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CRISIS AND RENAISSANCE IN POST-WAR JAPAN*

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This article explores the intellectual and political meanings surrounding scholarly reconstruction and reimagining of the Renaissance in pre- and post-war Japan, analyzing in particular the work of Hayashi Tatsuo, Watanabe Kazuo and Hanada Kiyoteru, through comparison with some of the dominant perspectives on the same subject produced during the same years in Europe and America. It focuses specifically on authors from other Axis countries, namely Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin. For although Italian and German scholarship has been seminal in setting out new ways of interpreting the Renaissance, beyond this criterion, the selection of the intellectuals whose work I shall investigate does not follow strictly disciplinary lines. Instead, they have been selected because of their relevance in proposing an image of the Renaissance that played an important role in post-war public intellectual debates about crisis and rebirth in post-war Japan.

I

Appropriating, relativizing, or negating the Renaissance has long represented one of the main symbolic battlefields in the construction of a unitary *Geistesgeschichte* (history of ideas). Japan's case—the first non-western and non-colonial country where a number of intellectuals studying the Renaissance

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emerged—is particularly interesting because, at a first glance, any attempt to represent the Renaissance in direct continuity with Japan's "own" history seems problematic. In other words, Japan represents a special case in an investigation of how a historical dimension such as the Renaissance can be appropriated and used as a symbolic image to cast light on problems at hand.[1]

Similarly, the Renaissance as a historical category has long been a topic of passionate debate in Western historiography, more or less since the time Japan experienced the Meiji Restoration, from 1868 to 1912. Then, for the first time, Jacob Burckhardt, influenced by Jules Michelet, shaped the features of the Renaissance as it still often appears today in the everyday imagination, placing the era and its relationship with the Middle Ages and modernity at the centre of a theoretical struggle for appropriation and refutation. The debate about the Renaissance represented an important part of the late nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf* for the definition of European and Western cultural identity.[2] Some of its alleged characteristics were connected to fundamental features of modernity, such as individualism and secularization, and a debate arose concerning the geographical origin of this historical period.[3] That debate, originally centred in continental Europe, spread across the world from North America to Japan. And the same authors who had created the myth of the Renaissance in Europe, namely Burckhardt and Walter Pater (1839–94), were read and commented on in Japan.

During the Second World War and its aftermath, the Renaissance assumed a new place in cultural debate, with intellectuals and scholars examining topics such as its relation to humanism and democratic agency under a new and somber light. The Renaissance, which bore a powerful symbolic appeal, acquired a new metaphoric depth in an era that discovered the universality and centrality of humankind through the tragedy of indiscriminate death on a massive scale, and which recalled the importance of the individual at a moment when the violent silencing of expression was common. In these conditions, studying the Renaissance had a particularly critical importance for those Italian, German

[1] Another interesting case is the reception and ideological use of the Renaissance in China. On this topic see Mark Gamsa, "Uses and Misuses of a Chinese Renaissance," *Modern Intellectual History*, 10/3 (2013), 635–54.

[2] It is important to remember here that the extension of the adjective "Western" to all of Europe was debated during much of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth because the German cultural mainstream perceived itself as essentially diverse from the liberal "Western powers."

[3] For a history of Renaissance historiography until the Second World War see the classic: Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (New York, 1948). Another history of the development of a conception of the Renaissance which, although recently published, is already considered a milestone is William Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance* (Chichester, 2011). See especially chap. 1 at 1–30.

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(of Jewish origins) and Japanese scholars who faced the difficult climate of the interwar period or the tragedy of war defeat and the challenge of reconstruction. Through their eyes, the Renaissance came to represent a metaphor of their condition or a symbolic alternative to the present.

With the present article, I intend to test the limits of the similarity among these imaginings of the Renaissance produced by authors of such different cultural backgrounds. On the one hand, I cast light on the cultural and linguistic effort that, for the Japanese authors I consider, entailed the appropriation of the Renaissance as a symbol and a metaphor—an effort often concretely confronting major linguistic problems and political limitations to liberty. On the other hand, I question the simplistic assumption that the distinction between Japan and "the West" is so relevant as to render secondary any more complex reflections on the common threads that bind together intellectuals from different countries in relation to the value they came to place upon the Renaissance. In order to substantiate this second line of inquiry, I will turn to a problem that has been a mainstay of the historiography of the Renaissance and that acquired a specific role in its revival during the mid-twentieth century as well as in its subsequent partial demise.[4]

One of the main questions concerning the Renaissance has always concerned the political and the existential liberty of man, and in particular the idea of intellectual freedom. The point at stake here is how the theoretical relation to history and time impacted on the role scholars and citizens could play in a modern democratic society. Such ethical and political problems were linked to that of the relationship between crisis and renaissance. The existence and the nature—theoretical or extra-theoretical—of as critical an event as the origin of the Renaissance was open to discussion. I will try to show how the line of thought that posits crisis as the cause of the Renaissance tends to imply the active choice of man as the historical engine of cultural rebirth. Such a position entrusts to intellectuals a specific creative role and thus recognizes their organic role and the power of cultural action as the endeavour of the individual to change the world. In other words, in those historiographic currents that focused on the Renaissance and humanism (*umanesimo*) as a moral and political experience, the ethically and socially engaged quattrocento and cinquecento scholars and humanists became the metonymic image of the human being in its full potentiality and a model for present-day engaged intellectuals.

4 William J. Bouwsma, "Eclipse of the Renaissance," *American Historical Review*, 103/1 (1998), 115–17; Bouwsma, "The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History," *American Historical Review*, 84/1 (1979), 1–15; Randolph Starn, "Historians and 'Crisis'," *Past and Present*, 52/1 (1971), 3–22.

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The list of the authors who could enter the picture of the present inquiry is large, but in order to make the essay manageable, I will focus only on a few, specifically those authors whose names during the post-war period have been associated in their nation and beyond with the Renaissance and whose work has been influential in wider cultural and political debates. These authors are Hans Baron (1900–88), Eugenio Garin (1909–2004), Hayashi Tatsuo (1896–84), Watanabe Kazuo (1901–75) and Hanada Kiyoteru (1909–74), also known as Hanada Seiki. With the German and the Italian scholars, I will introduce the topics of the relationship between crisis and renaissance and of the possibility to imagine the historical Renaissance and humanism as the archetypes of other crisis–rebirth periods. The second part of the essay is devoted to analysing the specific case of Japan. My conclusion shows the different lines along which the works of the selected authors—often conceived or composed before the end of the Second World War—can be segmented and grouped, and reflects on the independent life that the texts examined here assumed when re-signified in the post-1945 historical context. What emerges is how different conceptions of crisis informed different symbolizations of the Renaissance and, by implication, a different image of the relationship between the intellectual and society.

II

The focus on modern political agency as a distinctive and original feature of the Renaissance and the identification of such agency with a primarily intellectual work owes much to a specific line in historiography that has its prehistory in Jules Michelet and its beginning in Jacob Burckhardt. The two European authors, to whom the first part of this article is dedicated, belong to this line, which has been one of the prevalent influences on Renaissance studies in Japan too. Hayashi acknowledged on different occasions his debt to Burckhardt as a historian, and Watanabe, although inspired—especially in his later career—by the French school of *Les Annales*, received the original imprint of Jules Michelet. As we will see, Watanabe struggled throughout his whole work to reconcile a social and bottom-up outlook on history with a political and existential aspiration to recognize freedom in the individual. Hanada, a critic of the idea that the intellectual as an archetype of the free individual should hold a leading role in political life, had nevertheless formed his idea of the Renaissance on Hayashi's as well as on Burckhardt's and Pater's works.

However, we should start with Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin, often considered to be the two champions of the modernist theory of the Renaissance, to understand how this general line of historiography was interpreted and reinterpreted by authors whose lives and careers were sharply divided in two by the crisis of the Second World War and the events leading up to it.

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It is well known that one of the main characteristics of humanism and the Renaissance, or at least a characteristic that we can regularly find in many of the humanist and Renaissance authors, is the re-evaluation of the human being as a free agent. Although contempt for man is surely not a universal feature of the Middle Ages, asserting it was a common trope, especially during the twelfth century when traditional religious sensibility had began to clash with the developing complexities of a richer and more interconnected world. The long-established tradition of *de contemptu mundi* (on contempt of the world), which had its roots in the late classical age and its first great Christian interpreter in Eucherius of Lyon (380–449),[5] was revived by the works of Bernard of Cluny and Innocent the Third (1160–1216) (*De Miseria Humanae Conditionis*).

The best-known example of the new Renaissance idea of man is contained in the beginning of *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (1486) by Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), who composed the text as an introduction for the public discussion of his nine hundred theses, which never took place. For a part of the historiography that followed the Second World War, eminently represented by Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin, Pico belongs to the second part of the humanist–Renaissance period. He is one of the first philosophers embedded in the Medici court, and his oration asserts that the foremost aim of man's exalted liberty is the contemplation of God.

The subject expounded by Pico was not new, although the reasons he used to praise man were. Freedom, as Pico intended it, was a far cry from the early humanist thought on free will. This is evident when, for example, we compare the *Oratio* with the dialogue on free will by Lorenzo Valla, in which the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and man's freedom is ultimately resolved in faith rather than systematically explained. However, despite his theoretical originality in thinking humanity beyond essence, Pico had not invented the issue of man's dignity *de novo*. Praising it had become a common rhetorical trope since the second half of the fourteenth century. Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459) had already tackled the issue in a work entitled *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* (On the Dignity and Excellence of Man), an answer to Pope Innocent. He wrote the work at the request of Alphonse of Aragon (1396–1458), together with *De excellentia ac praestantia hominis* by Bartolomeo Facio (1400–57). Manetti argued that pleasure was no less an integral part of human life than suffering. He stressed the value not only of reason but also of the senses, opposing Innocent's contempt for bodily functions and extolling the joys of food and sex. What is more important here—and what attracted the attention of important interpreters of the Renaissance during the 1930s and 1940s, such as Eugenio Garin and Federico Chabod

[5] Erasmus of Rotterdam revived the fame of Eucherius and took inspiration from his work to compose his own *De contemptu mundi*.

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(1901–60)[6]—is that Manetti exalted man's action by attending to the creations he left as signs of his passage, his architecture and his political activity. One can summarize the final sense of Manetti's argumentation in the definition of man's ultimate function (*uficio*) that Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–98) attributed to him, namely *agere et intelligere*. To those twentieth-century scholars who addressed the Renaissance and humanism in their explicit or implicit search for a cultural and political model, this definition sounded promising as the opening of a new era in which man, namely the intellectual, was responsible for his freedom and its realization in this world through action. Garin commented on the *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* as follows: "And at the center of human freedom, [there is] this gift so great and so grave, that is together gift and achievement, and whereof man makes himself constantly worthy with his own work, by means of which he makes the products of the Lord always more beautiful and perfect."[7] On the one hand, Manetti was a long-time civil servant of the Florentine Republic; he held many appointments both in the administration of the city and the surrounding countryside and as ambassador and was an accomplished entrepreneur in the textile business. On the other hand, Pico, who was a protégé of Lorenzo de' Medici, was a strong supporter of the idea that the savant should not meddle in the cares of the world.

The difference between these two authors is exemplary of the supposed turning point that some historians have seen as the separation between the civic humanism and the later Neoplatonic humanism.[8] This distinction owes much to the work of the first two authors that we will examine: Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin.[9] According to Baron and Garin's point of view, Manetti embodied the ideal civic humanist, lover of letters but directly involved in active life. Civic humanism is the cultural trend that Baron assigns roughly to the last years of the

6 F. Chabod, *Scritti sul Rinascimento* (Torino, 1967), 49.

7 Eugenio Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, 5th edn (Rome and Bari, 1993), 74. Here and elsewhere, the translation is mine.

8 Hans Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought* (Princeton, 1988), 184.

9 Such an interpretation differs in many points with the other fundamental narrative of the Renaissance shaped by Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905–99), whose influence on Renaissance studies, especially in America, has been paramount. The debate between Kristeller, Garin, Baron and their many distinguished disciples cannot be summarized here, nor is its merit and resolution of interest to this article, which deals only with the historiography of the Renaissance rather than the Renaissance itself. For a thorough evaluation of the theory of civic humanism and its influence on other important issues of political and philosophical debate, such as communitarianism and New Republicanism, see James Hankins, *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000). Hankins studied under Kristeller.

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fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth, in which scholars, especially in republican Florence, had seen their work as an integrated part of civic life. According to Baron, after the Medici had taken power, Florence's civic humanism, which had been the guide in the assertion of the civic values of the intellect, went into decline.[10] The German historian had formed this conviction based on his personal academic background during his youth, when he was a disciple of the *Vernunftrepublikaner* Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), who had been a supporter of the model of English and American (Western) parliamentary democracy during the Weimar Republic, and of Walter Goetz (1867–1958), historian and parliamentarian for the German Democratic Party from 1920 to 1928.[11] Baron had been entangled in the pre-war German debate on the *Renaissanceidee* and had forcefully opposed the nationalistic and racist tendencies to appropriate the Renaissance or to negate its relevance. In such context, he had shaped his famous theory while he tried to defend Burckhardt's modernist take on the Renaissance by freeing it from what he considered to be the burden of its later Nietzschean interpretations. He saw the positive connotation afforded to amoral individualism and tyranny as deviations from the true meaning and core message of *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*.[12] His thought had matured in that direction after years spent living in exile in the US.[13]

However, if Baron's philo-democratic narration of the rise of the Medici can count as a description of the end of civic humanism, what really made Baron's theory iconic was the beginning he ascribed to that cultural phenomenon, the renaissance of a civic tradition. The problem was one concerning the origin rather than the arrival point. Where did the renaissance of a civic tradition that, according to Baron, informed the whole political history of modernity come from? As we will see, the core problem was going to be of importance for

[10] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, 1955).

[11] A good analysis of Baron's personal and academic background and its influence on his theory of civic humanism can be found in Riccardo Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali, critica moderna* (Milan, 2001). See also Georg G. Iggers, *"Refugee Historians from Nazi Germany: Political Attitudes towards Democracy"* (Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series, 14 Sept. 2005). Finally, a recent and fundamental source is Martin Ruehl, *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination, 1860–1930* (Cambridge, 2015). The book contains a chapter dedicated to Baron, and Ruehl has made use of an array of sources, including the manuscripts collected at Duke University Library.

[12] Ruehl, *Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination*, 228 and *passim*.

[13] Regarding earlier works and their take on the relationship between Republican and Medicean Florence see Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Leonardo Bruni Aretino: Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1928).

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post-war society because it ultimately concerned the nature of freedom itself—that fragile construct of Western civilization always in danger of disappearance at every historical turning point.

III

In 1955, Hans Baron finally published *The Crisis of Early Italian Renaissance*, the abridged result of research he had begun more than twenty years before.[14] The theory it contained, although accused of being simplistic and historically dubious,[15] was immensely influential in the field of Renaissance studies and beyond.[16] According to Baron, during the fourteenth century, early humanists, even those of Florentine origins, had sought to free themselves from the world and avoid public office.[17] This situation would have perpetuated itself if a traumatic event outside the world of letters and defined by Baron as a "crisis" had not happened. The event was the immediate danger of conquest posed by Giangaleazzo Visconti, the autocratic ruler of Milan, who at the turn of the century was intent on annexing all of northern central Italy. Such a challenge to the Italian city states, and to their ideological and political champion, Florence, prompted the humanist scholars to engage in a rhetorical fight against the propaganda coming from Visconti.[18] Being pushed from contemplation into

[14] Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 187.

[15] Baron put considerable time and effort into answering the criticisms that other scholars had made of his work. See Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Interpretation of Italian Humanism: The Contribution of Hans Baron," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19/1 (1958), 14–25; Hans Baron, "Moot Problems of Renaissance Interpretation: An Answer to Wallace K. Ferguson," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19/1 (1958), 26–34. Another important critic of Baron was Jerrold E. Seigel, "'Civic Humanism' or Ciceronian Rhetoric? The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni," *Past and Present*, 34 (1966), 3–48. Baron replied a year later. See Hans Baron, "Leonardo Bruni: 'Professional Rhetorician' or 'Civic Humanist'?" *Past and Present*, 36/1 (1967), 21–37. Baron was very upset by Seigel's criticism and actively tried to curtail his influence on other scholars. He expressly asked Garin to write a refutation on his behalf on the pages of the most influential Italian journals (MS Archivio Garin, GT B265, Baron to Garin, Chicago, 1 July 1967).

[16] Baron's theory, in particular, influenced authors such as Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock, who in the following decades expanded on his view and explicitly connected Renaissance Florence's republican ideology to the development of British and American modern politics. Moreover, Baron had also an influence on some of the philosophers known as Communitarians.

[17] Petrarch had been, according to Baron, "Moot Problems in Renaissance Interpretation," 28, like "a Moses, first to see a new land, but not granted to enter it," because he held public offices but could not frame in the end a complete theory of civic commitment.

[18] In order to prove his thesis, Baron had to provide new dates for some of the most famous literary pieces of the quattrocento, especially those by Leonardo Bruni.

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action, the scholars became aware of the freedom they had in the very moment they were about to lose it. They decided—and I must stress here "decided"—to defend it, and through this they put to use the Classics from a new perspective and with a novel historical sense. This is the Renaissance in Baron's mind: classical learning was revived not because it had been forgotten before—the Middle Ages had a long history of reading the Classics—but because it was now employed in a new, mediated way. It had become a part of the past, which it had not been during the Middle Ages, and therefore *exemplum*.

The idea that the ultimate meaning of the cultural rebirth of the quattrocento lay not in the rediscovery of some lost antiquity but in a new attitude towards that antiquity and its relation to the present was shared by Eugenio Garin. Garin had advanced for the first time his famous thesis in *Italian Humanism*, a work he had written before the end of the Second World War, but only published—in German—in 1947:

> it is true that Oxford's and Paris' physics and logics had long been internally eroding the structures [Aristotelian physics and Ptolemaic cosmology], which had been abundantly creaking since the terrible blow given by Occam. But only the achievement of the sense of antiquity as sense of history—belonging to philological humanism—allowed the understanding of those theories for what they actually were: men's thinking, products of a determined culture.[19]

Thus, for Garin, humanism is the true beginning of a true renaissance, or, in other words, it marks a discontinuity from the preceding rhetorical and literary culture because it puts a distance between the present and the past, so that it could actively use the past to project itself towards modernity. The difference from the previous era is not in what is known but in the way it is known and its different use in active life.

In this way, exactly and only humanism brought a conclusion to a long crisis framed in a historical framework and overcame forever that old vision of a static reality, of rigid structures, of a non-historical object of contemplation that Platonic–Aristotelian logic had presupposed, and where a motion, eternally coming back on identical positions, dissolves into an appearance of motion, while man and his life and his activity lose themselves in a radical insignificance.[20]

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[19] Garin, *L'Umanesimo* italiano, 20: "è vero che fisici e logici di Oxford e Parigi avevano da tempo cominciato a rodere dentro quelle strutture, che scricchiolavano parecchio dopo il terribile colpo dato da Occam. Ma solo la conquista del senso dell'antico come senso della storia – propria dell'umanesimo filologico – premise di valutare quelle teorie per cio' che esse erano davvero: pensamenti d'uomini, prodotti di una certa cultura."

[20] Ibid., 15: "Per questa via, proprio e solo l'umanesimo, concludendo del resto una lunga crisi, collocò nei suoi quadri storici e oltrepassò per sempre quell'antica visione del reale statica, strutture rigide, astorico oggetto di contemplazione, che la logica platonico-aristotelica

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And Garin exalted the primacy of the will in Coluccio Salutati as well as the glorification of human work and action above contemplation that characterized Florentine humanism, at least until Matteo Palmieri, because the point, Garin made it clear, was not man's intellectual freedom per se—that is, his ability to frame his own intellectual representation of reality—but the concretization of that freedom in action within the human world. Freedom had become concrete liberty, even if only for a short period, and that, suggested Baron and Garin, had been the time when the political and moral course of the West had been posited.[21]

IV

Although published after 1945, Baron's *Crisis* and Garin's *Umanesimo* were both products of war and of what had been before it. The German intellectual world at the beginning of the twentieth century had begotten *Crisis* and, arguably, the Cold War had given it its final appearance, but the background of the author—a Jew, hindered in his career and then cast away from his treacherous fatherland—had shaped its core values.[22] In a famous passage of *The Crisis of Early Italian Renaissance*, Baron likened the Visconti menace to the efforts of tyrants such as Napoleon and Hitler to destroy civil liberty in the United Kingdom.[23]

Even more than Baron's masterpiece, Garin's work was the product of interwar and wartime crisis and not of post-war enthusiasm. In 1986, remembering the

aveva presupposto, e dove un moto ritornante in eterno su posizioni identiche si dissolve in una parvenza di moto, mentre l'uomo e la sua vita e la sua attività si perdono in una radicale insignificanza."

21 However, the advancement of the humanities alone was not the product of this renewed attitude towards the past. In Garin's mind, the same epoch-making change produced the new scientific path as well. Garin's view was corroborated in the 1960s by a series of essays, some of which today appear dated. We remember here the masterwork of Cesare Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo: "Invenzione" e "Metodo" nella cultura del XV e del XVI secolo* (Milan, 1968). Later on, other historians, such as Sapori, would have also added the beginning of the spirit of capitalism. For Garin, the scholars of the Renaissance, both the humanists and the "technicians and mathematicians," were the active creators of a new time, which Cassirer (together with Dilthey a point of reference for Garin's theory), in his *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Berlin, 1927), 53, had epitomized in Cusanus.

22 Although Baron saw his intellectual career as in fundamental continuity with his days as a student in Germany, he also acknowledged that his thought on civic humanism only reached maturity around the end of the Second World War and that such mature thought had to be understood as part of a wider movement which included scholars such as Eugenio Garin, Federico Chabod and Nino Valeri. Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 188–9.

23 Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, 40.

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composition of *Italian Humanism* in the preface to the tenth Italian edition, Garin stated,

> I had inhaled the atmosphere between the two wars, when the word from the past was charged with all the tensions of a moment of crisis ... Between the two wars, when the threat of a new conflict was becoming more and more serious, and the awareness of a profound crisis of values in the Western world clearer and clearer, reflection could not but focus on the moment in which in Europe had emerged the cultural and political system, the twilight of which the First World War and the October Revolution appeared to have tragically started.[24]

Garin was pushed to reconsider the nature of the Renaissance when crisis impacted his world. What he decided to do was to imitate the humanists and look back to the past to appropriate it and draw from it an ideal line that connected it to his current predicament. As the twilight of the Middle Ages had been superseded by and did not simply fade into the Renaissance, was it possible to think of a new age from the standpoint of a waning world? Could a moment of crisis be the incubator of a new *Weltanschauung*?[25] In other words, what Garin and even more clearly Baron meant is that facing the crisis from a new perspective made Renaissance men capable of acting on that crisis and not just out of it. They were not pawns in an historicist development of the spirit, in the necessity of materialism, or in an irrelevant course of human action.

Whereas Baron did not engage in everyday politics, Garin took a more active role as a public intellectual in post-war Italy. As far as Garin is concerned, we can see his civil engagement during the years immediately following the war as analogous to his theoretical conviction, as if he had eventually to transform into actions the thoughts that had kept him alive during the last part of the war (we can read of his desperation and distress in the many letters he exchanged with his acquaintances and friends, especially with Kristeller.)[26] Garin, although always remaining sceptical of Marxism, became a supporter of the Italian Communist

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[24] Garin, *L'Umanesimo italiano*, 2: "Avevo respirato l'atmosfera fra le due guerre, quando la parola del passato si caricava di tutte le tensioni di un momento di crisi ... Fra le due guerre, quando la minaccia del nuovo conflitto si faceva sempre più grave, e sempre più chiara la consapevolezza di una crisi profonda di valori nel mondo occidentale, la riflessione non poteva non addensarsi sul momento in cui in Europa si era profilato l'assetto culturale e politico di cui la prima Guerra mondiale e la Rivoluzione d'ottobre sembravano avere tragicamente avviato il tramonto."

[25] Moreover, this was a question that Garin posed as a man who had just gone through a personal crisis, losing his religious faith, as Michele Ciliberto has pointed out in his *Eugenio Garin: Un intellettuale del Novecento*, Kindle edn (Rome and Bari, 2011).

[26] MS Archivio Garin, GT K92, Kristeller to Garin, New York, 24 Aug. 1945.

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Party (PCI) and was invited by Togliatti,[27] then the secretary general, to open the 1958 symposium on Gramsci.

V

Garin and Baron could see the historical sense of the crisis–rebirth dynamics during the Renaissance in their own eras because they thought of it as part of a tradition that they felt was their own. However, the circumstances were different for Japanese intellectuals who had in their backgrounds decades of speculation focused on the essential differences between their own culture and that of modernity, which the Renaissance had allegedly inaugurated. How, then, could the Renaissance—and, in some cases, the humanistic liberation of man associated with it—become paradigmatic for Japan?

To think that crisis was the generative background of the Renaissance and that the Renaissance was action on that very crisis implies that the condition for liberty was the ability of men to choose to influence reality by means of the culture they produce. Garin, in particular, devoted all his efforts as a public intellectual to imagining such a dynamic of crisis and renaissance as occurring again in his own time, and after the war he found in this an external moral and civic end to his study. Starting from the end of the war, Garin considered the twentieth century in Italy to have been a period of decadence, like some sort of symbolic doppelganger of the Middle Ages in the humanists' representation. However, even if for Garin history was *magistra vitae* and could actually teach something, this only occurred within the specific historical conditions of its development.

The question then becomes what happened when different cultural traditions were considered. Was it possible to take up the Renaissance as a model in such a context without merely aiming at its replication? In order to achieve such a goal, it was necessary to create a new paradigm for the Renaissance, in which historical experience could be read as universally translatable and not just repeatable. It also meant making the Renaissance a model response to crisis conceived as the rupture of any possible historical order.

This is what Hayashi Tatsuo tried to do, conceiving the Renaissance as only an instance of a general form of human experience. For scholars like him, Hani Gorō (1901–83), Machiavelli's translator Ōiwa Makoto (1900–57) and Watanabe Kazuo, research in the Renaissance had been a tool for political engagement and for the expression of their politically heterodox point of view. At the same time, the fundamental role of the Renaissance as the starting point of European anthropological modernity had been a long-discussed issue among Japanese

[27] Togliatti had also favourably reviewed Garin's *Cronache di filosofia italiana 1900–1943* (Bari, 1955) under the pen name of Rodrigo di Castiglia in *Rinascita*.

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intellectuals such as Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945) and Sakaguchi Takashi (1872–1928). Notably, during the same years in which Hayashi was shaping his theory of the Renaissance, Miki, with whom he was acquainted, had imagined the possibility of a spiritual rebirth as the creation of a new human being following a pattern similar to late fourteenth-century Italy.[28] Miki did not aim at a mere repetition of the European Renaissance, but rather at the overcoming of Western modern individualism, which he perceived as the core of a worldwide spiritual crisis. Hani, a friend of both Hayashi and Miki, was developing his personal, Marxist representation of the Renaissance. According to him, the Renaissance, quite like the Meiji Restoration, had been a period of broken promises in which an aspiration to freedom had been betrayed and only capitalistic liberty had emerged.[29]

Hayashi's masterwork, *Bungei Fukkō* (Renaissance), appeared in 1933, a decisive year for the intellectual and linguistic history of the locution *bungei fukkō* itself. Hayashi's book was a collection of essays that tried to put the historical image of the Renaissance inside a universal frame.[30] The book was published exactly when the expression *bungei fukkō* was becoming in Japan a commonly used metaphor for national cultural rebirth. The journal *Bungakkai*, founded in 1933 by Hayashi Fusao (1903–75), Kobayashi Hideo (1902–83) and Takeda Rintarō (1904–46), was the origin of the debate concerning that part of Japanese history known as *bungei fukkōki* ('period of cultural renaissance', 1932–5). The same year, Kikuchi Kan (1888–1948) organized a symposium entitled "On Cultural Renaissance." Hayashi Fusao identified the nature of such rebirth with the possibility—which, according to him, was opening up for the first time with the Shōwa era—to reconsider and renounce the Western functionalism imported to Japan since the Meiji Restoration in order to go back to "Japaneseness" (*Nihon seishin*) as the real essence of the nation.[31] It was a representation of *bungei fukkō* that clashed with the historical European Renaissance because it criticized the former as the beginning of a linear and progressive historicity with its despising of tradition and nature. From such an essentially modern view of history, thought the Japanese

[28] Susan Townsend, *Miki Kiyoshi the Itinerant Philosopher* (Leiden, 2007), 227. It is important to remember here that Miki—together with Hani—had studied in Germany under Heinrich Rickert and had had direct experience of the debate on the Renaissance which developed there during the 1920s.

[29] Such a point of view was fully developed after the war. See Hani Gorō, *Itaria shakaishi* (Tokyo, 1952), 65 and *passim*. Already before the war, a first exposition of such point of view is contained in the first chapter of Hani Gorō, *Machiavelli kunshuron: Sono rekishiteki fukei* (Tokyo, 1936).

[30] The essays were originally published from 1928 onwards.

[31] K. M. Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity* (Los Angeles, 1994), 107 and *passim*.

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Romantics, the crisis that gripped post-Meiji Restoration Japan would come. To overcome such a crisis, suggested Romantic author Yasuda Yojūrō (1910–81), the distance from the past, which modernization had created, had to be negated. In his influential work *Japanese Bridges* (1936), Yasuda had suggested that the original (Asian) culture, which had resonated in Europe as well until the fourteenth century, had found its own end when the Renaissance had given false profundity and perspective to human existence.[32] Moreover, in Yasuda's thought, and generally in the thought of the Japanese Romantics, the Classics—for them the Japanese autochthonous works of the early ages and not the Graeco-Roman tradition—were not, in a cultural renaissance, the past that had to be interpreted and reappropriated as something different and concluded. On the contrary, "The classics are not things of the past, they are of the present, belonging to us and finally things for the sake of our resolution for the future."[33]

There were many rebuttals aimed at this theoretical proposal, especially by scholars such as Miki and Tosaka Jun (1900–45) who had thought of the Renaissance as a moment of historical creation that had to be overcome rather than merely negated.[34] Hayashi Tatsuo's take on the Renaissance not only opposed the romantic thesis but also represented a distinct point of view in relation to the world-historical schemes presented by philosophers like Miki. One can find in other works by Hayashi an expressed criticism of the culturalist point of view that the Romantics embraced.[35] However, we must remember here that the author's decision to republish *Bungei Fukkō* in 1942 was the sign of Hayashi's perseverance in opposing nationalistic anti-humanism. Republished after the war, the work finally entered the public imagination as a political statement in a cultural environment in which the open connection between culture and politics had been re-established.

In *Bungei Fukkō*, Hayashi tried to find the universal mechanism behind the crisis of modernizing and its link to renaissance rather than consider crisis as just a historically situated event with its own specific genealogy. Despite starting from the factual data of the Renaissance as it had "occurred" in Europe, namely in

32 Alan Tasman, "Bridges to Nowhere: Yasuda Yojūrō's Language of Violence and Desire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 56/1 (1996), 35–75, at 60.

33 Yasuda Yojūrō, *Nippon no hashi*, trans. as *Japanese Bridges*, *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 34/2 (2008), 257–94, at 266.

34 Miki Kiyoshi, "Neohyūmanizumu no mondai to bungaku," in Kiyoshi, *Miki Kiyoshi Zenshū*, 20 vols. (Tokyo, 1984–86), 11: 215–44. See also Tasman, "Bridges to Nowhere," 43. Christian Uhl has addressed the relationship between literature and philosophy concerning the Japanese debate on Bungeifukkō and Romanticism in *Wer war Takeuchi Yoshimis Lu Xun? Ein Annäherungsversuch an ein Monument der japanischen Sinologie* (Munich, 2003), 350 and *passim*, esp. 380 on Tosaka Jun.

35 For instance Hayashi Tatsuo, *Shisō no unmei* (Tokyo, 1939).

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Italy, Hayashi had also considered it as a universal form of the human experience, in metaphor. Thus the Renaissance became in his mind a symbol of rebirth. He had described rebirth (*saisei*) as the experience of a man recovering from a grave illness. Because Hayashi explicitly assumed that the conceptualization of *saisei* was analogical (*ruihi*) and metaphorical (*hiyu*), it then followed logically that the correlated concept of renaissance cannot be circumscribed to its historical referent alone—the Renaissance, as a specific era in European history—but must be approached as a universal form of the human experience. Hayashi suggested, for example, that the same form of metaphor had belonged to religious experience since its very beginning.[36]

Although the Renaissance, modelled on the experience of illness, was thinkable as the positive outcome of a crisis in the medical sense of the term, Hayashi also sketched another model for crisis in his *Bungei Fukkō*. Describing the Middle Ages, Hayashi noted how crisis was already inherent in the spirit of the age itself. In particular, Hayashi dealt with such a thwarted nature of the spirit when he treated the medieval conception of political authority. Hayashi observed that the submission of temporal power to religious authority eventually corrupted the institution of the church and dragged it down to the world. The ideal model stipulated that the single states (*kokka*) had to be governed following the example of the reign of God. This meant that the Pope was in the end the only representative of the reign of God on Earth and as such had the authority to decide who was legitimately king and who was not. However, Hayashi pointed out that it was evident "that eventually such a [system of] thought was already pregnant with the *crisis* [*kiki*] that led the church to secularization and corruption."[37] In Hayashi's thought, crisis presents itself as the emergence of the corruption that is already contained in a cultural system's own roots. Thus crisis is the critical historical moment in which a desire for profound change arises—a change that ultimately entails the foundation of a new subjectivity.

When Hayashi takes into account how metaphorical regeneration is embodied in its most epitomic case, the Renaissance, it appears to him that it springs out of the emotions, the will and the desire of men. Hayashi denies that rational awareness is the prerequisite for historical change. It is in the feeling of people, in a new common sense, that change ultimately can be found. Thus Hayashi conceives of the Renaissance/renaissance as something that belongs more to the non-conscious dimension of common feeling than to the rational horizon of ideas of Garin and Baron. However, Hayashi supports the idea that historically situated human action starts the process of regeneration when he observes that it is not the mere restoration of classic culture that constitutes the Renaissance

[36] Hayashi Tatsuo, *Bungei Fukkō* (Tokyo, 1928), 180.

[37] Ibid., 195, italics mine.

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as an era. In fact, the humanists and the religious reformists do not study the Classics just for the sake of it but as a form of re-creation of the self. The Italians had the desire to recover classical learning because they perceived themselves as fallen heirs of a glorious Roman civilization, which had unified and governed the world. Primarily, the humanists aimed at resuming the identity they had somewhere lost and philology and the cult of the Classics were merely a tool for this. According to Hayashi, the ideal form of man, based on the Graeco-Roman model, became the active principle of the Renaissance only when the humanists decide to realize it concretely through active policies in their society. From this point of view, Hayashi's book was the offspring of Burckhardt's theory as much as Garin's and Baron's were.

VI

Watanabe Kazuo, founder of French Renaissance studies in Japan, beloved mentor of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Ōe Kenzaburō, and translator of *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, used the Renaissance and the wars of religion in France as a metaphor for his desperate condition during the war. His studies were for him a way of expressing his dissent during the military dictatorship, without openly antagonizing the authorities. In the same way, as a form of covert expression of his own mind, he kept a diary in French during the war in order to avoid the strict control of the authorities.[38] As Hani Gorō had transformed Machiavelli and Michelangelo into symbols of resistance,[39] Watanabe made the fictional characters of Gargantua and Pantagruel—in his opinion created by Rabelais as a criticism of the rigid and structured faith that the early modern rulers enforced by means of weapons and persecution—enemies of every possible oppressive system. His biographical studies of the main cultural figures of the French Renaissance, which he had begun under the militarist regime, he published after the surrender of Japan as an allegory for his experience as an intellectual in a dictatorship and as a caveat on the dangers of acquiescing to constituted authority. Watanabe's work immediately became, to fellow democratic intellectuals, a manifesto of intellectual resistance.

For Watanabe, the Renaissance meant the French sixteenth-century Renaissance, and thus the problems he addressed through his studies were those

[38] Watanabe Kazuo, *Watanabe Kazuo haisen nikki*, ed. Kushida Magoichi and Ninomiya Takashi (Tokyo, 1995).

[39] He had done the same with Benedetto Croce, whose work he translated and was acquainted with through correspondence. One of his last books was eloquently entitled *Benedetto Croce Teikō no Tetsugaku* (Benedetto Croce: Philosophy of Resistance) (Tokyo, 1972). Croce published the letter he received from Hani: Benedetto Croce, "Ricordi e lettere di amici giapponesi," *Quaderni della "Critica"*, 5 (1946), 101–11.

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of the modernization of religious experience and of the tolerance of different beliefs. In an article that appeared in *Tenbō* in 1949,[40] Watanabe had described the autonomy (*jiritsusei*) of conscience that emerged during the Reformation as the product of the crisis (*kiki*) engendered by the wars of religion, a desperate attempt to avoid politicizing spirituality by burying it in the depth of the soul and taking it away from the control of external authorities. The Renaissance was indeed the product of resistance against institutionalized religion, and through such resistance came the individualization and autonomization of the individual. Self-consciousness, as the inner freedom of the believer, was therefore also the spiritual cause of the historical phenomena that composed the Renaissance. By this, though, Watanabe did not mean that the Reformation caused the Renaissance. That would have meant that the Renaissance had come only once crisis (*kiki*) had emerged into the conscience and had come to a resolution. On the contrary, he observed, there was no clear direct development indicating this. Autonomy and self-awareness, essential to the Renaissance, were in no way the goals of the reformers. Instead, the latter wanted to go back to the original Christianity buried under the artificial creations of man. Nonetheless, the true spirit of renaissance, born of the philological effort of recovering the true roots of Christianity, had proven irreconcilable to the narrow purposes that had generated it. It had immediately revealed his human(istic), free, mundane and insubordinate (*futeina*) character that could be subjected to no authority.

As for Hayashi, in Watanabe's theory the power of reason to consciously create history appears somewhat limited. At the same time, one can find in Watanabe the same awareness, which belongs to all the scholars we have analysed so far, that it is not the resurrection of the past that produces a cultural renaissance. Instead, it is by means of the establishment of a distance from that past, in Watanabe through a healthy dose of historical scepticism, that spirit can find a new lease.

Watanabe's point of view appears clearer in his following works, *Runesansu no hitobito* (1949) and *Furansu Runesansu danshō* (1950),[41] which were amended collections of essays and intellectual biographies written during and immediately after the war. In these collections, his vocabulary became more precise, and what he had previously called heresy or insubordination was defined as the "spirit of free enquiry" (*jiyū kentō no seishin*). Watanabe explains how the greatness of the Renaissance ultimately lay in its disposition to critical examination. Such an enquiring spirit is essentially heretical and therefore, in the etymological sense

[40] Watanabe Kazuo, "Runesansu no itanseishin ni kan suru nōto," *Tenbō*, 37/1 (1949), 53–7.

[41] Watanabe Kazuo, *Runesansu no hitobito* (Tokyo, 1949); and Watanabe, *Furansu Runesansu danshō* (Tokyo, 1950). The two books were republished together, with the title *Furansu Runesansu no Hitobito* (Tokyo, 1964).

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of the word "heresy," the spirit of choice, of decision (*sentaku*).[42] Thus only in freedom of thought one can find true agency and subjectivity, a real space for human being. For this reason, argues Watanabe, the spirit of free examination is also the foundation on which humanism is built.

As Hayashi Tatsuo had done, Watanabe also looked beyond the contingency of the given historical period to find recurring universal laws of history. The general rule he found was the never-ending transformation of yesterday's heresy into today's authority. From this perspective, the Renaissance, providing a rich vocabulary and many masterworks of human creativity, was the perfect archetype and, during the totalitarian years, a useful disguise for the patterns of events reproduced in other places and times.[43] What he called the "stiffening" (*kowabaru*, *kōka*) of free thought highlighted a universal tendency to systematize and fetishize the ideas rooted in a more general law of nature that he attributed to all living beings (*seimeitai*).[44] Precisely because the natural dynamics of the Renaissance world were the same as those that govern today's world, Watanabe observed that although we do not kill for our religious beliefs any more, intolerance and war have by no means disappeared. Therefore the Renaissance could also be studied as a metaphor of Japan's wartime predicament and teach his nation something. In such a context, the crisis of the militarist order was like cracks on a surface, slowly revealing the underlying life force of freedom waiting to re-emerge. At the same time, the history of the Renaissance showed how an emerging freedom contained within itself the principle of its own future demise.

One might think that such point of view negates individual freedom in favour of superior laws of nature.[45] However, what one should observe is that whereas it is true that the "stiffening" or crystallization of ideas into systems and inviolable orthodoxies is an unavoidable, natural and impersonal process, the same does not

[42] See also Watanabe, *Furansu Runesansu danshō*, 11, where the spirit of free examination and enquiry is linked to both *chishiki* and *ketsudan*.

[43] Watanabe clearly states at the very beginning of *Furansu Runesansu no Hitobito*, 9, that the dynamics of creation and "stiffening" that are the basis of the Renaissance reproduce themselves throughout history. The Renaissance is simply the most evident case and becomes therefore paradigmatic for all other instances of such patterns. In *Furansu Runesansu danshō*, 12, all history is depicted as the struggle between the spirit of the Renaissance and the spirit of the Middle Ages.

[44] Watanabe, *Furansu Runesansu danshō*, 5

[45] Watanabe Kazutami suggested that Watanabe Kazuo cannot be defined as a humanist because he does not believe in the perfectibility and progress of a human being. According to him, Watanabe Kazuo would rather believe in an endless return of the same evil under different disguises (the religious wars and persecution of the infidels in Geneva, the militarist government and totalitarianism, the horrors of Stalin's dictatorship). Watanabe Kazutami, *Hayashi Tatsuo to sono Jidai* (Tokyo, 1988), 317. I disagree with his interpretation, which seems to me a too narrow interpretation of the term "humanist."

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hold true for the spirit of free enquiry. The latter is, as observed before, the "spirit of choice" and embodies the moral necessity to stand by one's own ideas and always actively maintain one's own individuality and critical attitude. Watanabe's humanism finds its proper meaning exactly in this continuous resistance to the worst and more instinctive part of ourselves that pushes us towards intolerance. To choose means to individuate oneself and always leads to heresy because our choices separate us from the mainstream, which has already been chosen for us.[46] The titanic but ephemeral nature of this free will is captured well by Ōe Kenzaburō, who spoke of the double soul of his sensei and of his hidden tendency to nihilism.[47]

VII

Hanada Kiyoteru, in his masterwork *Fukkōki no seishin* (1946), expressed a totally different point of view. *Faute de mieux*, one must define Hanada as an art and literature critic, but such a label sounds reductive to those who know the breadth of his cultural activity, encompassing fields as distant as politics, cinema and history. After the war, Hanada became a guru among *avant-garde* artists and intellectuals,[48] and *Fukkōki no seishin* was, perhaps, the work that raised him to that position. How far the book actually concerns the Renaissance is disputable. It would probably be more accurate to consider it, as Kurihara Yukio did,[49] a study in the will to renaissance. Hanada questions the nature of such will and criticizes the notion of intentional effort aimed at the production of a new life.

In Hanada's mind, politics, in its modern incarnation, is the symbolic place where universal truth (objectivity) is impossible.[50] Therefore Burckhardt's

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46 Watanabe's unsystematic style itself is an effort to be true to his principles. In *Furansu Runesansu danshō*, 3, Watanabe himself stresses the idiosyncratic and personal nature of the collection of portraits that he labels unsystematic fragments (*kakera*, *danpen*) and reading notes with no scientific authority.

47 Ōe Kenzaburō, *Nihon gendai no Yumanisuto:Watanabe Kazuo wo yomu* (Tokyo, 1984), 29.

48 Founder of the avant-garde association Yoru no Kai, Hanada exerted a direct influence on important Japanese intellectuals such as writer Abe Kōbo and artist Okamoto Tarō. See Okaniwa Noburo, *Hanada Kiyoteru to Abe Kōbō: Avangarudo bungaku no saisei no tame ni* (Tokyo, 1980); Ōtani Shōgo, "Okamoto Tarō no taikyokushugi no seiritsu wo megutte," *Tōkyō kokuritsu kindai bijutsukan kenkyū kiyō*, 13 (2009), 18–36.

49 Kurihara Yukio, "'Sengo bungaku' no kigen ni tsuite: 'Saigo no pēji' kara no shuppatsu", in Kawamura Minato, ed., *"Sengo" to iu seido: Sengo shakai no "kigen" wo motomete*, Bungaku wo yomikaeru, vol. 5 (Tokyo, 2002), 140–41. Originally Hanada had intended to entitle the book *Tenkeiki no seishin* (the spirit of a time of change). Using the word *fukkōki* was an editorial decision based on the great cultural resonance that the term was enjoying in the aftermath of the war.

50 Hanada Kiyoteru, *Fukkōki no seishin* (Tokyo, 1946), 47.

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Renaissance state as a work of art is not ultimately a viable metaphorical model for society. In Burckhardt's model of the Renaissance ruler, the politician has the soul of an artist, but, on the contrary, Hanada argues that artists tend more and more to become politicians. Politicians are incapable of the spontaneity that is the creative foundation of art. However, there is an alternative to this specimen of the modern politician, whose action is based on falsity and subterfuge: the "pure politician." The latter is in no way a politician because he does not conform to any stereotype and refuses vile tricks; he is the equivalent of the "pure artist." According to Hanada, the two coincide in Heinrich Heine, the German Romantic poet, evoked as the symbol of uncompromising individuality. When we consider the inane revolutionary attitude of Heine, it appears evident that the unbound freedom that Hanada describes cannot be applied in the traditional field of politics. Yet Hanada's criticism of the *homo faber fortunae suae* (man, shaper of his own fate) motto is not merely sociopolitical. Hanada makes this clear when he compares Heine to Machiavelli. Despite their differences, they were overlooked by the goddess of fortune and thereby failed to acquire relevant political positions. Hanada refers here to the famous passage of *The Prince* in which Machiavelli suggests that the goddess of fortune is a woman and that on some occasions one has to treat her roughly. In Machiavelli's mind, *fortuna* is tempered and contrasted by *virtù*, the ability to efficiently apply free will. We must also remember that in Heine's poem *Fortuna*, the struggle against fate is seen as self-destroying but glorious. According to the Japanese intellectual, for both these authors, resistance to fortune, independently of its possibility to succeed, is the way man is supposed to realize himself. However, Hanada is apparently suggesting that in reality no will is beyond the cycle of vicissitude and no form of individualistic aspiration bears fruit. Therefore there is in Hanada no will to engage in a renaissance that is politically active and that can redeem man from his condition, independently of the imagined result of action. Such will is simply impossible. He rejects the opposition between a state of cultural and civic passiveness and a renewed conscious intellectual and political activity as two different non-communicating spheres, separated by a critical event. Renaissance is but another face of death, the natural return of what has reached its own end. To explain this, Hanada uses the image of the clavelina, a tunicate that inhabits the depths of the ocean and reverts to embryonic stage when the quality of water is not compatible with life and returns again to a developed status as soon as the environmental conditions improve.

We must now ask ourselves what Hanada's image of the Renaissance adds to the problem of the relationship between crisis and (political) action. In the essay in *Fukkōki no seishin* dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli, Hanada compared the different representations the two men give of the Battle of Anghiari (1440) and declared them both "political" in their lack of faithfulness to

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the truth. According to Hanada, both Machiavelli and Leonardo were trying to break free from nature by means of rationalization but ended up producing a mere ratiocination with no purpose. In an effort to run away from nature, Machiavelli's politicization and what we might think of as Leonardo's geometrization of nature operated on the same level, and had their historical roots in Plato's programme to form the philosopher–king by means of an education in geometry and mathematics. The young king instructed at the academy is supposed to make use of the received lessons when he "faces crisis" (*kiki ni nozomu*).[51] Thus mathematics overcomes nature and becomes the intermediary between the natural sciences and metaphysics. Political action therefore became metaphysics and then—in Hanada's mind the natural development—modern science,[52] which inevitably fails when faced with the real contingencies of nature. According to Hanada, a good example of such failure is Leonardo's fallen flying machine. Transcending crisis and its origins in concrete reality seems finally impossible, and theory, rather than becoming an instrument of action on reality, ends up creating its own fictionalized world. For Hanada, the intellectual's pretension to reify "new life" as something that can be intentionally produced as a controllable and disposable object is vain because no real distance between a human being and life is possible. This entails that the point of view according to which natural events can be considered crises that must be dominated by means of technique is nothing but illusion.

VIII

In conclusion, the Renaissance appears as a polymorphous concept in the historiography I have described. These representations of the Renaissance place it on two different conceptual planes, on each of which the represented objected slides between opposing polarities. On the one hand, the Renaissance is a historically situated, immanent part of a given historical experience, or is a universal possibility on the horizon of being. On the other hand, it is politically immanent because there is no qualitative distinction between crisis and action, or,

[51] Ibid., 53. Hanada aligns himself with all those interpreters who traditionally saw the study of mathematics recommended by Plato as a form of mediated entering into the world of ideas. Myles Burnyeat has offered a different explanation of the place that mathematics has in Plato's system. Rather than just being instrumental to the understanding of metaphysical Good, mathematics would be an essential part of it. Myles Burnyeat, "Plato on Why Mathematics Is Good for the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 103 (2000), 1–81, esp. at 45. I am grateful to Duncan Kelly for pointing me to Burnyeat's work.

[52] Hanada's account of both Machiavelli and Leonardo is simplistic in its assumption of an unambiguous path from Renaissance to modernity. In this sense he follows Burckhardt's pattern far more thoroughly than Garin or Baron themselves, who had championed modernism.

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on the contrary, organically political human activity can express a third product and thus transcend itself and its preconditions. Thus the writers I have examined inquired into the conditions of the exemplarity or repeatability of Renaissance and renaissance, and in so doing they had to face what comes before rebirth. This, of course, raised the problem of whether and how the Renaissance could have any immediate translatability. History, both their own and that of the Renaissance, forced their works to follow their times with an unexpected fate. Their essays were the products of an ending era, which had been defined as a long cultural crisis, and they acquired a new significance when the world had gone through the intense and concentrated devastation of the Second World War.

Then, cultural crisis had precipitated a political crisis and the social demand for resolution and indeed revolution had become thoroughly pervasive. Confrontation not only with destruction and death but also with the legacy of totalitarianism and authoritarianism, which was unavoidable during and after the war, shaped our authors' minds as well as their readers', and filtered the way their works were received. It made the Renaissance a possible—positive or negative—model with which to face crisis concretely. The sense of urgency that belonged to the difficult conditions of post-war collapse afforded the works we have discussed in the present article a specific place. They held this place, along with their authors, until the impetus of actual war faded away into the apparently never-ending ideological confrontation of cold war. As Kurihara Yukio noticed of Hanada's *Fukkōki no Seishin*,[53] the books and arguments discussed in this article should be considered as the last will and testament of men facing conflict and death rather than as post-war manifestos. Besides being masterpieces of historiography and important philosophical considerations, they were also utopian desires for a better world, reflections on crisis, or denunciations of the shortcomings of modernity. This symbolic value was visible in the ambivalence with which these works depicted the greatness of the Renaissance. After the war, when they entered a new discourse, characters belonging to their original signification percolated nevertheless into new contextualizations. Even in Baron's *Crisis*, probably the most uni-dimensional work among those discussed here, with its downplaying of Florence's expansionism and of the humanists' political ambiguity, the moral greatness of the struggle against the Visconti always foreshadows the frailty of democratic construction. By the time of the armistice, Baron was a permanent resident of the United States. In Japan and Italy, the task of rebuilding the material and spiritual architecture of the country put citizens, and therefore obviously intellectuals too, in a shared condition of stringent necessity and moral distress.

53 Kurihara Yukio, "'Sengo bungaku' no kigen ni tsuite," 126–50.

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It has been observed how the tension between *saisei* and *kyodatsu* (desperation) characterized the intellectual discourse of post-war Japan.[54] A similar dynamic was clearly present in the minds of Italian intellectuals as well, Garin included.[55] In his early works on the Renaissance, Garin thought historical greatness to be inseparable from its own demise, its own decadence.[56] Such ambiguity was placed in the background but never really forgotten. After the war, he decided to embrace a modernist view that made the Renaissance into the philosophical origin(s) of the Enlightenment. Hayashi and Watanabe remained sceptical of direct involvement by intellectuals in politics despite the demand by their community to more clearly commit to specific causes. Nevertheless, they felt it was their duty to engage actively in the new democratic society as moral teachers. As Watanabe Kazutami has observed, great expectations regarding the active role of the scholars in post-war reconstruction emerged in the Japanese press after 1945. The editors of the spring issue of *Ningen* in April–May 1950 dedicated space to the political message hidden in Watanabe Kazuo's and Hayashi's wartime writings.[57] Moreover, Hayashi's work, *Bungei Fukkō*, soon became a guidebook to national regeneration in the prevailing interpretation.

For his part, Hayashi made it clear he could not take an active part in the political struggle because he had internalized the condition of imposed silence and ambiguity that he had experienced as an intellectual under the militarist dictatorship, and could not seem to find a public voice of his own.[58] He nonetheless received with enthusiasm the proposal of Hasegawa Minokichi (1893–1973), former head of Daiichi publishing, to direct an open school based on the model of popular universities in France and England. Watanabe also felt that the mission of the intellectual in the aftermath of the war must be to become a public educator. Both Hayashi and Watanabe took part in the re-signification of the idea of *kyōyō* (*Bildung*, education) that during the militarist dictatorship had

54 "The responses to this question were varied. Some people were plunged into the abyss of despair (*kyodatsu*), while others revelled in a sense of liberation and new life (*saisei*). These two extremes formed the basic structure of the discourse of defeat; within them were contained all possible responses available in early postwar Japan. The polar extremes of *kyodatsu* and *saisei* were not mere binary opposites where the appearance of one precluded the existence of the other. Nor were they causally linked in a temporal sense with one necessarily giving way to the other. They were in fact a coexistential pair whereby the presence of one necessitated the appearance of the other." Owen Griffiths, "The Reconstruction of Self and Society in Early Postwar Japan 1945–1949" (Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1999), 11.

55 Guido Crainz, *l'ombra della guerra: Il 1945; l'Italia* (Rome, 2007).

56 Ciliberto, *Eugenio Garin*, defines this as Garin's "religious existentialist period."

57 Watanabe, *Hayashi Tatsuo to sono jidai*, 185–6.

58 Ibid., 188 and *passim*.

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referred to the creation of the loyal national subject and was now transitioning to address the formation of individuals who could choose to become democratic citizens (*shimin*) in the emerging civil society.[59] In their minds, the democratic individual was a fragile construction and they felt ambivalent about the conflict between such fragility and their public duty.

In their later years Garin, Watanabe and Hayashi all ended up losing their faith in politics and in man's role as a historical actor. This meant that they had to acknowledge the limits of their public commitment to shape the new democratic generation. Academicians such as Garin and Watanabe found in the anti-hierarchical and anti-academic protests of 1968 a more bitter defeat when they saw a younger generation turn against their own humanistic pleas for tolerance and dialogue.[60] They each now felt the despair that the other had felt immediately after the war, like those men described by Hanada who, unable to imagine a bright future, were plunged into desperation and yet went on living. Nevertheless, even when their hopes for real democratic agency had disappeared, the theoretical validity of a humanistic reform of society remained a moral compass. So, although in the middle of a personal nihilistic crisis concerning the meaning of history, at the very end of the last century Garin once more called for a "rational revision of market capitalism" as necessary political action.[61] Watanabe explored the silent role of marginalized actors, such as women, in Renaissance society and urged fellow academics to complete the project of emancipation begun centuries before. Such attitudes place them in strident contrast to Hanada's perspective. In *Sabaku ni tsuite*, an essay that Hanada published one year after *Fukkōki no seishin*, he expressed in metaphor his critique of those intellectuals who looked at the desert left by the war and urged a renaissance without considering the life of those who still dwelled among the ruins.[62]

From the point of view of Hanada's anti-humanism, were not Watanabe, Hayashi, Garin and even more so Baron the type of elitist thinkers who were unable to go beyond the basic assumption of bourgeois humanism? Hanada, for his part, advanced a specific form of materialism—which he called "mineralism"—preaching the unity of contraries left in their irreducible difference, and the equal respect of all things, beyond humanism, including

59 Minami Morio, "Kyōyō to Senso," *Kyōyō to kyōiku*, 4 (2004), 1–10.

60 Ciliberto, *Eugenio Garin*; Oe Kenzaburō, "On Politics and Literature: Two Lectures by Kenzaburo Oe," *Doreen B. Townsend Center Occasional Papers*, 18 (1999), 1–47, at 10. The lectures by Oe were introducted by Randolph Starn, the famous scholar of the Renaissance, quoted elsewhere in this paper.

61 Eugenio Garin, *Intervista sull'intellettuale*, ed. Mario Ajello (Rome and Bari, 1997), 42.

62 Hanada Kiyoteru, "Sabaku ni tsuite," *Shisaku*, 7 (1947), 74. Concerning this passage see Namigata Tsuyoshi, "Suna no shigaku to seijigaku," *Tsukuba kenkyū ronshū*, 19 (2001), 147–61, at 151.

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even inanimate matter. In the end, denying man's will a place above nature, "mineralism" resembles an unconditional surrender to that cycle of vicissitude that Garin saw as mankind's desperate condition. Hanada's criticism of the Renaissance stressed its abstraction and ambiguity, but most of all it was unsettling because it remembered the continuous reversibility of any rebirth. Unlike Watanabe, who suggested that every free and renovating thought contained in itself always the roots of its fossilization, Hanada pictured not just the historical necessity that a positive course would stop its trend but a conceptual ambiguity that makes death and life indescribable as a linear process "from *A* to *B*". On such principles, all emancipatory representations of the Renaissance, such as those proposed by Baron, Watanabe and Garin after the war and, in his own way, Hayashi too, would become impossible. Hanada's criticism was not just an abstract philosophical reflection. It aimed at showing the vanity of those post-war intellectuals who actually thought (their) subjective efforts could redeem the masses. On the contrary, he suggested, the masses, the workers, would change their time for themselves and, by doing this, they were also going to change themselves. There was no need to shape a new democratic citizen because such a formation was a spontaneous process, foreign to any form of control by an intellectual elite.[63] The development of mass society and mass consumption during the 1960s would disprove his theory.

In the end, no representation of crisis and renaissance proved tenable as a political proposal. After the war, intellectual interest in the Renaissance and humanism characterized one of the most fruitful debates for recovering democracies. Nonetheless, the discourse gradually lost its strength, with reconstruction, the victory of market economies in Western Europe and Japan and the disillusion of the Cold War. The sharpness of crisis as an immediate threat to life was substituted by a blunt and vague feeling of malaise. When, by 1968, the idea that intellectuals could and should shape society by means of their teaching became the object of fierce criticism, the significance of Renaissance post-war symbolism and its force as a model for public intellectuals, if not its more mainstream status as an academic discipline, was already fading away.[64]

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63 In the last essay of *Fukkōki no seishin* ("Warau otoko" (The Man Who Laughs)), 239–50, at 247), dedicated to the political meaning of Aristophanes' comedies, Hanada points out that the contrivance and extolling of morals is a tool of control over the common people (*shomin*), of which both the ruling class and "the so-called world revolutionaries" make an identical use (247). See also Asao Yuichi, *Seijiteki geijutsu: Brecht, Hanada Kiyoteru, Oonishi Kyojin, Takei Teruo* (Tokyo, 2006), 134.

64 Randolph Starn, "A Postmodern Renaissance?", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60/1 (2007), 1–24; Bouwsma, "The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History" ; Bouwsma, "Eclipse of the Renaissance."

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