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## Mad about Radiguet : Tōzoku and Mishima Yukio's classical aesthetics

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Analecta Nipponica 1, 67-80

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2011

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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## 論文の日本語レジュメ

Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka

### 日本の宮廷文化における愛の文学的印象表象

愛は日本の歴史が始まって以来、インスピレーションとライトモチーフの源として日本文学の中で脈々と受け継がれてきた。愛の感情は、文字使用以前の時代に言語表現の最初の諸形式の中で重要な位置を占めていた。愛は宮廷生活の重要な側面であると日本文学を最初に築き上げた者たちによってすぐさま認識されるようになり、ほとんどの作家の主題として用いられた。本論文は主に平安時代(8世紀～12世紀)の純文学におけるライトモチーフとしての宮廷愛の役割について考察を与える。前半部では、語彙・記号論的観点から見た愛の定義について考え、後半部では、古代の叙情詩と叙事詩における愛の印象イメージを提示する。

**Key words:** courtly love, Heian period, *irogonomi*, *aware*, topos of *kyūkon*, topos of *shinobu koi*, topos of *tsumaaraso*, *kayō*, *sōmonka*, *Manyōshū*, *Kokinshū*, *ochō monogatari*

## MAD ABOUT RADIGUET. TÔZOKU AND MISHIMA YUKIO'S CLASSICAL AESTHETICS<sup>1</sup>

The whole literary output of Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫 (1925–1970), including both the fiction and the drama, which is not homogenous in character and differs from the Japanese literature of the post-war period, consists of numerous literary works, the contents or form of which derives not only from the tradition of classical Japanese literature but also seventeenth century French Classicism and literary works of Ancient Greece, particularly ancient tragedy. Mishima's clear predilection for classical aesthetics seems to be especially striking against the background of a very limited influence of European Classicism on the development of Japanese literature. Where does his interest in the classical literary output belonging to the treasury of European literature, rare and culturally as well as historically remote from the world of contemporary Japanese literature, come from?

This article deals with the early period of the writer's life, represented by Mishima's first novel, *Tôzoku* 盗賊 (The Thieves, 1948). Because of the range of the topic, it is only a tentative answer to the above question. It becomes part of this author's broader study into the issues of the classical aesthetics in the works by Mishima Yukio written in the years 1941–1960.

However improbable it may seem, the first and most important source of Mishima's fascination with European classical literature was the French writer Raymond Radiguet (1903–1923), who was closely connected with the artistic bohemian circles of Montmartre and Montparnasse of the 1920s, including Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, or Max Jacob. Radiguet became famous thanks to his two novels: *Le diable au crops* (*The Devil in the Flesh*, 1920) and *Le bal du comte d'Orgel* (*Count Orgel Opens the Ball*, 1924), which directly imitated the classical style typical of the novels by Madame de La Fayette and Pierre Ambroise François Choderlos de Laclos and are completely different from the style of his era. In the literary world, Radiguet exists as an outstanding writer endowed with great talent, whose creative skills could not develop because of an unexpected death at the age of twenty.

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<sup>1</sup> A Japanese-language version of this paper appeared as Kubiak Ho-Chi 2001: 9–28.

The significance of Radiguet and his influence on Mishima are clearly visible in the writer's numerous articles dealing with his master. The following among them seem to be the most important: *Dorucheru haku no butōkai* (ドルチェル伯の舞踏会, *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*, 1948), *Radige byō* ラディゲ病 [Radiguet's disease, 1952], *Reimon Radige* レイモン・ラディゲ (Raymond Radiguet, 1953), *Radige zenshū ni tsuite* ラディゲ全集について [about the Complete Works of Radiguet, 1953], *Radige no shi. Atogaki* ラディゲの死。あとがき [the death of Radiguet, a post-face, 1955], *Radige ni tsukarete. Watashi no dokusho no henreki* ラディゲに憑かれて。私の読書の遍歴 [mad about Radiguet, the history of my reading, 1956], and *Issatsu no hon – Radige* «*Dorucheru haku no butōkai*» 一冊の本ラディゲ「ドルチェル伯の舞踏会」 [the only book: *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* of Radiguet, 1963]. All Mishima's comments on Radiguet are highly emotional. The Japanese writer remains under the influence of Radiguet's "charm". He is "blindly in love" with him and "mad" about him. He talks about "Radiguet's fever" and even "Radiguet's disease", which he names after his idol. He admits that he has neither fallen in love nor been charmed by any literary protagonist, but his affection for Radiguet has lasted since his youth. Radiguet was the god for young Mishima, who called his master's novel *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* "The Bible of his youth"<sup>2</sup>.

It seems that the role played by Radiguet in moulding the young Mishima's literary taste and his writing method cannot be overestimated but only underestimated. The French writer and his, in Mishima's opinion, great novel were considered by him as models to which he would refer throughout his youth and which had reinforced in him for ever not only the ideal of literary construction, but also the ideal of life, perceived as a short and brilliant literary career ending in a tragic death of the young writer.

Before that, Mishima's model was classical Japanese literature taught to him by the teachers of Gakushūin (The Peers School) connected with the Japanese Romantic School. Now, it was Mishima himself who chose the model. The interesting thing was that his model writer was part of a completely different cultural circle and his style belonged to seventeenth century French Classicism which was practically unknown in Japan.

Classical writers also considered the model as an extremely important thing. According to Przybylski, the very term "Classicism" contains in itself the concept of a model as the word *classicus* denoted a writer who was so perfect that he could be regarded as a model for generations to come. A classical writer looked for models, who became his inspiration and constituted the measure of the beauty of his work. The shape of the literary piece was determined by the writer's imagination, intuition and literary taste and the model was intended to prevent a chaotic expression of his

<sup>2</sup> Mishima 1975a, vol. 31: 167.

own ego, fits of fantasy and “thoughtless innovation”<sup>3</sup>. The young Mishima, choosing Radiguet as his model writer, seems to be motivated by similar reasons.

Mishima's reception of *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* was a two-stage process. Each of the stages is different and unique and they both seem to reflect a similarity existing between Mishima's literary ideals and the literary ideals typical of classical European writers.

The first stage is connected with the period when Mishima accidentally came across Radiguet's novel at the age of fifteen or so. He was reading a lot of works translated from foreign languages at that time. The first book he found was *Salome* by Oscar Wilde by which he was actually charmed. Searching through various translations from western literature, Mishima came across Radiguet's novel<sup>4</sup>. His initial fascination did not result from the plot and structure of the novel but the quality of the Japanese translation and the language: “There are a few translations of *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*, a masterpiece by the prematurely dead Radiguet. But the best one belongs to Horiguchi Daigaku 堀口大学. I was absolutely in love with his translation of *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* which I considered a masterpiece of the Japanese language. I have read this book published by Hakusuisha 白水社 a countless number of times. When I read it for the first time at the age of fifteen I was charmed by it, although I could not understand many difficult parts. (...) When I was young I was ever more attracted by the original cool elegance because the translation was full of – for that period – insightful observations of the author about man's psychology”<sup>5</sup>.

Thus in the beginning it was not Radiguet but Horiguchi, writing beautiful Japanese, who charmed Mishima and inspired his imagination. Mishima says that Horiguchi's style is “mechanical but at the same time it is so pathetic, breathtaking, unique”. The writer admits that he used to end his sentences with the expression *datta* だった, for example *suru no datta* するのだった, *suginu no datta* すぎぬのだった, so characteristic of Horiguchi, and copy the latter's use of archaic words, because he was under the influence of his master of translation<sup>6</sup>.

The beauty of the language of Horiguchi's translation attracted the young Mishima to Radiguet's novel. He was fascinated by the elegant, elaborated and elevated translation of Horiguchi, as well as by the rhythmically chanted *nō* 能 songs which he admired and by the sophisticated style of both the poetry and fiction of the Heian 平安 period. It seems that the word (*logos*) and its musical aspects (*rythmos* and *melos*), which were so important for European classical writers, must have greatly influenced Mishima in his early years.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Przybylski 1966: 92–5.

<sup>4</sup> See Mishima 1975b, vol. 27: 211.

<sup>5</sup> See Mishima 1975a, vol. 31: 167.

All translations by this author, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*Count Orgel Opens the Ball* was read or rather studied by Mishima on countless occasions. With the time passing, the writer discovered newer and newer deeply hidden layers of the novel: "I underlined with a pencil various phrases which I liked and, as I was growing up, I found the things which I used to admire childish. So I erased the old lines and underscored new places, which seemed wonderful to me then. My book is full of traces of such erasing"<sup>7</sup>.

After the first, superficial infatuation with *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*, Mishima was astonished by the psychological analysis of the novel which seemed to be something "terribly elegant, impossible to copy, classy"<sup>8</sup> to the young man at that time. The characteristic thing is that in the first period of his fascination with *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*, the young Mishima's attention mostly focused on the novel's aesthetic qualities. Not only the style but also the psychological analysis appeared to be "elegant" and "classy". For him, the beauty contained in the form of the work was more important than the contents.

The second, matured, stage of reading *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* started in the last war years and lasted throughout the post-war period. The first step was to understand thoroughly the psychological analysis which constituted the plot of the novel: "After the blind admiration for Radiguet, I started to examine the sources from which he drew his knowledge and after reading *The Princess of Cleve*, *Adolph* and *Phedre*, I realized the real value of Radiguet and understood that he was the peak situated on the very top of the mountain range. I perceived the anachronistic and tragic character of *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*. I saw the secret of Radiguet's art and his ability to create something elevated from the simple triangle story. I also understood the beauty of the novel personified by Countess Mahaut who went through a hassle of long-concealed passions and finally changed into a great heroine, equaling the heroines of classical plays"<sup>9</sup>.

Mishima admires the knowledge of the young Radiguet who could speak from a fifty-year-old-man's experience. He realizes the abstractness of Radiguet's novel and perceives his writing method which seems very attractive to him thanks to its "crystalline structural transparency"<sup>10</sup>. He praises the way Radiguet constructs his story which is a chain of events culminating in an inevitable, catastrophic incident: "I always see in it a structure, the optics of which allows the existence of things which constitute the essence and lead exclusively to the consequences culminating in a solution. Such a way of reinforcing the novel's climax, modeled on classical tragedy, has become an indispensable element of my own writing method. Although I have tried to get rid of it many times, I have never succeeded"<sup>11</sup>. Thus

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the novel method borrowed by Radiguet from the French classicists became also the fundamental writing method in the case of Mishima's works.

The second stage of studying *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* coincided with a very difficult period in the writer's life when his long-cherished values were annihilated by the war defeat of Japan and Mishima had to redefine himself as a man and writer in the new situation. Throughout the war period, Mishima cherished his romantic dreams of a tragic death on the battlefield. He wanted to follow Radiguet and be remembered as a prematurely dead literary genius. This is why he was bitterly disappointed by the unconditioned capitulation of Japan of August 15, 1945. The subject of his works in that time, such as *Chūsei ni okeru ichisatsujin jōshūsha no nokoseru tetsugakuteki nikki no bassui* 中世に於ける一殺人常習者の遺せる哲学日記の抜粋 (fragments of the Philosophical Journal left by a serial killer from the Middle Ages, 1944) or *Chūsei* 中世 (the Middle Ages, 1945), was always connected with death. A foreboding of the forthcoming end of the world and reflections on death which so brutally became a part of the writer's youth and adolescence were present in all his writings of that time. Paradoxically, the war was the only period in Mishima's life when he felt that he shared his individual tragic experience with the entire nation<sup>12</sup>.

However, death, which he had dreamt of, did not come. Mishima survived the numerous bombardments of Tokyo which killed thousands of people. Moreover, he deliberately missed a chance to die. At the end of the war, when every newly drafted soldier joined a kamikaze unit, Mishima did not object when during the doctor's examination, he was wrongly diagnosed as having tuberculosis and was sent home. He knew that joining the army meant a death sentence. The end of the war was the end for young Mishima's dreams of a beautiful death. Moreover, all the ideas that were to constitute the writer's legacy turned out to be anachronistic and outdated. The writers of the Japanese Romantic School who used to be his models and promoted him were arrested and condemned. Isoda Kōichi argues that the young writer matured and that his personality was moulded in the Japan of the 1930s in an exclusive society. His approach to life was centered on pro-imperial thought. Consequently, he must have felt lost and disappointed when he could not write in a spirit of the ideology of death and cult of the Japan of old times any longer. How could he pass on his "dangerous thoughts" to the new generation living in the times of the reign of democracy, progress and rationalism?<sup>13</sup>

Mishima did his best to make publishers interested in his short stories, which were very successful during the war, but he failed. Nakamura Mitsuo 中村光夫 (1911–1988), the editor of Chikuma shobō 筑摩書房 publishers, shamed him by scoring Mishima "minus one hundred and twenty". Nakamura became Mishima's

<sup>12</sup> See Mishima 1975g, vol. 30: 434.

<sup>13</sup> See Isoda 1990: 249–250.



friend and a lover of his fiction a few years later and the two would often laugh at the past incident. It is, however, certain that at that time the young writer was unable to accept this disqualifying evaluation of his work. The post-war period was no easy for beginners. Works by experienced and esteemed writers belonging to the old generation were the first to be published. Nagai Kafū 永井荷風, Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎, Shiga Naoya 志賀直哉, and many other writers who were well known before the war, became the most esteemed artists. Mishima who had been a very successful young writer and had been regarded as a genius by a small literary group was no longer an admired artist and became a forgotten and rejected simple student<sup>14</sup>. He found it difficult to become a beginner again and enter the hermetic world of Japanese *bundan* 文壇. His literary attempts to akin to *shishōsetsu* 私小説, which was very popular in Japan, gave him neither creative satisfaction nor popularity with new readers<sup>15</sup>. The young writer was struggling to find a new way of expressing his “ego” and therefore took up the challenge of writing a novel. To write a novel is undoubtedly a dream of every writer. It is in a novel, and not in a short story, that they can show their artistic maturity. But how should he write to make his works comprehensible to people living in the time of complete chaos and destabilization? How could he find a language that could unify the writer with the community? Seventeenth century classicists would have referred him to a “model”. Przybylski says, “Despite constantly repeated legends, the seventeenth and even the eighteenth centuries were the era of unbelievable chaos, terrible uncertainty and this is why Classicism always spoke of models which protected the poets from the caprices of their free wills widespread mental anarchy. (...) The model was to prevent and did prevent a poet from losing the language unifying him with the community”<sup>16</sup>. Mishima, who reached a crossroads, seemed to follow the classicists’ advice. He decided to copy his greatest master, Radiguet, and his novel *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* in order to write his first novel.

Mishima started writing his first novel, *Tōzoku*, as early as January 1946. He wrote the first four chapters, that is, about two-third of the novel. The last two chapters were finished only two years later – in the spring of 1948. The fact that such a relatively short novel took him two years to complete is closely related to the writer’s difficult personal situation. The first three post-war years were really hard for Mishima. His beloved sister, Mitsuko, died unexpectedly of typhoid fever, and

<sup>14</sup> Cf Mishima 1975g: 438.

<sup>15</sup> Mishima wrote two such short stories, namely *Misaki nite no monogatari* 岬にての物語 [a tale from the Cape], written in 1945 and published in the renowned literary journal *Gunzō* 群像 in November 1946 and *Tabako* 煙草 (Cigarette), produced in the second half of 1945 and published in *Ningen* 人間, another noted literary journal, in June 1946, thanks to Kawabata Yasunari’s support.

<sup>16</sup> Przybylski 1966: 95.

the writer found it extremely distressful. In May 1946, Mishima suffered another disappointment, namely the marriage of a girl he loved (she became the main female protagonist of his novel *Kamen no kokuhaku* 仮面の告白, 1949, English *Confessions of a Mask*). The writer describes that period in one of his works: "The war ended in 1945. In October 1945 my younger sister died. I became a student at the Department of Law of Tokyo University. The novel was born out of my personal experiences dating back to that period. Moreover, the motives that induced me to write it were not as clean as they might seem to have been. I, who had never written anything longer than 180-page handwritten piece of text, craved to amaze people by a longer novel, taking advantage of the fact that it was the post-war period. For me the greatest work in the history of literature was a novel by Radiguet. In my childish dreams, I decided to compete with him"<sup>17</sup>.

Of course, the novel Mishima was talking about was *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*. The plot of Radiguet's novel (the French writer himself modeled his work on *La Princesse de Clèves*<sup>18</sup> [1689; English translation *The Princess of Cleves*, 1689] psychological novel by Madame de La Fayette) is based on a masterly analysis of a love triangle. The protagonists are Countess Mahaut d'Orgel, her husband Count Anne d'Orgel and their friend François de Séryeuse. The novel consists of short untitled chapters in which the omniscient narrator describes the escalation of feelings of love and friendship. It is thanks to him that the reader knows the characters' thoughts but he does not find anything about their appearances and characters. The narrator introduces Countess Mahaut in a short aphoristic prolog, written in the courtly style, so typical of Madame de La Fayette. Mahaut is a tragic heroine experiencing the tragedy of desire and innocence. She loves and admires her husband, though he does not love her so much. He is even unfaithful to her from time to time but for him such behavior is only one of his duty as a cosmopolitan who is made to have love affairs to satisfy his self-esteem and social expectations. François de Séryeuse, by contrast, is blindly in love with Mahaut and his affection is a real catalyst for Anne d'Orgel's love for his wife. François, who is aware of his feelings, dares not declare his affection because of his friendship with Count d'Orgel. Meanwhile Mahaut, who had never been unfaithful to her husband even in her mind, can not bear the situation. When she realizes this, she does not declare her love to François, but writes a letter to his mother. Mahaut begs her for help, because she wants to rid herself of the object of her affection. She is lost and feels pangs of conscience. Eventually she confesses this, in her opinion horrible, sin to her husband. The latter, however, cannot believe that his wife might love anybody but him and assumes that her confession was a result of her tiredness and illness. He is preoccupied with the idea of a huge mask ball, which he has undertaken to prepare for his friends. François de

<sup>17</sup> Mishima 1975e, vol. 27: 46.

<sup>18</sup> See Bernard Pingaut's forward to *Le bal du comte d'Orgel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1983: 12.

Séryeuse is helping him willingly with the preparations. Eventually, Anne d'Orgel learns of Mahaut's affection for François. He cannot ignore it because his friend's mother knows about the affair. He, however, takes into consideration neither his own distress nor his wife's painful experiences. His cynicism and hypocrisy make him keep up appearances and struggle to restore superficial order and marital bliss in order to avoid a scandal. Consequently, he decides that the ball will take place and François de Séryeuse will be one of his guests.

Radiguet's story is set in aristocratic circles in France at the beginning of the 1920s. Mishima's characters also come from aristocratic families. In addition, the intrigue is carried out at more or less the same time as the subtitle reads *An Incident from the Aristocratic Circles of the 1930s*.

The protagonists of *Tōzoku*, Akihide 明秀, the son of Count Fujimura 藤村, and his mother are taking a holiday in a seaside resort. The young man often meets beautiful Yoshiko 美子 coming of the splendid Harada 原田 family. Their friendship soon develops into love. When people learn about this affection, Akihide's parents feel obliged to ask for Yoshiko's hand in marriage on his behalf. However, the independent and extravagant girl turns down the honest and relatively naive boy. At first, Akihide does not care much about his refusal but, with the passage of time, he starts to feel unhappy. Thinking about this incident by the sea, he comes to the conclusion that this unfortunate love for Yoshiko had changed into a fascination with death. He believes that the affair was brought on him by fate and his affection was in fact a desire for death. Then Akihide meets another girl, Kiyoko 清子, who was also rejected by a beloved person. When they tell each other about their misfortune and learn about their plans to commit suicide, they become close friends. All their friends regard them as lovers but it is rather a sense of brotherhood and their desire to die that unite them. When the newly married couple commits suicide on their wedding day, everyone is so shocked that they can offer no rational explanation for the tragedy. Some suggest that Akihide and Kiyoko were too happy to live on. Paradoxically, this tragedy of rejected love is mistaken by the world for excessive happiness.

In the last chapter, the reader finds the explanation for the novel's title and is provided with more information about the suicidal motive. In the climactic scene of the sixth chapter, the bad lovers who had rejected Akihide and Kiyoko accidentally meet at the Christmas ball. It is a month since the young couple committed suicide. When they exchange traditional greetings, they meet face to face and can suddenly see the brutal truth. They realize that "Everything in them which was really beautiful and eternally young was stolen by some extremely sinful thieves"<sup>19</sup>. Since then, immortal beauty and everlasting youth belonged to Akihide and Kiyoko, the two dead lovers.

<sup>19</sup> Mishima 1975d, vol. 2: 172.

Although the well-known romantic theme of eternal beauty which must be annihilated, present in Mishima's earlier works, reappears in *Tōzoku*, the young writer uses a technique he has never applied on such a scale, namely the method of psychological analysis. He creates an omniscient narrator who wonders about the characters' motives and analyzes their thoughts and actions (Radiguet has done the same in his novel *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*). He controls and directs both the protagonists' behavior and the reader's perception. Radiguet's aphoristic and lofty style, modeled on Madame de La Fayette's way of writing, is visible in the very first sentence of *Tōzoku*: "A man who conceals all his feelings because of his character seems to be a person who can cope with the worst situation. But in the heart of such a man there hide the most surprising current stories and secrets, which will unexpectedly lead to an old-style tragedy"<sup>20</sup>. Throughout his novel the writer asks questions reminding the reader of the rhetoric style of Radiguet: "Should her humility be ascribed exclusively to her age? Can a person grow so old within a year? Was not her sudden loss of youth connected with a sort of unfaithfulness?"<sup>21</sup>.

Donald Keene criticized the style employed by Mishima in *Tōzoku*. He calls it a mannerism and considers the story to be improbable. He places the novel among Mishima's early works, permeated by the idea of death<sup>22</sup>. One cannot disagree with him completely because after reading *Tōzoku* a feeling of dissatisfaction appears, caused by the schematic plot totally cut off from reality. But one must perceive the novelty of this work, which manifests itself in the author's desire for maximum precision and for the accuracy of thought as well as the avoidance of romantic escalation of feeling, which were so typical of his early works. Although he cannot get rid of all his old habits, such as the excessive use of Chinese characters in the formal sphere and the exaggerated exploitation of death motif, in *Tōzoku* Mishima does his best to be so rational that he attempts to employ reason to explain the irrational. In <*Tōzoku*> *nōto*. 1946 「盗賊」ノート。1946 defines the idea which is to become the basis for the main thought of the novel: "Radiguet is a romantic writer, who sees a novel in normal psychology. I, by contrast, am a realist, who wants to present unreal romantic psychology"<sup>23</sup>.

According to Noguchi Takehiko 野口武彦, this "unreal romantic psychology" is what Akihide calls "some primitive impulse of tragedy". The impulse appears when Akihide, rejected by Yoshiko, decides to die. Analyzing his feelings, he comes to the conclusion that his affection for Yoshiko has changed into the love of death but at the same time he realizes that death was present in his subconsciousness much earlier<sup>24</sup>. He experienced a strange sensation during his very first meeting

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Keene 1984: 1179–80.

<sup>23</sup> Mishima 1957: 180.

<sup>24</sup> Hasegawa & Noguchi (ed.) 1976: 277.

with Yoshiko: “What made him tremble when he first saw Yoshiko? There can be no doubt that whenever he imagined the moments when he attracted Yoshiko, he got afraid of the future, which was getting out of hand”<sup>25</sup>.

In fact, whenever he found himself in Yoshiko’s presence, he was seized with some strange fear: “How many times was he seized with fear while holding Yoshiko’s hand, springy like young leaves?... What if she leaves? Undoubtedly, at the very bottom of his fear there hid a kind of primitive impulse of death, similar to the experience for a man who had run the risk and dies for the feeling that permeates the joy of children watching circus stunts of warfare”<sup>26</sup>. Noguchi Takehiko argues that Akihide anticipates the loss of Yoshiko and has a feeling that this will make him commit suicide. His love must be tragic in order to change into death. Noguchi believes that the characters of Radiguet’s novel are involved in quite normal love situations which are somehow overshadowed by a tragic and elevated mood. But in *Tōzoku* the strange love of the protagonists, permeated by the specter of death, rises above the level of normality and does not resemble the love depicted in Radiguet’s *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* in any respect<sup>27</sup>.

Undoubtedly, despite the superficial similarity of style, Mishima’s novel can hardly be considered a copy of Radiguet’s work. But did not Mishima intend to write a novel imitating Radiguet’s best techniques but surpassing his *Count Orgel Opens the Ball*? Reading the notes made by Mishima, one can easily observe the Japanese writer’s desire to emphasize the difference between him and Radiguet and not to stress the similarities. Besides the above-quoted difference between Radiguet, the romantic, and Mishima, the realist, the author points to yet another contrast: “Morality, which was the central theme of Radiguet’s work, historically belongs to Catholic tradition and is also one of the contemporary French techniques. It varies a bit in character from the morality of *The Princess of Cleve*. I, by contrast, followed the rules of historical and literary tradition of Japan and ignored morality as it played only a minor role in the history of Japanese literature”<sup>28</sup>.

Countess Mahaut in Radiguet’s *Count Orgel Opens the Ball* is a model wife, loving, faithful and fearing extra-marital affairs whereas Yoshiko in *Tōzoku* is in fact created in opposition to the ideal. She has many lovers and does not feel obliged to marry Akihide. Moreover, she does not care much about her reputation.

There is also some difference between the two structures of the two novels. Radiguet constructed his novel as a whole while Mishima not only divided *Tōzoku* into chapters, but also entitled them and enriched with epigraphs, quotations from his favorite writers and poets, such as Wilde, Strindberg, Baudelaire, and others.

<sup>25</sup> Mishima 1975d: 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Hasegawa & Noguchi (ed.) 1976: 277.

<sup>28</sup> Mishima 1957: 180.

The question is whether there is anything that really allows us to relate the two novels, or not? Apart from such scare elements in Radiguet as, the aristocratic origin of the protagonists and the technique of narration, there is only one such characteristic feature, namely the “timelessness” of both works. In *Tōzoku*, a novel written directly after the war, there is no hint that Japan has just gone through the terror of war. Keene argues that Mishima, a young man at the time, turns his back on the present and returns to the issues connected with the refined lifestyle of the aristocracy of the 1930s. He does not follow the general trend, a tendency to think of the future and build new democracy. Besides, Mishima does not refer even indirectly to the important events of the period he writes about, such as the rebellion in the Emperor’s army of February 26, 1936, the famous *Ni-ni-roku-jiken* 二二六事件<sup>29</sup>.

Mishima, who felt completely out of place among post-war writers and did not want to deal with the issues of war crimes, found a comfortable shelter. Radiguet had nothing in common with the writers of his epoch and his style of writing was completely different from theirs. In his essay titled *Reimon Radige* (1954), Mishima admires Radiguet for his “timelessness” and compares him to Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, and André Gide, the three writers who, in his opinion, did not carry on the “fruitless” work of the dadaists and surrealists but adopted the classical attitude of “timelessness”: “In Radiguet’s novels, time is rejected and the writer stays hidden. A piece of writing, like an ancient drama, becomes a pattern of vivid passions, presented in pure space”<sup>30</sup>.

Radiguet’s “anti-time” approach directed Mishima’s attention towards a possibility of finding his own way of writing through the return to the themes of literature regarded as classical. While writing *Tōzoku*, Mishima published an article with the title *Waga sedai no kakumei* 我が世代の革命 (A Revolution of Our Generation, 1946). Sakita Susumu 崎田進 considers this piece of writing as the young poet’s classical manifesto<sup>31</sup>. Mishima, who had distanced himself from the *Sengoha* writers group, regarded the values established by European classicists as his own principles. In his words, “Originality is a pearl which can be found only in the sea of universalism” and “We will not pay attention to what is called the love of novelty in literature”<sup>32</sup>.

The above quotations seem to be evidence of Mishima’s respect for the values appreciated by European classicists, namely universality, commonness, timelessness, and eternity, and his dislike of easy originality. The values equilibrium was upset after the lost war forcing the *Sengoha* 戦後派 writers to deal with existential

<sup>29</sup> Keene 1984: 1179.

<sup>30</sup> Mishima 1975c: 216.

<sup>31</sup> See Sakita 1984: 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

problems and look for new, individual means of expression. His quest for a new writing method resulted in a situation in which Mishima and *Sengoha* writers were poles apart in style. The *Sengoha* writers considered the power of impulse and feeling which were to be the manifestation of real humanism, the most important element of literature, while Mishima used reason to control emotion: “We know the power of a blind impulse, which seems to be the source of literature. But we also know pure reason (underline by me), which is indispensable to use if we want to express the impulse by means of words”<sup>33</sup>.

Mishima’s aim was to suppress sensitiveness by means of reason and this seems to be the main motive for his interest in Radiguet. The young author of *Tōzoku* who wanted to control his own emotions, suppress his concealed passions, and express feelings in the form of literary fiction, did not manage fully to achieve these goals in his first novel. However, this work, modeled on Radiguet’s work of fiction, was the beginning of Mishima’s struggle to overcome his romantic sensitiveness and the first step towards the introduction of the fundamental norms of classical aesthetics into his own technique of novel writing.

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<sup>33</sup> Mishima 1975f, vol. 25: 4.