Reading Manipulation in *Runaway Horses* by Mishima Yukio

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Abstract In her seminal work, *Authoritarian Fictions: Ideological Novels as a Literary Genre*, Susan Rubin Suleiman emphasizes the cooptational dimension of “romans à thèse”, which seem addressed to readers who are already converted to the ideological perspective of these works. Political novels therefore tend to divide the readers into two categories: proponents on the one hand, denigrators on the other. Based on a close reading of *Runaway Horses* (*Honba*, 1969), Mishima Yukio’s most overtly ideological fictional work, the purpose of my paper will be to enrich Suleiman’s model by showing that the most elaborate authoritarian fictional works use specific rhetorical tactics to soften or compensate for the excess of their message and to appeal to non-sympathizers. Focusing on chapters 9 and 10 of *Runaway Horses*, where the novel shifts from a classical and realist tone (chapters 1 to 8) to an ideological and authoritarian one (chapters 9 to 40), I will analyze three of these rhetorical tactics: (1) the lightning rod, which consists of attracting criticisms about one specific and clearly delineated locus of the text, fulfilling an apotropaic function and serving as a foil for the rest; (2) the prolepsis, which anticipates the reader’s likely negative comments and thus becomes in tune with his perspective; (3) the tactic of enlarging the audience by which the narrator reincorporates a sectarian ideology into a larger and more universal ensemble. My conclusion will question the place of the reader and investigate the reading strategies that he may adopt in order to respond to this manipulation.

Keywords Mishima Yukio, Ideological novels, Manipulation, Prolepsis

Introduction

The novel *Runaway Horses* (*Honba*), the second volume in the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility* (*Hōjō no umi*, 1965-1970), and Mishima’s most overtly political novel, was serialized in the review *Shinchō* between February 1967 and August 1968 before its publication in February 1969. The novel, which takes place between May 15, 1932 and December 29, 1933, draws its inspiration from a series of attempted *coups d’état* undertaken by ultranationalists who left their mark on Japanese politics in the beginning of the 1930s (Noguchi 1992: 7-50; Shibata 2002: 299-318). The hero, Isao, is a young activist on the extreme-right who is obsessed by acts of terrorism. He ends up killing an influent politician before committing ritual suicide (*seppuku*). Isao’s destiny fascinates Honda, the main protagonist of the *The Sea of Fertility,* a judge who is 38 at the start of the novel, and who sees the reincarnation of his childhood friend Kiyoaki (the main protagonist of the first volume, *Spring Snow*) in the young man.[1] The story’s verisimilitude, the narrator’s empathy towards the hero, and the large number of pages that have a dogmatic content enable us to categorize *Runaway Horses* as a *roman à these* (a relatively long realist fiction bearing an unambiguous ideological message) (Napier 1995: 264).

Among Mishima’s fictional works, only *Patriotism* (*Yūkoku*, 1961) and *Voices of the Heroic Spirits* (*Eirei no koe*, June 1966) have, in my opinion, a clear-cut ideological message comparable to that of *Runaway Horses*. *Patriotism* stages Lieutenant Shinji Takeyama and his wife Reiko’s ritual suicide following the attempted coup of February 26, 1936 (*ni-niroku*

[1] Mishima himself studied law at the prestigious Imperial University of Tōkyō (now, University of Tōkyō). He has praised the rationality of law and has drawn parallels between lawsuit and the logic required to build a story (Inose & Sato 2012 : 110).

jiken).[2] The couple's demise, intended to solve a moral dilemma, is presented by the narrator as a praiseworthy example of dedication to Japan and the emperor.[3] *Voices of the Heroic Spirits* is a prose poem, inspired by Noh. The narrator, who speaks in the first person, narrates a trance during which a character adopts the voice of the heroes who died for the emperor. The story draws a parallel between the ultranationalist rebels of the February 26 attempted coup and the Second World War's *kamikaze,* or « Special Attack Units » (*Tokkōtai*) who both sacrifice their lives for a god who finally resigned his divinity. If anachronistic and poetic texts such as *Patriotism* and *Voices of the Heroic Spirits* can certainly be described as ideological, they, however, do not strictly pertain to the realist genre of the *roman à thèse*. The tension between ideology (the text as message) and literature (the text as an aesthetical object) acts here on a different level.[4] The short story *Sword* (*Ken,* October 1963), or plays such as *The Decline and Fall of the Suzaku* (*Suzakuke no metsubō*, October 1967) and *My Friend Hitler* (*Wagatomo hitorā*, December 1968) also resound with an ultranationalist ethic. Yet, the absence of direct references to political discourse (*Sword*) or of a narrative voice taking responsibility for the protagonist's biased point of view (*The Decline and Fall of the Suzaku, My Friend Hitler*) alleviates these texts' ideological dimension. As a long novel set up in a realist context, only *Runaway Horses* may be, among Mishima's fictional works, categorized without dispute as a *roman à thèse*.

The standard model of a *roman à thèse*, inasmuch as it is addressed to individuals who already advocate its views, tends to coopt its readers (Suleiman 1983: 143). On the other hand, those who are either indifferent to the novel's doctrine, or even vehemently opposed to it, will be tempted to reject its reading contract, disqualifying it for being disrespectful to their own values and points of views. The omnipresence of the ideological referent in *Runaway Horses* has, indeed, given rise to critical reception (Shibusawa 1983: 98; Noguchi 1992: 54; Starrs 1994: 148-190; Napier 1995: 266). Our hypothesis, however, is that Mishima was perfectly aware of the ideological fictions' inherent drawbacks present in an ideological fictional work and tried to respond to them.[5] The main character's nihilism, his dubious motivations (narcissism, a death wish), the theme of romantic irony with its leap-of-faith logic, and, last but not least, the integration of the novel into the encompassing whole of *The Sea of Fertility,* add some complexity to the text's meaning without dismantling its ideological and binary structure.[6]

[2] A military rebellion in Tōkyō in which several political figures were killed and the center of the capital was seized. The rebellion was swiftly suppressed, and its leaders (young ultranationalist officers who sought to purify Japan from purportedly corrupted and westernized elites) were sentenced to death and executed. The military took advantage of the incident to increase its power and political influence (Shillony 1973).

[3] The main character of *Patriotism*, lieutenant Takeyama, shares friendship and political convictions with the rebels. His suicide is as a way to reconcile obedience towards his superiors (as well as towards the emperor) and his own personal convictions.

[4] In these two texts, it is mainly by working on the style, chiefly by toying with stereotypes and literary references, that Mishima negotiated the conflictual relationship between literature and ideology. For an analysis of the tension between poeticity and ideology in *Patriotism*, see my own works (Garcina 2015: 167-332; Garcinb 2015)

[5] There is a striking contrast between the overabundance of political essays and the limited amount of fiction with an overtly ideological content in Mishima's works. I have listed more than thirty political essays, without taking into account the briefest ones, which represent the largest amount. I must mention, among the most famous ones: *Me and the February 26 Incident* (*Ni-ni roku jiken to watashi*, June 1966), *The Samurai Ethic and Modern Japan* (*Hakagure nyūmon*, September 1967) and *The Defense of Culture* (*Bunka bōei ron*, April 1969).

[6] It could be argued that the entire tetralogy is an allegory of the decline Japan's "spirit" and "purity". Whereas the two first volumes stage characters devoted to an ideal (Love for Kiyoaki and the Nation for Isao), the third and fourth volumes' main characters are self-centered, passive or cynical. Tōru, the manipulative anti-hero from *The Decay of the Angel* (*Tennin gosui)*, the last volume of the tetralogy, is notably depicted as a corrupted and fake doppelgänger of the previous reincarnations. Mishima draws a close link between his characters transformation and the evolution of Japan: whereas prewar period, as described in the first two volumes, preserved some of the essence of ancient time, postwar Japan is depicted, in the two last volumes, as a deteriorated and materialistic environment covered with concrete and commercials. In that respect, *Runaway Horses* only highlights and heightens an ideological message that is pervasive throughout the tetralogy. However, *The Sea of Fertility*'s reactionary content is closely intertwined with a nihilistic message which tends to downplay, or at least add complexity to, its ideological implications. Thus, if the framing of *Runaway Horses* in *The Sea of Fertility* confirms the partisan view of the novel, it also emphasizes the novel's ambiguity, notably suggested by the hero's obsession

These semantic elements are combined with more specific rhetorical tactics that aim to soften the excess of the text's message and to appeal to non-sympathizers. The author, thus, tries to reach an agreement with the reader's point of view. Depicting and analyzing these tactics is all the more important as it helps both to deepen our comprehension of Mishima's novels and our understanding of the *roman à these*. My study will be concentrated on chapters 9 and 10 of *Runaway Horses*, where the novel shifts from classical and realist fictional work (chapters 1 to 8) to a more overtly ideological and authoritarian one (chapters 9 to 40). I will focus on three rhetorical devices: the lightning rod, the prolepsis, and the enlargement of the audience. As I will show, these tactics, if they indicate the author's concern with the reader's point of view, are also part of a logic of manipulation that seeks to deprive the reader of his critical distance from the work. In conclusion, I will, therefore, question the place of the reader and investigate the reading strategies that he may adopt in order to respond to this manipulation.

1. *The League of the Divine Wind*: the lightning rod

In chapter 8, the hero, Isao, hands Honda a book entitled, *The League of the Divine Wind* (*Shinpūren shiwa*), a laudatory fiction about ultranationalist samurai rebels who attacked the newly conscripted army in Kumamoto on October 1876.[7] At the end of chapter 8, Honda starts reading the fifty pages-long book, which corresponds to chapter 9. The reader, thus, goes through the story-within-a-story *with* Honda. *The League of Divine Wind* constitutes an ideological vade-mecum for the hero, who names his insurrectionary group *Shōwa Divine Wind* and seeks to imitate his predecessors from Meiji with whom he shares the same values and the same passion for disembowelment (*seppuku*). Even if the text fills Isao with enthusiasm, for the average reader, *The League of Divine Wind* is a long, hard road. Inspired by apologetic texts written by authors sensitive to the cause of the rebels (Shibata 2001 : 303-304), the framed story of *Runaway Horses* is a "serious imitation", or "forgery" (Genette 1982 : 161) of works of propaganda. It intensifies, to an almost grotesque degree, all of the novel's drawbacks: Manicheism, flat characters, excessive redundancies (identical points of view, repetition of the same narrative sequences, ceaseless repetitions of the ideological content, etc.) and circularity.

Overloaded with ultranationalist mystic, *The League of the Divine Wind* has obviously received negative criticism. For Hashimoto Osamu, the story-within-a-story has "less content than a second-class *kabuki* destroyed by an incoherent dramaturgy". The aggressive nature of this commentary underpins the paradoxically counter-productive effects of redundancies: the reader does not keep the message in mind, but instead its excessive reiteration, a testament to the meaning's poverty. Hashimoto Osamu may, however, miss a major point. Never does he muse over the fact that this "absence of content" (*naiyō no nasa*) (Hashimoto 2002: 65) in *The League of the Divine Wind* might have been intentional and that one of its main objectives was to arouse criticism similar to his own. My hypothesis, to state it more precisely, is that *The League of the Divine Wind* plays the role of a "lightning rod" that attracts certain criticism in order to divert them from the rest of the text.[8] One part wards off the flaws of the novel,

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with death and his psychotic fear of internal void. For a more comprehensive discussion of the close and ambiguous relationship between nihilism and ideology in *Runaway Horses*, see my own dissertation thesis (Garcina 2015: 413-443).

[7] Dissident former samurais of the former Kumamoto domain (*higo*) founded in 1872 the *The Party Respectful of Gods* (*Keishintō*), more often called *The League of the Divine Wind* (*Shinpūren*). Angered by the loss of their privileges and scandalized by Japan's westernization, they felt despoiled by the Meiji Restoration whose xenophobic and conservative hardline they embodied. The ordinance of March 1876 forbidding the wearing of swords (*Haitōrei*) was perceived as the final indignity. On October 24, 1876, about 170 men, lead by Ōtaguro Tomo.o (1835-76), attacked the Kumamoto garnison. They were subdued the following day. More than 120 samurai died in battle or voluntarily choose to end their lives (Roger: 408-439).

[8] I borrow the expression "lightning rod" (*paratonnerre* in French) from Gérard Genette who coins this term to define the function of authorial prefaces which prevent criticism in order to neutralize it (Genette 1987: 211).

intensifying them to an extreme level in order to preserve the whole. It is significant, in that perspective, that the metadiegetic narrative is placed just before chapter 10, exactly when the novel, taking on Isao's point of view, strengthens its ideological bias. Nothing is better, in order to alleviate a constraint, than to start by imposing a much greater one.

The "lightning rod" is thus closely linked to another device: the "restrictive frame" as Philippe Breton calls it, whose manipulative functioning corresponds to what social psychology calls the "Door-in-the-face" technique. In order to obtain a "behavior A" (here: the empathetic reading of chapters 10 to 40 of the novel), it consists of requesting a "behavior B" which is in it of itself "much more demanding" (here: the reading of *The League of the Divine Wind*) (Breton 1997: 120). In comparison, the rest of the text does indeed almost appear as a non-coercive area. The two-phased reaction expressed by Okuno Takeo, a famous critic of Mishima, underlines the restrictive frame's efficiency (Okuno 1993: 434):

> At the outset, *Runaway Horses*, was not to my liking. The purity of *The League of the Divine Wind*'s samurai who only trust the spiritual power of the Divine Wind and reject everything related to modernity and to Buddhism, is a constraint for contemporary readers and this is the reason why, at the beginning, this novel put me off. One is, however, finally carried away by Iinuma's son's [*i.e*: Isao] exceedingly pure spirit and by his exaggerated masculine behavior transcending the Oedipus complex insofar as he wishes to kill, at all costs, both the father and the mother.

It could seem paradoxical that Okuno, just after criticizing the samurai of the *League of the Divine Wind*, treats Isao in such a benevolent way. The hero's "exceedingly pure spirit", his values, as well as his religious beliefs, are, indeed, extremely similar to that of his fictive mentors. I argue that his empathy is spurred on by the *League of the Divine Wind*. This oppressive and coercive tunnel of obsolete ultranationalist and Manichean mystic acts as a shock treatment and finally disposes the reader favorably to what follows and to the main protagonist's point of view, whose line of reasoning is more ambiguous and convoluted. The framed story thus serves as a foil: it brings out the subtleties and the complexities of the rest of the novel.

2. Honda's letter and the prolepsis

At the beginning of chapter 10, almost right after *The League of the Divine Wind*, the reader is presented with a letter in which Honda transmits his impressions to Isao, concerning the book he lent him. This letter underpins the strategic and rhetorical functions of the framed story. After having read *The League of the Divine Wind* "simultaneously with" Honda, the reader is invited to adopt the judge's viewpoint, at once critical and benevolent. Honda, often placed in an observer's perspective (Starrs 1994: 65-66 ; Shibata 2001: 312), close to that of the reader, and described in terms that facilitate the process of identification, thus exercises the function of a mediator (Napier 1995: 266). A distinction must be made here between the first two volumes of *The Sea of Fertility,* in which Honda's portrait is rather positive, and the two last volumes, in which his description becomes increasingly negative. In *Runaway Horses* it seems easier, for the reader, to identify with the judge, upright and reasonable, than with the ultranationalist Isao, obsessed by death and sacrificial action. Honda is the text's objective and rational guarantee, who compensates for Isao's ideological, partial, and finally dominating perspective.

Honda's letter can be divide in two parts. In the former (pages 111 to 114 in the English translation), the judge lingers on his own experience and tries to warn Isao against any thoughtless action. In the latter (pages 114 to 117) he focuses his attention more precisely on *The League of the Divine Wind* and engages in a critical analysis of the text. His comments are

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Unlike him, however, I use this expression to indicate the idea of attracting negative comments on a limited segment of the text. Gérard Genette's definition points to the "prolepsis", that I shall mention later.

relevant as much as self-evident and would certainly echo the feelings of a large number of readers (Mishima 1990: 114-115):

> The danger of this account lies in its leaving out the contradictions. The author, Tsunanori Yamao, seems to have written in accordance with historical facts. But for the sake of the artistic unity of this slim volume, he has, without doubt, excluded a number of contradictions. Furthermore, he focuses so insistently upon the purity of resolve that pertains to the essence of this affair that he sacrifices all perspective. Thus one loses sight not only of the general context of world history but also of the particular historical necessities that conditioned the Meiji government which the League chose as its enemy. What this book lacks is contrast.

These few lines reveal the rhetorical figure of prolepsis which consists, as Christopher W. Tindale defines it, of "the anticipation of objections to one's position" (Tindale 2004: 83). In accordance with his thematic role as a rational man of law, Honda takes up a distant and clear-sighted perspective and forestalls the reader's criticism. The character also targets Isao's ingenuousness. Similar to his spiritual guides from Meiji, the main character refuses to regard the context and wipes out history by dividing it into solely two ages: the lost paradise on the one hand and the moral decay of modern times on the other.

However, the ultimate function of this rhetorical anticipation needs to be put into question. Indeed, stating criticism before the reader does is also a way to defuse this criticism. Does it make sense to blame Isao and *The League of the Divine Wind*'s naivety if an authority does it prior to us and on our behalf? Mitsuhana Takao's following comment about *Runaway Horses* epitomizes, without the critic noticing, the efficiency of such a tactic (Mitsuhana 2000: 202):

> Honda is another Mishima who coldly observes his other self, regressing to the youth he wished he had. The reason why all Mishima's critiques are rendered void stem from this specific point.

I shall not comment upon the confusion between the writer and his work, or the novelist and his characters, which is almost systematic in Mishima's case. Mitsuhana compares Isao to a "subjective Mishima" who wishes to regain an idealized youth and Honda to an "objective Mishima" who looks at the former with distance. The idea that Honda fixes Isao (in other words, that the objective amends the subjective) is more relevant to my argument. Honda is perceived by Mitsuhana as a shield that neutralizes critiques by forestalling them.

Mitsuhana clumsily touches upon what is, from my perspective, a major, yet ignored, feature of Mishima's literature: the texts very often anticipate the criticisms they may provoke. From this comes the essential role that plays the figure of the prolepsis in his works. In this respect, it is my assertion that some episodes in *Runaway Horses* could be characterized as "narrative prolepsis". The text anticipates its critical reading not by an argument, but by a narrative sequence. The "Golden Bat" Isao catches sight of when passing in front of a storyteller's "paper theater" (*kamishibai*) is an eloquent example (Mishima 1990: 220):

> The children, eager for the storyteller to open the curtain, were imitating the laugh of the Golden Bat. Isao did not stop, but as he passed, the image that appeared through the parting curtain caught his eyes: the glaring yellow skull mask of the Golden Bat, who, in a green tunic and white tights, trailed his crimson cloak as he flew through the sky. It was a crude and distorted image. (…)
>
> The story teller cleared his throat and began his preliminary narration: "Well now, the Golden Bat, the champion of justice…" The sound of his gravelly voice followed Isao as he walked on, leaving the paper theater and the crowd of children behind him.
>
> As he turned into a quiet street in Nishikata with a wall running along one side of it, that gold-skulled phantom who soared through the sky pursued him. How grotesque an image of justice was that bizarre golden figure!

Created in 1930 by the *kamishibai* artist Nagamatsu Takeo 永松武雄 (1912-1961), the Golden Bat (*ōgon batto*) is a righter of wrongs superhero with a skull-shaped head and a glitzy costume. This overly kitsch and morbid figure emerges as the hero's ludicrous travesty, symbolizing both

his death-wish and his immature pretention of being an impressive dispenser of justice. This clever insertion of Isao's caricature into the story is a way, for the author, to make it known that he is utterly aware of the quixotic side of his character. Why, then, bother clarifying something that is clearly asserted by the narrator? And what is left to unveil if the text's counter-model is even integrated to the text? The feeling of frustration that critical work on Mishima often arouses comes from an impression of paraphrase, as if the reviewers, be they proponents or denigrators of the novelist, were condemned to repeat what had already been forestalled by the author.

3. Enlarging the audience

An over-arching definition of prolepsis would include, subsequent to its anticipated objection, a "preemptive response" (Tindale 2004: 83), corresponding to the figure named "hypobole" in classical rhetoric.[9] Honda's development of a "purity of resolve" or "purity of motives" (*junsuisa na shinjō, junsui shinjō junsui na shinjō,* Mishima 2002 [1969]: 135-136) which is shown in his letter, corresponds to the second phase of the prolepsis. The judge wants Isao to relativize the hypothetic uniqueness of *The League of the Divine Wind*'s purity. He argues that any action accomplished without self-interested motives and in the name of a transcendent value deserve respect (Mishima 1990: 115):

> To give an example, you yourself are aware, are you not, of the existence at the same time in the same Kumamoto Province of a group called the Kumamoto Band?
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> In the 1870s, a retired American captain of artillery named L.L. Janes, who had distinguished himself in the Civil War, came to take an assignment as a teacher at the school of Western learning founded in Kumamoto. He began to give Bible classes, and to slip into the role of a Protestant missionary. In the same year of the rising of the League of the Divine Wind, 1876, thirty-five of his students, led by Danjo Ebina, gathered on Mount Hanaoka on January thirtieth. And under the title of the Kumamoto Band they took a vow "to christianize Japan, to build a new nation based upon this teaching." Persecution arose, of course. The school was finally closed, but the thirty-five comrades were able to flee to Kyoto, where they helped Jo Niijima build up Doshisha University. Though their ideals were diametrically opposed to those of the League, here, too, do we not see another example of the same purity of resolve?

In their seminal work *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca have mentioned the efficiency of a certain rhetorical device that consists of inserting *concrete values* ("that are attached to a living being, a specific group, or a particular object") in the "empty frame" of *abstract values* (Beauty, Truth, Justice, etc.) "with respect to which a wider agreement exists". Erasing particular values before universal values is a way to "justify choices about which there is not unanimous agreement" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 76-77). In my view, the argument the narrator engages in through Honda belongs to this type of rhetorical tactic. Notions such as "purity of resolve", "purity of motives" give a universal dimension to Isao's terroristic action and put the stress on an ethic of action (to act without being self-interested, by setting one's life at stake, etc.), regardless of its content. Other elements in the story, for example, Honda's quest (he relinquishes his job in order to achieve an ideal, namely to save the life of Kiyoaki reincarnated in Isao) or the surprisingly positive portrait of leftist militants (who face torture because of their beliefs), also indicates the high value placed upon sacrificial action in it of itself.

[9] According to Georges Molinié, prolepsis refers only to the part of the discourse that gives the opponent's point of view, whereas the hypobole consists of refuting him and giving one's own opinion. These two steps, that Christopher W. Tindale generically names prolepsis, correspond to the rhetorical locus of *anteoccupatio* (MOLINIER 1992 : 52 et 277).

The tactic of widening the audience (prolepsis's second step), is actually inscribed in Honda's argumentation from the outset. After the opening common civilities, the judge admits that he was touched by "the purity of motive and feeling of those involved" (in Japanese: *junsui na dōki to shinjō*) in the league of the Divine Wind's rebellion.[10] This preliminary remark underlines the letter's skillfulness in terms of argumentation. Operating on the epistolary genre's double enunciation, the argumentative order is reversed depending on who the text addresses. What the character of Honda criticizes in *The League of the Divine Wind* (and by extension, in Isao's point of view), is a concession to what is most likely the reader's perspective; conversely, what he concedes to Isao (the "purity of resolve" or the "purity of motives") is one of the novel's main reading programs. The following table illustrates this device:

	Sender : Honda	
Intradiegetic adressee: Isao	**Concession** (*The League of the Divine Wind* illustrates the purity of resolve)	**Criticism** (*The League of the Divine Wind* is over-simplistic)
Extradiegetic adressee: The reader	**Concession (prolepsis)** (*The League of the Divine Wind* is over-simplistic)	**Reading program** (*The League of the Divine Wind* and Isao illustrate purity of resolve)

This chiastic structure exemplifies the strategic role of the judge, positioned between Isao and the reader, and whose function is to offer an acceptable reading angle.

Mitsuhana's comment thus needs to be completed. Honda certainly corrects Isao's ideological perspective. However, he does not criticize his ultranationalist convictions so much as he makes them admissible. Honda is a judge, but he is both judge and jury and his point of view, as the story unfolds, is increasingly in favor of the young terrorist whose ideological presuppositions (deification of the Nation, purity and beauty of deadliest terrorist action, refusal of any compromise, superiority of an abstract ideal to concrete reality, etc.) he finally seems to share. *A posteriori*, the scenes in which Honda expresses a distance *vis-à-vis* the hero's perspective could be viewed as traps set up for the reader. The device involved here is the so-called *mirroring* technique, which consists of reflecting the behavior of the one you want to convince and particularly, as far as language is concerned, of "synchronizing the vocabulary and the concepts". The seducer makes the interlocutor believe that "he thinks like him" (Breton 1997: 82 and 92). At first, Mishima provides a duplicate of the reader who regards Isao's infatuation for ultranationalist mystic with distance and uses, to criticize him, exactly the words we (the readers) may have used. Ultimately, however, the logic reverses, and the reader is invited to model his behavior on Honda's, and acknowledge Isao's hypothetical "purity of resolve" or "purity of motive". It is no coincidence that, in the novel's last quarter (chapter 31 to 40), the judge jettisons his career as a magistrate and becomes a lawyer to plead the young terrorist's cause in court (who has been arrested for plotting a *coup d'état*).

What thus remains is to question the relevance of the arguments put forward by Honda in order to make us sensitive to Isao's sectarian perspective. The reader, in the course of reading, will probably not go into the details of the judge's comparison between the League of the Divine Wind's rebels and the Christians of the Kumamoto Band. The apparent similarities between both group's actions (they are both accomplished without calculation and in the name of a superior ideal) might convince him of its aptness. A close reading however suggests that the comparison is rather forced: the samurais were acting on behalf of particular values and by

[10] Mishima 2012: 132

using violence; whereas the Kumamoto Band's members engaged in their rebellion on behalf of pacifists and universal values. The concept of "purity of resolve" conveniently erases the discrepancy between both actions and incorporates the hero's violent and xenophobic ideal in a much more innocuous and consensual frame. The device falls within what Philippe Breton calls a "manipulative frame" (*cadrage manipulateur*) that "implies twisting and rearranging facts in order to obtain consent" (Breton 1997: 102). A meticulous reading suggests that the narrator is quite generous with this type of fallacious comparison.

Another striking example occurs in chapter 22, when the judge attends a conference about the contemporary situation in Siam where a military coup helped establish a constitutional monarchy on June 24, 1932. This little exotic detour takes the reader away from Isao's itinerary and allows the narrator to draw links with tetralogy's precedent and following volumes in which characters from Siam play a part. This anecdote thus contributes to creating an impression of timelessness, very frequent in *The Sea of Fertility*, the past and the future having a tendency to melt together in Honda's mind. However, the narrator also takes advantage of this short break, apparently unrelated to Isao's mystic, to insert a comment whose implications are, ideologically, nothing less than neutral (Mishima 1990: 238):

> Though they gave no outward sign of it, those who listened to this account, aware as they were of the deplorable state of Japan, could not help but make comparisons and wonder why attempts at political reform in their own country had to be aborted affairs such as the May Fifteenth Incident, marked by a senseless bloodletting and never proceeding temperately to a successful conclusion.

The narrator's observation is brief and its partiality is, at first, not necessarily ostensible. The conference's participants, mainly magistrates, simply regret the violent ways of contemporary uprisings in Japan. The text, again, appeals to universal values (peace, non-violence, etc.). Who does not favor a moderate issue to a bloody one? In passing, however, it is the necessity of an ultranationalist revolution (and the supposedly obvious nature of this necessity for contemporaries) that the narrator presupposes. The manipulative side of the comment is conspicuous when one considers the crucial, yet unmentioned, difference between Siam's putschists and ultranationalists rebels in Japan in the early thirties: the former were in favor of more parliamentarism, whereas the latter were fiercely opposed to it. Once again, the argument rests on a fallacious comparison, all the more efficient due to the fact that it is concealed by real similarities between the two events (both are a coup or attempted coup that originated in a desire for a constitutional change).

Honda plays thus a major role in establishing the novel's manipulative devices. His supposedly rational, honest and distant nature serves as a perfect smokescreen to conceal the biased dimension of the narrator's comparison. Yet, the character's evolution throughout *Runaway Horses* and *The Sea of Fertility* reveals the deceptive nature of his perspective. As shown previously, the plot's development tends to disparage the humanist, rational and farsighted part of Honda which served as a bridge between the reluctant reader and the text. By giving up his career and embracing Isao's perspective in order to plead his case in court, Honda first negates the moral value that he was supposed to incarnate (equity, moderation, rationality, intellectual detachment, etc.). Significantly, this last part of *Runaway Horses* offers the most favorable and engaging portrait of Honda. However, his depiction is increasingly negative as the tetralogy comes close to its end. The upright and honest judge from the first two volumes is ousted by a ludicrous and elderly peeping tom who find himself fooled and ridiculed by Tōru, the young men he adopted, convinced that he was the third reincarnation of his childhood friend Kiyoaki. This does not invalidate the role of prolepsis endorsed by Honda in *Runaway Horses*, but it casts light on the superficial dimension of his counterpoint within the text. As such, his perspective by itself could be defined as a manipulative frame, namely a deceitful and transient contextualization which conceals, or at least waters down, the author's ideological views.

Conclusion

Susan Rubin Suleiman defines the *roman à thèse* as a demonstrative and rhetorical genre, and relates it to the antique tradition of *exemplum* which was "an example offered by the orator to his public" in order to back up his message (Suleiman 1983: 27). As a result of their cooptational dimension, the rhetorical complexity of fictional works which are closest to the standard model of a *roman à thèse* is, however, relatively limited. A close reading of Mishima's novel *Runaway Horses* leads me to complete and to enrich Suleiman's theoretical frame. I argue that elaborate authoritarian and ideological fiction also take into account the negative reaction their ideology might arouse and build up complex rhetorical strategies to make sure that their message prevails without frontally opposing the reader's likely convictions. This concern for the text's ideological "other" calls to mind the famous rhetorical figure of *conciliatio*, whose objective is to promote a consensus. I have emphasized, in *Runaway Horses*, three complementary tactics: (1) the lightning rod, which consists of attracting criticisms about one specific and clearly delineated locus of the text, fulfilling an apotropaic function and serving as a foil for the rest; (2) the prolepsis, which anticipates the reader's likely negative comments and thus becomes in tune with his perspective; (3) the tactic of enlarging the audience by which the narrator reincorporates a sectarian ideology into a larger and more universal ensemble.

The question remains, however, as to how to react towards these rhetorical strategies that certainly contribute to the text's complexity, but, evidently, are also there to subjugate the reader to authorial intent. The tactics that I have brought to light are, indeed, closely combined with a series of devices that use a logic of manipulation (restrictive frame, manipulative frame, mirroring). The entire system shapes a text that one may qualify as paranoid, insofar as it is characterized by "a rigid defensive attitude, if not attempting to hold sway over the other in order to prevent the risk that it constitutes" (De Mijolla-Mellor 2007: 3). This paranoid writing obviously runs counter to what Barthes names "the pleasure of the text" which involves a seduction respectful of the reader's integrity, a *game* between the reader and the author (the French word — *jeu* — implying also the idea of an untightened relation) (Barthes 1973: 10-11). In *Runaway Horses,* the author's pleasure alone seems to be in play. A critic like Mitsuhana becomes totally trapped, to such degree that he endorses arguments that are part of the text's strategy of persuasion. Recalcitrant readers, however, are scarcely any better off, as it is difficult to find an appropriate response to manipulation. The reading contract's straight refusal, if it marks the failure of paranoid seduction, also points to the reader's incapacity to find a locus from which he could bring his own desire and exert his own control upon the text.

Rather than just condemning the abusive contract that is imposed upon us, it may be fruitful to seek a launching point for a new readerly pleasure. In order to do this, unmasking the text and disclosing its entire rhetorical and manipulative structure, as I have tried to do, is, at first, crucial. Through performing such a gesture, which reveals a logic of legitimate self-defense, I (the reader) re-appropriate the text, regaining my rights through these very devices that were supposed to deprive me of them. Benefiting from a synoptic view of the text's rhetorical and manipulative structure, I have to admit that the author is struggling to seduce me. Paranoid writing, indeed, if it circles around its own obsessions and refuses to leave a locus and to yield power to the reader, does not reject him. On the contrary, it lives only for the addressee's figure, who it ceaselessly tries to capture. It is not unpleasant, if not voluptuous, to remark and to realize the amount of endeavors the author wastes in order to take me under his control and to read, in the text, that other manipulative text whose subtle gearings are now running idle. I observe this structure with all the more pleasure since I am slipping from its hands and can rejoice in seeing it constantly miss its prey. I oppose a conquering voyeurism to the text's

paranoia, “I observe clandestinely” another person’s pleasure, “I enter perversion” (Barthes 1975: 17).

Admittedly, the unconventional (and “perverse”) reading advocated here is also a scholarly one and most readers would, in any manner, drop a novel with too extreme a political slant. But there are a lot of conflicting reasons to stop or proceed with one reading. Drawn by curiosity (or a slight inclination towards masochism) a reader at first repelled by a novel’s ideological background, can find himself swept along by its manipulative devices. In such case, reading manipulation itself *as a text* might be the only way to respond to the author’s paranoid control. Such an approach provides both narcissistic (inasmuch as I cease to be the text’s passive recipient and regain my independence and integrity) and hermeneutic benefits. I was thus able, through a close reading of *Runaway Horses*, to cast fresh light on the potential complexity of ideological novel and offer new insights into Mishima’s literature in which manipulation plays a major role. This manipulative apparatus is all the more difficult to deal with in that it is closely related to the author’s proclivity to lay his cards on the table: confession and exhibitionism are part of manipulation *per se*. In *Runaway Horses*, it is by acknowledging the flaws and contradictions of his main character (his nihilistic mobiles, the irrational dimension of his political commitment, etc.) that Mishima surreptitiously renders his hero’s political stance somehow acceptable. I believe that describing and scrutinizing this anticipation mechanism, through which Mishima constantly forestalls the reader’s reaction, offer a new and fruitful perspective on his works.

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