Behavior and Sentiments of the Radical Child in Japan in the 1960s

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1

The Japanese speak of the "Golden 60s," a phrase ubiquitous in *Life* magazine during the year 1960. Having recovered, some say "miraculously," from the devastation caused by the Pacific War with America and starting to feel more confident about Japan's economic future, the Japanese harbored only too naturally an illusion of an approaching decade of glittering affluence. From among an array of factors contributing to Japan's economic success, one must count the very close alliance with American capitalism. The strong America of the 1950s was a symbol of affluence and the object of ardent yearning by the Japanese.

Affluence in itself brings about a kind of positive effluence. America literally exuded "justice" of some sort or other merely because of its affluence and strength. Maybe it was for this reason that Westerns became the most popular among the Japanese masses of all the TV programs imported from America during the first few years of the 1960s. All the major Japanese TV stations aired them during prime time and enjoyed high viewing rates: *Laramie*, *The Rifle Man*, *Raw Hide*, and *Bonanza*, to name a few. *Laramie* in particular served a trend-setting role. The story was always the same: an outlaw comes to a farm and settles in, fights a bad guy together with the owner of the farm, and wins. This variation of the genre, with an invincible good guy, for the Japanese audience actually had a precursor in the Japanese period adventure dramas with their moralizing and didactic themes. At the same time, the straightforward message of "right always wins over wrong" unwittingly served the purpose of promoting American cultural power.

The masses were not so naïve as to believe that the message really corresponded to the reality; rather, they needed some diversion to dilute and expel their feelings of uneasiness over their life and the society at large that were threatening to become too compli-

cated for them to comprehend; the American dramas of simplistic justice ideally served that purpose. Even today, the Japanese stereotype of the American remains that of a cowboy fighting for social justice. Japan's more intelligent masses have naturally detested this dichotomy, particularly when utilized by one American President after another in their attempt at justifying American use of military might. The claims of such Presidents, backed by nuclear weapons already used twice on the nation, insisted that the American position was always the morally right one. The most conspicuous example was the case of the Vietnam War, where the "evil power of communism" was threatening the "justice of American democracy," at least as an ideology. The same applies to Mr. Bush's well-received speech following September 11, declaring war on terrorists. The rhetoric was the same—righteous Americans punishing evil.

The Japanese in 1960 showed a most ambivalent attitude toward America. While there were those who were totally engrossed in the Westerns, there grew a strong wave of anti-Americanism in the form of the movement to oppose the proposed revision of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. At the base of this nationwide movement was a vaguely felt unease concerning American rhetoric. This national movement was brief, lasting about six months in 1960, but ushered in a hot season of political struggles on other fronts. The country was divided squarely into two camps, one positing that the revised Security Treaty would guarantee the security of Japan, and the other claiming that it would force Japan to become part of the American strategy vis-à-vis East Asia. The movement that opposed the revision and ultimately the very existence of the Security Treaty with America was mainly led by the then-Socialist Party of Japan, other opposition forces, and the student movement, the lattermost organized into the All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Governing Associations, or *zengakuren*. When the Government of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi rammed the measure through the nation's half-empty Parliament (which had been boycotted by the opposition), there arose a spontaneous nation-wide protest movement, involving not just students but their professors, other intellectuals, workers and their organizations, and citizens with no specific political affiliation. This movement failed when the revision was approved by the bi-cameral Parliament without its upper House of Councilors actually voting; the Kishi cabinet merely sat through the constitution-prescribed sixty-day grace period. The "Golden 60s" had already assumed an ironic twist by the end of its first year.

What the Japanese experienced was a deep schism between economic prosperity on the basis of record high economic growth and a mixture of political instability and unrest and dismay over unidentifiable feelings of everyday life having meandered into a cul-de-sac. No one reacted more sharply to this societal reality than the university students of the day, arriving at an apex in 1968 and 1969. It was then that the slogan of the "Golden Sixties" turned into a piece of black humor.

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This pathetic, bureaucratic defeat of a national protest movement had a triggering effect: the students developed a profound mistrust of party politics as well as the established political parties (opposition parties included), and felt a general sense of frustration concerning their entire lives. It was this intense feeling of anticlimactic lethargy that prevailed among the young generation of Japan in the early 1960s. Novels depicting their apathetic life became best sellers; for example, Sho Shibata's 1964 *Saredo wareraga hibi* (*Yet Our Own Days*). It is worth recalling now that other Western movement that had a substantive impact on the lives and literary representations of these apathetic youth: Existentialism, which showed them a way out of apathy through social engagement, but whose works were received, as we shall see, with a not-always-conscious edge of irony.

Existentialism was actively introduced to Japan in the 1950s, and major works byJean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus were translated into Japanese one after another. Camus was widely read by literary-minded youths starting with *L'Etranger*, on bookshelves since 1948 in the Shicho sha press edition. Camus's impact on the novelists of apathetic life was significant, but in terms of impact on the reading public of Japan, he was no comparison with Sartre, whose works appeared virtually simultaneously in Europe and Japan. Sartre was the greatest ideologue of anti-colonialism in post-war Europe, and was an emblem of progressive and socially active intellectualism among those uncomfortable with so many cowboys. He was a must-read for students in Japan and his formidable collected works were printed over and over again. He wielded a special power to mobilize students and young workers into the streets, which the older schools of Marxist theory did not quite accomplish. His message lingered perhaps because it lacked the doctrinaire attitudes of the Marxists while engaging with the Marxist tradition that had long been part of Japanese intellectual culture. It struck a profoundly emotional chord among the students: The world has no meaning, and you must make your own sense out of the world, and you yourself are responsible for it; meaning is action, and action alone will make you human. Concepts such as "project" and "engagement" spurred the youth to various protest movements against the Vietnam War and American military bases in Japan.

The terms "project" and "engagement" were translated into the supposed equivalent Japanese words *touki* and *shakai-sanka*, respectively, but students and intellectuals insisted on using the original French words as if there was something valuable and even sacred in the way they could be pronounced with Japanized French pronunciation, dropping the last consonant in a rigorous way. One linguist, Akira Yanafu, came up with the concept of "cassette effect" to describe the newly coined words because these words had the intoxicating effect of making the user believe that there were something valuable (like jewels in a cassette, or music in a jewelery box)

of Western, or more specifically European, origin (41-44, 82; see also Kondo). In the latter 19th century during the Meiji period of rapid industrialization and superficial modernization, everything of value was believed to come from the West. There's a ring of that here; to speak the words in the original French and with French accent had a double "cassette effect" of making the user feel that much closer to the true source of wisdom. The cassette effect, however, was bound to wither away the moment it was realized that the content really had little relevance to Japanese reality, a reality to which the user of these words eventually awoke, causing the construct to crumble like a castle of cobwebs. This moment was some years off, the 1970s and 80s, but we should not overtake ourselves.

I mention in passing that these were the days of the Francophiles. French literature, philosophy, paintings, and, in fact, everything French, were avidly sought after as the highest cultural attainment. People learned French just to inhale the French "scent" that the language emitted from its precious cassette-like signs.

Japanese publishers had their heyday with the French. Not just Sartre himself, but those European authors surrounding and discussed in Sartre's works were published in translation and enjoyed a most susceptible readership. Kanji Nishio et al. were engaged with the first phase of translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's collected works by the early 60s; paperback editions were widely available. Soren Kierkegaard's major works were translated by Keizaburo Masuda et al. between 1962 and '68. A 33-volume edition of the major works of Heidegger was published by Risou sha in 1954, Yoshiaki Utsonomiya et al., translators. Karl Jaspers's selected works were available by the early 70s in the Saburo Suzuki translation.

Sartre's fame also brought fame to those whom he read, including the Marquis de Sade, whose selected works were published in eight volumes by Togen sha press in 1965-66; Georges Bataille, whose major works were translated by Kosaku Ikuta et al. between 1969 and '75; Jean Genet, whose complete works to that date were published by Shincho sha in '68; Samuel Beckett, whose plays were translated by Shinya Ando et al. in 1967, and whose novels were published in translation by Hakusui sha; and Eugene Ionesco, whose complete plays appeared in '69. One could also read major works of Maurice Blanchot in Japanese translation. *L'Espace litteráire* was translated by Norio Awazu et al. in '62; subsequently, almost all his works were published by Kinokuniya shoten. Sartre, in this context, was a cultural hero of the day, and his heroics introduced the Japanese to many other heroes.

It is hardly a surprise, then, that Sartre's visit to Japan in the fall of 1966 created a sensation. For about a month, he, together with Simone de Beauvoir, toured the country, made speeches, attended symposia, carried out open dialogues, and otherwise sent out his messages to enamored Japanese intellectual masses with energizing vigor. However, what Sartre himself had in mind to speak to at those occasions was the defense of the intellectuals, completely

missing the intellectual trend of the day in Japan. His own explanation was that he had seen a rise of anti-intellectualism in France and came to Japan in defense of the intellectuals. While Japanese intellectuals were, by and large, not from the bourgeoisie as they were in France and were not, as they were in France, the target of criticism as a consequence, Sartre's perception was that intellectuals (supposedly everywhere) faced a conflict between the class-specificity of the bourgeoisie and the avowed universality of truth, and that they felt lethargic and alienated. Most conspicuously, he erred in the reading of the societal roles the Japanese intellectuals were playing. His visit therefore proved the start of his demise, and Japanese students gradually started to lose interest in him. But at the time, it was glorious. In an interview, movie director Nagisa Oshima reminisces about an interview he had at the Paris premiere of his movie *Koshukei* (*Hanging*) in 1968, and his comments reflect the dying rays of Sartre:

> "Whom do you respect as a writer?" an interviewer asked. I felt excitement rise. "Jean-Paul Sartre!" I answered. When I said this, my eyes were moist. It was as if I had been producing movies for a decade [1959-69] just to utter this name. It was as if all my hard work to become a movie director and all the hard work of actually directing all these movies over the years was only for that fleeting moment when I could spell out this name (Hasegawa 24).[1]

In his own country, Sartre's influence had already started to wane by the late 50s. Both French and Japanese critics generally agreed that Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralists were making inroads and replacing Existentialism. One could roughly characterize the tendency by citing the demise of subjectivism with individual identity at its center and the rise of objectivism, in contrast. According to the Structuralists, identity or subjective will is not an absolute or solid entity, but various structures bundled together: The essential themes for the Structuralists are not continuity, discontinuity, or even story, but the structure and the system in which the very categories of continuity, discontinuity, and narrative were conceptualized. History could certainly no longer be regarded as a linear progression. With such history went Sartre.

However, Sartre's influence in Japan enjoyed strength well into the early 70s (we will discuss the reasons for this influence below). Campus unrest and anti-Vietnam demonstrations saw their apex in 1968 and '69, but then came a sudden drop of these societal actions in the 1970s. High economic growth produced ideologically empty affluence, and students suddenly felt drained, unable to promote a nationwide insurrection in such posh conditions. Michel Foucault's *L'Archeologie du savoir* came out in Japanese translation in 1975, proclaiming the death of humanism a la Sartre; subsequently, all Foucault's works were translated and voraciously consumed. Foucault became popular not just because of the stu-

dents' feelings of lethargy and fatigue concerning the possibility of effective action, but because an unprecedented and ever-rising tide of consumer culture now effected a total split from 1960s culture. During the following two decades, not just Foucault but most other significant Structuralist and Post-Structuralist texts came out in Japanese translation, beginning with Claude Lévi-Strauss, continuing with Roland Barthes (whose entire oeuvre, unlike in France, was in print during the 70s), and continuing on with Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, all of whom enjoyed the same simultaneity-in-publication as Sartre. These authors, however, were, by and large, read in a hurry, essentially "consumed" with almost no serious critical appraisal attempted of their critique of Western metaphysical ideology and its relevance or irrelevance to the Japanese cultural situation. Only a mere bubble of cultural relativism and self-identity critique bloomed alongside the larger economic bubble.

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In the humanism of Sartre, as it was understood by the radical child of the pre-post-Existentialist era, it is the man with a definite identity who is placed at the center of all human social and cultural endeavors and who builds the institutions that enable such endeavors. On the other hand, Structuralism criticizes such a perception as ultimately human-centric and emphasizes instead the analysis of the structure that gives basic direction to what humans do and think. However, there was one thinker who did not accept either of these views and tried to understand humans in relationship to each other and to the structures of their lives and imaginations, while taking into account all the spheres of illusion and ideology, as well, essentially taking radical thought beyond its European sources and translations. This thinker was a Japanese poet, literary critic, and prolific writer of broad interest, Takaaki Yoshimoto, who exerted a profound influence through the 1960s and 70s on Japan's intellectual community. He addressed Japanese students both in writing and in lectures and spurred them to streets to demand social changes. His thorough reading of Karl Marx, in particular, and his methodological insight in overcoming the dichotomy of substructure and superstructure produced a work of profound importance: *The Communal Illusion* (originally serialized in 1966-67, published in book form in 1968 by Kawadeshobo shinsha, and subsequently translated into French as *L'Illusion commune*). Yoshimoto wrote about three spheres of illusion: that of "community illusion" (religion, law, state), that of "counter-illusion" (family and sexual relations), and that of "individual illusion" (literature and arts). He further identified their structural interrelationships and analyzed ethical conflicts between individuals and the common will that occurred within such interrelationships. According to him, the Japanese state was a form of illusion, a totality of all the illusions that the Japanese harbored. He thus was able to take the myth of the emperor system as an object of study,

explaining the very origin of a system that still held onto Japanese consciousness. This naturally had a great bearing on such issues as the nature of the masses in Japan and their political actions. Kenji Nakagami, a novelist, describes this book with typical enthusiasm:

> It was in 1968, toward the very end of the 1960s, that this book came out, side by side with the street violence. Here was a prophecy. It spoke of the future, and decreed that the state was a form of sex that presents itself as an illusion right in broad daylight. Sex was read as a counter-illusion that was inevitably transformed into community illusion. . . . The publication of this book was the most important event to happen in the transitional period to the 1970s, together with the impending ritual suicide by Yukio Mishima (332).

In 1978, Yoshimoto had an open dialogue with Foucault on the theme of "the methodology of world cognition—how to finish with Marxism." Kojin Karatani, probably the most incisive literary critic alive today, describes how the two giants essentially talked past each other. For Yoshimoto, law and the state were merely a part of the community illusion. Law for a Japanese is not to be trusted: It is an illusion that surfaced from the depths of sexual desire. It cannot be expressed in language. Yoshimoto's task was to give it an explicit form. But for Foucault law is reason, a logical language. In order to criticize the state, therefore, it was essential also to mount an internal criticism of Western logos itself. That is why "Yoshimoto's criticism of Japan and Foucault's criticism of the West never really met head on," writes Karatani (162).

The concept of relationship in Yoshimoto seems Structuralist at first sight, but it really is a distinct intellectual project in that it embraces both the notions of self-representation (every society thinks itself imaginatively, creatively), historical continuity (this imagination is an aspect of a longer, continuous tradition), and emotional intensity. In terms of his impact on student radicalism, he is closer to Herbert Marcuse than to Louis Althusser or Simone de Beauvoir. Yoshimoto engaged with most of the critical issues of his age as Japan entered the stage of high mass consumption, and he continues to speak and write on the process of man's image production and the role of subcultures today. He sometimes baffles commentators by calling high capitalism one of the highest forms of wisdom humans ever created, for instance. But he seems to be right with the time in a productive writing career that still continues today.

Let us go back once again to the 1960s.

Yoshimoto was particularly influential among those students who were critical of the leadership of the Japan Communist Party (JCP). The JCP and its youth arm strongly criticized students for their violence, but the strategy and organization, as well as daily activities, of this youth arm were under strict bureaucratic control of the parent JCP. Such partisan modes of operation were precisely what

Yoshimoto subjected to thorough and profound criticism. There were other weaknesses: the activities of JCP-led students degenerated into merely asking for marginal improvements in the university facilities; when they succeeded in having the university administration equip all its toilets with toilet rolls, it was advertised as a victory! Such a movement was obviously too down-to-earth to capture the imagination of the university student body as a whole or capitalize on student enthusiasm and energy for social reforms.

In the mid-1960s, when America became irrevocably involved in the Vietnam War and started to bomb North Vietnam, non-JCP students in Japan also became more violent, taking the form of a dual anti-war and anti-establishment movement. Their actions had not merely overt political implications but also more personal significance, i.e., they wanted to overcome the existential challenges of daily life through acts of imaginative creation. In 1968, the whole spectrum of actions reached an apex, "student power" dominating the entire protest movement from mundane demand for university reforms to campaigns asking for more democracy to the anti-Vietnam-war movement to guerilla warfare with steel pipes to the inciting of global revolution. Students held all-night mass rallies with professors dragged out for Maoist-style self-criticism; they barricaded university campuses indefinitely; and they fought with riot police. When they were refused permission to hold mass rallies and demonstrations on International Anti-War Day, they showed international solidarity by mobbing all sorts of public places, including one of the busiest train stations in Shinjuku, where more than 2,000 demonstrators were arrested. Mothers of these fighting students came out to look after the sons and daughters who stayed inside university barricades, distributing milk candies to the students in plain view of the barricades of Japan's greatest and most famous university. One of these mothers also left a graffiti poem in the classical 31-syllable style:

> Young people, said to be violent and rebellious,
> Have clear, undisturbed eyes,
> Which puzzles me.

As if to follow the classical courtesy of returning with another poem, a poster was displayed on a campus that depicted a man with tattoos across his back. At the time and still today, tattoos in Japan are normally worn by self-proclaimed outlaws. This embodied text was a pop-style poem that would go on to enjoy much fame:

> Let me go, Mother.
> The gingko trees on my back
> Are weeping.

The gingko tree referred to here was the symbolic tree of the university. The first line of this return poem achieved instant popularity among students. Ten years later, the author of this poem, a stu-

dent in the Literature Department, became a best-selling novelist of
unconventional and slapstick novels that depict women who have
become like men and men who have become like women. The
sensitivity of this particular radical child easily crossed the line
from partisan discipline to lambent style. It was an easy move for
him, because he was undoubtedly an elitist and not committed to
political party goals in any serious way.

4

One of the literary men of the period who felt great empathy for
the radical child of the New Left was Yukio Mishima. Ironically,
Mishima was a radical right-winger who publicly expressed ardent
admiration for the Emperor. While Mishima was diametrically
opposed to the students politically and ideologically, he did
empathize with the radical students' attempts to blow a hole in the
existing system not only imaginatively, but physically, with their
bodies, in order to initiate a process of revolution worldwide. One
of Mishima's novels, with a junior-high-school student as the prin-
ciple character, gives a clue to the mentality of the young radicals,
Gogo no eikou (or *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace with the Sea*,
1963), which gives us a curious clue about the sharing of sympa-
thies among radicals on both the Left and the Right. It tells the
story of a group of boys who execute a navigator, Ryuji, who once
was their hero but had betrayed their expectations by not setting
out one last time in a voyage to doomed glory. The boys, portrayed
as a pseudo-secret society, are led by a chieftain. The mother of
Noboru, one of the members of the society, rendezvous with Ryuji.
Noboru observes their clandestine meetings. One day, Ryuji choos-
es life on land and decides to marry Noboru's mother. Once an
almost mystical figure, Ryuji now speaks in the prudent tones of a
mundane man. Noboru asks the ex-navigator, "What is the objec-
tive of life?" and carries the banal response back to his friends:

> You know what my father said? He said, "My boy,
> nobody tells you the objective of life. Only you can
> create one with your own power." Ha, what a lesson!
> So common, so banal, such a stereotype! He just
> pushed one of the buttons father could push. Look at
> his eyes. He is on the alert to spot all the creativity. He
> wants to narrow down the world. You know, father is
> an organ that hides the truth. What's worse, he believes
> he secretly represents the truth! (126-27).

To the boys, the father has become nothing but a fraudulent insti-
tution that hides truth and provides lies. They hold an emergency
meeting and resolve to execute Ryuji, Noboru's would-be father.
Ryuji drinks a cup of poisonous tea on a hill overlooking the sea.
The chieftain says repeatedly, "The world is made up of simple
signs and decisions" (11). Ryuji was also one of the simple, almost
mythical signs to whose existence they hoped they could show

respect. Once he falls from that state of (illusory, but emotionally intense) grace, a "simple decision" comes due.

One could probably say that all radical acts of this period were based on "simple signs and decisions." Direct actions that support worldwide revolution without being sure that the revolution was not illusory were inevitably bound to follow such signs and decisions. The "organ that hides the truth," testified to by Yoshimoto, and all the fraudulent institutions (i.e., the rules of daily life, laws, morals, and orders that stand between the world and the individual) were inevitably ignored and destroyed as they, like Ryuji, lost their glamor. Such direct actions against the world were what constituted the radicalism of Japan's radical child. In a sense, such directness could be taken to be the essence of innocence—this was Mishima's point, of course—not unlike that portrayed in another novel that came out about the same time as Mishima's (in 1962), Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. While the conspiracy of a totalitarian, paternalistic state lurks behind the scenes, the radical innocence of Alex and the end results of his violent, direct actions against moral "illusion" are depicted. Innocence, the denial of the pragmatic here-and-now through the imposition of extra-worldly dreams, could become an element of romantic power. Alex was a radical child, too, but also a hopeless romantic, listening to Beethoven in his off-hours. The dream of innocence in Mishima's novel and in the minds of Burgess's readers shows that the radical child and the romantic child are merely two sides of the same coin.

Once we come to see the revolutionary illusions of the age to be a form of romanticism with innocence as its origin and motive, we are reminded of another view and another way to understand the importance of Sartre to Japanese youth. Masashi Miura, a literary critic, argues that the great popularity of Sartre in the 60s is comparable to the popularity of Byron in the early 19th century in Europe (See *Seishun no Shuen* [or The *End of Youthfulness*]). It may not be so easy to see commonality between a British Romantic poet and a French Existentialist philosopher living 150 years apart, but Miura maintains that their impact was indeed very similar both in form and scope, especially when both impacts are considered in terms of the forms of political activism they inspired.

European culture of the early 19th century is inconceivable without Byron. His influence extended beyond literature to music, theater, and painting. In the same way, areas in which Sartre's impact was felt included not just the literature, art, and philosophy of the youth, but, first and foremost, their entire lifestyle. Byron rebelled against his society and sang songs of ecstasy and unease, staking his whole life in the bargain. Miura asserts that Existentialism was also a rebellious romanticism that involved the totality of one's sentiments, thinking, and way of life. He extends this analogy to include the entire wave of radical resistance, both Right and Left, that inundated the world in the 1960s and that destroyed an irrational order on the profound basis of a so-called "reality of everyday life." It therefore follows for Miuma that, with the end of the

radical season of the 1960s, the romantic movement of Europe, having lasted for two centuries, also came to an end.

When we realize that romantic rebellions are a revolution of sentiments and a style of radical will, we are reminded of another man we can ill ignore. If the 1960s was a radical age not only in politics but also in avant-garde experiment in the arts, the god-sent child here is Shuji Terayama and his troupe, the Tenjo Sajiki (or "Upper Balcony"). He organized his own troupe in 1967 but was already active around 1963 visiting festivals on university campuses and speaking on themes like "Advice to Run Away from Home." He was a category of his own in exerting a strong impact on the lifestyle of the young. The titles of his books and plays are sufficient to suggest his attitude of continuous challenge to the young: "Get Everyone Mad" and "Throw Away the Books and Go out to Town," among others. He attempted to bring about a "revolution of principles and reality that would not depend on politics" (Senda 10).

Terayama inhaled the scent of the rebellious season to his heart's content and demonstrated the radical innocence found in Mishima and Burgess in the rarified air of avant-garde theatrical chambers. Like most other avant-garde experiments, his plays lacked professional finesse, but his was a conscious choice to be positively different from the established professional theaters and theatrical orders. One of his earlier productions, *Oyama Debuko no Hanzai* (or *The Crime of Miss Obesity*), featured women of over 100 kilograms (or 200 pounds) standing on stage. As in avant-garde productions worldwide, the production refused the narrative structure of traditional theater and attempted to transform everyday mundanity into a kind of freakshow, presenting the women to the audience as objects of ridicule. A series of early productions featured hunchbacks, child killers, and transvestites. They often ended up with an orgy of the abnormal on stage. According to Terayama, these theatrical provocations tried to "infuse indigenous energy to the energy-drained established theater, and make Kabuki Theater out of a festival of the deformed, the sexually perverted, the juvenile delinquent, and the rebelling students" (14).

In the 1970s, Terayama refused to stay inside the theater building and went out to the street to perform. He produced street plays. Spectators might be given a map and made to walk the town in search of a play. A public bathhouse was declared the theater with no warning and the play just happened. A man in the guise of a mummy visited one ordinary home after another. The framework of fiction versus reality was intentionally destroyed. When the play took place in a theater, a locked room was featured. The 1974 production of *Mojin Shokan* (or *Blind Man's Letters*) featured a completely darkened stage, the audience denied sight. No longer was there a lukewarm and comfortable barrier between the spectators and the actors.

Terayama rebelled against the very institutions that made the theater what the theater was, and he made a play out of his protest itself, using his theater to challenge those who claimed to understand the social significance of his work. Furthermore, his theater

challenged the assumptions of the kind of social science that
claimed the ability to define a radical style. That stylistic radical-
ism did not allow him to stay in one time period stylistically but
forced him to be ever on the move through the 70s since he refused
to let the energy of his experiments and reforms be absorbed by
existing institutions. One could characterize this attempt as either
a kind of permanent revolution or, less kindly, as the adventure of
a Peter Pan and his Lost Boys, the persistence of an immature rad-
ical motivated only by a childish impulse toward innocence. The
ultimate irony is that this radical child was evaluated more posi-
tively by European audiences than Japanese. Words of highest
praise for him were heard not just at the 1971 International
Theatrical Festival in Nancy, France, but in the theatrical media in
the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Great Britain. Such
non-Japanese audiences may have perceived in Terayama's theater
the festivity of the 1960s kept alive by the constant renewal of what
appeared to them to be a most romantic radicalism. What they
also may have seen was the last gallant figure of a romanticism that
no longer existed in their own world but that nevertheless appealed
deeply to their desire for innocence in an age when innocence had
been soundly debunked. The final curtain came down in May
1983 when Terayama died of an illness. Since then, we have not
heard even the rumor of an encore call for the romanticism of the
1960s.

Notes

[1] All translations by Masaomi Kondo.

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ABSTRACT:

This essay studies two moments in the professional American political theater: the overall failure of European modernism during the 1930s and its creative refunctioning in the protest theater of the '60s. In particular, the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht and Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater are considered and recognized for their paradoxically vernacular qualities.