

**JAPAN'S "LAST MAN": OVERCOMING A "CRISIS OF IDEAS"**

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## ABSTRACT

Due to Mori Ôgai's importance not only as a writer, but as one of Japan's leading medical researchers and cultural critics, his works have always been under the scrutiny of scholars. This is especially true with respect to the fiction composed during a short segment of his career—from 1909 to 1912—which Richard Bowring has labelled Mori Ôgai's "literature of ideas." Ôgai's "literature of ideas" depicts an enormous and heterogeneous array of ideas from a variety of humanistic and scientific disciplines, and is expressed in a variety of genres and literary styles. They represent Mori Ôgai's keen interest in a variety of Western literary and philosophical discourses, such as Naturalism, the *Bildungsroman*, and the cultural criticism of such thinkers as Nietzsche and Ibsen. Although the importance of Mori Ôgai's reception of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas has been discussed to a limited degree in several studies, I intend to demonstrate that Nietzsche's ideas actually constitute a significant influence on the manner in which Ôgai fine-tuned the structure, style, and content of his "literature of ideas." I believe that Ôgai's "literature of ideas" is a definitive response to its author's disapproval of the outright "imitation" of Western ideas, which he perceived dominated Japan's modernization process. In addition, he was very wary of the consequences of imitating a discourse which he believed was characterized by a paradoxical union of optimistic and nihilistic ideologies. Although Mori Ôgai expressed envy at the progress-oriented nature of Western ideas and the philosophies of inspiring and forward-looking thinkers such as Plato and Goethe, he was also deeply disturbed by the gradual manifestation of pessimistic thought subsequent to the Renaissance—a phenomenon which he feared could be replicated in Japan. I will argue that Nietzsche's notion of continuous self-development as depicted in *Zarathustra* is at the core of Ôgai's "literature of ideas," the primary purpose of which is to depict Ôgai's anxiety about Japan's modernization, and to posit a perspective which might help the Japanese intelligentsia to "overcome" the many obstacles which Ôgai perceived as inherent components in this process.

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## PREFACE

Although this is primarily an essay about Mori Ôgai, a Japanese fiction writer, it contains a significant discussion of German literature and philosophy, particularly that of Friedrich Nietzsche. As I would like this essay to be equally accessible to readers interested in both Japanese and German culture, I have decided to refer to all of the texts discussed in this essay by the English translations of their titles. With the exception of several short passages and phrases which I translated, all of the English translations of Mori Ôgai's texts in this essay can be found in *Youth and Other Stories*, edited by J. Thomas Rimer, the most recent and widely available collection of Mori Ôgai's fiction available in English.

Passages from *Zarathustra* are referenced by the "book" and page from which they are quoted, eg., 1:4. The passage from the *Gay Science* at the head of this essay is referenced by the aphorism and page from which it is quoted.

**Die Explosiven.** -- Erwägt man, wie explosionsbedürftig die Kraft junger Männer daliegt, so wundert man sich nicht, sie so unfein und so wenig wählerisch sich für diese oder jene Sache entscheiden zu sehen: Das, was sie reizt, ist der Anblick des Eifers, der um eine Sache ist, und gleichsam der Anblick der brennenden Lunte, -- nicht die Sache selber. Die feineren Verführer verstehen sich desshalb darauf, ihnen die Explosion in Aussicht zu stellen und von der Begründung ihrer Sache abzusehen: mit Gründen gewinnt man diese Pulverfässer nicht! (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 38:80)

**The Explosive Ones.** -- When one considers the explosiveness of the power which lies within young men, one barely gives it any thought when they see how indelicately and with so little discrimination they align themselves with this or that cause. That which entices them is the sight of the zeal that surrounds a cause, just like the sight of a burning fuse--not the cause itself. The cunning tempters therefore understand how to guarantee an explosion while failing to provide the rationale for their cause: one does not win these powder kegs over with reason! (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 38)

## A "Crisis of Ideas"

自分は失望を以て故郷の人に迎えられた。それは無理も無い。自分のやうな洋行歸りはこれまで例の無い事であつたからである。これまでの洋行歸りは、希望に輝く<sup>かがや</sup>顔をして、行李の中から道具を出して、何か新しい手品を取り立てて御覧に入れることになつてゐた。自分は丁度その反対の事をしたのである。(Ôgai, "Mósó" 130)

I was received with great disappointment by my friends in Japan; and not without reason, because to return with my attitudes was unprecedented. Those before me had pulled their wares from their trunk and shown off some new trick or other, their faces bright with anticipation. I, on the other hand, did exactly the opposite. (Ôgai, "Delusions" 175)

Written from the perspective of a worn-out and tired intellectual in his declining years, Mori Ôgai's autobiographical essay entitled "Delusions" (*Mósó* 妄想, 1911), is a bittersweet collection of afterthoughts. It is written by a man whose youthful encounter with the "West" inspired the seeds of both skepticism and a sense of profound personal detachment from the world—a perspective which only ripened with age.<sup>1</sup> There are two conflicts depicted in this passage. The first is represented by the consternation felt by Ôgai's colleagues upon learning that the returning

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<sup>1</sup> Although Mori Ôgai does not identify himself as the narrator of "Delusions," this essay rides the finest possible line between fiction and pure autobiography. As pointed out by Donald Keene, the only "conspicuous departure from truth [in "Delusions"] consisted in Ôgai's characterization of the central figure as a 'white-haired' old man, though the author was not yet fifty when he wrote 'Delusions'" (361). Although generally known to English readers as "Delusions," Thomas Rimer chose to publish his recent translation of "*Mósó*" under the title "Daydreams," reflecting a very mild interpretation of the word *mósó* 妄想. This text will be referred to as "Delusions" in this essay.

scholar was not a keen advocate of the popular shotgun approach to Westernization prevalent during the Meiji period (1868-1912)—a predicament which made the narrator feel quite alienated and detached from Japan's intelligentsia. The second conflict is present in Ôgai's depiction of the Western ideas themselves, from which he was never able to either disengage himself or come to terms with. Although Ôgai recognized the potential for progress and lofty achievements which he perceived as inherent components of Western discourse, he also identified a great "flaw" in the evolution of Western philosophy, which has led to the ubiquity of nihilistic and pessimistic tendencies in Western ideas. Despite the optimism displayed by many intellectuals and proponents of modernization, many of whom embraced the popular—and rather fanatical—Meiji slogan "Japanese spirit, Western learning" (*wakon yôsai* 和魂洋才), Mori Ôgai did not see any aspect of the "Japanese spirit" which made it inherently invulnerable to the great "flaw" he perceived in Western philosophical thought.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the texts I will discuss in this essay, Mori Ôgai depicts the manifestations of "modernity" in much the same way as in the above quoted passage: grey, lustreless, and worse yet—tasteless—imitations of their Western counterparts which are doomed to inefficiency at best, and complete failure at the worst.

This "flaw" in Western discourse is perhaps best represented by Ôgai in the opening lines to "Delusions" as a great gap—an enormous and mysterious depth—symbolized rather appropriately by the Pacific Ocean:

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<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by Kenneth Henshall, the "xenophobic catch phrase '*sonnô jôî*' [尊王攘夷] ('Revere the Emperor, expel the barbarians!') was soon to be replaced by more pragmatic and constructive slogans such as '*wakon yôsai*' ('Japanese spirit, western learning') [...]." (71). This quote captures the quick change in policy on the part of the Meiji government after realizing that isolationism cannot work when confronted with market economies and big guns. The former slogan, *sonnô jôî* proved to be an ineffective method for dealing with large market driven economies with superior military technologies.

目前には廣々と海が横はつてゐる。

その海から打ち上げられた砂が、小山のやうに盛り上がつて、自然の堤防を形づくつてゐる。アイルランドとスコットランドとから起つて、ヨオロッパ一般に行はれるやうになつた <sup>ドユウン</sup> d ūn <sup>ことば</sup> といふ語は、かういふ處を <sup>き</sup> 斥して言ふのである。

その砂山の上に、ひよろひよろした赤松が <sup>むら</sup> 簇がつて生えてゐる。餘り年を経た松ではない。(124)

Before him lies the open sea. The sand cast up by the waves has formed small hillocks, creating a natural defensive barrier. It is this kind of formation that is meant by the word "dune," a word that originated with the Irish and Scots but which is now commonly used throughout Europe. Thin red pines grow in clusters on these dunes. They are still fairly young.

The white-haired old man gazes out to sea from a room in his small house, which has been built surrounded by the pines in a small clearing cut for the purpose. (168)

The use of the ocean as a symbol of an unpredictable and monstrous void is frequently employed by Western thinkers, particularly Schopenhauer, whose ideas are depicted by Ōgai as prime examples of pessimism and nihilism in his fiction. Between the author and this monstrous void lies only the walls of his cabin and the young "thin red pines" growing on the dunes. The word which denotes "dune" is written in Roman phonetic script and annotated with *katakana*, which indicates the Japanese pronunciation of this word.<sup>3</sup> Although the Japanese language has its own word for "dune" (*sunā* 砂), Ōgai has clearly chosen to employ a word of foreign origin. There are many possible reasons for this choice. Perhaps Ōgai desired to conjure the imagery of a rugged coastline such as those found in Northern Europe. However, it is also possible that the sand dunes provide a suitable metaphor for the evanescence of Japan's "modernization." As I will demonstrate in this essay, Mori Ōgai was deeply concerned that the conditions which set the stage for a social climate of nihilism and malaise in Europe would be replicated in Japan if the process of modernization were

to continue to emphasize the outright imitation of Western ideas. The danger that such a negativity might surface in Japan is ubiquitously depicted throughout the texts I will discuss in this essay. It is a danger which could manifest itself as soon as the veneer of Japan's achievements erodes, in the manner in which dunes erode on a beach, leaving the "thin red pines" exposed and unprotected.

I believe that the young "red pines" growing on the dunes represent the young Japanese intellectuals that Mori Ôgai perceived to be Japan's most promising hope for survival in what is clearly depicted to be a "crisis of ideas" throughout Ôgai's fiction written during the period in which "Delusions" was published. The clusters in which they grow represent the highly factional and cliquish intelligentsia of the late Meiji period. This crisis, like the arguments presented in "Delusions" are framed within the context of Japan's "encounter" with a distinctly foreign, "Western" discourse. The purpose of this essay is to explicate Ôgai's depiction of Western ideas and the manner in which these ideas are applied in the process of Japan's modernization as represented in selected fiction composed between 1909 and 1912, which Richard Bowring has aptly labelled Mori Ôgai's "literature of ideas."<sup>4</sup> At the core of my argument will be Mori Ôgai's reception of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas, which I believe functions as a *leitmotif* throughout Ôgai's "literature of ideas." Although Nietzsche is only mentioned by name sporadically throughout these works, Nietzsche's model of continuous personal growth through "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) and critical thinking, particularly as depicted in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1885), can be identified throughout Ôgai's "literature of ideas." The presence of Nietzsche's ideas serves the important function of assisting Mori Ôgai and his protagonists in coming to terms with this "flaw" in Western

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<sup>3</sup> *Katakana* is the Japanese syllabary reserved primarily to transcribe words of foreign, non-Chinese, origin. This custom of indicating the correct pronunciation of a word in small type next to the original text is called *furigana* 振り仮名. In general, *furigana* is provided in *hiragana* 平仮名, the syllabary used to denote words of Sino-Japanese origin. However, in the event that *furigana* is provided for words of foreign etymology, *katakana* 片仮名 is usually used. Mori Ôgai's unorthodox orthographic representation of "dune" is not unique, but in fact employed quite frequently throughout the literature of this period in much the same manner as in "Delusions."

epistemology and the cultural "gap," which he clearly believes is standing directly in the path of Japan's progress towards achieving the status of a universally respected global power. However, at no time is it suggested that this high level of understanding can be achieved through the imitation or the endorsement of a specific ideology. In every text that I will discuss, the only ideas which are clearly presented as a prescription for success are those which encourage intellectual and personal development as a way of life and skepticism towards imitation, extreme forms of individualism, and what Ôgai perceives to be the "morals of the common herd."

### A Literature of "Detached Amusement"

昔世にもてはやされてゐた人、今世にもてはやされてゐる人は、どんな事を言つてゐるか、  
譬へば道を行く人の顔を辻に立つて冷澹に見るやうに見たのである。

冷澹には見てゐたが、自分は辻に立つてゐて、度々帽を脱いだ。昔の人にも今の人にも、敬意を表すべき人が大勢あつたのである。

帽は脱いだが、辻を離れてどの人かの跡に附いて行かうとは思はなかつた。多くの師には逢つたが、一人の主には逢はなかつたのである。(Ôgai, "Môsô" 133)

As I considered the words of famous men in the past and in the present, I felt like a man standing at the crossroads who looks coolly at the faces of passersby. My gaze was

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<sup>4</sup> "Literature of Ideas" is a part of the title of two chapters on Mori Ôgai's fiction written between 1909-1912 (although not exclusively) in Bowring's book *Mori Ôgai and the Modernization of Japanese Culture*. This book is the most complete source of scholarship on Mori Ôgai available in English. Although it is extraordinarily comprehensive and emphasizes the importance of Mori Ôgai's fiction and translations in the development of the history of ideas in Japan, it gives little credit to the artistic and aesthetic merits of Ôgai's "literature of ideas."

detached, but I did stand there and occasionally raise my hat to them. There were many, both past and present, who were worthy of respect. I raised my hat, but I was never tempted to leave the crossroads and follow in their footsteps. Many teachers I have met, but not a single master. (Ôgai, "Delusions" 178)

In this passage from "Delusions," Mori Ôgai depicts himself as a man who never found his "niche," in either a contemporary milieu or a historical discourse. The use of the word "crossroads" (*tsuji* 辻) is a metaphor which depicts the isolation that Ôgai experienced as an intellectual throughout his life. It emphasizes not only his encounter with a vast and heterogeneous array of ideas, but his hesitation to step into any current of contemporary thought—either mainstream or radical. The manner in which he describes himself, floating amidst a sea of passing faces within the "crossroads," is strongly evocative of a man standing in the middle of a busy and modern intersection during rush hour—confused about how to reach a safe haven. However, despite the fact that this passage may evoke some distinctly modern imagery, it should be pointed out that *tsuji* is not a specifically modern term. As reflected in the English translation, *tsuji* literally denotes "crossroads" or "roadside" in a traditional context, and does not explicitly refer to the modern, urban, "intersection"—an image which was particularly new and futuristic in 1911. Clearly, the juxtaposition of modern imagery with an antiquated word is intended to depict this period in history as an important turning point in the evolution of Japanese culture.

These semantic considerations indicate that the use of the word *tsuji*, as opposed to another word specifically coined to refer to a modern "intersection," shows that Mori Ôgai is also concerned with a particularly modern phenomenon; one that was instigated by an encounter with something distinctly foreign. It is apparent that there are a variety of aspects inherent in the culture of early twentieth-century Japan and the nation's encounter with foreign modes of thought which Mori Ôgai found quite discomfiting and distasteful. This discomfort is so extreme that Ôgai felt compelled to remain within the confines of his role as an active "bystander," suspended at the "crossroads," his entire life. The primary definition of *tsuji*, which is rendered into English as

"crossroads," captures the intersection of distinct epistemological systems depicted in "Delusions," while the secondary definition, "roadside," emphasizes the alienation felt by the author as an intellectual. However, when considered in tandem, both meanings of the word "*tsuji*" function as an effective metaphor to elucidate Mori Ôgai's self-representation as a uniquely sensitive and perceptive intellectual, whose keen sense of judgement and discrimination may result in a feeling of "detached engagement," but lend his opinions an air of credibility as well.

Donald Keene points out that Mori Ôgai uses the word *asobi* 遊び to express his feelings of "detached amusement" (364). *Asobi* is derived from the verb *asobi* 遊ぶ, which although normally translated into English simply as "to play," has a wide variety of other connotations as well. *Asobi* can also be translated as "a game," "a playground," "playtime," or even a ritualistic dance. All of these meanings are strongly evocative of active involvement on both a cerebral and physical level. In addition, they imply a defined discursive space in which these activities transpire. As I hope to illustrate, *asobi* is an important motif, which appears frequently in Mori Ôgai's "literature of ideas." It helps to underscore the aspect of Mori Ôgai's fiction which clearly delineates a process of learning and personal growth through the interplay of ideas.

After nearly two decades of publishing virtually no original fiction of his own, Mori Ôgai quickly regained his reputation as a creative writer in 1909 with the publication of "Half a Day" (*Hannichi* 半日, 1909). Ôgai made a decisive departure from the romantic, fairy-tale narrative style which earned him his repute during his student years with such stories as "The Dancing Girl" (*Maihime* 舞姫, 1890) and "An Ephemeral Tale" (*Utakata no ki* うたかたの記, 1890), to one which can only be described as an enormous laboratory of ideas, in which a sense of hesitancy and the detached-engagement of a "man standing in the crossroads" can be keenly felt throughout every narrative. This "literature of ideas" coincided with the manifestation of a distinctly nationalistic climate and a crucial historical moment in the modernization of Japanese society.<sup>5</sup> 1909 was only four years after Japan's first victory over a European power in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), which only served to exacerbate the hubris which permeated the spirit of Japanese nationalism after its local victories during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The end of this period of Ôgai's

literary career coincides precisely with the end of the Meiji Era in 1912, which to many, symbolized the end of "traditional" Japan.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the beginning of the Taishô Era (1912-1926) was only two years before the beginning of the First World War, in which Japan continued to score victories in its persistent attempts at establishing a sphere of military and economic influence throughout China and East Asia, and helped the allies to flush the Germans out of their colonies throughout Asia and Africa.<sup>7</sup> Japan was in a state of flux, somewhere in a "crossroads" too.

The tension present in Ôgai's works reflects the central importance of a concern shared by both Japan's intelligentsia and politicians: that the people of Japan be able to share a common, lucid, and universal method of written communication, without which respect in the international community would not be possible. For decades, intellectuals and government bureaucrats toyed with how to implement a policy known as *genbunitchi* 原文一致—the "unification" of written and spoken Japanese—as originally conceived by Meiji intellectuals in the 1870s.<sup>8</sup> During this sensitive period, what started off as nationalism gradually began to take the shape of modern fascism, and the framework of Japan's fragile democracy—which was never more than a "procedural democracy" at best—increasingly exhibited major functional flaws. Not unlike the Prussian-controlled German

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<sup>5</sup> Scholars are not in agreement as to how Ôgai's works should be categorized. In fact, the prefaces to many anthologies of Ôgai's works translated into English often provide contradictory information regarding which works should properly be described as novels, autobiographical fiction, and narratives of self-development (see Rimer and Dilworth, vii-viii, for a brief description of this ongoing debate).

<sup>6</sup> In his discussion of "The Ashes of Destruction" (*Kaijin* 灰燼, 1911-1912), Thomas Rimer suggests that the death of the Emperor Meiji and General Nogi "shook the author's own patterns of thinking," so much so, that "it sent him veering off in another literary direction" and may have contributed to Ôgai's decision to leave this work (Rimer, *Youth* 313).

<sup>7</sup> Japan had a tenuous alliance with Great Britain during the First World War, in which Britain helped it to acquire German territories.

empire, whose democratic institutions and constitution served as the foundations on which the early Meiji government was constructed, Japan became an expansionist state, and carefully defined what constituted a "threat" in order to deny the presence of conflict within its sphere of influence, as is typical of Fascistic governments.<sup>9</sup> As discussed by Nanette Twine, what was originally known as *genbunitchi* gradually came to be referred to as *kokugo* 國語 ("national language"), a movement which closely corresponded to a similar move towards language reform in Germany known as *Gemeinsprache* (a "common language"), in which "language" became an issue of "national identity and unity" and "a factor contributing much to the sense of authenticity necessary to social cohesion in a developing power" (218). Due in part to a continued lack of consensus as to what form the Japanese language should ultimately manifest itself during this period of flux, the state of the Japanese language left many thinkers, including Ôgai, with an enormous linguistic quandary.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "It is clear that Japan was and had been for some time a nation-state [to the Meiji oligarchs], a socially cohesive and politically autonomous territory, faced now with the urgent necessity for modernization to secure and fortify its position in the modern world into which it had been propelled" (Twine 9). See Twine, Chapter Five, for a discussion of the contributions of major writers in the Meiji period to *genbunitchi*, including Mori Ôgai (149-151).

<sup>9</sup> In "The Prussia of the East?" Perry Anderson explores the extent to which Japan and Germany serve as suitable examples of parallel development. Despite differences in the development of Germany and Japan after the First World War, Anderson depicts Japan as a zealous younger brother in a competitive sibling relationship, citing evidence that Japan was even considered by some to be an appropriate model for Western nations in the late nineteenth century (11). In addition, he indicates that the authoritarian model of the Prussian constitution contributed greatly to the rise of Japan's belligerence prior to the First World War and the disenchantment and rise of fascism which followed it: "The Meiji oligarchs, indeed, used the Second Reich as their model when they framed an authoritarian constitution and legal code for Japan. [...] The two states fought on opposite sides in the First World War, but each emerged as a dissatisfied power from it [...]" (11-12).

Clearly, despite Japan's "victories" around the turn of the century, Mori Ôgai did not consider the last days of the Meiji Era a time to celebrate, as indicated by the narrator's ambiguous sense of detachment from the modernization process depicted in "Delusions."

Although Mori Ôgai did not issue a formal declaration of his stance on the question of language reform, his "literature of ideas" was composed in a colloquial, Naturalistic style—a clear departure from his earlier pieces which were written in *gabun* 雅文, or "elegant language," a literary style containing many elements of classical Japanese. Yet despite this shift in language, Mori Ôgai's fiction was quite different from that of the Japanese Naturalists and authors of the "I novel" (*watakushi shôsetsu* 私小説)—novels of "self-discovery"—which in Ôgai's opinion, was self-indulgent and focused excessively on sexuality and personal topics. Ôgai was keenly interested in the literary form known as the "*Bildungsroman*" (novel of "self-development"), especially as conceived of by the German writer Goethe, whom Ôgai deeply admired. This genre offered Ôgai the opportunity to explore the development of a young man in relationship to an outer world of ideas rather than his discovery of an inner world of the self, as emphasized by the "I-novel."<sup>11</sup> Ôgai's approach to the composition of the *Bildungsroman* is consistent with his powerful sense of commitment to the notion that literature serves a distinctly unselfish social purpose. Although Natsume Sôseki also felt a similar sense of urgency regarding the course of Japan's modernization in the years following the Russo-Japanese War, Sôseki was of the opinion that the "Japanese people could begin to worry less about the fate of the nation and live more for themselves as individuals; and [that] the ethic of self-sacrifice had begun to ring hollow" (Rubin 245).<sup>12</sup> As I hope to demonstrate by closely examining selected dialogues in Ôgai's narratives, an individualistic

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<sup>10</sup> Twine notes that Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese war added a new twist to the *genbunitchi* movement, as the use of Japanese overseas increased the government's concern with script reform and support of a colloquial written language (154).

<sup>11</sup> As pointed out by Rimer, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* served as one of the primary influences on Mori Ôgai's *Youth* (*Youth* 373).

world-view, such as that advocated by Sôseki, was exactly what Mori Ôgai did not want to see evolve in Japan, as it represents yet another hasty and ill-considered imitation and application of a Western idea—albeit a well-intentioned one.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of “individualism” is broached with suspicion and great trepidation in Mori Ôgai's fiction. Ôgai was well aware of the frenzy and disorder which the unsystematic and freewheeling application of philosophies that advocate “individualism” and “free will” had caused throughout Europe and the Americas. As I will demonstrate in this essay, Ôgai never displayed anything but disappointment and disdain with writers such as Sôseki, whom he saw as the possible (although unintentional) catalysts of a copycat reaction in Japan. Richard Bowring aptly characterizes this relentlessly detached, yet committed and ascetic aspect of Ôgai's life and work as “a sense of mission,” a major component of which included carefully safeguarding himself from falling into the same trap as those who gleefully pull “wares from their trunk[s]” or show-off “some new trick,” as depicted in “Delusions.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This passage is quoted from Jay Rubin's preface to his translation of two of Natsume Sôseki's lectures entitled “Sôseki as Lecturer: Autonomy and Coercion.” The essay he is referring to is entitled “The Civilization of Modern-day Japan” (*Gendai nihon no kaika* 現代日本の開化, 1911).

<sup>13</sup> My interpretation of much of Ôgai's fiction discussed in this essay is based on my opinion that these narratives were written as a response to the highly popular writings and speeches of Natsume Sôseki. For a brief, yet elucidating discussion of Ôgai's relationship to his “rival,” Natsume Sôseki, see Rimer's introduction to *Youth* (*Youth* 373-380).

<sup>14</sup> This epithet is also the title of a chapter in Bowring's *Mori Ôgai and the Modernization of Japanese Culture*.

## Nietzsche's "New Man"

Throughout this essay, I will point out many instances in which Mori Ôgai and his protagonists express great dissatisfaction with what they perceive to be a scarcity of words to represent the notion of "progress" in Japanese epistemology and the Japanese language. By "progress," I am not referring simply to a "competitive edge" or the desire of a nation or individual to better itself—qualities which are indeed an integral part of Japan's powerful drive towards attaining respect as a global economic and military power—but rather a more instinctual desire to "strive" towards a higher and transcendent state, in a way expressed by Goethe's *Faust*, a work which profoundly influenced Mori Ôgai. Although Faust, the protagonist of Goethe's two-volume classic, caused a sizeable amount of harm during his misadventures, his entire *raison d'être* was based upon his desire to engage in a lifelong process of "striving" (*Streben*), which, unlike any other goal that a human being could possess, represents a process of continual growth with no terminus. Goethe's work inspired Mori Ôgai to contemplate the monolithic task of translating both volumes of this drama into Japanese for over two decades. He eventually completed this task in 1913, only one year after the end of the Meiji Era.<sup>15</sup>

Faust's commitment to "striving" is the centrepiece of the protagonist's famous pact with Mephistopheles ("the Devil"), in which Faust is promised a second chance at youth and the magical power of a demon companion at his constant disposal with the only stipulation that if he should ever "tarry" (*verweilen*) in the moment—or cease to "strive" (*streben*)—he would surrender his soul:

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<sup>15</sup> Bowring explains that Ôgai began thinking about translating *Faust* as early as 1885. As documented in a diary entry from that year, Ôgai and a friend visited Auerbachskeller in Leipzig, an actual tavern mentioned in *Faust*, and discussed the possibility of translating the work into Classical Chinese (184). Ôgai's final version, which appeared over twenty years later, was published in a lucid modern idiom. The first part of *Faust* was performed in Tokyo in 1913.

Und Schlag auf Schlag!

Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:

Verweile doch! du bist so schön!

Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen [...]. (581)

And beat for beat!

If the swift moment I entreat:

Tarry a while! you are so fair!

Then forge the shackles to my feet [...]. (41)

Ultimately, despite a lifetime of callous deeds, as well as notable achievements, Faust escapes the flames of hell, as he never ceased to “strive.” Although Goethe depicts a “hero” of questionable morality, Faust is spared the sting of Mori Ôgai’s condemnation. I believe that it is the hunger for experience, personal growth, and achievement that lies at the core of Faust’s actions, which spares Faust not only from hell, but from Ôgai’s condemnation, which can be quite caustic. At no point is Faust ever motivated by a blind or selfish desire to be individualistic for the sake of being individualistic—a desire which Ôgai perceived to be an inherent component of contemporary advocates of “individualism,” such as Natsume Sôseki. Faust’s actions are always guided and structured by a clear commitment to the process of “striving” for its own sake.<sup>16</sup>

Although Ôgai makes it quite clear that Western discourse is filled with undesirable and negative qualities, his texts depict a distinct sense of envy at the loosely defined, yet distinctly optimistic, inspirational, and growth-oriented characteristics that he feels are lacking in his own culture. Mori Ôgai clearly expresses a powerful desire to see these lofty traits incorporated into Japanese thought so that Japan’s political, scientific, and artistic communities would have a better chance for success in a world dominated by Western ideas. Although there are many models of

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<sup>16</sup> Although this is the generally accepted interpretation of *Faust*, it should be noted that there are literally hundreds of articles and books which offer numerous alternatives.

ambitious and striving heroes from other works which are explored in Ôgai's texts, I intend to argue that it is the model of self-development as expressed in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche—particularly *Also Sprach Zarathustra*—which provides the most effective and easily transferable models for Mori Ôgai and his protagonists. Nietzsche's writings were written either directly or indirectly as a response to many of the same issues which were just as important in Mori Ôgai's Japan as they were in Germany; the frenzied spread of anarchism, communism, Naturalism, and the rise of the modern nation state were important concerns to both thinkers. Even though Nietzsche's ideas were misinterpreted and caused quite a stir in Japan—a fact which greatly irritated Mori Ôgai—Ôgai cleverly managed to weave Nietzsche's ideas into his works. Nietzsche's ideas offered Ôgai a foundation on which to develop a customized model of personal growth. It combines the progress-oriented and forward-propelling qualities Ôgai identified in Nietzsche's ideas, with Ôgai's usual emphasis on the importance of developing a keen sense of judgement and maintaining a healthy level of skepticism.

Throughout Ôgai's texts, his characters repeatedly mention or allude to the concept of the “new man,” or as it is also referred to, the “modern man.” Often this concept is introduced into a text specifically with reference to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. It is frequently depicted as representing both an exotic and desirable state of being, as well as one which clearly represents Ôgai's ambivalent attitude towards ideas which express an extreme form of individualism. This is indicated in the following passage from “Play” (*Asobi あそび*, 1910): “His manner had become much milder, but there was still some measure of spite in his smile. Despite this stubborn, malicious streak, he was still not the modern man of ‘Nietzsche-ism.’”<sup>17</sup> 併しこんな、けちな悪意では、ニイチエ主義の現代人にもなれまい” (276). As Nietzsche does not frequently employ the term “modern man,” the texts are likely referring to Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch* as described primarily in the German philosopher's only work of fiction, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which Ôgai refers to and paraphrases throughout the texts I will discuss in this essay.<sup>18</sup> I believe that Ôgai was profoundly influenced by the model of intellectual and personal development represented by this concept. Despite the enormous controversy which has surrounded the notion of the *Übermensch* over the

past century, this concept represents a process in which a high level of intellectual maturity is reached by gradually rising above pedestrian modes of thought, to one where ideas and concepts can be understood and applied in a constructive and creative manner without the burdens of convention and outmoded traditions. The concept of the *Übermensch* is loaded with a sense of freedom and release from constraints, which for someone such as Mori Ôgai, who depicts himself as a man stuck at the "crossroads," must have been very inspiring:

Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwindern?

Alle Wesen bisher schufen Etwas über sich hinaus: und ihr wollt die Ebbe dieser grossen Fluth sein und lieber noch zum Thiere zurückgehn, als den Menschen überwinden?

Was ist der Affe für den Menschen? Ein Gelächter oder eine schmerzliche Scham. Und ebendas soll der Mensch für den Übermenschen sein [...]

[.....]

Einst wart ihr Affen, und auch jetzt noch ist der Mensch mehr Affe, als irgend ein Affe.

[.....]

Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, -- ein Seil über einem Abgrunde.

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<sup>17</sup> Mori Ôgai's depiction of the "new man" is based on a number of models from European literature and philosophy. Bowring devoted an entire sub-chapter to this subject entitled "The New Man," (pp. 135-153). In particular, he discusses the importance of ideas such as individualism and the significance of Naturalistic thinking in Japanese attitudes and culture in shaping Mori Ôgai's depiction of the "new man." The use of the word "Nietzsche-ism" (ニイチェ主義) in this passage indicates that the speaker has been influenced by the general reception of Nietzsche in Japan, which tended to emphasize and exaggerate Nietzsche's most radical and "individualistic" qualities.

Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches  
Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben. (1:8-10)

*"I teach you the overman [Übermensch]. Man is something that shall be overcome.*

What have you done to overcome him?

*"All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be  
the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is  
ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the  
overman [...] Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape. [...]*

*"Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss. A  
dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous  
shuddering and stopping. (1:124-126)*

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<sup>18</sup> It is also possible that Ôgai is making reference to the "great man" or the "noble man" depicted in *The Will to Power*, however I cannot find any evidence to support this in Ôgai's fiction. In addition to references to the *Übermensch* and *Zarathustra* in Ôgai's fiction, there is also the fact that Ôgai contributed a short story entitled "The Tower of Silence" (*Chinmoku no tô* 沈黙の塔, 1910) to serve as the preface to the Japanese translation of *Zarathustra* to consider. Ikuta Chôkô's translation of *Zarathustra* was the first translation of one of Nietzsche's works to appear in Japanese. "The Tower of Silence" appears just before Chôkô's translation and is captioned "In Lieu of a Preface for the Translation of Zarathustra" (*Yakuhon Tsaratusutora no jo ni kahu* 譯本ツアラトウストラの序に代ふ). Sano Haruo has gathered sufficient evidence to conclude that not only was Ôgai the contributor of the "preface," but was consulted regularly by Chôkô for assistance with the original German text, as Chôkô did not feel confident to tackle the German on his own. He also drew heavily upon the popular English translation by Thomas Common, which is notorious for being a highly imaginative and far from accurate rendering of Nietzsche's text (Kaufmann 108). The publication of this translation coincides with the middle of Ôgai's "literature of ideas," and is a strong indication of the importance of this text during this period of Ôgai's literary career.

As discussed in the introduction, Mori Ôgai perceived the ideas of many European philosophers, such as Schopenhauer and Hartmann, as being essentially pessimistic, stifling, and even worse--nihilistic. Nietzsche, however, offers his readers not only optimism, but a model for self-development based on the acquisition of a keen sense of judgement and the ability to distinguish and "overcome" personal and cultural limitations--a model that can be readily applied to an epistemology which does not necessarily have to be German, European, or even Judeo-Christian. Although I do not contend that Ôgai's protagonists in any way represent the *Übermensch*, I believe they possess many qualities of what Nietzsche termed the "last man," the precursor of the *Übermensch*, who remains suspended in the most crucial stage of self-development. As depicted in the following passage, this stage is a turning point, in which the "last man" may manifest himself as an overly confident animal who believes that he has reached a god-like level of development and no longer sees the need for personal growth:

Und sprach Zarathustra zum Volke:

Es ist an der Zeit, dass der Mensch sich sein Ziel stecke. Es ist an der Zeit, dass der Mensch den Keim seiner höchsten Hoffnung pflanze.

Noch ist sein Boden dazu reich genug. Aber dieser Boden wird einst arm und zahm sein, und kein hoher Baum wird mehr aus ihm wachsen können.

Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit, wo der Mensch nicht mehr den Pfeil seiner Sehnsucht über den Menschen hinaus wirft, und die Sehne seines Bogens verlernt hat, zu schwirren!

Ich sage euch: man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können. Ich sage euch: ihr habt noch Chaos in euch.

Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit, wo der Mensch keinen Stern mehr gebären wird. Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit des verächtlichsten Menschen, der sich selber nicht mehr verachten kann.

Seht! Ich zeige euch den letzten Menschen. (1:13)

And thus spoke Zarathustra to the people: "The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whirl!

"I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

"Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*. (1:129)

Alternatively, the "last man" may have enough good sense to recognize how "despicable" he has become, and prepare to undertake the process of "going under," the eventual result of which is the transformation into the *Übermensch*:

Was gross ist am Menschen, das ist, dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist: was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein Übergang und ein Untergang ist.

[.....]

Ich liebe den, welche lebt, damit er erkenne, und welcher erkennen will, damit einst der *Übermensch* lebe. Und so will er seinen Untergang.

[.....]

Seht, ich bin ein Verkündiger des Blitzes und ein schwerer Tropfen aus der Wolke: dieser Blitz aber heisst *Übermensch*.-- (1:11-12)

"What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a *going under*. [...]

"I love him who lives to know, and who wants to know so that the overman may live some day. And thus he wants to go under. [...]

"Behold, I am a herald of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud; but this lightning is called *overman*." (127-128)

As is clearly evident in the text, Nietzsche employs a variety of imagery from the natural world and music as metaphors to depict the transformation of the "last man" into an *Übermensch*. Of particular interest here is the use of the word "overture" to describe the "last man," who is ready to undergo the final stage of the transformation—the "going under" (*die Untergang*)—necessary to become an *Übermensch*. This particular imagery emphasizes not only the beginning of a new "movement" (to build upon Nietzsche's imagery from music), but implies there is still more growth and development yet to come. Clearly, this metaphor is intended to indicate a continual and indefinite process of self-development.<sup>19</sup> The image of lightening and heavy rain in the third strophe emphasizes the powerful impact which the *Übermensch* is likely to have upon his entrance into society. This descent from the heavens is particularly significant, especially when considering that the final transformation into the *Übermensch* involves "going under." One possible interpretation of this continual process of ascending and descending is that it is intended to emphasize that Nietzsche's process of self-development and transformation is characterized by an indefinite series of high and low points—or "overtures" and "finales." As depicted in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's concept

<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche had a keen interest in music. This interest is perhaps highlighted by his friendship with the German composer Richard Wagner, whom Nietzsche cited as one of the principle inspirations for his early ideas, and whom he later disavowed and used as his primary example of cultural decadence in his mature years. Music theory is an important component to Nietzsche's ideas, ranging from his interpretations of Dionysian and Apollonian music and dance, to the significance of contemporary classical forms. Nietzsche actually composed a fair amount of music, which is a significant testimonial to the importance of music in his career. It is currently available on compact disk.

of the *Übermensch* is not presented as a terminus in a process of intellectual and personal development. It is a rite of passage for an individual into a transcendent state of being in which an indefinite process of transformation and growth--of high and low points--is a way of life.

The process of indefinite development and transformation depicted in Nietzsche's writings, particularly in *Zarathustra*, is either directly or implicitly related to Nietzsche's theory of "Eternal Recurrence." This is a complex component of Nietzsche's ideas that the author developed gradually over the course of his career. Eternal Recurrence is based upon the legend of the Greek god of wine and dance, Dionysus, who is ritualistically torn to bits by his worshippers in an orgiastic frenzy of wine, song, and dance, after which he is reconstituted only to undergo the same process every year for all eternity. However, in comparison with the myth of Sisyphus, the Greek deity who was sentenced to an eternity of having to roll a boulder up a hill only to watch it return to the bottom and repeat the process perpetually, Dionysus' sufferings are not a punishment, but symbolic of the realities inherent in the process of living. For Nietzsche, this process is a metaphor for how the process of personal and intellectual development should be perceived, despite its rather awesome and lurid overtones. Even though the process of Eternal Recurrence implies that both the desirable and undesirable aspects of life will continually repeat themselves, it emphasizes that the process of growth, learning, and teaching, is an indefinite process as well. It is a frightening thought, even for Zarathustra:

--ich komme ewig wieder zu diesem gleichen und selbigen Leben, im Grössten  
und auch im Kleinsten, dass ich wieder aller Dinge ewige Wiederkunft lehre,--  
--dass ich wieder das Wort spreche vom grossen Erden-und Menschen-Mittage,  
dass ich wieder den Menschen den Übermenschen künde. (3:272)

I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest as in what is smallest,  
to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things, to speak again the work of the great  
noon of earth and man, to proclaim the overman again to men. (3:333)

This Dionysian aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy is depicted in the philosopher's texts in stark opposition to the Apollonian, which represents the moral, rational, and "civilized" side of human nature. As the Apollonian tends to deny the Dionysian tendencies inherent in human beings and rejects them as primitive and inappropriate, the Dionysian side of human nature tends to remain repressed and suffocated by the rational, Apollonian side.<sup>20</sup> Very much like Nietzsche's "rival," Freud, the bifurcation of the Dionysian and the Apollonian is responsible for a great gulf in human nature which manifests itself in an unhealthy imbalance. As I hope to demonstrate, despite the danger of misinterpretation—which Ôgai perceived to be an inherent component of Nietzsche's ideas—Nietzsche's theory of Eternal Recurrence represents a model for "change" in which nothing is actually ever "destroyed," but "reassembled" into a new matrix. As I will elaborate later in this essay, Mori Ôgai manipulates this theory rather effectively so it fits into many aspects of his world-view which are actually quite conservative.

In "Delusions," Mori Ôgai expresses delight in his discovery of an optimistic thinker in Western thought, which despite its heterogeneity, he had previously regarded as being characterized by an overabundance of pessimism. However, even with respect to Nietzsche, Ôgai displays his usual skepticism and trepidation:

生の意志を挫くじいて無むに入いらせようとする、シヨオベンハウエルのクキエチイフ Quietive  
に服従し兼ねてゐた自分の意識は、或時らんみん懶民の中からむら鞭うち起こされた。

それは N i e t z s c h e の超人哲学であつた。

過去の消極的な、利他的な道徳を家畜の群の道徳としたのは痛快である。同時に社  
會主義者の四海同胞觀を、あらゆる特權を排斥する、愚かな、とんまな群の道徳としたのも、

<sup>20</sup> The genesis of this aspect of Nietzsche's thoughts is clearly represented in his early work, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Although Nietzsche tended to minimize the significance of this work in later years (this being in part due to his renunciation of his friendship with Wagner), these ideas remained at the core of his philosophy throughout his career.

無政府主義者の跋扈を、歐羅巴の街に犬が吠えてゐると罵つたのも面白い。併し理性の約束を棄てて、權威に向ふ意志を文化の根本に置いて [...] (134)

I had not been able to accept Schopenhauer's *Quietive*, that sedative which tried to destroy the will to life and make people enter a state of nothingness; but now something whipped me out of my soporific state. Nietzsche's philosophy of the superman. This too, however, was intoxicating wine rather than nourishing food. With keen pleasure I saw his dismissal of the passive altruistic morals of the past as the morals of the common herd. I was also delighted to see him not only descry the socialist view of universal brotherhood as the morality of a stupid, foolish crowd who rejected all privilege, but also revile rampant anarchists as dogs barking in the streets of Europe. I could not, however, seriously accept his rejection of the conventions of the intellect, his argument that the will to power lay at the root of all culture [...] (179)

In this passage, the narrator of "Delusions" clearly delineates Ôgai's position regarding the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Ôgai's encounter with Nietzsche is depicted as a wish come true in his search for a truly optimistic alternative to the pessimistic thinking which he believed dominated Western thought when he returned from Europe in the 1880s. In addition, it seems as though Mori Ôgai has found a comrade in arms in his battle against what he perceives as "passive" and "altruistic morals," and ideologies designed for the "common herd," such as anarchism and communism. However, despite the active and progress-oriented qualities which Ôgai identifies in Nietzsche, Mori Ôgai stops short of endorsing his philosophies. The reasons for this distance from the German philosopher is clearly expressed by the narrator of "Delusions," who believes that Nietzsche advocates the "rejection [of] the conventions of the intellect" and the notion that the "will to power" lies "at the root of all culture."

The conflict between what initially seems to be an outright endorsement of Nietzsche's philosophies, but what eventually amounts to a rejection, is indicative—at least in part—of the

controversial and passionate nature of Nietzsche reception in Japan, rather than an outright objection by Mori Ôgai. The reception of Nietzsche's ideas in Japan was clouded by even more misinterpretation and fanaticism than in Europe. As none of Nietzsche's work's was translated into Japanese until 1911, the only access Japanese readers had to Nietzsche was through difficult to procure editions in English or German or through secondary literature and pamphlets. The "Aesthetic Life" debate, named after Japanese philosopher Takayama Chogyû's 1901 essay entitled "Debating the 'Aesthetic Lifestyle'" (*Biteki seikatsu o ronzu* 美的生活を論ず) sparked a massive controversy among a wide variety of figures from the ranks of Japan's most respected intellectuals, including Mori Ôgai. The language of the essay, which draws heavily upon "Nietzschean" ideas, was so provocative that it helped to spark what would eventually become a trend of government censorship of intellectuals who were perceived as espousing "dangerous" Western values of individualism and socialism:

Chogyû's 'aesthetic life' was early confused with Nietzsche's 'extreme individualism' and 'immoralism'. Accordingly, the debate was mainly fought over what these concepts denoted. The larger issue was whether individualism was compatible with social existence, and whether Nietzsche's ideas and the 'Nietzschean' writings of his Japanese admirers represented 'dangerous thought' that should be proscribed in Japanese society. Chogyû's individualism predicated on instinctual satisfaction is demonstrated to have evolved circuitously from his idealist critique of modern civilization's (and Japanese society's) materialism, utilitarianism, and lack of spiritual values. (Petralia, *abstract*)

As the profusion of words surrounded by single quotes in this passage indicates, there exists a large measure of doubt on the part of historians as to how much blame can be placed on Nietzsche's ideas themselves in sparking this debate.<sup>21</sup>

However, despite the ambiguity of Mori Ôgai's reading of Nietzsche, it is clear that Ôgai's brand of elitism is very similar to that of Nietzsche's, which is often referred to as *aristokratischer*

*Radikalismus* ("aristocratic radicalism").<sup>22</sup> However, as indicated in "Delusions," Ôgai felt that Nietzsche went too far in his "rejection of the conventions of the intellect." Thus, Ôgai struggled to find a way in which an authentic, Japanese set of "traditional values" could be maintained without resorting to imitating Western models of nationalism or indulging in the more self-centred and easily accessible approach towards self-discovery advocated by Natsume Sôseki, which Ôgai depicts not only as impulsive and selfish, but as reflecting the values of the "common herd."

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<sup>21</sup> Graham Parkes cites evidence that Chogyû may have been relatively unfamiliar with Nietzsche when he wrote "On the Aesthetic Life" (197). For a complete discussion of the controversies sparked by "Debating the 'Aesthetic Lifestyle'" or Chogyû's role in shaping the course of Nietzsche-reception, see Petralia's dissertation *Nietzsche in Meiji Japan--a comprehensive work of no less than eight hundred pages*. For a more compact history, complete with translations of an essay by Chogyû and other key figures related to Nietzsche reception, see Hans-Joachim Becker's *Die Frühe Nietzsche-Rezeption in Japan (1893-1903): Ein Beitrag zur Individualismusproblematik im Modernisierungsprozess*. For general Nietzsche-Reception in Japan, see Graham Parkes' chapter entitled "The Early Reception of Nietzsche's Philosophy in Japan" in the book (edited by Parkes) *Nietzsche in Asian Thought* and Kiichiro Oishi's "Nietzsche als Philologe in Japan: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion der Rezeptionsgeschichte."

<sup>22</sup> Bowring cites "internal evidence" that Ôgai studied Danish critic and historian Georg Brandes' essays, including "Aristokratischer Radicalismus," as early as 1890 (143). Brandes corresponded with Nietzsche for a time, and is one of the first figures of "international repute to recognize Nietzsche's quality" as indicated in "Aristokratischer Radicalismus" (see Hollingdale 233-234).

## A Dissonant Literature In Search of Resolution

Some of Ôgai's texts are literally flooded with ideas, so much so, that simply untangling the references and terms that might appear on any given page requires not only patience, but the desire to do a little research as well. I believe that Ôgai was motivated by a number of factors in creating such difficult-to-penetrate texts. The first is based upon my conviction that Ôgai accepted Emile Zola's theory that the purpose of fiction is to serve as a creative laboratory of ideas, as expressed in his treatise, *The Experimental Novel*.<sup>23</sup> Despite the clear advantages which Naturalism offered Mori Ôgai, who placed a great emphasis on depicting the subtle details which comprise "modern" language and culture, the author was convinced that Naturalism was ultimately a let-down—an opinion which he did not hesitate to share with his readers. However, a quick visual and textural analysis of Ôgai's "literature of ideas" clearly illustrates that not only do Ôgai's texts contain many of the characteristics inherent to Naturalistic literature, but employ them quite well—so well in fact, that they actually provide a useful set of "conclusions" from the "data" acquired in his "experiments," without the side-effects which he perceived to be an inherent component of Naturalism.<sup>24</sup> This laboratory permits Mori Ôgai, fiction writer and lifetime scientific researcher, an opportunity to experiment with the vast array of ideas which characterizes the late Meiji period. This perspective on Ôgai's "literature of ideas" emphasizes not only the excitement which Ôgai felt while engaging these ideas, but his desire to see a resolution of the dissonance which he perceived as an inherent component of Japan's modernization.

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<sup>23</sup> Bowring points out that when Ôgai was in Germany, European critics were engaged in a heated debate over Naturalism, which may have had the initial effect of inspiring Ôgai to take an interdisciplinary approach to writing literature: "Neither is it surprising that he should take particular interest in Zola's central thesis—that of the identity of science and art—as he was both doctor and prospective writer himself and saw the introduction of the scientific method as part of his mission on his return to Japan." (65).

Ôgai's works of this period are well known for their fragmentation and open-endedness. Numerous commentaries have been written about the lack of closure and irregular structure characteristic of Ôgai's works. Some critics, such as Richard Bowring, virtually apologize for Ôgai's attempts at writing novels and label them failures. Bowring literally issues a warning to his readers: "It is undeniable that by the virtue of the fascination that his [Ôgai's] life and character hold for the Japanese the works themselves are given a vicarious lustre which easily tarnishes if one approaches them entirely on their own merits" (x). I prefer to regard Ôgai's narratives of this period as representative of a "unique historico-philosophical moment" at the "watershed of two historical epochs," as described by Georg Lukács in reference to examples of novelic discourse in the European Renaissance (104).<sup>25</sup> In Lukács' early work, *The Theory of the Novel*, he states that the tension inherent in such "unique historico-philosophical moments [as the Renaissance]" is what provides an author the material needed to construct a plot. This is a process which holds a basic scientific principle at the core of its theory: that all tension seeks to resolve itself. At one point in his discussion, Lukács characterizes his theory as being indicative of the novel's inherent tendency towards depicting the "self-correction of the world's fragility," and persuasively argues that the fragmentation and heterogeneity are "only a symptom" which "renders the structure of the novel's totality clearly visible" (76). It is from this perspective that I propose to read Ôgai's texts. Rather

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<sup>24</sup> There is a large body of research which documents Ôgai's ambivalent stance towards Naturalism as a movement and its reception in Japan. Bowring sums it up succinctly in the sentence: "If we remember Ôgai's earlier arguments against the exclusive use of realism to the detriment of beauty, and especially the tendency of the European Naturalists to be obsessed with sexual instincts, his chagrin at seeing a somewhat similar movement *establish itself in Japan* can be imagined [emphasis added]" (123).

<sup>25</sup> Although Dennis Washburn employs Lukács' theories in a different context than myself, I would like to give credit to his essay "Manly Virtue and the Quest for the Self: The *Bildungsroman* of Mori Ôgai" for inspiring me to consult *The Theory of the Novel*.

than considering the heterogeneity of ideas and the work's structural irregularities separately, I will treat them as indicative of a dissonant quality which pervades Ôgai's "literature of ideas." I feel that "dissonance" is an especially fitting term in that it implies not only the need for resolution but also progress and forward movement.

I have chosen this perspective not only to provide a theoretical model by which one can examine this dissonance, but to introduce the topic of the European Renaissance, which functions as a key motif throughout Ôgai's "literature of ideas." Japan of the late Meiji Era was an extraordinarily vibrant era, and one of the few environments in the world during the last millennium which experienced a surge of ideas, scientific advancements, and fundamental changes to the basic structure of society as Europe did during the Renaissance. Both periods experienced a sharp increase in literacy, literature published in colloquial dialects, and a surge in the volume of material that was actually published. In addition, as pointed out by Lukács and depicted in Mori Ôgai's texts, both eras can be characterized by the heterogeneity and hybridity of their epistemological systems. As I will elaborate later in this essay, I believe that Ôgai was influenced by the optimism, initiative, and progress achieved by European thought following the Middle Ages, and attempted to infuse his fiction with his own version of this spirit. Mori Ôgai depicts the Renaissance as a powerful and enviable symbol of progress and organic social transformation for which he was not able to find a suitable equivalent in Japanese epistemology and history. Mori Ôgai and his protagonists frequently allude to an aspect of the Renaissance, which many modern critics (as well as some earlier ones such as Lukács), identify as the shift in philosophical and epistemological discourse from a "God-centred" perspective of the universe to a distinctly anthropocentric one, for the first time since the rise of orthodox Christianity, as described in the following passage by Harry Berger:

The Christian assignment of system-building to God entailed sharper restrictions on the role played by the mind, but these very restrictions, with a gradual shift of value, became the source of power in Renaissance thought. For the Christian imagination up through the

fourteenth century, the second world or world made by the mind was second because the first world made by God was better.[...] But by the time of Galileo, Descartes, Bernini, Milton, Leibniz, and Newton, the second world tends to be thought of as improving, superseding, or even replacing the first world. Actuality becomes a chaos or blueprint offered by God as raw material for the mind. (Berger 10-11)

As I hope to demonstrate, this "gradual shift of value," was at the core of what Mori Ôgai believed to be the "gap" which separates Japanese from Western discourse. Mori Ôgai also felt that it was the most important factor in making the Renaissance a period of such unprecedented progress, as the "shift" described by Berger, served to make humanity feel empowered, inspired, and that there was no limit to what it could achieve. Perceiving such qualities in another culture and not one's own is certainly a cause for not only envy, but a solid reason to feel that there is a bona fide "epistemological crisis" inherent in Japan's quest to become "equal to" or "greater" than the great European powers which Mori Ôgai and many other Japanese intellectuals felt was a necessary prerequisite of being "modern."

Yet, at this juncture, the most relevant aspect of Lukács' theories is their emphasis on the importance of heterogeneity and lack of closure, which results when a text is motivated primarily by the intersection of various epistemologies and cultural discourses, and the modification of existing epistemologies due to this "gradual shift of value." Lukács' ideas provide a perspective from which every level of dissonance in Ôgai's texts, ranging from the purely structural, to the most detailed discussion of philosophical ideas, can be interpreted as reflecting the "crisis of ideas" which I believe motivated Ôgai to renew his career as a fiction writer, change his literary style, and engage the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. The "self-correcting" nature of the modern novel as described by Lukács, in which the act of depicting heterogeneous ideas actually provides a means by which the tension between them can be released, provided Ôgai with a proper setting for his "laboratory of ideas," in which the road to an organic solution to Japan's "crisis of ideas" might present *itself*.

The responsibility to address the genuinely crucial and complex questions depicted in Ôgai's fiction falls not only on the protagonists and other significant characters, but on the *reader* as well, who is forced to grapple with the inaccessibility and frustrating lack of closure inherent to Ôgai's texts. Rather than acting to resolve the dissonance depicted in these narratives, Ôgai's protagonists engage in a process of active detachment, a process which I believe is deliberately intended to ensnare the reader into taking an active role in the process of "self-correction." As the only course of action which Ôgai clearly endorses is the development of one's sense of judgement and intellectual maturity, any other system of ideas is put into question, encouraging the reader to think critically and maintain his or her own sense of "detached-engagement."

#### Japan: "Not Yet"

Ôgai presents Japan as a zone of both physical and discursive flux. This impression is clearly expressed in his short story "Under Reconstruction" (*Fushinchû* 普心中, 1910) in which Japan is described as a zone in the midst of continual transformation. In the following passage, the protagonist, Watanabe, who like Ôgai lived in Germany, provides this bit of dry advice to his former European mistress who has travelled to Japan via Russia.:

「アメリカへ行くの。日本は駄目<sup>だめ</sup>だつて、ウラチオで聞いて来たのだから、<sup>あて</sup>當には  
しなくつてよ。」

「それが好い。ロシアの次はアメリカが好からう。日本はまだそんなに進んでゐる  
ないからなあ。日本はまだ普心中だ。」(247)

"I'm going to America. Japan is just hopeless—from what I've heard on the radio, it  
[Japan] really can't be relied upon!"

"That's splendid. I think America would be good after Russia. Japan is still not quite as advanced as America. Japan is still under construction."

Watanabe's former mistress finds the conditions in Japan less than satisfactory for her entertainment career. However, as with any construction zone, the finished product is always a function of a variety of factors, including the soundness of its foundation, the quality of its materials and workmanship, and the clarity and style in which the blueprints are drawn. The quality of the blueprints determines how effectively the intentions of the architects will be transmitted to those who will be performing the actual construction. It is this aspect of the project that will ultimately determine the quality and integrity of the final product. Thus, rather than depicting the construction zone as a disparaging metaphor, it is presented as a sign of continual renewal and un-released potential.

Ôgai's impetus to write the previous passage, and many similar ones in his essays and fiction, was based on a brief yet particularly disappointing lecture he attended in Germany by Edmund Naumann.<sup>26</sup> Naumann was one of the few Germans to have actually resided and worked in Japan for a long period of time during the 1880s. And despite his positive experiences he was left with the general impression that Japan simply didn't have the "right stuff" to be a leader in scientific research. Ôgai's reaction to Naumann's lecture is captured in a passage from "Delusions" which clearly refers to this incident: "A certain German, who has lived in Japan for a long time and is said to know the country inside out, has stated not only that such necessary conditions [to undertake serious scientific research] are lacking for the moment but that they will never arise in the Far East" (174). 日本に長くみて日本を低から知り抜いたと云はれてゐる独逸人某は、此要約は今<sup>か</sup>開けてゐるばかりでなくて、永遠に東洋の天地には生じて来ないと宣造した (129). He bitterly interprets this argument as meaning that Japanese research institutions will never be "more than transmitters of the results of research done in Europe" ("歐羅巴の學術の結論文を取り續ぐ場所たるに過ぎない筈<sup>はず</sup>である" pg. 129), an implication which he finds very distasteful (174). Yet, simplified

<sup>26</sup> See Bowring, pp. 16-19, for a complete discussion of this issue.

in the coy tone of Watanabe in "Under Reconstruction," he counters this Eurocentric attitude by stating that the current state of affairs in Japan can be summed up with the expression "not yet" ("まだ" pg. 143), implying that one of the greatest tasks at hand in his home country is to ensure that nothing bad happens in the "[re]construction zone."

Despite his unwavering devotion to the cause of Japan's modernization, and patent refusal to deny his nation's ability to "strive" with its own distinct flair, Ôgai's writings display a strong inclination towards honesty and openness. Even with his declaration "not yet," Ôgai's tone deviates substantially from the fanaticism and essentialism that characterized Japanese nationalism during the late Meiji period. Although partially biased by his repeated encounters with government censors during the period in which he composed his "literature of ideas"—Ôgai's opinions, both fictional and otherwise, are clearly those of a person unselfishly concerned with the manner and appropriateness with which Japan should enter the community of modern nations. He implies that other Japanese reformers have acted without the maturity required to introduce foreign ideas in a well-balanced fashion. The following excerpt from "Delusions" accurately corresponds with Ôgai's actual experiences as one of Japan's proponents of "modernization":

東京では都會改造の議論が盛んになつてゐて、アメリカのAとかBとかの何號町か  
にある、独逸人の謂ふ<sup>い</sup> <sup>ワルケンクラッツエル</sup> Wolkenkratzerのやうな家を建てたいと、ハイカラア連  
が云つてゐた。その時自分は「都會といふものは、狭い地面に多く人が住むだけ<sup>ひとじに</sup>人死が多い、  
<sup>こと</sup>殊に子供が多く死ぬる、今まで横に並んでゐた家を、<sup>たて</sup>豎に積み重ねるよりは、上水や下水で  
も改良するが好からう」と云つた。(130)

In Tokyo the debate about reconstructing the city was at its height, and the smart set said they wanted to put up those buildings the Germans call *Wolkenkratzer*, skyscrapers that you find in America on Block A or B. I argued to the contrary that the more people live in a confined space such as a city the higher the death rate, especially among children. Rather than taking all those dwellings that were now built side by side and piling them on

top of each other, it would make far more sense to improve the water supply and the sewerage, I said. (175)

In this passage, Ôgai clearly depicts his aesthetic inclinations as well as his integrity as a good scientist and public servant. His primary concern here is obviously that Western technology, such as skyscrapers, which have become the trademark of North American and German cities, have been frequently adopted simply because they are Western.<sup>27</sup> Ôgai provides clear and apparently unbiased rationales as to why building skyscrapers should be undertaken with caution in general, not to mention in Japan, where housing and public hygiene were very underdeveloped by European standards. Aesthetically speaking, Ôgai seems to be greatly concerned about the "Block A or B" look, which he considers to be a distinguishing characteristic of American urban areas. In the same passage he also criticizes another faction of urban planners who wanted to "impose restrictions on building, arguing that we [the Japanese] should try to standardize the heights of eaves in Tokyo and thus achieve a beautiful ordered look." 又建築に制裁を加へようとする委員が出来てみて、東京の家の軒の高さを一定して、整然たる外観の美を成さうと云つてゐた (130). Ôgai is clearly not satisfied with this approach either, and complains that such an urban landscape would look like "soldiers on parade" ("兵隊の並んだやうな町" pg. 130) and should be reconsidered in favour of allowing "each particular form of architecture to have its own style of roof" ("あらゆる建築の様式を一軒づつ別にさせて" pg. 130-131). Ôgai clearly favours a process of urban development which emphasizes heterogeneity and organic transformation.

Many of Ôgai's fictional narratives contain ambivalent geographical descriptions of Japan "under reconstruction" in both the first and third person. Often, they contain less than complimentary descriptions of Japan, which accentuate the ambivalent attitude towards the improvements offered by

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<sup>27</sup> Although skyscrapers are quite ubiquitous in North America, they have been generally the exception rather than the rule in most European cities, with the exception of the cities in the industrial part of western Germany. The German word *Wolkenkratzer* means "cloud scratcher," which closely corresponds in etymology to its English equivalent, "skyscraper."

Western technologies and ideas. In the following example from the first chapter of *Youth*, the tone of the text is tinged by technical or mathematical language in which the protagonist, Jun'ichi, remarks to himself on the lustreless quality of some aspects of Tokyo's outer appearance:

小泉純一は芝日陰町の宿室を出て、東京方目圖を片手に人にうるさく問うて、新橋停留場から上野行の電車に乗った。目まぐるしい須田町の乗換も無事に済んだ。扱本郷三丁目で電車を降りて [...] 十月二十何日かの午前八時であつた。

此処は道が丁字路になつてゐる。権現前から登て来る道が、自分の辿つて来た道を鉛直に切る處に袖浦館はある。木材にペンキを塗つた、マッチの箱のやうな擬西洋造りである。入口の鴨居の上に、木札が沢山並べて嵌めてある。(3)

Koizumi Junichi [sic] left his inn on Shiba-Hikage. Despite the map of Tokyo he had with him, he kept bothering people about directions. At a Shinbashi streetcar stop, he caught a car for Ueno, and he somehow managed to make the rather complicated transfer at Suda to another car. He finally got off at Third on Hongô [...]. It was eight in the morning around the twentieth of October.

There the street forked into a T-shape. The Sodeura-kan was just at the spot where the street leading uphill from Gongenmae was cut at right angles by the road he was walking along. The painted wooden structure, looking like an oversized matchbox, seemed an imitation of a Western-style building. Above the door frame at the entrance were several resident nameplates. (381)

The Tokyo perceived by Jun'ichi is a grid. The language used to describe the layout of the streets is just as mathematical and precise in the Japanese original as it is in English. Words such as *tejiro* ("T-shaped road") and phrases such as *enchoku ni kiru tokoro* ("a place cut by right angles") indicates a cityscape created with modern, mathematical exactitude. Yet, as Jun'ichi feels that he must ask people for directions despite the fact that he possesses a map, it is suggested that Tokyo is

not simply a defined space in a fixed geographical location, but a large fluctuating mechanism, in which the various parts are connected by dynamic subcomponents such as gears, that are constantly shifting position. Of particular note is the "*mokuzai ni penki o nutta, matchi no hako no yô na giseiyô zukuri*" ("painted wooden structure, looking like an oversized matchbox, seemed an imitation of a Western-style building"). "Painted wooden structure" is about as generic an architectural description as one could possibly imagine. Although the phrase "*matchi no hako no yô na giseiyô zukuri*" ("looking like an oversized matchbox, seemed an imitation of a Western-style building") helps the reader to imagine its shape and general lack of aesthetic appeal, and indicates a probable stylistic influence of the structure, it should be noted that such descriptions are qualified with a great deal of uncertainty. In short, its structure is characterized as if it were a pimple or blob on the urban landscape. In addition, the predicate adjective "*nutta*" ("painted") implies that the structure has been given some sort of tasteless veneer to veil its lack of redeeming aesthetic qualities.

There are aspects of Tokyo's urbanization which are depicted in *Youth* as being failures, neither authentic transplantations of Western ideas and technologies, nor distinctively Japanese adaptations or improvements of the former. They are grotesque and monstrous creations. In addition, they are ugly and possess an excessive degree of symmetry, two qualities that always seem to be among the final factors in influencing Ôgai to issue a stamp of disapproval. The pitfalls of poor urban planning, public health, or military diets are not dissimilar to those involved in the construction of a modern Japanese attitude, world-view, or philosophical grounding. An ill-considered, poorly developed, and unbalanced system of ideas can lead to many of the same problems: inefficiency, lack of a distinctive identity, and of course, tastelessness. Ideas, like architectural concepts, can be imported verbatim. They can be adapted and combined with existing technologies, or disguised—an array of choices that applies to the importation of ideas and philosophical concepts as well.

## The Burden of Responsibility

In Ôgai's fiction, the roles of architects and urban planners are subsumed by the importance of the cultural critic. Although in the present-day world it is almost comical for one to consider a student of literature or a literary critic as the potential saviour of a social crisis, the role of the scholar in Meiji Japan had a much higher degree of official importance than in present-day Western or Eastern cultures. The Japanese government officially sponsored many young scholars to study the humanities in Europe and North America, many of whom were ultimately destined to accept posts in high-ranking government and military positions. The active study of Western ideas, languages, and institutions was policy and not simply a trend. Thus, when one of the young men in Ôgai's stories sports his student cap and departmental insignia on his clothing, despite the measure of parody no doubt intended by Ôgai, these young men are not intended to be thought of farcically, but rather as potentially influential members of society who have the moral and social obligation of actively participating in the modernization of Japan. They are vested with the responsibility of interpreting, introducing, and adopting foreign ideas for the benefit of those who are involved in more practical aspects of the modernization process.

The protagonist of Ôgai's short story "As If" (*Ka no yô ni* かのようにて), Hidemaro, is an excellent example of this sentiment. "As If" is a short narrative of approximately twenty pages that describes the academic career of a young man who is the son of a prominent viscount. It includes a number of exchanges between Hidemaro and his father, who consistently expresses his support in his son's arcane fields of interest, inspired by the belief that regardless of what Hidemaro studies abroad, it will in some way be of assistance to the state's agenda of creating a modern Japanese sense of self-identity. Gradually, Hidemaro settles upon history as his primary field of inquiry and a modern history of Japan as his ultimate goal. The following passage describes the viscount's initial reaction to his son's penchant for a broad liberal arts education:

學期ごとにこんな風で、専門の學問に手を出した事のない子爵には、どんな物だか見當の附かぬ學科さへあるが、兎に角随分雜駁な學問のしやうをしてゐるらしいと云う事丈は判断ができた。併し子爵はそれを苦にもしない。息子<sup>むすこ</sup>を大學に入れたり、洋行をさせたりしたのは、何も専門の職業がさせたいからの事ではない。追つて家督相續をさせた後に、恐多いが皇室<sup>はんべい</sup>の藩屏<sup>はんぺい</sup>になつて、身分相應な動きをして行くのに、基礎になる見識があつてくれれば好い。そのために普通教育より一段上の教育を受けさせて置かうとした。だから本人の氣の向く學科を、勝手に選んでさせて置いて好いと思つてゐるのであつた。(234)

Each term was like the others, and the viscount, who had never made a specialty of any branch of learning, could not determine what some of the lectures were about. However, he concluded that his son was pursuing a very heterogeneous line of work. He had not sent his son to the university and Europe to enable him to become proficient in a special profession; he wanted him only to acquire a certain amount of knowledge which would enable him to have opinions about things when he succeeded his father and became one of the supports of the imperial family and to do the work that his position in life required him to do. (236)

In addition to illustrating the importance of a broad, interdisciplinary approach to scholarship and the crucial role that the young scholar plays in the young Japanese nation-state, this story also emphasizes the importance of the radical aristocrat in Ôgai's literature. However, it should be noted that although "old money" is not required of these role models, a high degree of "breeding" definitely is. Although the protagonist's parents are not always described in Ôgai's fiction of this period—as in *Youth*, in which the protagonist is a mysteriously unsentimental orphan—Ôgai's young men display a sense of innate responsibility to their country's cultural and social development, much the same way Ôgai did. Hidemaro is in the minority in that he is explicitly described as being a member of the aristocracy. The vast majority of Ôgai's protagonists in his "literature of ideas" are educated, at least moderately well off, and sons of families of some importance from the provinces—much like himself.<sup>28</sup>

When faced with a philosophical "crisis" of one sort or another, many authors turn to a systematic ideology or belief system, which helps not only the characters overcome their dilemma, but the plot to overcome chaos and banality. This is not generally a tactic practiced by Ôgai.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the heroes of many narratives admired by Ôgai himself, most of his protagonists do not turn to religion, to an "ism," or even like Faust, to an emotional state such as "striving."<sup>30</sup> Quite the contrary, their level of detachment from the world and everything in it remains fairly static, and the climax of many of Ôgai's narratives is highlighted by something as seemingly insignificant as a protagonist deciding *not* to write an article or that they are *not* going to pursue a romantic interest. The greatest victory scored by Ôgai's protagonists, including both the older narrators and the young "heroes" of his stories of self-development, is reflected in their intellectual growth. Rather than accumulating "raw experience" like Goethe's Faust, or becoming embroiled in painful affairs of the heart, such as Goethe's young hero, Wilhelm Meister, Ôgai's characters experience life through an engaged detachment.<sup>31</sup> Their greatest achievements are measured by their ability to "strive" constantly toward improving their sense of judgment and expanding their horizons as intellectuals. For example, if *Youth* is indeed to be regarded as a *Bildungsroman*, then Jun'ichi's greatest achievement is

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<sup>28</sup> Ôgai was born in Tsuwano in the mountainous western province of Iwami. According to Bowring, Ôgai was descended from a long line of respected physicians who were at the "lower end of the samurai class" (1).

<sup>29</sup> Ironically, despite the fact that "As If" provides an excellent depiction of the responsibility of a young intellectual towards society, it also provides an example of what happens when a young scholar *does* make the mistake of endorsing a specific philosophy, as I will discuss later in this essay.

<sup>30</sup> "ism," the suffix which comprises the last syllable of the name of many ideologies in English, is translated as *shugi* 主義 in Japanese. Unlike its English equivalent, it can be used as a noun on its own. Ôgai uses this word fairly frequently in his works, usually to refer to the profusion of ideologies which were being imported to Japan during the Meiji era, and the dizzying effect they had on the common people and intellectuals.

that he has reached a level of intellectual maturity in which he is able to distinguish between the "painted wooden structures" in the construction zone of ideas around him—the poor imitations, the trendy, and the deceptive—from those which are authentic examples of progress and originality.

Although this process applies to Ôgai's characters of all ages, I feel that an important component of Ôgai's decision to write novels in the style of the *Bildungsroman* was based in large part to the similarity of "youth"—particularly that of a university student—to that of a construction zone. I believe that the metaphor of the construction zone can be applied to human development as well. Just as Japan is depicted in Ôgai's "literature of ideas" as an unfinished product whose future is still open-ended, what transpires during a young intellectual's development will shape the manner in which that individual will utilize and interpret ideas for quite a long time. It is also a time of many tests and rites of passage, in which friendships, romantic relationships, and career decisions have the potential to affect greatly the integrity of one's thought processes. However, unlike protagonists from the novels of other authors, many of Ôgai's simply do not fully engage the obstacles that come their way; rather, they intellectualize them and prefer to experience life from a distance, as observers. It is this distance that prevents a disaster from occurring in the construction site, and ensures that whatever is being built is completed authentically, soundly, efficiently, and with good taste. Although not all of Ôgai's young protagonists are students, the intellectual freedom and comparatively unstructured lifestyle of a student is certainly a useful tool for Ôgai.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the open-endedness and fragmentation of Ôgai's fiction need not be considered as an indication of the author's lack of literary skills, but an innovative tool used to depict the discourse of a nation in flux.

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<sup>31</sup> Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is credited by Rimer as being one of the major influences in Ôgai's composition of *Youth*. One characteristic of Goethe's novel which is particularly similar to *Youth* is the presence of many extended intellectual conversations (see Rimer *Youth*, 373-377).

<sup>32</sup> Ôgai's most famous young protagonist, Jun'ichi, is not a student. Although he is described as one, and lives as one, he is never registered as a student or ever explicitly expresses his intention to do so. He is a particularly open-ended character.

## The Pathology of a Bad Translation

私が満州で受け取った手紙のうちに、安国寺さんの手紙があつた。その中に<sup>うち</sup>重い病氣のためにドイツ語の研究を思ひ止まつて、房州辺の海岸へ転地療養に往くと云ふことが書いてあつた。私はすぐに返事を遣つて慰めた。これは私の手紙としては、<sup>もつとも</sup>最長の手紙で、世間で不治の病と云うものが必ず不治だと思つてはならぬ、安心を得ようと志すものは、病のために屈してはならぬと云ふことを、<sup>ひやだん</sup>譬喩談のやうに書いたものであつた。私は安国寺さんが語學のために甚だしく苦んで、其病を惹き起こしたのではないかと疑つた。どんな複雑な論理をも<sup>たやす</sup>容易く<sup>たど</sup>辿つて行く人が、却つて<sup>そら</sup>器物械的に諳んじなくてはならぬ語格の規則に悩まされたのは、想像しても氣の毒だと、私はつくゞ思つた。(Ôgai, "Futari no tomo" 95)

Among the letters I received in Manchuria was one from Ankokuji-san. He wrote that he had fallen seriously ill and had therefore abandoned the study of German. He was going somewhere near the Boshû coast to convalesce. I immediately dispatched a letter consoling him. It was the longest letter I have ever written. I wrote, somewhat metaphorically, that one should not believe that what the world called an "incurable illness" was really "incurable" and that in aspiring to have peace of mind one should not give in to illness. I suspected Ankokuji's struggle with language was what had brought on this illness. I felt thoroughly sympathetic just imagining how much a person, no matter how easily he was able to follow even complex logic, would be afflicted if he were to have to mechanically learn grammatical rules. (Ôgai, "Two Friends" 209-210)

Mori Ôgai's autobiographical short story "Two Friends" was published in 1915, several after the other stories discussed in this essay. "Two Friends" is very similar in tone and content to "Delusions," in which a mature narrator takes a backward look at his days as an active, young intellectual. The narrator of "Two Friends" focuses on a specific incident that corresponds very closely with the events which transpired during what is often referred to as Mori Ôgai's "exile" in

Kokura, in the prefecture of Kyûshû.<sup>33</sup> "Two Friends" has a sentimental, romantic, and almost prophetic quality which is largely absent in the other narratives discussed in this essay. Although there is only a gap of three to six years between the publication of "Two Friends" and the stories in Ôgai's "literature of ideas," a number of important events transpired during the intervening period that had a major effect on both Japan and Mori Ôgai personally. The event with the most poignant and universal significance was the death of General Nogi, who committed ritual suicide following the passing of the Meiji emperor, in keeping with the samurai tradition of *junshi* 殉死—following one's lord after death through self-disembowelment. For many Japanese, this dramatic and moving event served as a more powerful symbol of social and political change than the death of the Meiji emperor himself. Natsume Sôseki, for example, used the powerful imagery and emotions surrounding this event as an important *leitmotif* to express the social milieu of Tokyo in his widely-read *Bildungsroman*, *Kokoro* 心 (1914).

In "Two Friends," the story of General Nogi serves as an important sub-text as well as a *leitmotif*, as General Nogi and Mori Ôgai were intimately acquainted. They met in Berlin in 1887 after which they corresponded frequently and developed a relationship whose roots were founded on mutual respect. As pointed out by Richard Bowring, Nogi was one of the few government officials to pay Mori Ôgai a farewell call prior to his departure to Kokura (121). Given the political significance and controversy surrounding Mori Ôgai's transfer to Kokura, this event is indicative of a deep sense of camaraderie and mutual support shared by the two men. Thus, the story of General Nogi, a powerful literary sub-text, colours "Two Friends" with a distinct air of sentimentality with an indirect reference to Mori Ôgai's relationship to a powerful national symbol of Meiji Japan. As discussed in the introduction, the death of General Nogi was followed by a period of great political and social uncertainty and the rise of fascism.

Perhaps such powerful events as the suicide of General Nogi, the passing of the Meiji Emperor, and the many belligerent military campaigns that Japan undertook when Ôgai wrote "Two

<sup>33</sup> In 1899 Ôgai was demoted and sent to Kokura as a chief medical officer. Bowring explains that "this demotion [...] can be traced to his earlier violent attacks on his superiors" (98).

Friends," instilled Ôgai with an added sense of urgency. This is what may have led to his clearest and most direct statement that what lies at the root of Japan's "crisis of ideas" is a specifically linguistic problem. Although in the texts I have discussed thus far, Ôgai has expressed the manifestation of "modernity" in Japan in a manner which indicates a powerful dissonance between various epistemological systems, he does not specifically indicate a linguistic problem. However, in "Two Friends," the entire conflict of the narrative is centred on what is plainly depicted as an incongruity between the narrator's and his best friend's understanding of the concept of translation.

At the end of the short story "Two Friends," the unnamed narrator speculates on the cause of the illness of a young monk named Ankokuji, whom he and his close friend F had befriended near their lodgings in Kokura. F originally approached the narrator with the intention of receiving instruction in reading German philosophical texts. After a period of several years the two men develop a strong friendship, which to a large degree is an outgrowth of their original student-teacher relationship. Like many of Ôgai's other protagonists, the narrator of "Two Friends" resembles his creator in a great number of ways. This includes Ôgai's preferred method of addressing the complex problems inherent in translating a text from a foreign language-- particularly a European language. In the case of both Ôgai and the narrator of "Two Friends," the keyword is "balance." Recognizing the complex relationship which exists between Japanese philosophical and epistemological traditions and their Western counterparts, the narrator suggests to F that the best way to instruct the monk, a novice in Western philosophical traditions, is by treating "both the colloquial language and literary language from an overall point of view." In fact, he even suggests that the language of Buddhist scriptures be employed liberally, suggesting that it is not the raw impact of a clean and literal translation which is ultimately desirable, but rather a subtle and sensitive rendering of a foreign work of philosophical discourse into Japanese:

そこで安国寺さんは哲學入門の譯讀を、私にして貰ふ代りに、F君にして貰はうとした。然るに私とF君とは外國語の扱方が違ふ。私は口語でも文語でも、全體として扱ふ。F君は

それを一々語格上から分析せずには置かない。私は Koeber さんの哲學入門を開いて、初のペエジから字を遂つて譯して聞せた。しかも勉めて佛經の語を用ゐて譯するやうにした。(93)

It was decided that F would take my place in reading and explicating the volume on philosophy to Ankokuji-san. F's manner of dealing with a foreign language, however, was different from mine. I dealt with both colloquial language and literary language from an overall point of view. F, however, would not be content without grammatically analyzing each word. I had opened Raphael Koeber's introduction to philosophy and started explaining from the very first word. On top of that, I had tried to translate using as much Buddhist vocabulary as possible (208).

F, on the other hand, to the narrator's disappointment, insists that Ankokuji take the rather pedantic approach of a grammarian. And as the narrator had already agreed to transfer the custodian of this student to F, the fate of Ankokuji's academic training is out of his hands.

Thus, the cause of Ankokuji's illness is clear: Ankokuji is a victim of bad translation. Although "Two Friends" is a comparatively short story, and provides only a scanty amount of details about this character, it is clear that Ankokuji is extraordinarily inspired and quite motivated while under the guidance of the narrator, and affected quite negatively when under the rigid and coldly academic direction of F. As he is unable to comprehend Raphael von Koeber's ideas in German and unable to find an effective bridge between the Western epistemology and his own, it is implied that he experiences some form of crisis that is somatized into a very real pathological manifestation. F, on the other hand, develops into an increasingly pedantic and close-minded individual.

Although somewhat melodramatic and sentimental, the end of "Two Friends" clearly illustrates the barrier of language and two of the worst possible outcomes of improper philological training. In the case of Ankokuji, the end result of this crisis is illness. In the case of F, it is a life full of unproductive and actually *harmful* scholarship, whose first victim is the health of a young man and the second F's own life. F's crisis is depicted as having been brought on by his own

stubbornness. "Two Friends" provides the reader with an opportunity to see exactly what *does* happen if something goes wrong during the "construction" phase of a young scholar's life. F, who at the beginning of the story is portrayed as a serious yet charming youth, ends up literally asphyxiating himself on his own words. Ankokuji, however, is an entirely different matter. It is clear that it was the superior tutelage of the narrator that was responsible for his recovery.

### Inorganic Solutions to Organic Problems

The narrator of "Delusions" (1911) emphasizes that one viable—although not completely successful—solution to Japan's "crisis of ideas" is to coin new words to make up for the Japanese language's deficiency in progress-oriented vocabulary. One of the most interesting expressions of Ôgai's admiration of the dynamic and striving-oriented nature of European thought is his fascination for the German word *Forschung*, which means "research." He contrasts this word to its Japanese equivalent, *kenkyû* 研究, which in his view lacks the zeal and fighting-spirit of *Forschung*. *Forschung* is a noun constructed from the participle of the verb *forschen*, which can be roughly translated into English as "to plow on".<sup>34</sup>

勿論自然科学の方面では、自分なんぞより有力な友達が  
大勢おつて、跡に残つて奮闘して  
あてくれるから、自分の撥ね出されたのは、  
國家の爲めにも、人類の爲めにも  
なんの損失にもならない。

ただ只奮闘してゐる友達には氣の毒である。依然として  
霧園氣の無い處で、高壓の下に働く潜水夫のやうに喘ぎ  
苦しんでゐる。霧園氣の無い證據には、まだ  
F o r s c h u n g といふ日

<sup>34</sup> The Sino-Japanese compound which corresponds most closely to "research" would be *kenkyû* 研究. This compound is formed by combining characters which correspond roughly in English to "to sharpen" or to "polish," and "to reach an extreme" or "to investigate thoroughly," respectively. Although exactitude and a desire to acquire knowledge are important aspects of this term, Ôgai is correct in pointing out that *kenkyû* lacks the striving orientation of the German word *Forschung*.

本語も出来てゐない。そんな概念を明確に言ひ現す必要をば、社會が感じてゐないのである。  
自慢でもなんでもないが、「業績」とか「學問の推挽<sup>すいばん</sup>」とか云ふやうな造語を、自分が自然科  
學界に置土産にして来たが、まだF o r s c h u n g<sup>フォルシュング</sup>といふ意味の簡知で明確な日本語は無い。  
研究<sup>ことば</sup>なんといふぼんやりした語は、實際役に立たない。載籍調べ<sup>さいせきしら</sup>も研究ではないか。(131)

I had of course many friends who were far abler than I in this field [of the natural sciences]. Because they stayed and still battle on for the cause, the fact that I was excluded is no particular loss either for the state or for mankind. And yet I feel sorry for those who carry on the struggle. There is no atmosphere and so they gasp for air like divers working under high pressure. There is as yet no satisfactory Japanese equivalent for the word *Forschung* (research): proof that the right atmosphere does not exist. Society does not yet feel the need to express this concept with clarity. It is hardly anything to boast about, but I myself gave the scientific world such coined words as *gyōseki* (results) and *gakumon no suiban* (encouragement of learning), yet there is still no simple, easy way of expressing the idea of *Forschung* in Japanese. The vague word of *kenkyū* is not really appropriate. Mere reading and study of books is *kenkyū*, is it not. (176)

In this passage, Ōgai is clearly depicting himself and his colleagues in the scientific community as being handicapped because of their language's inability to provide them with the tools they need to compete with their counterparts in the West. Ōgai does not give the medical profession in Japan a very optimistic prognosis. As depicted in "Delusions" and "Two Friends" (1915) Ōgai was greatly concerned with what he perceived to be the lack of innovation, the unimaginative penchant for imitation, and the pedantic perspective that prevailed in many aspects of Japan's scientific and intellectual communities. The narrator clearly reminds the reader of some of his own contributions to the linguistic modernization of Japan, by bestowing modern meanings to words of Sino-Japanese origin such as *gyōseki* 業績 (scientific results) and *gakumon no suiban* 學問の推挽 (encouragement of learning).<sup>35</sup> Although these words represent admirable attempts to capture the

progress-oriented spirit of Western scholarship and science without creating loanwords, Ôgai is frustrated at what he perceives to be a deficiency in the Japanese language to provide the building blocks of a modern vocabulary.

Despite the intense frustration experienced by Ôgai's protagonists in their attempts to come to terms with the gap between Western and Eastern systems of thought, Ôgai does depict a character who comes very close to providing a quick solution to this crisis. Hidemaro, the protagonist of "As If" (1912) devises a solution inspired by the ideas of the German philosopher Hans Vaihinger, as presented in his book *The Philosophy of As If* (*Die Philosophie des als ob*, 1911). In this book, Hidemaro finds what he considers to be a fitting solution to the problem of how to deal with the mythology and belief systems of the Japanese people, which are an integral part of Japanese life and the government's programme of building a sense of national identity. Hidemaro is faced with the dilemma of how to grapple with issues such as ancestor worship and the "line dividing myth and history" (246). The new perspective, aptly referred to as the "philosophy of 'as if,'" is depicted by Hidemaro as being the direct result of the transition from a God-centred universe to the more anthropocentric one which has characterized Western discourse since the advent of modernity:

どんな哲學者も、近世になつては大抵世界を相待に見て、絶待の存在しないことを認めては  
あるが、それでも絶待があるかのやうに考えられてゐる。宗教でも、もう大ぶ古くシユライ  
エルマツヘルが神を父であるかのやうに考えへると云つてゐる。孔子もずつと古く祭るに在<sup>いま</sup>  
すが如くすと云つてゐる。先祖の靈があるかのやうに察るのだ。さうして見ると、人間の智  
識、學問は扱<sup>さてお</sup>置き、宗教でもなんでも、その根本を調べて見ると、事實として證據立てられ  
ない或る物を建立<sup>こんりふ</sup>してゐる。即ちかのやうにが土臺に横はつてゐるのだね。[...]極頑固な、  
極篤實な、敬神家や道學先生と、なんの扱<sup>さてお</sup>ぶ所もない。只頭がごつゝしてゐない丈だ。ねえ、  
君、この位安全な、危険でない思想はないぢやないか。神が事實でない。義務が事實でない。

<sup>35</sup> Yoshida Seiichi points out that the word *gyôseki* is one possible translation for the German word *Arbeit* which means "work" or "labour," indicating that Mori Ôgai was strongly motivated by what he perceived to be progress-oriented qualities of the German language (322).

これはどうしても今日になつて認めずにはゐられないが、それを認めたのを手柄にして、神を汚す。義務を蹂躪する。そこに危険は始て生じる。行為は勿論、思想まで、さう云ふ危険な事は十分撲滅しようとするが好い。(248-250)

Most of the modern philosophers regard the world as relative and not as absolute. Still they think *as if* the absolute existed. In religion, again, Schleiermacher long ago stated that he regarded God *as if* He were the Father. Confucius centuries ago said that when we worship the spirits of our ancestors we should do so as if they were really with us; that means that we should worship them as if their spirits really did exist. Now we have examined religion as well as all branches of human knowledge and have seen that they are established on something which cannot be proved as real. That is to say, 'as if' lies at their foundation.[...] I'm just the same as an abstinent and upright believer in the gods of the moralists. The only difference is that I'm not so stubborn. Don't you see that there's nothing safer, nothing less dangerous, than my thoughts? God isn't a fact; duty isn't a fact. We cannot but admit that now. But if we glory in that discovery and blaspheme, if we trample upon duty, then real danger begins for the first time. We should try to repress not only such actions, but also such thoughts. (250-252)

Unlike Ôgai's other protagonists, who attempt to make up for deficiencies in Japanese discourse by rethinking the concept of "translation," and effecting a solution to an epistemological problem from the ground up, Hidemaro tries an altogether different approach—by implementing a blanket solution that can be applied to a wide variety of philosophical and ideological dilemmas by merely altering one's perspective and not challenging the foundation on which these dilemmas are grounded. However, unlike F in "Two Friends," Hidemaro is not depicted as an unimaginative pedant. Hidemaro advocates leaving the basic framework of Japanese epistemology in place while importing a foreign solution to a problem that Western philosophy was forced to grapple with previously, presumably in the Renaissance, when an anthropocentric world-view began to prevail in Europe, and religious concepts were gradually being put into question. Hidemaro's arguments are

depicted as being quite seductive for a variety of reasons. They represent aristocratic ideals, eschew the values of the "common herd," and provide a logical model by which the conflict between Japan's "traditional" system of values and beliefs and the anthropocentric and individualistic values of the West can be reconciled. In addition, Hidemaro convincingly argues that a philosophy such as that suggested by Hans Vaihinger isn't really that foreign anyway, citing evidence that Confucius suggested a similar strategy to lend legitimacy to the ancient tradition of ancestor worship within the system of secular values espoused by Confucianism thousands of years ago in China.

However, at the end of the passage quoted above, Hidemaro gives clear expression to a by-product of Vaihinger's philosophy which makes it quite obvious that Hidemaro's ideas are meant to be interpreted with a great deal of skepticism and suspicion. This by-product is Hidemaro's outright endorsement of the repression of "actions" and "thoughts," as well as his opinion that the "philosophy of 'as if'" must be kept secret from the public for the time being. Clearly, such a reactionary and arch-conservative attitude goes against the grain of nearly everything that Mori Ôgai stood for, a fact that is especially poignant when one considers that Mori Ôgai himself was harshly criticized for speaking out against the policies of conservative and reactionary cultural essentialists.<sup>36</sup>

Hidemaro's adoption of Vaihinger's "philosophy of 'as if'" is indicative of one of the greatest difficulties involving the importation of a foreign philosophical system: the system's drawbacks must be accepted along with its advantages. As emphasized throughout this essay, there is little evidence in Mori Ôgai's fiction that he believed that Japan is immune to the pitfalls of Western ideas, and that a slogan such as "Japanese spirit, Western learning" is not an effective attitude

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<sup>36</sup> An excellent source of information on this aspect of Mori Ôgai's career is Helen Hopper's article entitled "Mori Ôgai's Response to Suppression of Intellectual Freedom, 1909-12." Hopper provides in-depth discussion of Mori Ôgai's lifelong struggle to remain loyal to both the Japanese government and his instincts as an intellectual and fiction writer. Throughout her article she indicates that despite Ôgai's struggle to be loyal to the government, Ôgai frequently became the target of censorship and punitive action. She describes "As If" as a meditation in which Ôgai explores the implications of his own struggle with Japan's state-sponsored belief system.

towards modernization. On the contrary, even when discussing Western ideas he found inspiring, such as those of Friedrich Nietzsche, Ôgai's protagonists nearly always conclude their arguments with some form of disclaimer or strong indication of skepticism or trepidation regarding these ideas. The case of Hidemaro provides the best example of how the adoption of foreign ideas can go wrong, as the idea this protagonist chooses to adopt is designed specifically to cover-up the inconsistencies and failings inherent in Western thought. It offers an inorganic solution to an extremely profound philosophical dilemma faced by the protagonist in writing his "history."

It is not Hidemaro's experimentation with Vaihinger's "philosophy of 'as if'" that makes him a "failure" in Ôgai's "literature of ideas," but his decision about what to do with the knowledge he had gained. As Rimer points out in the introduction to Gregg Sinclair's and Kazo Suita's translation to this story, Hidemaro and his father the Viscount can be:

[..] understood as a sort of extended metaphor between European-trained intellectuals, such as Ôgai, and the paternalistic Japanese state, which [...] looked with increasing suspicion upon those intellectuals, typified by Hidemaro, who had begun to question the thickening clusters of myth and history propounded by authorities of the Meiji state in order to solidify nationalistic sentiments among the general population. (*Youth*, 231)

Until the final declaration of his intentions to endorse the "philosophy of 'as if,'" Hidemaro remains "in the crossroads," like his "creator" Mori Ôgai. Very much in the tradition of Ôgai's "literature of ideas," "As If" contains a number of parallelisms between Ôgai's own life and that of his fictional character. Most of these similarities are transparently manifested in the tripartite structure of the story: the young university student prior to his official stint in Berlin, the distinguished young Japanese scholar in Berlin, and the more mature professional scholar with many social and political responsibilities subsequent to his residence in Germany. The structure of the narrative is influenced by the manner in which Ôgai perceives the "structure" of his own life, as depicted in numerous essays, diaries, and biographical writings.

Hidemaro is the only character in the narratives I have discussed who has clearly broken free from the paralyzing effects of the “crossroads.” Throughout the first two sections of “As If,” Hidemaro remains firmly entrenched in the role of the “active bystander.” In the third section, which details Hidemaro’s “post-European” life, he finds himself excessively burdened by the expectations put upon him by his position as a government official. As a result, he also finds himself with a case of writer’s block in his assigned task of composing a new “history” of Japan. Towards the end of the story, however, he comes upon the Vaihinger text (published only one year prior to “As If” in 1911), and makes a conscious decision to “step-out” of the “crossroads” with the powerful epistemological tools he has acquired. He feels confident that with these tools he can now write his “history,” as all of the dilemmas he had formerly faced have now been solved.

Even though Hidemaro is aware of the obvious drawbacks of implementing the “philosophy of ‘as if,’” he goes ahead and does it anyway, in the belief that there is simply no other choice:

てんでに自分の職業を遣つて、そんな問題はそつとして置くのだらう。僕は職業の選びやうが悪かつた。ぼんやりして遣つたり、嘘を衝いてやれば造<sup>ざうさ</sup>倣はないが、正直に、真面白に遣らうとすると、八方塞<sup>ふさ</sup>がりになる職業を、僕は不幸にして選んだのだ。(251)

I did unwisely when I selected my profession. It’s easy enough to do my work without distinguishing clearly or by dissembling, but if I want to do it honestly, earnestly, I see I am hemmed in on all sides. It was my misfortune to choose such a profession. (253-254)

Perhaps the similarities between Mori Ôgai and Hidemaro indicate that while composing “As If,” Ôgai was contemplating what his life would have been like if his personal background had been a little different. I believe that this narrative is a meditation on the virtues of *not* having chosen a career of pure historical scholarship, but rather one which balanced a “day” job as a government official with duties related to public health and hygiene, and “moonlighting” as a writer of *fiction*, in which becoming embroiled in dilemmas such as the one described above by Hidemaro would not

be likely. Ôgai was free to experiment with ideas, both historical and current, without the pressure of having to affirm state-sponsored myths and “invented traditions.” In any event, Ôgai did not choose Hidemaro's approach and remained free of the guilt of having to deceive the public and advocate repression and censorship. Hidemaro, on the other hand, may be confident that he has found an answer to his epistemological crises, but he obviously does not feel very good about feeling “hemmed in on all sides” and being forced into a position where he must side against intellectual freedom. Clearly this story illustrates the temptations that exist for the hesitant bystander stuck at the crossroads. Perhaps a more fitting title for this story would have been “What If?” Hidemaro is clearly depicted as villainous to Ôgai, as he acts against his better judgement.

### Japan's “Last Man”

The “last man” is a central theme throughout Ôgai's novel, *Youth* (1911). It is introduced early on in the novel in the depiction of a lecture by a famous writer named Fuseki, who is generally regarded to be a fictional representation of the celebrated fiction writer and essayist Natsume Sôseki. During the period in which *Youth* is set, both Mori Ôgai and Natsume Sôseki displayed a keen interest in the works of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. In fact, one of *Youth's* most pivotal chapters depicts the Japanese premiere of Ibsen's play, *John Gabriel Borkman*, that is clearly a fictional representation of the real-life premiere for which Mori Ôgai himself provided the Japanese text.<sup>37</sup> In the portion of Fuseki's lecture quoted below, Fuseki is paraphrasing the fifth aphorism of the first book of *Zarathustra* in which he substitutes Nietzsche's highly abstract imagery in *Zarathustra* in favour of references to the works of Ibsen and Nietzsche:

ノールウェイ  
イブセンは初めノルウエーの小さいイブセンであつて、それが社會劇に手を着けてから、大きな  
ヨオロッパ  
歐羅巴イブセンになつたといふが、それが日本に傳はつて来て、又ずつと小さいイブセンに

<sup>37</sup> This event took place in 1909 at the Yûrakuza theatre in Tokyo.

なりました。なんでも日本へ持つて来ると小さくなる。ニイチエも小さくなる。[...]ニイチエの詞を思ひ出す。地球はその時小さくなつた。そして其上に何物をも小さくする、最後の人類がひよこひよこ跳つてゐるのである。我等は幸福を發見したと、最後の人類は云つて、目をしばだたくのである。日本人は色々な主義、色々なイスマを輸入して来て、それを弄<sup>もてあそ</sup>んで目をしばだたいてゐる。何もかも日本人の手に入つては小さいおもちゃになるのであるから、元が恐ろしい物であつたからと云つて、剛<sup>こは</sup>がるには當らない。(24)

At first, Ibsen was Norway's little Ibsen, but after turning to social dramas, he became Europe's big Ibsen. When he was introduced in Japan, however, he again reverted to the small Ibsen. No matter what comes to Japan, it turns into something small. Even Nietzsche became small in our country. [...] Something occurs to me that Nietzsche once said: 'At the time the earth became small. And then everything on earth became smaller.' The last race of human beings will be dancing with superb nimbleness and flexibility. 'We've discovered real happiness,' this last race will say, their eyes blinking. The Japanese people import all kinds of systems, all kinds of *isms*, and while toying with these, Japanese eyes are perpetually blinking. Everything and anything in turned into small playthings when fingered by us Japanese. So you don't have to be terrified if this thing or *ism* is at first quite dreadful. (406-407)

The passage in *Zarathustra* which Ôgai's bears such a remarkable similarity to comes directly after the passage quoted previously in this essay in which the nature of the "last man" is described:

„Was ist Liebe? Was ist Schöpfung? Was ist Sehnsucht? Was ist Stern?“ -- so fragt der letzte Mensch und blinzelt.

Die Erde ist dann klein geworden, und auf ihr hüpfen der letzte Mensch, der Alles klein macht. Sein Geschlecht ist unaustilgbar, wie der Erdflöhen; der letzte Mensch lebt am längsten.

„Wir haben das Glück erfunden“ -- sagen die letzten Menschen und blinzeln.

Sie haben die Gegenden verlassen, wo es hart war zu leben: denn man braucht Wärme. Man liebt noch den Nachbar und reibt sich an ihm: denn man braucht Wärme.

Krankwerden und Misstrauen-haben gilt ihnen sündhaft: man geht achtsam einher. Ein Thor, der noch über Steine oder Menschen stolpert!

Ein wenig Gift ab und zu: das macht angenehme Träume. Und viel Gift zuletzt, zu einem angenehmen Sterben.

[.....]

Kein Hirt und Eine Heerde! Jeder will das Gleiche, Jeder ist gleich: wer anders fühlt, geht freiwillig in's Irrenhaus. (1:13-14)

"What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star? thus asks the last man, and he blinks.

"The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

"We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth.

"Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully. A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or human beings! A little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams. And much poison in the end, for an agreeable death.

[.....]

"No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse." (1:129-130.)

Zarathustra's "speeches" express a relationship between the growth in the prowess of science and epistemology, and the manifestation of a "god-complex" in humanity. Humanity is depicted as having reached what it perceives to be a transcendent state in which people believe

that they are able to "invent" their own happiness, in the form of scientific achievements, philosophical systems, and material creations, as opposed to seeking happiness in a spiritual realm. Zarathustra describes a type of human who perceives normal states of being, such as "sickness" and "death," and natural emotions such as "love," as being beneath their dignity or not worthy of appreciation as highly evolved beings.

The "systems" and "isms" referred to by Fuseki represent the many ideas "imported" from the West that are responsible for introducing the sense of over-confidence and hubris described in *Zarathustra*, to Japan. Communism and anarchism are definitely among these "isms," as indicated by the last line of the above-quoted passage, in which Zarathustra alludes to a system of thought in which "everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse." Clearly, this indicates what Mori Ôgai terms the "morals of the common herd" in "Delusions," a type of philosophical discourse which both Ôgai and Nietzsche depict as particularly distasteful and undignified manifestations of modernity. In addition, the phrase which refers to the "madhouse," indicates that those who uphold "aristocratic" systems of thought will find themselves out of place in a world in which the philosophies of the "common herd" prevail. Thus, in both *Youth* and *Zarathustra*, the word "small" is a parody of the excessive amount of overconfidence and "cockiness" which both Nietzsche and Ôgai's fictional character, Fuseki, perceive as inherent components of "modernity."

On one level, Fuseki's speech reflects many of the deeply held convictions of the narrator of "Delusions"—specifically his perception that Western ideas are being imported to Japan like "tricks" and "wares" pulled at random from a trunk. Both Fuseki and the narrator of "Delusions" express the opinion that importing foreign ideas and merely imitating the way in which they are employed in the West, is clearly a problematic solution to Japan's "crisis of ideas," as well as a demonstration of just how "naive" Japanese intellectuals can be. However, this is where the similarity between Fuseki's ideas and Mori Ôgai's stops. Despite Fuseki's ambivalent stance towards the rampant adoption of "isms" in Japan, he concludes this section of his speech by implying that all of this "toying" with "isms" is simply a passing phase—perhaps growing pains—as indicated in his comment "So you don't have to be terrified if this thing or *ism* is at first quite

dreadful.” Fuseki continues with his speech by quickly changing the subject to Ibsen's individualism as expressed in his social drama, *Brand*. Fuseki offers an interpretation of *Brand's* actions which Mori Ôgai would probably not have agreed with. In addition he offers an actual endorsement of Brand as a model of a “man of the new age”:

しつかい  
悉皆か絶無か。此理想はブランドといふ主人公の理想であるが、それが自己より出でたるもの、自己の意志より出でたるものだといふ所に、イブセンの求めるものの内容が限られてゐる。[...] 宗教は自己の信仰する為めに、自己の<sup>こんりつ</sup>建立するする宗教である。一言で云へば、<sup>オオトノミイ</sup>Autonomieである。それを公式のして見せることは、イブセンにも出来なんであらう。兎に角イブセンは求める人であります。現代人であります。新しい人であります。(25)

All or nothing—this was the ideal which Brand, the protagonist, was seeking, but what Ibsen was searching for was limited to the idea that this ideal world would come from one's self, would come from one's own free will. [...] In order to believe in religion, one has to establish one's own religion. In a word, one has to seek autonomy. Even for Ibsen, the formulation of autonomy was probably an impossibility. At any rate, it is Ibsen himself doing the seeking. He was a modern. He was a man of the new age. (408)

An endorsement of a philosophy, especially one as fiery and defiant as expressed by Ibsen's Brand, is not likely to emerge from any of Mori Ôgai's texts, except in the form of what is clearly designed to be an object of criticism and skepticism such as Fuseki's speeches.<sup>38</sup> As pointed out by Thomas Rimer, the connection between Fuseki and the real Natsume Sôseki can only be taken so far, as it is not likely that Sôseki would have lectured so extensively about German philosophy or used it as the core of his arguments—it simply was not his style or primary area of interest (“Metamorphosis” 253). However, such a blanket endorsement of individualism is clearly indicated as a valid course of action at the end of Sôseki's famous lecture of 1914 entitled “My Individualism” (“Watakushi no kojishugi” 私の個人主義).<sup>39</sup>

私は折角の御招待だから今日まかり出て、出来る又個人の生涯を送らるべき貴方がたに個人主義の必要を説きました。是は貴方がたが世の中へ出られた後、幾分か御参考になるだらうと思ふからであります。(157)

I want to thank you for inviting me here. I have tried my best to explain to you how necessary individualism will be for young men such as yourselves who will have the opportunity to live lives of individual fulfillment, and I have done so in the hope that it might be of some use to you once you have gone out into the world. (315)

One can only begin to imagine the response such words might elicit from Mori Ôgai. Even if he were to agree with these words, it would be almost impossible to imagine Mori Ôgai issuing what amounts virtually to a "call to arms" to young intellectuals. Even though Sôseki insists throughout "My Individualism" that individualism "advocates respecting the existence of others" (他の存在を尊敬する)

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<sup>38</sup> Ôgai's juxtaposition of Zarathustra and Brand is probably not coincidental. Ibsen's protagonist is very similar to Zarathustra. Both characters are depicted at the beginning of each work as rugged hermits, who after a long period of isolation, wander into a town and get attention by making speeches about their philosophies. One of the biggest differences between Brand and Zarathustra is that Brand's philosophy is openly Christian, despite his modern, individualistic personality. Alternatively, Zarathustra is infamous for his famous statement "God is dead." The secular orientation of *Zarathustra* is one of a number of factors which may have contributed to its popularity in Japan.

<sup>39</sup> I am not implying that Sôseki was attempting to endorse any specific form of individualism as depicted by a given philosopher or writer, but individualism in general. As pointed out by Parkes, neither Ôgai nor Sôseki, "even though they were consummately familiar with European ideas" were "naïvely enthusiastic about Nietzsche as Chogyû [...]" (190-191).

and "replaces cliquism with values based on personal judgment of right and wrong" (「党派心がなくつて理非がある主義なのです」 pg. 152), this attitude would likely leave an extraordinarily bad taste in the mouth of Mori Ôgai (309). Sôseki's indiscriminate dispersal of these values to anyone listening, leaving the power to decide the "right" from the "wrong" in the hands of impulsive and zealous young intellectuals, probably did not sit well with Mori Ôgai, who virtually lived by a code of "aristocratic radicalism," that dictated the liberal use of restraint in expressing ideas that might kindle the flames of passion in the "common herd." As previously discussed, Ôgai found it impossible to accept what he perceived as the "passive altruistic morals" of ideologies which cater to the masses. These philosophies "reject all privilege" and are nothing other than the "morality of a stupid, foolish crowd."

If Fuseki is a parody of Natsume Sôseki, then it is a very cutting one indeed, as Fuseki is clearly depicted as a buffoon because of his sloppy misinterpretation of *Zarathustra*. In *Zarathustra*, the "last men" are depicted as being fools for not realizing the absurdity of their nihilistic "God-complex," when they could strive towards and become "Supermen" instead—a state which is depicted as a process of continuous growth and development. Fuseki, however, is interpreting the "last race of human beings" as being indicative of humanity's growing pains, or a natural stage in its organic development, which will eventually lead to something that people—particularly the Japanese—"don't have to be terrified of."

Mori Ôgai is adding an additional dimension to Nietzsche's twist on the word "small," by composing Fuseki's speech in a manner that represents Japanese intellectuals—particularly Fuseki himself—as being particularly foolhardy for implementing "systems" and "isms" which are "flawed" to begin with—simply because they represent an enviable, "modern," hegemonic, Western discourse. The same relationship is applicable to Ôgai's and Nietzsche's respective use of the verb "to blink." Nietzsche employs this word to parody the spellbinding effect which the achievements of "modernity" have had on Western people. However, Ôgai is clearly satirizing the copycat effect that the imitation of these ideas have had in Japan.

Although Fuseki's speeches contain a great deal of fascinating and compelling ideas, they are framed in a context which leave little room for worry that Ôgai's readers will feel the sudden

inspiration to adopt a freewheeling philosophy of individualism. The somewhat fragmented and casual tone of Sôseki's real speeches is exaggerated in Fuseki's condensed speech in *Youth*.

Fuseki's speech is characterized by abrupt changes of topic, lack of a clear argument, defined terms, or scholarly analysis, elements which only serve to agitate the protagonist, despite the provocative and compelling ideas Fuseki presents to the audience of young men: "All at once Jun'ichi felt Fuseki's remarks were beginning to sound like static, meaningless and distant" (408). 純一の耳には拊石の詞が遠い遠い物音のやうに、意味のない雑音になつて聞えてゐる (25).

Although the narrator adds that the audience appears agitated as well, the overall condition of the audience at the end of the speech was "spellbound" (縛がまだ解けないのである). However, the fact that Mori Ôgai is clearly manipulating Sôseki's rhetoric and exaggerating its weaker points is a very important consideration. Despite Ôgai's reservations about the potentially harmful effects of Sôseki's writings and speeches on impressionable minds, Ôgai was very indebted to Sôseki, whose innovative and popular literature often prefigured his own. Ultimately, the fictional depiction of Sôseki and his ideas in Ôgai's writings should not be interpreted as a condemnation, but as a harsh, yet critical and constructive response from a peer.

As pointed out by Rimer, the "multiple displacement" represented by Fuseki's speech, is "a trenchant example of Ôgai's ability to create a literary strategy he deems suitable for his literary and philosophical purposes" ("Metamorphosis" 6). Indeed, Sôseki serves as a convenient tool for Mori Ôgai. As an incredibly esteemed lecturer who *did* tend to leave his audiences "spellbound," Sôseki provides the raw material necessary to study the type of man, who as Rimer puts it, has the "pride of place in the pantheon of those who might spur on the younger generation" ("Metamorphosis" 6). However, as is quite evident, this is not necessarily a complimentary gesture. Although Fuseki presents a number of ideas that are very close to those expressed by Mori Ôgai or his mature protagonists, he is ultimately depicted as being a buffoon for his failure to provide satisfying and complete arguments to justify his zealous and enthusiastic endorsement of provocative ideas. Although the audience of Fuseki's speech is depicted as "spellbound," Jun'ichi and Ômura are not quite spellbound. Nor, however, are they turned away. Rather, they feel compelled to explore

these issues in greater detail, and engage in critical and analytical discussions about them. Although Rimer does not clarify what Ôgai's "literary and philosophical purposes are," I feel that it is clear that this clever technique of introducing ideas through the fictional representation of such a popular speaker as Natsume Sôseki is intended to provoke the reader to actively engage ideas from a detached and skeptical perspective. The protagonist, as well as the reader, are in a position to maintain a critical distance from not only "dangerous" ideas, but positive and optimistic ones, which have the potential of inflicting damage as great as the "dangerous" ones if a detached and skeptical perspective on them is not maintained. It is certainly possible that Ôgai's intention to parody figures such as Sôseki is to induce a healthy dose of skepticism in the reader.

After listening to Fuseki's lecture, Jun'ichi leaves the young men's club and heads back to his lodgings where he encounters Ômura, who for the rest of the novel functions as Jun'ichi's "best friend." Although Jun'ichi is certainly not "spellbound" like the general audience at the young men's club, he is certain that there is "something special" about Fuseki (彼が何物かが氣になる, pg. 26), even if it is only something which can be discerned "faintly" (髣髴として認められた様). Subsequently, Jun'ichi asks his new friend what sort of person Fuseki was referring to when he said that Ibsen's Brand exemplifies the "man of the new age":

新しい人は詰まり道徳や宗教の理想なんぞに浦はれてゐない人なんでせうか。それとも何か別の物を有してゐる人なんでせうか」

微笑がまた閃け。

「消極的の新人と積極的の新人と、どつちが本當の新人かと云ふことになりますね。」

「ええ。まあ、さうです。その積極的の新人とふうものがあるでせうか。」微笑が又閃け。

「さうですねえ。有るか無いか知らないが、有る筈には相違ないでせう。破壊してしまへば、又建設する。石を崩しては、又積むのでせうよ [...]。」 (27)

I wonder if 'man of the new age' means someone who is not enslaved by ethical and religious ideals. Or does it mean someone possessed by something else?"

Again Ômura flashed that same smile.

"The real point is which one is genuinely 'a man of the new age,' the passive new man or the active new man?"

"Well, maybe that's the point. But does a truly active new man exist?" said Junichi.

Again Ômura came out with his brief smile.

"Well, I don't know if he does or doesn't, though I agree that there ought to be that kind of person around somewhere. If he's destructive, he's also a builder. Just as the man who demolishes stone ends by heaping them into a foundation. (410)

In the above quoted passage, Jun'ichi and Ômura discuss how the meaning of the word "new man" applies to their world-views as young Japanese intellectuals. Ômura ultimately suggests that the phrase "man of the new age" should be employed specifically to refer to a sophisticated individual who lives a life unfettered by the shackles of convention. However, neither of the young men feels that it would be an appropriate course of action to accept Fuseki's seductive endorsement of a philosophy of individualism that advocates the outright dismissal of established conventions and values in favour of a system that has its roots in a purely personal subjectivity.

In addition, the young men are not satisfied with such generalities as "free will" and "autonomy," which Fuseki uses to characterize the "new man." Ômura and Jun'ichi are curious about what lies at the core of this "individualism" which Fuseki is so eager to see his listeners adopt. They question whether or not the "new man" implies a process of casting off traditional ideals, or whether a constructive process is involved as well. They bring up the question of "passivity" versus "activity," and wonder whether or not a truly "active" new man exists, implying that examples of such a person are not readily available—especially in Japan. Ômura ends the conversation with a rather cryptic statement, in which he alludes to a process of creation that is a direct result of a destructive process. Although not specifically identified, this is clearly an allusion to Nietzsche's philosophy of Eternal Recurrence, that represents an endless process of development and change, and has the act of "dismantling" at its very core.

This allusion to Nietzsche's philosophy of Eternal Recurrence is very well placed. Ôgai has presented the idea of the "new man" as a subject worthy of skepticism and caution. This circumspect attitude is not simply a reaction to the concept of the "new man" itself, but the clumsy and sloppy manner in which it is presented. Fuseki's speech, like the passages I quoted from Sôseki's lecture, "My Individualism," is designed with the specific intention of kindling a passionate and feverish spirit of individualism in the ears of the young men listening to these speeches and to encourage them to freely explore "free will" and "autonomy." Although this may appear to represent an optimistic and forward-looking philosophy, it is clear that it is Mori Ôgai's intention to depict Fuseki's outright endorsement of individualism and free-will as callous behaviour. This callousness is due to the lack of a firm and solid foundation on which Fuseki's system of ideas is built upon. Although it is clear that Fuseki sees individualism, free will, autonomy, and a whole host of other inspiring concepts as the means to achieve a more advanced and satisfying human condition, his system relies entirely upon the discretion of the individual to decide upon how these concepts will be implemented. His system provides no systematic or organic method for transformation. It is chaotic and leaves the door open for irresponsible, impulsive, and ill-informed people to act at their own discretion. It is inorganic in that it encourages "imitating" individualism—"trying it out for size"—rather than incorporating it into an "active" and "constructive" model for personal growth and social transformation. And Ôgai clearly presents it this way.

Nietzsche's philosophy of Eternal Recurrence, however, provides an extraordinarily constructive model from which to consider the process of rethinking an existing set of values and conventions. As indicated by the manner in which Nietzsche's ideas are represented in Ômura's example of the "man who demolishes stone ends," it is implied that everything which comprised the original structure will still be present in the new structure. Although they may be held together by a different type of bond, be rearranged into different patterns, or even have an entirely altered form or colour, they will still be there. Nothing will be "cast off," and nothing will actually be destroyed. In one way or another, the shape of every existing piece of the original structure must

be considered in order to maintain the integrity of the new structure. If this process is not monitored, the new structure might very well be flawed, and perhaps even cave in on itself.

The question as to whether or not the "new man" is a man "bound to convention," is one which Ômura and Jun'ichi toy with throughout the novel. The question of passivity versus activity, however, leans strongly in favour of the active, as the passive is seen as being the harbinger of stagnation and pessimism, two things that Ôgai unquestionably held in disdain:

日本で消極的な事ばかり書いてゐる新人の作をみますと、縛られた縄を解いて行く處に、なる程と思ふ處がありますが、別に深く引き付けられるやうな感じはありません。あのフェルハアレンの詩なんぞをみますと、妙な人生観があるので、それが直ぐにこつちの人生観にはならないのですが、其癖あの敬虔なやうな調子に引き寄せられてしまふのです。ロダンは友達ださうですが、<sup>ちやうど</sup>丁度ロダンの彫刻なんぞも、同じ事だらうと思ふのです。さうして見ると、西洋で新人と云はれてゐる連中は、皆氣息の通つてゐる處があつて、それが日本の新人とは大分違つてゐるやうに思ふのです。拊石さんのイブセンの話も同じ事です。どうも日本の新人といふ人達は、拊石の云つたやうに、小さいのではありますまいか。(28)

"When I read works of the new men in Japan who write only about passive subjects, I do admire the way they undo the ropes that bind them, but I can't find anything in them which really attracts me, really overwhelms me. As for Verhaeren's poems, they too contain a unique view of life. And even though his view doesn't agree with mine, I'm drawn to a pious quality I find unique. I heard Rodin was Verhaeren's friend, and I found this same religious quality in Rodin's sculptures. When I look at these men in this way, it seems to me that what Europeans call the 'new men' are quite different from Japan's 'new men' in that those in Europe have something in them full of life, really active and humane. The same is true of the Ibsen that Mr. Fuseki talked about. As Fuseki said about the Japanese new men, they seem to be men of small caliber. (411)

Again, Mori Ôgai, through the voice of Ômura, intimates that there is something deficient in Japan's "new men." Throughout this essay I have attempted to draw a connection between what Mori Ôgai and many of his protagonists seem to perceive as something missing in both the Japanese language and epistemology—something that deprives the Japanese people of many of the progress-oriented and forward-propelling qualities which Ôgai associates with Western thought. However, there is also a layer of parody involved here as well. Whereas "Westerners" seem to be clearly implicated in Mori Ôgai's texts of indiscriminately using "blind will" and selfish individualism, which are depicted as being responsible for creating a climate of pessimism and nihilism in Western philosophical discourse, it is the Japanese who are particularly "small" because they are imitating this flawed "Western" mentality verbatim. Without exercising sufficient detachment to properly distinguish the positive from the negative aspects of Western thought, the Japanese will simply replicate the Western path towards pessimism and nihilism on their own soil.

Thus, the enviable quality in Western philosophy is not only depicted by Mori Ôgai and his protagonists as being something deficient in the history of Japanese ideas, but the cause of Western philosophy's embracement of nihilism, pessimism, and self-destructive tendencies. Despite its desirability, it is clearly something which must be handled with caution. Although this is a complicated process, through his philosophical ruminations in "Delusions," and the serious, yet playful conversations of his youthful protagonists, Mori Ôgai clearly outlines the cause of Western philosophy's path towards negativity, and exactly why, despite his drawbacks, Nietzsche stands out as one of Western philosophy's last, best hopes.

## Mori Ōgai's "Existential" Crisis

The following excerpt is a condensed version of an extended passage of "Delusions" in which Ōgai identifies a definitive (yet muddled) progression from the pessimism of Hartmann to what seems to be the more sophisticated existentialism of Samuel Beckett or Jean Paul Sartre, which was still decades away. It is based upon his memories of the impressions he had of Western philosophy while living in Berlin, nearly twenty years prior to the composition of "Delusions"—he had not yet discovered Nietzsche:

自分に哲學の難有<sup>ありがた</sup>みを感じさせたのは錯迷<sup>さくめい</sup>の三期であつた。ハルトマンは幸福を人生の目的だとすることの不可能なのを證する為めに、錯迷の三期を立ててゐる。第一期では人間が現世で、福<sup>さいはひ</sup>を得ようと思ふ。少壯、健康、<sup>いづ</sup>友誼、戀愛、名譽といふやうに數へて、一々その錯迷を破つてゐる。[...] 人間は此福を犠牲にして、<sup>わづ</sup>纔かに世界の進化を翼成してゐる。第二期では福を死後に求める。それには個人としての不滅を前提にしておくてはならない。ところが個人の意識は死と共に滅する。[...] 第三期では福を世界過程の未来にもとめる。[...] ところが世界はどんなに進化しても、老病<sup>こんやく</sup>困厄は絶えない。[...] ハルトマンの形而上學では、此世界は出来る<sup>だけ</sup>丈喜<sup>だけ</sup>く造られてゐる。併し有るが好いか無いが好いかと云へば、無いが好い。[...] シヨオペンハウエルを讀んで見れば、マルトマン・ミナス・進化論であつた。世界は有るよりは無い方が好いばかりではない。出来る丈悪く造られてゐる。世界の出来たのは<sup>しつさく</sup>失錯である。[...] この滅びないで残るものを、滅びる寫象の反對に、廣義に、意志と名付ける。意志が<sup>カント</sup>K a n tの物その物である。個人が無いに歸るには、自殺をすれば好いかといふに、自殺をしたつて種類が残る。物その物が残る。そこで死ぬるまで生きてゐなくてはならないといふのである。(128-129)

It was his [Hartmann's] "three stages of illusion" that brought home to me the comforts of philosophy. Hartmann propounds these three stages of illusion in order to prove that happiness is an impossible goal for humanity. He lists youth, health, friendship,

love, and honor, and then destroys each illusion one by one.[...] By sacrificing this happiness, humanity can contribute a little toward the world's evolution. In the second stage, happiness is sought after death. Here one must first accept as a premise the immortality of the individual. But the individual consciousness is destroyed at death [...]. In the third stage, happiness is sought in a future world process.[...] But however the world may evolve, old age, death, pain, and misfortune will never cease.[...] According to Hartmann's metaphysics, the world is constructed as well as it could be. But if one then went on to ask whether it should or should not exist, the answer would be it should not.[...] Schopenhauer was Hartmann minus the theory of evolution. Not only would it be better if the world did not exist, it was in fact the worst of all possible worlds. The fact that it existed at all was a blunder.[...] This indestructible element he called the Will, in the broadest sense of the word, and this Will was in opposition to Representation, which was mortal. Precisely because this Will existed, nothingness was not an absolute but only a relative negation. His Will was the same thing as Kant's "thing-in-itself." Suicide might well be the best way for the individual to return to nothingness, but nevertheless the specifics, the thing-in-itself, would always remain. So all one could really do was live on until death came naturally. ("Delusions" 173)

In the preceding passage, the narrator of "Delusions" depicts the decadence of Western philosophical discourse as a series of disappointments which are the result of simply having too many high self-expectations; a process which ultimately leads to the inevitable conclusion that "nothingness" is the only real "truth." Even though Western philosophy may have experienced a surge of optimism and self-confidence in the Renaissance, Western thinkers used their increasingly powerful abilities to think critically and reason to reduce even the most basic human emotions into concepts which can be negated as easily as a mathematical formula. However, Hartmann at least retained a belief that philosophy is a continuous process of development and evolution, although unlike his more optimistic predecessors in the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, the

presumption that a utopic future is an inherent component of this process has been dismissed. Schopenhauer is depicted as even more dismal however, as Ôgai perceives his philosophy as lacking even the rudimentary vestiges of optimism which were inherent in Hartmann's philosophy; as the only indestructible element in the world is "Will," which is merely the relative negation to "nothingness," then "suicide" is the best answer to life's problems. Without eternal truths, *a priori* concepts of beauty, which Western philosophy and epistemology have relied on as their core concepts for millennia, then there is no reason to do anything but wait for death, conjuring images of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*:

此男はH a r t m a n nの迷いの三期承認してゐる。ところであらゆる錯迷を打ち破つて置いて、生を肯定しろと云ふのは無理だと云ふのである。これは皆迷だが、死んだつて駄目だから、迷を追つ掛けて行けとは云はれない筈だと云ふのである。人は最初に遠く死を望み見て、恐怖して面を背ける。[...]その圈が漸小くなつて、とうとう疲れた腕を死の項に投げ掛けて、死と目と目を見合わす。(132)

[Phillip] Mainlaender accepted Hartmann's three stages of illusions, but then he said it was unreasonable to first of all destroy people's illusions and then tell them to affirm life. All was indeed illusion, but death made a nonsense of the whole matter in any case, so you could hardly tell people to pursue such illusions. First of all man catches sight of death in the distance and turns his back on it in fear. [...] This circle gradually gets smaller and smaller, until eventually he flings his tired arms around the neck of death and looks it straight in the eye. (177)

The evolution of nihilistic thinking in Western thought is presented as a mathematical formula by Ôgai, as expressed by his emphasis of the "relative negation of nothingness" and the diminishing "circle" which leads people to embrace death and "look it straight in the eye." Ôgai seems to believe that despite the versatility, power, and progress-oriented characteristics inherent

to Western thought, there is a rigid constant wedged into this system which ruins all of its potential for success: the absolute finality of “death” and “nothingness.” Ôgai describes Western philosophy as a system that simply surrenders itself to that which it is unable to control; it gives up as it is unable to accept its own limitations. As I will discuss in the next section, Ôgai—very much like Nietzsche—perceives this defect in Western thought as a childish and unnecessary obstacle which can be “overcome.” Westerners are depicted as being too myopic to realize that it is their own rigid thinking which has ruined their chances for happiness.

### Conclusion: Mori Ôgai's Search for a “Bluebird”

During the final conversation between Jun'ichi and Ômura, the young men discuss their interpretation of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist drama *L'oiseau bleu* (*The Bluebird*).<sup>40</sup> Jun'ichi summarizes the plot of *L'oiseau bleu* as a story about a woodcutter and his family who “exist on bread and water, and even at Christmas [...] can't afford to buy candles to light up the fir tree even though the bluebird of happiness lives in a cage in the woodcutter's hut” (479). 麵包と水とで生きて  
 みて、クリスマスが来ても、子供達に縦の枝にろう燭を點して遣ることも出来ないやうな木樵りの棲  
 み家にも、幸福の青い鳥は籠の内にある (84). He further explains that in order to solve this crisis,  
 the woodcutter's children, Tytyl and Mytyl (T y l t y l, M y t y l), “wander in search of the  
 bluebird” (その青い鳥を餘所に求めて) to various fantasy lands. In one of these lands, “Future Land”  
 (未来の國) they witness “children of the future” (これから先きに生れて来る子供) building amazing  
 machines which give human beings the ability to cure diseases and fly through the air. Some of  
 these people are even attempting to “create a machine by which to overcome death” (死に打ち克つ  
 方を工夫してゐる). Jun'ichi offers the following interpretation of *L'oiseau bleu*'s utopic vision:

<sup>40</sup> Bowring states that this play was quite popular in Japan at the time (145).

十九世紀は自然科学の時代で、物質的の開化を齎<sup>もたら</sup>した。我々はそれに満足することが出来な  
いで、我々の觸角を外界から内界に向け換へたでせう。[...] そんな物は、現在の幸福が無く  
なつた先の入れ合わせに過ぎないぢやありませんか。(84)

The nineteenth century was the era of natural science, and it brought about our materialistic  
civilization. But we couldn't be satisfied with that kind of world, so we turned our eyes from  
the outer world to the inner.[...] Don't you feel all these machines and devices are no more  
than substitutes to make up for our losses once our present happiness vanishes? (479)

After Jun'ichi finishes his interpretation, Ômura responds by offering a similar interpretation, but  
one that is clearly shaped by his more sophisticated knowledge of Western and Eastern philosophy:

西洋で言つて見ると希臘<sup>ギリシア</sup>の論理がP l a t o n<sup>プラトン</sup>あたりから超越的になつて、基督教<sup>キリスト</sup>が其方面  
を極力開拓した。彼岸<sup>ひがん</sup>に立脚して、馬鹿<sup>かうべ</sup>に神々しくなつてしまつて、此岸<sup>しがん</sup>がお留守になつた。  
樵夫<sup>よそ</sup>の家に飼つてある青い鳥は顧みられなくなつて、餘所に青い鳥を求めることになつたの  
だね。(85)

If we look at the Western world, Greek ethics were transcendentalized after Plato, and  
Christianity developed his thought to a considerable degree. This philosophy, based on a  
transcendental world, became supremely awe-inspiring, and this world itself became  
meaningless, empty. As a result, the bluebird, caged in the woodcutter's hut, went  
unheeded and had to be searched for elsewhere. (481)

The tendency of humanity to turn their backs on "this world" and place too much emphasis  
on the importance of the "other world" is a very important theme in *Zarathustra*. Although there  
are no passages in *Zarathustra* which correspond to Ômura's and Jun'ichi's conversation as closely  
as Fuseki's speech does, there are a number of passages which express nearly the same ideas

contained in Ômura's dialogue. Perhaps the most appropriate example from *Zarathustra* is in another one of Zarathustra's speeches in the first book entitled "On the Afterworldly" (*Von den Hinterweltern*). What is particularly interesting is how Walter Kaufmann translates the German phrase *jene Welt* as "that world" in nearly the same context as Ôgai employs *higan*. The German phrase *jene Welt* is closely related to the word which Nietzsche frequently uses to represent the concept of the "afterworldly," *jenseits*, which is a word employed either as a preposition in the genitive case or an adverb, both of which mean "on the other side of." When capitalized, *Jenseits* becomes a noun which literally means the "hereafter." The word-pair which expresses the opposite of *jenseits* and *Jenseits* is *diesseits* and *Diesseits*, which can be respectively translated as "on this side of" and "in this life."<sup>41</sup> The parallels that exist between the etymologies of these respective word-pairs, as well as Ôgai's tendency to consistently refer to Nietzsche's philosophy as the "philosophy of this world," (*shigan*) indicate the strong possibility that Ôgai's interpretations of Western philosophy, and those expressed by his fictional characters, were influenced by Nietzsche's texts.<sup>42</sup> The following passage from "The Afterwordly" represents Nietzsche's perception of the respective roles of "this world" and "that world." It is one of a number of passages which may have served as a

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<sup>41</sup> In Ikuta Chôkô's 1911 translation of *Zarathustra*, *jenseits* and *jene Welt* are frequently translated as *higan* 彼岸 as well as *takai* (他界—literally the "other world"). As Mori Ôgai's exact contribution to Chôkô's translation is not known, it is not possible to prove that he influenced Chôkô's choice of words. However, the appearance of this translation during the same year in which *Youth* was published would indicate at least a possible connection.

<sup>42</sup> In "The Tower of Silence" (1910) towards the end of the fictional newspaper article which comprises the majority of the story, the fictional journalist briefly summarizes the path of Western philosophy towards nihilism in much the same way as Ômura or the narrator of "Delusions." In this passage, he specifically uses the phrase "Nietzsche's this-world philosophy" (ニイチエの此岸哲学), making a clear connection between the philosophies of Nietzsche and "this world" (*shigan*). He does this for no other author (282).

model for Mori Ôgai when composing the dialogue of Ômura's and Jun'ichi's conversations. Rather than referring to any of humanity's specific achievements, Nietzsche represents humanity's disdain of "this world" by its tendency to scorn the limitations of its own corporeal existence:

Glaubt es mir, meine Brüder! Der Leib war's, der an der Erde verzweifelte,--der tastete mit den Fingern des bethörten Geistes an die letzten Wände.

Glaubt es mir, meine Brüder! Der Leib war's, der an der Erde verzweifelte,--der hörte den Bauch des Seins zu sich reden.

Und da wollte er mit dem Kopf durch die letzten Wände, und nicht nur mit dem Kopfe,--hinüber zu „jene Welt“.

Aber „jene Welt“ ist gut verborgen vor dem Menschen, jene entmenschte unmenschliche Welt, die ein himmlisches Nichts ist; und der Bauch des Seins redet gar nicht zum Menschen, es sei denn als Mensch. (32)

Believe me, my brothers: it was the body that despaired of the body and touched the ultimate walls with the fingers of a deluded spirit. Believe me, my brothers: it was the body that despaired of the earth and heard the belly of being [Seins] speak to it. It wanted to crash through these ultimate walls with its head, and not only with its head--over there to "that world." But "that world" is well concealed from humans--that dehumanized inhuman world which is a heavenly nothing; and the belly of being does not speak to humans at all, except as a human. (143-144)

In the following passage, Ômura continues to build upon his analysis of the development of Western culture. It is one of the most pivotal passages in all of Mori Ôgai's "literature of ideas" as it delineates a clear connection between the paradoxical relationship in Western thought in which progress and nihilism are inextricably linked, and what Mori Ôgai perceives as a deficiency in Japanese thought--a deficiency which is responsible for the inability of the Japanese language and

Japanese ideas to embody the inspiring and forward-propelling concepts which Ōgai considers enviable qualities of Western discourse:

<sup>ルネッサンス</sup>  
R e n a i s s a n c e といふ奴が東洋には無いね。あれが家の内の青い鳥をも見させてくれた。大膽な航海者が現れて、本當の世界の地圖が出来る。天文も本當に分かる。科學が開ける。芸術の花が咲く。器械が次第に精巧になつて、世界の総てが佛者の謂う器世界ばかりになつてしまつた。殖産と資本とがあらゆる勢力を吸収してしまつて、今度は彼岸がお留守になつたね。その時ふいと目が醒めて、彼岸を覗いて見ようとしたのが、ショペンハウエルといふ變人だ。彼岸を望んで、此岸を顧みて見ると、萬有の根本は盲目の意志になつてしまふ。それが生を肯定することの出来ない厭世主義だね。そこへニイチェが出て一轉語を下した。なる程生とふうものは苦艱くげんを離れない。併しそれを避けて逃げるのは卑怯だ。苦艱籠めくげんごごに生を領略する工夫ホウツトがあるといふのだ。W h a tの問題をh o w にしたのだね。どうかして此生を有の儘に領略しなくてはならない。(85-86)

And I feel that the future development of man's ideas can only occur in the West. You see, there's never been a Renaissance in the Orient. The Renaissance made it possible for men to find the bluebird in their own homes. Bold voyagers appeared and created the real maps of the world. Astronomy came to be understood. The sciences developed. The arts bloomed. Machines became more and more significant, and everything in the world turned into what the Buddhists call the material world. Production and capital absorbed all our energies so that the other world became neglected, meaningless. And then that eccentric Schopenhauer suddenly awoke and attempted to peer into that other world. Wishing for that other world, he reflected on this world we were in. He envisioned all creation as fundamentally a product of blind will. This is his pessimism, a pessimism which can't accept life affirmatively. And then Nietzsche appeared and handed down a totally opposite

thesis. He said that one cannot escape suffering in this life, but that it's cowardly to avoid it by running away. He proclaimed there was a way of comprehending life's significance while fully being immersed in its suffering. That is, he turned the problem of What into How. You have to find, at any cost, the significance of life as it is. (481)

Echoing the grim prognosis for the future of scientific research in Japan, expressed by the narrator of "Delusions," Ômura states that "man's" ideas can only be "developed" in the West. In this passage, Ômura specifically focuses his argument on the European Renaissance, a turning point in the development of Western civilization, which he identifies as both its zenith and the defining moment in which the seeds of pessimism were sown. Ômura sounds as though he were summarizing the previously quoted passage from *Second World and Green World*. Like the "green" in Berger's passage, which is supposed to represent a "better" world created by "man" based on raw material provided by "God," the "blue" in "bluebird" is employed as a metaphor for this process. Ômura alludes to the rapidity of technological, social, and cultural development, but also how these developments are qualitatively different from those of previous eras: they were able to represent the actual state of things—"the thing in itself." Europeans made "real" maps and "truly" came to understand astronomy.

Despite Ômura's belief that "Buddhism's renunciation of the world" and Christianity's renunciation are the "same" and his remarkable ability to use words of Buddhist origin such as *higan* and *shigan* to describe the similarity between two religions, the nihilism found in "this world" is a distinctly "Western" phenomenon, the roots of which go back thousands of years. In addition, it appears that Ômura perceives that this nihilism and the inspiring, progress-oriented characteristics of Western epistemology are inextricably intertwined. Ômura postulates a direct correlation between the extreme nature of Western epistemology's technological and empirical orientation and the loss of what he also perceives to be its most awesome and exhilarating qualities—a theme that has appeared in almost all of Ôgai's texts discussed in this essay. Whereas Ômura seems to approach this situation with a relative degree of levity, the more mature narrator of "Delusions"

finds the situation absolutely aggravating and disappointing, as indicated by his disappointed and detached perspective which becomes more intense and paralyzing with each passing year. Mori Ôgai and his protagonists perceive this paradoxical relationship between optimism and nihilism as an inherent quality of Western epistemology. It is particularly disturbing as it reveals the true complexity of Japan's epistemological dilemma—a dilemma for which there is no clear solution.

As clearly depicted in the works discussed in this essay, Western epistemology and philosophical ideas are perceived as a hegemonic discourse in nearly every level of society, ranging from pure, theoretical academic discourse, to urban planning, hygiene, and foreign policy. The discourse of the hegemonic West is ubiquitous in Mori Ôgai's literature, down to the finest details of the actual style in which the narratives are composed. However, despite the presence of what is clearly the desire on the part of both the author and many of his characters to release the tension caused by the dissonance between Western and Japanese systems of thought, Ôgai offers no resolution to this crisis—in spite of the fact that the nature and roots of this dissonance seem to be lucidly presented in the texts. If it were not for the fact that nihilism is depicted in Ôgai's texts as the inevitable outcome of the extreme individualism in Western discourse, then the answer to Japan's epistemological dilemma would be clear: find some way to recreate the exuberance and glory of the European Renaissance in Japanese discourse. This would solve a number of problems that are posited in Ôgai's "literature of ideas," particularly the gap in Japanese epistemology that Mori Ôgai believes is depriving it of such progress-oriented and inspiring concepts as *Forschung*, or as depicted in characters from Western literature such as Ibsen's *Brand* or Goethe's *Faust*.

Yet there are a number of problems inherent in such a solution. As clearly given expression in Mori Ôgai's depiction of Fuseki, advocating individualism as a blanket solution to Japan's epistemological crisis is not an acceptable solution. This lack of acceptability is twofold. In the first place, replicating a process which led to the philosophical discourse of nihilism and decadence in Europe is clearly not a viable option. Even if it were, the outright adoption of Western philosophical and technological ideas into Japanese epistemology are simply "imitations,"

"cheap" and hollow constructs that lack the authenticity and full-development of their original, European counterparts.

Previously in this essay I discussed the profound effects the speech of a German geologist named Alfred Naumann had on Mori Ôgai when he was living and working in Germany. This speech left Ôgai with feelings of anger, despondency, and frustration with the German geologist's convictions that Japan will never be an environment conducive to truly useful scientific research. In this essay, I have attempted to illustrate Ôgai's response to this experience in such stories as "Delusions" and "Under Reconstruction," in which Ôgai indicates that such a judgement of his country is premature, as it is still in the midst of "reconstruction," and that it is simply not ready to be on equal terms with the West—"not yet." As Donald Keene points out, Ôgai had a similar experience over a decade after his return to Japan, in which he attended the lecture of another German scientist named Erwin Bälz, who made a number of similar criticisms of Japan, but indicated a specific reason why he believed that Japan's condition is terminal. Keene states that Bälz was of the opinion that the atmosphere for scientific research, which had "developed organically in the West since the days of the Greeks, could never be transplanted to a country without the same historical background" (Keene 362).

The emphasis on the significance of organic development, which seems to have its greatest expression in *Youth*, was the kernel of Sôseki's speech entitled "The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan" ("*Gendai nihon no kaika*" 現代日本の開化) given in the summer of August 1911. Although Sôseki does not specifically mention the Renaissance, he expresses his contention that one of the problems which lies at the core of Japanese epistemology's encounter with the "West" is that the inherently hegemonic nature of Western discourse has made Japan feel compelled to adopt ideas overnight, whereas in Europe, these ideas (presumably) were able to enjoy the fruits of an organic development:

それで現代の日本の開化は前に述べた一般の開化と何處が違ふかと云ふのが問題です。若し一言にして此問題を決しやうとするならば和はかう断じたい、西洋の開化（即ち一般の開化）

は内發的であつて、日本の現代の開化は外發的である。こゝに内發的と云ふのは内から自然に出て發展すると云ふ意味で丁度花が開くやうにおのづから蕾が破れて花瓣が外に向ふのを云ひ、丈外發的とは外からおつかぶさつた他の力で己むを得ず一種の形式を取るのを指した種なのです。(44-45)

So, then, the question facing us is this: How does the civilization of modern-day Japan differ from civilization in general as I have been discussing it? Simply stated, Western civilization (that is, civilization in general) is internally motivated, whereas Japan's civilization is externally motivated. Something that is "internally motivated" develops naturally from within, as a flower opens, the bursting of the bud followed by the turning outward of the petals. Something is "externally motivated" when it is forced to assume a certain form as the result of pressure applied from the outside. (272)

"The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan" does not end in the "call to arms," as I have characterized the conclusions to both Fuseki's fictional speech in *Youth* and the previously quoted passage from Sôseki's "My Individualism." The conclusion suggests simply that "we probably should go on changing through internal motivation while trying our best to avoid a nervous breakdown" (283). 只神経衰弱に罹らない程度に於いて、内發的に變化して行くが好からうといふやうな體裁の好いことを言うより外に仕方がない (53). Although Mori Ôgai might tacitly agree with Sôseki's assessment, it is not likely that Ôgai would resort to the dramatic tone with which Sôseki finished his sentence, in which he conjures of image of Japan having a "nervous breakdown"—an image he gradually develops throughout the latter half of his essay. Sôseki posits Japanese and Western discourses in a dyadic relationship in which the former is "externally" motivated by the latter. The West is depicted as being a self-confident and organic entity. This relationship is not unlike the epistemological "gap" depicted in Ôgai's literature of ideas discussed in this essay. Both Sôseki and Ôgai agree on the problems Japan is facing, but they disagree on the solutions. Each author advocates progress, modernization with a distinct "Japanese" flair, and adopting new ideas.

However, Sôseki's head-first attitude towards Japanese intellectuals adopting ideas such as "individualism," deviates sharply from Ôgai's cautious, elitist, and conservative rhetoric. Although Ôgai does not deny the importance and relevance of individualism in modern Japan, he clearly perceives its presence as having potentially dangerous consequences.

As implied in Jun'ichi's and Ômura's interpretation of *L'oiseau bleu*, the decadence of the West is clearly due to the foolhardiness of the Westerners themselves. Westerners actually *had* the "bluebird of happiness" in the palm of their hands, but lost it due to the excessive God-complex which developed in the Renaissance. In addition, throughout all of the texts I have discussed, Ôgai clearly depicts his irritation at how the West has tainted its philosophical discourse with pessimism and nihilism—a philosophical discourse which is otherwise depicted by Ôgai as awe-inspiring and enviable for its progress-oriented qualities. However, he is even more irritated by his own countrymen for imitating the West and potentially bungling their own chances for ever finding a "bluebird" in their own country. Even though Japan's modernization may appear to be a success story, the Japan depicted in Mori Ôgai's fiction is clearly a land populated by Nietzsche's "last men," who are in danger of missing out on the opportunity to become something truly great, simply because they are unable to recognize the faults in their own system of judgement.

Modern Japan is depicted as a grotesque creation in which almost everything, despite its attractive veneer, is actually malformed and not fully functional. Whether it is the "painted wooden structures" observed by Jun'ichi, the buffoonish Fuseki, or the misguided young scholar Hidemaro, Ôgai's fictional depiction of late-Meiji Japan is filled with both human and inanimate examples of what happens when a society relies on the process of outright imitation as the means to achieve cultural and social development. The West is portrayed as having had the luxury to develop its ideas organically over a long period of time. It was also lucky enough to have had the opportunity to reap the rewards of this organic development by giving full expression of its achievements in an inspiring Renaissance, in which at least for a time, Westerners were able to enjoy their "bluebird" in their own "hut."

The motif of the bluebird has its genesis in Ôgai's voyage home from Europe. As described in "Delusions" Ôgai claims that in Ceylon, he was "sold a beautiful bird with blue wings by a man with a red-checkered cloth wound round his head and loins" ("Delusions" 175). 自分は錫蘭<sup>セイロン</sup>で、赤い格子縞の布を、頭と腰とに巻き附けた男に、美しい、青い翼の鳥を買はせられた (130). When Ôgai returned to the ship, he reports that one of the sailors said that the bird would not live. Indeed the bird died before it reached Yokohama. Several pages later in "Delusions," the narrator states that he has been "fated to be misplaced" (自分のゐるない筈の所に自分がゐるやうにである) as he is an "eternal malcontent" (永遠不平家). The only explanation he offers of this statement is in the following cryptic passage:

どうして灰色の鳥を青い鳥に見ることが出来ないのである。道に迷つてゐるのである。夢を見てゐるのである。夢を見てみて、青い鳥を夢の中に尋ねてゐるのである。なぜだと問うたところで、それに答へることは出来ない。これは只單純なる事實である。(132)

Somehow I cannot bring myself to see a gray bird as if it were a blue bird. I am lost. I wander in a dream; in a dream and searching for a blue bird within that dream. I ask why, but can give no answer. It is a simple fact, a fact of my consciousness. (177)

On one level, Ôgai is implying that the perhaps a "blue bird" simply can't survive in Japan, as Japan represents a culture in which no one is ready to "find their bluebird." However, these passages also imply that no matter how great the temptation, Mori Ôgai will not ever be satisfied with a "blue bird" which is only blue on the surface but grey within—despite whatever seductive beauty or charm it may possess.<sup>43</sup> In addition, it is clear throughout Ôgai's "literature of ideas," which is directed in large part to young Japanese intellectuals, that he hopes that they will never allow themselves to be "enticed" by the "zeal that surrounds a cause" or the "sight of a burning fuse," as put by Nietzsche in the aphorism about "youth" at the head of this essay. Kuki Shûzô, in his 1930 treatise on Japanese aesthetics entitled "The Structure of 'Chic'" (*Ita no kôzô* 「いき」の構

造), states that “ashen grey” (*haiiro* 灰色)--the same shade of grey depicted by Mori Ôgai in the above passage--is “no more than the color of ‘theory’ which has turned his back on ‘life,’ as Mephisto says” (39). メフィストの言うやうに「生」に背痛「論理」の色に過ぎないかも知れぬ (108). If we are to accept Kuki Shûzô’s interpretation of the colour “ashen grey,” in which he draws a parallel to Goethe’s *Faust*, then it is clear that the “greyness” of modernity as depicted in “Delusions” is indeed the colour of the superficial and empty qualities which Ôgai has identified in the flawed and pessimistic discourse of the West. It is the colour of the “last man” who has “turned its back on ‘life’” and places faith only in his own “modern” prowess. Thus, among the countless layers of subtexts and ideas of Ôgai’s fiction written between 1909-1912, one of the many messages which emerges is that the “last race of human beings” must not be allowed to dance “nimble” in Japan, but encouraged to take the initiative to grow into something truly new, original, and distinctly Japanese. There are two aspects to Nietzsche’s concept of the “last man”; one emphasizes his potential for stagnation, and nihilistic and self-destructive thinking while the other emphasizes his potential to solve these dilemmas by engaging in the process of “overcoming.” Although Ôgai would hardly endorse the dramatic and extreme nature of Nietzsche’s ideas exactly as they are presented in *Zarathustra*, the aspect of Nietzsche’s ideas which emphasizes continuous intellectual development, detached-engagement, and the recognition and transcendence of one’s limitations is clearly a crucial aspect of Ôgai’s “literature of ideas.”

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<sup>43</sup> The colour “ashen grey” (*haiiro* 灰色) serves as an important theme throughout Ôgai’s “literature of ideas.” It appears in a wide variety of instances in which some negative aspect of modernity is manifested. The most common usage of this word I have been able to find is in Ôgai’s unfinished novella, quite appropriately titled “Ashes of Destruction.” However it is also appears a number of times in similar contexts in *Youth* and “The Tower of Silence” as well. It should also be mentioned that Nietzsche liberally employs the use of the colour “ashen grey” in the third part of *Zarathustra* in which Zarathustra travels into places which are clearly depicted as representations of the modern world.

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