



Research Article

Fragmented Identities in Postwar Japan: Examining the Temple of The Golden Pavilion and No Longer Human

P.C. Lalrinmuani¹, Dr. Sarangadhar Baral^{2*}

¹PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Mizoram University, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Kamalanagar College

^{2*}Professor, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Mizoram University

Abstract

This paper explores the negotiation of identity in postwar Japan by analysing Yukio Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* and Osamu Dazai's *No Longer Human*. The end of World War II and the American occupation triggered a crisis of identity, compelling the Japanese to navigate tensions between tradition and modernity, collectivism and individualism. Drawing on cultural theories of selfhood, including Takeo Doi's concepts of *tatemae* (public façade) and *honne* (true feelings), this paper examines how Mizoguchi and Yozo embody fragmented identities struggling against social expectations. Mizoguchi's obsession with beauty and destruction reflects anxieties over Japan's loss of cultural purity, while Yozo's masked existence exposes the alienation resulting from failed integration into society. By situating these narratives within broader philosophical and psychological frameworks, this paper argues that both characters exemplify the disintegration of self in a rapidly transforming Japan. Their struggles highlight the broader existential crisis of a nation redefining itself after defeat, ultimately revealing the precarious balance between autonomy and conformity in postwar Japanese literature.

Keywords: negotiation, identity, social expectations, alienation, struggles.

Received: 10/12/2023 Accepted: 12/12/2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53555/AJBR.v26i3.7229>

© 2023 The Author(s).

This article has been published under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0), which permits non-commercial unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that the following statement is provided. "This article has been published in the African Journal of Biomedical Research"

Introduction

The aftermath of World War II left Japan in a state of profound socio-cultural transformation, as traditional values were destabilized by the pressures of modernization, American occupation, and the search for a new national identity. The negotiation of identity in postwar Japan was an arduous and complicated process factored in by the country's defeat in World War II and the dramatic shifts during the American occupation. The end of Japan's imperial past, demilitarization, and the spread of Western values and ideologies led Japan into a state of flux where individuals moved away from the traditional values and belief systems that had been part and parcel of Japan's collective identity for centuries.

The social, cultural and personal conflicts that arose from attempts to reconcile Japan's historical identity with modernization and Westernization are reflected in the literary works of the era. Before and throughout the war period itself, concepts such as loyalty to the emperor, collective duty towards

society and bushido – the moral code of Samurai warriors – were central to the formation of Japanese identity. However, the postwar period saw the subversion and undermining of these values by Western democracy, individualism and capitalism, which catapulted the Japanese into a state where they had to question and challenge the notions of selfhood and identity. A sense of loss and alienation sprang forth as a consequence of disrupting the cultural continuity of Japan and the need to adapt to the new social framework. The negotiation of identity in postwar Japan was fraught with tension between preserving its cultural authenticity and embracing the values of a modernized world, thereby resulting in a nation continuously redefining itself in the shadow of its past.

The literary works of Yukio Mishima and Osamu Dazai reflect these tensions through protagonists who struggle with fractured identities. Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* and Dazai's *No Longer Human* explore the psychological and existential crises faced by postwar individuals caught between

societal expectations and personal alienation. This paper argues that Mizoguchi and Yozo embody the disintegration of self in a rapidly transforming Japan, revealing the precarious balance between autonomy and conformity in postwar Japanese literature.

Framing the Japanese Self, Identity, Stigma :

The concept of identity in Japan has been shaped by the interplay between collectivism and individualism. Takeo Doi's psychological framework of *tatemae* (public façade) and *honne* (true feelings) is useful in understanding the psychological turmoil of Mizoguchi and Yozo. *Tatemae* represents the socially acceptable self, while *honne* refers to one's authentic emotions, which are often suppressed in favor of social harmony. Additionally, Erving Goffman's theory of stigma provides insight into how the protagonists navigate their marginalization. Stigma arises when an individual is marked as deviant or inferior, a condition that defines both Mizoguchi's speech impairment and Yozo's inability to conform to social norms. Their struggles highlight the broader existential crisis of a nation redefining itself after defeat.

Formation of Japanese Selfhood:

The concept of self in Japan is fairly different from the Western self in the sense that the Japanese do not adhere to the idea of a bounded, impermeable, unified identity and acknowledge the self as adaptive, permeable and relational. The concept of selfhood in Western thought has revolved around the idea of a fixed, autonomous and unified self that prioritizes individuality, authenticity and rationality. The Western self, deeply individualistic and aware of itself, is located at the center through which the universe is perceived, and a sovereign self-possessing a sense of personal control and coherence is established.

Western thought has always emphasized the mind/consciousness/logic and one's mastery over it for the formation of selfhood or personal identity. The 17th century French thinker Rene Descartes asserts the self as a distinct, thinking entity through his philosophical statement, "Cogito, ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am" in his 1637 seminal work *Discourse on the Method*; John Locke, the Enlightenment thinker whose *An Essay On Human Understanding* (1698) posits that the continuity of an individual's "consciousness" of his/her "present thoughts and actions" is central to maintaining a unified, "personal self" (303). In tracing the Western notion of a unified self in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor argues that reason and morality make possible "self-mastery, which consists in reason ruling over desires, a self-control which contrasts to being dominated by one's appetites and passions" (124). The Western "autonomous individual imagines the incredible, that he lives within an inviolate protected region (the extended boundaries of the self) where he is 'free to choose' " (Shweder and Bourne 192).

The Japanese self, on the other hand, is constructed by *omote* (surface self) that is presented to the soto (outside) where "what is thought to be good is displayed" and *ura* (hidden self) that is kept closed up in *uchi* (inside) where "what we fear may be judged negatively is shut away" (Doi 29), with a complex interchange between the two. This concept of 'self' in Japan and

its interaction with society is put forth by the Japanese academic and psychoanalyst Takeo Doi in his book, *The Anatomy of Self* (1986). According to Doi, *omote* and *ura* "are not split" and "do not exist separately but, cojoined, form a single existence", suggesting "unity" and "a quality of two-sidedness" (29). Unlike Western perceptions of a fixed, singular self which emphasizes individuality and authenticity, the Japanese self is relational, adjusting and shifting between these two modes based on situational contexts. Delving into the psychological mechanisms that enable this adaptability, he describes *tatemae* as the public facade and *honne* as true feelings that reflect the tension between societal expectations and individual desires.

Takie Sugiyama Lebra, a Japanese anthropologist and professor, similarly examines in her book, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (2004), the concept of self in Japanese culture. She believes that Japan's cultural identity and selfhood are shaped more by fluidity and contextuality rather than the strict binaries of Western thought, such as right versus wrong or self-versus other, where the self is at the very centre and appears to be in symmetric opposition to everything else. Acknowledging the shifting nature of identity in Japanese society, she emphasizes the interdependence between self and other and the division of the Japanese self into the social self that is defined by social roles/obligations and surface level interactions and the inner self that is developed through introspection and often hidden or revealed through silence, *giri* or duty, body language and emotions. The boundary between the two, "far from fixed or impenetrable", involves constant shifting and is therefore "in a sense semi-transparent" (88).

The Japanese concept of the self is not an isolated, individualistic entity but a fluid, relational identity that navigates relationships without fixed binaries and is constantly reshaped by interactions with other people, thereby showcasing its interdependent nature. Similar to Takeo Doi's argument, Lebra states that the social self or "*omote* confronts that world by presenting a carefully packaged version of self (display)" while the inner self or "*uchi* wraps the self-up protectively and makes it more or less inaccessible to the world (concealment)" and hence, interactions are more intimate and informal "with the theatrical mask removed" (67). The self-presented in the *omote* (social self) action "assumes the greatest significance in keeping society in order" (43) where an individual's behavior is "characterized by linguistic, spatial, and bodily "wrapping" of self—that is, presentation of an acceptable and appropriate "package" to the outside world" (65).

Lebra notes that not everybody is successful in separating their private self and public façade, with the consequence being an "involuntary unwrapping of self" of an individual or "the uncontrolled leakage of their undesirable selves in front of others" (66) and the counter-action being "a further attempt at self-wrapping" that often exacerbates the mental anguish of the said individual. Takeo Doi also similarly posits that the individual is not always consciously aware of the distinction between public façade and true feelings, sometimes going so far as to deny the existence of his *honne* or true feelings, which can lead him/her to lose control of it and as a result, "*honne* can run rampant in ways that are extremely grotesque" (39). This shows how a balance between the dual structure is crucial in maintaining a person's psychological balance. Lebra stresses

the necessity for a sense of order within the outside zone to control “multiple selves within a single self”, as the absence of discipline or breakdown of boundary can result in psychological imbalance and alienation (103). As one’s inner zone is the locus of one’s self-identity, the inner zone can be regarded as “the sacred innermost space” (148), containing one’s truths and secrets. The Japanese consciousness to grasp this dual nature of things is considered crucial to the point that “a person is not considered to be an adult until he or she has grasped this distinction” (Doi 33).

This idea aligns with the Japanese concept of the Eightfold Fence, which originates from one of the first recorded poems in Japan from the eighth century. Included in the *Kokiji: An Account of Ancient Matters*, the poem talks of Susanoo-no-Mikoto, the male deity who founded Japan, who built a palace surrounded by eight layers of clouds for his wife, Kushinadahime (27). Used as a metaphor for a strong and layered barrier to describe a relationship or a strong bond, the Eightfold Fence also signifies a coping mechanism that allows the Japanese to compartmentalize their personal and social selves, enabling them to act appropriately and maintain composure even amid challenges. This is vividly echoed in the novel *Shogun* (1975) by James Clavell, whose recent television series adaptation in 2024 won multiple awards, including the Primetime Emmy Award and the Golden Globe Award. In the novel, the female character Mariko confesses to Anjin-san that to create their privacy, the Japanese have been trained ever since childhood “to disappear within ourselves, to grow impenetrable walls behind which we live. If we couldn’t, we’d all certainly go mad and kill each other and ourselves” (720). Claiming that they have “a limitless maze to hide in” within their inner world which enables them to be a million miles away even socializing, Mariko explains that this practice is for centering oneself to be reminded of “the transcendence of life, to help you gain *wa*, harmony.... which is the most sought-after quality in all Japanese life, all art, all” (Ibid).

Split Selves in Dazai and Mishima:

Osamu Dazai features in the selected narratives for this study, characters dominated by their *honne* (true feelings) that render them incapable of performing their societal roles and obligations. The farcical and inauthentic feeling they experience while enacting their public façade highlights the irreconcilable rift between the surface self and the inner self. In *No Longer Human* (1948), the protagonist Oba Yozo is a forlorn character whose *honne* (true feelings) transmogrifies him into a passive, hollow figure. Since he cannot achieve reconciliation between his surface self and his inner self, he becomes an outcast who cannot function as a normal human being in the postwar Japanese society. His inner self lacks an understanding of his fellow human beings and feels disconnected from them. He neither knows how to “speak or act like a human being” (28), nor understands the sensation of “hunger” (22) and “what makes human beings tick” (24) because he perceives himself to be a non-human who is “disqualified as a human being” (167). He harbours a grim, nihilistic perception of life where he views the world “as a place of bottomless horror” (133). To conceal his real, hidden self and uphold his identity as a normal person, he makes multiple efforts to maintain his public façade through his performative clown persona during his childhood, his Marxist

liaison to seem ‘modern’, and his womanizer as well as his dissolute personas after entering adulthood.

Yozo’s efforts are always in vain because his performances to fit into society are gruelling and torturous, as it signals to him a sense of inauthenticity and dishonesty. This is exemplified by his statement:

I deceived them. I was aware that everybody in the apartment house was friendly to me, but.... how much I feared them all, and how I was cursed by the unhappy peculiarity that the more I feared people, the more I was liked, and the more I was liked, the more I feared them (117).

The inauthentic feeling he experiences and the guilt arising whenever he enacts his social roles indicate the lack of reconciliation between his public persona and his inner feelings. He states, “When they tied me up as a criminal, I felt relieved, a calm, relaxed feeling” (92), suggesting that the awareness of his deceptive and hypocritical public persona causes him to suffer. Committing crimes, destroying himself through alcohol and drugs, and living a life of degeneracy seem to be his only way of bridging the gap between his surface self and his inner self.

In *The Setting Sun* (1947) by Osamu Dazai, Kazuko and her family, former aristocrats born into the nobility and currently facing financial ruin, try to navigate life in Japan in the wake of World War II. Denouncing old moralities and claiming that her “present life is unendurable” (80), she chooses to prioritize love over convention and becomes the mistress of a married man named Mr. Uehara, and an unmarried single mother. In her letters to him, she repeatedly begs him to accept her as a mistress and impregnate her so she can raise the child on her own. Completely abandoning traditional femininity, she chooses love over societal roles or obligations and states:

But I am happy. I have become pregnant, as I had hoped.... I cannot possibly think of it in terms of a “hideous mistake” or anything of the sort.... The only thing on my mind was to succeed in the adventure of my wholehearted love. Now that my desire has been fulfilled, there is in my heart the stillness of a marsh in a forest. I think I have won (172).

This signifies that Kazuko is a character driven by *honne* (true feelings) as she renounces her social image to live life on her terms. She is willing to be at odds with the world in pursuit of her desires as she declares, “A bastard and its mother. We will live in perpetual struggle with the old morality, like the sun” (174). Her willful defiance in not maintaining her public persona symbolizes Kazuko’s stance that there can never be harmony between the life she chooses and the society she dwells in.

Kazuko’s brother, Naoji, from *The Setting Sun*, is a character whose *honne* (true feelings) causes him to self-destruct and wallow in self-pity. Being born and raised as an aristocrat and a former Japanese soldier during World War II, he seeks freedom from the shadows of his past life through drug abuse, alcoholism, nihilism and reckless behaviour. To escape his noble upbringing and fit into society, he rejects family values and obligations and puts on the mask of a self-indulgent, “coarse” and “brutal” man who is a “friend of the people” (154). However, behind his degenerate and coarse persona lies great suffering because he is aware of the falseness and farcicality of his acts. His statement, “I had to forget my family. I had to oppose my father’s blood. I had to reject my mother’s gentleness. I had to be cold to my sister” (154) suggests the

arduous lengths he must take to enact his public persona. The last sentence of his suicide letter reads, "I am, after all, an aristocrat" (169), suggesting that despite his efforts to fit in with the commonfolk, his aristocratic background remains a major part of his inner self and he can never rid himself of it even after the aristocracy's fall from grace in the postwar era. His eventual suicide is further proof of the lack of reconciliation between his surface self and his inner self.

In *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956) by Yukio Mishima, the protagonist Mizoguchi is a character whose honne (true feelings) urges him to completely abandon his public persona and leading to a path of destruction. Though he puts on the mask of a cheerful young man, his inner self is filled with an intense self-loathing because he suffers from stuttering, and his weak physical constitution makes him feel "a trifle uglier than the others" (32). His sufferings and sense of alienation all stem from his stuttering. When he goes on a date with a girl, he is in doubt as to why she associates with him, as he says, "I could not understand.... what impulse drove her to this *desire for contamination*" (117). Since his inner self is filled with self-hate and negative self-perceptions, the all-consuming obsession he develops with the Golden Temple is the only thing he clings to outside of himself. As a Zen acolyte, he has training as well as obligations both in the temple and in his educational institutions that he has to carry out. However, as his obsession with the Golden Temple grows, he indulges in various forms of mischief and wrongdoings, and burns the temple towards the end of the novel in a twisted pursuit to become one with the beauty of the temple. Being completely controlled by his honne (true feelings), he abandons his public persona as a priest-in-training by destroying the temple he has sworn to protect. All his efforts are expended towards bringing himself closer to the temple's unattainable beauty and perfection. His statement, "I must burn the Golden Temple after all. Only then could a new life begin that was made specially to order for myself" (186), highlights how his honne (true feelings) extends towards something external to validate itself, further proving the inability of his inner self to form a clear identity.

Besides Mizoguchi, most of Mishima's characters are individuals who constantly work towards brandishing and mastering their tatemae (public façade) because they cannot accept their inner, hidden selves. Their honne (true feelings) prompts them to steadfastly enact their societal roles and moral obligations so as not to be caught. Feelings of inauthenticity and deception arise while they enact their tatemae (public façade), and they are aware of the gap between the surface self and the inner self. However, Mishima's characters choose to be dominated by their tatemae (public façade), which indicates that there can never be a harmonious shift between the dual selves. In Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), the protagonist Kochan suffers from "the sense of being different" (54) from other boys his age because he struggles with his hidden homosexuality and his inability to conform to traditional masculinity. Being weak, sickly and solitary ever since childhood, and his homosexual desires and fascination with violence and death all led him to wear a carefully maintained persona. He pretends to be a fun and active boy, and as he becomes a young adult, he forces himself into relationships with women even though his attraction is solely towards men. He cannot accept his honne (true feelings) because his

homosexuality gives him a "sense of uneasiness" and "uncertainty" (70). He confesses, "What I was now disgusted with was my true self, which was a part of my true life" (67). His self-disgust drives him to put on a masquerade and play his "part on the stage without once ever revealing" his true self (68). Repressing his true feelings, forcing himself into heterosexual relationships becomes his moral obligation as he fears societal rejection. He is aware of "the emptiness of the gulf" (67) that separates him from others due to his performative masculinity and inherent perversity. However, till the end, he willfully entraps himself, outwardly rejecting his home and never once letting go of his public persona. The irreconcilable split he discerns between his surface self and inner self leads him to accept the suffering that will ensue while living in the postwar Japanese society.

In *The Frolic of the Beasts* by Yukio Mishima, the protagonist, Koji, is initially depicted as a passive, free-spirited youth with no strong family ties. After getting involved in a love triangle between Yuko and her husband Ippei, Ippei is filled with love for Yuko, and even after committing a crime against Ippei, he has to remind himself of his repentance so as not to pursue Yuko. However, he suppresses his honne (true feelings) and prioritizes his public persona after accepting the impossibility of their situation. Koji and Yuko's existence revolve around the physically and mentally impaired Ippei as they take up responsibility for him. Towards the end of the novel, Koji admits to having the notion that his life and actions are dictated by Ippei as he states, "A lot of things have happened. But, in the end, I feel like I've behaved and lived exactly the way he wanted me to. And that will probably carry on this way from now on as well" (146). They grant Ippei's wish to die by killing him, and as a result, Koji is given the death penalty, and Yūko is sentenced to life imprisonment. Koji's return to Yuko and Ippei in the Kusakado greenhouse to resume a life of servitude after being released from prison, his fatalistic devotion, and his eventual death encapsulate his prioritizing of tatemae (public façade) and giri (duty) over his inner feelings and desires. The statement regarding Koji that "whenever his desire arose, it inevitably revived his crime" towards Ippei (87) serves as evidence for the impossibility of bridging the gap between his surface self and his inner self.

Ippei, Yuko's husband and Koji's former mentor, from *The Frolic of the Beasts*, is initially portrayed as a character fuelled by his honne. Formerly a wealthy, middle-aged man who is worldly, self-indulgent, intellectually sophisticated and morally corrupt with numerous love affairs outside of his marriage, his character pursues his inner desires and emotions without caring for the repercussions. However, after Koji's physical assault leaves him physically and mentally impaired, he morphs into a character whose tatemae (public façade) is the only side of him visible to the world. Ippei's spirit or inner self is portrayed to be struggling behind "an invisible and impregnable wall" (59) with no exit, where "his hands and feet were bound and his intellect gagged" (60). "Unable to communicate freely his desires" (57), his intercourse with people is reduced to only a few words, and he answers "everything with the same warm, helpless smile" (61). He has no choice but to wear this agreeable façade that always smiles and appears not to be cognizant of what happens around him.

Koji perceives something sinister and uncanny in Ippei's smile. He feels that Ippei's clueless façade is a way for him to exert control over Ippei and Yuko, and that he is secretly aware of what he is doing to them. He states to Ippei:

Our household has begun to revolve around the hollow cavern that lies inside you....and not only that, but you arranged Yūko and me around the periphery in a manner that suits you and took it into your head to create for yourself an entirely new family of the kind that wouldn't have occurred to anyone else (141).

Koji's suspicions regarding Ippei's mental impediment can be regarded as his inability to accept the reality that he has rendered Ippei disabled and that he is the cause of Ippei's transformation. However, instances in the text where Ippei has "an unmistakable smile on his face" (77) when Koji slaps Yuko on the face after an argument, or where he requests to sleep in the guestroom beside Koji's room instead of their bedroom immediately after Yuko tries to share a bed with Koji, raise the question of whether Ippei is mindlessly reacting to his surroundings in his limited capacity, or he secretly has an awareness of his actions and has mastered this public façade to torture Koji and Yuko. Therefore, it becomes impossible to determine in this study whether Ippei is a character whose inner self is trapped and his whole being is driven by his surface self, or if he is putting on a façade to disguise his wicked private self that is driven solely by his *honne* (true feelings).

Fragmented Identity in the Postwar Milieu:

The clash between individualism and conformity in Dazai and Mishima's texts is a testament to the clash between modernity and tradition in postwar Japan. It also serves as a reflection of a deeper crisis regarding selfhood and identity formation in the Japanese context. The notion posited by Takeo Doi and Takie Sugiyama Lebra of the surface self and the hidden self forming the Japanese identity by contextually shifting back and forth and co-existing in a state of harmony and balance is found to be lacking in the selected texts. Dazai and Mishima's characters, while being conscious of the division between their inner self and surface self, are tormented by this very division, causing them to experience alienation and inner conflict. As they straggle along with different selves that are disharmonious and at odds with one another, their cognizance of the irreconcilable gap between their split selves causes their identity to be split apart or fragmented.

There are several instances in the selected narratives where the "involuntary unwrapping" (Lebra 66) or exposure of an individual's undesirable self/selves in front of others is witnessed. For instance, in Dazai's *No Longer Human* (1948), Oba Yozo's act of clowning gives him the reputation of a mischievous joker during his school days. During one particular physical training period when he purposefully falls to make his classmates laugh, a boy named Takechi catches his act and murmurs to him that he did it on purpose. This fills him with anxiety and dread because whatever he does, "Takechi would see through it" (44), and he is afraid of Takechi exposing his hypocritical mask to everyone. In *The Setting Sun* by Dazai, Naoji states in a letter he leaves behind to his sister Kazuko before committing suicide that he has never derived pleasure from his dissipated lifestyle. He lets the "coarse" and "brutal" (154) façade he puts on slip, and confesses that his reason for

living the way he does is because of the desire to escape the shadow of his aristocrat identity and fit into the postwar society. Dazai and Mishima feature characters possessing an acute consciousness of the distinction between their inner and surface selves. In Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), the protagonist Kochan conceals his homosexual tendencies by putting on his carefully crafted heterosexual mask and having relationships with women despite his attraction to men. However, in a scene where he and his former girlfriend Sonoko are at a dance hall, he sees a young man in his early 20s "with coarse but regular and swarthy features" standing in front of him half-naked (167). Fixing his gaze on him, Kochan's mask slips momentarily as he is "beset by sexual desire" so intense that he forgets Sonoko standing right beside him. Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* also features an incident where Mizoguchi accidentally witnesses the slipping of Father Dosen's persona as the Superior of the Golden Pavilion temple when he catches him red-handed with a geisha or female entertainer, and he is wearing Western clothing instead of his priestly attire (150). In *The Frolic of the Beasts*, Mishima's character Yuko has mostly remained stoic and expressionless to her husband Ippei's antics and infidelities. However, when she and Koji catch him in the act of cheating, she slumps to her knees, covers her face and utters a "bitter, coarse, primitive cry" (48), thereby completely abandoning her indifference and letting her stoic façade slip momentarily.

The involuntary exposure of what should be concealed is often met with "a further attempt at self-wrapping" (Lebra 66) or concealment of the parts they wish to hide. Some characters choose conformity by maintaining their *tatemae* (public façade), and the prioritizing of their surface self is sometimes taken to extreme lengths, where they attempt to conceal the inner self. Then there are other characters whose insistence on *honne* (true feelings) and the prioritization of their inner self drive them to completely abandon their public façade as well as their societal roles and obligations. However, in both cases, their identity is extremely complex because there is always a shift between their different selves depending on the context. As they glide consciously, reluctantly or even unconsciously, between one form of being to another, at times subscribing to or juggling with their multiple selves and affiliations, the characters as portrayed by Dazai and Mishima are subjects that inhabit the rim of an "in-between reality" or a "borderline existence" (Bhabha 19).

Their identity forms itself in the gap between their shifting selves and boundaries, where it experiences fragmentation as it is no longer just one thing or the other but a fusion of the two. As their identity shifts back and forth between modernity and tradition, individualism and conformity, and inner self and surface self, an individual is situated permanently in the margin between two cultures and two societies which never completely interpenetrated and fused. He/she comes to experience alienation and "the conflict of the divided self", the old self and the new" as an inhabitant of "two worlds, in neither of which he ever quite belonged" (Park 892). The postwar Japanese characters in this study therefore harbour a fragmented identity as they exist "betwixt and between" two worlds where "neither one thing nor another; or may be both" (Turner 236) and they manifest most clearly the production of cross-cultural identities during a period of national turmoil and uncertainty.

Conclusion: Postwar Fragmented Self

Mizoguchi and Yozo serve as literary representations of Japan's struggle with identity in the aftermath of war. Their narratives highlight the tension between societal expectations and personal authenticity, illustrating how rigid cultural norms can drive individuals toward self-destruction. Through their protagonists, Mishima and Dazai offer a critique of postwar Japan's attempt to redefine itself, ultimately questioning whether true selfhood can exist within the confines of societal conformity.

Mizoguchi, the protagonist of *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, is a stuttering acolyte who internalizes his disability as a fundamental failure to exist within a world that values aesthetic perfection. His stutter isolates him, reinforcing his belief that he is inherently flawed. His obsession with the Golden Pavilion stems from his desire to grasp an absolute, untouchable form of beauty that is denied to him. His eventual decision to burn the Pavilion is a radical assertion of agency, representing both a rejection of societal ideals and a desperate attempt to destroy the source of his torment. This act mirrors the postwar struggle with national identity—Japan, much like Mizoguchi, is caught between the remnants of its imperial past and the uncertainties of modernization. Mizoguchi's destruction of beauty serves as a metaphor for Japan's crisis of selfhood, illustrating the dangers of an unattainable ideal.

Dazai's *No Longer Human* presents Yozo as a man who is incapable of assimilating into society. Unlike Mizoguchi, whose alienation is rooted in physical impairment, Yozo's struggle is psychological. His reliance on a "mask" to conceal his true self aligns with Doi's concept of *tatemaie*, as he performs roles that allow him to survive in a world that feels inherently hostile to him. His inability to maintain this façade, however, leads to repeated failures in relationships, work, and self-preservation. Yozo's downfall is emblematic of the postwar individual who cannot reconcile traditional values with the demands of a rapidly modernizing society. His eventual descent into self-destruction is not merely personal but reflective of a broader societal malaise. By portraying Yozo as both victim and participant in his alienation, Dazai critiques the rigid structures that define normalcy, suggesting that those who cannot conform are left to navigate the abyss of existential despair. These works remain relevant today as they continue to resonate with contemporary discussions on mental health, social pressure, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world. By examining Mizoguchi and Yozo through the lenses of stigma, beauty, and alienation, we gain a deeper understanding of how literature can reflect and challenge the complexities of identity in times of upheaval.

Works Cited

- Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Houghton Mifflin, 1946.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Spec. Indian ed. India: Replika P Pvt. Ltd., 2015.
- Clavell, James. *Shogun: A Novel of Japan*. Dell Publishing, 1975.
- Dazai, Osamu. *No Longer Human*. Translated by Donald Keene, Revised ed., New Directions, 1973.
- . *The Setting Sun*. Translated by Donald Keene, Revised ed., New Directions, 1968.
- Doi, Takeo. *Anatomy of Self*. Translated by Mark A. Harbison, E-book, Kodansha International Ltd., 1988.
- Dower, John W. *EMBRACING DEFEAT: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. E-book, W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Ewing, Katherine P. "The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency". *Ethos*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1990, pp. 251–78. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/640337>. Accessed 13 Mar. 2024.
- Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.
- Mishima, Yukio. *Confessions of a Mask*. Translated by Meredith Weatherby, Penguin Classics, 2017.
- . *The Frolic of the Beasts*. Translated by Andrew Clare, Penguin Classics, 2019.
- . *The Temple of Golden Pavillion*. Translated by Ivan Morris, Vintage Classics, 2001.
- Park, Robert E. "Human Migration and The Marginal Man". *American Journal of Sociology* 33.6 (1928): 881-893. JSTOR. Web. 20 Aug. 2017.
- Sugimoto, Yoshio. *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Shweder, Richard A., and Edmund J. Bourne. "Does the Concept of the Person Vary Cross-Culturally?". *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion* edited by Richard A. Shweder and Robert A. LeVine. Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 158-199.
- Turner, Victor. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage". *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970. 93-111. Print.
- Yasumaro, O No. *Kokiji: An Account of Ancient Matters*. Translated by Gustav Heldt, Columbia University Press, 2014.