skin in his depiction of the tension between one’s national identity and one’s individuality. For example, Sanki strays into the alleys of the downtown district and ends up watching a peepshow:

彼の眼前で落ち込んだ旧ロシアの貴族の裸形の団塊が、豪華な幕のよう
に伸縮した。三方に嵌った鏡面の彼方では無数の皮膚の工場が、茫々と
して展けていた。踊り子の口に銜えたゲラニヤの花が、皮膚の中から咲
き出しながら、廻る襞の間を真紅になって流れていった。(140)

[Before him a naked troupe of dancers from the old Russian aristocracy was expanding and contracting like some exquisite curtain. Beyond the dancers, in the surface of mirrors that enclosed them on three sides, numberless factories of skin spread out infinitely. The geraniums the dancers held in their mouths seemed to exfoliate from their skin, flowing to a bright crimson among the turning fleshy pleats. (110)]

The scene displays one of Yokomitsu’s marked New Sensationist techniques of objectification and personification, which bi-circulates organic/inorganic boundaries.
The relationship between the spectators and their objects of desire complicates the ordinary trope of voyeurism, because what are consumed are not only the Russian dancers’ bodies but their reflection as mirror image. In front of the spectator, the three sided mirrors artificially multiply the dancers’ skin on the reflecting surface, and the tri-dimensional corporeality of human bodies is transfigured into two-dimensional illusions. The warped spectacle intensifies the cinematic distance and contrarily closes up the individual images; at the same time, the reflections of the bodies are flattened onto the mirror’s surface, thereby they lose their flesh-bones and spread into “factories of skin.” All these plays of body-images emblematically foreground the mass consumptions of human bodies throughout the novel (in a Turkish bathhouse, prostitution, and so on).

The scene of the proliferating bodies in the mirror’s reflection illustrates the cinematic experience, an experience of surface, which relates to the self-reflectivity of the spectator in the mirror-images. For example, Sanki continues to watch over the “factory of skin” which “extended and contracted, then transformed into an arched tunnel” (111):

世界は今や何事も、下から上を仰がねばフィルムの美観が失われ出したのだ。——再び、トンネルが崩れ出すと、参木は後を振り返った。すると、塊った観客の一群の顔の上に、べったり吸い付いた吸盤のような動物を、彼は見た。彼は、その巨大な動物を浮き上らせた衣服の波の中から、逆に野蛮な文明の建築を感じて来た。(141)

[If you didn’t look up at the world and everything in it from below, then its beautiful cinematic spectacle would be lost. The tunnel started to collapse. Sanki glanced behind him. He saw a beast stuck hard like the suckers of an octopus on the faces of a crowd of onlookers clustered together. From among the wave of clothing that buoyed up that huge beast, he came to appreciate the architecture of a barbarous civilization. (111)]

The above quotation reveals a moment of self-reflective transfiguration of the spectators in the presence of these mirror-images. Encircled in the decayed, collapsing
“architecture of skin,” the imaginary sphere of the mirror-images, Sanki looks back and again sees “the suckers of an octopus” on the faces of the onlookers. The eerie corporeality of the spectators, which shares the sucker image with the imperial nations exploiting China, takes a collective shape which can be possibly termed as 国体 (kokutai, nation + body, i.e. the national polity). In other words, what the readers can imagine from the quotation is a figure of the monster looking into its own reflection; it is also the figure of the Imperial/national entity, reflected and transfigured in the mass-consumption of body-images in the mass media.

In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 1935-36), Benjamin observes the penetrating influence of films on the masses in activating the collective political sphere. Moreover, when he writes about an image sphere in “Surrealism” (1929), he insightfully refers to the collective, which is coordinated into a body within the image-sphere:

The collective is a body, too. And the physis that is being organized for it in technology can, through all its political and factual reality, only be produced in that image sphere to which profane illumination initiates us. Only when in technology body and image so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent demanded by the Communist Manifesto. (192)

Benjamin’s image-sphere can be, more plainly, conceived as a cinematic space, in which the proliferating images organize the mass spectators into the collective body. Rephrasing this image-sphere in Yokomitsu’s formalist diction, the interaction between the spectators and images via the film screen activates a mechanism, a shared space-time in which one has to inevitably engage through one’s physical body. Yokomitsu depicted this coercive engagement in the collective body as well as in nationalist/capitalist realities
through Sanki’s identification with Japanese territory as 国体 (kokutai). Focusing on the actualities of the textual images, moreover, his image of the suckers of the octopus, which accumulates its allusions in the text as well as in the readers’ minds, pinpoints one of the self-producing sites of the image-sphere, where “an action puts forth its own image and exists, absorbing and consuming it” (“Surrealism” 191-92).

Returning to the decadent “皮膚の建築” (140; “architecture of skin”) in Shanghai, the narrative further dramatizes the interfacial nature of skin as the expatriate’s dual identity-formation. In one aspect, one’s skin reflects external realities and forces one to internalize national identities. This materialist supremacy of external/material realities over one’s subjectivity is, however, overturned when the narrative illustrates Sanki’s search for an internal subjectivity freed from the corporeality of his body as well as from his national identity. In the face of the rage of the colonized people, Sanki, facing his identity as Japanese, perceives his inner conflict as a gap between his heart and his skin:

彼は彼自身の心が肉体から放れて自由に彼に母国を忘れしめようとする企てを、どうすることが出来るであろう。だが、彼の肉体は外界が彼を日本人だと強いることに反対することには出来ない。心が闘うのではなく、皮膚が外界と闘わねばならないのだ。すると、心が皮膚に従って闘い出す。

[[W]hat could he do to liberate his heart from his body and freely forget his mother country? His flesh could not resist the simple fact that the external world forced him to be Japanese. It wasn’t his heart that resisted. It was his skin that had to take on the world. And so his heart, in obedience to his skin, also began to resist. (157)]

The inner free spirit as an individual and the corporeal mark of racial/national identity strive against each other both inside and outside of one’s skin. This dual identity, again, qualifies Sanki as a Baudelairean spectator in the crowd, who is “[t]o be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the
world, and yet to remain hidden from the world” and to be, above everything, “an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I’” (Baudelaire, Painter 795). Sanki’s body, functioning as an extension of the Japanese territory, forces him to be Japanese wherever he is. His heart, however, in his dire attempt to overcome the national inscription on his skin, aspires to be an individual.

Sanki’s oscillating identity—his desire for the transcendental “I” (or the “non-I”) and his inability to be freed from the “social I”—add an element of the detective novel to *Shanghai*.18 Deeply affected by his relationship with Fang Qiu-lan, a mysterious lady of the Chinese Communist party, Sanki roams through the city streets, looks for her and searches for the “I.” Indeed, throughout the novel, Sanki’s figure is repeatedly associated with Don Quixote, an idealist seeker. But what Sanki (and Yokomitsu) plunges into is the gigantic system of modern nationalist capitalism, whose entire figure is beyond the comprehension of an individual; what one sees instead are the scattered images of the momentary contact or the uncanny amorphousness distorted in reflection.

This lack of a clear overview or the invisibility of a mechanism under the surface certainly differentiates Yokomitsu from his precursor, Tanizaki, who could have overturned the naturalized, self-evident notion of “I” by depicting the flesh and bones of human sexuality, but simultaneously reclaimed the solid structure of the composition. In other words, the accumulation of the displaced bodies in *Shanghai*—the collective movement of mobs illustrated with the imageries of waters (waves, flows, and vortex);

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18 The popularization of the detective novel starting in the mid-1920s and throughout the 1930s embodied another form of Modernist resistance to the I-novels. For example, Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965), one of the most popular writers of the detective novels in prewar Japan, dramatized a confession of an ugly man hiding in a chair in “Ningen isu” (The Human Chair 1925). The fictitiousness of the confession disguised in an epistolary form challenges the self-evident notion of “I” in Japanese Naturalism.
the cinematic consumption of body images; the material circulation of human bodies as commodities—inscribes Yokomitsu’s Modernist uncertainty, the sense of being a superficial organ of the gigantic system, a peripheral nerve. His experience of the momentary shocks can re-build neither the totality of his body nor his historical period.

In *Shanghai*, Yokomitsu repeatedly leads Sanki to compete with the immeasurable mechanism of nationalism/capitalism by hurling him into the foreign crowd. For example, in one of the depictions of the uprising, Sanki, who “was forced back into the sunken entrance of a shop and could see only a pivoting transom opened horizontally above his head,” watches the raving mobs in the reflection of the transom glass (149):

The rioting crowd was reflected upside down in the transom glass. It was like being on the floor of an ocean that had lost its watery sky. Countless heads beneath shoulders, shoulders beneath feet. They described a weird, suspended canopy on the verge of falling, swaying like seaweed that drifted out, then drew back and drifted out again. (149)

The merging body-images reflected in the transom glass provide another visual manifestation of Benjamin’s image-sphere, which organizes human bodies into a collective body. Encircled within the image-sphere, Sanki feels “his desire to fight that external world” (149).

Later in this scene, he actually ends up jumping into the wave of the flowing mobs. However, leaving the position of the spectator, what Sanki feels is his skin preventing him from merging into the crowd and confirming his alienation as Japanese:
とる体温の層を感じ出した。すると、彼は彼ひとりが異国人だと思う胸騒ぎに締めつけられた。彼は彼と秋蘭との間に群がる群衆の幅から無数の牙を感じると、次第にその団塊の中に流れた共通の体温から、ひとりだんだんはじき出されていく自分を見た。

[Sanki believed that Fang Qiu-lan was hidden at the center of the vortex of this crowd. In order to find her he looked into the hues of the shaking whirlpool. His skin felt the layers of body heat maintain their equilibrium in the packed crowd. Then he tensed up at the uneasy feeling that he was the lone outsider. He could feel the countless fangs of the mob assembled between Qiu-lan and him, and he saw himself being gradually excluded by the common temperature that flowed through that crowd. (159-60)]

What separates Sanki from his surrounding crowd is again his skin. He is unable to merge himself with the crowd and left to be an individual and Japanese.

Interestingly, Sanki’s oscillating dual identity coordinates with Yokomitsu’s own stylistic transformation in the novel from New Sensationist materialism to psychological idealism. For example, in the face of the revolutionary powers of external reality, Sanki’s affection for Qiu-lan gives him a sense of freedom from the confusion of external reality. In the narrative, it states: “彼は彼の心が外界の混乱に無感動になるに従い、その混乱した外界の上を自由に這い廻る愛情の鮮かな拡がりを、明瞭に感じて来た。” (215; “[T]hough his heart had grown indifferent to the turmoil around him, he clearly sensed the vivid extension of his feelings of love, which roamed freely over the confusion of the external world” 170). This romantic expression of affection overruling material realities ironically exposes the moment of Yokomitsu’s conversion from materialist formalism to idealism. That is, when Yokomitsu asserts that the material realities can be changed by the inner spirit (ideas), he betrays his formalist worldview, since his materialist belief claims that “われわれは総て、現実の物象に従って変化しなければならぬ” (TYRZ 13: 101; “[w]e have to change in accordance with the material
At the same time, while Yokomitsu’s idealism expresses his inclination toward the transcendence of the nationalist/capitalist realities, his stylistic conversion signifies a setback for New Sensationist formalism, which attempted to rebel against the interiority of the “I” in the tradition of Japanese Naturalism. The text of Shanghai vividly inscribes Yokomitsu’s ideological conversion from materialism to idealism. Especially after the publication of “Kikai” (The Machine 1930), he markedly shifts his interest from external realities to human psychology and, under the influence of Joyce’s stream of consciousness and Proust’s inner monologue, experiments with expressing one’s inner time (Nishiki 178-81).

Some of the passages in Shanghai already disclose Yokomitsu’s inclination toward the psychological. Near the end of the novel, chased by the Chinese people, Sanki jumps into a boat full of fertilizer and involuntarily awakens his memory of Japan.

Sanki’s inner-monologue is not absolutely free from the time of Japan. He contemplates in the earlier part of the novel: “その二つの光景の間を流れた彼の時間は、それは日本の肉体の時間にちがいないのだ” (200; “His own time, the flow marked by the interval between these two spectacles, was undoubtedly also the time of Japan’s flesh and
blood” 157). The inner memory, which allows one to transcend pressing historical realities, here ironically reinforces Sanki’s national identity; whether Sanki wishes it or not, his advocacy of idealistic interiority conforms to and reinforces the spiritual integration of *kokutai*.

Sanki’s oscillating identity persists until the end of the novel. After losing Qiu-lan in the tumult of Shanghai, Sanki wanders the city searching for a piece of bread. His Japanese national identity prevents him from getting food, and Sanki thinks that “領土が、鉄よりも堅牢に、自身の肉体の中を貫いている” (226; “this territory, Shanghai, had penetrated his flesh and bones more solidly than iron” 178). At the same time, hunger, one of the fundamental human drives, brings another change of perception: “彼は身体が尽く重量を失ってしまって、透明になるのを感じた。骨のなくなった身体の中で前と後の風景がごちゃごちゃに入り交った” (263; “His body lost all heaviness and he felt he was turning transparent. The scenes all around him were jumbled together as in a body without bones” 205). As if losing the visual screen of one’s skin as a barrier between the external and internal world, Sanki’s transparent body enables him to merge into his surroundings for the first time.

The ending of *Shanghai* is rather ambiguous. The images of two women, his mother and Qiu-lan, which appear to Sanki in the pool of fertilizer, symbolically illustrate his split identity. After getting out of the boat, Sanki at last finds a night’s rest in a room of another Japanese woman, Osugi, whom Sanki once imagined he would take as his wife and who now fulfills the role of Sanki’s mother. He falls asleep beside Osugi; his subjectivity as a protagonist is taken over by Osugi at the end of the novel, and she wishes that the riots on the streets would continue another day to let her stay with Sanki.
As if symbolizing the political and intellectual confusions faced by Japan in the early 1930s, the Japanese expatriates in *Shanghai* stay in the lowest sedimentary layer of a society with no definite destination.

Just as Yokomitsu himself observed, the New Sensationist/formalist period as “rebellious, bloody struggle with the national language” was taken over by a period of “submission to the national language” (*TYRZ* 16: 369). His stylistic conversion anticipates not only his return to classical literary style in the late 1930s, but also his escalating support of Japan’s Nationalist spiritualism. In regard to *Shanghai*’s ambiguous, “uncompleted” ending, Fukuda Kaname points out the periodical effect of the January 28th incident (or the *Shanghai Incident*) in 1932, a two-month war between China and Japan, which broke out half a year before the publication of *Shanghai* from the Kaizo Co. (85). In the pervading militaristic Nationalism and the aggravating suppression of the freedom of speech, Yokomitsu abandons his avant-garde materialism in the 1930s and instead develops a theory on “pure novel” (1935). His formalist discourse was succeeded not in the genre of novel but in poetry by young avant-garde poets contributing to a magazine *Shi to shiron*. In the final section of this chapter, while commenting on Yokomitsu’s critique of the linguistic mechanism of his age, I will narrate the post-Yokomitsu development of Japanese formalism, which led to the poetic correspondence of Pound and Kitasono discussed in Chapter Two.
4. Yokomitsu’s Formalism and After

In their Modernist resistance to the I-novels, Tanizaki, Akutagawa, and Yokomitsu restored the multivalent concepts of form (*keishiki* or *kata*) to their compositions, ranging from the visual aspect of language, to the structure of a novel, to a mechanism activated between readers and text. The development of modern Japanese discourses of form displays the Modernists’ resistance to the historical formation of modern language, as illustrated by Tanizaki’s, Akutagawa’s, and Yokomitsu’s critiques of the Japanese Naturalist style in their theories of composition. At the same time, their stylistic concerns were deeply involved in the reformation of the “national language” after the Meiji period. For example, Mishima Yukio pointed out that Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist style could not have been created without the syntax and tropes of the European languages and calls it “故意の翻訳体” (40; “an intentional mode of translation”) to give a sensate resistance. The influence of massive translation had gradually transformed the Japanese language in itself; upon this linguistic body Japanese modern writers attempted to create a cultural and linguistic frame enabling the comprehension of enormous socio-linguistic realities. Tanizaki’s, Akutagawa’s, and Yokomitsu’s marked tropes of monstrous language demonstrate their deep-rooted anxiety regarding the chimerical disorder of Japanese language as a result of the linguistic transplantation since the Meiji period.

In particular, Akutagawa’s “vague sense of anxiety” over the monstrous linguistic and social realities was certainly succeeded by Yokomitsu, who tried to express the
dynamics and velocity of reality as a global capitalist mechanism ("Note" 205). 19 Yokomitsu’s "Kikai" (The Machine 1930), highlights an ominous presence of mechanical function or system, which is the end result of his obsession with an artificial body. The story, which best represents his psychological approach in the early 1930s, dramatizes an invisible operation of a mechanism creeping into human psychology. While borrowing the convention of the I-novels, the narrative unfolds the narrator’s psychology in a detective-like process of uncovering syllogistic assumptions and reasoning. At the end of the story, however, an account of a death in a nameplates factory turns into the narrator’s confession of self-distrust:

いや、もう私の頭もいつの間にか主人の頭のように早や塩化鉄に侵されてしまっているのではなかろうか。私はもう私が分らなくなってしまって来た。私はただ近づいてくる機械の銳い先尖がじりじり私を狙っているのを感じるだけだ。誰かもう私に代って私を審いてくれ。私が何をして来たかそんなことを私が聞いていたら私の知っていようはずがないのだから。

(And hadn’t my head at some time or other been taken over already by the iron chloride, reduced to the same state as that of the boss? I have reached the point where I no longer understand myself. All I feel is that there is the sharp point of some machine coming slowly toward me, getting closer and closer to me. Let somebody take my place and judge me. For if you are to ask me what I have done, how can I be expected to know? (180)]

The narrator is threatened by the “sharp point of some machine coming slowly toward me, getting closer and closer to me,” and, under this threat, he abandons the subjective position of “I = the narrator.” The logical accumulation of cause and result, which is supposed to delineate the right order of things, contrarily brings forth the relative instability of one’s positioning in a human mechanism. Moreover, when one thinks of

19 In his suicide note, Akutagawa confesses his “vague sense of anxiety” about his own future (205). The phrase became an epochal symbol and locates a radical intellectual transition from the end of Taishō liberal intellectualism to the rise of Shōwa militaristic Nationalism (Kawanishi 13-16).
the mechanism as a linguistic paradigm, there is no interiority of the “I,” since one’s thought already exists in language. The “machine” can be the metaphor for this kind of linguistic paradigm, inevitably determining thoughts and perhaps distorting perception.

In dramatizing the Modernists’ distrust of “I” in his psychological narratives, Yokomitsu’s stylistic conversion from New Sensationist materialism to Psychologism is shown to be not a simple return to the tradition of the I-novel, but an application of his materialist notion of mechanism to the socio-linguistic realm.

Situated in the Modernist critiques of the socio-linguistic paradigm of the early Showa period (1926-89), Yokomitsu’s rediscovery of the visual aspects of ideograms had multi-layered significance. First, it was a Modernist resistance to the modern national language and modern Japanese tradition of the I-novels. Second, a close association between visual images and material objects in the Chinese ideograms provided Yokomitsu a proper materialist medium to illustrate socio-historical realities as “dynamics of things.” When he spoke of the tension between a body and a text, furthermore, the corporeality of the Chinese ideograms provoked an image-sphere whose textual space enacts the national entity as kokutai in correspondence with the readers’ bodies.

Yokomitsu’s Modernist rediscovery of the Chinese ideographs can be further evaluated in comparison with the discoveries of ideograms by Fenollosa and Pound. For Fenollosa, Chinese ideographs represented a Romantic language of nature. His fascination with the organic mobility of a visual sign was actually very close to the Japanese animistic belief in kotonoha as a language of poetry. In addition, Fenollosa’s fascination with the spatial articulation of ideogram or the compositional lines in artwork
may be seen as anticipating Yokomitsu’s trope of the peripheral nervous system, since both compositional concerns, more or less, reflected the emergence of global networking in mass society.

To speak of Pound and Yokomitsu’s advocacy of form, furthermore, Yokomitsu’s trope of mechanism was founded on a similar spatio-temporal concern as Pound’s, since both anticipated in the Modernist paradigmatic shift caused by Einstein’s theory of space-time continuum. In addition, their organicist views of the mechanism attempted to comprehend both linguistic and scientific systems. Pound’s mechanism, as we have seen in Chapter Two, accomplished an ideogrammic method and activated a transcendental form of totality, whereas Yokomitsu’s mechanism, rather, symbolized the invisible workings of linguistic and capitalist rules. One final distinction is that Pound sought to envision the entire organized structure of life and learning, unlike Yokomitsu’s Baudelairean experience of Modernity as a mere accumulation of sensate shocks in the peripheral nervous system.

Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism put an intense emphasis on “how to express” and thereby ushered in the Japanese Modernist poets’ experiments with poesy under the slogan of “L’esprit Nouveau.” Haruyama Yukio, along with his fellow poets Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, Anzai Fuyue, Toyama Usaburō, Miyoshi Tatsuji, inter alios, founded a literary quarterly Shi to shiron (Poetry and Poetics 1928-31). Just as Yokomitsu challenged the modern tradition of the I-novels in the New Sense School, these Modernist poets manifested their departure from the previous generation, for example, from Hagiwara Sakutarō’s free colloquial poetry (Sayama 158). In order to reshape the contemporary Japanese poetic discourse into a counterpart of that of Western
Modernisms, each issue of Shi to shiron dedicated many pages to the translation of Western Modernist literary theory and poetics.\(^ {20}\) Specifically, an international Modernist literary magazine, *transition* (1927-30; 1932-38), founded by Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul, provided the crucial resources for young Japanese poets in search of a global identity as part of a synchronic Modernist movement (Sone 26).

Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist respect for the visual/formal aspect of language became a potent foundation for the varied formalisms experimented in *Shi to shiron*. Conversely, his materialist formalism was formulated in close dialogue with contemporary formalisms.\(^ {21}\) For example, Sayama Mika mentions Yokomitsu’s close friendship with Kitagawa Fuyuhiko (1900-90), one of the Modernist pioneers of prose poetry, and points out a lucid similarity between Kitagawa’s poetic technique and Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist style, both of which show “書き出しの鮮烈な印象、短いセントンスによって昼み掛けるようなリズム感、直喩、擬人法、オノマトペ、体言止の使用、そして映画を思わせる視覚的形像などで” (160; a vivid sensation of the opening passage; a rhythm created with a sequence of short sentences; the use of similes, personification, onomatopoeia, noun clauses, and film-like visual figurations”). Moreover, another formalist, Abe Tomoji (1903-73), published his essay “Keishikishugi to bungaku” (Formalism and Literature 1931), in which he comprehensively categorizes

\(^ {20}\) For instance, one finds the following names in *Shi to shiron*: Surrealism of A. Breton, J. Cocteau, L. Aragon; *Neue Sachlichkeit*; the Anglo-American Modernism of G. Stein, T. S. Eliot, J. Joyce, V. Woolf, E. E. Cummings; and French Modernism of A. Rimbaud, P. Valery, A. Gide.

\(^ {21}\) Yokomitsu himself actually contributed to *Shi to shiron* twice: “Zen nit suite” (On Goodness, Vol. 4. June 1929) and “Fuyuhiko shō” (A Review on Fuyuhiko, Vol. 5. September 1929). Komori points out the essential role of Toyama Usaburō’s *Shi no keitaigaku*, which introduced the Saussurean linguistic paradigm to Yokomitsu (*Kōzō 479-90*).
the current types of formalisms into three: 1) an attention to physical/material phenomena as resources of literature; 2) a consciousness that literature is an “art composed by a sequence of letters (language) as well as by structure,” which suggests “sensation, representation, psychological reactions given by the literature,” and “rhythm that affects our spirits”; 3) an exploration of the specific form of each genre of arts (7-8). Abe’s explanation for the second type lucidly echoes Yokomitsu’s definition of form as a “meaningful sequence of letters with rhythm” (TYRZ 13: 151).

One can explore the development of post-Yokomitsu formalisms in the connection between Yokomitsu and Kitasono. For example, Yokomitsu’s Saussurean view that the meaning of form (i.e. a signifier) is varied by a reader’s perceptual experience seemed to provide a basic interactive model for Kitasono’s experiments with ideoplasty as accumulative associations of images. Inukai Takeru, Yokomitsu’s fellow formalist novelist, interprets Yokomitsu’s notion of form as an interactive association and writes:

それ [内容] は形式——即ち一つ一つの文字の組立ての連続、緩急変化によって、読者の心理作用から生ずる聯想のいひである。——つまり、作者自身が「形式」をとめして豫想したところの「内容」を、讀者はその同じ「形式」をとめして想像し返すのだ。（qtd. in TYRZ 14: 331）

[Contents are associations elicited in the readers’ psychological operation by form, i.e. a sequence of composition of individual letters and its modulation. That is, just as the writer himself developed his expectations in a “form,” the readers will re- evoke the “contents” from the same “form.”]

For both Yokomitsu and Kitasono, the meaning is created in the interaction between a reader and a text rather than by the fixed signification of language. While Yokomitsu, as a

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22 Upon these three categories, Abe observes a paradigmatic shift of the contemporary formalism from a pursuit of “literature as an art” to “literature as literature.” Furthermore, he notes a development from discourses on “form” (keishiki) to those on “method” (Keishiki 8). This gradual shift of interests from “form” to “method,” for example, can be exemplified in Pound and Kitasono’s explorations of the scientific method of poetry.
novelist, could not entirely dismiss meaning as signified, Kitasono and his fellow poet
Haruyama further attempted to create the meaning of a poem out of the visual plasticity
of language.

The complex exchange of formalist discourses around Shi to shiron not only verifies
Yokomitsu’s discursive connections to his contemporary avant-garde poets, but also
follows up the Kitasono-Pound interaction discussed in the previous chapter. Abe’s
formalist theory of “Intellectualism” (Shuchi shugi) in Shuchiteki bungakuron (Literary
Theory of Intellectualism 1930) proves that Pound’s geometric interest in the abstraction
of a mechanism was already germane to Japanese formalist discourses. In the essay,
Abe compares the historical development of literary theory to the swing of the pendulum
between chaos and cosmos, a trope manifestly borrowed from T. E. Hulme’s
“Romanticism and Classicism” in Speculations (1924). Using diction reminiscent of
Pound’s Imagist/Vorticist trope of analytical geometry, furthermore, Abe elaborates upon
his notion of an accurate theory as a “precise mechanism”:

正確な理論。——それが正確な機械だ。そして、それらは、抽象的な、
假説である、即ち、この假説は、彼の振子運動の推移のやうにはかない
もののではない。しかし、かかる「正確な理論」とは、「抽出された代数式」
のやうなものである。われわれは、その式の、a、b、などのサインに、
どのやうな数を持ってきてもいいのである。この標識にどのやうな現実
の肉をあてはめるか、といふことが問題になる。(25-26)

[Accurate theories—those are the precise machines. And they are [also]
abstract hypotheses. That is, this hypothesis is not ephemeral as the transition
of the swing of the pendulum; such an “accurate theory” is like an “abstracted
algebraic formula.” We can put any numbers to the signs—a, b—of the
formula. The question is what kind of real flesh should be applied to the
indicator. ]

Upon his historical recognition that the contemporary formalist discourses express a
demand for an “order” (chitsujo) in the face of chaotic realities, Abe asserts the need for a
“mechanism that grasps and deals with the truth” (25).

By transplanting European Modernist poetics, the post-Yokomitsu formalism precisely anticipates a Poundian search for a cosmic order. It should be also noted that, in 1931, the next year of publication of Literary Theory of Intellectualism, Abe further elaborated on the contemporary formalist demand for abstraction via Hulme’s bipolarity between geometrical arts and vital arts. Furthermore, Andō Ichirō’s translation of T. E. Hulme’s “Notes on Language and Style” appeared in Shi to shiron in March 1931. The delayed influence of Hulme’s corporeal notion of image as a “hairy caterpillar” and Imagist appreciation of hard, dry language merged with other Western and Japanese Modernist discourses on form and style and flowed into the Japanese formalist exploration of poesy in the early 1930s (Hulme, Selected 38).

These national and trans-national intersections of Modernist discourses on form display the dynamic crossings of two intellectual axes: a paradigmatic transformation from Romanticism to Modernism, intersecting with the Eastern-Western textual dynamics. Built on the complex crosscurrents between European and Japanese figures of a textual body, Yokomitsu’s New Sensationist formalism was thus succeeded by a Japanese Modernist poetics. A few years after Yokomitsu’s departure from the Formalist debates, Kitasono and other young Japanese poets founded the VOU Club in their attempt to share their voices with the world. However, it was not until the post Second World War period that the plasticity of Chinese ideograms again became a target of Formalist poetics. The ideogrammic materiality of language and the playful pleasure of visual figuration would be further explored in a genre of concrete poetry in the 1950s, while Kitasono himself pursued his plastic poetry to create a poem purely out of plastic/material objects.
CONCLUSION

Why Ideograms?

Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,
die sich über die Dinge ziehn.
Ich werde den letzten vielleicht nicht vollbringen,
aber versuchen will ich ihn.

(Rainer Maria Rilke, from Das Stunden-Buch)

The Modernists’ fascination with ideograms—their organicist urge for composition, their pleasure in connecting lines and articulating thoughts, and their aesthetic pursuit of autonomous textual entities—I share as a writer and a thinker. My study attempts to untangle the unarticulated ideas of Fenollosa’s, Pound’s, and Yokomitsu’s arts of composition, explore the lines of connection, and recompose them in my writing as a unique textual organicism. At the same time, writing the present work has been a process during which I familiarized myself with the dissociated written letters and retrieved their linkage. As a conclusion to my argument, therefore, I would like to inquire one last time: why ideograms?

I would like to specifically reiterate the importance of articulation in Fenollosa’s, Pound’s, and Yokomitsu’s transfiguring tropes of textual organicism. When Fenollosa essentialized the lines and spacing of composition, for example, his aesthetic focus shifted from the totality of the art object to the relationship among the distinct elements within the art object. His emphasis on spatial articulation was succeeded by Pound’s ideogrammic method, a transcendental search for the functional system. Moreover, Yokomitsu’s hypertrophic trope of nerves, his Modernist sensibility to shocks perceived on one’s skin, and the momentary sensation of nervous impulse suggested the increasing
role of an interface as a realm of interconnection and communication.

From a cultural studies’ viewpoint, this growing emphasis on articulation within the Modernists’ theories of composition has an intriguing connection to the post-Second World War development of global communication. In the 1960s, for example, Marshall McLuhan (1911-80) argued that the spread of electronic technology functions as a kind of central nervous system of human society and successfully integrates the whole of mankind into one global organism (150). Furthermore, based upon his belief that “the medium”—the delivery or the form of a message—“is the message” in and of itself, McLuhan observed that “[i]n contrast to phonetic letters, the ideograph is a vortex that responds to lines of force. It is a mask of corporate energy” (McLuhan and Parker 38). McLuhan’s statement uniquely incorporates Fenollosa’s grasp of Chinese ideographs as a composition of lines, Pound’s vortex as a pattern of energy, and Yokomitsu’s interest in the ideogrammic interface between readers and text. McLuhan’s reference to ideograms allows me further to investigate the postmodern development of textual organicism.

One glimpse of the contemporary form of textual organicism is visible in Japanese ASCII art, called kaomoji (顔文字). Kaomoji, a form of digital character art used in email as well as in the Internet, literally means 頭 (kao, face) plus 文字 (moji, letters). By freely mixing alphabets, symbols, Japanese signs, and kanji, the varied face-expressions are explored in digital communication:

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<tr>
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<td>Smoking</td>
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Fig. 6 Kaomoji (face mark; Ref. FACEMARK PARTY)
By using the visual forms of letters/symbols not for the signified but for the signifier, the *kaomoji* popularizes the typographic experiments of concrete poetry.

Just as Japanese Modernists expended the stylistics and aesthetics of their language, the digital generation of Japanese youths is experimenting with their own medium for expression. Of course, the instrumentality of the *kaomoji* is developed to serve personal expression and cannot be simply equated with the self-reflective reformation of poetic language by the avant-garde poets/writers, who attempted to renovate their own cultural and linguistic identities. Nevertheless, the *kaomoji* demonstrates another interesting form of cultural adaptation that digests amalgamated languages and expresses them in Japanese popular culture. Japanese language as an amalgamated cultural body, while retaining its organic view of language, continues to change in response to various cultural dynamics.

The material/visual presence of Chinese ideographs, which I have emphasized through the notion of *buntai* (sentence + body), deserves another reflection through the notion of body in itself: why is the body important? For Pound and Yokomitsu, whose poetics were built on the French symbolist tradition, the body is a medium to reclaim symbolic totality through the correspondence of different senses. The reader’s ability to experience visual, tactile, aural, and olfactory imagination through the act of reading enables one to retrieve one’s sensations as a simultaneous whole. Furthermore, from a Bergsonian standpoint, the body is a durational locus of experiences that, through memory, evokes images in order to communicate with and evolve one’s self. Just as a body can be the place of intersection between past and present; it is open to exchanges,
crossings, and transformations. Pound, inspired by translation and utilizing multilingual signs, would have been fully conscious of the potency of material/visual figurations that cross cultural boundaries.

My discussion of ideograms dramatized the interfacial sites of a body within the Modernists' urge for textual totality. Considering the fact that Fenollosa, Pound, and Yokomitsu respectively associated themselves with Hegelian cosmopolitanism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese Nationalism, their organicist figures—organism, organum, and organization—show ideological alignments with their contemporary political discourses. Aside from Fenollosa, a Romantic idealist who dedicated himself to interfacing East and West, Pound and Yokomitsu elaborated on their theories of composition in their tension over the concept of totality. In contrast to his transcendental desire for an organized system, Pound’s multilingual practice created a chimerical corpus in which a reader has to engage in an assiduous act of reading—filling in the gap, articulating the fragments, and re-composing the whole in his/her own imagination. In addition, Yokomitsu’s metaphor of a giant octopus in Shanghai envisioned for us the uncanny presence of the chimerical whole, which devours and subsumes the individual into the nationalist/capitalist mechanism. Between the “purified” or transcendental totality that attempts to get rid of otherness and the chimerical totality that comprehends the otherness within the multiplicity of textual space, Pound’s and Yokomitsu’s theories of composition reflect their aesthetic and political conflicts. Even though they show their affinities to the totality of nation-cultures as totalitarianism or as kokutai (the Japanese national polity), their organicist tropes of ideograms inscribe their aesthetic resistance to reclaiming the organic articulation in life and in writing.
In the post-Second World War intellectual paradigm of literary criticism, the Modernists’ drive for transcendence and totality were often criticized or evaded by scholars because of their perceived affinity to the totalitarian/Fascist ethos. Most famously, Pound was denounced by U.S. authorities for his pro-Fascist propaganda during the Second World War; as a result of the diplomatic diagnosis of his insanity, Pound was isolated in St. Elizabeths Hospital, a federal government asylum in the U.S., between 1945 and 1958 (Stock 418). Yokomitsu was also criticized for his support of the Japanese Imperial entity during the war and, in 1947; he died of a gastric ulcer in public infamy and disapproval (Inoue and Komori 507). Yokomitsu’s domestic reputation long reflected the Japanese academic aestheticism and oblique avoidance of war-responsibilities, while Yokomitsu’s fellow-writer in the New Sense School, Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) achieved international literary fame. After the late 1980s, however, the emerging fields of (post)colonialism and cultural studies launched a reevaluation of Yokomitsu’s works in the Imperial/colonial network. In this vein, with further archival research, my own focus on Yokomitsu’s trope of the peripheral nervous system may allow me to investigate the intricate intersection between socio-political and aesthetic discourses and to interconnect different aspects of Japanese Modernity, such as Showa capitalism, Modernist tropes of neurosis, and the relationship to mass media.

The critical studies of Pound’s and Yokomitsu’s work provide insightful reflections on the post-war academic paradigm. But my empathy for the Modernist quest for totality is based in their aesthetic mode of resistance: their intellectual efforts to redeem a minute totality of their artwork in the face of immense historical realities. The art of composition—putting together elements, connecting lines, and articulating
thoughts—brings joy in creation and a potential for communication, despite frustration with the otherness of the language. I share Fenollosa’s, Pound’s, and Yokomitsu’s fascination with ideograms through my aesthetic pleasure in unfolding narratives and in my own longing for form, the expectation of the vision unseen and the totality in life as well as in art. In writing as in life, the point of perfection may not come, as there is always another thread of thought to trace; the process of writing itself will continue to recreate my whole being. In my belief and hope that I will lead my own life in an equal pursuit of aesthetic composition to those artists examined here, I finish my own lines.


---. “From The Painter of Modern Life.” Leitch 792-802.


---. *Matter and Memory*. Bergson, Key 81-137.

---. *Time and Free Will*. Bergson, Key 49-77.


---. “From *Biographia Literaria.*” Leitch 674-82.


---. “The Place in History of Mr. Whistler’s Art.” *Lotus* 1 (1903): 14-17.


---. “T. E. Hulme, Mercenary of Modernism, or, Fragments of Avantgarde Sensibility in Pre-World War I Britain.” *ELH* 47.2 (1980): 355-85.


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