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The Decadence of Becoming Oneself: The Bounding Rebellion of Moving-Gender

Once upon a time someone drew a line in the sands of a culture and proclaimed with great self-importance: On this side, you are a man; on the other side, you are a woman.

– Gender Outlaw, Bornstein 1994

‘Gender’ is, structurally and functionally, a designation – an organisational framework that categorises identifying appearances and compartments, through which the individual is comprehended (GenIUSS 2014). In the contemporary West, this is taken as establishing a binary in which the bounds of the feminine and the masculine stand in opposition (Costello 2020). For normative gender-expressing individuals, the binary is *one’s* place of intelligible belonging, wherein the self *dwells* in its assigned category. However, for non-normative gender-expressing (NGE) individuals, regularly reported is an experience of the binary – not as home – but as region of homelessness.¹ On an individual level, NGE is often explained as motivated by an overwhelming and profound sense of dissonance; a “never really quite fit[ing]” in the material and existential domains assigned by the normative ontology (Darwin 2020, p. 194). On a societal scale, attempts of NGE are frequently described as met with antagonism; whether through outright condemnation or micro-aggressions, NGE individuals are made to feel as though their mere existence constitutes a violation of some sacred “boundary” (Darwin 2020, p. 199; Cashore and Tuason 2009; Fiani and Han 2019; Costello 2020).

For many NGE individuals, what underlies their experience of the gender binary is the view most dominant and entrenched within the public consciousness: essentialism, which holds biological sex as the reality

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¹ Hereafter, ‘non-normative gender expression/-expressing’ will be abbreviated to ‘NGE’. In this paper, NGE refers to modes of gendered expression that move outside, across, between, or even without the boundaries of the contemporary Western gender binary – i.e. involve boundary-movement – in such a way that the individual becomes unintelligible to normative ontology.

of the self, as the determinant of gender designation. Under this, the binary is assumed to be comprised of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, as two static and mutually exclusive spaces divided by impassable boundaries (Costello 2020). Consequently, despite the innocuous and unintrusive nature of an individual’s experience of gender, NGE is judged by a large majority of the Western public as, at minimum, an abnormality, and at worst, a malicious encroachment – a *decadent* self-indulgence that, not just causes a decay in the moral fabric of society, but transgresses its foundational ontological structure, entirely (see Peterson 2018). Although, at first instance, this reaction appears to be solely provoked by nonconformity – the presence of the non-normative within the bounds of the norm – the broader pattern of hostility suggests an additional point of disagreement: the fact of movement, itself. Take for example, the sentiment held against NGE individuals who ‘pass’: the more they conform to the gender binary, the greater the sense of deception once their NGE status is revealed. This anger is reflective of an ethos which, irrespective of the very structure by which gender is nominally sorted, treats all NGE individuals as trespassers who have insidiously snuck into a space pre-assumed to which they do not belong (Billard 2019). In the contemporary West, due to the belief of necessary alignment between sex and gender, it is the standard to automatically assign an individual their position within the binary immediately at birth; thus, any future movement outside of these coordinates are regarded as simply unnatural – NGE is judged to *be* a departure away from oneself (Costello 2020). Therefore, the issue at hand seems to be neither boundaries nor movement, alone, but boundary-movement: existential movement carried across ontological boundaries.

Hence, rather than extending existing debates about the structure of the gender binary – i.e. the question of if its boundaries should be maintained or abolished – this paper will address the phenomenology of NGE, itself, as an ontologico-existential mode of being. To do so, I explore NGE through, what I term, ‘moving-gender’. Here, moving-gender refers to the phenomenological structure of NGE: the lived experience of navigating and negotiating gendered boundaries, as they exist (whether unfortunate or not) in the context of the contemporary West; that is, the lived experience of boundary-movement through which NGE is enacted and unfolds. To guide our exploration, I turn to the philosophy of Saka-guchi Ango (坂口安吾 1906-1955), a provocative and influential 20th century Japanese author who was a prominent member of the *Buraiha* (無頼派) literary circle; and who, through his body of works, cultivates a practice of authenticity that – refusing to settle for realisation alone – holds the self’s authentic mode of being as a continuous process of *becoming* oneself. With that said, it must be acknowledged that, due to the anachronistic distance between Ango’s time of writing and present-day gen-

der discourse, application of his philosophy will necessarily be based on my own reconstructive interpretation.² This, however, should not imply that relevance is merely tangential. When Ango's theories of the tangible-intangible self and its mode of *daraku* (墮落) or 'decadence' are taken together, articulated is an account: of being not as a fixed essence but a perpetual process of becoming that unfolds in a pre-reflective reciprocity between self and world; of existential possibilities as the very necessities of the body; and of decadence as a means of turning social exile into individual belonging – all without denying the validity of normative modes of dwelling. In this way, we find a becoming that – existential and material; individual and social – is not only open to, but distinctively configured for, movement towards oneself in relation to gendered boundaries in a manner able to accommodate diverse expressions without privileging any one experience.

In this paper, my aim is to offer a phenomenological account of NGE as a rebellious pursuit of authenticity through which both self and world are cleared for authentic dwelling. The purpose of this is: (1) to provide an alternative way of attending to the complex interpenetration between becoming and belonging at the ontologico-existential ground of NGE; (2) to suggest that it may be productive to give further attention to the phenomenology of boundary-movement within the contemporary context of NGE. To do so, I will interpret moving-gender within the framework of Ango's practice of authenticity. In the first half, I turn to Ango's theory of the self, whose tangible-intangible structure clarifies how moving-gender is possible and why it may be necessary. Then, bridging the two halves, I rearticulate becoming as belonging by bringing movement and decadence into relation. In the second half, I turn to Ango's concept of decadence, which in its description of movement as a fallenness – away from the social and into the individual – offers an understanding of how moving-gender and gendered boundaries interact within different regions of being. In light of this, I will argue that NGE may be illuminated as an existential movement of becoming oneself that boundingly moves to belong through the ontological migration of regions.

² While originally formulated within a historical and cultural context that predates the vocabulary of contemporary Western gender discourse, Ango was also not entirely unaware of phenomena that resemble what we would later come to describe as 'NGE'. In particular, he wrote favourably of *Nō* and *Kyōgen*, which are interrelated forms of Japanese theatre dating back to the 14th century wherein staged is always a "double identity" inclusive of age, time-period, social status, and most importantly, gender – gender-fluidity, androgyny, and non-binary expressions are often incorporated as significant aspects of these performance (Yamanaka et al. 2024, p. 726; Yokota 2019). For examples of Ango's writings on this see 1990, p. 17-32; p. 323-331.

1. The Intangible Self and the Possibility of Movement

Ango's theory of the intangible self, in being grounded in temporality, reveals moving-gender as a possibility authentic to it. To Ango, the self persists in intangibility – it is unfixed and mutable; being is always *becoming* something else. This conception draws on the Buddhist understanding of the self as impermanent: a temporal being that, in virtue of its temporality, appears “in an infinity of alternate forms and causal chains” (Ziporyn 2016, p. 232).³ Articulating this most explicitly in “*Dis-course on Decadence, Part II*” (続墮落論), Ango describes time as “the unyielding flux of the endless cycle...[within which] a single lifetime of ours is but as fleeting as a dewdrop” (1990, p. 594). Within the eddying flow of time, its constant advance negates the consistency of all existent beings – this is, however, not just that all existence eventually comes to an end, but also that nothing may endure unchangingly moving forwards. *Who* we are in the present cannot be said to be *who* we were yesterday or *who* we will be tomorrow. With time: a new encounter, a reconsideration of beliefs, a sudden realisation – each change of mind brings with it a new iteration of the self; each moment of existence is an actuality for but one dissipating instance. Being advances towards its point of termination, not as a single constant entity, but as a continuous succession of transient existences, each as ephemeral as the totality of life, itself (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 583-594). As such, Ango states, “whether it be progress or regression, all is in constant change” – all lack fixed essence; all is intangibly being (1990, p. 38).

In this sense, there is always movement; even within the bounds of the normative, from one stage of life to the next, all beings exist in a dynamic movement composed of the perpetual ceasing and rebirths of physical states and self-identity. What this implies, however, is not just the fact of movement, but also an openness to this moving – a pure potentiality inclusive of boundary-movement. While the fact of termination is certain, the *when* of it remains uncertain: impermanent being always proceeds into uncertainty. As we shall see later, change is subject to the unstable state of the self's material manifestation, alongside the material conditions of the shifting world within which it finds itself manifested (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 38-9; p. 352-384). Therefore, the future of the self unfolds, not as a linear and patterned continuation of ‘what-is’ previously actualised, but as an open expanse of ‘what-ifs’ that stretches indeterminately and unpredictably towards an unknown horizon – an unbounded bounding field, wherein nothing is predetermined, and so everything (within rea-

³ Although drawing on Buddhism, Ango does not explicitly align himself with any particular doctrine; references to impermanence will remain in general terms.

son) is possible (Sakaguchi 1991a, p. 53-55). As such, although the temporal flow of the self moves in accord with its own situatedness, it is also precisely because of this accordance that it is, not only bifurcated into a myriad of streams – each branching off into further trajectories – but also free to sail down anyone of these near-limitless avenues. In the absolute negation of fixed essence and certain directionality, the self is being in an indeterminacy of absolute potential for self-determination: not-man and/or not-woman, the intangible self may be man, woman, both, or neither. Its movements are open to all possible orientations of moving-gender – from one boundary to the next; from the interstices to beyond. Hence, far from being unnatural, movement is the fundamental mode of the self, of which moving-gender is a natural path upon the terrain of self-nature. Accordingly, when NGE is understood with respect to its proper temporal intangibility, it is shown to be, not a turning away from oneself, but an attunement with one's authentic movement towards the distant shore on the far-end of existence.

2. The Bodily Becoming of the Tangible Self

However, if taken on its own as the full extent of Ango's theory of the self, this conception of intangibility risks inviting a voluntarist interpretation of gender – one that would hold NGE as a mere choice, freely acted upon, and ungrounded from the individual's material context. This, for the vast majority of NGE individuals, is a gross reduction of the bodily experiences of gender which motivate their moving-gender, in particular, their struggles with dysphoria (see Cashore and Tuason 2009; Fiani and Han 2019; Costello 2020). The significance of Ango's theory of the tangible self comes from its ability to capture this complex nuance: in recognising tangible existence as an integral constituent of lived experience, Ango allows moving-gender to be understood, not as voluntary self-determination, but as a necessity that is communicated through the body – specifically, a pre-reflective dissonance that compels action. But, before proceeding, it must be made clear that the introduction of Ango's notion of necessities is not intended to endorse a transmedical view nor biologically pathologize the self; thus, as opposed to grounding dysphoria in the body, my objective is to provide an account of dysphoria as bodily experienced.

To Ango, the self exists tangibly – a bodily existence through which the intangible possibilities of impermanence are experienced as the tangible “necessities of life” (1990, p. 356). He writes: “the undying man, the immutable ego” survives only as a construct of metaphysical abstraction; but, for all existent beings, the self dies with its body

(1990, p. 38-9). There is ceasing, not because time passes, but because in the passing of time, there is hunger and there is thirst; gathering around the self are fluctuating material conditions, each bearing existential affectivity on the self. Yet, at the same time, there is also the possibility for rebirth – we hunger, we thirst; and, in their satisfaction, we live – in meeting these material conditions, the self may secure its continued persistence (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 352-384). Impermanence, as both nothingness and potentiality, finds its ultimate expression in the tangible. For Ango, however, what makes something necessary is, not the bodily need for mere survival, but rather, the ontologico-existential necessity to further the “vitality of living” (1990, p. 120). In “Discourse on Decadence” (続墮落), Ango recounts how, the same faceless soldiers who had resigned themselves to die for their country, directly following Japan’s surrender, abandoned their patriotic codes and turned into “black-marketeers” (1990, p. 511). This, he attributes to the end of the Second World War. As the immediate threat of “great destruction” receded, the holistic totality of their situatedness was unfettered; released from a shared end and returned towards a future that is open to *becoming* their own (1990, p. 518). In this way, “human beings were born” – each soldier was returned to being: at once, individuals with their own ambitions and dreams, as well as husbands and fathers upon which others depended (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 520). The point being, it is only when living – material and existential; individual yet social – is a meaningful possibility that the self is seized by the necessity to live. Accordingly, necessities arise, not from the simple desperation to secure one’s existence, but from the pressing urgency to sustain the conditions under which the possibilities of the self, as both tangible-intangible, remains bounding. In this sense, what may become necessary pertains, not only to the body, but possibly every encounter in the world and every individual action.

Thus, the body is not the sole point of origination for the necessities of life. Instead, its significance lies in its being the exclusive site through which what is necessary is given affectivity through experience, and so, felt as a compulsion – that is, as necessity, itself. Within Ango’s theory of the tangible self, the body is the translator of possibilities to necessities, a ‘thinking flesh’ that “itself thinks and is able to speak” (1990, p. 577). This, however, should not be taken to imply that the body is somehow capable of conscious reasoning; rather, for Ango, its announcements are made in a register unmediated by intelligible thought. The possibility of nourishment does not make itself known as the necessity of food, but is *felt* as a pure hunger; similarly, the possibility of providing for one’s family does not make itself known as the necessity of money, but is *felt* when the possibility is put at stake – say in a job interview – through

sweaty palms, a racing heartbeat, and a shortness of breath. As such, although the body is capable of intentionality and communication, the self's necessities are, less so disclosed, and more so experienced. More specifically, through these "suprarational emotions" the reverberations between life as it is actually lived and the still dormant, but immediate possibilities of life find embodiment within the self's material being; the body – in its hunger, in its anxiety – *is* dissonant (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 34). Accordingly, while innumerable directions, nevertheless, remain open to the self, when confronted by impermanence, there effected is a pre-reflective bodily seizure that affects the directionality of its living movement – the self acts on its necessities, not by choice, but because it is moved.

Although many NGE individuals would already characterise their experience of being within the normative bounds of the gender binary as "a lot of feeling uncomfortable", in a study conducted by Fiani and Han, participants reported this discomfort becoming most pronounced during adolescence and early adulthood, during which the changes of puberty manifest as physical reminders of the seemingly insurmountable distance between internal experience and external presentation (2019, p. 85). As described by one participant:

When I had puberty, stuff was happening and I was having like panic attacks and freaking out, binding down my chest, I had no idea what was going on (Fiani and Han 2019, p. 186).

Accordingly, moving-gender appears to be driven by a profound desperation to right something that is not fully within one's control. For NGE individuals, the body is, not a flexible medium of gender expression, but the unmastered site within which gender is lived – visceral and immediate, the moment this distance is experienced, it demands that it is closed (see Cashore and Tuason 2009; Fiani and Han 2019; Costello 2020; Darwin 2020). In this sense, when NGE is considered in light of Ango's theory of the tangible self, moving-gender looks a lot like a necessity: that which is compelled by the pre-reflective bodily experience of the dissonance between the body materially manifested and socially positioned in the normative world and the reality of their living body which, in its vitality, exceeds what one has been assigned. That is, the dissonance between the actual and the possible. Therefore, it is not just in spite of the bounds of gender binary, but precisely because of it that NGE individuals *feel* need to move. In this sense, much in the same way all humans need air – while the timing of a breath and the manner in which it is taken may be controlled – when a breath is held, at some point one *must* breathe. The mode of movement may be chosen, but moving-

gender, itself, is neither calculated nor deliberate; it is necessitated by the suprarational emotions that speak to a profound need to live one's possibilities. Hence, far from voluntary, NGE is compelled by the individual's own impermanence – it is simply necessary.

3. The Decadence of Becoming Oneself

Attuned to and compelled by impermanence, moving-gender, thereby, reveals itself as existentially significant; it is a movement that belongs to the perpetual becoming oneself of the tangible-intangible self (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 17-32). According to Ango, while the self persists in intangibility, it also distinctly *is* its tangible being. This is because, impermanence addresses each self as an individual positioned within its own specific situatedness; thus, in response to impermanence, each self draws upon the totality of its own historicity (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 352-384). Take for example, the necessity of food: for the self who lives in the city, what is necessary may be as simple as going to a convenience store; but, for the self who lives in the country, it may be necessary for it to resort to the land for its next meal. Though, even within the same context, two selves may, based on their prior experience, turn to differing means – instinctually, the hunter thinks to hunt and the forager to forage. Therefore, while these actions, essentially, enact a mere transition from one state to the next – hungry to not-hungry – when informed by the self's situatedness and historicity, we may understand them as tangible expressions of, not only the self's factual *what*, but also the totality of lived experiences that speak to *who* it is thus far. Accordingly, as the self moves in its necessary direction, it is not the case that what has passed is extinguished through change; but rather, it is given new meaning – each bygone phase builds upon the last in a rearticulation, which collapses all that has come before and all that is possible into the most authentic visage of the present self (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 17-32). Hence, the tangible-intangible self is always moving authentically as itself; its fundamental mode of being a living movement of becoming oneself.

Likewise, moving-gender, as compelled by the need to act on the possibilities of impermanence distinct to the individual, is encompassed within this great movement of becoming oneself. It begins when the individual is left with little choice but to *become*; and through it, the individual is enacted, the individual is moved – all towards an unending pursuit of the authentic oneself. This, however, does not yet capture the full ontologico-existential significance of moving-gender. The process of becoming is intimately entangled with the conditions of belonging: 'I' can only authentically experience my being in the world if the world au-

thentically engages with me as ‘I am’. In this sense, NGE is necessarily a co-creation – it requires, not only the self’s enactment of gender, but also the world to receive the self as such (Cashore and Tuason 2009). This even extends to cases where becoming is precisely a not-belonging: despite their non-participation in the gender binary, non-binary individuals, nevertheless – if not “more heavily” – cite “the importance of a sense of community” (Fiani and Han 2019, p. 188). Therefore, it seems that, irrespective of one’s personal commitments towards gendered boundaries (and even beyond the discussion of boundaries entirely), there is always a quiet desire to be engaged with and understood as one *is*. Hence, Freiwald writes:

[To become is] to create a place to call home; to make oneself at home in the world; to find ways of being at, or when necessary, leaving home – the home that is one’s body, the physical, affective, and social spaces inhabited by that body (2001, p. 38).

To illuminate NGE as this ontologico-existential mode of moving-gender, we must examine where becoming turns ‘decadent’. Though, this does immediately raise the question: how could such a sincere process – incandescent with the vitality of life – possibly be labelled as decadent? For Ango, decadence, at its most basic, signifies the movement of becoming oneself authentic to the tangible-intangible self; but, as suggested by the terminology, it redescribes this movement as a mode of fallenness. Unlike the one-dimensional colloquial meaning – a morally corrupt self-indulgence – within Ango’s practice of authenticity, the word unfurls a multilayered and nuanced concept that provides us with a twofold description of the duality of the self’s movement of becoming: a falling away from the social and a falling into oneself (1990, p. 511-522; p. 583-594). In this sense, decadence reframes the becoming of the self in light of its belonging; it speaks to the intricacies of moving-gender as, not just authentic movement, but one that moves the ontological boundaries of the gender binary, of regions of being.

4. Homelessness: The Fall from Organised Society

The co-existence of any group of people, requires, to some degree, organisation. Even in the absence of a shared goal, all interactions depend on at least a minimal extent of cooperation, which in turn hinges on the immediate intelligibility of self and other. Thus, a functioning society is always founded upon some framework of defining categories and distinguishing boundaries, through which all existent beings are assigned an

identity that articulates their place within this common world (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 36-43). This means that, for an individual to be identifiable, they must first be rationalisable as an arrangement of distinct, non-contradictory descriptors that – as a whole – endures as a stable object capable of being classified within this framework. It is for this reason that NGE may be described as decadent, in the first sense of the word: a mode of falling away from society (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 511-522; p. 583-594). Within this context, however, what fallenness signifies is, not merely the social denouncement of NGE, but a total exile – the movement of becoming oneself as that which moves the self from one region of being to another; a fall into homelessness (Freiwald 2001).

In principle, organisation should require only a momentary coherence of social identity – a role and a function through which the relational meaning of the individual may be grasped and coordinated. While there is a demand for coherence within the present moment, the designations attributed to the individual may change over the span of their life, much in the same way one's job title or citizenship may be altered. However, as Ango observes, this is, more often than not, imposed as some way of condensing the ontologico-existential orientation of the self – that is, the entirety of its factual *what* and existential *who*, the totality of it as a tangible-intangible – into a single identity. Once rendered in this way, the designations of the self are no longer easily shed; for they are taken as its very selfness reified (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 36-43; p. 352-384). While, at first instance, this may appear as a metaphysical issue arising from a logic of substance, Ango argues that it, instead, signals the emergence of an 'organised society', which through the "systemisation of science", fixes not the boundaries of the being nor its orientation, but its very positionality (1990, p. 38). Under this, subjective descriptions of human beliefs and behaviours are regarded as objective empirical evidence, such that recurrent observations – like 'Chinese people are good at math' or 'Conservatives are homophobic' – are afforded the same scientific reliability as the fact that 'spiders have eight legs' and 'the sky is blue'. Thus, in the same way that 'having eight legs' attaches to spiders as a true property, these widely held value judgements and common suppositions are also established as essential characteristics that admit entry into classifications of beings. Consequently, just as it is assumed that whatever has eight legs must be a spider, it is likewise assumed that if one is homophobic, one must be a conservative. Therefore, these descriptors are naturalised – taken as not only markers of an individual's belonging to a particular boundary; but also, as themselves enduring and immutable features of the individual. In this way, taking effect as a 'scientification' of being, they unforgivably anchor the self within a fixed ontologico-existential position (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 36-43). Hence, there is a fixity to the bound-

aries of an organised society, but only in so far as they define the self and the self is first held to be fixed as a constant being.

It is in this sense that the NGE individual appears, from the standpoint of organised society, as decadent – not because moving-gender transgresses established boundaries, but because, the system rejects any and all boundary-movement, entirely – irrespective of if said movement is necessitated by actual change. When the systemisation of science is applied specifically to observations about gender, the result is, as described by Darwin, a “cisgendering of reality” (2020, p. 186). As it is the case that cisgender individuals are the statistical majority, their experiences of gender are that which are taken to define the boundaries of the gender binary – but, unlike with other identities, this results in a particular predetermination. Classifications such as ethnicity or age often contain descriptions drawn from correlations made between observable beliefs and behaviours, and certain features of biology. While such correlations are far from universal, wrought with subjectivity and bias, and come with their own set of serious concerns, they, nevertheless, remain within a single domain: the Chinese individual thought to be good at math *is* biologically Chinese. In contrast to this, gender is heteronomous; it contains, not only descriptions of direct appearances and comportments of gender, but also external descriptions drawn from other classifications, which are often biological: it is, not only that ‘a woman is weak’, but also ‘a woman is a female’ (Darwin 2020). The unfortunate consequence is a paradoxical positionality, as documented by Cashore and Tuason:

Despite their efforts [to announce and explain their gender], others continued to treat them as an identity different from the identity participants felt internally...in addition, [others assumed] that they were, or always had been, either a man or a woman, based on physical characteristics (2019, p. 386).

Thus, the NGE individual is an “exile” in their “own body and in the world” (Freiwald 2001, p. 41). On one hand, due to the scientific classification of being, the gender assigned to the individual at birth is taken as the truth – this is despite the individual ‘passing’ in a way that should, in any other context, determine a different belonging. On the other hand, due to the scientification of social descriptors, the ‘passing’ individual’s presentation is also taken as proof that they were always their present gender, even when this was not the case. In both instances, the system is, not only incapable of properly judging the individual as a ‘bad’ or ‘good’ representative of a particular gender, but also fails to account for the individual as a living whole; it breaks its own rules in an attempt to accommodate them, yet in doing so negates both what the individual has become and what they have been. Therefore, it seems that, because moving-gen-

der is – from the outset – boundary-movement as such, the system simply cannot comprehend the NGE individual without contradiction. As such, although organised society may perceive moving-gender as a fallenness, it cannot adjudicate upon it, precisely because moving-gender falls beyond its bounds. Hence, the NGE individual is excluded from organised society, not as a consequence of an instance of movement, but because moving-gender as a mode of being in boundary-movement simply has no place within its framework. It results in a literal fall away from organised society – it is decadent; it is homelessness.

5. Homecoming: The Fall Towards Oneself

Becoming is always tied up with belonging; yet, belonging also precludes all becoming. This is precisely the cruel contradiction explored by Bornstein in the play, “Hidden: A Gender”, inserted within their critically influential book, *Gender Outlaw*. The play stages the lives of two NGE individuals contending with belonging in a world which denies them their becoming; and arrives at the conclusion that there is only “homecoming in death” (Bornstein 1990; Freiwald 2001, p. 41). For Bornstein, death is understood as the negation of boundaries; the movement of “people and their ideas...beyond their boundaries” before they are negated by them (1994, p. 212). Thus, they write:

The incessant struggle between nature and reason...drags me with great strides toward the tomb...Death is there. Oblivion, there. There without any doubt the poor wretch exiled from the world, shall at last find a homeland (1994, p. 218).

While *Gender Outlaw* provided radical visibility to the lived experiences of NGE individuals and represents a transformative shift in the narrative of gender discourse, it also, in a way, seems to present us with a different kind of binary – one which holds, either, the death of oneself or a death to the world as the only two choices available – wherein still fundamentally negated is the possibility of co-existence. Here, we are still left in the same bleak place of a belonging; within which becoming, nevertheless, remains an impossibility. Curiously, much like Bornstein, Anjo also locates the self – rendered homeless – in the domain of death. For him, however, death refers to the temporal ground at the topology of being: the eddying currents of time from which the tangible-intangible self inherits both its potentiality and the necessity to become. Therefore, he describes it as *furusato* (ふるさと): the ‘birthplace’ of movement, of becoming, of belonging – of the authentic oneself (1990, p. 33-5; p.

323-331). Hence, when put in relation to Ango's practice of authenticity, NGE may also be described as decadent, in the second sense of the word: a falling into oneself; a homecoming (1990, p. 511-522; p. 583-594).

In its exclusion of boundary-movement, organised society always outstrips the self of its capacity to become oneself (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 36-43). Ango observes that this, however, is not in spite of, but in precise awareness of the "heartbreaking nature (suchness) of human beings" (1990, p. 594). Our rootedness in temporality speaks, not only to our infinite potentiality as human beings, but also to the great ineffectuality of humanity: although each existence unfolds through its own distinct movement of ceasing and rebirth, at the far-end, we all arrive at the same distant shore – death. This marks the absolute negation of, not just the states and identities lived by the self, but also all that had been brought to life by its hands – its actions, its creations; any and all impact it had on the world (Sakaguchi 1991b, 244-6). Thus, left behind by the self is: first a life, then a memory – but always with the passing of time – eventually, nothing at all. It is not only that the self moves impermanently, but also that this very movement is itself impermanent; temporality marks becoming oneself with, in equal measure, the possibilities of life and the futility of it, both felt as intimately and vividly as the other. Consequently, it seems that it is exactly because we know how much we are capable of, whilst also understanding how little it all means, that humans turn to the systematic scientification of being (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 352-384). The condensation of being into an objective set of descriptors contained within a self-referential designation generates a loop of self-reinforcement. For the privileged majority, whose beliefs and behaviours establish the descriptors and classifications of this system, this circularity manufactures a permanence that allows their identity to, not only endure through time, but also – over time – be further stabilised through reduction. The hero is remembered by the glory of a won war, and not the sum of lives taken; the genius is remembered by the cleverness of the invention, and not the harm left in its wake – being, thereby, endures as its greatest deeds (Sakaguchi 1991a, p. 407). Therefore, "human beings simply love what is human, and cannot bear to let go": organic community gives way to organised society as a calculated effort to sever the impermanent self's fundamental rootedness in temporality (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 615).

Accordingly, the same moving-gender that exiles the NGE individual from organised society is also their releasement from the fixed ontologico-existential positionality assigned to them by its scientific system. In falling beyond the bounds of the gender binary, all its naturalised descriptors and classificatory identities also fall away – here, self and world are borne bare to their ground of temporality. This is, however, not the creation of a new world without boundaries, but

rather, a return of the self to a region wherein the movement of becoming may bound through the world in search of a belonging. Boundaries may be embedded within the structure of organised society, but they neither belong to nor originate from it; instead, they are the product of the collective attentivity of an aeon of humans concerned with human life (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 352-384). Upon the vast expanse of time, there is only the distance – between death and life; necessities and actions – of the disquieting horizon that stretches towards the unknown. And so, in the beginning, there is only dissonance: the possibilities of life seize the self within an unfamiliar environment, compelling it into an acting that is also the creation of meaning. But, over time, disparate threads of human observations establish the ley lines through which the living movements of humanity may be traced across the landscape of time: ‘the strong hunt’, ‘the weak forage’, ‘humans are...’, ‘people are...’. On one hand, this provides us with a meaningful context of ontologico-existential relations upon which interactions are interpreted and life may be oriented. Yet, on the other hand, these are merely the remnants of the many who walked the same path – observations made about the way in which human beings took necessary action, made only because the impermanent self needs them to make sense of this world to which its material being is dependent – they remain open to situational alteration and future revision. In this way, however messily, boundaries were already drawn; but only because the woven pattern so happens to look like a tapestry (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 323-331). Hence, the emergence of organised society marks the birth of, not boundaries, but order. Homelessness entails exclusion neither from boundaries nor the experience of being articulated through them; instead, it is a homecoming: a departure from a region of not-impermanence that returns the self to one of impermanence, wherein rooted in temporality and drawing from its potentiality, self and world, boundaries and movement, are all open.

It follows that, from an ontologico-existential standpoint, NGE is decadent; for, in homecoming, becoming and belonging are reconciled as an absolute movement towards oneself. Within the region of impermanence there are still boundaries, it is just that they exist pre-scientified, and so, do not impose upon the individual with the force of the truth: they are encountered as they were originally – uncrystallised groupings of beliefs and behaviours, as unfixed and mutable as the selves from which they came (Sakaguchi 1990, p. 323-331). Thus, even if it is still presently the case that the majority of men are male and the majority of women are female, boundaries are no longer governed by *musts* and *shoulds*; entry and exit are, not predicated upon some necessary criteria or prescribed normativity, but compelled by the necessities of life. Here, the NGE in-

dividual may inhabit boundaries in conformity or in defiance, they may defy them whilst still confirming, or they may ignore them altogether – moving-gender simply unfolds within and in accordance to the flux of time in which their tangible-intangible selves are caught. Therefore, rather than a destruction of boundaries, moving-gender merely clears the way for its own boundary-movement. It opens up the possibility of experiencing, not only the boundaries that we are already familiar with, but also ones which, in their overlaps and contradictions, were precluded from organisation – at least within a contemporary Western context – from the very start: the gender fluidity inherent in Ancient Greek and Roman religious practices; the gender blending of the ‘two-spirit’ people found across various Native American nations; the non-gendered enlightenment of Guanyin detailed in Mahayana Buddhist scriptures – this all stands as testament to the long-standing human resistance against the scientification of being; this all speaks to boundaries that designate not mere positionality, but movement, itself (Surtees and Dyer 2020; Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997; Wilf 2020). Within the region of impermanence, there is always a place for the NGE individual, whether it be within, in transition, in between, or even beyond the boundaries – here, there is always somewhere that becoming may belong. Hence, moving-gender turns homelessness into a homecoming: a return of the NGE individual to the temporal ground, upon which their moving *who* may be openly received by the boundaries of the *what* – here, they find themselves re-rooted in their potentiality to belong and become; here, the decadent self comes to dwell as oneself.

6. The Bounding Rebellion of Moving-Gender

When writing this paper, I found myself reminded of the fable of the country mouse and the city mouse: ignorant to the ways of the country, the city mouse returns to the city; fearing the dangers of the city, the country mouse returns to the country. Curiously, this is often taken as a lesson in natural belonging and moralised as an inditement against the decadent lifestyle of the city; yet, between the lines, whispered is also an impulse to explore beyond the pre-determined – a *need* to live that returns life to itself. Perhaps, it is not so much that the country mouse returns because it *is* a country mouse, but because it *is-not* a city mouse – when one finds themselves in another’s land, there is simply no choice but to move. But, for the decadent – for whom return knows no country – where does movement come to rest?

In this paper, I considered moving-gender in light of Ango’s practice of authenticity, and offered a phenomenological account of NGE as a

rebellious pursuit of authenticity through which both self and world are cleared for authentic dwelling. Through his theory of the tangible-intangible self, moving-gender emerged as, not just permissible, but compelled. While all selves are fundamentally in a mode of movement as becoming, moving-gender – insofar as it moves beyond the individual's assigned position within the normatively established boundaries of the contemporary Western gender binary – is unintelligible; however, this does exclude it from being just as fundamental and authentic to oneself. Nevertheless, it is for this precise reason, that moving-gender is also decadent. Though, not as some perverse fetish or contrarian attention grab or whatever other objections the essentialist public may have (see Jeffreys 2014; Peterson 2018). Rather, it is a fall from an organised society within which movement has no place; and thus, a fall into re-rootedness in one's own temporal ground – it is a fall into oneself. Accordingly, moving-gender unfolds, not merely across boundaries, but between regions of being: an existential movement that results in an ontological migration towards a space, wherein becoming may boundingly move to in search of belonging. It is, thereby, “*there...shall the outlaw find a place*” (Bornstein 1994, p. 218).

Therefore, this paper illuminates an alternative way of attending to the existentiality and materiality, individuality and sociality, and – most importantly – becoming and belonging at the ontologico-existential ground of NGE. In moving-gender, the individual is returned to *furusato* – the ubiquitous ground of time, upon which necessities overflow and a life fecund with vitality bears forth worlds. Here, in this region of impermanence, wherein boundaries are, neither essential classifications nor social constructs, but reflective and responsive to authentic necessity, reciprocity is restored: gender is no longer subjugated to the reception of a contradictory system; but becomes part of a reality, co-constituted and co-created between the individual and world – the movement of becoming now sets the bounds within which the individual may belong. In this sense, moving-gender is the liberation of self and world: it unfetters boundaries from the tyranny of scientification, and in doing so, reclaims, not only the individual's full potentiality for movement, but also the very boundaries through which movement is made meaningful. Here, every decadent plays a hand in establishing their own boundaries – boundingly moving with, without, and in-between – the interstices matter as much as the bounds, themselves; here, no longer unlike oneself and all others, the NGE individual is reborn in a becoming oneself that belongs distinctly with others. Hence, it may be productive to give further attention to the phenomenology of moving-gender as boundary-movement; for, it is *here* that the outlaws dwell.

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La decadenza del diventare se stessi: la ribellione sconfinata del Moving-Gender

Il presente contributo esplora l'espressione di genere non normativa (NGE) come modalità ontologico-esistenziale dell'essere che si dispiega attraverso il «moving-gender»: l'esperienza vissuta di orientarsi e negoziare i confini del sistema binario di genere nel contesto dell'Occidente contemporaneo. Come linea guida, questo articolo si rivolge a Sakaguchi Ango (坂口安吾, 1906-1955), la cui teoria del sé decadente tangibile-intangibile fornisce un quadro di riferimento che considera l'essere come esistenziale e materiale, individuale e sociale – ovvero un movimento del divenire attraverso l'appartenenza. In una lettura anacronistica e ricostruttiva di Ango, questo articolo illustra il moving-gender come un movimento esistenziale del divenire realizzato attraverso un'appartenenza che si trova nella migrazione delle regioni ontologiche. Offrirà, in tal modo, una descrizione fenomenologica del NGE come modalità di movimento ribelle dei confini che persegue l'autenticità nella sua interezza – ovvero, l'essere e l'abitare.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Espressione di genere non normativa | Sakaguchi Ango [坂口安吾] | Decadenza [墮落] | Fenomenologia queer | Filosofia giapponese

The Decadence of Becoming Oneself: The Bounding Rebellion of Moving-Gender

This paper explores non-normative gender expression (NGE) as an ontologico-existential mode of being that unfolds through 'moving-gender': the lived experience of navigating and negotiating the boundaries of the gender binary in the context of the contemporary West. As its guide, this paper turns to Sakaguchi Ango (坂口安吾 1906-1955), whose theory of the tangible-intangible decadent self provides a framework that attends to being as existential and material, individual and social – a movement of becoming through belonging. In an anachronistic and reconstructive reading of Ango, this paper illuminates moving-gender as an existential movement of becoming enacted through a belonging found in the migration of ontological regions. It will, thereby, offer a phenomenological account of NGE as a mode of rebellious boundary-movement that pursues authenticity in its entirety – that is, being and dwelling.

Keywords: Non-normative Gender Expression | Sakaguchi Ango [坂口安吾] | Decadence [墮落] | Queer Phenomenology | Japanese Philosophy