**Reason for choosing the path**

I faced the topic in more disciplines and I tried to explicit the connection among them and the different developing in Italy and England.

**Problem posed or objective of the path**

Decadence in philosophy, art, Italian and English culture.

# decadentism through art

In Modern Age scientific and technologic progress made people consider the well-being became only from material things. Art was considered un-productive and as a consequence useless.

Some intellectuals didn’t accept the new (not) role of art, and the will to distinguish themselves from the modern utilitarian society took to an act of rebellion.

The reactional movement began firstly in the more industrialized. In England, artists, writers and philosophers reacted to Victorian orthodoxy and society. People called them *dandies* to indicate a disdainful person of middle-class’ style of life.

The father’s reactional movement was Walter Pater, which took the name of Aestheticism. The name was due to the important role of beauty, indeed life should be considered as a *work of art* to live it as intensely as possible. According to Walter Pater only art could make life beautiful and it made people escape from the modern industrial reality.

The movement spread in whole Europe. For example in France we found the *Poètes maudits*, whose name is due to a Paul Verlaine’s collection of essays and articles. The adjective *maudits* was referred to their denounce and opposition to the contemporaneous society, indeed they were aware and proud of their behaviour. One of the most significant poems of the *Poètes maudits* was Charles Baudelaire’s one, where he denounced society’s attitude toward art and artists:

*….*

*À peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,  
Que ces* ***rois de l'azur****,* ***maladroits et honteux****,*

*….*

*Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est* ***gauche et veule****!  
Lui, naguère si* ***beau****, qu'il est* ***comique et laid****!*

*…*

*Le Poète est semblable au* ***prince des nuées*** *Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;****Exilé*** *sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses* ***ailes de géant******l'empêchent de marcher****.*

**Albatros (Les Fleur du Mal) - C. Baudelaire**

***Rois de l'azur*, *prince des nuées*, *beau*** and ***ailes de géant*** make the reader understand the importance of poetic language for Baudelaire, indeed he is aware of cognitive power of art but also he is ***maladroits et honteux***, ***gauche et veul***, ***comique et laid*** and he can’t ***marcher***. The poet-albatros is ***Exilé***, unsuitable to live the modern society because it doesn’t understand the role of art.

The term to design this period where intellectuals followed the same *Poètes maudits’* trend of thought was ***Decadence***.

In Italy, Gabriele D’Annunzio was one of the greatest decadents. He was influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophy and he wrote *Il piacere.* Just reading the title the reader linked the writer’s poem to Walter Pater’s way of living. Indeed also G. D’Annunzio made his life a *work of art* and he made it inimitable. In addition, the poet thought only verses could represent life in its true essence and beauty:

*.. il verso è tutto e può tutto. Può rendere i minimi moti del sentimento e i minimi moti della sensazione; può definire l'indefinibile e definire l'ineffabile ; può abbracciare l'illimitato e penetrare l'abisso, può avere dimensioni d'eternità; può rappresentare il* ***soprauomo****, il soprannaturale, l'oltramirabile; può inebriare come un vino, rapire come un'estasi; può nel tempo medesimo possedere il nostro intelletto, il nostro spirito, il nostro corpo; può, infine, raggiungere l'Assoluto.*

**Il Piacere - Gabriele D’Annunzio**

In the text you can read the word ***soprauomo***, indeed the writer has read and inspired his life on Nietzsche’s philosophy. According to the philosopher man has to leave the world of the “eternal return” and in order to this he has to go away from society to find new values and to return to linear time. G. D’Annunzio overlooked philosophic aspects of Nietzsche’s ***Über–Mensch*** he based his life style on beauty worship and on moments of absolute sensations, feeling and emotions. These moments could be compared to Walter Pater’s ecstatic moments and according to him the artist should be eternalized in *works of art.* This attitude could make them be able to stop unstoppable time and to relish the essence of life.

Walter Pater’s trend of thought was influenced by Pre-Raphaelites’ movement. The artistic movement is a reactional one to academic accuracy of art. They tried to return to purity and simplicity of art preceding the XV century one. The subjects of the paintings are immersed in nature, because as the other decadents they rejected the process of industrialization.

According to the Pre-Raphaelites the primitive nature of human beings is a world of true beauty to which they wanted to return. But they are aware it was impossible. So they tried to return to the idea of that beauty. The paintings express the relation they wanted to create with nature, which is indeed studied in detail. The scenes usually eternalize a moment of life:



John Everett Millais’ ***Ophelia*** represents the pending instant between life and death, hot and cold and the study of nature is evident. The painting has a symbolic meaning, indeed it appeals to reader’s mind Shakespeare’s tragedy. It has his meaning in itself. Indeed according to Walter Pater and Pre-Raphaelites art justifies itself and it appeal to reader’s senses and emotions with its beauty and without any moral purpose but ***art for art’s sake***.

**Bibliography**

#### Testi e Scenari 5, L’età del Naturalismo e del Decadentismo, Beatrice Panebianco , Cecilia Pisoni , Loretta Reggiani ,Marcello Malpensa, Zanichelli

**Sitography**

Notes from <http://www.marilenabeltramini.it/>

<http://tranellidiseta.blogspot.it/2012/11/ophelia-lattimo-sospeso.html>