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Edited by Richard Donovan

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He has published extensively, in English and Japanese. His published works include: *Endō Shūsaku: A Literature of Reconciliation* (Routledge); *Christianity and Japan: Impacts and Responses* (Macmillan; co-edited with John Breen), *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach* (Routledge; co-edited with Rachael Hutchinson) and *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Post-war Japanese Literature and Film* (Brill; co-edited with David Stahl). He is also the translator of *Foreign Studies* and *The Girl I Left Behind*, two novels by the Japanese author Endō Shūsaku.

Emiel Nachtegael holds a Master of Arts in Italian Literature and Language and another in Modern Literature (both from the University of Antwerp, Belgium). During the production of this maiden article, he worked as a *post-lauream* researcher in literary sciences, benefiting from a scholarship generously awarded by the Collegio dei Fiamminghi in Bologna (Italy). Currently he is preparing a PhD proposal to contribute to the discipline of World Literature. To this purpose, he is looking for an interesting programme abroad.

Philip Rowland is a British poet and Associate Professor in the College of Humanities at Tamagawa University in Tokyo. He is the founding editor of *NOON*: *Journal of the Short Poem* and co-editor of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013). His own most recent collection of haiku is *Before Music* (Red Moon Press, 2012).

Nigel H. Foxcroft is Senior Lecturer in English Literature, Russian & European Studies at the University of Brighton and on the editorial board of *Rusistika*. He holds BA (Hons), MA, and MPhil degrees from the Universities of Leeds, Sussex, and Sheffield, respectively. He has published on modern Anglo-American literature (Malcolm Lowry and Toni Morrison), Russian Literature (A. S. Pushkin, M. Yu. Lermontov, and Anton Chekhov), and Russian historical linguistics in *Acta Academiae Paedogogicae Szegediensis*, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis*, *The Atlantic Critical Review*, *Rusistika*, *Sun Yat-Sen Journal of Humanities*, and *Sobre Lowry*. He has given keynote lectures at the Fourth International Malcolm Lowry Colloquium, Cuernavaca, Mexico (2010) and at *The Mexican Day of the Dead: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* Symposium, University of Kent (2012). He has delivered research papers at the *Malcolm Lowry: Fifty Years On* International Symposium, University of Sussex (2007); the 2009 Malcolm Lowry Centenary International Conference, UBC, Vancouver, Canada; the *Malcolm Lowry, Encore* International Conference, CCIC, Cerisy-la-Salle, France (2012); and at the *LibrAsia2013* IAFOR Conference, Osaka, Japan (2013).

Editor

Richard Donovan lectures at Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan, teaching in the Faculty of Global and Regional Studies. He also works as a translator between Japanese and English. He obtained a PhD in literary translation studies at Victoria University of Wellington in 2012. The title of his thesis was *Dances with Words: Issues in the Translation of Japanese Literature into English*. His other areas of interest include Japanese media subculture and environmental technology.

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Introduction

As the new editor of the IAFOR *Journal of Literature & Librarianship*, I would like to thank the outgoing editor Dr Melissa Kennedy for the two excellent issues she has overseen during her tenure. Last year I assisted Dr Tom French with editing the IAFOR sister journal of *Arts & Humanities*, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to take over the reins of this journal from Melissa.

The theme of the Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities and LibrAsia for 2013 was 'Connectedness, Identity and Alienation'. Setting the tone for this discussion was Prof. Mark Williams of Akita International University, Japan, whose fascinating keynote address "Life After Death? Writing within the Alienated Self in Post-War Japan" considered the role of literature in addressing traumatic experiences, with particular reference to the works of two lesser-known Japanese novelists after World War II. We are lucky enough to have this address reproduced here as the first paper in this issue for Autumn 2013.

The theme of connectedness is especially relevant in the second paper, "Coming Home to Modern Japan. An Orphic Dialogue between Japan and the West in Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood*" by Emiel Nachtegael. Not only does this paper portray the dialogue between East and West in one of Murakami's most famous works, but it also establishes a conversation, of sorts, between the 2012 and 2013 conferences and journals. In the previous issue of this Journal, Suzuki Akiyoshi provided a "literary topography" of Murukami's works, unearthing hidden meanings and connections in his paper "Mapping the Subterranean of Haruki Murakami's Literary World". In part responding to Suzuki's assertions, Nachtegael finds another way into the writer's world through intertextual readings of Western and Eastern Orphic myths that reveal still more of Murakami's authorial identity.

In "New Directions in English Haiku: An Overview and Assessment", Philip Rowland also considers, among other things, aspects of literary identity in his focus on the Western appropriation of what is often regarded as a quintessentially Japanese poetic form. Rowland's paper serves not only as an introduction to some of North America's foremost exponents, but also traces some of the transformations in English haiku's identity that have been occurring in the century since its inception.

The final paper, by Nigel Foxcroft, is perhaps the most interdisciplinary, as its expansive title attests: “From Russia to Eridanus: The Taoist Psychogeographic Ecosphere of Malcolm Lowry”. The paper ranges across anthropology, ethnography and philosophy in a challenging but compelling discussion of the spiritual evolution of the modernist British writer’s literary works.

The depth and breadth of scholarship in this issue of the IAFOR *Journal of Literature & Librarianship* is testament to the intellectual acumen and spirit of engagement of participants at IAFOR conferences. It has been my pleasure to work with the authors of the above papers in bringing their work to a wider audience. The Journal not only requests submissions from eligible conference participants, but is open to reviewing high-quality unsolicited manuscripts from anyone who wishes to participate in our ongoing discussion about literary issues in an international context. I look forward to working with the next set of contributors on the following issue.

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Life after Death? Writing the Alienated Self in Post-war Japan

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Abstract

This paper represents an attempt to consider how artists in general—and Japanese post-war novelists in particular—deal with traumatic experience and how this process is reflected in their subsequent literary texts. More specifically, it will consider how two Japanese immediate post-war authors, Shimao Toshio (1917–86) and Shiina Rinzō (1911–73)—neither of whom saw active experience at the front but who both emerged, by their own admission, heavily traumatized from their experiences of the period—tackled the issue of depicting in their literary texts their wartime experiences and their subsequent attempts to return to 'normal' life in the immediate aftermath of war. The literary process whereby they first 'act out' and subsequently 'work through' their particular traumatic experiences will be examined—and, in so doing, their oeuvres will be presented as ongoing, collaborative projects aimed at more fully 'constituting' certain traumatic events in cognitive, affective and ethical terms.

Keywords: Shimao Toshio, Shiina Rinzō, trauma, Asia-Pacific War

I would like to begin by offering an alternative title for this paper—which would be along the lines of: 'Don't mention the war: The Japanese literary response to the trauma of the Asia-Pacific War'. This variant seems appropriate inasmuch as, in this paper, I shall be focusing on two Japanese authors who, for all their own harrowing, and inevitably intensely personal, experience of the Asia-Pacific War, have left us with a corpus of literary texts in which direct allusion to this experience is often marked off, as much by its absence as by any intense focus on the traumatic past.

Needless to say, the gamut of those who can be subsumed under the rubric of Japanese 'war authors' is broad: whereas some authors chose to focus predominantly and directly on their experiences on the battlefield, others included these experiences—could not help but include them?—in texts that are ostensibly about unrelated topics. Still others deliberately tried to repress their wartime experiences and sought their literary material elsewhere. Nevertheless, the significant point here is that, even in these texts, the war remained as what the critic Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit has described as an "unstated presence" (1996: 247).

What we need to recall is that, for the vast majority of these writers, the war remained as a source of trauma. My focus in the paper that follows, then, will firstly be on a consideration of how artists in general—and then Japanese post-war novelists in particular—deal with traumatic experience. I shall then move on to an analysis of how two specific Japanese immediate post-war authors, Shimao Toshio (1917–86) and Shiina Rinzō (1911–73)—neither of whom saw active experience at the front but who both emerged, by their own admission, heavily traumatized from their experiences of the period—tackled the issue of depicting in their literary texts their attempts to return to 'normal' life in the immediate aftermath of war. So let us begin with a consideration of some of the principles involved in the literary representation of trauma in general.[1] In this context, it is surely true that the contribution of art to how traumatic historical events are constituted, integrated and comprehended has yet to be sufficiently acknowledged. As the critic Ernestine Schlant has observed, for example:

[1] Much of the following section draws on my co-authored paper (2010a).

> Politicians and political scientists, economists, journalists, opinion makers, and poll takers all form their conclusions according to some 'objective' criteria, but rarely, if ever, is literature consulted. Yet literature is the seismograph of a people's dreams and nightmares, hopes and apprehensions…. [L]iterary truth often goes deeper than political or economic analysis, and it reflects the conditions and values of the society under which it was created. (Schlant & Rimer 1991: 1)

Another grouping that could arguably be added to Schlant's list of those who, all too often, fail to 'consult' literature—or film for that matter—in producing their narratives of traumatic events and experiences is that of the historian. In fact, the neglect of artistic works by historians, political scientists, economists, journalists, etc. may help explain (though only partly) why so many constitutive elements of the Asia–Pacific War (e.g., the Nanjing atrocities, the ongoing 'comfort women' issue, Hiroshima) remain controversial and insufficiently fathomed to this day.

According to the philosopher Walter Davis, traumatic events and experiences must be 'constituted' before they can be assimilated, integrated and understood (2003: 142). As such, what is required, in addition to the historical facts, is the subjective element (including emotion). And I am certainly not alone in arguing that this is precisely what the literary artist is in a unique position to provide.

Drawing upon their formidable powers of intuition and imagination to create potent, affect-charged forms and images of extreme historical violence, psychological damage and ideological contradiction, artists enable their audiences to engage virtually, to internalize, to 'know' and to respond to trauma in concrete, human terms. In this sense, art serves as the "conscience of its community" (2007: 7). Furthermore, as Davis surmises, "creating new affects" is one of the "primary businesses of great [artistic] work" (2001: 228).

So what does all this mean in practice? As already noted, some authors are directly involved, whether as perpetrators or victims/survivors; others may have been present as witnesses, while still others were not present at the time or place of traumatic occurrence at all. There is nevertheless a real sense in which significant numbers from all these cohorts can be seen as suffering the after-effects of trauma—in some cases what we would now call

PTSD—and, as artists, they are obliged, whether consciously or not, to consider their traumatic experience and the convoluted processes by which survivor-narrators struggle to represent and (re)constitute their experiences—and to reintegrate themselves—through artistic expression.

The critic Cathy Caruth reminds us that, with trauma, there is, by definition, a period of 'latency' during which the victim experiences frequent and unwitting repetition of the traumatic event—as s/he feels, to cite Dominick LaCapra, as if s/he "were back there reliving the event, and the distance between here and there, then and now, collapses" (LaCapra 2001: 89). At the same time, however, the period of latency allows for a degree of perspective that permits the traumatized individual to begin "the arduous process of working over and through the trauma" (*ibid*: 90); in short, the survivor is seen as living, not with memories, but with an ongoing, as-yet-unassimilated event. Equally significantly, it is important to bear in mind that the process of interpreting the event can lead to "an enlarged understanding of the self" (Freeman 1993: 29). At the same time, Caruth reminds us that, "while the images . . . remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control" (1995: 151). With time, a critical distance may be achieved—but then the question may become whether the trauma is the encounter with death, or rather the ongoing experience of having survived.

Building on this hypothesis, LaCapra identifies two clearly identifiable stages to the process of representing and reintegrating the self under such circumstances, both of which are crucial for distancing the writer from the original trauma, for laying certain ghosts to rest—and for renewing interest in life and the future. He suggests:

> Writing trauma … involves processes of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past—processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences', limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms…. [It] is often seen in terms of enacting it, which may at times be equated with acting (or playing) it out in performative discourse or artistic practice. (LaCapra 2001: 186-7)

The distinction between the two stages of the process ('acting out' and 'working through' the event) is crucial. But how does each find expression and what is the relationship between them? In his consideration of these issues, LaCapra offers the following definition of the process of 'acting out' trauma:

> Acting out is related to repetition, and even the repetition compulsion…. This is very clear in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They have a tendency to relive the past, to be haunted by ghosts or even to exist in the present as if one were still fully in the past, with no distance from it…. For people who have been severely traumatized, it may be impossible to fully transcend acting out the past. (*Ibid*: 142-3)

The shift from the 'acting out' stage to the situation wherein the author embarks on the process of 'working through' the trauma may be subtle, even imperceptible. But it tends to be marked off by a heightened ability to distinguish between past and present—to "recall in memory that something happened to one . . . back then—while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future" (*ibid*: 22). In all this, the collective challenge for us, as concerned outside observers, is to engage, unlock and (re)constitute the affect-charged, value-laden human dramas that have been imaged—and imagined—in this case in specific Japanese artistic representations of the traumatic past. And, if we trawl through the literature, there is a whole wealth of images, both visual and verbal, that spring to mind: the 'human seal' of Hiroshima; the young female survivor and skull amidst the ruins of Nagasaki; the Okinawan man who awakens one morning to find his leg swollen grotesquely, his big toe emitting water from which phantom soldiers come to drink nightly; the dying soldier in a remote cave in the Philippines with maggots squirming in his unseeing eyes as he quietly lectures about how the entire history of the universe is contained in a single stone. What we are called to do is to try and grasp their relevance to the present and future. Left unengaged, unconstituted and un-acted upon, such images—and the historical traumas that they reference—will, whether we realize it or not, continue to disturb us both personally and collectively, like recurrent but unregistered nightmares, haunting the present and threatening the future.

Let us turn then to the Japanese literary response to the trauma of the war. I start from the premise that the events, experiences and aftermath of the Asia–Pacific War were not only traumatic for the majority of Japanese people and the nation as a whole at the time, but have continued to be so to the present day. In this sense, Japanese artists affected by such trauma, whether directly or indirectly, can be understood to be engaging in ongoing, collaborative projects aimed at more fully constituting particular traumatic experiences and events in cognitive, affective and ethical terms. It is in this context that I consider the oeuvres of two authors, Shimao Toshio and Shiina Rinzō, both of whom came of age during the War, neither of whom saw active service at the front, and who had vastly differing experiences of the War—but who can nevertheless be used to offer insights into how the artist deals with trauma. More specifically, I shall be suggesting that traces of these two processes—that of 'acting out' followed by 'working through'—can be seen clearly delineated in their respective texts.

Turning first to Shimao, the trauma of his wartime experience is well-documented. Encouraged to enlist in the *tokkōtai* (special attack forces, better known in the West as the *kamikaze*) as a largely unwitting 'volunteer', Shimao spent the last two years of the War on the island of Amami Ōshima, just north of Okinawa, as leader of a suicide squadron, with every day spent preparing himself and the approximately 200 men under his command for their fateful mission. The go-ahead for this mission was finally delivered on 13 August 1945, with Shimao and his men spending the next 36 hours in a state of 'ready alert'. Noon of 15 August arrived with the men still in limbo, only for news of the imperial declaration of surrender to slowly filter through, leaving Shimao and his entire team to confront the prospect of a life that had been denied them until that moment. Having also missed the great earthquake that hit the Tokyo area in 1923 as a result of a day trip that had taken him out of town, in subsequent years, Shimao was to make much of his sense of having missed the two most formative moments of his life. As he remarked in 'Tobikoenakereba!' ('I must overcome!'), a piece penned shortly after the cessation of hostilities:

> Two incidents in my past serve to symbolise the way in which I always seem to be caught between two stools. At the time of the Great Kanto earthquake, I had left our home in Yokohama in order to recuperate and was thus unable to become a victim. Then in the recent war, I opted for service as a commissioned officer and became head of a kamikaze squadron. But we never sailed and I survived the war having never experienced life at the front. (Shimao 1980–83, vol. 13: 121)[2]

For those spared such a confrontation with death, we can only guess at the psychological upheaval and trauma Shimao went through, both at the time and as he sought to 'act out' and then 'work through' these events and to return to 'normal' life. But his works give us fascinating insights into the workings of the human mind *in extremis*; indeed, in many ways, they can be seen as offering some of the most detailed case studies of man emerging from the ashes of defeat—as some of the most haunting examinations of human nature—in the entirety of modern Japanese literature.

Shimao starts his oeuvre by asking the question of how to cope with traditional peacetime after such an experience: his early stories show a protagonist, often called Toshio, in a state of ready alert—in which, not only has he learnt to live only for death, but he has come to terms with that as his destiny. As Toshio remarks in the early short story, 'Shutsu-kotōki' ('Exodus from the Island', 1949):

> The moon was high in the night sky. There was nothing to do now but wait for the command to sail. Strangely enough, I had lost all attachment to life in this world. Every moment that our departure was delayed sowed in me the seeds of impatience. It was painful to continue in this state of ready alert. This was our chance … the perfect opportunity. I would have no qualms about sailing right then. But the order didn't come. (*Ibid* 6: 282)

It is hardly surprising that Shimao's protagonist is shown as possessed of an inverted vision of normality—with post-war peace here perceived as a temporary respite from the norm of war. This leads to a warped perception of life as a struggle, not with his fellow man, but with his own inner being. The more he comes to accept that the emptiness

[2] This and all subsequent citations from the Japanese, including titles of works, are translated by myself, unless otherwise indicated.

he experiences following release from death stems from an inability to replace his constant readiness for death with any credible role in post-war society, the more he comes to see the enemy as within his inner being. Needless to say, Shimao is not unique in this; but I would argue that he does succeed, more than most others I can think of, in taking this to its logical conclusion: using literature as a vehicle for genuine self-scrutiny.

It is to be expected that the early Shimao stories—written, we must remember, under the constraints of the US Occupation—focus on the confusion and fear both of the 'ready alert' period and of his ensuing abject circumstances in Occupation Japan. With time, however, the author becomes more balanced and objective—and it is in 'Shuppatsu wa tsui ni otozurezu' ('The Moment of Departure Never Came', 1962), covering much the same material but written some fifteen years later, that he finally appears reconciled to the inevitable: to understand that release from death will not necessarily entail return to full life. His consequent pain and indifference to life is highlighted in the following extract from the later story:

> I was overcome by an intense fatigue and lay face up on my bed. There was nothing about which to feel apprehension and, in that sense, there were no grounds for fear. Yet I was engulfed in an indescribable sense of loneliness. It was as though the future, in which there was an alternative to death but which had previously been banished from our minds, had been reduced with the passage of time to something commonplace, and the sense of fulfilment in life that I had assumed would ensue automatically seemed to slip through my fingers….
>
> In the past, I had merely reacted out of an unabated sense of abhorrence and had lived in fear of air-raids, of insubordination, and of the moment when our suicide boats would strike the enemy craft. When such possibilities disappeared, not as a result of any wish on my part but like the conclusion of some natural phenomenon, I was left with a sense of emptiness, devoid of all energy to go off to confront a new situation. (*Ibid*: 325-6)

Here finally, Shimao seems to have acknowledged—to have 'worked through'—the full extent of the struggle to which he had been subjected from the moment the order to sail had been revoked; he can now finally accept that, having found himself alive but living for

certain death, he had subsequently found himself staring in on life from the perspective of death—and admitting that, in many ways, that was infinitely harder to accept.

The story, 'The Moment of Departure Never Came', also illustrates the unseverable link between Shimao's war stories and the three other types of story that populate his oeuvre: those dealing with home, dreams, and travel, all of which can be seen as products of his August 1945 experience. All can be seen as literary attempts to explore the inner being by placing protagonists under extreme circumstances. But in what ways do these too reflect his experience of postponed death in August 1945?

The brief answer to this question is that every Shimao protagonist has an inverted perspective on life. Just as the distinction between war and peace had been eroded, so too his non-war stories are populated by characters who have lost all sense of black and white distinctions. Most significant in this regard is the protagonist, Toshio, in *Shi no toge* (*The Sting of Death*, 1977), a novel that is all too easily dismissed as a rather turgid and realistic depiction of a marital breakdown.

What is important to note here, however, is that the work belongs to a series of 'sick-wife stories', a body of stories that focus on the period in the author's life after he had moved back to mainland Japan and married the girl, Miho, he had met during his two-year stint on the island of Amami Ōshima—only for his wife to succumb to mental-health issues and for the couple to spend the next decade or so frequenting a series of psychiatric clinics. As the author is the first to acknowledge, however, the situation is exacerbated—if not directly caused—both by his ongoing awkward attempts to 'work through' his traumatic wartime experiences and by his marital infidelity. The sense of guilt—both towards his military comrades who had not escaped their moment of destiny and towards Miho for having occasioned her illness—is palpable in this and the other 'sick-wife stories'. The result, however, is a body of works marked off by their emphasis on absolute faithfulness to the mundane reality that confronted Shimao following his return to 'peacetime reality'. As with the war stories, here too the future holds no meaning: Toshio has to live for the present moment. And so he records the mundane detail of his daily life—and, in so doing, he gives

voice to the torment he was still experiencing ten years after his initial traumatic experience of near-death.

On the surface, therefore, *The Sting of Death* portrays in graphic detail one marital tiff after another, with the only saving grace being the couple's determination to stay together at all costs. And yet, as suggested by the fact that the film was to take both the FIPRESCI Prize and the Grand Prize of the Jury at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival (where it was also nominated for the Golden Palm), there is also a beauty here that enables the reader to discern a sense of optimism, a Rembrandt-like ray of light shining through the darkness.

So how does Shimao achieve this paradoxical effect? Here too the answer seems to lie in the author's experience of suspended death in 1945: he manages to elicit our sympathy for Toshio on the grounds that he never fully re-integrated back into society—and, in this regard, it is interesting to note that the film version includes many flashbacks to the war, episodes which are not overtly present in the novel.

The home Shimao portrays here is one enveloped in ambiguity. On the one hand, it appears as a very fragile institution, devoid of life and mutual understanding. At the same time, though, Toshio is attached, almost pathologically, to the home and family—as shown by the ending where he finds himself tempted to abandon all his responsibilities and to escape alone, but ends up, in spite of himself, once more drawn to return to the psychiatric clinic where his wife is confined, an act that has been seen by many as the ultimate act of atonement and self-effacement. The result may be a portrait of confusion—of one struggling to make sense of events for which he is partly responsible but is powerless to control. At the same time, however, there is a sense of hope, even of optimism, with the future, however uncertain, nevertheless offering the potential for new beginnings. And, in this sense, *The Sting of Death* can be seen as a very powerful metaphor for post-war Japan itself.

There is, however, one final aspect to Shimao's art that I see as central to an understanding of his literary depiction of traumatic events. This relates to his tendency, predictable in many ways, to transform reality into fantasy, and vice versa. It is this that

leads to the series of 'dream stories', another significant contributor to his posthumous reputation.

It is hardly surprising that the events of 1945 came to appear to Shimao as part of a dream—and the reader is struck by the number of his stories that see his protagonists move from the real to the surreal world. Here, the author can be seen using dreams to explore the unconscious—and consequently to depict deeper truths than would be possible through objective realism. In short, in classic Freudian manner, he uses dreams to portray the chaos of human existence at a basic level. The best example of this trait is the short story 'Yume no naka de no nichijō' ('Everyday Life in a Dream', 1948), a work whose very title can be read as a powerful image of reality turned upside down, a perfect mirror of Shimao's situation in 1945.

For the protagonist of this story, everyday life has come to assume an air of unreality: just as the protagonist of the war stories is trying to make sense of his reprieve from death, so this protagonist becomes embroiled in a conscious attempt to fathom the nature and contents of his dreams. As he does so, he is shown penetrating ever further beyond an exterior façade—until he eventually confronts his inner being. This takes the form of the protagonist becoming embroiled in heated discussion with his own mood—until he eventually succeeds, quite literally, in exposing his inner self:

> Hardening my resolve, I thrust my hand into my stomach. Then, still scratching my head vehemently with my left hand, I tried with my right hand to dig out the contents of my stomach. My hand alighted on something clinging tenaciously to the pit of my stomach like a hard kernel, and I tried pulling on it with all my might. The result was incredible. My flesh was pulled upwards with that hard kernel on top. I continued pulling desperately. Eventually, I felt that my whole body had been pulled inside out, like a sock. My head no longer itched and the stomach ache had dissipated. (*Ibid* 2: 209)

The image symbolizes, in dramatic fashion, the two conflicting worlds the author had discerned at the end of the war when, with his unexpected reprieve, his own entire world had indeed appeared turned inside out.

In all this, one conclusion remains irrefutable: as an author driven by personal experience to consider in his literature fundamental questions about life and death, Shimao was never to waver in his attempt to come to terms with the events of 1945. In preserving this experience as the catalyst for all his subsequent literary production—by initially 'acting them out' and subsequently 'working through' them—he has left us a set of texts remarkable not only for their ability to plumb the depths of his own inner being, but also in their consistent attempt to find new ways of asking old questions, such as 'What is man?' and 'What is war?'

By way of a second case study of Japanese literary engagement with traumatic material, let us now turn to another author, Shiina Rinzō, who also came to literary prominence shortly after the cessation of Pacific War hostilities. As with many other Japanese, Shiina has been described by his friend and fellow author, Saitō Suehiro, as having listened to the imperial radio broadcast of surrender 'with little emotion' (Saitō 1980: 254). In this, he was not alone: as John Dower suggests in *Embracing Defeat*, his extended study of the period, the Japanese of the time experienced a sense of *kyodatsu*: they were physically 'drained'. For Shiina, however, the ongoing struggle for daily survival was nothing new: ever since his arrest in September 1931 for violation of the Peace Preservation Law (which outlawed left-wing political activity), his subsequent torture, and his eventual release from imprisonment on the back of his agreement to put his signature to a *tenkōsho* (document of political apostasy), he had been confronted with the need to make the most of whatever mundane opportunities and employment he was offered by the military police. As with so many of his peers, the decision to commit *tenkō* may have led to release from physical incarceration;[3] however, it did little to assuage the feelings of guilt he consequently harboured towards his comrades who remained imprisoned; nor, given the military build-up of the time, did it lead to any immediate reintegration back into society.

Largely as a result of the vagaries of translation, Shiina's oeuvre has not established for itself an international reputation; indeed, his works are unfamiliar to all but the most

[3] Here it is important to note that all but a tiny minority of the 57,000 arrested for leftwing activities between 1928–34 succumbed to the various pressures to commit *tenkō*; cf. Steinhoff 1988: 84.

committed of literary scholars in Japan. For all this neglect, however, it is not without reason that his friend and critic, Takadō Kaname, chose to describe him as the "literary voice of the masses" (1989: 250). Shiina is arguably the representative author of the *Sengoha* (après-guerre) literary coterie, a classic example of the alienated individual in Occupation Japan. Indeed, a case can be made for describing him as the unofficial spokesman for an entire generation of alienated, 'deracinated' individuals.

Central to Shiina's entire corpus is the image of an individual struggling to come to terms not only with the big national issues of the day (responsibility for defeat in the war, guilt, the position of the imperial institution, etc.), but also, far more immediately, with the need to survive—or, as Shiina would have it, to "*taeru*" (endure) in the "*haikyo*" (ruins) of post-war Tokyo. Thus, as Takadō Kaname noted:

> Both physically and spiritually, it was ruins that molded Shiina inexorably into a unique writer. Unable to look down on these ruins from above, he was forced to crawl around hopelessly within them. But the knowledge that he had escaped the calamities of the war alive would have made every day precious and yet, paradoxically, totally empty. (*Ibid*: 8)

It is significant to note that Takadō is here referring not only to the physical ruins of Occupation Japan but also to the ruins that pervaded Shiina's spiritual being, one devoid of a past or a future, existing merely as an empty present. Indeed, as Shiina himself acknowledged as he emerged from the war, he was obliged to confront the ultimate question:

> Why am I alive? That is the stubborn question with which I am continually confronted. I have lost all hope in the history of mankind and cannot believe in its future. All I can believe in is the end of mankind…. When I hear such words as the "happiness of mankind" and "peace", I just want to burst out laughing. (Shiina 1970-79 [hereinafter *SRZ*], vol.14: 34)

The issue lies at the heart of Shiina's early prose narratives, most notably in the portrayal of the first-person narrator, Sumaki, of the early novella 'Shin'ya no shūen' ('The

Midnight Banquet', 1947), with which Shiina announced his arrival on the literary scene. Sumaki's evocations of his abject circumstances are among the most poignant on record for this period. As he suggests,

> I have no future and the past has been destroyed. I am merely a solitary ruin. My heart is weighed down by the realization that I was destroyed in the very process of my birth. I was destroyed the very moment I received my destiny. All that remains of me is a solitary ruin that is living for a concrete death. (*Ibid* 1: 98)

For all that we should be aware of the necessity to maintain a clear distinction between Shiina and his literary alter ego, Sumaki, Shiina is at constant pains to stress his self-identification with his protagonist. And there can be few more honest literary portrayals of the depths plumbed by so many in Japan in the immediate post-war period. Thus, although there may be many examples in the literature of the time of the individual devoid of anything in which to place his trust except himself, it is significant to note that, for Shiina, even such trust in the self is lacking.

There is, then, a fundamental oxymoron underlying Shiina's work—in the attempted fusion of the subjective depictions of the circumstances of ruin and his objective analysis of existence within such ruins. To the writer himself, this was an inevitable consequence of his own past. The point was taken up by Shiina's colleague in the *Sengoha*, Haniya Yutaka, who remarked:

> For Shiina—as well as for me—all literature stems from a continuing challenge to attempt to say that which cannot be said, to transmit that which can never be transmitted, to describe the impossible as if it were possible. (Cited in Takadō 1989: 16)

The comment echoes the exhortation, issued by the Emperor, in his famous radio broadcast of 15 August 1945 accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, for the citizens of Japan to "endure the unendurable". The challenge for Shiina and his compatriots was to capture

the essence of this paradox—to give literary expression to this opposition. But how were they to do this?

Perhaps Shiina's response to this challenge can best be encapsulated in his oft-stated belief that there can be no depiction of hope without consideration of its inverse, absolute despair: as he suggested, "[d]espair is impossible without hope and, equally, hope is not possible without despair" (*SRZ* 20: 23-24). Similarly, the brightness which, I am arguing, does ultimately permeate his texts, is a brightness premised on a knowledge of darkness. Shiina may have been dismissed by many as merely depicting the despair and emptiness of existence in Occupation Japan. But such depictions, I suggest, fall short of the mark—in missing the carefully crafted dichotomy, the hope beyond the despair, the Rembrandt-like light beyond the darkness.

This trait is clearly evident in 'Midnight Banquet', where we see Sumaki living in an old, bombed-out warehouse, converted into the most rudimentary of apartments. The atmosphere evoked from the outset is one of unmitigated gloom—to the extent that Sumaki recalls with nostalgia his days in prison before committing *tenkō*:

> Now, when it rains all day long, I feel stifled. Even when in prison, I could inhale the spray from the rain through the window and could watch thoughtfully as the tall, red brick wall gradually changed hue to an ugly mud colour. When spring came, I could see, beyond the iron bars and iron grillwork, begonias blossoming along the edge of the wall. But all I can do in this room is pace back and forth. (*Ibid* 1: 4)

Thereafter, struggling to endure such meaninglessness, Sumaki not surprisingly finds himself questioning the very purpose of his present life:

> I am devoid of all memories…. And not for me the dreams of a shining future. All that exists is the unendurable present. But, to one forlorn of hope, just because the present is hard to endure, does not mean any hope of improvement. What can be improved? And how? … All that remains for me is to endure the unendurable present. (*Ibid*: 11)

Again echoes of the imperial broadcast to the nation are evident in the word 'endure'. And, based on such passages, it is hardly surprising that Shiina has been categorized by critics such as Yamagata Kazumi as an "author of despair" (1988: 68); in many ways, the reputation was self-inflicted. Almost immediately, however, comes evidence of more than meets the eye, of a narrator determined to penetrate beyond the immediate pain and misery—by drawing attention to the fact that Sumaki is not simply succumbing to his despair, but seeking to work through it. The inversion is first evidenced in Sumaki's response to his 'depressing' neighbours:

> All [my neighbours] incite in me a profound sense of despair. They reduce the various yearnings of my heart to a sense of hopeless despair. *And yet*, I am content. I have begun to love my despair. Of course, that is a melancholy sort of love. *And yet*, my melancholy affords me the same kind of pleasure as that one feels when climbing into bed at night. (*SRZ* 1: 11; my italics)

The stark opposition incorporated into such portrayals is clearly not designed to mitigate the extent of Sumaki's despair: this remains as real and abject as ever. The protagonist is, however, moving on; he is 'acting out' past experience—and this will eventually bring him to an acceptance that such despair and suffering are not meaningless, painful emotions that must be endured for no apparent reason, but rather natural feelings through which he will ultimately be enabled to confront a deeper level of his being. The experience is invaluable and, by the end of the novella, Sumaki is in a position to unravel some of his confusion, to make some sort of sense of that which has earlier been presented as irrationally conflicting emotions—in short, to begin the process of 'working through' them.

In 1950–51, Shiina experienced another form of *tenkō* (conversion), albeit this time of a spiritual dimension, as he sought baptism into the Christian faith. At much the same time, he published *Jiyū no kanata de* (*On the Other Side of Freedom*, 1954), set up as an attempt to stress the fundamental distinction he discerned between his current self and his earlier self 'on the far side of freedom'—with literary portrayals of his former self as, for example, 'a corpse', as 'a betrayer', and as 'God's clown'. Significantly, however, the past

is not dismissed as an irrelevance; it is seen as an essential prerequisite for the process of 'working through' certain salient events in his life journey to which his attention now turns.

It is here, I would suggest, that one can find the essential difference between Shiina's earlier and later narratives. The former, epitomized by *Midnight Banquet*, conform closely to Shoshana Felman's template for narratives that "bear witness to the trauma and the implications of survival" (Felman & Laub 1992: 165)—that 'act it out'. The latter, by contrast, written at considerably greater remove from the events in question, ask instead 'How does one survive the witnessing?' Or to use the lexicon of this discussion, 'How does one "work through" it?'

But what does this mean in practice as we read the more mature texts? In the first of these, *On the Other Side of Freedom*, Shiina draws in greater detail than ever before on autobiographical material—chronicling a series of events that relate closely to his own life experience, with his decision to leave home at age 15, his *tenkō* experience in the early 1930s, his consequent release from prison, and the gruelling experience of freedom he undergoes working in the match factory to which he is assigned by the Military Police. In all this, it is difficult to avoid the sense of the author, Shiina, as omnipresent, frequently casting judgment on his protagonist, here named Seisaku, from his current perspective on 'this side of freedom'. This, in and of itself, is strong evidence of an author 'working through' his material, as opposed to simply 'acting it out', as he was earlier.

The trait is even clearer in the novel *Unga* (*The Canal*, 1956), written immediately after *On the Other Side of Freedom*, and deliberately picking up where the former leaves off—with the protagonist recently arrived in Tokyo and seeking to re-establish himself in society through hard work and attempting to establish some meaningful relationships with those around him.

To this new protagonist, Senkichi, the only escape from his miserable circumstances is through searching. And during the course of the narrative, this quest leads to the discovery not merely of the world of former colleagues who had hitherto rejected him as having betrayed them but also of a greater affinity with the mundane and harsh reality of the masses.

Significantly, however, this search does not take place in a vacuum—and an integral part of this process relates to Senkichi's ability to acknowledge and come to terms with his own traumatic past and to 'work through' these events as the only means of moving forwards. As such, he is consequently dogged by frequent reminders of his past, with several early incidents acting as the 'trigger' for flashbacks to the trauma surrounding his *tenkō*. For example, right at the outset, after crashing his bike and losing consciousness, he returns in his mind to the experience of being tortured by the Military Police:

> Senkichi recalled the large *dōjō* (auditorium) on the second floor of the police station. There was a long, thin, plain wood desk in the middle behind which sat a young prosecutor and clerk. Senkichi was made to sit in front of them, with an old, slow-moving military police officer (*tokkō*) stood behind him. He was ordered to tell them the names of the local Party members who had contacted him—and of those in his cell. When Senkichi said that he knew none, the officer passed a bamboo between Senkichi's hands, now tied behind him, and his back and then pulled it up towards his shoulders, with a shriek. He felt as though both arms were being ripped from their sockets. Every time the pole was forced up, he let out a pitiful scream and broke out into a sweat. He endured this; but the officer just carried on and on with the torture. Unable to resist the pain, Senkichi fell to the floor. But the officer made no attempt to pick him up—and just carried on forcing his arms up with the sword. (*SRZ* 6: 531-2)

For all the distance, the memories are still raw—and they inspire Senkichi, once more, to relive the events. But, in sharp contrast to the absence of portrayal of any of the intense interior dialogue of the earlier works, *The Canal* represents the first concerted effort by Shiina's protagonist to analyse these events—and, more specifically, to consider the paradoxical consequences of his *tenkō*. On the one hand, he did succeed thereby in securing his release; but, at the same time, he sees the act as a betrayal of himself—and of those around him.

The overall depiction is of Senkichi confronted—and increasingly troubled—by what he describes as his own "overwhelming wretchedness" (*ibid*: 586). Significantly, however, the narrative then proceeds to an important admission: "Never before had Senkichi been confronted by the ugly contradiction inherent within his being to this extent"

(*ibid*: 587). And strangely enough, this thought was linked to a sense that he was betraying the entire world. Here, as if for the first time, we have the sense that Senkichi is finally making some headway with his attempts to reconstruct his *tenkō* experience. Having failed, to date, to integrate this as an integral element of his life history, he is now in a position to move from resistance and denial to a greater degree of acceptance; he is ready, in short, to 'work through' the experience—and this is marked in the text by his encounter with one of his former colleagues whom he had 'betrayed'.

In this sense, his meeting with his former colleague, Anami Reiko, is the real cathartic moment here:

> Reiko didn't smile. She simply stared at him with an expressionless look in her eyes, and replied in the Kansai dialect, 'Yes.'
>
> The sweet sensation of nostalgia drained visibly from Senkichi's being; there was a distinct tone of powerful criticism in Reiko's voice. The past, which he had long since tried to bury, came flooding back; he was even aware of the weight on the palm of his hand of the ten fifty-*sen* coins he had received from Reiko when she had been working in the small café in Kobe to cover the 'rent of an agitator'. There had even been a time when he had experienced feelings of love towards her.
>
> 'When did you come to Tokyo?' he asked out of desperation.
>
> 'Only about a month ago,' she replied. (*Ibid*: 605)

The earlier narratives would doubtless have left things there, with the Shiina protagonist unwilling—or unable—to delve deeper into the cause of Reiko's evident anguish. Senkichi, however, is ready for further probing, and the ensuing narrative raises several of the issues he had been mulling over for so long:

> 'You [were tortured] too?' he eventually asked hesitantly.
>
> 'Yes,' she replied brusquely.
>
> 'I suffered terribly at the hands of the military police. I was moved from one cell to another for about two years,' Senkichi began to explain. 'They eventually let me out on parole.'
>
> 'Why did you run off without telling anyone?' she eventually asked.
>
> 'I didn't. I told my colleagues it was dangerous and ordered them to escape.'
>
> 'I never heard that,' she said in a monotonous voice. 'Everyone on the trains was mad with you.

> Even those who weren't in the union got caught up in it. Everyone's convinced that you informed on them to the police before running away.'
>
> 'That's a lie,' he found himself shouting. 'Are you crazy?'
>
> 'In which case, why didn't you come back to be with your former colleagues on leaving prison?' (*Ibid*: 606)

In its portrayal of Senkichi determined to live for the future, not simply by expunging the traumatic past from his consciousness but by seeking consciously to move on, the incident is decisive. On the one hand, he may be left bemoaning the fact that "that horrible moment under torture had destroyed any bridge back to the past" (*ibid*: 631); on the other, however, he has now reclaimed at least some semblance of control over his life and its future direction.

By way of conclusion to this discussion, therefore, I would suggest that the political perspective may not always be overtly foregrounded in either of these authors' works. However, even where the texts are not dealing directly with the traumatic experiences they had undergone, these 'omissions' cannot be totally ignored. Given the circumstances, one might well ask, should we not just read the novels for the richness of what is there, rather than for what, if anything, has been excluded? But at this point, it is surely important to remember the rejoinder offered by the critic Edward Said, who reminds us not to read texts "stripped of their affiliations with the facts of power which informed and enabled them" (1994: 195). Shiina and Shimao may not be household names in Japan. Still, I would argue, their works are an invaluable resource, not just for the literature aficionado, but also for the historian, and for the politicians and diplomats trying to move on from the issues that continue to cast long shadows on international relations in East Asia.

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Coming Home to Modern Japan.
An Orphic Dialogue between Japan and the West
in Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood*

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Topics: World Literature, Intertextuality, Cultural Studies, Comparative Literary Studies

Abstract

This article addresses the debate on the 'Japanese identity' of *Norwegian Wood*, which—though popular—is often conducted in an intuitive fashion. I try to find a way out by looking more thoroughly into the Orphic legacy of the novel than has been done up to now by Japanese scholars. First of all, my purpose is to extend the intertextual reading by bringing into the equation the Japanese version of the Orpheus tale. A comparative analysis can thus trace the author's more-or-less unconscious cultural influences from Japan (the myth of Izanagi) and the West (Orpheus). Furthermore, I take into account the novel's love triangles, which connect the two intertexts. In short, I see the novel's identity as a transformative one. Murakami's Orpheus—the love-stricken Tōru—tracks across the Greek/Western parameters of the Orphic myth (i.e., the triumph of death and individuality) after his descent into the 'Underworld' of Ami Hostel but finally sails back to Japanese home waters, as it were, when he decides to *look forward* to life and love (Midori). Choosing connectedness over alienation like Izanagi, the protagonist of *Norwegian Wood*—and arguably its dislocated author—leave behind the tempting but disillusioning Western culture. Both achieve this however thanks to one crucial element which is lacking in the Japanese myth and represented in the novel by Reiko: the wondrous power of music/art. The latter is Murakami's Golden Fleece brought back from the West. Finally I discuss how this enriched state of mind may have altered Murakami's 'vague, Japanese' fictional 'I'.

Keywords: Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, intertextuality, Orpheus, Izanagi, East-West

Orpheus the Tired Troubadour, Giorgio De Chirico, 1970. Oil on canvas, 149 x 147 cm

Part 1. THE ORPHIC INTERTEXTS

The research presented here[1] was inspired by reading an interview with Murakami Haruki in *The Sydney Morning Herald* dating from 2006. Here the best-selling writer illustrates the place of the 'fantastic' in Japanese spirituality by citing the Greek Orpheus myth as an example of an un-Japanese way of thinking.

> You know the myth of Orpheus. He goes to the underworld to look for his deceased wife, but it's far away and he has to undergo many trials to get there. There's a big river and a wasteland. My characters go to the other world, the other side. In the Western world, there is a big wall you have to climb up. In this country, once you want to go there, it's easy. It's just beneath your feet. ("Not Lost in Translation")

It seems Murakami designates his fantastic writing as being part of Japanese spirituality rather than being a product of Western culture. The story of Tōru in Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* offers an interesting case study to put this statement to the test. As in the Greek myth, a loved one (Naoko) travels to the 'other world' in *Norwegian Wood*. This is Ami Hostel, a mental institution—today's Underworld—from where "once you've left you can't come back" (Murakami, *NW* 133). Tōru's Orphic descent fails, leading to the 'second' loss of his Eurydice. Finally, both myth and novel obey the same parallel thematic binary oppositions: present/past, life/death, man/woman, and individual/community.

On the other hand, in many respects Murakami's Orpheus stands out as the antipode of the son of Calliope, the Muse of poetry, whose singing and string-playing enraptured everything and everyone. Initially, Tōru, as he himself claims, is an inconspicuous, average student majoring in theatre history but excelling in nothing. Although he is a dedicated reader, he never finds the right words to express his feelings.

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[1] I am grateful to Prof. Suzuki Akiyoshi (Konan Women's University, Japan), Prof. Mark Williams (Akita International University, Japan) and Prof. Myles Chilton (Chiba University, Japan) for serving as the Japan reading panel for this paper and delivering me with most valuable comments in that capacity. This research is an offshoot of thesis research conducted between 2011 and 2012 at the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

Likewise, Tōru's trip to Ami Hostel unfolds in a very different way than Orpheus' descent into the Greek Underworld.

It is my belief these differences in character and plot can be retraced to the residue of another version of Orpheus' story: the Japanese myth of Izanagi and Izanami. Murakami does not cite the story, but it is a myth he certainly knows and one that embodies the Japanese spirituality described in the abovementioned interview. By conducting a comparative analysis not only of the Greek Orpheus—as has already been done by Japanese scholars—but also of the myth of Izanagi, I believe the author's more-or-less unconscious cultural influences from Japan and the West can be traced. Thus not only a geographical but also a cognitive mapping of Murakami's novel is established.

In accordance with Murakami's statement on Japanese spirituality as opposed to the Greek Orpheus myth, Tōru has to undertake a long voyage uphill to reach his destination, but the only real obstacle is the narrow mountain pass where his coach is temporarily halted by an oncoming car. Calling at the sanatorium, Tōru waits for the gatekeeper, but the Japanese Charon not does even sit at his post. Once inside, Naoko's lover does nothing more than Izanagi did in Yomi, the Japanese Underworld: try to convince his lover (not the gods) with tender words (not on the wings of music) to accompany to him back to the outside world (as is known, the hero Orpheus first had to move the heart of the goddess Persephone).

Eventually and most importantly, Tōru chooses life over death (though the Greek Orpheus does not commit suicide, he has no further will to live) and connectedness over alienation. In the Japanese myth, the god Izanagi too chooses reintegration into his community of peers after his return from the underworld. The Japanese Orpheus swears to bestow on the world more lives than his now-vengeful sister Izanami can negate.

At first glance, Murakami's conception of the balance between the fantastic and reality in Japan is reflected neatly in *Norwegian Wood*. It would seem the Japanese mythical intertext holds sway in the novel more than the Greek one does. However—unlike what the reader is led to believe in the interview—the narrative of Tōru becomes more similar to that of the troubled Thracian bard after his first visit to Naoko in Ami Hostel. Furthermore, one major structural feature remains for which neither of the Orpheus myths can offer any explanation: the love triangles.

In the next pages I shall demonstrate that the triangle mechanism serves as an elaborate narratological transposition of the novelist's cultural intertwining of the West, Japan, and what I shall call the 'third place' of the mature Murakami. After that, I will analyse thoroughly the 'Western' Orphic intertext.

1.1. Third time around

In *Norwegian Wood* three pairs, three Orphic couples, are foregrounded—Kizuki–Naoko, Naoko–Tōru and finally Tōru–Midori—whilst in both the Greek and Japanese myths only two lovers appear. The first of the love triangles is formed by Naoko–Tōru–Kizuki, the second by Midori–Tōru–Naoko and the third in the end by Tōru–Midori–Reiko.

Furthermore, the mechanism of the love triangles attributes to each of the couples its own 'third person'. Tōru serves in this capacity for Naoko and Kizuki. He is, so to speak, the appendix to the first Orphic couple. When they go out together, Kizuki always tries to find a fourth person for Tōru. But as the narrator, who throughout the novel obsessively counts the number of people in connection, observes: "Kizuki and Naoko and I: odd, but that was the most comfortable combination. Introducing a fourth person into the mix would always make things a little awkward" (27).

When Kizuki was still alive, Tōru served as the link between the couple's own self-involved world and the rest of society. After Kizuki's suicide, Tōru's sexual desire for Naoko unleashes itself and he transforms into a rival of his once best friend Kizuki for Naoko's love. But after the first night of her courtship with Tōru, Naoko flees both college and Tōru without leaving behind any message. From this point onwards, Tōru turns from a passive outsider into an active Orpheus in search of his beloved Eurydice, who herself is grieving for the passing away of her Orpheus.

After Tōru's first visit to Ami Hostel, the second 'third person' comes into play: Midori. She thoroughly alters the story. In the second love triangle, Midori–Tōru–Naoko, the centre is no longer Naoko but Tōru. It is now his turn to choose: between a lively Midori and a sickly Naoko. Midori performs the same function here as Tōru in the previous love triangle, as the connection to the outside world for the Orphic couple. The initial response is the same as the one Naoko gave to Tōru: the communication fails because Tōru also cannot help but *look back* to his Eurydice.

The love triangles offer an interesting structural departure from the novel's Orphic intertexts, assembling three lovers in narratological triangles rather than pairs (Orpheus/Eurydice, Izanagi/Izanami), but at the same time this triangular infrastructure renders visible both Western/Greek and Japanese parameters of the Orphic myths. This is achieved firstly by the doubling of the mythical love couple when Naoko and Tōru, the central Orphic couple, split up.

In this first love triangle Naoko must make an Orphic choice between Tōru and Kizuki: that is, between life and death, between *looking forward or backward*. Naoko, whose sickness has "deeper roots" (192), never processes the death of Kizuki. Like the Greek hero she pays for this with her death because her grief places her outside the community of the living, the only difference being that Naoko commits suicide and therefore 'chooses' death herself.

In other words: Naoko does what the Greek Orpheus wanted to, but was not capable of doing. For his part, Tōru eventually completes the mourning process and chooses life like Izanagi after a ritual purification in water. He in turn does what the Greek Orpheus could have done, but did not want to do. This suggests that Naoko and Kizuki represent the parameters of the Greek myth (death/individuality), whereas Tōru and Midori incarnate the Japanese ones (life/community).

1.2. The Greek Orpheus in Ami Hostel (Reiko)

Besides Midori and Tōru, Reiko constitutes the third 'third person' to discuss. She is introduced in the drawn-out and crucial sixth chapter relating Tōru's first visit to Ami Hostel. After his trip it is she who welcomes the youthful Tōru there. Then, as an experienced older woman, Reiko serves as a guide for Naoko and Tōru. For in the hospital that is not like any other hospital it is prohibited to move in pairs (cf. 126, 129), recalling, by the way, the importance of the narrative love triangles.

The author lays it on thick that Reiko embodies the Greek Orpheus. The very first thing she tells him is that surely he has not touched any musical instrument for years (123). Ironically Murakami has the narrator say that he had no idea why Reiko started talking about music. She turns out to be the music teacher at the sanatorium, where, moreover, as she puts it, relatively many special talents are to be found (128).

Murakami gives us a Reiko who in Ami Hostel lets the birds flutter in their cage with the same inexplicable magic held by the Greek Orpheus (176). During a walk with Naoko and Tōru, she draws them further up into the mountains to listen to the radio. “If I don’t come here once in a while,” the woman says, "I don’t have any idea what’s playing out there" (183). When Reiko recounts her life to Murakami's Orpheus in private it appears that as a child she was prepared for a career as a concert pianist, a dream that almost materialised until she fell into a severe depression. She had lost "some jewel of energy" (155).

During her musical studies Reiko never played for herself, only for others. That is why she ended up in Ami Hostel, regaining her former joy of playing music. After the loss of Eurydice, Orpheus too lost the power to charm others with his music (cf. Ovid XI, vv. 39-40). Drawn from this experience, Reiko seeks to warn Tōru against repeating his own previous mistakes. Although the musician denies that she is able to, she offers him two pieces of advice. The first one is “not to let yourself get impatient” (Murakami, *NW* 151) and the second “once you've left you can't come back” (133).

This is where the second element of the Western Orphic legacy absent in the Japanese myth lingers on in the superstructure of the novel, in *the Upper World of Norwegian Wood*: the discovery of personal artistic expression through which the narrator is later enabled to commemorate his lost Eurydice *painlessly*. Upon his return to Tokyo, Reiko inspires Tōru to start playing the guitar again. It heralds the writing of his personal story. Instead of a consumer of literature and music, he becomes a creator.

Yet at first Tōru does not take Reiko’s two Orphic counsels to heart. When Murakami’s Orpheus leaves the sanatorium he turns around several times (217) thus violating the mythical ban on the backward gaze. He also starts a relationship with Midori and yet he visits Naoko for a second time.

1.3. Murakami's nomadic Orpheus sails West

It seems that after his first visit to Ami Hostel Tōru will copy Orpheus' errors, apparently implicating him in Naoko's death. Apparently, of course, because Naoko did not love him but Kizuki. However, the final loss of his beloved does extract a heavy toll on his mental health.

He behaves in an utterly confused way, as the Greek Orpheus did, lamenting after Eurydice's 'second death' that the gods of the underworld were so cruel (Ovid X, vv. 61-70). Likewise, Tōru slowly sinks into self-pity and entrenches himself in his "own world" (Murakami, *NW* 333), as Midori sorely puts it. More and more, Tōru comes to resemble the Greek singer-poet. After Naoko's death, Murakami's Orpheus decides to retire from the city to the countryside.

On this nomadic journey he encounters a young fisherman who offers him food, sake and money. But it is not a real encounter where a dialogue is established. The young fisherman talks about his deceased mother. He too has lost a loved one, but the battered Tōru listens to him absently. The fisherman, on the other hand, expresses his sympathy. Tōru takes the money, but not the "feeling" of this gift (362). Tōru does not choose to share his pain, which would have turned the fisherman into a fellow-man, a companion on his voyage (cf. Luke 10: 25-37).

He ultimately senses the failure of his introspection and his journey: "I knew I had to go back to the real world" (363). Like Orpheus after his return from Hades, the nomad Tōru is too far removed from the human community. Unlike Izanagi's purification ritual in the water after his return from Yomi, Tōru finds no solace in nature. What will heal him is his 'musical' conversation with Reiko in his apartment in Tokyo. This is the turning point. Reiko reminds Murakami's Orpheus that in the Upper World people like Midori care about him, people to whom he has obligations.

Reiko makes him aware that he must choose between Midori and Naoko, just as Naoko had to choose between Tōru and Kizuki, and Orpheus had to choose between Eurydice and the Bacchae Women. In short, she reminds him about everything the Greek Orpheus did not bother to do upon his return from the Underworld. She has left

Ami Hostel especially to tell him this. And this time, unlike at Ami Hostel or with the fisherman, Tōru listens sincerely[2] and opens up.

1.4. Ending the mythical curse on the gaze

More importantly, Reiko reminds Tōru that he—and this information is crucial—chose life *before* Naoko's death. (Maybe, in a strange sense, when he looked back after leaving the sanatorium for the first time he behaved like Izanagi, who hurried back to the Upper World at the sight of Izanami's rotting ghost.) "You made your decision long before Naoko died …. You chose Midori. Naoko chose to die" (379). The encounter with Reiko in Tokyo allows Tōru to *look forward* and move on with his life. Moreover, in doing so, Reiko (Orpheus) restores herself. The "human jukebox" (381) does not return to Ami Hostel.

The identification of Reiko as the bearer of the musical power of the Western Orphic myth also sheds light on the meaning of Tōru's uncanny coupling with Reiko (who, reminding us of Hitchcock's movie *Vertigo*, wears Naoko's clothes). Just as Murakami's Orpheus was unfaithful to Naoko with Midori when she was still alive, he now shows her infidelity in death. Again the triangular mechanism of the novel comes into force but, this time, shutting off the mythical curse on the gaze. In other words, the explicit divine command of the Orphic myths ("look forward, not backward") has been respected in the end, paradoxically with the help of a narratological mechanism absent in those myths (the love triangles), and, most importantly, through Reiko.

I therefore find the conclusion drawn by J. Rubin in his excellent reference fan book *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words* incomplete and hence difficult to agree with. On the authority of the fact that Tōru sleeps with Reiko four times (the pronunciation of the Japanese word for 'four' is a homophone for 'death'), and believing that the adult narrator is unhappy, Rubin states that Tōru "implicitly chooses

[2] Cf. Rubin: "Tōru is presented as writing directly to the reader, which intensifies the impression of sincerity" (151). In this sense, too, the realisation of Tōru's sincerity serves as a precondition to Murakami's challenge of writing a realistic (and perhaps an autobiographical) novel. Being sincere, by the way, was a necessary precondition for entering Ami Hostel.

death and negativity (Naoko) over life (Midori); Tōru will live with the memories of Naoko rather than give himself over to the vitality of Midori" (159).

It is true that we cannot be totally sure the older Tōru found happiness in living with the vital Midori. The final scene of the novel (Tōru picks up the phone and calls Midori) leaves the reader's knowledge of the actual reunion of Tōru and Midori wanting, so if he is unhappy in the aeroplane it may indeed be because he has never been able to commit to love after Naoko. Maybe he split up with Midori? This is speculation and in no way certain.

What is certain however is that at the end of the plot Reiko made Tōru see that he chose life and Midori over Naoko and death. That is why it is so important that he makes the choice *before* Naoko's death. Unlike in the Orphic myths, his decision to look forward does not coincide with—and thus is not in any way related to—her death. This is the significance of Reiko's words when she tells him: "Whether Naoko is alive or dead, it has nothing to do with you" (379).

Unconsciously building on this insight in the aeroplane, Tōru decides to write a novel, be artistic, in order to deal with his haunting past in a proper way. It is the cover version of the Beatles song played in the aeroplane (lending its title to the novel) which triggered Tōru's memory of Naoko. Taking a closer look at 'that place', where the novel is being born, one can see that music is as important as writing is, maybe even more important. Music, more than anything—as we saw—is embodied in the character of Reiko.

It all boils down to our appreciation of her. Rubin sees her as a negative force, as Naoko's body double. However, looking at the matter through the Orphic intertext, one sees she embodies not death but the solace of art itself.

1.5. Murakami's Orpheus muses about life and death

The parameters of the myth of Orpheus and the myth of Izanagi appear not only in the opposition of the two love couples Naoko–Kizuki and Tōru–Midori after Naoko's death, but in Tōru's own coming-of-age as well. Before finally choosing connectedness with his Japanese peers, as Izanagi did in the myth, he heads West. This is where the Western Orphic intertext comes into full force. In a sense, the coming-of-age of

Murakami's Orpheus is also his coming home, recalling, by the way, that Orpheus was also a fellow companion on Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece.

This intense inner struggle between two sets of thinking reflected in the two different Orphic myths of the West and Japan is also rendered obvious if one examines the trajectory of Tōru's conceptions of life and death, one of the central contradictions pondered by all the world's Orphic myths. After Kizuki's suicide Tōru muses about the issue. Up until that moment he had always perceived death as something quite separate from life: "until the day it reaches out for us, it leaves us alone" (30). Life and death are independent categories, a fact that is made perpetual in all Orphic myths after the violation of the prohibition against the act of looking. As the narrator of *Norwegian Wood* himself observes, that constitutes a "simple, logical truth" (30).

Tōru's contemplation goes on: "Life is here, death is over there. I am here, not over there" (30). This shows the cultural thinking of Japanese spirituality. The Japanese Orphic myth strongly emphasizes the fact that Izanagi's free will is illusory, that mortal life is from now on a given in nature, and that with the Japanese Orpheus all humanity has to accept this separation. The Greek Orpheus' short triumph over death keeps this possibility alive as an illusion for him and his followers. It is no accident that Orpheus lay at the root of a cult in ancient times, the Orphic mysteries.

After Kizuki's death the narrator eliminates philosophically his former rigid, binary thinking on the matter. Now, he declares, death has seized him as well (31). This allows Naoko to have Tōru in tow, as it were, since she too is unable to abandon the memory of the dead Kizuki. It is important to remember at this point that, unlike in the Greek version, the element of Orpheus' heartbreak (as well as the element of the healing power given by artistic expression) is conspicuously absent in the Japanese myth of Izanagi, dealing therefore more with the death/life opposition. The second phase in his thinking on life and death is thus closer to the 'truth' contained in the Greek myth.

It is when Naoko commits suicide that Tōru is forced once again (by Reiko, as I have suggested) to review his ideas, that is, to *look forward*: to Midori and towards life. He failed in rescuing Naoko from the Underworld. The latter follows Kizuki in death and so upholds the Greek Orpheus' legacy. The grieving Tōru, however, now has to brush aside the ghost of Naoko, as Izanagi did when haunted by the reflection of his

rotting sister and lover. Once again, Murakami's Orpheus has to stand 'on the other side' of the spiritual divide.

But that does not mean his thinking returns to the traditional Japanese simplicity of linearity ("life is here, death is over there"). He rethinks all past events and concludes sadly that, all in all, "[b]y living our lives, we nurture death" (360), echoing the former phase of his thinking. However, he continues, in a striking clarity familiar to the sentiment of *mono no aware*, "[t]rue as this might be, it was only one of the truths we had to learn. What I learned from Naoko's death was this: no truth can cure the sadness we feel from losing a loved one."

Norwegian Wood intertwines the dominant themes of the Greek as well as the Japanese Orpheus myth: the tragic dimension of the loss of a lover, and Japanese spirituality. Thus, when establishing the novel's cognitive mapping between the Western and Japanese intertext, where does Murakami's Orpheus finally stand on the life/death thematic? The answer can be found in the story's ending (the beginning of the plot). Years after the tragic events, Tōru involuntarily *looks back* to Naoko whilst sitting in an aeroplane.

It is here that he ultimately 'decided' to create a novel, *Norwegian Wood,* to keep his fading memory of Naoko alive, as he promised her.

> Once, long ago, when I was still young, when the memories were far more vivid than they are now, I often tried to write about her. But I couldn't produce a line. … Everything was too sharp and clear, so that I could never tell where to start—the way a map that shows too much can sometimes be useless. Now, though, I realize that all I can place in the imperfect vessel of writing are imperfect memories and imperfect thoughts. The more the memories of Naoko inside me fade, the more deeply I am able to understand her. (10)

The novel itself is the place where the conflict between the dramatic 'Western' truth of Orpheus, who looks backward (too much), and the drastic 'Japanese' solution of Izanagi, who looks forward (too much), can be transcended.

No truth about life and death, as Tōru declared himself when Naoko committed suicide, can offer any solace—and the fact that artistic rendition does not equal truthfulness is underscored by saying his memory on paper will be an imperfect one. However, and curiously, through writing Tōru has at last confronted the *personal* truth

he had always known, but chose to ignore: Naoko never loved him (but did he really love her either?).

Part 2. MURAKAMI'S ORPHEUS' TRANSFORMATIVE IDENTITY

2.1. Back from the Underworld. Vague, Japanese 'I'?

Murakami's characters are always looking for a third way out of this impasse between past and present. As I see it, *Norwegian Wood* is salient in Murakami's *oeuvre* as past and present coincide with myth and novel and, in a veiled way, with the apparent cultural dualism between Japan and the West. The comparative analysis elaborated in this essay can contribute to the debate on the Japanese identity of the novel and on that basis determine more exactly its significance for the understanding of Murakami's works as a whole, and indeed the dislocated identity between the West and Japan of the author itself.

In *Norwegian Wood* (as in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*) a well connects two narrative worlds: on the one hand a society ruled by Logos (the modern Westernized world with the city as its pre-eminent locus), on the other a mythical, traditional community surrounded by nature (represented by the young Japanese fisherman). The well also connects Naoko's world with Tōru's, and the mythical Orphic infrastructure with the novel's modern superstructure. It is significant that sitting in the aeroplane, thinking about the landscape of his youth, Tōru is no longer sure whether the well actually existed.

Suzuki Akiyoshi, who has analysed *Norwegian Wood* by superimposing a map of ancient Japan on the topography of the novel, retracing the walks of the characters through the modern Japanese cities, concludes that in the novel there "is no border between the ground and the subterranean. Japanese are always controlled, through memory, by the past and dragged into the world of death. The embodiment of this standpoint … is the world of Murakami" (38).

This echoes much of the Murakami interview I quoted at the beginning of the paper: "once you want to go there, it's easy. It's just beneath your feet." Thus after his easy but failed Orphic descent to the Western Underworld, physically Murakami's

Orpheus may be back in the Japanese Upper World, but mentally he finds himself as a nomad on a borderline between the West and Japan, between present and past, and between life and death (always somewhere in between).

According to another Japanese scholar, Takemoto Toshio (72-73), this kind of nomadism of Murakami's fictional 'I' was still considered an escapist, chimeric way out in the previous novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the world* (1985). He designates the type of character in this novel as a "vague, Japanese I".[3] It is a philosophy of the recluse recalling Nietzsche, meaning—as Takemoto explains—that Murakami declared the Cartesian subject dead early on, and that he aligned himself with the postmodern theories injected into Japan during his formative years. This vague, Japanese 'I' assumes plural identities, like the novel's protagonist, in order to live both in a counter-utopian, bucolic Wonderland and in modern Tokyo.

In my reading of *Norwegian Wood*, I have suggested the identity crisis of the love-stricken Tōru leads to the choosing of the Japanese parameters of the Orphic myths (life, forward orientation, community) after having absorbed the counsels of Reiko, the transposition of the Greek Orpheus. Does this imply the nomadic, vague, Japanese 'I' in this novel has found his way home, cherishing his Japanese passport?

Takemoto claims a change of character occurs in *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1992), the successor of *Norwegian Wood*. Here the nomadic protagonist Hajime[4]—like Murakami the former owner of an upscale music club, where visitors could escape stress and reality—is mercilessly exposed as a money-grubber and (like the Dionysian Orpheus) a failure in love and life. As the author matures, so to speak, the vagueness of Murakami's postmodern 'I' is being more ironically exposed.

Yet in my opinion, *Norwegian Wood*, situated between *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, but omitted by Takemoto, at least foretells the ending of this "vague, Japanese I". In suggesting this, I wish to stress the 'Japanese' element of the scholar's concept and see

[3] My translation from the French "moi vague nippon".

[4] NB: as a common noun 始め (*hajime*) means start, opening, beginning.

the postmodern 'vague' itself as a modifier contrasting the first 'I'. From this viewpoint Tōru's identity crisis during his nomadic voyage is the crisis of the vague 'I'.

The comparative analysis of the Orphic intertexts in *Norwegian Wood* has revealed that the novel's protagonist most clearly assumes the traits of a Greek Orpheus after seeking Naoko at Ami Hostel, making the same mistakes as the Thracian singer-poet. When his Eurydice commits suicide, the depressed Tōru wanders around like a stranger in the city as well as in nature, unable to reconnect in either of the worlds linked by the well. In other words, he experiences the downside of the story of the Greek Orpheus, who—unlike Izanagi—looks back too much once returned to the Upper World.

When Tōru arrives at college, he is surrounded (or lets himself be surrounded) by Western imported goods. The main character even manages to read no Japanese authors at all. Likewise, no Japanese musicians are addressed. It is also noticeable that all his lessons at college deal with Western theatre. It is known Murakami himself was very much under the spell of the so-called individualistic values of the West as opposed to the so-called suffocating social life in the Japan in which he grew up. He actively disliked Japanese literature, Mishima in particular (Rubin 14).

As in *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, where Hajime's 'I' can only pursue ludic pleasures, Tōru's inner escape to 'individualistic values of the West' is illusory. Conversely, if you look upon his nomad's Orphic journey into nature as following the trail of Izanagi, who was isolated after his descent into the Underworld in order to ritually purify himself before being reintegrated into the community of the gods, the impoverished Tōru comes to realise that the mythical Japanese past offers no solace either.

Therefore, either way, the possibility of Murakami's vague, Japanese 'I' in combining successfully two possible worlds and therefore plural identities—as the Greek or the Japanese Orpheus, in the traditional past or in the Westernized present—is being short-circuited in *Norwegian Wood* as well as in the next novel. It shows the progress achieved with respect to the narrator of the previous novel, who—as Takemoto (73) points out—could not move *either forward or backward*, who had nowhere to go.

When in *Norwegian Wood* the nomadic Tōru repents, he has left behind the vices of the Western Orpheus who could only look *backward*, ready to become a less

"vague", more "Japanese I". Like Izanagi, Murakami's Orpheus decides to look *forward*, enabled however by the artistic virtue of the Greek Orpheus. Conversely, he also completes the Greek Orpheus' mourning process. It is as if the novel's protagonist restores himself from Orpheus' sickness by the miraculous drug the same held the licence on but forgot about after losing Eurydice to the Underworld.

Art's solace is Murakami's Golden Fleece brought back from Greece, the West. By commemorating Naoko, Murakami's Orpheus takes himself one step further than his mythical predecessor Izanagi, who reintegrated but also chased the ghost of his beloved wife. The wondrous power of the creation of (novelistic) art allows for Tōru's identity transformation as well as his reintegration home in the Japanese community, like Izanagi's.

Thus, in this most *creative* way, Murakami's Orpheus chooses connectedness over alienation. Tōru's Japanese identity, like Murakami's own in world literature, becomes a transformative one. For me this is the deeper meaning of the juxtaposition of the two Orphic intertexts in *Norwegian Wood*. In this (unconscious) reworking of the mythical intertexts, he adopts not the Orphic vices but the Orphic virtues of East and West.

2.2. Over there, alongside the West and Japan

This feature in the novel recalls Murakami's own stated third resting place besides Hawaii and Japan—"over there"[5] ("Haruki Murakami. Bref, j'ai survécu." 90)—and coincides, I might add, with a third place alongside (or between) life and death.

As the narrator puts it at the end of the novel, it is from the "dead center of this place that was *no place*" (Murakami, *NW* 386, my emphasis) that he still holds Midori on the telephone line. Given a negative 'charge', this place in the Upper World where Tōru has to find happiness is nowhere. It can not be pointed out on an evidence-based, geographical map (cf. Suzuki). As the mature Tōru put it before he starts writing the novel (*supra*), "a map that shows too much can sometimes be useless".

[5] Translated from the French "là-bas".

With a positive charge, the Orphic opposition between life and death, being and non-being, forward and backward—in short the conflict between the Greek and the Japanese parameters of the myth—is transcended in the realm of art, in the novel itself.[6] Thus a 'third' synthesis between Japan and the West as well as between past (Underground) and present (Upper World) is achieved by Murakami's Orphic adaptation: the "over there" in *Norwegian Wood*. It is here that the mature Tōru finally finds happiness after all these years, keeping his promise to Naoko as well as getting her out of his system.

This in turn may explain why the novel served as the ideal place for personal reflection, primarily for the Japanese reading public. I believe the implicit cultural intermingling of the Orphic myths of Japan and the West helps to explain what Rubin designated as the "greater demographic impact" (160) of *Norwegian Wood*. Like modern Japan, the novel tries to find a balance between the country's own cultural heritage and the present 'imported' from the West.

It may not be unrelated to the fact that the novel has turned out to be a object of commercial hype in that country, but not in the West. By an ironic twist, it has made matters worse for the author himself. He has often declared that before *Norwegian Wood*, he used to be a cult writer in Japan, as he still is in the West today. "That book destroyed my reputation [in Japan]" ("Writer on the Borderline"). The huge success of the novel in his home country, putting it well ahead of his 'cult' works, only served to prolong the author's own nomadic stay in the West (cf. Rubin 161).

To add to the complex debate on the novel's national identity, Rubin (147-148) points out that Murakami wrote his Orphic adaptation in Italy and *Greece*. As is well known, Murakami settled back in Japan after being 'called home' by the national

[6] Cf. Murakami cited in Rubin: "But once I get involved in writing a long piece of fiction, there is nothing I can do to prevent an image of death from taking shape in my mind … and the sensation never leaves me until the moment I have written the last line of the book" (164). This angst may be linked to Murakami's habit of listening to music during the 'morbid' writing process. One might say it is a legacy of the Greek Orpheus.

disasters of 1995. It may be argued that Tōru's Orphic voyage mirrors the author's own trail on the world map from the young Murakami to the mature one.

> All I could think about when I began writing fiction in my youth was how to run as far as I could from the "Japanese Condition". I wanted to distance myself as much as possible from the curse of Japanese. … When I was in Japan, all I wanted was to be an individual. (Qtd. in Rubin 47)

The author's disillusionment with a once-hopeful image of the West (the absolute freedom of the individual) after fleeing his native Japanese community led to the carving-out of a 'third' resting place back in Japan's postmodern present: "over there"; a place that is nowhere and that only exists in art, a *fictional* place.

During the nineties, years after writing *Norwegian Wood*, the mature Murakami declared in interviews that he wanted to write something more related to his home county as he now considered himself a Japanese writer (cf. e.g. *Kitarubeki sakka-tachi* 181). For the author too, perhaps, a change in character into a less vague, Japanese 'I' had occurred. He no longer looked backward, having decided to keep the past under fictional lock and key.

Paradoxically, like Tōru, Murakami rediscovered his Japanese identity after his own 'individualistic', nomadic flight to the West. Then he re-emerged as a 'wrecked ship' still carrying the Japanese flag, back in the Upper World, the "real world". It is as if Tōru's retreat from Ami Hostel to the Upper World was itself either a premonition or a preparation for the homecoming of this dislocated author. One can choose between the two options depending on whether one has read *Norwegian Wood* 'looking down the well' or not.

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New Directions in English-language Haiku: An Overview and Assessment

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Abstract

This paper gives an overview of innovations in English-language haiku over the past decade or so, focusing on American haiku in particular. These are described through discussion of examples drawn from contemporary journals and anthologies, and are seen to involve the freer use of metaphor and opaque language than is found in normative haiku. Broader contextual factors are also taken into account: most notably, the renewed awareness of modern Japanese haiku that has been enabled by recent works of criticism and translation. While haiku in English still occurs mostly within self-contained communities of writers and publishers, recent developments suggest possibilities for recognition of the genre in a wider field of poetry and literary criticism.

The year 2013 marks the centenary of the publication of Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," widely recognized as the first fully achieved haiku in English. Although Pound's poem is well known, the subsequent history of English-language haiku has long been neglected by the academic mainstream. This, then, is a timely moment to consider the current state of the art, and here I shall focus on developments of the past decade or so, particularly in relation to the one-line form as a vehicle for innovation. There has been a tendency among American haiku poets, especially, to use metaphor and opaque language more freely, against the grain of the received notion that haiku should be based on direct personal experience of a moment of "ordinary reality," expressed in transparent, everyday language.[1] In most of what follows, my aim is to illustrate this shift in haiku practice, but I shall also briefly outline some of the contextual factors that have enabled it. While recent criticism and translations have shown that Japanese haiku is more various and challenging than English-language poets had thought, there has also been growing interest among haiku poets in the interface between their chosen genre and other innovative short poetry.

Although English versions of Japanese haiku began to appear in the late nineteenth century, and Yone Noguchi tried his hand at composing haiku in English in the early years of the twentieth century, it was not until Pound's "Metro" poem, which first appeared in *Poetry* magazine in 1913, that the way was paved for a genuine tradition of haiku in English.

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals on a wet, black bough .

The genre of "haiku in English" was of course not then recognized, and Pound used the old word for haiku in referring to his poem as a "*hokku*-like sentence" (Pound, 1914, 465-67). But as Jim Kacian has pointed out, the poem not only uses "the basic haiku

[1] See Cor van den Heuvel in "A Dialogue on the Experimental" (with Philip Rowland), *Frogpond* 25.3, 2002: "Haiku does not look to an ideal reality, but to ordinary reality. … [H]aiku poets avoid figures of speech, emotional expressions, and rhetorical or musical decoration" (51).

techniques of juxtaposition and seasonality," but also "raises many questions that would be debated by practitioners of haiku in subsequent decades" (Kacian, 2013, 312). Should, for instance, haiku have titles? Use metaphor so explicitly? Should they "speak of contemporary topics, like subways, or must they be limited to 'classical' content?" (ibid). Some have even argued that Pound's poem simply does not qualify as haiku. As Haruo Shirane relates in his essay, "Beyond the Haiku Moment: Bashō, Buson, and Modern Haiku Myths":

> I was once told that Ezra Pound's famous metro poem … was not haiku. If I remember correctly, the reason for disqualification was that [it] was not about nature as we know it and that the poem was fictional or imaginary. Pound's poem may also have been ruled out since it uses an obvious metaphor: the petals are a metaphor for the apparition of the faces, or vice versa. This view of the metro poem was based on the three key definitions of haiku—haiku is about direct observation, haiku eschews metaphor, and haiku is about nature—which poets such as Bashō and Buson would have seriously disputed. (Shirane, 2000, 48)

I shall describe the standard model of English-language haiku in more detail shortly, but first, let me highlight the "key definitions" mentioned by Shirane: *haiku is about direct observation*; *haiku eschews metaphor*; *haiku is about nature*. This view, which is widely taken for granted, owes a lot to Masaoka Shiki's Western-influenced concept of haiku as a sketch (*shasei*) based on direct observation, as well as to the writings of mid-century pioneers such as Harold Henderson, R. H. Blyth, and the Beats, who promoted an idea of haiku as a Zen-oriented way of life focused on the present moment.

Despite its deviance from the later norms of English-language haiku, some aspects of the standard model are illustrated by the formal differences between the version of Pound's poem as first published and the final version in *Lustra*, 1916:

> IN A STATION OF THE METRO
> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.

The most obvious difference, the elimination of spaces in the lineation, means that less attention is drawn to the "scaffolding" of the poem. And crucially, the colon is changed

to a semi-colon, de-emphasizing any sense of causality or consequence. The overall effect is that the poem has a more normative look as haiku, albeit one with a title.

So, what, more specifically, are the predominant norms of contemporary English-language haiku? The Haiku Society of America's definition is as follows: "A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition"; and until 2004, "the essence of an experience of nature" was defined more narrowly as "a moment keenly perceived." It should be added that haiku in English are usually written in one to four lines, most often three. In *The Haiku Handbook*, William Higginson, following the example of R. H. Blyth's translations, codifies "a 'traditional form' for haiku in English," which would "establish rhythmical proportions similar to those of traditional Japanese haiku" (1985, 105). This "traditional form" consists of three short-long-short line lengths; the first two lines grouped against the third, or the last two against the first; with two accented beats in the first line, three in the second, and two in the third. Here is a haiku by Michael McClintock, from 1975, that Higginson puts forward as an example of the form he is suggesting:

as far toward the trees
as the wire mesh gives—
the fox's nose (Ibid, 107)

And here is another, by Gary Hotham, dating from the same year:

distant thunder
the dog's toenails click
against the linoleum (*Modern Haiku* 6.2, 1975)

Both poems serve also as examples of normative language and content, involving aspects of nature other than human nature; using sense-based, concrete images; presenting an event as happening now; being based, it would seem, on direct personal observation; and not employing metaphor in any obvious way. With these normative poems and "rules" in mind, let us turn now to some recent new directions in haiku.

Until around the turn of this century, one-line haiku in English were still something of a novelty, although several poets and translators had already argued strongly for the form: notably, Hiroaki Satō, who has always preserved the one-line form of Japanese haiku in his English translations, and the American poet Marlene Mountain. Her "pig and i spring rain" (*Frogpond* 2.3-4, 1979) is a classic example. While surprisingly brief and simple, it does include, in keeping with convention, a seasonal phrase, as well as linking non-human with human nature. The later "thrush song a few days before the thrush," published in 1990 (*Modern Haiku* 21.3), is similarly oriented towards the outer, natural world, though what makes the poem distinctive is how it encompasses a span of time rather than a single, present-tense moment. Both of these one-liners depart slightly from the norms of English-language haiku in interesting and effective ways, but the following, from 2005, goes further:

spin on dead and wounded any scratch of pines
(*NOON: Journal of the Short Poem* 2)

The reference to media "spin" brings us abruptly into the realm of the contemporary, while "any scratch of pines" serves not only as an "experience of nature," but also, possibly, as an expression of irritation, or a frustrated call to awareness of what was really going on in the Iraq war.

Mountain's poem bears close comparison with the following, senryu-like one-liner, by younger American poet Scott Metz:

only american deaths count the stars (*Modern Haiku* 40.1, 2009)

This concisely demonstrates the ambiguity that the one-line form affords. With the word "count" acting as a hinge, the poem makes a general, bitterly ironic claim: "only american deaths count." However, it also allows for the verb to be read as an imperative ("count the stars"), so putting the claim in a broader, indeed cosmic, perspective—even while "stars" resonates satirically, in the popular sense akin to "heroes." While traditionalists might dismiss the poem as too "message-y," it touches on an important political topic and emotion in a particularly concise yet evocative way.

In fact, the work of Scott Metz goes in many, sometimes genre-defying, new directions, too many to explore here, and the online journal he edits, *Roadrunner*, has been the foremost vehicle for experimental haiku since the mid-2000s. I would like to quote two more of his haiku to help show how the renewed popularity of the one-line form has coincided with a linguistically playful turn in the work of 21st-century haiku poets. The first may be seen as a vertical one-liner, touching on the topic of romantic relationship via its unconventional line-breaks:

a
not
her
drop

&

it's
raining (*Modern Haiku*, 38:3, 2007)

Not that the foregrounding of linguistic features, in form or content, is without precedent in English-language haiku. Metz's "a comma attached to the tip of a flowering branch" (*ant ant ant ant ant* 9, 2011) directly extends the tradition in the line of Robert Boldman's one-liner, first published in 1980:

leaves blowing into a sentence (*Cicada,* 4:4)

The way both poems articulate the "interference" of language in the flow of experience is perhaps what most differentiates them from the traditional model of haiku.

Indeed, one striking aspect of the anthology *Haiku 21*, which features only work published during the first decade of the 21st century, is the large proportion of one-liners in the book. Another is the frequent recurrence of language "itself" as a topic, leaving the impression that haiku has been catching up with developments in the wider scene of postmodern poetry, "language poetry" in particular. This is in stark contrast to

the poems in *The Haiku Anthology* (3rd edition, 1999), which tend to have a more nostalgic American, pastoral feel, and to use language more simply and transparently. By comparison, many of the poems in *Haiku 21* seem quite opaque, as some of the following examples will indicate.

After Marlene Mountain, Chris Gordon is one of the most distinctive and widely published writers of English haiku in one line. Since the mid-to-late 1990s, he has continually surprised readers of haiku with poems such as the following:

> where the lines end and the absence begins an architecture or so
> (*ant ant ant ant ant* 5, 2002; *Haiku 21*, 74)

> a love letter to the butterfly gods with strategic misspellings
> (*NOON: Journal of the Short Poem* 1, 2004; *Haiku 21*, 74)

These might seem to have less in common with haiku than, say, John Ashbery's poetry of aesthetic consciousness: to have more to do with what Ashbery has described as "the experience of experience … the way a happening or experience filters through to me" (in Shoptaw, 1994, 3) than identifiable, anecdotal experience.[2] Certainly it is more a poetry of the mind; but as these instances show, the mind, too, has its "moments."

In recent years the work of some more mainstream haiku poets has moved in a similar direction. Compare, for instance, this award-winning haiku of 1990, by Lee Gurga, former editor of *Modern Haiku*:

> spot of sunlight—
> on a blade of grass a dragonfly
> changes its grip (*Mainichi Daily News* 1, 1990)

with the following, from 2010:

[2] See also Ashbery's "37 Haiku" in *A Wave* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984), 37-38.

morning birdsong requiring quotation marks
(*Notes from the Gean*, 2.3, 2010; *Haiku 21*, 81)

While "spot of sunlight" precisely conforms to the "traditional" model of haiku, "morning birdsong" abruptly distances itself from the conventional expectation set up by its opening words, reading, as it were, the natural world in terms of language.

A similar preoccupation with the inextricability of language from experience is the focus of Cherie Hunter Day's:

looking up
rules of punctuation—
the green hills (*The Heron's Nest*, 8.1, 2006; *Haiku 21*, 57)

Here the "unnatural" conventions of writing are set against the "unpunctuated" green hills. The writer's work is paradoxically entwined with her perception, or "reading," of the natural world.

Eve Luckring is another poet at the cutting edge of English-language haiku, unafraid, here, to reflect on

the metallic taste
of what
I can't imagine
negative tide (*Modern Haiku*, 41.2, 2010; *Haiku 21*, 104)

Nor does the poet shy away from slowing the reader down—in keeping with the uncertain subject matter—more than the conventional three-line form would allow.

While Luckring's poem stretches the boundaries of haiku, Fay Aoyagi's work has drawn the admiration of traditionalists and experimentalists alike. Note the intuitive, rather surreal leap of association, in the form of a question, in this example:

ants out of a hole—
when did I stop playing
the red toy piano? (*Roadrunner* 6.3, 2006)

Memory also turns out to be the question in the following, more boldly metaphorical haiku:

icy rain
at the bottom of the lake
a door to yesterday
(Cornell University Mann Library *Daily Haiku*, 7 March, 2008)

A humorously confessional mode is also characteristic:

summer festival—
my Astro Boy mask
has lost its power (*Mariposa* 10, 2004)

The allusion here is to a robot character in a *manga* series dating back to the 1960s. Thus the poem is comical (in both senses), as well as poignant.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to the haiku of Peter Yovu, another poet who strikes a fine balance between the experimental and traditional:

October
the red shift
you were buried in
(*Roadrunner*, 10.1, 2010; *Haiku 21*, 178)

This poem was picked as "best of issue" by Pulitzer-prizewinning poet Rae Armantrout; her comments are worth quoting at some length. "What," she wrote,

> I really like about it is the way the various connotations of the word 'shift' create an interesting instability, a shifting field of meanings. Taken as a phrase, 'red shift' refers to the fact that light moves towards the red end of the spectrum when it is traveling away from the viewer. This is how astronomers concluded that the universe was expanding, the galaxies flying apart from one another. However, following the line 'October,' the color red also suggests seasonal change or 'shift' and falling leaves. … Now the red shift is something 'you' were buried in. It might even be a burial garment. So which of these meanings of 'red shift' (if any) is to be taken literally and which metaphorically? … What I appreciate is the way the possible meanings work together and enrich one another. (*Roadrunner*, 10.2, 2010)

The creation of a "shifting field of meanings" which does not quite resolve into a single, identifiable experience is, I would suggest, what most characterizes the new directions that English-language haiku has taken.

What has helped enable these shifts in practice? First, there is the influence of Haruo Shirane's book *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Basho* (Stanford University Press, 1998) and the related essay, directed more pointedly at haiku poets, "Beyond the Haiku Moment: Bashō, Buson and Modern Haiku Myths" (*Modern Haiku* 21.1, 2000). There, Shirane demonstrates the importance of the imaginative dimension in haiku, in contrast to the North American "emphasis on the 'haiku moment'" (Shirane, 2000, 55), and argues for a broader conception of haiku in the West:

> [If] haiku is to rise to the level of serious poetry, literature that is widely respected and admired, that is taught and studied, commentated on, that can have impact on other non-haiku poets, then it must have a complexity that gives it depth and that allows it to both focus on and rise above the specific moment of time. Basho, Buson and other masters achieved this through various forms of textual density, including metaphor, allegory, symbolism, and allusion, as well as through the constant search for new topics. … Haiku need not and should not be confined to a narrow definition of nature poetry, particularly since the ground rules are completely different from those in Japan. (Ibid, 62)

This call for an expansion of the genre, from an authority on Japanese poetry, was doubtless liberating for many English-language haiku poets.

Second, there is the impact that the avant-garde haiku poet Ban'ya Natsuishi has had since around 2000, the year of his co-founding the World Haiku Association, which

has helped promote his views. In presenting the second edition of his first collection in translation, *A Future Waterfall* (1999/2004), he argues that "Western poets perhaps confuse 'reality' with 'fact'. Reality might easily include the imaginative and unreal. What interests me is the totality of human reality" (Natsuishi, 2004, 67). The following haiku is characteristic, and manifesto-like in its emphasis on language as the source of poetic and political power:

> Put a period deeply
> into the desert
> at the center of the new world (Natsuishi, 2004, 24)

In this respect, the poem anticipates the language-oriented turn in American haiku described earlier in this paper.

Richard Gilbert's critical theory and translations have also had a profound influence. In 2004, he published "The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Contemporary English-language Haiku," later incorporated into his book, *Poems of Consciousness*. As Jim Kacian summarizes: "In this essay, [Gilbert] argues that the conception of haiku we have inherited in the West is unduly narrow, not at all like that found in its native land, and that we would do well to broaden our expectations of what the genre might contain" (2013, 383). Gilbert also proposes a vocabulary by which to consider varieties of "disjunction" (to be distinguished from simple juxtaposition of images) in haiku, while in *Poems of Consciousness*, he gives examples of the *gendai* (modern) directions in Japanese haiku, lending further support to his case. Further, in 2010 and 2011, Gilbert and his Kumamoto-based team of translators published translations of interviews and poems by leading *gendai* haiku poet Kaneko Tōta.[3]

In the past decade, much contemporary Japanese haiku has reached an English-language audience via Hiroaki Satō. His translations of the work of Japanese women poets are especially worthy of note. One eye-opening instance is "the haiku of

[3] *The Future of Haiku: An Interview with Kaneko Tohta* (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2011); Kaneko Tohta, *Selected Haiku* 1961-2012 (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012), *Selected Haiku* 1937-1960 (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012), trans. The Kon Nichi Translation Group.

Kamiyama Himeyo" (born 1963), presented in *Modern Haiku* 36.1, 2005. Kamiyama uses lineation and varied spacing in her haiku so as, she says, "to release them from the monolinear form into a spatial world" (Satō, 2008, 515):

In the
womb

runs the
equa-
tor

a new century

(from the collection *Yakobu no Kaidan*, *Jacob's Ladder*, 2001)

It may also be suggestive to read Kamiyama's poem as a feminine counterpart to Natsuishi's "new world" haiku quoted above.

Against the backdrop of these specific influences, there has been a growing interest among haiku poets in engaging with the wider poetry world: to discover, for instance, the "haikuesque" in other poets' work, and to learn from their practice. Several crossover journals have encouraged this: *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem* (founded in 1989), *Lilliput Review* (1989), *Tundra* (1999), *NOON: Journal of the Short Poem* (2004), and *Roadrunner* (2004), whose best-of-issue prize judges have deliberately been chosen from outside the haiku scene. The different styles of these journals should, however, be noted. For example, *Tundra* was billed as "a journal for short poetry rooted in the crystal image," while *NOON* aimed to set a wide variety of short poems in conversation with each other, with more emphasis on the experimental.[4]

[4] In his welcome preface to the premier issue of *Tundra*, its editor, Michael Dylan Welch, writes: "my primary purpose is to showcase short poems that objectively highlight the crystal image, the defining moment" (*Tundra* 1, 1999, 6-7). For discussion of more unexpected juxtapositions of haiku with other short poetry, see Philip Rowland, "From Haiku to the Short Poem: Bridging the Divide," *Modern Haiku*, 39.3, 2008.

In conclusion: haiku in English—particularly in the United States, where much of it appears—still occurs mostly within self-contained communities of writers and publishers, but recent developments relate it more closely to the general field of contemporary poetry, so making it ripe for recognition in a wider field of literary criticism. There is a stronger sense now of haiku as *contemporary poetry*, as opposed to an imitative verse form, an exotic hobby, or a spiritual way of life. A wider variety of poetic tools are now recognized as available to the 21st-century haiku poet. While this opening of the field risks blurring the boundaries between haiku and other short poetry, it is worth bearing in mind that the Japanese-inspired genre of haiku in English has always been hybrid; it has necessarily evolved from a fusion of haiku sensibility and Western poetics. In order for it to continue to evolve and avoid stagnation, it must change and at times "push the envelope"; on the other hand, it must remain rooted enough in the tradition to remain, recognizably, haiku. The challenge of finding this balance is what is most interesting and vital about the genre.

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From Russia to Eridanus:

The Taoist Psychogeographic Ecosphere of Malcolm Lowry

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Abstract

In tracing the evolution of the cosmic consciousness of Malcolm Lowry (1909–57), a prominent English Modernist novelist and poet, this paper provides a multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural, intercontinental framework for analysing the influence of cultures and civilizations—both east and west—upon national identities and value-systems, expressed through literature.

In its investigation of the material, cosmological and spiritual domains of the Aztecs and Oaxacan Zapotecs, the paper considers anthropological, cultural and ethnographic influences associated with pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican rituals and primordial forces. Hence, it can be said to scrutinize the psychogeographic ecosphere of existence in its cycles of life, death and renewal, probing the subconscious dimensions of the Mexican Day of the Dead Hispanic festival observed by Lowry in Cuernavaca in 1936. It also evaluates his dedication to a quest for atonement with the spirits of the dead in his various works, ranging from *Under the Volcano* to *The Forest Path to the Spring*.

In recognition of Lowry's need to repent for the debts of the past and for the traumatic sins of mankind, synergies are made with the animist, cosmic and shamanic concepts of the universe reflected in the celestial visions of the Aztec and Zapotec civilizations. In pursuit of Lowry's search for *yin-yang* universal harmony on his psychic journey from Russia, via Mexico, to Canada, cosmopolitan, cross-disciplinary connections—including Sino-Japanese links—are established among the cyclic rhythms of the universe reflected in Aztec, Zapotec and Taoist world-views; the highly significant Pleiades star cluster; the ubiquitous, intergalactic symbol of an Edenic Eridanus; and the philosophical and cosmic concepts of Taoism.

Introduction

This multidisciplinary, cross-cultural paper[1] investigates the evolution of the cosmic consciousness of the prominent English Modernist novelist and poet Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) by scrutinizing the subconscious and psychogeographic dimensions of the Mexican Day of the Dead Hispanic festival, which he observed in Cuernavaca in 1936.

In its analysis of the material, cosmological and spiritual domains of both the Aztecs and the Oaxacan Zapotecs, it considers anthropological, cultural and ethnographic influences associated with pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican rituals and primordial forces. In doing so, it determines Lowry's dedication to his quest for atonement with the spirits of the dead in works such as *Under the Volcano* (1947), *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend is Laid* (1968), *La Mordida* (1996), and *The Forest Path to the Spring* (1961).

Furthermore, a consideration of the impact of Sir James Frazer's research into the Aztec and Zapotec civilizations, as reflected in the Day of the Dead festival, leads us to an analysis of Lowry's unique combination of Modernism with cosmic shamanism. His increasingly Taoist world-view provides us with an anthropological basis for Kandinskian psychotherapeutic and shamanic healing, together with a sense of spiritual regeneration by ethnographic and artistic means.

Russian Literary Influences

Lowry's magic is born of a highly inquisitive mind—one which spans the continents in its assimilation of world literature and thought, stretching from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, from the Americas to Europe. His enormous, esoteric literary diet embraces Russian as well as Scandinavian, Czech and German writers. His heterogeneous erudition is rooted both in continental European and in Anglo-American literature, with an attraction to Mexico, on the one hand, and to China and Japan, on the other—having visited the Far East in 1927, as portrayed in his first novel, *Ultramarine* (1933). He embarks upon a spiritual odyssey in pursuit of truth, salvation, and an evaluation of east-west value-systems. His aim is to renew what he perceives as being

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented, with funding from the University of Brighton, at *LibrAsia2013*: The Third Asian Conference on Literature and Librarianship, April 4-7, 2013, Ramada Hotel, Osaka, Japan.

an ever-more-materialistic Western civilization through the power of literature, culture and philosophical reflection, stimulated by the yearning for a Taoist Eridanus, and providing an alternative life-cycle to the one to which he was accustomed.

Judging from the frequency of their mention in his daily correspondence, we can identify numerous writers of the Golden Age of nineteenth-century Russian literature as Lowry favourites: Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol,[2] Fyodor Dostoyevsky,[3] and Anton Chekhov. Indeed, Lowry sees himself not only as a new Goethe, or a Kafka, but also as a Pushkin, and, even, as a "second order Gogol" (Lowry (1995) I 292-93. See also Lowry (1996) II 885).

Such parallels are pursued in *Dark as the Grave*, where Sigbjørn Wilderness reads himself into a newspaper report, as was the case with Major Kovalyov in the Gogolian fantasy "The Nose" (1842) (ibid. II 779). Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842) is described by Lowry as "one of the most lyrical and nostalgic novels ever written" (ibid. II 154). Gogolian (and Dostoyevskian) influences of this nature are precursors of Lowry's recognition of the importance of an aesthetic appreciation of beauty in how the celestial spirit of Eridanus brings harmony and peace to *The Forest Path* (1947-61). However, every *yin* is accompanied by a *yang*: the burning of parts two and three of *Dead Souls*, the troika of divine retribution, reminds us of the catastrophic loss of Lowry's own manuscript, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, which would have concluded the trilogy, *The Voyage That Never Ends*—a "voyage that can have no ending, precisely because every now is a new beginning", a portal to the future (Wood (1976) 58). Of course, Lowry's preoccupation with fire—as a representation of *yang* in a Taoist *yin-yang* outlook—can be "seen not merely as a hazard, but a force that exerts its will any time when the elements are out of balance" (Chen and Xie 364).

[2] Lowry (1995) I 292-93, and 506-07; and II 274, 625, 656, 779, 885, and 889.

[3] Lowry (1995) I 183, 322, 325-26, 396, 433, 444, 500, 543, 636, and 642; and Lowry (1996) II 53, 104, 131, 426, 518, 820, 842, 849, and 932.

The Cultural Renewal of Civilization

The need for essential connections between the natural sciences and the humanities has been identified by Sir John Polkinghorne (1930–), the distinguished Cambridge mathematical physicist and theologian (Polkinghorne 109, cited in Spivey xiii). According to Ted Spivey, the solution to civilization's dilemma is "for modern man to experience cultural renewal" (Spivey 186). Furthermore, he proposes that "ethics and aesthetics must be integrated with science and technology in new social patterns", as Modernism intended (ibid. 186). This would necessitate a greater recognition of the symmetry of nature's design and beauty. It would entail a "new synthesis of knowledge, reason, and the powers of heart and soul", in an ideal Edenic existence where social turmoil and political unrest would be balanced by a more judicious approach both to human interaction and to our ecosphere (ibid. 47).

Since Descartes there has been a tendency for Western philosophy to fragment into two divergent movements: objectivism (based upon scientific reason) and subjectivism (referring to an aesthetic and/or spiritual interface). It is this *fissure* in modern consciousness—between the analytical, empirical, rational nature of science, on the one hand, and the imaginative, intuitive, visionary aspects of the arts, on the other—which has been identified as threatening to dissolve the very basis of humanity itself. Dating from Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), prominent psychologists have established that modern rationalism has tended to exclude the existence of the subconscious and spiritual minds. Alluding to Po-tuan Chang's monograph entitled *Understanding Reality*, John (Zhong) Ming Chen and Shaobe Xie, in their significant article on 'Malcolm Lowry and the Tao', refer to "the dichotomy between the spontaneous, the intuitive, the natural and the conscious, the cultural, and the unnatural—between 'the mind of Tao and the human mind' (Chang 5)" (373).

Aware of the need for a new psycho-analytic approach to life, Lowry established his own mode of psycho-therapeutic writing under the supervision of Conrad Aiken, the illustrious American poet and caring, 'surrogate father' to whom, in February 1940, he writes, "What truer father have I than you" (1995 I 293). Both Aiken and Lowry suffered, in their childhoods, from deep psychological scars requiring prolonged adaptation. Spivey refers to:

> (1) […] [a] basic life crisis, which—though often but not always hidden in the unconscious—causes various small physical and mental instabilities; (2) a way of seeing one's life as a pilgrimage to find a lost love and joy; and (3) the gradual overcoming of a deep death wish and the achieving of a psychic growth in which life and death, love and violence, are seen in a perspective that makes possible a full acceptance of life. (Spivey 151-52)

Undergoing a continuous Nietzschean struggle over the fundamental question of what it is to be human, Lowry attempts to attain a higher state of consciousness and self-revelation in order to determine how mankind can realize its full potential by being more in tune with the ecosphere and the constant change of the cyclical (temporal), Taoistic rhythms of the eternal symphony of life, death and renewal.

Lowry's anthropological and psychotherapeutic investigations are inspired by Sir James Frazer, Robert Graves (an admirer of Dr Rivers's psychoanalytic method at Craiglockhart) (MacClancy 87) and Tom Harrisson (founder of the Mass-Observation Experiment) (Heimann). His study of the Judeo-Christian metaphysical system of the Cabbala was increasingly motivated by Charles Stansfeld-Jones—alias Frater Achad—a white magician (Bowker 320-21 and Day 294-95). Following in Frazer's footsteps and embarking upon his own transcendental, supernatural quest for the Garden of Eden, Lowry (and, indeed, the Consul of *Under the Volcano*) traces back the roots of the Aztecs and Zapotecs. These civilizations became caught in the jaws, as it were, of Spanish conquistadors, contributing to their subsequent decline. Enthralled by the Day of the Dead in Cuernavaca, Geoffrey Firmin, our shamanistic consul, seeks the existence of a divine order—the 'Holy Grail' of supreme truth and salvation—through the Cabbalistic and cosmic wisdoms of the past. He embarks upon a mystic pilgrimage, a spiritual mission to discover death in life and life in death.

Lowry's *Dead Souls*: *Under the Volcano*, the Day of the Dead, and the Cabbala

The Day of the Dead festival derives from shamanic and cosmological perspectives akin to those of the animist tribes of northern Mexico. Indeed, the Yaqui and the Huichol communicate with gods and spirits, giving thanks to images, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe. With its focus on the Day of the Dead, *Under the Volcano* symbolizes what Perle Epstein has described as "the great battle […] for the survival of the human

consciousness" (Epstein 50).[4] A "tragic protagonist […], like Tchitchikov in Dead Souls", the dipsomaniac and psychotic Geoffrey Firmin is afflicted by a Gogolian sickness observed by the attentive Dr Vigil (Lowry (1995) I 507. See also 581). This ailment, we are told, is "not only in body but in that part used to be call [*sic*]: soul"—a malady which the Consul, like Lowry himself, expiates through suffering and self-sacrifice (Lowry (2000) 148). It is through psychoanalysis—the science of "nature *inside*", dealing with "the obstacles to reason within the psyche" (Frosh 118; original emphasis)—that a state of "intense self-revelation" is achieved (Bowker 224 and Martin 92-93, 45 and 204). Our clairvoyant Consul hallucinogenically aspires to a higher dimension of mescal-induced consciousness to reflect upon the significance of the eternal wheel of existence. By imbibing the ritualistic drinks of *pulque* and mescal, he is transformed from a priest into a god, as is the Aztec custom (Miller and Taube 138). Through "simultaneity of experience", he embarks upon a telepathic and psychogeographic crusade in search of civilization's elixir of life (Orr 166).

According to Epstein, Lowry's incorporation of the theme of William Blackstone (c. 1595–1675)—a seventeenth-century, shamanic reverend who fled from Cambridge to New England to join the Indians—links Lowry's ethnological and psychological worlds (Epstein 51). Indeed, "in his outward search for seclusion, Blackstone represents man's inner search for awareness" (Martin 195). In this respect, the youthful Lowry was mesmerized by Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), a spellbinding study of the correlation between anthropology and religion, "a voyage of discovery" into ethnography, folklore, and magic (MacClancy 79). In it Frazer documents attempts at exorcizing evil spirits in order to attain rebirth. As he explains, "in the primitive mind […] it was thought that by transferring the evils of a whole people to an individual and sacrificing that individual, it might be possible to get rid of the accumulated sorrows of the entire community" (Downie (1940) 33-34 (see also 21, 23 and 37)).[5]

In Aztec culture, death, as "a mirror of life", is a symbolic, cyclic celebration, necessitating sacrifice in order to nourish the souls of the deceased on their underworld

[4] See also Ackerley and Clipper 32.

[5] For further details, see Lowry (1996) II 364 and 379; Downie (1970) 52; and Vickery 36, 42-43, 110-11 and 139.

journey into the afterlife (Miller and Taube 74). Associated with the culmination of the Pleiades, or Seven Sisters, star cluster (Lowry (1996) II 367), the tradition of the Day of the Dead—whereby the living communicate with the spirits of the departed, who are temporarily reborn in the here and now—is a widely commemorated festival of pre-Hispanic, pagan-spiritual origin, deeply rooted in the Zapotec and Aztec civilizations. In *Under the Volcano* our Consul makes the ultimate Christ-like, sacrificial surrender, dying for the sins of a bellicose mankind. He reveals "his adversaries as figures of evil by offering himself up as a sacrificial victim", at the mercy of the trochoidal Máquina Infernal, the great eternal Ferris wheel of life (Orr 157). Such symbols are derived from Aztec mythology, which "believed that each human being was, by predestination, inserted into a divine order, 'the grasp of the omnipotent machine'" (Soustelle 112, quoted in Wutz 66).

Under the Volcano sets the psychogeographic stage for the annihilation of the Aztec Garden of Eden, the aggressive desecration of Mexico by Spanish invaders (evoked by the dying-Indian theme), and the recurring 'Fall of Man'. It is our Adamic Consul whom Lowry empowers to bear the burden of guilt for the sins of the world, for he perceives that "modern society has corrupted humanity's innate 'goodness' […] and pristine innocence" (Chen and Xie 374. See also Lowry (1965) 85).

According to Mercia Eliade (1907–86), "the primitive magician, the medicine man or shaman, is not only a sick man, he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself" (Eliade (1964) 27, cited in Spivey 8 and 183). Portrayed as a reclusive "dark magician in his visioned cave" (Lowry (2000) 151 and 206), our consul resorts to consulting his "numerous cabbalistic and alchemical books" (178), seeking "a new blending of antinomies" to reconcile the configurations of universal elements, the building blocks of nature (Chen and Xie 377). A shamanic priest on a pilgrimage, he seeks communion with his imagined, harmonious cosmic order, incorporating the "life-giving force of love" and joy to balance and cleanse the internal and external forces at work in the Taoistic universe of existence (Spivey 15).[6]

However, Geoffrey Firmin's extraordinary dabbling in the preternatural or supernatural forces of the Cabbala has culminated *not* in an attainment of the

[6] See also ibid. xiv and 166.

transcendental power of love and inner tranquillity, but in a loss of "the knowledge of the Mysteries" (Epstein 27). As Lowry himself claims, "the garden can be seen not only as the world, or the Garden of Eden, but legitimately as the Cabbala itself, and the abuse of wine […] is identified in the Cabbala with the abuse of magical powers […] à la Childe Harolde" (Lowry (1995) I 595). An emblem of modern Faustian man, he has sold his trans-migratory soul to Mephistopheles in his desire to achieve omnipotence. By untethering the riderless horse, our consul causes a purifying thunderstorm of Messianic divine intervention which resurrects Yvonne, his Aztecan ritual sacrifice, who has imagined "herself voyaging straight up through the stars to the Pleiades", as predicted for the sober (ibid. I 523. See also Lowry (2000) 202-03, 216, 335 and 373-74).[7]

Exorcizing the Spectres of the Past: *Dark as the Grave*

With the cataclysmic combustion of his two-thousand-word script of *In Ballast to the White Sea*, Lowry has no alternative but to amend his plans for *The Voyage That Never Ends*, conceived as an "ordeal, a going through the hoop", an "initiation", and "a doing of God's will" (Lowry (1951) 3, cited in Grace (1982) 9). Hence, we glimpse Lowry the voyeur, the visionary, the new Sergei Eisenstein on a *montaged Battleship Potemkin*, storming the Barents Sea.

Dark as the Grave exposes a Benjaminian and Taoist "lost harmony between mind and world" (McCarthy (1994) 209). With its Dostoyevskian and Gogolian influences, this novella strives for a symmetry expressed through the concept of the artist as a visionary, with a "primordial natural force, possessing an infinite supply of power and creativity"—features which match those of the Tao (Ku-ying Ch'en (1981), quoted in Chen and Xie 359). Indeed, we discover that "life flowed into art: […] art gives life a form and meaning and flows on into life, […] and […] this flowing, this river, […] became a flowing of consciousness, of mind" (Lowry (1969) 60). With its *yin* elements, this aquatic imagery is an antecedent to the focal role played by water, in all its forms, as a life-giving, curvilinear force in *The Forest Path to the Spring*.

[7] In addition, see Doyen 112 and Grace (1987) 162 and 165.

In *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* (*Under the Volcano*'s original title), *Dark as the Grave*, and *La Mordida* (1949-96) we encounter the spiritual odyssey of Sigbjørn Wilderness (Bareham 109). Indeed, Sigbjørn is what Lowry calls a Dostoyevskian "underground man", a "modern anti-hero" (Lowry (1996) II 424, 430, 538 and 540), "a doppelganger", with all his contradictions (Lowry (1969) 7). He dreams that he is *both* a Lermontovian executioner of fate and a murderer extradited from Mexico to Canada (ibid. 70-71). Unable to distinguish between the novel authored by himself and that by his daemon, he is shocked by the suspicion "that he is not a writer so much as being *written*"—a true identity crisis (Lowry (1965) 332; original emphasis). On his return journey with Primrose from Vancouver to Cuernavaca to exorcize the ghosts psychogeographically plaguing him since his last visit, Sigbjørn searches for Juan Fernando Martinez, his old friend and guardian spirit, as well as a reincarnation of the legendary Juan Cerillo, the Dr Vigil of *Under the Volcano*. In doing so, he completes a circuitous, spatial motion with regard to the law of circular, or cyclical, movement, which, in the Taoist philosophy, governs both human beings and water and is illustrated by the *yin*/*yang* circle (see Chen and Xie 362).

Yet, it is voodoo to which Sigbjørn turns as a shamanic force to calm his anxieties and as a way of tapping the supernatural to displace science, which "can only help the person whose experience is beyond it" (Lowry (1969) 167). Hence, the dynamic power of voodoo is also seen by Lowry as a means of subduing the dark Dantean forces of nature, for it is

> a religion, to be regarded with reverence, since unquestionably it is the matter-transcending religion based upon the actual existence of the supernatural as a fact that is fundamental to man himself […]. But that is not to say that one should not regard with awe the great dignity & discipline that is behind it at its highest, nor its conception of God, nor the meaning that it gives to life […]. (Lowry (1996) II 364)

Furthermore, it is a voodoo ritualistic cross that enables Sigbjørn, in his transition to rebirth, to communicate with the spirits of the dead, transformed into gods. It too provides "a way out of the infernal, closed circle into renewed voyaging" (Grace (1982) 73).

However, Sigbjørn's trip to the Zapotec high priest's palace involves a parallel *physical* descent into the cruciform prehistoric tombs of Mitla, down towards the subterranean Column of Death. Representative of the Underworld, Mitla is perceived as the Land of the Dead (Spence 49 and 110, cited in Sugars 155). Sigbjørn's renewal of faith is accompanied by "the mediating influence of the dead" and "the mediating spirit of […] the Holy Virgin", resulting in a realization of "the mystical experience that suffering had caused him to undergo" and precipitating the acute "feeling of something Renaissance" (Lowry (1969) 262). Sigbjørn is reminded of the constellation Eridanus, the mythological Styx, encompassing Hades—the "river of life: river of youth: river of death" (ibid. 261).[8]

It is in the Hotel La Luna in Oaxaca where, having survived the perils of the lunar eclipse, Maximilian's Palace, and the temple of Mitla ('the City of the Moon'), Sigbjørn is reunited with his wife, Primrose, a reborn phoenix and moon-goddess (Sugars 158). As with Yvonne in *Under the Volcano*, the narrator's wife in *The Forest Path,* and Margerie Bonner in real life, Primrose has a clear understanding of connections between the seasons and the movement of the stars and constellations across the night sky. It is Primrose who enables Sigbjørn to attain a state of psychogeographic harmony with life and Juan Fernando with death. In his dominion over the Mitlan tombs and the Edenic garden endowed by the Banco Ejidal, Juan provides the key to Sigbjørn's spiritual renaissance. Furthermore, Lowry himself was captivated by the ancient rituals of the 800-B.C. Mitla, of the pyramids of the 500-B.C. Monte Albán, with its astronomical Building J where Zapotec gods were venerated, and of the 200-B.C. Teotihuacan. Indeed, Lowry modestly concedes that he "did, however, live in Oaxaca for a time, among the ruins of Monte Albán and Mitla" (Lowry (1995) I 315).

From Eridanus to the Pleiades, and on to Taoism: *The Forest Path to the Spring*

Influenced by Walter Benjamin's concern that the ascent of reason was actually turning life into knowledge (that is, information manipulated to human advantage), Lowry firmly believes that technological progress is extinguishing human contact with the

[8] Lowry also refers to this conception of Eridanus in Lowry (1969) 26-27, 258, and 263, and Lowry (1991) 231.

natural environment. He advocates the "direct and unmediated observation of and contact with nature to gain new knowledge and insight and re-establish a different system of values" (Chen and Xie 374). It is *The Forest Path*—replete with its Manx myths and legends—which "constitutes an unabashed encomium on the yin […] as a quintessentially vital balancing force" (Chen and Xie 357). Having traversed Sigbjørn's wilderness on his Protean path to paradise, we encounter the soul of Eridanus. This temporal, spatial and spiritual heart of the universe facilitates a peaceful, harmonious interaction and ecological co-existence with our environment. It is the focal point where the all-pervasive *yin* and *yang* elements of the Tao—considered to be "Mother of the universe"—are in a state of equilibrium (Chen and Xie 358. See also Wood (1976) 54). In *The Forest Path* it is the narrator's wife who is "an integral part of nature" and "greatly facilitates her husband's truly organic integration into it" (Chen and Xie 377).

With regard to our ecosphere and bearing in mind the metaphysical concepts of Laozi, Aiken, and Walker Percy, Spivey attempts to "mold a philosophical view that makes man's knowledge—his science, that is—a part of his human and natural environments" (Spivey 187). A parallel shamanic ideal in search of cultural regeneration through ethnographic-artistic methods is pursued by Wassily Kandinsky, a trained anthropologist (MacClancy 90). Similarly, Lowry's shaman "can be healer and guide as well as mystic and visionary" (Eliade (1962) 86, cited in Spivey xiii). It identifies the spiritual need for a Benjaminian, neo-Romantic return to a congruous Taoist relationship with our natural environment: in aspiring towards a rapport with the world around it, humanity should be part of nature, nature part of humanity.

However, the universal laws of nature also apply to the cosmos, as the narrator in *The Forest Path* intuitively discerns when he "realizes that humans and cosmos, however tiny or gigantic, are equally subject to the same Taoist laws of relative stillness and absolute movement, as well as to mutability, seasonal and/or cyclical" (Chen and Xie 376). In this respect, as with Lowry, his utopian vision of the cosmos involves interpersonal and environmental relationships based on "the encompassing power of love" as a way "to withstand the elemental forces it had to withstand […] in defiance of eternity, and yet as if in humble answer to it […] [:] as much a part of the natural surroundings as a Shinto temple is of the Japanese landscape" (Spivey xi and Lowry (1991) 233). Culminating "on a note of harmony and rebirth", the sensuous lyrical

novella *The Forest Path*—"a testament to hope"—enables Lowry to tap the power of his imagination and also his spiritual desire for freedom (Grace (1982) 100 and 102; Cross 105; and Lowry (1965) 266).[9] *The Forest Path* has been described by Daniel Dodson as a "prose poem on man in nature, a Wordsworthian benediction on nature's benevolent power to transform the heart capable of seeing and receiving" (Dodson 41). In it Lowry advocates a romanticism—reminiscent of the souls of the forests in Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862)—which exalts a closer relationship with our natural environment: "Often all you could see in the whole world of the dawn was a huge sun with two pines silhouetted in it, like a great blaze behind a Gothic cathedral. And at night the same pines would write a Chinese poem on the moon" (Lowry (1991) 216). Yet, the moonlit, nocturnal stillness of the sky at night—associated with *yin* in the Taoist system of values—is also a time when "little shellfish called Chinese Hats […] are on the move!" (ibid. 237. See also 243). A backwards reading of Lowry's terminology—transforming "hats" into "star"—further exemplifies the attainable tranquillity of the cycles of natural motion and their relationship to an eastern view of the vast, cosmological universe. In this respect, Chen and Xie contend that Lowry "subverts and at least partially replaces the dominant western value system with that of Taoism" (370).

On another plane, *The Forest Path*—with the threatening, sinister sign of the 'Hell' oil refinery on the horizon (Lowry (1991) 258)—conjures up a *yin-yang* imbalance between humanity and nature immortalized in Alexander Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* (1833). In it humanity—personified by the enlivened equestrian statue of Tsar Peter the Great (1672–1725)—attempts to defy the natural laws, but the 'soft', aqueous elements take their revenge in the Great Flood of St Petersburg in November 1824. Familiar with this narrative poem through Edmund Wilson's translation, Lowry refers to a "serious spirit of Pushkinship" in his letters (Lowry (1996) II 105 and 889).[10] It is in *The Forest Path* that he alludes to "the very elements, harnessed only for the earth's ruination and man's greed" (Lowry (1991) 241). In "the

[9] Although Lowry claims that he read Anton Chekhov's comedy *The Demon of the Wood* (1889) only in 1952, he alludes to Dante's dark wood too. See Lowry (1996) II 518 and 524.

[10] In his letters he refers to A. S. Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (1825) and to *Mozart and Salieri* (1830): cf. Lowry (1996) II 105, 155 and 885.

shadow of the war", they "turn against man himself", taking their revenge in the forest fire whose relentless advance "is almost like a perversion of the movement of the inlet" (ibid. 231, 245 and 260). However, with its seasonal cycles, nature is indeed capable of decontaminating itself, in a regenerative way, from the heinous oil slicks violating the purity of the Eridanus Inlet (ibid. 236 and 281).

Lowry's "vision of paradise or moment of achieved balance" is experienced by "renouncing the world altogether" to attain spiritual integrity and unity by harmonizing his inner and outer worlds (Grace (1982) 115 and Lowry (1991) 233). Dwelling "at the edge of eternity" in Dollarton, British Columbia, the humble, mutually trusting, yet hard-working community of Eridanus symbolizes a Taoist equilibrium in which love for one another is supreme, as witnessed by Lowry, who lived there happily after his own honeymoon (ibid. 279). Eridanus is a mythological synonym for the River Po, alongside which Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is said to have commenced composing his *Paradiso* (Lowry (1965) 245).[11] By using *nagual*—"a person's animal-spirit companion" used "as a means of communicating with ancestors and deities" (Joyce (2010) 79 and 245)[12]—to depict Sigbjørn's psychogeographic entry into "the soul of a past self" to confront its wild forces in the form of the animistic cougar, or puma in *The Forest Path,* Lowry connects shamanically with the tyranny of his own childhood ordeals in Wallasey, Liverpool (Lowry (1991) 246 and 226).[13] The reflective experiences endured during his daily sojourns—both physical and spiritual—to and from the spring enable Sigbjørn to transcend his terrifying anxieties, derived from past experiences, to discover his real self through "a continual awakening", to be "baptised afresh" (ibid. 235 and 273).

"Known both as the River of Death and the River of Life", Eridanus is both a bay and a southern celestial constellation (ibid. 226-27). Relating the terrestrial to the cosmic, the natural to the supernatural universe of myths and legends, it connects us to the Chinese amoral concept of the Tao, or Dao, signifying 'The Way', or 'The Path'. Encapsulated in the fundamental intertext of *Tao Te Ching*, which, as Barry Wood first discovered, Lowry paraphrases and then cites, its principles are attributed to the 6th-

[11] See Ackerley and Clipper 414.

[12] See also 236.

[13] See also McCarthy (1994) 206.

century-B.C. Chinese philosopher Laozi, and shared with Confucianism, Chán, and Zen Buddhism (Wood (1976) 55. See also Chen and Xie 357-58). Being "immanent, not transcendental", the Tao "designates the inherent laws governing the changes and movements of all cosmic substances and natural objects" (ibid. 359). It plays a focal role as a recurring theme in *The Forest Path*, where its wave-like, monistic omnipresence, with its philosophical and cosmological dimensions, is portrayed by Lowry as pre-dating the birth of heaven (*yang*) and of earth (*yin*) in the following way:

> [A]t such a time of stillness, at the brief period of high tide before the ebb, it was like what I have learned the Chinese call the Tao, that, they say, came into existence before Heaven and Earth, something so still, so changeless, and yet reaching everywhere, and in no danger of being exhausted: like 'that which is so still and yet passes on in constant flow, and in passing on, becomes remote, and having become remote, returns'. (Lowry (1991) 236)

Indeed, in applying "the law of relative stillness and absolute movement operating in nature" to the human sphere, Chen and Xie have even gone as far as, persuasively, contending that "Lowry reshapes his whole vision of the human world and Nature in accordance with Taoism, and stresses harmony, balance, and peace. The Taoist or Edenic Eridanus thus epitomizes his ideal world of existence" (371 and 357).

It is his faith in the wisdom of a Taoist, ubiquitous and "timeless heaven" which invigorates Lowry in his pursuit of metaphysical truths, giving him a deeper insight into humanity and the processes at work in his mystical universe, extending from the "eternal flux and flow" of his ever-changing opera "on the very windrow of existence" (Lowry in McCarthy (1996) 216 and Lowry (1991) 236, 226-27 and 244). In its emphasis upon a harmonious interaction with our natural environment, the Tao promotes the appreciation of an integral, primal innocence missing from modern civilization. It recognizes "the feeling of something that man had lost, of which these shacks and cabins, brave against the elements, but at the mercy of the destroyer, were the helpless yet stalwart symbol, of man's hunger and need for beauty, for the stars and the sunrise" sought in *Under the Volcano* (ibid. 234). The resultant amicable interface with nature is based upon a balance in the universe, transforming *yin* (the Moon and

rain) into its opposite, *yang* (the sun and the earth), and vice-versa. In *The Forest Path* it is reflected in the centrifugal motion of a raindrop kissing the sea:

> Each drop falling into the sea is like a life, I thought, each producing a circle in the ocean, or the medium of life itself, and widening into infinity […]. Each is interlocked with other circles falling about it […]. […] [T]he whole dark water was covered with bright expanding phosphorescent circles. […] As the rain fell into the phosphorescent water each raindrop expanded into a ripple that was translated into light. And the rain itself was water from the sea, as my wife first taught me, raised to heaven by the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. While within the inlet itself the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao, returned again as we ourselves had done. (Ibid. 285-86)

Conclusion

In recognition of a need to repent for the debts of the past and for the sins of an alienating mankind, Malcolm Lowry makes synergies between the cosmic, shamanic, and animist concepts of the universe, reflected in the celestial visions of the Zapotec and Aztec civilizations. He discovers that "the spiritual centre in man is the integrating perceiver of the world", though, in the light of the Copernican Revolution, he recognizes that we are circumscribed by an extensive, elliptical cosmos which does *not* orbit the Earth (Wood (1976) 55). It is in pursuit of his multicultural, psychogeographic search for a Taoist universal harmony "in his effort to redress the reigning imbalances, natural and social" (Chen and Xie 377) that Lowry establishes crucial, cosmopolitan connections in his various, though coherent, world-views. When combined, his wide-ranging outlooks on civilization are united in a recognition of the true significance of the Pleiades star cluster, of Eridanus, as an unpretentious, yet powerful, intergalactic, ecospheric symbol of a rejuvenated civilization, and, last but not least, of the equilibrial, philosophical concepts of Taoism.

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