

# The Grand Old Man and the Great Tradition



Adriana Boscaro with a *Bun'ya ningyō*, Island of Sado, 1971.

# The Grand Old Man and the Great Tradition

Essays on Tanizaki Jun'ichirō in Honor of Adriana Boscaro

EDITED BY

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Luisa Bienati and Bonaventura Ruperti  
Venice, April 2009



Adriana Boscaro, *Laurea honoris causa* to Professor Katō Shūichi, University Ca'Foscari of Venice, 9 June 2000.

# Introduction

LUISA BIENATI

Adriana Boscaro and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō: two names firmly linked in my mind and in those of many others who feel connected to Boscaro either on a personal level or through a shared devotion to the work of Tanizaki. This book is primarily conceived as an homage to both the work of the “grand old man,” in all its inexhaustible richness, and to Boscaro's tireless contributions to the study of Tanizaki in Italy and around the world.

Recently, while in Tokyo, I was struck by the enduring impact of the international conference Boscaro organized in Venice in 1995 on the joint thirtieth anniversary of Tanizaki's death and of the founding of the Japanese Studies Institute at the University of Venice. This important event, which attracted scholars from all over the world, offered the chance to discuss Tanizaki and exchange ideas in this beautiful venue, Boscaro's favorite city. Thanks to Boscaro's energetic commitment, Venice became a center for Tanizaki studies that produced two volumes based on the conference proceedings. These two volumes are now cited in all scholarly works on Tanizaki, and are regarded as seminal publications in the field.<sup>1</sup>

While the Venice Conference is the best-known link between Boscaro and Tanizaki, she had already contributed actively to Tanizaki's literary success in Italy.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1980s, when Tanizaki's later works were already well known in Italy thanks to Suga Atsuko's translations, Boscaro was among those who exposed Italian readers to Tanizaki's earlier writings with translations of *Shisei*, *Majutsushi*, *Hōkan*, *Himitsu*, and *Ningyo no nageki*. In that same period, Boscaro edited the first major collection of Tanizaki's writings in Italian—sixteen works covering the entire span of the author's career, published in a series devoted to world classics—and contributed six translations to it.

1. The proceedings from the conference were published in English and Japanese: Adriana Boscaro and Anthony H. Chambers, eds., *A Tanizaki Feast: The International Symposium in Venice*, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies 24 (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1998); *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō kokusai Symposium* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1997). Another important contribution to Tanizaki studies is Adriana Boscaro, ed., *Tanizaki in Western Languages: A Bibliography of Translations and Studies* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2000).
2. Adriana Boscaro has traced the literary success of Tanizaki in Italy in several of her articles, including: “La fortuna di Tanizaki in Italia,” in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Opere* (Milano: Bompiani, 1988), pp. 1155–1168; “The Fortunes of Tanizaki in Italy,” in Zdenka Svarcova and Cody Poulton, eds., *Dreams and Shadows: Tanizaki and Japanese Poetics in Prague: Essays in Honour of Anthony W. Liman*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Orientalia Pragensia XV, Philologica I, 2005 (Charles University in Prague, The Karolinum Press, 2006), pp. 71–80.

The years that followed the Venice Conference produced an abundance of works by Boscaro and her students. Boscaro's translation of *Yoshino kuzu* was published in 1998 as part of the "Mille gru" (Thousand Cranes) series on Japanese literature, a series which Boscaro supervised for the publishing house Marsilio. Her contribution to Tanizaki studies took the form of a variety of publications aimed at both academic and general readers (see the Bibliography at the end of this volume). Now retired from full-time teaching, Boscaro continues to be an active participant at conferences and other academic events.

The present volume is intended to link the two names—Adriana Boscaro and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō—through the contributions of colleagues and friends, each of whom provides a unique perspective from his or her field of interest.

A central theme of many of the essays presented in this volume is Tanizaki's position in relation to the "great tradition" of Japanese classical literature. It is significant that most contributors have chosen to discuss the classical aspects and themes found in the writing of Tanizaki, as if to confirm the author's "classical" place within the spectrum of Japanese literature.

The volume opens with an homage paid by Edward Seidensticker (1921–2007) to Adriana Boscaro. In sending me his article some years ago, Seidensticker expressly stated that I was not to remove its closing sentences. I would like to quote this passage here as an authoritative reminder of Boscaro's position in the world of international scholarship:

Approaching the end of my say, I wish to change the subject and offer a few words of thanks to and for Adriana Boscaro. Energetic, intelligent, imaginative, she has been an enriching presence. She is genuinely cosmopolitan. Scholars on the European continent and scholars in the English-speaking countries tend not to pay much attention to other factions. This has not been true of Boscaro. She has always seemed interested in what we are doing. I have been very grateful, and I am glad that her retirement does not mean her disappearance from the scene.

Seidensticker's contribution is a provocative essay on literary styles and translation. He begins by describing his perspective on Tanizaki as "somewhat negative," but concludes that it is "outrageously subjective," for "the most important literary judgments are intuitive." An important point raised here is that "Murasaki Shikibu and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō are not closely akin as is commonly held to be the case." Seidensticker's argument is based on the language and literary style of Tanizaki, who produced three modern Japanese versions of the classic masterpiece by Murasaki Shikibu (1939–41; 1951–54; 1964–65). Tanizaki, Seidensticker argues, proved incapable of re-creating the same sense of lyric beauty in his own writing. Moreover, he suggests, "admiration for Tanizaki's attempt to modernize *Genji* is not universal."

Seidensticker's discussion includes memories of his long career as a translator. Seidensticker mentions an exchange with Kawabata Yasunari concerning Tanizaki's modern Japanese translations of *Genji*, recalling two specific details: Kawa-

bata's copy of Tanizaki's translations, with its most questionable passages marked in red (it was, Seidensticker writes, a "very red copy"); and Kawabata's smile—both intriguing and unequivocal—in reply to Seidensticker's request for amplification on Kawabata's comment that Tanizaki's translations were a "*shōnin Genji*." Seidensticker states frankly that a great opportunity was missed when Kawabata failed to provide a modern rendering of *Genji*. In Seidensticker's opinion, only Kawabata's style would have been capable of conveying the charm of Murasaki's masterpiece to modern readers.

Drawing on his experience as a translator, Seidensticker engages the central issues surrounding the rendering of *Genji* into a modern language (including modern Western languages): if and how to maintain the length of the original sentences; how many words to employ to convey what Murasaki is saying; what to add, explicate, and elucidate and what to leave in the allusive and lyrical language of classical Japanese.<sup>3</sup> In reading such comments, one should not forget that Seidensticker has been the translator of Kawabata ("It has been said that Edward Seidensticker won the 1968 Nobel Prize in literature for Kawabata Yasunari").<sup>4</sup> But it is also worth bearing in mind that Seidensticker translated several works by Tanizaki, including one which many critics have regarded as his most "classical" work: *Sasame yuki*.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Seidensticker was the first person to translate *Genji monogatari* (1976) into English after Arthur Waley, whose translation was abridged. (Seidensticker remarks that for someone like himself, who had been introduced to Japanese literature by reading the Waley *Genji*, producing a new translation was like "killing his own father.")<sup>6</sup>

Kawabata, Tanizaki, and Murasaki, therefore, are three authors whom Seidensticker discusses from personal experience. His essay offers the reader willing to entertain Seidensticker's "negative" perspective much food for thought on issues of translation. Our only regret is that Edward Seidensticker is no longer with us to continue this debate.

The second contribution to the volume provides further reflections on the Tanizaki *Genji*, though from a completely different point of view. Gaye Rowley and

3. In *Bunshō tokuhon* (1934), Tanizaki criticized Waley for making his English translation longer than the original. By retranslating one of Waley's passages back into Japanese, Tanizaki demonstrated that Waley had used twice as many words in his translation. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Bunshō tokuhon* (Chūōkōronsha, Chūkō bunpo, 1994), pp. 53–58.

4. Aileen Gatten, "Edward Seidensticker: A Biography," in A. Gatten and A. H. Chambers, eds., *New Leaves: Studies and Translations of Japanese Literature in Honor of Edward Seidensticker* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan), 1993, p. 1.

5. In an interview on "Tanizaki and *Genji monogatari*" and "Kawabata and *Genji monogatari*," Seidensticker claims to have found little stylistic or linguistic affinity between *Sasame yuki* and Murasaki's masterpiece. Seidensticker argues that the style of Kawabata's sentences and the "atmosphere" (*bunsho no fuiki*) they evoke more closely resemble the *Genji* style. Cf. E. Seidensticker and Ii Haruki, *Sekai bungaku to shite no Genji monogatari: Saidensutekka shi ni kiku*, Tokyo, Kasamashoin, 2005, pp. 128–135.

6. Kawazoe Fusao surveys *Genji* translations in Western languages. "'Nemureru mori no bijin' no yohanseiki: Sekai de *Genji* wa dō yomaretেকita ka?" *Eureka*, Feb. 2002, p. 186.

Ibuki Kazuko (Tanizaki's amanuensis from 1953 to 1965) document Tanizaki's endeavors in making three separate translations of *Genji*. Ultimately, Tanizaki's work is presented as the "product of a highly complex corporate project involving great numbers of experts and assistants over long periods of time." Thanks to the documentary evidence provided about the formation of the translations (including Tanizaki's own remarks on that subject, here translated by Thomas Harper), and the parallels drawn between Tanizaki's and Yosano Akiko's respective attempts to render the text into modern Japanese, this essay represents an important contribution to the study of Tanizaki's work. Tanizaki's own observations and the conclusions reached by Rowley and Ibuki alternatively question and confirm Seidensticker's "intuitions." Concerning style, Tanizaki writes: "I've been unable to write with the daring economy of the original text; but if we posit that the original expresses ten units of meaning using five units of expression, then I have expressed them with seven. So a passage in the original that cannot be understood without reading it ten times over, in my translation should be understandable after two or three readings." Similar comments lend strength to Seidensticker's suggestion that Tanizaki might be too "clear" or "lucid" in his translation, that "he explains too well, as is not the Japanese way."

Curiously, there is one important point of agreement between Tanizaki and Seidensticker, both of whom devoted many years of their lives to reviving Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* by translating the work into their respective languages: "I don't think it's such a great masterpiece!" (Tanizaki); "I am not convinced that Murasaki was a superbly good stylist. This is all right. It is possible for a novelist not to write superbly well and yet to be considered a very good novelist" (Seidensticker).

Despite the fact that, as Ibuki and Rowley note, Tanizaki denied the influence of *Genji* on his own work (particularly with respect to *Sasame yuki*), many modern critics have pointed to significant parallels between Tanizaki's and Murasaki Shikibu's writing. As Umberto Eco has shown, a written text often does not reflect the intentions of its author (*intentio auctoris*): the correct interpretation of a literary text depends not on the manifest intentions or biography of its author but on an engagement *with the text itself*; it is necessary, in other words, to examine what the work itself has to say, regardless of the intentions of its author or readers.

Further critical attempt to engage with Tanizaki's writing must be made: what "Tanizaki did not see fit to tell us, it is the reader's task to decide." Thus Aileen Gatten writes in highlighting the influence of Heian narrative methods on Tanizaki's fiction. Gatten regards Tanizaki's *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* as a "neoclassical" work; she links it to *Genji*, arguing that Tanizaki's classicism, far from being superficial, "reflects a deep sensitivity to Heian narrative." Gatten begins by discussing the relation between *Shigemoto* and Tanizaki's second *Genji* translation; she suggests that "Tanizaki's preparations for a new *Genji* translation may indeed have directly influenced his decision to write *Shigemoto* by inspiring him to return to a favorite genre of his youth, fiction set in the Heian period."

Gatten continues her essay with an analysis of *Shigemoto*. Through specific references to *Genji* and other classical novels, she examines the influence of Heian



narrative techniques on Tanizaki's oeuvre, both structurally (the place of *waka* in the structure of the text, derived from *utamonogatari*) and in terms of Tanizaki's choice of imagery and themes (both of which were deeply influenced by classical aesthetic canons, as revealed by his use of spring and autumn imagery). The final part of her essay focuses on literary style. It emphasizes the narratorial aspects of the text by drawing parallels with the shifting narratorial distance that characterizes *Genji*. Gatten draws the reader's attention to Tanizaki's explicit and implicit references to classical texts, as well as to the importance of these references as a source of inspiration and creativity. She concludes by noting that "it is difficult to imagine that Tanizaki would have written so fine a work without the stimulation afforded by a profound contact with classical literature."

A different perspective on the connections between Tanizaki's work and Heian literature appears in Tzvetana Kristeva's essay, "Another Key to Tanizaki's Eroticism." Singling out specific aspects of Tanizaki's eroticism, Kristeva finds in them the "unmistakable imprint of the classical tradition." Kristeva observes that our ability to view Tanizaki as a "classical" writer—a highly controversial issue—is "suspended within the framework of our knowledge and understanding of classical literature." This assertion is particularly significant in the context of the present volume, comprised as it is of essays by scholars of classical literature who have much to contribute to Tanizaki studies. Kristeva writes that in her essay she will "concentrate on the level of expression itself and discuss its eroticism from the standpoint of my own background as a critical reader of classical Japanese literature."

Two points are worth emphasizing here. The first is that Kristeva, a scholar of *nikki bungaku*, here draws a parallel between the two diaries in *Kagi* (The Key) and the "lyrical diaries of classical literature written post-factum."<sup>7</sup> This game of hide-and-seek brings to mind the classical technique of *kaimami* ("double peeking") and reveals that the "key" of the title is the key "to the awakening of a woman's latent or suppressed sensuousness"—an awakening achieved through the process of writing. The second point concerns Kristeva's analysis of written language as a "sign." In her essay she emphasizes the close relation between the flow of writing and the flow of the senses, and concludes that, "as in classical Japanese literature exemplified by *The Tale of Genji*, the eroticism of *The Key* is not merely narrated or represented, it is an eroticism of the representation itself." Once more, there is a close link between the work of Tanizaki and *Genji*. *The Key* was published in 1956, and Tanizaki drafted the second *Genji* translation in the years immediately preceding that.

Two essays emphasize Tanizaki's experimental engagement with classical literary genres—Amy V. Heinrich's "Tanizaki's *Tanka*" (devoted to poetry) and

7. See also Kristeva's "Japanese Lyrical Diaries and the European Autobiographical Tradition," in Gordon Daniels, ed., *Europe Interprets Japan* (Tenterden, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications, 1984), pp. 155–162. Here Kristeva provides a definition of *nikki*: "In my opinion, they [Japanese diaries] are specific autobiographical works of art, created *post factum*, elaborately organised, underlaid by a general idea, and subject to the aesthetic intent of the authors to recreate the history of their own lives" (p. 155).

Bonaventura Ruperti's "Tanizaki and the Way of Art (*Geidō*): Traditional Arts and Performance Skills." In the preface to *A Tanizaki Feast*, written with Anthony H. Chambers, Adriana Boscaro included poetry and theater among the "still relatively neglected" subjects in Tanizaki studies. Heinrich's and Ruperti's essays should do much to correct this deficiency.<sup>8</sup>

Poetry is largely ignored in Tanizaki's literary production, not least, as Heinrich observes, because the author "wrote poetry all his life" but "published very little of it." Heinrich's essay presents the *tanka* of *Miyakowasure no ki* (Record of the "Forgetting-the-Capital" Flower), a collection of forty-three poems, some with brief headnotes, which was privately published in 1948. The collection was republished in 1977 by Tanizaki's wife Matsuko to mark the thirteenth anniversary of her husband's death. Tanizaki began writing these poems in 1944, at the very height of the war, with the last poems dating from 1946; yet nothing in their language suggests that "the writer is living in modern times, during a brutal war."

A context, however, for the classical images employed by Tanizaki can be found in the headnotes, which reveal details of the author's life: his evacuation from the Hanshin region and his family's frequent moves. Tanizaki marks the end of the war by quoting Bashō's famous *haiku*, "*Natsugusa ya tsuwamono domo ga yume no ato*" (The summer grasses— / For many brave warriors / The aftermath of dreams).<sup>9</sup> Heinrich concludes that by linking Bashō's warriors to those of the Second World War, Tanizaki "is seeing a kind of universal sorrow, a human futility."

Bonaventura Ruperti begins his article by noting the important role played by performance arts in Tanizaki's novels and short stories: "scenes, theater, music, cinema and performance very often figure as salient episodes; they enrich atmospheres and animate dialogue." Tanizaki, of course, also wrote essays on performance arts; Ruperti here focuses on *Geidan* (Conversation on Art), 1933. The publication date of this work is particularly important. Tanizaki's essay was written when the literary debate on the purpose of art and its relation to politics was at its peak, a debate influenced by Marxist thought and *puroretaria bungaku* (proletarian literature). Japan was about to embrace nationalism, and writers were forced to choose between supporting the regime and silence. Tanizaki, Ruperti notes, did not conceal his "delicate sense of national pride, which is in keeping with the thought of the times." Tanizaki's essay, as its title suggests, is not conceived as a systematic reflection on art, but rather as a conversation touching on various issues and making suggestions about several artistic disciplines: Kabuki, painting, cinema, theater, music, dance, and so forth. Ruperti's article presents numerous passages from *Geidan*, particularly those that concern "the formation of artistic man" and training in traditional arts, as well as general reflections on art. The latter include a passage on the distinction between *gei* and *geijutsu*—traditional Japanese art and art conceived in modern, Western terms. Tanizaki's conclusions in the essay are consistent with his acknowledged

8. Boscaro and Chambers, *A Tanizaki Feast*, p. viii.

9. The translation is by Donald Keene, *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600–1867* (New York: Henry Holt, 1976), p. 104.

debt to tradition: “contemporary artists rather than abstract theories should respect the arts a little bit more, and put themselves in a state of mind that is a bit closer to the men of art from the past.”

Another field of particular interest in Tanizaki studies is cinema. Not only was he personally and directly involved in cinema production (having worked, in his Yokohama years, as a scriptwriter for the Taikatsu production company), but many of his novels were filmed. This latter point was made by Roberta Novielli in the filmography included in *Tanizaki in Western Languages*, edited by Adriana Boscaro (see Bibliography). In “Translating Imaginary into Images: *Manji*,” Novielli focuses on a specific novel by Tanizaki, *Manji*, and explores how it was recast for the screen by Masumura Yasuzō. *Manji*, Novielli writes, “has been selected as subject of the present paper because of its perfect aesthetic fusion between the literary work (1928) and the film (released only a year before the writer’s death in 1965). The literary work is enriched by the director’s tridimensional scenes because, as we can see, there is much more than a simple passion for the plot. Besides the idealization of the feminine topoi there is a true and pure image identification, an erotic universe with equally intense nuances, full of decadent sensuality.”

Novielli illustrates how Masumura was able not only to portray the complexities that mark the chief female characters in the novel, but also to convey the charm of the female body through the interplay of light and shade: “The image is alternatively exposed and then hidden, thus best paraphrasing the dream-like drive of the erotic crescendo of Tanizaki’s original work.” Novielli’s analysis confirms what Tanizaki had written in *In’ei raisan* (In Praise of Shadows, 1933): “One need only compare American, French, and German films to see how greatly nuances of shading and coloration can vary in motion pictures. In the photographic image itself, to say nothing of the acting and the script, there somehow emerge differences in national character. If this is true even when identical equipment, chemicals, and film are used, how much better our own photographic technology might have suited our complexion, our facial features, our climate, our land.”<sup>10</sup>

The volume concludes with two contributions interpreting Tanizaki’s works in the light of Western and Meiji literary traditions. Paul McCarthy focuses on the former in his essay, “Tanizaki’s *Naomi* and Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” Both Tanizaki and Nabokov, McCarthy argues, were “highly prolific, producing works of startling variety in a number of genres, and each is known to the general public for allegedly scandalous works centering on the theme of sexual obsession.” Each writer stood “in the very front rank of the novelists of his own period and country.” McCarthy continues by comparing and contrasting the lives and experiences of Tanizaki and Nabokov, emphasizing the many analogies as well as differences. A central feature of this essay consists of the parallels he draws between the novels *Chijin no ai* and *Lolita*, particularly in terms of the roles played by their female protagonists (Naomi and Lolita). In the closing section of his essay, McCarthy focuses on a different

10. Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas Harper and Edward Seidensticker (New Haven, Conn.: Leete’s Island Books, 1977), p. 9.

parallel, represented by the existence of two works that can be regarded as “pre-texts” prefiguring Tanizaki’s and Nabokov’s more important novels. *Chijin no ai* and *Lolita* thus find a “final point of resemblance” in their very conception in their authors’ minds.

In “Tanizaki’s Reading of Sōseki: On the Subject of *Longing for Mother*,” Jacqueline Pigeot draws a comparison between *Haha wo kouru ki* (*Longing for Mother*), written by Tanizaki in 1919, and *Kōfu* (*The Miner*), written by Natsume Sōseki in 1908. Pigeot’s groundbreaking analysis emphasizes the similarities between these two novels and their substantial differences. Tanizaki claimed to have written his book under the influence of *Tsukikage* (*Moonlight*), a short prose composition by Satō Haruo. Indicating features shared by *Haha wo kouru ki* and *Tsukikage* with respect to narrative, moral dimension, description of everyday life and landscape, and imagery, Pigeot notes, “Though any of them, taken separately, might raise doubts, the ensemble forms such a compelling whole that it seems impossible to attribute them to chance.” The author advances two hypotheses. The first is that Tanizaki might unconsciously have adapted some of the literary elements that formed his inner “encyclopedia”: elements he absorbed from his reading of Sōseki. According to this view, *Longing for Mother* would be the product of an “internal alchemy and the involuntary workings of the memory.” The second hypothesis advanced by Pigeot is that Tanizaki, as in many other works, might have adopted a subtle strategy in order alternatively to reveal and conceal his literary “borrowings.” Readers of Tanizaki are familiar with his fondness for this device in describing the sources of his historical novels. In the case of *Longing for Mother*, Tanizaki may have explicitly identified Satō Haruo’s novel as his source of inspiration while concealing the genuine source. Pigeot suggests that “although *The Miner* is not a source for *Longing for Mother* in the same sense that early documents are for his historical novels, it is quite conceivable that Tanizaki adopted the same strategy when he revealed the secret of his creation to his readers.” Pigeot refrains from favoring one hypothesis over the other, and concludes: “Let readers make their own choice.” For my part, as a reader, I would certainly be inclined to favor the second hypothesis.

# Adriana Boscaro: A Biography

LUISA BIENATI

Adriana Boscaro was born in Venice in August 1935, and Venice was where she was destined to spend most of her private and academic life. She remains deeply connected to her Venetian roots despite a willingness to travel frequently, as a citizen of the world, to further scholarly contacts and to meet new colleagues. Her roots are most easily seen in her love of irony; her manner of speaking, which shifts easily from Italian to Venetian; her islander's identity—she likes to quote the local saying that “without a bridge linking the mainland to Venice, Europe would be an island”; and, certainly not least, in the nature of her academic research. Despite the distance between Japan and Venice, Boscaro has always looked for connections between the two. For example, as part of a collective project on the affinities between certain Italian and Japanese cities in given historical periods—a project that unfortunately was never realized—Boscaro chose to focus on the parallels between Venice and Edo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Edo and Venice: cities on the water, cities of commerce, cities with a similar urban structure, cities of entertainment, with their pleasure quarters, casinos, and beautiful women painted by artists and praised by poets.

Over the course of the years, the links between Edo and Venice led Boscaro to focus her attention on the Tokugawa period and the years immediately preceding it. Given the broad chronological span and artistic wealth of this period, she soon came to cultivate a range of interconnected interests. To use an analogy better fitted to the pleasure of discovery, the development of these interests was almost an unconscious reaction, an attraction of similarities.

Boscaro took her first steps toward a career in the field of Japanese studies in 1956, when she took courses given in Venice by the Mideast and East Asian Institute of Rome (IsMEO). She was introduced to Japan and Japanese culture by a gifted young teacher, Tsuji Shigeru, who later became a professor at Geidai University in Tokyo. Professor Tsuji was an art historian, a specialist on Giorgione, and a translator of Vasari who was in love with Venice. He communicated his love for Japanese culture so effectively that Boscaro continued to study Japan on her own; she even published some articles while waiting for the University of Venice to inaugurate its Japanese studies program in 1965. Since her grasp of Japanese culture was already substantial, her career as a university student progressed smoothly. In 1969 three major events occurred in her life: she received her degree, was appointed assistant professor at Ca' Foscari (University of Venice), and was awarded a Monbushō fellowship. During the eighteen months of her grant term she carried out research at

the Shiryō Hensanjo (Historiographical Institute) of the University of Tokyo under the guidance of Professors Numata Jirō and Kanai Madoka.

While in Tokyo, Boscaro met Professor Kanai twice a week to discuss her translation of the letters of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. These meetings frequently ended in a *yakitoriya* across from the Tokyo University campus. Boscaro has often said that she learned a great deal from her long conversations with her advisors. Not only did Professor Kanai answer her questions, he would fire off facts and anecdotes, thus earning him the nickname “Machine Gun of Tōdai.” Boscaro’s research on the letters was later published as *101 Letters of Hideyoshi* (1975).

No sooner had Boscaro returned to Italy—bringing with her much material on the history of the Warring States period (*sengoku jidai*), Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, and eager to begin the new academic year—than a piece of news dampened her enthusiasm. She was told that the program she was assigned to had to focus more on literature, leaving history within a cultural framework. Boscaro therefore turned to an intensive study of Japanese literature, a field of interest that fortunately she had never quite abandoned but which she now sought to explore in greater depth. Having been asked to focus on a contemporary author, she chose Endō Shūsaku, whose *Chinmoku* (Silence) had recently been the subject of much acclaim. As she had already worked on “the Christian century” (see below), she was now able to cultivate her interest from a literary perspective. Her long friendship with Endō gave Boscaro privileged access to his literary world—one of the reasons she continues to be regarded as *the* Italian specialist on Endō.

In the course of the years she taught at the University of Venice (1969–2004), Boscaro held, among many positions, those of Director of the Institute of Japanese Studies, Director of the Department of East Asian Studies, and member of the Board of Directors. She taught courses on Japanese literature, the history of Euro-Japanese relations, and the cultural history of Tokugawa Japan (with specific focus on popular literature), as well as seminars on such Japanese writers as Kawabata Yasunari, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Endō Shūsaku, and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō.

Here follows a brief outline of Boscaro’s academic interests. Driven by a keen desire to learn more about the impact of the West on Japan, Boscaro began examining early European relations with Asian countries. She took as her starting point the accounts of Italian travelers—adventurous merchants and clerics who in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries followed the caravan trails east. Her interest in this subject fit well with her teaching program on “the century of discoveries,” when Portuguese vessels made the fortuitous crossing to Tanegashima and St. Francis Xavier reached Kagoshima in 1549. The roughly hundred-year period (1549–1636) of the Jesuits’ mission in Japan is called “the Christian century,” a never-ending source of discoveries.

Boscaro continued to study Jesuit letters and reports and to explore related issues (here mentioned at random), such as the introduction into Japan of the moveable-type printing press by the Jesuits; the menace of Hideyoshi; the sixteenth-century mission to Europe of four young Japanese men under the direction of Alessandro Valignano; and the Jesuit Gerolamo de Angelis’s discovery that Ezo (Hokkaidō) was an island rather than an extension of the continent.



The journey made by the four young Japanese converts and their Jesuit companions in the eight years between their departure from Nagasaki in 1580 and their return in 1588 was carefully reconstructed by Boscaro on the basis of printed sources of the period. A bibliography of the texts and frontispieces of all the pamphlets issued in Europe on that occasion appeared as *Sixteenth Century European Printed Works on the First Japanese Mission to Europe—A Descriptive Bibliography* (Leiden 1973). This work was followed by the publication of several articles detailing their travels to Italy, and an exhibition at the Marciana Library in Venice in 1985, the four-hundredth anniversary of the young men's visit to that city in 1585.

De Angelis's "discovery" of the island of Ezo triggered Boscaro's latent passion for cartography. She had already done some research on the representation of Japan in European cartography from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. She now turned her attention to a report and handwritten map in the Jesuit Archives in Rome. Boscaro examined the sources prior to de Angelis, and drew chronological comparisons between the various representations of Ezo on Italian, French, Portuguese, English, and Dutch maps, noting errors and discrepancies. She also produced a translation and commentary of de Angelis's 1621 *Report*, which was not published until 1981. Although this edition is no longer in print, a new one was published by de Angelis's hometown, Enna in Sicily, on the occasion of his being proclaimed a patron of Enna in 1987. All this reference material, used in classes for many years, will soon appear in print under the title *Ventura e sventura dei gesuiti in Giappone, 1549–1639* (Fortunes and misfortunes of the Jesuits in Japan, 1549–1639).

Despite the sealing of Japanese borders and the expulsion of Roman Catholic missionaries in 1639, the presence of Dutch merchants at Deshima led to a Japanese interest in Western learning (*rangaku*). Those Japanese who challenged bakufu authority were interested in the new knowledge and technologies brought by these "red-haired men" (*kōmōjin*): medicine, ballistics, telescopes, the compass, oil painting, perspective, and so on. These events attracted the interest of Boscaro, who examined a number of figures from this period: Shiba Kōkan, Takano Chōei, Hayashi Shihei, Honda Toshiaki, Sugita Genpaku, and especially Hiraga Gennai. Gennai's broad range of interests makes him an extraordinary figure for his time. Albeit not a genuine *rangakusha*, Gennai can be seen as a link between science and the spirit of Edo, for he was an imaginative, unpredictable, and ingenious inventor, a product of his time but endowed with a broad vision, as Boscaro observes in her annotated translation of Gennai's *Fūryū Shidōkenden* (1990).

In 1987, Boscaro organized the International Conference "Rethinking Japan," and in 1995 the International Symposium on Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. The latter was an epochal event that is still fondly remembered: Tanizaki experts from all over the world (with the exception of Edward Seidensticker, who was ill at the time) gathered in Venice to participate in the first international meeting devoted to a single Japanese author. The transactions from this conference were published in 1998 as *A Tanizaki Feast*, a volume jointly edited by Boscaro and Anthony H. Chambers.

Boscaro had already devoted many years to the study of Tanizaki, translating and editing his works, lecturing, and gathering bibliographic material. The result was the publication of *Tanizaki in Western Languages: A Bibliography of Translations and Studies* (2000), a list of 263 translations in seventeen languages and 224 articles and books on Tanizaki. One of Boscaro's distinguishing traits is the desire to have an overview of any subject she might be discussing; to inform herself, for instance, on everything about a given literary work: its composition, the chronological order of its translations in other languages, and the choices made by the translators. Hence Boscaro's decision to catalogue all Japanese literature translated into Italian, culminating in *Narrativa giapponese: cent'anni di traduzioni* (Japanese Fiction: One Hundred Years of Translations, 2000), which brought to light one little-known fact: that the works of many authors, including Tanizaki, were translated into Italian long before they were translated into other languages.

Boscaro's official positions are too numerous to list in their entirety. Suffice it to mention a few. She was a founding member in 1972 of the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS), served as president from 1991 to 1994, and has been an honorary member since 2005. Boscaro was also one of the founding members, in 1973, of AISTUGIA (Italian Association for Japanese Studies), served on the board of the Association for many years, and has been its president since 2005. In 1999 Boscaro was asked by Fosco Maraini to become academic director of the new Viesseux-Asia Center of the Gabinetto P. G. Viesseux in Florence, where Maraini's library and photo collection are now kept. Boscaro's role at the Center is to coordinate projects aimed at strengthening ties with Japan.

The position of which Boscaro is most proud, however, is one she has held since 1988, that of editor of a Japanese Literature series published by Marsilio in Venice. This is the first series in either Italy or Europe devoted to classical Japanese literature; it has published thirty-one translated volumes to date. Each volume is the work of a specialist scholar and includes a detailed introduction to the life and literary career of the author, an annotated translation, and a glossary. While primarily aimed at an academic readership, the series has attracted the interest of the wider public, and the volumes have been reprinted several times. As of 2008 it has been my honor to coedit the series with Adriana Boscaro.

In 2000, Boscaro sponsored the awarding of an honorary degree to the scholar and critic Katō Shūichi by the University of Ca' Foscari, Venice. Katō had been a visiting professor there in 1983–84. The Italian edition of his book *Nihon bungakushi josetsu* has been widely used in Italian departments of Japanese studies.

I wish to end this introduction by mentioning the most prestigious honors bestowed on Adriana Boscaro: the Okano Prize for the promotion of Japanese culture in Italy, 1990; the "Premio Cesmeo" for her translation of Katō Shūichi's *Nihon bungakushi josetsu*, 1999; and in the same year, the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun, Third Class.



# The Modern Murasaki

EDWARD SEIDENSTICKER

This seems likely to be a somewhat negative piece—not the best sort, perhaps, for a festschrift. I will argue that Murasaki Shikibu and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō are not as closely akin as is commonly held to be the case.

There is nothing mysterious about the reasons for averring an affinity. Tanizaki spent three solid prewar years putting the *Genji monogatari* into modern Japanese. He was not doing a great deal else during those years, although what he did produce, and especially *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women* (*Neko to shōzō to futari no onna*), is very good.

The amount of time consumed on his other two *Genji* modernizations is not as easy to measure, but neither of them can have taken as long as the first one. Perhaps we may guess that the two of them together took as much time as the other. If this is the case then, still in the fullness of his capabilities as what is called a creative writer, he put a half dozen years into the work. This is about what it would take for a person not otherwise occupied and working full time to put it into a European language.

So it is clear that Tanizaki was very fond of Murasaki Shikibu and her work. This fact does not tell us much, however, about the extent to which he was influenced by her. It is quite possible to be long and intimately associated with a work of literature, or anything else, and not fully understand it.

And of course “understand” is one of the more difficult words and concepts in any language. When Japanese ask (and they are very fond of doing it) whether European sorts (and most Americans fall into that category) really understand Japanese literature, I generally respond with a question of my own: what is meant by “understand”? If that difficult word can be changed to something like “enjoy” or “find interesting,” then the answer is most definitely positive. Can it be said with confidence that the Japanese understand Japanese literature?

It is to the point to note that admiration for the Tanizaki modernizations of the *Genji* is not universal. It is especially to the point with regard to a writer, Kawabata Yasunari, who will be of some importance in my discussion. He proposed to join the ranks of *Genji* modernizers but in the end did not.

Among his reasons for wanting to do it was that he found the Tanizaki versions unsatisfactory. He was, perhaps, as fond of the work as Tanizaki was:

During the war, on trains to and from Tokyo and in bed in the dim light that was permitted, I read an old *Kogetsushō* version of the *Genji monogatari*. I feared that small print would be bad for my eyes in the darkness and the

jolting. There was also a certain cynical pleasure in being so at odds with the times. It was peculiar to be reading a tale from a thousand years ago in an old wood-block edition as the Yokosuka Line took on more and more the color of war, but none of my fellow passengers seemed to detect the anachronism. In a whimsical mood, I would tell myself that if there was a raid and I was wounded it would be good to have the sturdy old paper to press against the wounds.

I was at the twenty-third chapter, about half the distance through the work, when Japan surrendered. It was a strange way to read the *Genji*, but it left a deep impression on me. I would be aware in astonishment of the rapture and intoxication into which I had fallen. People who had been bombed out or who had taken refuge in the country came struggling aboard with luggage. I could not but be surprised at the disharmony between me and people wandering streets that smelled of ashes. I was still more astonished at the harmony between me and prose from a thousand years ago. . . . I was still more surprised at the number of consoling letters that came to me from soldiers at the front. Some were from strangers, but common to them was the fact that they had come upon my writings and been stirred to intense homesickness, and wished to thank me and wish me well. It seems that my writings make people think of Japan. I felt a similar homesickness when I read the *Genji monogatari*.<sup>1</sup>

This is from *Sorrow (Aishū)*, an essay published in 1949.

Though he thought of translating the *Genji* into modern Japanese, he ran out of energy. He showed me the copy of the *Genji* on which he was making preparations for his modernization. It was toward the end of his life. He seemed to be paying little attention to modernizations other than the Tanizaki ones. He had marked in red Tanizaki passages which he thought questionable. It had turned into a very red text. He did not seem to like much of anything in the Tanizaki versions.

He said something rather remarkable of the Tanizaki *Genji*: “It is a *shōnin Genji*.” *Shōnin* can be rendered “merchant” or “tradesman.” Much interested and not ideally comprehending, I asked him to tell me in detail more what he meant. His response was characteristic. He smiled and said nothing more. The smile seemed to say: “With a bit of effort you can figure that out for yourself.” If that is what was meant, it flattered me.

A part of his meaning is quite clear. He thought Tanizaki out of his class when he undertook to do the *Genji*. The word he chose has in every language I can think of connotations of vulgarity. It is hard to believe that Kawabata thought himself an aristocrat. Dark rumors about his ancestry have floated over the landscape, but his short-lived father was a physician and not a merchant. Tanizaki’s family was definitely mercantile. Whether or not he thought his circumstances nearer those of Murasaki is not possible to say. It seems doubtful. Yet there was something about being from the merchant class that put Tanizaki at a distance from her.

1. Kawabata 1982a, pp

What was it? I wish I could say for certain, but it was not Kawabata's way to leave a person in certainty. It seems clear that Kawabata felt himself in some respect nearer Murasaki.

Tanizaki was in many ways a product of the European Enlightenment. He wrote an exceedingly famous essay about shadows, arguing that they are essential to Japanese culture and should be brought back, or at any rate preserved in such limited regions as literature, but those of us who saw how he lived may wonder whether he really was such a devotee of murkiness.

His was a bright, cheerful way of life. The world of *The Makioka Sisters* (*Sasame yuki*), essentially Tanizaki's own suburban Osaka, was bright, and westernized. I suspect that Tanizaki's way of calling a spade a spade had something to do with Kawabata's distaste for the translations. He seldom left the reader in doubt as to where he stood. Whatever it was, Kawabata did not think Tanizaki the right person to translate the *Genji*.

It would have been good if Kawabata had shaken off the work that so occupied him after the Nobel flurry and turned to modernizing the *Genji*. It was work that had little to do with his real work, and many feel that it caused his death. Quite possibly if we had a Kawabata *Genji* before us we still would not know precisely what he meant. That smile might well have passed over his countenance if we had asked.

So what might it mean when we are told that Tanizaki was close to Murasaki Shikibu? We must consider at least one attribute, the long sentence, that does not seem (to me, of course) so very essential.

One thing about Murasaki is that there does not seem to be anything inevitable about her long sentences. Long they are, but not inevitably so. Many of the longest of them contain a place or two or three at which she could have come to a stop and started a new sentence. They have about them a bit of the look of mannerism.

I am not sure I would go as far as the most extreme definition of "mannerism" in my favorite dictionary, a Scottish one (not an American one): "manner or style becoming wearisome by its sameness." Yet I think mannerism to be a trick or quirk of style which calls attention to itself, and which we would be happier without. I am not convinced that Murasaki was a superbly good stylist. This is all right. It is possible for a novelist not to write superbly well and yet to be considered a very good novelist. Russians tell me something which I cannot judge for myself—that Dostoevski did not write well. Certainly this is true of Dreiser. Henry James said of his own sentences that they were like a rubber ball which bounces from wall to floor and here and there and finally comes to a halt. There was little he could do but observe the process. I do not think this to be true of Murasaki. Very often she could have stopped once or several times in the course of a sentence before finally she did:

帝、かしこき御心に、倭相を仰せて思しよりにける筋なれば、今までこの君を親王にもなさせたまはざりけるを、相人はまことにかしこかりけり、と思して、無品親王の外戚の寄せなきにては漂はさじ、わが御世もいと定めなきを、ただ人にておほやけの御後見をするなむ、行く先も頼もしげなめることと思し定めて、いよいよ道々の才を習はさせたまふ。

The contents will reveal that this is from early in the *Genji*, when the hero was a small boy.<sup>2</sup> It is not to be seen, however, as the product of a beginning, tentative, hesitant writer. This first chapter is a rather difficult one, and there is strong evidence that it was written after chapters that follow it in the standard text.

Here, more or less, is my rendition:

In the wisdom of his heart, the emperor had already analyzed the boy's physiognomy after the Japanese fashion and had formed tentative plans. He had thus far refrained from bestowing imperial rank on his son, and was delighted that the Korean view should so accord with his own. Lacking the support of maternal relatives, the boy would be most insecure as a prince without court rank, and the emperor could not be sure how long his own reign would last. As a commoner he could be of great service. The emperor therefore encouraged the boy in his studies, at which he was so proficient that it seemed a waste to reduce him to common rank.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for the qualification "more or less" is that the sentences do not coincide. Careful readers will observe that the translation runs past the original sentence. This establishes adequately enough that I have never been very careful about following the sentence pattern of an original. Perhaps this is careless and irresponsible, but to me the endeavor to follow the original pattern of full stops has always seemed useless.

It seemed especially so in the case of the *Genji*. Heian Japanese is a richly agglutinative language, and English is not agglutinative at all. Neither is any other European language with which I am familiar. I know very little Finnish or Magyar. It is not possible to imitate perfectly in English the rhythms of a document in modern Japanese, and it is far less so in the case of Heian Japanese.

Perusal of the three Tanizaki translations of the *Genji* establishes that Tanizaki worried most about verbs and adjectives, the highly agglutinative parts of speech, and the heart of its honorific propensities. Can it be said that he solved the problem perfectly? I am inclined to think that there is no perfection in such an endeavor. So let carelessness and irresponsibility, if such they be, prevail.

The sentence quoted tells us much about how Murasaki Shikibu made her sentences into long ones. She of course used the rich conjugations of her verbs and adjectives. It should be noted, however, that she twice uses the particle *wo*. Kenkyu-sha's definition is very brief and to the point. It gives seven monosyllabic English prepositions followed by examples.

It is not so with elaborate Japanese dictionaries of the language, ancient and modern. The *Daijirin*, for instance, offers upward of a dozen elaborate definitions covering upward of fifty lines. One might think that this would take care of the matter adequately. Perusal and thought, however, do not really take care of the two instances in the above sentence. If it seems frivolous of me to offer another definition,

2. *Genji monogatari* 1982, p. 117.

3. Seidensticker (trans.) 1978, p. 15.

very well, it seems frivolous: “Used by writers who do not, for somewhat mysterious and very private reasons, wish to end their sentences quite yet.”

So the reasons for Murasaki’s long sentences come to seem somewhat different from Henry James’s. He had ponderous thoughts to put in order, and his sentences got longer and longer as he did it. Long though they are, they are tightly constructed. Murasaki’s long sentences do not have quite the significance that his do. Thus Tanizaki’s long sentences come to seem not so strong a bond with her. They may be important in themselves, but if her sentences are a bit dodgy, often longer than the content requires them to be, then the proclaimed affinity is dodgy, too. They seem to me on the whole better sentences than hers, and their length seems more in accord with the contents than hers. So how important are they in establishing close affinity?

I first read the *Genji* in the Waley translation during the Second World War. I did not have a try at reading it in the original until some years after the war. I was rather slow in deciding that I wanted to make a career in Japanese. Perhaps because of the slowness, my first impressions remain vivid. Much is wrong with the Waley translation, but it is triumphant in establishing that the work is a great one, and great in a way not to be seen, or at any rate very rare, in the literatures I had until then been familiar with.

I had never before read so lyrical a novel. I did not hesitate then, and I do not now, to use the word “novel.” The novel is distinguished from other forms of narrative prose in that it succeeds or fails though characterization. So the novel is essentially a dramatic form. In the *Genji* fifty or so major characters are distinguished from one another with remarkable skill. But it also seemed an uncommonly lyrical piece of prose narrative.

It is thus in an obvious way and a not so obvious way. It contains a large amount of lyric poetry. I found this a bother to translate, and not hugely interesting to read. The poetry of the earlier court anthologies, which dominates it, does not, I must confess, seem to me compelling.

It was the other lyrical element that seemed to me then, and seems to me now, not far from unique. We are constantly aware of nature, of the passage of the seasons and the phases of the moon. Jane Austen will suddenly remind you of something you have quite possibly forgotten—that spring has come over whatever section of rural England she is speaking of. In the *Genji* the reader is not permitted to forget. The natural background is present on virtually every page.

For anything remotely resembling it in English literature, by which I mean literature in the English language, one must go to somewhat minor writers. At my first reading I was filled with wonder at the quality, and repeated readings—I could not give the count—have not persuaded me that I was wrong. I still do not know of a Western equivalent, save minor ones. Nominations will be welcome.

The prose of the Heian period formed one base (Chinese was the other) for later prose. This became increasingly divorced from the colloquial. So we lose sight of an extremely important fact, that the *Genji* is a very colloquial document, probably more so than the *kōgotai* (conversational writing style) of our day. This last is full

of conventions, perhaps most conspicuous among them the ubiquitous *de aru* and *no de aru* that keep the written language at a remove from the language we hear all about us.

When I was first interviewed by a Japanese newspaper, the interviewer asked whether I wished the results to be in *hanasu kotoba* or *kaku kotoba*.<sup>4</sup> Democracy, or perhaps “egalitarianism” would be better, was much in vogue in those days. We were not supposed to be aristocratic or exclusive. So I replied with the first of the two, which seemed to have in it less of these undesirable qualities. The interview, when it came out in *hanasu kotoba*, had a peculiar sound to it. So I was made aware of the discrepancy, and did not ask for *hanasu kotoba* thereafter. The discrepancy did not exist in at least the best narrative prose of Heian. Perhaps in this fact, and some closely allied facts, may be found the beginning of an explanation for the long Murasaki Shikibu sentence, a length that may sometimes seem, as in the example translated above, a bit gratuitous. The allied facts include the scarcity of paper and therefore of copies, the fact that the significant information in a sentence tends to come at the end of it, and the nature of the original audience.

We cannot be sure of the circumstances of publication, so to speak. It seems not unlikely—given that in the beginning and for rather a while afterward there was only one copy, and that the possible audience was very small, only a few hundred people in the capital and some of the provincial capitals—that it was read aloud.

The Heian sentence cannot have seemed as difficult to native speakers, so to speak, as it does to us. It is by its nature rather difficult, however. Most of the significant information is provided in the adjectives and verbs, so closely allied that they might be considered two versions of the same part of speech.

Matters are complicated by the fact that the crucial words come after everything else. Intense concentration is required for us to see this arrangement successfully through. It may not have been as intense for the original audience, which knew nothing else, but it was required all the same. An instant of inattention and everything was lost.

The scarcity of copies meant that there was a lector, whether the great novelist herself or someone else. We can assume that the audience was interested and tried to be attentive, but that it was not always successful. There would come a query from the audience. Murasaki, or someone, would oblige with a *wo* or an agglutination and add amplification. And so we would find ourselves with the long and loosely organized sentence that characterizes the work.

This is fanciful, of course, but the nature of the language and the nature of the initial audience suggest that something of the sort could have happened. And this also suggests that the length of the sentence does not matter so very much. Sentences can be broken up without doing serious damage to the meaning, and writing long sentences does not necessarily indicate close affinity with a forebear who also

4. *Hanasu kotoba* literally means “spoken language” and *kaku kotoba* “written language.” The choice referred to here is between transcribing the interview exactly as recorded, in spoken Japanese (*hanasu kotoba*), or editing it to conform to *kōgotai* (conversational writing style) conventions, which are used in most modern written Japanese.

wrote them.

Murasaki Shikibu is an obscure writer. It is easy to make too much of this tendency, since it is highly doubtful that she was as difficult for her initial audience as she is for us. Yet the language is obscure, and Murasaki does not go out of her way to explain her characters to us. She prefers to let them go their own way, and they do this obediently, for we are aware of their great individuality.

Murasaki Shikibu was also a writer of few words. This is a peculiar thing to say, it may well be remarked, of the author of a piece of fiction that runs to more than a thousand pages in translation. The point here is that she does not have a huge vocabulary, and she uses the same words over and over again in subtly different meanings. The most obvious such word is of course *aware*,<sup>5</sup> but it is not the only one. The reasons for the success of the characterization are not easy to define. There is surprisingly little dialogue, and there is not much by way of psychological analysis.

Aside from the long sentences, what in Tanizaki can be held to establish close affinity with Murasaki Shikibu? Not very much, really, would be my answer. I have wondered, whimsically, whether Tanizaki's long paragraphs, especially in *The Makioka Sisters*, might be held to speak of a bond with Murasaki Shikibu. I am sure that if she had them, they would be. The original *Genji* would seem to have been one long paragraph broken only by poems.

Mishima Yukio once said something which I had not thought of before and which much interested me: that Japanese writers pay attention to patterns of light and darkness across their pages. The relative airiness of Japanese *kana* makes for light, the density of Chinese characters for darkness. He especially admired Mori Ōgai's distribution of the two.

I do not know whether there is any truth in the Mishima view, but that does not keep it from being interesting. Certainly long, dark paragraphs can have an effect on the spirits. To turn over a leaf and see that the two pages opened contain but a single paragraph break, and even none at all, can have a dispiriting effect.

Tanizaki was not a strongly lyrical kind of writer. There are famous passages of natural description in his writing—the most famous ones, doubtless, the firefly hunt and visits to the Kyoto cherries, both in *The Makioka Sisters*. There are also glimpses and glimmerings, such as the smell of daphne in early spring, or the effect the Ashiya autumn has upon the scent of coffee.

Nature is not the constant presence in his writing that is in the *Genji*. Indeed, the Makioka family, living with the garden spread out before it through all the seasons, pays precious little attention to it. I wonder if this might have been one of the attributes of the “merchant's” *Genji* which Kawabata saw emerging from the Tanizaki hand.

The moon is of such extreme importance to Murasaki Shikibu that she arranges to have important characters die near its fullness, that their funerals may be conducted under it. Tanizaki seldom mentions it except to complain, usually about how the

5. This central aesthetic concept of the Heian period is defined by Helen Craig McCullough as “deep but controlled emotional sensitivity, especially to beauty and to the tyranny of time.” McCullough 1999, p. 414.



bright lights of the modern world have mistreated it. We should probably assume that Tanizaki's complaints are genuine, from the heart, but, as in the larger matter of shadows, there is room for doubt.

The most important matter by far has to do with Tanizaki's ideas on literature itself, or on the art of expression. We cannot be sure how Murasaki Shikibu viewed her writing. Perhaps she was short-tempered with those persons in her audience who (we may imagine) asked for clarification. "Such fools," she may have said of these. "I have told them everything they need to know." Yet she must have been in some measure obscure in her day as she is in ours. Some of the obscurity must have been unintentional, but she must have liked much of it.

I am fond of saying, largely to shock and surprise, that Tanizaki is no fun to translate. It is the truth. To be interesting, translation must be difficult. Tanizaki is very easy. One can let one's mind wander off and he will take care of himself. Japanese are always saying how very Japanese he is. Certainly his material is Japanese, but the expression of it is rather English. I am by no means alone in this view, and do not claim it to be original. Even when his matter is rather complicated, the expression of it is pellucid. He can sometimes be a touch wordy and discursive, but even then, what he is saying is clear. The reader or translator is almost never in doubt about the meaning. This does not, as I have suggested, make for very interesting work.

When their material is stuffy, novelists must perforce write a bit stuffily, or resort to satire. Tanizaki can sometimes be a touch stuffy:

事態が既にかうなってから何を申上げる事もないし、未練がましいやうだけれども、小生として一言貴下に釋明させて戴かなければ立つ瀬がない。貴下は或は、小生等夫婦が妹の心中を十分確かめても見ずに此の縁談を進めたやうにお考へかも知れないが、事實は、あの妹は決して貴下を嫌いってゐなかつたのみならず、寧ろその反対であつたと信じる。それでは先日來の貴下に對するあの消極的な曖昧な態度、電話での應對などを如何に説明するかと仰せられるでもあらうが、あれは持ち前の異性に對する怯懦と羞恥心がさせたことで、貴下を嫌つてゐた證據にはならない。三十を越した女がそんな馬鹿らしいことが、と、他人は誰しもさう思ふところだけれども、彼女の平生をよく知つてゐる肉身の者たちには不思議でも何でもなく、あゝ云ふ場合に彼女としてあゝ云ふ風になるのが常で、あれでも昔よりは幾分か人みしりをしなくなつたのである。<sup>6</sup>

He had no apologies to offer, he wrote, and he knew his letter might sound querulous, but there was one thing at least that he must be allowed to explain. Perhaps Hashidera thought that they, his wife and Teinosuke himself, had pushed the marriage talks without attempting to learn Yukiko's views. That was far from the case. Yukiko did not dislike Hashidera, and they had cause to believe that her feelings were the opposite. If Hashidera wanted an explanation for her strange manner of a

6. Tanizaki 1943-47, p. 696.



few days before, or for her manner over the telephone, then her general shyness before men was explanation enough. There was no evidence of any dislike for him. Though it would seem ridiculous to outsiders that a woman past thirty should be so shy, her family, those who knew her well, saw nothing whatsoever to be surprised at. She had always behaved thus, and her fear of strangers had if anything begun to leave her.<sup>7</sup>

This is not Tanizaki at his best. It is somewhat pompous and somewhat empty. Yukiko, the third of the four sisters, finding a husband for whom has become the chief concern of the family, has just ruined another possibility by refusing to take a telephone call from a prospective husband. The passage above is the letter that Teinosuke, Yukiko's brother-in-law and the most important male character in the novel, writes to apologize for her. It tells us nothing we do not already know, and seems to serve little purpose except to assure Teinosuke (and Tanizaki, whose surrogate he is) that he has done something high-minded. The point is, however, that even when not very satisfying, Tanizaki is always lucidity itself. There is nothing in the letter that need give the reader the slightest pause.

In an article entitled "Tanizaki Matsuko as a Critic," the novelist Maruya Saiichi describes a feeling he has long had that the third Mrs. Tanizaki was a gifted critic and an influence on her husband's style.<sup>8</sup> The article is followed by two letters from Tanizaki to Mrs. Tanizaki that confirm Maruya's view. Both are from 1934. The second, dated July 11, contains the clearest statement:

While I was writing *A Textbook in Style* (*Bunshō tokuhon*) I became aware of something you have always scolded me for, the fact that the style is bald and wanting in suggestiveness. My style is prolix, you have warned me, and makes things too clear.

In a word, he is too lucid. He explains too well, as is not the Japanese way. Mr. Maruya finds that the Tanizaki style changed during the years of the China Incident. I am not sure that I detect significant change, or that the contents of the fiction become more obscure. I have quoted from *The Makioka Sisters*, to argue that lucidity is of the essence. The point is that, though Mr. Maruya detects a change, he recognizes what seems to me essential. It is very different from Murasaki Shikibu. I can with confidence say that I understand everything in the big Tanizaki novel. The reader who says that of the big Murasaki one is lying.

I do not doubt that Tanizaki got his lucidity from the English. I do not wish to be understood as saying that it is a defect. My point is that he was a very lucid sort of writer, and Murasaki Shikibu was not. Translating Tanizaki does not feel like translating Murasaki.

And so translation of writing by whom does? Whom, I reply, if not Kawabata? Many a reader of Kawabata in translation, and especially of *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*), has remarked upon the wraith-like quality of the characters. This I take to

7. Seidensticker (trans.) 1993, p. 418.

8. Maruya 1996, pp. 134–144.

mean not so much that the characterization is inadequate as that the characters seem so fragile against the natural background. They are very isolated characters in an isolated society. The heroine remarks that things have improved since, not so very long ago, the railway came through.

Paintings of the premodern village certainly do suggest it to be an unsociable place, especially in the winter, before skiing became a national craze. The story is set at the beginning of the craze. Given the nature of the characterization, it seems right that at the end we do not know whether the girl Yōko, the lesser of the two main female characters, is alive or dead. It seems worth pointing out that we cannot be sure whether or not the *Genji* is finished.

Some have dismissed the essay on weaving, near the end of the novel (to the extent that it has an end), as pointless. It is, however, as much about loneliness and fragility as about weaving. A very important thing, all through the novel, is that nature always seems ready to overwhelm.

Kawabata is, like Murasaki, a writer of few words. He is by no means as voluminous a writer as she. None of his novels is of more than medium length. Like her, he had favorite words which he put to all manner of uses. In her case, the big favorite is probably *aware*. In his it may well be *omou*.

More than one Japanese—and the Japanese, more than any other people I am familiar with, are interested in and critical of translation from their language—has pointed out the abundance of ways in which the verb *omou* is rendered in my Kawabata translations. Thirty verbs is a good round count of my renditions. These are only verbs. The Japanese verb is also rendered into other parts of speech.

The primary meaning, of course, is “to think.” This is a complex expression in all languages, and it is perhaps more so in Japanese than in most. *Omou* conveys meanings, such as “to be sad,” which the English does not. Yet thirty is a surprising count. I may confess that I was not aware of the variety when I was doing the translations, though I was vaguely aware of the complexity of the word and Kawabata’s fondness for it. Like *aware*, it has sad overtones. The writings of both authors are replete with sadness. Tanizaki, for all his “satanism” (and he once told me that he disliked the expression), was a much sunnier writer.

Like Murasaki, Kawabata is frequently difficult to understand. The passage that has puzzled more readers than any other is that in *Snow Country* in which Shimamura, the chief male character, enrages his geisha friend, the chief female one, by saying that she is “a good girl” and then unconsciously shifting to “good woman.” After much thought I translated it literally and thereby caused puzzlement. Asked to explain, I have usually replied that the intelligent reader, in which category the inquirer without question falls, can figure it out for himself or herself. And he or she does. The point is that Kawabata is frequently difficult to understand, as Tanizaki is not.

Like Murasaki, Kawabata prefers to let the conjugated parts of speech do the work. He is sparing in his use of nominatives. The opening sentences of *Snow Country* are probably the most famous in modern Japanese literature. They have been the most frequently noticed by Japanese who are suspicious of all translations from their

language. Some of the criticism seems rather silly. I am criticized, for instance, for giving the first sentence a subject when there is none in the original. The answer is easy: concessions must be made to the target language, and English demands subjects as Japanese does not.

I think the demand that the first sentence do without a subject is unreasonable, but Kawabata's refusal to name his subjects has led me to blunder. Toward the end of *The Izu Dancer* (*Izu no odoriko*), someone waves a cap. I identified the waver incorrectly. Now that I know the correct identity, it seems a stupid blunder; but Kawabata could so easily have prevented it.

I have heard rumors that there is a Kawabata story containing no subjects at all. I have been unable to find it, and suspect that it does not exist. In some early Kawabata stories, however, one can go the better part of the way and find no subject indicators. With her more richly agglutinative language Murasaki can go greater distances, but the two are alike in preferring to let the verbs and adjectives do the work.

Translating Kawabata feels more like translating Murasaki than does translating Tanizaki. Doubtless this will seem an outrageously subjective and intuitive statement to rationalists who find all the answers in literary theory. So be it. I am convinced that the most important literary judgments are intuitive. Is this not true of the most fundamental one—whether a work and an author are worth talking about?

Approaching the end of my say, I wish to change the subject and offer a few words of thanks to and for Adriana Boscaro. Energetic, intelligent, imaginative, she has been an enriching presence. She is genuinely cosmopolitan. Scholars on the European continent and scholars in the English-speaking countries tend not to pay much attention to the other faction. This has not been true of Adriana. She has always seemed interested in what we are doing. I have been very grateful, and I am glad that her retirement does not mean her disappearance from the scene.

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# The “Tanizaki Genji”: Inception, Process, and Afterthoughts

IBUKI KAZUKO AND G. G. ROWLEY

With translations by Thomas Harper of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s  
“On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese” (1938)  
and “Some Malicious Remarks” (1965)

Among the many translations of *The Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese, the best known and most widely read remain “the Tanizaki *Genji*” and its immediate predecessor, “the Yosano *Genji*.”<sup>1</sup> Both are the work of writers at the forefront of their arts, the poet Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) and the novelist Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886–1965); both writers made multiple translations; and the extent to which both translations are identified with their writers is apparent in their informal titles. But there the resemblance ends.

The two versions of “the Yosano *Genji*” are entirely the work of a solitary artist who tells us very little of how she worked or the principles that guided her in her work. By contrast, the production of “the Tanizaki *Genji*,” in all three versions, was a major project involving several eminent scholars of Japanese literature, the staff and graduate students of the departments of Japanese Language and Literature at both Kyoto and Tokyo Universities, the editorial department of one of Japan’s largest publishing companies, and Tanizaki’s longtime personal amanuensis, Ibuki Kazuko (1929–).<sup>2</sup> The aim of this essay is to reconstruct this complex process, in as much detail as possible, from inception to completion, and then to suggest how the very complexity of the process calls into question certain long-cherished views of Tanizaki’s relationship with *Genji* and its importance to his work. Perhaps the best place to begin is with Tanizaki’s own description of how his first translation came into being.<sup>3</sup>

ON TRANSLATING *THE TALE OF GENJI* INTO MODERN JAPANESE

By Tanizaki Jun’ichirō

Translated by Thomas Harper

[1.] I think it must have been young Shimanaka, president of Chūōkōronsha,<sup>4</sup> who had the idea of getting me to translate *The Tale of*

1. For bibliographical details, see Tanizaki 1939–41, Tanizaki 1951–54, Tanizaki 1964–65; and Yosano 1912–13, Yosano 1938–39.

2. Ibuki recalls her twelve years working for Tanizaki in Ibuki 2001a. For her essays on the “Tanizaki *Genji*,” see Ibuki 2001b, Ibuki 2003, Ibuki 2005, and Ibuki 2009, pp. 213–310.

3. The essay translated below by Thomas Harper is not the same as Tanizaki’s preface to his first translation of *Genji*. For the preface, see Tanizaki 1939.

4. Shimanaka Yūsaku 嶋中雄作 (1887–1949), president of Chūōkōronsha from 1928 until his death.

*Genji*. I'm not at all the sort of person to accept at the drop of a hat a plan dreamt up and set before me by a magazine publisher. But this proposal interested me enormously right from the start. Whether a disinterested observer would consider me qualified for the task I cannot say; but even supposing I should decide on my own to translate a work of classical literature, there could be no other choice but *Genji*. I am fully aware, of course, that transforming the original text into modern Japanese is no easy task. But because it has long been considered such a difficult work, commentaries, digests, and other such aids abound. From as early as the Kamakura period, and on into the Muromachi and Tokugawa eras, a truly vast variety of academic studies and reference works has been produced; so many, one might say, that **the meaning of virtually every word, every phrase**, has been explicated. And from the Meiji period through to the present day, the trend has been toward ever greater attention to fine points of detail. We now have several different editions equipped with modern language glosses; and just since I have undertaken this project, our younger scholars of National Learning have published a wealth of new work.<sup>5</sup> With the possible exception of the *Man'yōshū*, no other work possesses such an abundance of exegetical commentary as does *Genji*. With the aid of the work of these scholars, both ancient and modern, one should experience little difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the text. This is not to say that there are no doubtful or unclear passages whatever; but these are passages that no scholar in the past has been able to decipher, so I'm not worried that anyone will take me to task for coming up with an interpretation of my own. This being the case, one might say that *Genji* is, in a certain sense, the easiest of all the classics to translate—far easier, at least, than Saikaku or Chikamatsu; just as, in English literature, Shakespeare is easier to translate than Hardy or Meredith.<sup>6</sup> Assuming, then, that there is no difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the text, how is one to render it in the most literary manner possible? That is the task to which one must devote the whole of one's energy; and the sort of work that I myself find immensely satisfying. If *Genji* were not such an enormous work, I might well have had the idea and finished the job long before Chūōkōron suggested it. Indeed, the one and only reason for my initial hesitation when they put the proposal to me is that I am such an exceptionally slow writer, four or five pages a day being my maximum rate of progress. How many years would it take me to finish translating such an enormous work? Once begun, I would have no choice but to abandon everything else and give myself up entirely to the task. Yet it was not as if I had no commitments to other magazine publishers; would I be able to spend that many years in such a manner? That was my one and only cause for concern.

[2.] It was three years ago, in September 1935, that I first began work in earnest. Since then I have published nothing except *Neko to Shōzō to*

5. In this essay, Tanizaki does not use the word *kokubungakusha*, “scholars of National Literature,” preferring instead the older *kokugakusha*, “scholars of National Learning.”

6. The English novelists Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) and George Meredith (1828–1909).

*futari no onna* in the magazine *Kaizō*, and I have written no new fiction or essays. The way I work is this. First I send the manuscript of my draft translation to Chūōkōronsha. There they make two sets of galleys, one of which I have sent to my collaborator Professor Yamada Yoshio,<sup>7</sup> and one to me. Then, as Yamada’s pages, corrected in red ink, come in, I have them sent to me as well. These, which sometimes seem dyed bright red with the professor’s corrections, I refer to from time to time; but revision I leave until later and forge ahead without worrying about it. At first I left the headnotes for someone else to do; but then I realized I could never be content not doing them myself, so since then I have appended them one by one as I go along. Proceeding in this manner until a draft translation is complete, I shall then review the entire text from the very beginning with reference to Yamada’s advice, and with the intention of incorporating 80 to 90 percent of his suggestions. At present, I have reached a point midway through the Uji chapters in my work on the draft translation. This has taken two years and four months spread over three calendar years, at which rate the draft, albeit a rough one, should be complete by about April. If it is not to be published all at once but at the rate of two- or three-hundred pages per month over the span of a year or so, then I should be able to make my corrections while it is being produced. Thus once I have completed at least a draft, I shall finally feel secure.

[3.] For me to have studied on my own the multitude of commentaries that have come down to us from old would have been all but impossible. It was essential, therefore, to find a collaborator who is an authority on this subject. It was I who insisted that they importune some major figure, but it was on the initiative of Chūōkōronsha that we approached Professor Yamada. Thus it was that in the spring of 1935, accompanied by Mr. Amemiya<sup>8</sup> of Chūōkōron, I called at the professor’s home in Sendai and first met him. I asked his opinion on several matters, and I can say with total sincerity how extraordinarily grateful I am to have found such a fine collaborator. I have no desire merely to borrow the professor’s good name; I really do want him to point out, unsparingly, all of my errors. Which indeed the professor does: wielding his vermilion brush with the most painstaking precision, he has made many valuable suggestions and corrections, not only concerning academic matters but points of style and expression as well. The professor likewise has told me in person how very important he considers this task and has been unstinting in his encouragement. That I should be the beneficiary of someone who

7. Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄 (1875–1958) was professor of Japanese language and literature at Tōhoku University from 1925 until 1933. In 1940, when the Jingū Kōgakukan 神宮皇學館 in Ise, a government institute devoted to the promotion of National Shinto, was granted university status, Yamada was appointed president. The university was closed by GHQ order during the Allied Occupation of Japan and Yamada was purged. Known more for his studies of Japanese grammar than of literature, Yamada’s most notable work on *Genji* is entitled *Genji monogatari no ongaku* (Music in *The Tale of Genji*, 1934, reprinted 1969).

8. Amemiya Yōzō 雨宮庸藏 (1903–99), head of the publishing department (*shuppan buchō*) at Chūōkōronsha between 1932 and 1937.

would scrutinize my work so obligingly and with such extraordinary attentiveness was something I never expected. I feel quite as if an ally a million strong has come to my aid. Over these past three years, it has been a source of no small sustenance to me that the professor has participated in this project with such unwavering interest and zeal, start to finish.

[4.] Professor Yamada suggested that I use the *Kogetsushō* as my text.<sup>9</sup> And since my own knowledge of the *Genji* was acquired through the *Kogetsushō*, I decided to base my translation upon it entirely. Of the old commentaries, I found *Mingō nisso* the most helpful.<sup>10</sup> But for a modern person translating into the modern language, the most helpful of all are the vernacular translations published since the Meiji period—such as Yosano Akiko’s; Miyata Waichirō’s, as revised by Professor Yoshizawa; the seven-volume edition in *Zen’yaku ōchō bungaku sōsho*; Kubota Utsuho’s translation; the *Genji monogatari sōshaku* published by Rakurō Shoin; and Shimazu Hisamoto’s *Genji monogatari kōwa*.<sup>11</sup> Those that are already complete, I have, of course; and those currently in process of publication, I place on my shelves as soon as they appear. Waley’s work is so riddled with errors that it is not of much help; but its considerable virtues as a literary translation are a stimulus to effort, so I peruse it from time to time as a source of inspiration. As I said before, my principal aim is to produce a literary translation, a translation that can itself be read as literature without reference to the original text—a translation from which one derives the same fascination that an ancient reader would derive from reading the original. It is not to be a free translation, unfettered by the original, but, in keeping with my aim, one that adheres to the original as closely as possible. At the very least, I intend there should be no phrase in the original text for which there is no corresponding passage in the translation. It may be impossible to achieve perfection in this, but I shall try my best to do so. In short, I mean to work in such a manner that my translation may also be of use as a reference in reading the original text.

[5.] There shall, I am sure, be other opportunities to discuss the style (*bun* 文) of *The Tale of Genji*, so I’ll not discuss the matter in any detail here. Were I to venture just one observation, however, I should say that the charm of the original lies, more than anything else, in its “eroticism” (*iroke* 色気). The text of *Genji* is truly, to an uncanny degree, erotic. Of all the classics, it is first of all *Genji* and, much later, Saikaku’s works that stand out for their eroticism. Is not this one of the reasons *Genji* so utterly outshines the many other fictions of the Heian period? Thus in rendering

9. The *Kogetsushō* is a complete text of *Genji* with selected commentary, compiled by Kitamura Kigin 北村季吟 (1624–1705). First published in 1673, the *Kogetsushō* became the most widely circulated edition of *Genji* throughout the Edo period and, as Tanizaki’s remarks confirm, continued to be used well into the twentieth century.

10. The *Mingō nisso* is a commentary on *Genji* by Nakanoin Michikatsu 中院通勝 (1556–1610), completed in 1598.

11. See Yosano 1912–13; Miyata 1938; Yoshizawa et al. 1924–27; Kubota and Yosano 1936–38; Shimazu 1937–39; and Shimazu 1930–42, left incomplete upon the author’s death in April 1949.



it in the modern language, I try as hard as I can not to lose that eroticism. To what extent I have succeeded only an expert can judge; but to that end it has been essential to emulate the vagueness of the original—that indirect manner of speaking, fraught with implications, yet so understated that it can be taken in several different senses. I’ve been unable to write with the daring economy of the original text; but if we posit that the original expresses ten units of meaning using five units of expression, then I have expressed them with seven. So a passage in the original that cannot be understood without reading it ten times over, in my translation should be understandable after two or three readings. This much of the “difficulty” and “impenetrability,” I should like it to be understood, has been preserved. And one further point: I have endeavored to keep my vocabulary small. This is something that strikes everyone when they read the *Genji*; but for such a long work and such a sweeping narrative, the variety of words used in it is not great. The adjectives used in describing scenery, describing persons, describing feelings are for the most part unvarying, with *omoshiroshi*, *okashi*, *namamekashi*, and the like repeated over and over again. (Though in the process, extremely fine shades of nuance do emerge.) This may well be due to the importance attached to what I have previously described as words fraught with implication; but I think, too, that the number of words in general use at that time must have been small. These characteristics of the original text I have of course done my best to preserve.

[6.] If modern persons reading works of modern literature were to delve into the meaning of every word and every phrase the way one does in deciphering a classical text, I am sure they would encounter a great many passages that are quite incomprehensible. But since the text is written in the modern language, they feel they have understood and read on. This sort of reading presents no obstacles to literary appreciation. The relentless pursuit of every word and every phrase is academically indispensable, but it may actually be a hindrance to literary response. By reading on past what is incomprehensible, making no concerted attempt to understand it completely on the first go, we come in the course of repeated readings to a natural understanding of it. I’ve meant the text of my translation to be more readily understandable than the works of Izumi Kyōka,<sup>12</sup> and hope that my readers will not be deterred by the idea that it is a classic but will read it in the same frame of mind as they would an ordinary novel.<sup>13</sup>

#### INCEPTION

Tanizaki tells us that he got the idea of translating *Genji* when Shimanaka Yūsaku, president of the publishing company Chūōkōronsha, proposed the project.

12. Izumi Kyōka 泉鏡花 (1873–1939), the novelist and playwright.

13. “Genji monogatari no gendaigoyaku ni tsuite,” first published in the February 1938 issue of *Chūō kōron*. Translated from the text in *TJZ* 21, pp. 323–328. For ease of reference, section numbers have been added by the translator.

Correspondence between the two enables us to date Shimanaka's proposal to late 1933, when he first learned of Arthur Waley's translation of *The Tale of Genji* into English.<sup>14</sup> Shimanaka immediately ordered a copy of Waley's *Genji* sent to Tanizaki,<sup>15</sup> which, "for its considerable virtues as a literary translation" Tanizaki found "a source of inspiration." But it was not until September 1935, Tanizaki recalls, that he began work in earnest. He hesitated, he confesses, because he was "such an exceptionally slow writer" and *Genji* was "such an enormous work." If not, he states with characteristic immodesty, "I might well have had the idea and finished the job long before Chūōkōron suggested it."

We know from another source, however, that Tanizaki also had a more personal motive for agreeing to produce a modern-language version of *Genji*. In January 1935, the year he began work on the translation, Tanizaki married Morita Matsuko 森田松子 (1903–91); it was his third marriage and her second. Three years earlier, in December 1932, Tanizaki and his second wife, Furukawa Tomiko 古川丁未子, had separated just as Tanizaki's romantic relationship with Matsuko, then still married to Nezu Seitarō 根津清太郎, was developing. In the spring of 1934, Matsuko and Nezu were divorced, Matsuko returned to her maiden name of Morita, and she and Tanizaki began living together. In October of the same year, Tanizaki and Tomiko concluded their own divorce proceedings. Tanizaki and Matsuko were finally married in January 1935. When Tanizaki began work on his first translation of *Genji* later that year, in September, he was forty-nine years old.

In later years, Matsuko liked to think that she and not Shimanaka was the driving force behind the translation:

I told him that I wished I could read *The Tale of Genji*—as a polite accomplishment, like learning flower arranging, or tea ceremony, or piano. But it's too difficult to read it in the original, and the translations are so academic; I haven't found a one that's easy enough to understand. And the famous "Yosano *Genji*" is only a digest version. If only there were a complete modern translation that my younger sisters could enjoy reading when they get married, a beautiful edition just like the ones young ladies in the past used to have in their trousseaux!—it was my telling him this that got him started.<sup>16</sup>

The "famous Yosano *Genji* . . . digest version" to which Matsuko refers is Yosano Akiko's widely circulated and well-regarded first modern translation of *Genji*, *Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* (1912–13).<sup>17</sup> As Akiko herself acknowledges in her afterword to the translation, she had indeed made cuts along the way:

14. See Tanizaki's letters to Shimanaka dated 16 January, 24 January, 4 February, 12 February, 16 February, and 27 February 1934, in Minakami and Chiba 2008, pp. 105–109, 345–346, 351–352.

15. On Shimanaka Yūsaku's decision to commission a translation, see Chiba 2007, pp. 20–22, and Minakami and Chiba 2008, pp. 346–351.

16. Personal communication from Tanizaki Matsuko to Ibuki Kazuko, cited in Ibuki 2003, p. 180. For Matsuko's own account of her relationship with *Genji*, see Tanizaki 1998, pp. 337–340.

17. The *Shin'yaku* was favorably reviewed in contemporary newspapers and literary journals; reprinted many times in a variety of formats, it remained in print until Akiko's second translation began to

I eliminated those details which being far removed from modern life we can neither identify nor sympathize with, and thus only resent for their needless nicety. My principal aim has been to bring forth as directly as possible the spirit of the original through the instrument of the modern language. I have endeavored to be both scrupulous and bold. I did not always adhere to the expressions of the original author; I did not always translate literally. Having made the spirit of the original my own, I then ventured a free translation.<sup>18</sup>

Drastically reducing the length of the tale and translating freely, Akiko in effect rewrote *Genji* in the language of the modern novel, producing a translation that bore her own distinctive personality.<sup>19</sup> Her translation could be read from cover to cover, though not quite in a single go; and readers found it irresistibly appealing. Tanizaki Matsuko recalls her experience of reading Akiko’s translation in the mid-Taisho period: “By day and by night, waking and in dreams, I was completely possessed by *Genji* / *Genji*.”<sup>20</sup>

By the time Matsuko told her new husband of her desire for a *Genji* suitable for her and her sisters to read, more than twenty years had passed since the publication of Akiko’s *Shin’yaku*. The number of girls’ higher schools, both public and private, and their enrollments had increased dramatically since the latter years of the Meiji period, and reading was one of the principal ways graduates of girls’ higher schools sought to achieve “self-cultivation” (*shūyō* 修養) as they prepared for married life.<sup>21</sup> Matsuko’s desire to provide her sisters with a complete *Genji* as a wedding gift reflects, at least in part, the period’s concern with self-cultivation. Moreover, knowledge of *Genji* “as a polite accomplishment,” to borrow Matsuko’s phrase, had long been de rigueur for Japanese women, and especially, though not exclusively, upper-class women. From the famous “Hatsune accoutrements” of the early Edo period on, items decorated with motifs drawn from *The Tale of Genji* had been fashioned for the trousseaux of daimyo daughters.<sup>22</sup> Even in the Taisho and early Showa periods, *Genji* scent motifs<sup>23</sup> continued to be used in kimono and obi patterns.

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appear in October 1938. After a sixty-year hiatus, the *Shin’yaku* has been reprinted twice in recent years: see Yosano 2001, Yosano 2002.

18. Yosano 1913, pp. 2–3. For a complete English translation, see Rowley 2000, pp. 186–188. The extent of Akiko’s cuts is tabulated in Seki 2003, pp. 306–307.

19. For more on the personal resonances in Akiko’s first translation, see Rowley 2000, pp. 112–131.

20. Tanizaki 1998, p. 337.

21. Sato 2003, pp. 134–135.

22. “Hatsune accoutrements” are the *Hatsune no chōdo* 初音の調度, a set of forty-some gold-lacquered items (censer, go board, inkstone box, mirror-stand, picture-stand, shelves, etc.) decorated with motifs from the “Hatsune” and “Kochō” chapters of *Genji*, made for the trousseau of Chiyo (1637–98), daughter of third Tokugawa shogun Iemitsu (1604–51; r. 1623–51), when in 1639 she was betrothed to Mitsutomo (1625–1700), heir to the Owari Tokugawa house. See photographs 95–97 and 102–104 in Yoshioka 1983, pp. 78–80, 85–86.

23. The so-called *Genji* scent (*Genji-kō* 源氏香) motifs depict combinations of fragrances, one each for 52 of the tale’s 54 chapters. (There are no motifs for the first or the last chapters.) Each motif consists of five vertical lines: one line represents one scent; lines linked by horizontal bars represent the same scent.

The commemorative poster commissioned by Chūōkōronsha to advertise the launch of Tanizaki's translation certainly suggests that the publishing company envisaged a largely female readership of just the sort described by Matsuko. Designed by the artist Kaburaki Kiyokata 鏑木清方 (1878–1972), it depicts a beautiful young woman, clad in kimono but seated on a Western-style sofa, intently reading a volume of the Tanizaki *Genji*.<sup>24</sup> Chūōkōron's beautiful, elegantly produced new edition of *The Tale of Genji*—designed, it would seem, specifically for these young women—demonstrates how unerring Shimanaka's acumen as publisher and marketer was in realizing the translator's own desire to fulfill Matsuko's request.

#### PROCESS: FIRST TRANSLATION

Tanizaki began work on his modern-language translation of *Genji* a little more than two years after Akiko, in the autumn of 1932, embarked upon her second version. In “On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese,” Tanizaki records that in the spring of 1935, he went to visit Yamada Yoshio, one of the country's most esteemed scholars of Japanese language and literature, to ask him to be his *kōetsusha* 校閲者, or supervisor.<sup>25</sup> In November 1935, Tanizaki and family moved to Tantakabayashi 反高林 in the village of Sumiyoshi 住吉村, Muko-gun 武庫郡, Hyōgo Prefecture; their life there would later be depicted in his long novel *Sasameyuki* (1948). The figure of Teinosuke, the husband in *Sasameyuki* who is endlessly disappearing off into his study, is surely a portrait of Tanizaki himself, hard at work on his translation of *Genji*.

By September 1938, only six months later than projected in his article “On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese,” Tanizaki completed the first draft of his translation. The feat was reported in the *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, not on the literary pages but as breaking news, along with the latest air raid in China and a forced love suicide in Tokyo.<sup>26</sup> The placement of the article is itself a measure of the acclaim his accomplishment generated. Not long thereafter, on 23 January 1939, the first volume of the translation was published, and “the Tanizaki *Genji*” was everywhere.

The completion of the manuscript also resulted in an invitation to address the Kyoto University Department of Japanese Literature. Tanizaki declined to give a lecture but said he would be happy to participate in a group discussion of his translation. Tamagami Takuya (1915–96), then a second-year graduate student, was told it would be his task, as a scholar of *Genji*, to ask a question of Tanizaki. Tamagami asked: “Having completed your translation, how great a work do you consider *The Tale of Genji* to be?” At first Tanizaki mistook Tamagami, thinking he referred to his

24. “Tanizaki-bon *Genji monogatari* o yomu shōjo,” (Young woman reading the Tanizaki *Genji*). Color on silk (126.4 x 36 cm), c. 1939. See the reproduction in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Memorial Museum 2003, p. 7.

25. Tanizaki 1938, p. 325.

26. *Tokyo Asahi shinbun* 11 September 1938, p. 11.

own *Genji*, but then realized his error. “Oh, the original you mean? I don’t think it’s such a great masterpiece.”<sup>27</sup>

On 1 September 1964, the day Tanizaki’s third version of *Genji* went on sale, an anonymous Chūōkōronsha employee, writing in the in-house magazine *Chūō shahō*, recalled the flurry of activity twenty-five years earlier, as Tanizaki’s first translation was launched:

All at once we had 50,000 new orders to fill and there was a huge panic about materials and printing. . . . In September 1941, when the last of the twenty-six volumes was published, Tanizaki Sensei came up to Tokyo from Ashiya and thanked us employees for our help; the company history records that he invited us all to the Kabuki theater.<sup>28</sup>

Was it simply a coincidence that only one month before the first volume of Yosano Akiko’s second translation was published in October 1938, the completion of Tanizaki’s draft translation was given such great play in the newspapers? And that when his first volume appeared in January 1939, Akiko’s translation was still coming out? There is no evidence that the publication of Akiko’s second translation provoked the response in society that the appearance of Tanizaki’s first translation did. Akiko’s publisher Kanao Tanejirō 金尾種次郎 (1879–1947) could not afford to advertise extensively, and the *Shin-shin’yaku* was assumed by some to be merely a reprint of her earlier translation.<sup>29</sup>

There are of course several reasons why the publication of Tanizaki’s translation attracted such widespread acclaim. It was the first time that a novelist (*sakka* 作家) had translated *The Tale of Genji* into the modern language; and Tanizaki was no ordinary writer: he was a major novelist, the author of a succession of sensational novels. There was a sense of anticipation that he of all people would definitely be able to satisfy the desire for an elegant, flowing translation, and his translation lived up to expectations. In the fourth section of “On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese,” Tanizaki records that he aimed to produce “a literary translation . . . a translation from which one derives the same fascination that an ancient reader would derive from reading the original.”<sup>30</sup> And apparently he felt he had achieved this aim. In the preface to his second version of the translation, *Jun’ichirō shin’yaku Genji monogatari*, he writes:

Even now, as I reread my translation, I feel hardly any sense of dissatisfaction. . . . Since it is, after all, a literary translation, meant to convey the sensuality, the fragrance, the elegance, the implications of the original, I am confident there could be no style superior to the one I have chosen.<sup>31</sup>

27. “Sore hodo no kessaku to omoimasen ga ne,” Tamagami 1986a, p. 117.

28. Ibuki 2003, pp. 184–185.

29. Yuasa 1974, p. 6.

30. Tanizaki 1938, p. 326.

31. Tanizaki 1951, pp. 253–254.

Another notable feature of Tanizaki's first translation was the extravagance of the production. The overall "look" of the set was the responsibility of prominent Nihonga artist Nagano Sōfū 長野草風 (1885–1949), who also provided the background illustrations, printed in pale orange and different for each chapter. The individual volumes were bound in Japanese-style covers made of deep green paper patterned in traditional motifs, with calligraphy on the covers, title-pages, and chapter title-pages by the poet Onoe Saishū 尾上柴舟 (1876–1957). Large print, averaging twelve lines to a page, made the text exceptionally easy to read. No expense was spared. At about 160 pages in length, the volumes were light to hold, and each installment contained two volumes in their own box. Simply as an objet d'art, Tanizaki's translation was epoch-making. Nor should we overlook the fact that, despite this extravagance, the list price of each installment was held down to 1 yen. As a marketing tactic, this was unbeatable. At the same time, a special collector's edition, packaged in paulownia-wood boxes and limited to a thousand sets, was produced—precisely the "beautiful edition just like the ones young ladies in the past used to have in their trousseaux" that Matsuko had wished for.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the appearance of Akiko's second translation was somewhat overwhelmed by Chūōkōronsha's lavish production. Then, in May 1940, less than a year after the final volume of her *Shin-shin'yaku* appeared, Akiko herself disappeared from the scene when she had a stroke that left her an invalid for the last two years of her life. She died in May 1942, at the age of sixty-three.

It is well known that Tanizaki's first translation of *Genji* was heavily expurgated.<sup>32</sup> Sections relating Genji's illicit liaison with Fujitsubo, the accession of their child Reizei to the throne, and, in the "Fuji no Uraba" chapter, the elevation of Genji, a commoner, to the rank of honorary retired emperor (Jun-Daijō Tennō) were excised in their entirety, without even the usual ellipsis points (*fuseji* 伏せ字) to indicate the deletions. By contrast, Akiko's *Shin-shin'yaku*, the publication of which in 1938–39 overlapped with the publication of Tanizaki's translation in 1939–41, contained only a single niggling cut—in the first line of the text, the two characters *tennō* (emperor) were deleted and replaced with ellipsis points: "*Dono ... [sic] sama no miyo de atta ka*" (In which . . . reign was it).<sup>33</sup> How can this disparity be explained?

Nishino Atsushi has shown in a painstaking and subtle examination of the Tanizaki-Yamada relationship that the translation was not censored by the military, nor did Tanizaki merely acquiesce to conditions laid down by his collaborator. Nishino demonstrates that in fact Tanizaki had agreed with his publishers at the outset to omit any and all passages that might cause the translation to be accused of sedition.<sup>34</sup> In his preface to the translation, Tanizaki admitted that he had made cuts to the tale:

32. See, for example, Rubin 1984, pp. 258–260; and Kobayashi 1997. The extent and exact location of the cuts is detailed in Kobayashi 1997, note 36, pp. 225–226.

33. Yosano 1938–39, vol. 1, p. 3.

34. Nishino 2007. See also the discussion in Minakami and Chiba 2008, pp. 367–369.

To tell the truth, the plot of the original work contains elements that, transplanted unaltered into the contemporary world, might be considered improper. I have thus excised precisely those passages in their entirety. (In actual fact, these constitute but minor elements of the plot, and, as Professor Yamada has pointed out, do not form the basis of the story; indeed, eradicating them completely has almost no effect on the development of the tale as a whole. In terms of volume, they amount to less than 5 percent of the three-thousand-and-several-hundred-page manuscript).<sup>35</sup>

Any reader of *Genji* will recognize immediately that this argument is absurd and completely unsustainable. “What baldfaced lies!” Tamagami Takuya thought to himself when he read this. “I’d bought the book, but I no longer had any desire to read it.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, Okazaki Yoshie—a professor at the same Tōhoku University where Yamada Yoshio had worked—courageously pointed out in a review that Tanizaki had “cut out the spinal cord of this classic of world literature,” and had done so without even indicating where cuts had been made; that no matter how neatly the “surgery” had been tidied up, this was “a great atrocity” that raised the question—delicately phrased, of course—“to what extent [Tanizaki] had exercised sound judgment (*yōi* 用意) as an artist.”<sup>37</sup>

In the preface to his second translation, published after the Second World War, Tanizaki explained away these cuts in the following manner:

This was time when the bigotry of militaristic minds was rampant in every corner of life . . . , and so I did it in order to avoid the censure of those ignorant soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

Tanizaki steadfastly refrained from blaming Yamada for forcing the cuts, reserving his contempt for the military authorities. As Tanizaki states in section three of “On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese,” it was he himself who had insisted that Chūōkōronsha “importune some major figure” to “point out, unsparingly, all of my errors.”<sup>39</sup> Yamada agreed to help, and his assistance is prominently acknowledged on the title page of each volume, where his name appears before the translator’s. Both publisher and translator realized that the deployment of an ultranationalist such as Yamada would serve to shield them from official condemnation and ensure that the translation was not banned; he might also help to deflect disapproval from the wartime reading public.<sup>40</sup>

35. Tanizaki 1939, p. 167.

36. Tamagami 1986a, p. 120.

37. Okazaki Yoshie, “Tanizaki *Genji* ron (4),” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, 26 May 1939, p. 7. A revised and expanded version of Okazaki’s four-part review is found in Okazaki 1960, pp. 451–471.

38. Tanizaki 1951, p. 253.

39. Tanizaki 1938, p. 325.

40. See the letters from Tanizaki to Yamada quoted in Ibuki 2005 and the detailed account in Nishino 2007. Shimanaka Hōji 嶋中鵬二 (1923–97), president of Chūōkōronsha from 1949 until his death, told Rowley that during the war the Shimanaka family “received postcards daily” demanding that the company cease publication of the Tanizaki *Genji* (conversation 7 April 1995).



Despite these ulterior motives, Tanizaki appears to have been sincerely grateful for Yamada's advice: in "On Translating *The Tale of Genji* into Modern Japanese," as well as in the prefaces to his first and his second translations, Tanizaki frankly admits his indebtedness to Yamada's "many valuable suggestions and corrections" and expresses his gratitude for the professor's unstinting encouragement and enthusiastic participation in the translation project.<sup>41</sup> In 1959, the year after Yamada's death, Tanizaki wrote a short essay entitled "Back Then (Mourning the Death of Yamada Yoshio)." In it, he claims that the professor had only agreed to assist him on the condition that the "improper" sections be cut. Even here, however, Tanizaki is careful to avoid criticizing his collaborator, remarking:

It was an era when the military was all-powerful, and therefore, *even if the professor had not counseled me to do so*, I had already resigned myself to making the cuts.<sup>42</sup>

#### PROCESS: SECOND TRANSLATION

After the end of the war, in October 1949, Tanizaki published his translation of the omitted portions of the "Sakaki" chapter, under the title "Fujtsubo," in a special issue of *Chūō kōron*.<sup>43</sup> His revised translation of the entire novel, rewritten in the *desu* style, rather than the *de aru* style he had used for his first translation, was published in twelve volumes between May 1951 and December 1954. As before, his collaborator was Yamada Yoshio. And as before, Yamada's assistance is acknowledged on the title page of each volume, where his name appears before the translator's.

This time, however, Tanizaki had the help of several other scholars as well. In his preface to the *Shin'yaku*, he notes that he consulted Shinmura Izuru 新村出 (1876–1967), who had by then retired from Kyoto University and was fully occupied editing the *Kōjien* dictionary. Shinmura had first suggested Tamagami Takuya, but Tanizaki had demurred. He remembered Tamagami from their meeting ten years earlier, and felt that he would now be too senior to do some of the more prosaic tasks that would be asked of him. And so Shinmura introduced him to Omodaka Hisataka 澤瀉久孝 (1890–1968), who in turn assigned Enoki Katsuaki (1920–98) to assist Tanizaki with the new translation. Beginning in September 1948, Enoki called at Tanizaki's residence two or three times a week. At first Tanizaki assigned Enoki a series of research tasks in connection with the historical fiction he was at work on; then, in May 1949, asked him to identify all passages that he had excised from his first translation.<sup>44</sup>

Suddenly, in June, Tanizaki asked Enoki to accompany him on a trip to Ise, where Yamada Yoshio was living in humble circumstances. Since the end of the

41. Tanizaki 1938, p. 326, Tanizaki 1939, p. 166, Tanizaki 1951, p. 256.

42. Tanizaki 1959b, p. 357; emphasis added. For reasons that are still unclear, this piece remained unpublished until after Tanizaki's death. See Nishino 2007, pp. 133–134.

43. Tanizaki 1949.

44. Tamagami 1986a, p. 119; Enoki 1968, pp. 6–7.



war, Yamada had been barred from holding any teaching post or government position; but Tanizaki was no fair-weather friend. After they arrived, Tanizaki changed into formal Japanese garb, *haori* and *hakama*, presented himself at Yamada’s home, and asked if he would be so kind as to “point out any errors I may have made in my previous translation.” “There are no errors,” Yamada snapped back. “I supervised that project.” Yet despite his arrogance, he did agree to assist Tanizaki again.<sup>45</sup> “The New Tanizaki *Genji*” was officially underway.

In May 1950, however, Enoki was forced on account of illness to resign as Tanizaki’s assistant. Tamagami then arranged for Miyaji Yutaka 宮地裕 (1924–) to fill the gap, and as a result became involved in the project himself in a supervisory role. This change of personnel also marked a fresh start of sorts, for at about this time Tanizaki decided that the revisions should be far more thoroughgoing than he had originally envisioned. Tamagami recalls that he divided the work between himself, Miyaji, graduate students, and other staff of the Department of Japanese Language and Literature. It was decided that emendations would be written directly onto the pages of the old translation. (Generous margins and widely spaced text made this task easier.) As each volume of the translation was completed, it was returned to Tamagami for final checking. Corrections and recommendations were then incorporated in yet another copy of the old translation and forwarded to Tanizaki.<sup>46</sup>

The revised translation, then, was not written out anew by the translator on fresh squared manuscript paper. Rather, Tanizaki’s task was to collate the suggestions made by others. This he did by emending his own copy of the old translation in vermilion ink. These volumes he then sent to Chūōkōronsha, where they were retyped in four copies: one for Yamada, one for Tanizaki, one for Tamagami, and one to be kept in the company. Again, both Yamada and the Kyoto group would note any further suggestions and return the typescript to the publishers. By this time, one might imagine that there would have been little to change; but as Tamagami points out, Yamada was always severely critical of any suggestions made by the Kyoto scholars.<sup>47</sup> A fresh copy was made, therefore, incorporating all suggestions on a single copy, which Tanizaki would use in preparing his final version for the printer.<sup>48</sup> At this stage in the process, upon completing each volume of the new translation, Tanizaki would reward his Kyoto collaborators by inviting them to his home for a lavish dinner, at which all manner of exotic dishes were served to the scholars by Tanizaki’s wife Matsuko and her younger sister Shigeko 重子.<sup>49</sup>

For Takizawa Hirō 滝沢博夫, the Chūōkōronsha employee whose task it was to expedite the process, this was the most demanding stage in the production of each volume. In the early stages, the various versions could be sent back and forth by mail; but as the printer’s deadline approached, time grew too short to trust to the mails. Takizawa would then board the 8:45 a.m. express for Sendai, where Yamada

45. Tamagami 1986a, p. 120; Enoki 1968, p. 8.

46. Tamagami 1986b, p. 27.

47. Tamagami 1986a, p. 120.

48. Tanizaki 1951, pp. 255–256; Tamagami 1986b, p. 27.

49. Tamagami 1986b, p. 2.

Yoshio had retired, and at the end of the seven-hour trip hurry to the professor's home to deliver the typescript by hand. He would spend the night in Sendai, return to Yamada's home at midday the following day to pick up the corrected text, and board the 1:36 p.m. train for Ueno. From there he would transit to Tokyo Station and board the night train for Kyoto, where he would deliver his parcel to Tanizaki. He repeated this trip with every succeeding volume through "Yume no ukihashi."<sup>50</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine what an immense paper trail was left in the wake of this project. Fortunately, as Tamagami points out, copies of the old translation were piled high in Kyoto bookshops.<sup>51</sup> Complete sets were selling for only 10 yen; there were plenty of spare volumes to pass around to all concerned. Much of this glut of paper, from all stages of the process, still survives—in the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Memorial Museum, the archives of Chūōkōronsha, and private collections.

The contrast with Yosano Akiko's way of working could not be more marked. When in 1932 she at last had time to begin work on the new translation of *Genji* she had long felt it her "responsibility" to prepare,<sup>52</sup> she worked alone. The death of her husband, Yosano Hiroshi 与謝野寛 (1873–1935), was a huge setback, but in the autumn of 1937 she went back to work on the translation. One of her disciples, Yuasa Mitsuo (1903–89), describes visiting her after she resumed work:

After two or three words of greeting, Sensei quickly took up the *Nihon koten zenshū* edition of *Genji* and her pen raced across the paper. Saying nothing, we sat there stiffly by the desk gazing in admiration at the awesome figure intent on the translation.<sup>53</sup>

Akiko took in the original with a glance to the left, and with barely a pause, recast what she had read as modern Japanese with her right hand. No pauses to ponder what the correct word might be, or how the words might best be ordered. No dictionaries or commentaries, apparently, and certainly no collaborator, no team of Kyoto University scholars and students.

Publication of the *Shin'yaku* fell behind schedule when Tanizaki suffered a stroke in April 1952 while on a trip to Tokyo. He lost the use of his right hand, and his eyesight, too, was impaired. Thenceforward he needed help entering revisions in the text, and after false starts with four or five potential assistants, he decided on Ibuki Kazuko, who had been employed in the office of the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at Kyoto University since 1950, and had herself worked on revisions to the Tanizaki *Genji* there. When Ibuki first called upon Tanizaki on 17 May 1953 at his home in the Shimokamo district of Kyoto, he was sixty-seven and she was twenty-four. She was the only child of a well-known but deceased Kyoto dealer in fine kimono fabrics, whose widow and daughter the war had left in

50. Tamagami 1986b, p. 24.

51. Tamagami 1986a, p. 124.

52. Yosano 1939, p. 2. For a complete translation of Akiko's preface to her second translation of *Genji*, see Rowley 2000, pp. 188–192.

53. Yuasa 1974, p. 5.

strained circumstances. Tanizaki needed an assistant who was sufficiently well-educated to read and take dictation following the rules of classical *kana* orthography (*kyū kanazukai* 旧仮名遣い). Ibuki managed this without difficulty. Moreover, having been born and brought up in the old capital, she was a speaker of unadulterated Kyoto women’s Japanese. Ibuki began work on 25 May, when Tanizaki was revising the “Kashiwagi” chapter. Her salary of 6,000 yen per month was paid by Chūōkōronsha.

Like Tanizaki’s first translation, the *Shin’yaku* too was a lavish production. The bindings and paper were designed by the Nihonga artist Maeda Seison 前田青邨 (1885–1977), who also did the title-page calligraphy for each volume. The commemorative poster advertising the launch of the new translation suggests that the *Shin’yaku*, like its predecessor, was marketed as a woman’s book. Designed by Itō Shinsui 伊東深水 (1898–1972), who was a student of Kaburaki Kiyokata, designer of the 1939 poster, his picture likewise shows a beautiful kimono-clad young woman reading the Tanizaki *Genji*. This time, however, she is seated at a table rather than on a sofa, and her 1950s permanent wave is held back from her face with a barrette.<sup>54</sup>

According to *Chūō shahō*, more than 60,000 orders for complete sets had been received before publication began;<sup>55</sup> after the first volume appeared, orders quickly doubled to more than 120,000 sets, and a “*Genji* boom” ensued. The translation was broadcast to the entire nation by Nippon Cultural Broadcasting Company, read by actress Yamamoto Yasue 山本安英 (1902–93) to the accompaniment of koto music by Miyagi Michio 宮城道雄 (1894–1956). It was also adapted for the Kabuki stage, and a film version was produced by Daiei.<sup>56</sup>

Over the next ten years, the *Shin’yaku* was regularly reprinted in a variety of different formats. To commemorate Chūōkōronsha’s seventieth anniversary, fourteen prominent artists were each commissioned to produce four illustrations to the *Shin’yaku*. In October 1955, these were published with the translation in a limited edition of one thousand five-volume sets, each costing 15,000 yen. In this way, Matsuko’s “beautiful edition just like the ones young ladies in the past used to have in their trousseaux” lived on into the postwar period. In January 1956, the illustrations were published separately as *Tanizaki Genji gafu* 画譜 (*Tanizaki Genji* picture album), priced at 5,000 yen per set. A six-volume edition of the translation was published in 1956; and an eight-volume edition, in the same format and selling for the same price as individual volumes of his 1958–59 *Complete Works*, followed in 1959. The word “*Shin’yaku*” was removed from the title of this edition; as Tanizaki noted in his preface, there was no longer any need to specify that this was a “new”

54. “*Jun’ichirō Shin’yaku Genji monogatari.*” Color on silk (51.6 x 58 cm), 1951. See the reproduction in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Memorial Museum 2003, p. 7.

55. Ibuki 2003, p. 186.

56. “*Genji monogatari,*” directed by Yoshimura Kōzaburō 吉村公三郎, screenplay by Shindō Kanetō 新藤兼人, with Tanizaki Jun’ichirō acting as technical consultant (*kanshū* 監修). The film starred Hasegawa Kazuo 長谷川一夫 as Hikaru Genji, Kogure Michiyo 木暮実千代 as Fujitsubo, and Otowa Nobuko 乙羽信子 as Murasaki no Ue, and in 1952 won first prize for cinematographer Sugiyama Kōhei 杉山公平 at the fifth Cannes Film Festival. See Boscaro 2000, pp. 68–69, and <http://www.festival-cannes.fr/archives/>, accessed 18 November 2004.

version.<sup>57</sup> At this stage Tanizaki had no intention of producing another translation of *Genji*.

PROCESS: THIRD TRANSLATION

Nonetheless, in what was to be the last year of Tanizaki's life, it was decided to put out yet another "Tanizaki *Genji*." Whether the idea was Tanizaki's or originated with his publisher is unclear, even to Ibuki, who was by that time living in Tokyo and employed full time in the editorial department of Chūōkōronsha. In his preface to the *Shin-shin'yaku*, Tanizaki states that the desire to attract younger readers was behind his decision to permit the publication of a third version of the translation:

A selection of my writings, redone in modern *kana* orthography, has already appeared as one volume of the *Nihon no bungaku* series, and a second volume will shortly appear. So long as the Tanizaki *Genji* remained available only in its old state, however, thus alienating the younger generation of readers, I, as the translator, felt left out. For myself, in my heart of hearts, I would like as many people as possible to read the Tanizaki *Genji*. If not, what a waste of all that work.<sup>58</sup>

This new version used the simplified *kanji* and pronunciation-based *kana* orthography that had become standard in the postwar period. It also simplified the use of respect language (*keigo* 敬語). In accordance with Tanizaki's wishes, no major revisions were made to the translation itself. Tokyo University professor of Heian-period literature Akiyama Ken and his graduate students were paid by Chūōkōronsha to go over the translation and suggest simplifications to both *kanji* and *keigo*. These were collated by staff in the editorial offices of the publishing company, then sent to Tanizaki for his approval.<sup>59</sup>

Like earlier versions of the Tanizaki *Genji*, this third translation has appeared in a variety of different editions over the years. In the autumn of 1970, when the eight-volume "deluxe popular edition" (*gōka fukyū-ban* 豪華普及版) went on sale, "*Shin-shin'yaku*" was finally dropped from the title. Renamed simply *Jun'ichirō yaku Genji monogatari*, the translation now forms part of the standard edition of Tanizaki's *Complete Works*; it also remains in print in a five-volume paperback edition and a single-volume large-format paperback. Sales of all three versions of the Tanizaki *Genji* generated enormous income for both publishing company and translator, and the successful marketing of the translations to a mass readership has recently become the subject of intense interest.<sup>60</sup>

57. Tanizaki 1959a, p. 349.

58. Tanizaki 1964, pp. 401–402.

59. Ibuki 2001a, vol. 2, pp. 267–268; Ibuki 2003, p. 187.

60. On this subject, see Iwasaki 2007 and Tateishi 2008.

## AFTERTHOUGHTS

This account of the process by which Tanizaki's three translations of *Genji* were produced inevitably prompts afterthoughts and reappraisals. We have noted the striking contrasts that emerge between "the Tanizaki *Genji*" and "the Yosano *Genji*," so often spoken of as if they were comparable in most ways other than their translators' individual styles, whereas in fact the former was the product of a well-funded corporate project involving large numbers of experts and assistants over long periods of time, and the latter a solitary labor of love involving just the writer herself. Here we need only add that the qualitative differences such a contrast yields go far deeper than style—differences that Enchi Fumiko (1905–86), novelist and fellow translator of *Genji*, sums up eloquently when she describes the Tanizaki *Genji* as an "extremely well-mannered translation," and then adds that "Mrs. Yosano's is much more the blood kin" of Murasaki's original, "sometimes straying far from it, sometimes doing it violence, but penetrating far more deeply into the interior of *Genji*."<sup>61</sup>

Nor do such afterthoughts emerge only in a comparative context. What, for example, are we now to make of Tanizaki's great "reverence" (*keichō* 敬重) for *Genji* "as a major classic of the highest order" that inspired in him such "zeal that he completed three modern-language translations with never a complaint of the rigors involved"<sup>62</sup>—translations the very existence of which underwrite "the fundamental importance of *The Tale of Genji* to the man and his art"<sup>63</sup> And what of the view that "for Tanizaki the novelist, his relationship with *The Tale of Genji* far transcends the level of a mere source, but possesses more fundamental significance; for only through *The Tale of Genji* was Tanizaki able to give concrete shape to his own inner self in a world of words"<sup>64</sup>

Our purpose in pointing to these views is not to pillory those who propound them. It is only natural to suppose that a novelist who undertakes to translate a work of the magnitude of *Genji*, written in the language of a millennium past, should have a major emotional investment in that work, and that those emotions should be a major force in the shaping of his own fictions. But, alas, the facts of Tanizaki's involvement with the *Genji* do not offer much support for these assumptions. When we examine the record, we find not a translator whose inspiration was a literary work so dear that (like Enchi Fumiko) he kept a copy perpetually at his bedside, but one who undertook the project at the behest of the president of a publishing company. Nor do we find a translator who (like Yosano Akiko) had a "stubborn confidence" in his or her command of the language of *Genji*,<sup>65</sup> but one who insisted upon the help of a specialist as a condition of his acceptance of the proposal, and who, as the project progressed, left more and more of the work to specialists while he himself lapsed

61. Enchi 1974, p. 253.

62. Hata 1976, p. 46.

63. Hata 1976, p. 37.

64. Ikeda 2001, p. 48.

65. Yosano 1913, p. 2.

into the role of a supervising editor. As for the importance of *Genji* to Tanizaki's own work, he expressed displeasure at critics who thought they could detect the influence of *Genji* in his long novel *Sasameyuki*.<sup>66</sup> And his "reverence" for *Genji*, as we have seen, was not so overwhelming that it gave him second thoughts about slashing the "spinal cord" of the plot.

In pointing out these discrepancies between received opinion and actual evidence, it must be emphasized that none of them is in any way the result of false pretensions on Tanizaki's part. His sense of "inadequacy" (*chikara ga tarinai*)<sup>67</sup> to a task of this magnitude, as well as the help given him by others more learned, are openly and graciously acknowledged. His assessment of *Genji* as "not all that great," and his disappointment that critics should think his *Sasameyuki* heavily under the influence of *Genji*, come unbidden from his own lips. "People seem to think I'm just mad about *Genji*," Tanizaki grumbles in the preface to his third translation, "but in fact I don't spend all that much time thinking about *Genji*. There have been long periods in my life when I've quite forgotten about *Genji*."<sup>68</sup> It seems fitting, therefore, that our suggestions for reappraisal should be followed by Tanizaki's own afterthoughts on translating *The Tale of Genji*. These were dictated to a secretary in the summer of 1965 and published in *Fujin kōron* in September, a little over a month after Tanizaki's death on 30 July 1965.<sup>69</sup> "Nikumareguchi" (Some Malicious Remarks), he calls them. These last words of his long career leave us with a clearly stated, authentic standard by which to judge both the assertions of some of his more wishful critics and the tentative conclusions drawn in this essay.

#### SOME MALICIOUS REMARKS

By Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

Translated by Thomas Harper

Howard Hibbett, who translated my novel *The Key*, teaches Japanese literature at Harvard University. He and his wife arrived on a visit to Japan in the autumn of last year and will remain, I am told, through the present year. The English of *The Key* is considered a model of fine translation. I had heard of Hibbett some time ago, but this was my first meeting with him. Our conversation chanced to turn to *The Tale of Genji*; whereupon Hibbett told me that American students, for the most part, are fonder of the Lady Murasaki than of the Shining Genji, who is not much liked.<sup>70</sup> This may be because his is a country that reveres women, and thus many

66. Ibuki 2003, p. 194.

67. Tamagami 1988, p. 7.

68. Tanizaki 1964, p. 401.

69. Ibuki 2001a, vol. 2, p. 307.

70. In a discussion (*taidan*) with Tanizaki, Hibbett notes that these opinions emerged from a questionnaire he asked his American students to complete. In response, Tanizaki agrees, and remarks that he intends to write an essay setting forth his criticisms of Hikaru Genji in the near future. "Nikumareguchi" would appear to be that essay. See Tanizaki and Hibbett 1964, pp. 4–5.

people automatically take the side of a woman; but what of we Japanese readers of *Genji*? In the present day at least, even if one distinguishes between male and female readers, I think one would find their attitudes much same as those of American readers.

I first read *Genji* in my fourth or fifth year of middle school. I don't think Mrs. Yosano's modern language translation had appeared at that time; but I read it [*Genji*] nonetheless, understanding very little, to be sure, with the help of the annotations in the *Kogetsushō*. This first time, needless to say, I hadn't the perseverance to read on to the end. I tried several times to read it through, and every time gave up somewhere along the way. As I recall, it was when I was at the First Higher School that somehow or other I finally managed to finish it. From my very first reading, however, I've been struck by that passage toward the end of “Hahakigi” where Genji sneaks into Utsusemi's bedroom. The ability to depict so risqué a scene so erotically and yet so tastefully seemed to me such a tremendous talent. But in that scene, where Genji is trying to seduce Utsusemi, we find the following speech:

This is so terribly sudden that you may well take it for a thoughtless whim; but I want you to know that you have been in my thoughts continuously for years. The fact that at long last I have seized this opportunity, I beg you to understand, shows how far from shallow the bond between us is.

(This and all subsequent quotations  
from my *Shin-shin'yaku*)  
[“Hahakigi” 1: 175]<sup>71</sup>

This woman, Utsusemi, is the wife of a provincial official who is far inferior in rank to Genji. Her husband is off in the country on official business, and she has come home on her own to the house in Kyoto. Whereupon Genji happens to arrive, asking to be put up for the night on account of a directional taboo. Such is the situation of these events. Genji could not previously have known the woman Utsusemi. He might possibly have heard her name, but the fact that she had left her husband in the country and come alone to Kyoto, and the fact that she was sleeping in this house, he could only have learnt after he arrived there. He himself reckons “there is nothing exceptional about her; but, pleasingly done-out woman that she is, she must surely count as a member of that ‘middle rank’” [“Hahakigi” 1: 181]. From this it would seem she was no great beauty; yet she is depicted, not surprisingly perhaps, as a strangely

71. Since, as Tanizaki notes, he quotes not from the original text but his own translation of *Genji*, I here translate Tanizaki's translation, as provided by him in “Nikumareguchi,” rather than the corresponding text in the original. This is done in the hope that it will better capture the interpretation of *Genji* on which Tanizaki bases the opinions he expresses in the essay. For the convenience of those who wish to consult the original text, volume and page numbers of the Shōgakukan edition of *Genji* are given following each quotation (Abe, Akiyama, and Imai 1970–76).



alluring woman. Genji, at that point, is sixteen or seventeen years old. No matter how exalted his station, it is nonetheless an outrage for him to force his way into the bedroom of a married woman and take her for his own. So what are we to make of it when he says, “This is terribly sudden . . . but I want you to know that you have been in my thoughts continuously for years, which is why I’ve seized this opportunity. Please don’t, by any means, think the bond between us shallow.” His words are mere clichés used to seduce women; but coming from a youth of noble breeding, who presumably is no jaded cynic, they hardly make a favorable impression. It may be that young men of that era matured sooner than they do nowadays; but those glib lies, flowing from his mouth with never an instant’s hesitation, somehow leave one feeling that this young man is more worldly-wise than becomes his years. Nor is Utsusemi the only one. Even to Nokiba no Ogi, whom he mistakes for Utsusemi and ends up in a strange relationship with, he sends Kogimi bearing a note saying, “Do you know that I yearn for you so much I could die?” He attaches his “Had I never tied that knot, ever so briefly, about the reeds beneath the eaves” poem to a tall reed,<sup>72</sup> telling the boy to “deliver it with caution.” But even if the boy should blunder, he tells himself, and the woman’s husband Shōshō should discover the note and realize that it was I who sent it, well, surely he’ll forgive me. Even if the husband does find out, my station being what it is, nothing much should come of it. He just dismisses the matter in a manner the author describes as “unspeakably vain.” She is absolutely right [“Yūgao” 1: 264–65].

Amorous escapades of this sort are something that anyone might get up to in his younger years, and are almost inevitable in the case of a young nobleman like Genji, so if it amounted to nothing more than that, we ought not, perhaps, take him to task too severely. But in Genji’s case, at this point in his life, there is another very dear person to whom his affections ought to have been devoted. In this same chapter, “Hahakigi,” there is a passage in which Genji overhears the women in the next room gossiping about him, and “he, whose thoughts were occupied solely by her for whom he so longed, was shocked that on such an occasion as this he himself might chance to hear someone spreading rumors of her” [“Hahakigi” 1: 171]. When the relationship between Fujitsubo and Genji begins is unclear, but this mention of a person “he so longed for” must refer to Fujitsubo. How it is that while “his thoughts are occupied solely” by this person, he is dallying with Utsusemi, Nokiba no Ogi, and Yūgao is a bit difficult to fathom. But even letting that pass, it is not easy to forgive him when he grabs hold of a married woman he encounters by mere chance and tells her, “You have been in my thoughts continuously for years,” or glibly proclaims, “I yearn for you so much I could die.” Historical differences notwithstanding, how can someone, while in love with a woman of such substance as Fujitsubo, take it into his head to say,

72. *honoka ni mo nokiba no ogi o musubazu wa / tsuyu no kagoto o nani ni kakemashi*: “Had I never tied that knot, ever so briefly, about the reeds beneath the eaves, / how should I now dare voice even a dewdrop of complaint?”



with total nonchalance, to a woman who has caught his fancy on nothing more than a passing whim, that he has been thinking of her for years, or that he yearns for her so much he could die? Even assuming that he says such things only in jest, it is still a terrible insult to Fujitsubo. The author of *The Tale of Genji* apparently is an unqualified admirer of the Shining Genji, and means to portray him as paragon of manhood; but for my own part, I just can't stomach the man's appalling smoothness.

Genji, by nature, seems not to have been well matched with his principal wife, Aoi no Ue. As he himself admits, quite frankly, “To my great discomfort, she is so decorous she somehow puts me to shame” [“Hahakigi” 1: 167]. In Aoi no Ue's entourage, however, there are some “extraordinarily beautiful young” gentlewomen, such as Chūnagon no Kimi and Nakatsukasa, with whom Genji banters quite casually [“Hahakigi” 1: 171]. Nor do they only banter. He has them massage his legs and his hips, and occasionally they go a bit further, which apparently delights the young ladies.

At some point, his relationship with the Rokujō Consort seems to have developed into a bond no less profound than that with Aoi no Ue. Yet in “Yūgao” there is a passage that reads:

Her gentlewoman Chūjō raised one of the shutters and pulled the curtain stand aside so that her ladyship could see him off. She [the Rokujō Consort] raised her head and looked out at the garden. The sight of him lingering there, as if loath to pass by the beauty of all the flowers and plants so radiantly in bloom, simply was not to be matched. Then, as he proceeded on toward the gallery, Chūjō accompanied him. She wore an aster-colored robe, well suited to the season, and the movement of her hips, about which she had neatly tied her sheer silk train, was gracefully enticing. Genji glanced back, drew her aside, and sat her down for a moment by the base of the rail outside the corner room. The great care with which she had done herself out, the drape of her hair—he was awed by the sight:

*saku hana ni utsuru chō na wa tsutsumedomo  
orade sugiuki kesa no asagao*

Though loath to be known as one who flits to whatever flower is in bloom,  
what a shame to pass by without plucking this morning face.

“So what shall we do?” he said, taking her hand in his. She was an experienced woman, and replied immediately, without missing a beat,

*asagiri no harema mo matanu keshiki nite  
hana ni kokoro o tomenu to zo miru*

From the sight of you not waiting even for morning  
mists to clear,  
it would appear your thoughts linger not upon your  
flower.

—purposely speaking with reference to her mistress.  
[“Yūgao” 1: 221–222]

Thus this gentlewoman Chūjō is treated just like the gentlewomen in the service of Aoi no Ue. Genji says, “What a shame to pass by without plucking this morning face,” draws her aside, and sits her down by the railing; and in the moment of hesitation that follows she realizes what is happening and says, “It would appear your thoughts linger not upon your flower,” adroitly taking “flower” as a reference to the Consort, and makes her escape. He carries on like this in full view of the Consort. Be it his lover or be it some woman he encounters merely by chance, such is Genji’s ingrained nature that he will banter with any woman he happens upon. If the delighted object of these attentions is someone’s gentlewoman, then a gentlewoman; if the Consort, then the Consort.

I think the thesis propounded by the venerable Motoori<sup>73</sup> is highly perspicacious—that *The Tale of Genji* was not written with the aim of “commending virtue and condemning vice”; that it is a book written principally to depict the varieties of human emotion (*mono no aware*); and thus that it is wrong to deal with it on the basis of distinctions between right and wrong, virtue and vice, such as those made by Confucian scholars; and that one must not judge the good and evil of the characters in the novel in a Confucianist’s frame of mind. But these men, such as I have just described, who spew forth this glib nonsense, are numerous even in the present day, and no matter by what measure one judges them, one can never admire them. To carry on a secret affair with the love of one’s own father, who happens also to be the sovereign ruler of the land, may be something one can sympathize with when viewed from the perspective of “the varieties of human emotion.” We may excuse that much, but to be striking up affairs with other lovers at the same time, and to be lavishing such honeyed lies upon these women, seems to me simply unforgivable. Being a feminist, I feel very strongly about this; so if the tables were turned in these relationships, it might not worry me so much. But in reading *Genji*, I always find this aspect of it distasteful.

And then there is the woman Oborozukiyo, the Palace Attendant. This woman is the beloved of Genji’s elder half-brother, who is also the heir to their father’s throne; yet with her, too, Genji carries on an illicit affair. The scene in which their affair is discovered by her father the Minister of the Right, the author describes in the following manner:

73. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), in his commentary *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* (1796).

[The Minister of the Right] suddenly burst in and lifting the blind said, “How were you last night? The weather was so dreadful, I was worried about you, but somehow didn’t manage to come by and see you. Chūjō and Miya no Suke would have been with you, surely?” He rambled on aimlessly, at a great rate; and the Commandant [Genji], even in this compromising situation, found himself comparing the man with the Minister of the Left, which he found indescribably amusing. Really, he thought, he might at least have come all the way in before he spoke.

[“Sakaki” 2: 136–137]

Even here, Genji’s great admirer Murasaki Shikibu takes the side of Genji the philanderer and describes the father, the Minister of the Right, as thoughtless, and says he should at least have come all the way in before he spoke—malicious remarks (*nikumareguchi*) she might better have left unsaid. And this incident precipitates Genji’s banishment to Suma.

Strangely enough, after he is banished to Suma, Genji composes the following poems:

*kumo chikaku tobikau tazu mo sora o miyo  
ware wa harubi no kumori naki mi zo*

Look down from the sky, ye cranes, who fly close  
by that realm in the clouds,  
for I am as free of taint as a cloudless day in spring.

[“Suma” 2: 207]

And:

*yao yorozu kami mo aware to omouran  
okaseru tsumi no sore to nakereba*

The gods in their myriads of millions must take pity  
upon me,  
for naught have I done that could count as committing a crime.

[“Suma” 2: 209]

“I am as free of taint as the sunshine on a day in spring,” he says; “I have done nothing that could be called a crime; and thus the myriad gods surely must feel sorry for me.” Can he really, in his heart of hearts, believe this? Or might he just be feigning innocence for the benefit of the Akashi Novice and the Akashi Lady? If the former, he has lost all sense of shame; and if the latter, one feels like telling him that even hypocrisy can be carried too far. If he were to look back and examine his own past life, he could hardly utter the words, “I have committed no crime.” Nor,

for that matter, is Genji the only one. Even the Kiritsubo emperor, who is no longer of this world but who has, we presume, returned to Heaven, accuses his second son Genji of no sin; instead, he appears in a dream to his eldest son the Suzaku emperor and berates him for behaving high-handedly toward his second son [“Akashi” 2: 241].

As regards Genji’s personal life, once one begins this sort of carping and probing, there is no limit to it. But in the end it does irritate me a bit that the author Murasaki Shikibu goes to such extremes to defend Genji that even the deities that appear in the tale seem timorous of Genji and take his side.

Well, in that case, you may well ask, don’t you like *The Tale of Genji*? And if you don’t like it, why did you translate it into the modern language? I cannot bring myself to like the man Genji who appears in the tale; and I cannot but harbor a certain antagonism toward Murasaki Shikibu for consistently taking the side of Genji. But viewed as a whole, one must, really, acknowledge the magnificence of the tale. Over the years there have been all manner of tales, but none of them even approaches this one. I am in complete agreement with the venerable Motoori’s encomium that “Every time I read this tale, it seems new to me; every time I read it, I am struck with wonder.”<sup>74</sup>

Mori Ōgai has said that *Genji* is an example of bad writing; but the writing in *Genji*, it seems to me, is of the sort least likely to appeal to someone of Ōgai’s character.<sup>75</sup> Ōgai’s writing, in which each and every word is clear and distinct, and meshes in a precise pattern with no waste or excess, is the very antithesis of the writing in *Genji*.<sup>76</sup>

74. Tanizaki here translates a passage from Motoori Norinaga’s commentary *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi*. See Motoori 1969, p. 234.

75. In fact it was not Ōgai, but the conservative poet Matsunami Sukeyuki 松波資之 (1830–1906), as quoted by Ōgai, who described *The Tale of Genji* as *akubun*, “bad writing.” See Ōgai’s preface to Yosano Akiko’s *Shin’yaku Genji monogatari* (Mori 1912, p. 5). As Ōgai goes on to explain, however, “he [Matsunami] was an old gentleman who often spoke with considerable irony, and so his words should not be taken at face value as an attack on the style of *The Tale of Genji*” (Mori 1912, pp. 5–6).

76. “Nikumareguchi,” first published in the September 1965 issue of *Fujin kōron*. Translated from the text in *TJZ*, 21, pp. 513–520.

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# What's So Classical about Tanizaki's Neoclassical Fiction? The Influence of Heian Narrative on Tanizaki's *Shōshō* *Shigemoto no haha*

AILEEN GATTEN

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō is known for memorable fiction set in premodern Japan.<sup>1</sup> It is memorable first for its meticulous attention to historical setting and wide use of literary, historical, and religious sources from the period—so wide, in fact, that Tanizaki must sometimes create an erudite narrator who will explain obscure customs and vocabulary to the reader. Second, Tanizaki's neoclassical fiction is memorable for its vivid portrayal of characters shaped by the culture and events of their time. Yet despite their grounding in a past world, there is something familiar about them: they tend to resemble characters from other works by Tanizaki—those set in modern times.

This is certainly true for the principal characters of *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (The Mother of Captain Shigemoto, 1949–50). The cruel, capricious young Lady Jijū is reminiscent of the heartless “modern girl” Naomi in *Chijin no ai* (Naomi, 1925); the old nobleman Kunitsune behaves rather like the twentieth-century professor-protagonist of *Kagi* (The Key, 1956); and although Shigemoto's mother probably represents the most successful portrayal of Tanizaki's “eternal woman,” similar characters appear in modern settings as well, such as Chinu in *Yume no ukihashi* (The Bridge of Dreams, 1959).

If many of the characters in *Shigemoto* seem familiar to Tanizaki readers, classicists will also recognize the ancient origins of much of its plot. Two stories in the twelfth-century collection *Konjaku monogatari shū* (Tales of Times Now Past) provide much of the narrative foundation for the first seven of the eleven chapters in *Shigemoto*. One of the *Konjaku* stories (book 22, story 8) tells how Minister of the Left Fujiwara no Tokihira (871–909) obtained for himself the beautiful young wife of his elderly uncle Kunitsune (828–908). The other (book 30, story 1) describes the romantic sufferings of the playboy-poet Taira no Sadafun (known also by his sobriquet, Heichū; 871?–923) at the hands of the heartless Jijū.<sup>2</sup>

1. Besides *Shigemoto*, some well-known examples are *Mōmoku monogatari* (A Blind Man's Tale, 1931), *Bushūkō hiwa* (The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi, 1932), and *Shunkinshō* (A Portrait of Shunkin, 1933).
2. In addition to *Konjaku*, Tanizaki quotes, summarizes, or draws on several premodern sources in *Shigemoto*. Ikeda Tsutomu identifies and lists the following: *Genji monogatari*, *Kakaishō* (a medieval *Genji* commentary); *Heichū monogatari* and *Yamato monogatari* (poem tales); *Kokinshū*, *Gosenshū*, *Shūishū*, and *Atsutada shū* (*waka* anthologies/collections); *Ōkagami* (a history-based tale); *Yotsugi monogatari*, *Jikkishō*, *Uji shū monogatari*, *Hyakunin isshu issekiwa*, and *Kankyo no tomo* (*setsuwa* collections); *Sonpi bunmyaku* (a genealogy); *Hakushi monjū* (a collection of Po Chū-i's poetry); and *Maka shikan* and *Daichidoron* (Buddhist treatises). Ikeda Tsutomu 1967, p. 35.

Is it reasonable, then, to conclude that *Shigemoto* is an assemblage of retold ancient stories populated by Tanizaki's favorite characters in Heian costume? Not entirely, because this view does not credit the creativity, knowledge, and virtuoso writing that characterize *Shigemoto*. Writing within a historical frame can pose special challenges for a creative writer. For example, Tanizaki's decision to use historical figures as his characters in *Shigemoto* limited his possibilities in creating their personalities, because he had to take into account their lives and natures as recorded in ancient sources. Thus although the characters in *Shigemoto* are unquestionably Tanizakian, they are also shaped within an extant context. The hapless Heijū was already known in literature as a victim of love, and the foundation of Kunitsune's personality in *Shigemoto* is already present in *Konjaku*.<sup>3</sup> Other examples of Tanizaki's craft lie in his mastery of the plethora of classical sources used in *Shigemoto* and the sly insertion of his own fictional document, the fragmentary "Diary of Shigemoto," which determines the plot for the second half of the novella.

Tanizaki was fascinated by the past, both for what it told and what it concealed. He was also interested in the indistinct boundary between historical fact and fiction. In an essay originally published in *Mainichi shinbun* in January 1949, Tanizaki begins by stating that "the boundary between truth and falsehood is blurred."<sup>4</sup> If an author follows history too carefully in crafting a story, he continues, it will restrain the wings of imagination: "While striving to be faithful to historical facts, I seek out the gaps in the historical record and there unfold my own world."<sup>5</sup>

If we assume, then, that *Shigemoto* is a creative retelling of ancient stories and legends, this raises another question. Discounting the more superficial elements—setting, sources, costume—what is classical about the "neoclassical" *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha*? Is its classicism entirely on the surface, or does it reflect a deeper sensitivity to Heian narrative? In this essay I argue in favor of the latter position: in *Shigemoto*, Tanizaki's celebrated stylistic versatility and broad knowledge of classical literature combine to convey, through style and imagery, the flavor of a classical *monogatari*. I begin by discussing the relationship between *Shigemoto* and Tanizaki's second *Genji* translation, and then analyze the text of *Shigemoto* with specific reference to *Genji* and other classical literature to elucidate how Tanizaki was influenced by Heian narrative methods.

#### THE ROLE OF GENJI

Why should there be any classical influence in *Shigemoto*? After all, few writers of historical fiction display much interest in using narrative techniques typical of the

3. All the principal characters in *Shigemoto* are historical figures active in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. However, the narrator of *Shigemoto* uses variant pronunciations of two principal characters' names, citing obscure precedents. He refers to Tokihira as "Shiheī," an unvoiced version of "Jiheī," the *on* reading of "Tokihira," and to Heichū as "Heijū," using a voiced pronunciation of the second character of the sobriquet. In this essay I refer to the historical/literary figures as Tokihira and Heichū, and to Tanizaki's characters as Shihei and Heijū.

4. *TJZ* 23, p. 233. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

5. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 95; *TJZ* 23, p. 234.

period they portray. One answer may lie in the chronological position of *Shigemoto* within Tanizaki's oeuvre. Having completed *Sasameyuki* (The Makioka Sisters) in May 1948, Tanizaki began work less than a year later on *Shigemoto*, writing it in what was, for him, a "remarkably short time"—about six months.<sup>6</sup> *Shigemoto* was serialized in *Mainichi shinbun* from December 1949 to March 1950. Tanizaki's next project, begun in June 1950, was the twelve-volume *Jun'ichirō shin'yaku Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, Jun'ichirō's New Translation, 1951–54), the second of his three translations of *Genji monogatari* into modern Japanese.<sup>7</sup> Given Tanizaki's decision to make the second translation a complete redoing of the first,<sup>8</sup> the length of the *Genji* text, and a publication date for the first volumes of May 1951, we may conclude that the June 1950 "beginning" of work on the retranslation refers to activity leading up to a final draft, at least for the first part of *Genji*, rather than to the early stages of a revision. Before he wrote his final draft, Tanizaki would have devoted considerable time to rereading the original text and mulling over how he would improve on his first translation. Thus we may reasonably assume that *Genji* loomed large in Tanizaki's life while he was envisioning and writing *Shigemoto*.

Tanizaki's preparations for a new *Genji* translation may indeed have directly influenced his decision to write *Shigemoto* by inspiring him to return to a favorite genre of his youth—fiction set in the Heian period.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, Tanizaki's immersion in *Genji* motivated him, at the height of his creative powers, to produce a novel rich in the kind of narrative, thematic, and imagistic elements characteristic of Heian *monogatari*.

Before examining in detail those elements of *Shigemoto* that reflect Tanizaki's deep literary connection to *Genji*, a summary of the plot of this two-part novella may prove useful.<sup>10</sup> Part One begins by describing the playboy-poet Heijū, his infatuation with Lady Jijū, and his friendship with Jijū's master Shihei, the Minister of the Left. Jijū toys with Heijū's affections, refusing to see him until one rainy night when she tricks him cruelly. This episode marks the beginning of Heijū's obsession with Jijū. The story shifts to an evocation of Heijū's famous chrysanthemums and then to Heijū and Shihei as they talk of women—particularly the wife of Shihei's aged uncle, Kunitsune. Shihei, who despises his uncle but is fascinated by the wife's reputation for beauty, questions Heijū about her. Heijū admits that he has had a brief affair with her. Following his conversation with Heijū, Shihei plots to get the lady

6. Chambers 1978, p. 361.

7. See Itō Sei 1958, p. 278. Tanizaki began his first translation, the 23-volume *Jun'ichirō yaku Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, Jun'ichirō's Translation), in 1935; it was published from 1939 to 1941. He published his third translation, in 10 volumes, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō shinshin'yaku Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's Newest Translation), from 1964 to 1965.

8. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (trans.) 1951–54, 1, p. 10.

9. Anthony H. Chambers observes that many of Tanizaki's stories written between 1910 and 1918 are set in the Heian period, but that "with the exception of *Genji*, the Heian period disappears from his writings between 1918 and 1949." Chambers 1978, p. 362.

10. There are several translations of *Shigemoto* into Western languages, including those by Guglielmo Scalise, *La madre del generale Shigemoto*, 1966; Anthony H. Chambers in *The Reed Cutter and Captain Shigemoto's Mother*, 1994; and Jacqueline Pigeot, *La mère du général Shigemoto*, 1998.

for himself. He showers the astonished Kunitsune with attention and gifts, and finally pays his uncle the great honor (since Kunitsune's rank is far lower than Shihei's) of visiting his house for a New Year's celebration. Once admitted to Kunitsune's house, Shihei will carry out his plan.

Kunitsune's banquet, at which Shihei and his fellow courtiers are entertained in grand style, constitutes the climax of Part One. The wife, watching the party from behind her blinds, finds Shihei splendid, while Shihei openly stares in her direction. At the end of the banquet, when Kunitsune brings out the conventional parting gifts for his guest of honor, the drunken Shihei rejects them and demands something better: Kunitsune's wife. The old man, equally drunk, pulls his wife from behind the blinds and presents her to his nephew, who bundles her into a carriage and takes her to his house.

Kunitsune awakens the next day appalled at what he has done. Meanwhile, Heijū has continued to be tormented by Jijū. Desperate to find a reason for falling out of love with her, Heijū steals Jijū's chamber pot, contemplates its contents, and finally tastes them. But their ambrosial flavors only make him love her more. A prisoner of his infatuation, Heijū sickens and dies. Shihei, too, dies a few years after taking away Kunitsune's wife. The vengeful ghost of Shihei's political rival Michizane is said to have laid the curse of a short life on him and his descendants.

Part Two, based on the surviving fragments of the title character Shigemoto's diary, describes the child Shigemoto's relations with his parents—Kunitsune and his wife—and his search as an adult for his mother, who has become a nun in her old age. Shigemoto's visits to his mother at Shihei's house ended while he was still a boy, and his memories of her, though intense, are vague. His years with his father are crystal clear, however. As a youth Shigemoto watches Kunitsune as he tries to forget his former wife, first through drinking and Chinese poetry, then through Buddhist devotions. Finally Kunitsune turns to *fujōkan*, a radical Buddhist meditative practice advocating the pursuit of enlightenment through contemplation of the impure. In Kunitsune's case, the impure object is the decaying body of a young woman exposed in a burial ground on the outskirts of the city. On one of Kunitsune's nightly visits to the burial ground, Shigemoto follows his father and watches him at his devotions. His father later explains that he is doing this to forget Shigemoto's mother; Shigemoto is shocked, believing that Kunitsune is trying to turn his mother into something dirty. Several months after this episode Kunitsune dies, still unrec- onciled to his loss.

In the climax of Part Two, the middle-aged Shigemoto journeys to his mother's retreat at Ono, north of Kyoto, reaches it near dusk, and finds his mother as she is gathering flowers and admiring a blossoming cherry tree. Mother and son are reunited.

#### HEIAN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN SHIGEMOTO

Although the character types in *Shigemoto*—the tormenting woman and her male victim, the impotent husband and his younger rival, the eternal woman—are unmis-

takably Tanizaki's, many of the narrative techniques he uses would have been familiar to Murasaki Shikibu. In structure, theme, imagery, and style, Tanizaki observes Heian narrative conventions. Was this done intentionally, to impart an antique luster to *Shigemoto*, or is it the unconscious result of a thorough internalizing of *Genji* and other classical works? Since Tanizaki did not see fit to tell us, it is the reader's task to decide.

### Structure

Given the brevity of the novella *Shigemoto* in contrast to the famously long *Genji monogatari*, structural similarities might seem difficult to find. In terms of overall structure, however, both narratives begin in the halcyon days of the early tenth century among the high court society of the capital, and conclude decades later (about seventy-five years in the case of *Genji*, some forty years with *Shigemoto*) near a nun's dwelling at Ono, in the foothills of Mount Hiei. This may not be so much a narrative technique as, perhaps, an act of homage to *Genji*, but the resemblance is worth noting.

Classical influence is also apparent in the structure of individual chapters in *Shigemoto*. By constructing some chapters around one or more *waka*, for example, Tanizaki employs a narrative device that flourished in the tenth-century poetry-prose narratives known as *utamonogatari*. In these works, typified by *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise, ca. 950), a *waka* "marks the climactic point in the plot development and provides the impetus by which problems in the story are either resolved smoothly or end in catastrophe."<sup>11</sup>

Somewhat later in the Heian period, this device came to be used in longer works of prose fiction. In these *monogatari*, *Genji* included, a *waka* signals the emotional high point of an episode, and can also serve as a leitmotif for a character or section. Heian authors either composed such *waka* especially for a given passage or used pre-existing *waka* apposite to the situation. In the latter case, the poem acquired a new context within the *monogatari*, but its original context could provide further resonance for a readership well acquainted with royal *waka* anthologies (*chokusenshū*), *utamonogatari*, and the major personal *waka* collections (*kashū*).

The *waka* in Chapter 2 of *Shigemoto* all do double duty: each poem both supplies or reinforces leitmotif imagery and acts as a link to the central scene, which is the conversation between Shihei and Heijū about Kunitsune's wife. As a whole, moreover, these *waka* serve as an imagistic framing device for the chapter.

Three tenth-century *waka*, all about chrysanthemums, are quoted in Chapter 2. Although the narrator gives the source and original context of each poem, all acquire a new function and significance in *Shigemoto*. The first poem appears near the beginning of the chapter, following a short description of Heijū as connoisseur and cultivator of chrysanthemums. The narrator prefaces the poem with a discussion of its original context: written by Taira no Sadafun—known by his sobriquet, Heichū

11. Konishi 1986, p. 362.

(the historical figure portrayed in *Shigemoto* by Tanizaki's character Heijū)—it accompanied a gift of chrysanthemums sent to the retired emperor Uda. Heichū's *waka* praises the ethereal beauty of the flowers after they have been touched by the frosts of early winter:

For chrysanthemums  
there is a season of splendor  
other than autumn:  
they but increase in beauty  
after their color changes.<sup>12</sup>

秋をおきて時こそありけれ菊の花うつろふからに色のまされば  
*Aki o okite toki koso arikere kiku no hana utsurou kara ni iro no masareba*<sup>13</sup>

Tanizaki has reasons for quoting this poem beyond the obvious fact that it was written by the historical equivalent of one of his characters. The image of the late chrysanthemum evoked by the *waka* helps in ordering the narrative of the chapter. First, it reinforces the change of season stated in the first sentence of Chapter 2: “Meanwhile summer passed and autumn deepened, and the season arrived for the color and fragrance to fade from the chrysanthemums that bloomed on the rustic fence at Heijū’s house.”<sup>14</sup> Second, it suggests what we already expect: that the story to come will concern a beautiful woman, and that in this chapter the chrysanthemum will be her motif.

Women are conventionally compared to flowers in Heian *monogatari*.<sup>15</sup> The motif of Shigemoto’s mother as flower appears throughout *Shigemoto*, but it is sounded for the first time with this *waka*. The lady is later compared to flowers in their prime—she is memorably likened to a peony in the banquet scene of Chapter 4—but here, in the first appearance of the trope, the flower is a fading winter chrysanthemum. In Heian literature, such an image typically evokes an old woman near death, and indeed, the poem seems to foreshadow the beauty of Shigemoto’s elderly mother as we see her in the final chapter.<sup>16</sup> Thus the poem functions as an overture of sorts, alerting the reader to future developments.

Third, the *waka* moves the narrative forward, setting the stage for the narrator’s next words: “One winter night, when the blossoms he grew so assiduously had finally lost all color and scent, Heijū called again on the Hon’in Minister [Shihei] and joined him in society gossip of all sorts.”<sup>17</sup> Their gossip, as we have seen, concerns

12. McCullough (trans.) 1985, 69; *TJZ* 16, p. 171.

13. Sadafun’s poem appears in *Kokinshū* (book 5, poem 279) and *Heichū monogatari* (section 20).

14. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 74; *TJZ* 16, p. 170.

15. Two of many possible examples are Yūgao, the “lady of the evening faces” in *Genji*, and several female characters in the short story “Hanada no nyōgo” in *Tsutsumi Chūnagon monogatari*. For an English translation of the latter, see Backus (trans.) 1985.

16. For a discussion of the Heian appreciation of the “beauty of the moribund,” see Gatten 1993.

17. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 75; *TJZ* 16, p. 171.



Kunitsune's wife and forms the core of the chapter. It is at this point that the reader learns, through Shihei's interrogation of Heijū, of the lady's youth and beauty, her unhappiness at being married to a man in his late seventies, her past affair with Heijū, and the existence of her little boy, Shigemoto.

The final two *waka* appear at the conclusion of Chapter 2, following the conversation between Shihei and Heijū. They are a pair of poems originally exchanged by the historical Kunitsune and Heichū, and again they concern chrysanthemums. In the original setting of these poems, in section 21 of *Heichū monogatari* (Tales of Heichū, ca. 965), Heichū receives a letter from Kunitsune and writes a reply, which he folds and ties to the stalk of one of his magnificent chrysanthemums. Kunitsune responds to the message and gift with a poem:

Ah, how this old fellow  
(who has lived through many reigns)  
wishes he might take  
his walking stick and see if he  
could find this blossom's dwelling place!

御代をへて古りたる翁杖つきて花のありかを見るよしもがな  
*Miyo o hete furitaru okina tsue tsukite hana no arika o miru yoshi mo*  
*ga na*

Heichū replies:

If you were but to come  
near the pathway to my house,  
your presence would enhance  
the scent of the chrysanthemums  
that grow among the weeds and grass.

たまぼこに君し来よらば浅芽生に交れる菊の香はまさりなむ  
*Tamaboko ni kimi shi kiyoraba asajifu ni majireru kiku no ka wa masari-*  
*namu*<sup>18</sup>

The exchange in *Heichū monogatari* is no more than an elegant way of saying “thank you” and “you’re welcome.” It takes on new significance, however, in the context of Chapter 2 of *Shigemoto*, for these poems concern not the frosty, fading chrysanthemum of early winter but blossoms at the height of their lustrous beauty, and Heijū's and Shihei's conversation has concerned just such a flower: Kunitsune's wife. Tanizaki's narrator further emphasizes the connection—and gives poignant overtones to the exchange—with the final sentence of the chapter: “Could Heijū, recalling that he had already plucked the old man's most cherished blossom, have intended his gift to be ironic?”<sup>19</sup> Kunitsune's lovely chrysanthemum, already enjoyed

18. *Heichū monogatari* 1984, 21, p. 75; *TJZ* 16, p. 179.

19. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 83; *TJZ* 16, p. 180.

by Heijū, is about to be transplanted to Shihei's house. Kunitsune will indeed come to wish that he could totter over on his stick to see where his former wife has come to live.

### *Theme and Imagery*

The chrysanthemum poems of Chapter 2 illustrate the usefulness of classical imagery in structuring a narrative. An example of Heian imagery supporting a theme occurs in the final chapter of *Shigemoto*: there, in perhaps the most famous passage of the novella, Shigemoto's mother is identified with a cherry tree in full bloom. Looking for his mother, who is living as a nun in Ono, the middle-aged Shigemoto finds himself one spring twilight beholding a "large cherry tree blossoming so radiantly that it seemed to fling back the evening darkness that floated about it."<sup>20</sup> As he admires the tree in the light of a misty moon, he sees "a white, fluffy object swaying under the cherry tree. A blossom-laden branch drooped over it, and Shigemoto had not distinguished between them at first; but the white, fluffy object—too large to be a clump of blossoms—might have been fluttering there for some time before he noticed it."<sup>21</sup> The "fluffy object" proves to be his mother's white head-covering.

The scene is reminiscent of another well-known passage: in the "Nowaki" (Typhoon) chapter of *Genji monogatari*, Yūgiri catches a rare glimpse of his stepmother Murasaki: "Her noble beauty made him think of a fine birch cherry blooming through the hazes of spring."<sup>22</sup> Rather than simply borrow the *Genji* image, however, Tanizaki produces a creative variation, transforming the Heian trope of blossoming beauty into Shigemoto's curious vision of a cherry tree's branch that morphs into a nun's white hood in the dusk. "[Shigemoto's] mother does not simply appear," notes Anthony H. Chambers, "she emerges from the blossoms as though created from them by some wonderful alchemy."<sup>23</sup>

Chambers has written persuasively of Tanizaki's use of spring and autumn imagery in *Shigemoto* to contrast Shigemoto's mother (native culture) with his father Kunitsune (foreign culture).<sup>24</sup> As child and as man, Shigemoto encounters his mother in the spring; their meetings take place in semidarkness and are described in impressionistic, lyrical terms, and the mother's medium of communication with the outside world is the native *kana* syllabary. Kunitsune and his son meet in the bright light of the sun or full moon and engage in the imported intellectual pursuits of Chinese poetry and Buddhist scripture.

One might build on Chambers's perception by observing that Tanizaki is playing a literary game beloved of the ancients, including Murasaki Shikibu: determining which is the supreme season, spring or autumn. *Genji* and his son Yūgiri politely debate this vital question in the second "Wakana" (New Herbs) chapter.<sup>25</sup> The

20. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 176; *TJZ* 16, p. 278.

21. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 178; *TJZ* 16, pp. 279–280.

22. Seidensticker (trans.) 1976, 1, p. 458; *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, 14, p. 257.

23. Chambers 1994b, p. 101.

24. Chambers 1978, pp. 365–367, and 1994b, pp. 99–101.

25. *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, pp. 186–187; Seidensticker (trans.) 1976, p. 603.

question is also acted out in *Genji*, through the good-natured rivalry of Akikonomu, whose sobriquet means “Autumn-lover,” and Murasaki, whose motif is the cherry tree and whose garden is dedicated to spring. Like Murasaki Shikibu, Tanizaki finds spring the superior season and identifies his heroine with spring.

In writing of a man's longing for his mother in *Shigemoto*, Tanizaki explores a theme notable in his writing since at least *Haha o kohuru ki* (Longing for Mother, 1919).<sup>26</sup> Long before Tanizaki, however, Murasaki Shikibu used this theme as one of the principal forces motivating her hero Genji in his pursuit of love. One might well wonder whether this theme played a role in Tanizaki's lifelong attraction to *Genji monogatari*.

The harmful, even fatal consequences of sexual love and the concomitant purity of love between parent and child are two other favorite themes of Heian *monogatari* that are sustained in *Shigemoto*. The theme of Part One (Chapters 1–7) is the battle for sexual possession of Shigemoto's mother and the tragicomedy it precipitates. At the conclusion of this section, the amoralist Heijū is dead of frustrated love and Shihei has died in his prime, bequeathing the curse of an early death to all but the most prudent of his progeny. The message here, as in *Genji*, is that amorous love leads only to destruction, which can also be visited on future generations. By contrast, Part Two (Chapters 8–11) describes the spiritual health and salvation achieved by the reunion of mother and child. Such a family-oriented stance is common in Heian prose fiction, including *Utsuho monogatari* (Tale of the Hollow Tree, late tenth century), *Genji*, and *Yoru no nezame* (Wakeful Nights, ca. 1080). In these works, family bonds are portrayed as far stronger and better than those of amorous passion, and mother love is perceived as an admirable, healthy emotion.

#### LITERARY STYLE

We have seen how Tanizaki uses Heian narrative techniques—imagery, tropes, and themes common to *Genji* and other *monogatari*—to structure his narrative, create leitmotifs, and underscore his own themes in *Shigemoto*. I conclude by analyzing two aspects of classical influence in *Shigemoto* that fall under the general rubric of style: Tanizaki's use of narratorial distance in creating complex characters, and the way he transforms a familiar trope from classical poetry into a unifying theme in *Shigemoto*.

#### *The Narrator and Characterization*

Tanizaki “seeks out the gaps” in the *Konjaku* stories of Kunitsune's wife and Heichū's romantic torment, and fills these blank spaces with a mélange of episodes from ancient sources and his own “Diary of Shigemoto.” Gaps in characterization are similarly bridged by Tanizaki, who turns the straightforward characters in *Konjaku* into more complex personalities. This is achieved chiefly through two techniques:

26. Chambers 1978, pp. 362–363.

having the narrator tell us in detail what a character is thinking and feeling, and permitting us to enter the mind of a character without apparent narratorial intervention. One narratorial stance often directly follows the other, so that we are able to view a character's thoughts from shifting distances.

One of the best examples of this technique appears in Chapter 5, which describes Kunitsune's thoughts when he awakes, alone, in his bedroom on the morning after the banquet at which he gave his wife to Shihei. The narrator begins by telling the reader how Kunitsune had collapsed immediately after Shihei departed with the lady; this passage is followed by a description of Kunitsune's sensations of cold as he awakes the next morning. Then the narration directly transmits Kunitsune's thoughts:

Where was he? Had he been sleeping somewhere other than his usual bed? Looking around, he was certain that the curtains and the bedding and the incense permeating them were those of the bedchamber in his own house, familiar to him morning and evening. The only difference was that he was in bed alone . . .

Why was she not here in his arms, this morning of all mornings?  
Where had she gone?<sup>27</sup>

Narratorial distance in this chapter continues to shift, moving like a camera lens from the broad view—objective description of Kunitsune's actions and thoughts—to the close-up, seemingly unmediated representation of the thoughts themselves. The primary effect of this narrative style is to increase the complexity of the character Kunitsune; a secondary effect is to offer a plausible, characteristically Tanizakian reason for Kunitsune's outrageous act.

The Kunitsune of *Konjaku monogatari shū* is a stock character, a rash old man who lets his pride get the better of him. His motive for giving away his wife is succinctly described in the *setsuwa* (story). Throughout the banquet, Kunitsune notices to his annoyance that Tokihira (Tanizaki's Shihei) is staring openly at the blinds behind which Kunitsune's wife is sitting. As the banquet is ending, Tokihira rejects Kunitsune's parting gifts and urges him to produce a truly splendid present in their place:

It occurred to [Kunitsune] to show his nephew what sort of wife he had. Crazed with drink, he said, "Look what I have—a beautiful young wife. You're a fine minister to be sure, but you can have no one like her. Just fancy her living with an old codger! I'll let her be your parting gift," and he pushed the screens aside, thrust his hand behind the blinds, and pulled the lady out by her sleeve. "Here she is," he said.<sup>28</sup>

Although Tanizaki follows the plot of the *Konjaku* story, his Kunitsune acts from complex, often contradictory motives that are carefully developed in the course

27. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, pp. 104–105; *TJZ* 16, pp. 204–205.

28. Marian Ury (trans.) 1979, p. 137; *Konjaku monogatari* 1993–99, 36, pp. 340–341.

of the narrative. We learn in Chapter 2 that Kunitsune is a vigorous man who was well into his seventies when he fathered Shigemoto. Chapter 3 narrates some of his feelings for his wife: adoration, pity, guilt, and pride, all intensified by an awareness of failing sexual powers. He wants to show her off, but he also wishes to free her from living with an old man. Following the climactic banquet scene in Chapter 4, Tanizaki's narrator completes the portrait of Kunitsune's psyche with the stream-of-consciousness narration in Chapter 5, as the old man lies in bed and thinks over what he has done.

In the course of his early morning thoughts, Kunitsune realizes that he was pleased to see Shihei staring at his wife's blinds, not only because he was proud of his wife but because he had long wished to give her to someone younger; this would relieve his guilt and win his wife's gratitude. Shihei's breach of etiquette thus signals the imminent fulfillment of Kunitsune's desire. But later, when the deed is done, Kunitsune is deeply depressed and becomes "a living dead man" (*ikinagara shinda ningen*).<sup>29</sup> Tanizaki's Kunitsune, a good-natured, decent man, is shown principally through stream-of-consciousness narration to be motivated as much by guilt, greed, altruism, masochism, and the desire to be loved as he is by the pride of the *Konjaku* Kunitsune.

Tanizaki is famous for sympathetic portrayals of complicated old men, the most prominent examples being the protagonists of *Kagi* and *Fūten rōjin nikki* (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1962). But the two latter characters reveal their personalities only through diary entries, thus introducing considerable ambiguity into the characterization. By contrast, Kunitsune's personality is unambiguously revealed through direct narration of his thoughts.

*Genji monogatari* is very likely the locus classicus for the narrative techniques Tanizaki employed in depicting Kunitsune and other characters in *Shigemoto*. The final ten chapters of *Genji*, known as *Uji jūjū* (The Ten Uji Chapters), are characterized by meticulous depiction of the characters' thought processes, often through the use of stream-of-consciousness narration.

Constantly shifting narratorial distance is also typical of the Uji chapters.<sup>30</sup> Compare, for example, Kunitsune's ruminations in bed with a passage from Chapter 52 of *Genji*, "Kagerō" (The Drake Fly). Kaoru, having just heard that his beloved Ukifune has disappeared and is believed dead, is trying to come to terms with his loss. The narrator begins with third-person description, marked by the use of honorific verbs: "He deeply lamented [*nagekitamau*; in his *Shin'yaku* translation, Tanizaki uses *onageki ni narimasu*] the utter fragility of their bond."<sup>31</sup> Kaoru's thoughts are then stated directly, without honorifics.<sup>32</sup>

29. *TJZ* 16, p. 212.

30. The best work in Western languages on narrative strategies in *Genji* is Amanda Mayer Stinchecum's 1985 *Narrative Voice in "The Tale of Genji."* Chapter 4 is particularly applicable to our discussion.

31. *Genji monogatari* 1970–76 17, p. 205; Tanizaki 1951–54, 10, p. 88.

32. Tanizaki does not use honorifics in his third-person narration of *Shigemoto*, so it is not always as easy as with *Genji* to discern the shift from third-person narration to direct presentation of the character's thoughts.

The pretty face, those winning ways, were gone forever. Why had he been so slow to act while she was alive, why had he not pressed his cause more aggressively? Numberless regrets burned within him, so intense that there was no quenching them. For him, at least, love seemed to be unrelieved torment. Perhaps the powers above were angry that, against his own better impulses, he had remained in the vulgar world. They had a way of hiding their mercy, of subjecting a man to the sorest trials and imposing enlightenment upon him.<sup>33</sup>

The narrator then reappears to mark the end of Kaoru's thoughts with an honorific "while he continued to ponder."<sup>34</sup> Kaoru's "close-up" is over, and his thoughts are again mediated through the narrator.

Kaoru shares similar circumstances with Kunitsune in this passage. Each is slowly beginning to realize that he has lost the woman dearest to him, and each is trying to determine what role he played in that loss. Of the two, Kunitsune is more honest with himself. But Kaoru's thoughts, self-pitying and conceited though they are, vividly portray his personality at one of the bleakest points in his story.

### *Scent and Memory*

Tanizaki's admission that his historical novels emerged from discovering "gaps" within which to create a story is an instructive but hardly comprehensive description of his method. There is at least one example in *Shigemoto* of Tanizaki choosing to *add* extra details to the original story, rather than supplementing an incomplete narrative. The question is, why?

In the central scene in Chapter 1 of *Shigemoto*, Heijū and Lady Jijū meet for the first and only time. This scene is a fairly faithful retelling of part of the original *Konjaku* anecdote,<sup>35</sup> which can be summarized as follows. Heichū, a handsome fellow accustomed to success with the ladies, courts Jijū but receives no encouragement from her. Finally, returning from the palace one dark, rainy night, he goes to her quarters on an impulse, hoping that his arrival in such inclement weather will soften her stony heart. Jijū's maid has Heichū wait outside for quite some time before finally unlatching the door. It is pitch black inside the building, but Heichū, following an elegant scent, finds Jijū's bedroom. A woman is lying there, covered by a sheer robe. Heichū lies down next to her, feeling her face and cold hair, and removes his outer clothing in anticipation. The woman suddenly gets up from the bed, saying that she must lock the sliding door to her room. This she does, but from the other side of the door, so that Heichū is locked in by himself. When Jijū fails to return, Heichū realizes that he has been tricked, and leaves as dawn is breaking.

Tanizaki's version is amplified thus: when Jijū gets up to lock the door, she

33. Seidensticker (trans.) 1976, p. 1018; *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, 17, pp. 205–206.

34. "To omoitsuzuketamaitsumu," *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, 17, p. 206; "to okangae ni nattari shina-gara," Tanizaki 1951–54, 10, p. 88.

35. Book 30, story 1; *Konjaku monogatari shū* 1993–99, 37, pp. 392–396.

removes her outer robe and leaves wearing an unlined robe and *hakama*. After Heijū realizes that he has been duped,

he was in no hurry to put on the robes he had discarded there; instead, though he knew he was being foolish, he embraced the robe and the pillow that the lady had left behind, stroked them, and finally lay down, resting his face on the pillow and wrapping himself in the robe. . . . He lay in the darkness . . . enveloped in the woman's warm, lingering scent.<sup>36</sup>

Then, as in the *Konjaku* version, he slips out of Jijū's room at dawn.

Why did Tanizaki add these details? To underscore Heijū's emerging obsession? Yes, but that is not the only reason. Heijū's wrapping himself in a lost love's robe is the first statement of a theme in *Shigemoto* centering on clothing, scent, and memory.

The theme is restated in Chapter 9, when the child Shigemoto goes to see his father in his room some months after his mother has left. Kunitsune has kept to his room and neglected his court duties since the night of the banquet, and has become emaciated and rather unkempt. The little boy finds him frightening:

[Kunitsune] was sitting like a wolf beside his pillow, apparently having just risen from bed . . . .

As father and son looked each other over, the fear oppressing Shigemoto's heart gradually abated, to be replaced by an inexpressibly sweet nostalgia (*aru iishirenu amai natsukashii kankaku*). At first he did not recognize its source, but soon he noticed that the room was filled with the fragrance of the incense that his mother had always burned into her robes. Then he saw clothing that his mother used to wear, scattered around his father where he sat . . . .

Suddenly his father said, "Do you remember this, my boy?" Extending his hard, dry arm like an iron bar, he grasped the collar of a colorful robe.

Shigemoto went to his side. His father held the robe up in front of Shigemoto with both hands, then buried his face in it and remained motionless for a long time.<sup>37</sup>

Like Heijū, Kunitsune has no better substitute for his lost love than the scented clothing she has left behind. Alone in his bedroom, Kunitsune buries his face in a robe the scent of which transports him to happier times. Shigemoto's unconscious mood shift from fear to "an inexpressibly sweet nostalgia" is also caused by his mother's familiar scent.

The third restatement of the theme, and its resolution, is in the final sentence of *Shigemoto*. Mother and son embrace after forty years' separation: "The fragrance of incense in the sleeves of her black robe recalled to him that lingering scent of long

36. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 73; *TJZ* 16, pp. 168–169.

37. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 146; *TJZ* 16, pp. 246–247.



ago, and like a child secure in his mother's love, he wiped his tears again and again with her sleeve."<sup>38</sup>

The theme of scent and memory, beautifully expressed in its three variations, gives unity to the narrative, but it is not entirely Tanizaki's creation. He probably drew its basic components—a deserted lover taking comfort in a lady's castoff clothes, and the power of scent to recall vanished times—from *Genji monogatari*.

The lady of the locust shell is one of the few female characters to escape the amorous Genji. In Chapter 3, "Utsusemi" (The Shell of the Locust), the lady, trying to sleep in her dark room, is alerted that something is amiss by an unusual scent—Genji's. She flees the chamber, leaving behind a thin summer robe. Genji retrieves it and, when he has returned home, "pulled her robe under his quilt and went to bed."<sup>39</sup> Having the lady's robe against his skin is not conducive to sleep, however, so Genji gets up and writes the "locust shell" poem from which the chapter takes its name. "The lady's fragrance lingered in the robe he had taken. He kept it with him, gazing fondly at it."<sup>40</sup>

The original text of this last quotation is as follows: *Kano usuginu wa kouchigi no ito natsukashiki hitoga ni shimeru o mi chikaku narashite miitamaeri*. The most important word here, for our purposes, is *natsukashiki*. Tanizaki uses the same adjective in its modern form, *natsukashii*, to describe Shigemoto's "inexpressibly sweet nostalgia" (*iishirenu amai natsukashii kankaku*), and to translate the "Utsusemi" passage in his *Shin'yaku: Tada ano usuginu wa, natsukashii hito no utsuriga no shimitsuite iru kouchigi desu kara, onmi ni chikaku o-okinasarete, mite oide ni naru no deshita*.<sup>41</sup>

The *Genji* passage is not, however, the origin of the scent-and-memory concept. A better candidate—one known to both Murasaki Shikibu and Tanizaki—is poem 139 of *Kokin wakashū*:

Scenting the fragrance  
of orange blossoms that await  
the Fifth Month's coming,  
I recall a perfumed sleeve  
worn by someone long ago.<sup>42</sup>

さつきまつ花たちばなのかをかげば昔の人の袖のかぞする  
*Satsuki matsu hanatachibana no ka o kageba mukashi no hito no sode  
no ka zo suru*

38. Chambers (trans.) 1994a, p. 180; *TJZ* 16, p. 282.

39. *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, 12, p. 203.

40. Seidensticker (trans.) 1976, p. 55; *Genji monogatari* 1970–76, 12, p. 204. *Genji* commentators point out that the "lady's fragrance" (*hitoga*) is a unique combination of the incense burned into her clothing and the scent of her own body. We can assume that Heijū, Kunitsune, and Shigemoto are responding to a similarly compound fragrance.

41. Tanizaki 1951–54, 1, p. 89.

42. McCullough (trans.) 1985, p. 41.

It was the genius of Murasaki Shikibu to transfer this Proustian concept from the vegetable world to that of clothing. In the *Kokinshū* poem, a flower's perfume transports the speaker back in time to reexperience the scent of a beloved's sleeve, while in "Utsusemi" it is the scent of the absent woman's clothing that reunites Murasaki's hero, at least in his imagination, with his beloved. Tanizaki's genius lies in transforming Murasaki Shikibu's vignette into a fully developed thematic device.

#### THE ISSUE OF CREATIVITY

What is so classical about *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha*? Quite a lot, it appears. Whether intentionally or unconsciously, Tanizaki was influenced by *Genji monogatari* and other classical literature in conceiving the structure, themes, imagery, and style of *Shigemoto*. This may have been due to his ongoing retranslation of *Genji*, or it could simply reflect a lifelong familiarity with and love of the Japanese classics.

Having answered one question, I am tempted to ask a couple more.

Does it matter that *Shigemoto* is influenced by the classics? Yes, in terms of acknowledging and appreciating Tanizaki's skill as a writer and his scholarly erudition. Tanizaki is admired for his ability to pull together the many narrative strands of his sources for *Shigemoto* so as to create a pattern of interlocking relationships and a vivid narrative. The reader's appreciation is further enhanced by an awareness that this cohesive narrative is created, in part, thanks to classical storytelling techniques.

What does Tanizaki's interest in the classics say about him as a creative artist? Tanizaki is generally thought to have written historical fiction as an outlet for literary expression that would not be feasible in fiction set in his own time. Summarizing this position, Donald Keene notes that Tanizaki "set his works in the past because this gave him greater scope for his imagination. Actions that might seem exaggerated if attributed to contemporaries were believable of people who lived at times when life was more brightly colored than in the present."<sup>43</sup> In *Shigemoto* Tanizaki retells stories from the past, but in his own style and with his own emphases, characters, and inventions.

Like many twentieth-century writers in the West, Tanizaki returned to the classics of his culture for inspiration. Rather than stifling his creativity, the old stories seem to have augmented his powers: the vivid, rough emotions of *setsuwa* anecdotes, the subtle imagery of Heian poetry, and the narrative techniques used in *monogatari* give *Shigemoto* a peculiarly attractive aura of surface refinement, dark undercurrent, and lyric beauty. It is difficult to imagine that Tanizaki would have written so fine a work without the stimulation afforded by a profound contact with classical literature.

43. Keene 2003, p. 7.

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## Another Key to Tanizaki's Eroticism

TZVETANA KRISTEVA

The presence of classical Japanese literature pervades Tanizaki's works—a suffusion of content and expression, historical and cultural milieu, aesthetic sense and sensuality. This extensively explored and critical issue is also a highly volatile one. The reason is that what we recognize in Tanizaki as “classical” is suspended within the framework of our knowledge and understanding of classical literature. This in turn means that the deconstruction of that framework may reveal some submerged aspects of the “classical” presence and, subsequently, a deeper insight into Tanizaki's works. A clearly predictable target, for instance, is Tanizaki's highly famed eroticism, for it is precisely the eroticism of classical Japanese literature that is the neglected garden of twentieth-century criticism. In this essay, however, I shall not undertake a thorough search for the traces of this lost eroticism. Rather, I shall signpost some specific aspects of the eroticism in Tanizaki's novel *Kagi* (The Key, 1956), a palimpsest that bears the unmistakable imprint of the classical tradition.

*The Key* was published serially by the monthly *Chūō kōron*, stirring up a scandal as early as the publication of the second part and provoking debates in Parliament. To the modern reader such furor evokes both an ironic smile and a feeling of nostalgia. We may look back at Tanizaki with admiration, and wonder who or what might bring about such a grave social problem nowadays. Moral norms have changed—so much so that neither Egawa Tatsuya's *Genji manga* nor *Hebi ni piasu* by Kanehara Hitomi, a 2004 Akutagawa prize winner, could be considered as constituting “a moral offense.” Moreover, the role of literature has diminished to such a degree that it is difficult to imagine Parliament caring a fig about any of literature's manifestations, not least a trifle such as “obscenity of expression” (*waisetsu na hyōgen*). But does this imply that we have come closer to an understanding of Tanizaki's ubiquitous eroticism?

As one of Tanizaki's editors, Shimanaka Hōji, points out, the publication of *The Key* was awaited with great anticipation. The novel emerged after a long period of silence—there is a gap of about seven years between *The Key* and its antecedent, *Captain Shigemoto's Mother* (*Shigemoto shōshō no haha*, 1949), written in the style of “romantic classicism” exemplified by *The Makioka Sisters* (*Sasameyuki*, 1948). It was in this intervening period that Tanizaki completed the second (revised) version of his modern translation of *Genji monogatari* (1954). *The Key*, however, stunned the literary world—so different was it from its predecessors. Alas, as Shimanaka explained much later, the hostile reaction forced Tanizaki to reconsider his initial

plans for *The Key*, which was supposed to be structured as a drama in four acts, and to choose a shorter variant.<sup>1</sup>

Did Tanizaki betray the expectations of the reading public with *The Key*? Judging by its aggressive acceptance/nonacceptance, the answer is yes. But does this mean that by writing *The Key* Tanizaki also betrayed his exquisite sense of classical literature? The first translation of *The Tale of Genji* resulted in *The Makioka Sisters*, whereas the second was followed by *The Key*. Is there no relation between the fabric of *The Key* and the classical tradition exemplified by *Genji*? What did Tanizaki wish to reveal about this tradition by writing *The Key*?

The contemporary interpretation of eroticism in Japan seems oblique even today: eroticism is located within the frame of pornography. Curiously, Japanese-English dictionaries translate *ero i* (an abbreviation of “erotic”) as “pornographic, obscene, lustful, dirty-minded,” which is exemplified by such popular phrases as *ero oyaji*. This is ironic given that Japanese culture prides itself on having a long tradition of erotic literature and art. When and how was eroticism debased? One ponders this question in comparing, for instance, Utamaro’s erotic portraits of “dressed” women and the nonerotic Western-style pictures of nude women in the Meiji and Taishō periods. Is this merely a case of misunderstanding the foreign word “eroticism,” rather than the erotic tradition itself? Unfortunately, this is not the case. The rejection of eroticism as “shameful” seems to have resulted in the rejection, or at least neglect, of the erotic aspect of premodern Japanese culture. Let me quote one example from the homepage of the film *Sennen no koi* (A Thousand Years’ Love), which, judging from its enormous budget, was supposed to mark the high point of the 2004 commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of *The Tale of Genji*. Here is what the film’s director, Horikawa Tonkō, surmises about *Genji*’s eroticism: “The world of *The Tale of Genji* is a world without love. This tale was written before the Japanese got to know love—love in the meaning we understand it nowadays, a meaning probably very close to Western ideas of love. The random relations between men and women were governed only by eroticism called *irogonomi*. This was the cause of Murasaki Shikibu’s suffering.”<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, this statement, a manifestation of bad taste and sublime lack of knowledge, has attracted many opposing views. Yet it is symptomatic not only of the general misunderstanding of *The Tale of Genji* but also of how little the notion of eroticism is esteemed. Thus, although Tanizaki’s *The Key* is no longer considered scandalous, it is dubious whether the contemporary reading audience has moved closer to an understanding and appreciation of its eroticism.

*The Key* is usually associated with Tanizaki’s later work *Fūten rōjin nikki* (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1962), or with *Shunkinshō* (A Portrait of Shunkin, 1933) as its antithesis. Yet it could be argued that the text to which *The Key* bears the strongest resemblance—both in terms of aesthetics and in its overall message—is *Shisei* (The Tattoo, 1910). The object in both novels is a femme fatale who is unaware of and

1. Shimanaka 1997, pp. 109–113.

2. Translated from Japanese (<http://www.toei-group.co.jp/sennennokoi>) by the author.



frightened by her true nature. The subject is a man—an expert in love affairs and a connoisseur of female beauty—who sets himself the task of awakening the woman's hidden nature, of kindling her passion and sensuousness, and thus enabling her to realize her own power and be unafraid of it. In both texts the outcome is a change of roles, a reversal of the subject-object relation: the woman becomes the subject, and the man her victim. The resemblance between the two texts can be traced in such details as the oval line of the female leg and the alluring whiteness of the nape of the woman's neck. But whereas *The Tattoo* was warmly welcomed by critics and readers, *The Key* was consummately rejected. The main reason, no doubt, lies in the difference in settings between the two stories, the identity of the characters, and the method by which the dormant female nature is awakened. All this creates diametrically opposed conditions in the reading process. *The Tattoo* is set in the Edo period, the main characters are a famous tattoo artist and a young girl who is to become a geisha, and the means of revealing the femme fatale is art. By contrast, the story of *The Key* takes place in the present, and the man and woman are husband and wife. Hence *The Tattoo* can be read as romantic fiction and as an allegory about the eternal woman or eternal beauty, whereas *The Key* is too mundane and "real." A reader can accept it only by accepting its "probability," and thus encountering his or her own hidden passions and desires.

In this essay, however, I shall not attempt further discussion of the story of *The Key*. Tanizaki's many critical readers can do this better. Neither shall I dwell upon the questionable problem of "obscene expressions" (*waisetsu na hyōgen*). Instead, I would like to concentrate on the level of expression itself and discuss its eroticism from the standpoint of my own background as a critical reader of classical Japanese literature.

It could be argued that in *The Key* eroticism is not merely expressed as is usual in modern literature, but that, in keeping with the classical tradition, the expression itself is eroticized. The diary form of the novel itself clearly communicates this feature. As is well known, the diary form is a convention between the writer and the reader that yields a personally tinged narrative, and thus a higher degree of sensuality. Tanizaki exploits the form to its limits by constructing his novel as an assemblage of two diaries—that of the husband and that of the wife. Each writes "secretly," pretending that the diary it is not meant to be read by the other. Yet, by deliberate carelessness, each discovers the existence of the other's diary, for it is precisely the other who is the real addressee of the diary written "for one's own self."

One cannot resist the temptation to draw a parallel between *The Key* and the famous lyrical diaries (*nikki bungaku*) of Heian and Kamakura ladies, each of whom kindly explains that her diary is meant "only for herself." The true aim of these explanations is the exact opposite—namely, they serve to hide/reveal a strong desire and hope that someone will read the diary. Tanizaki employs a very similar device, but with significant differences. By doubling the diary form, he doubles its effect: he reveals the falseness of the pretext of "writing for oneself" and explicates its real purport via a diary-dialogue form. The result, however, is that since the intended reader of each of the two diaries is also a character in the novel itself, readers of *The*

*Key* are forced into the somewhat embarrassing position of being voyeurs. Actually, this narrative pattern also has parallels in classical literature. One could mention, for instance, the erotic episode of “double peeking” (*kaimami*) in *Makura no sōshi* (The Pillow Book, ca. 1000) of Sei Shōnagon. In the misty dawn, a woman is sleeping after her lover has departed, when another woman’s lover happens to pass by on his way home and stops to peek into her room, fascinated by “the charm of the dew.”<sup>3</sup> The readers, who are led into the room prior to the appearance of the amorous passerby, witness his peeking, look at the woman through his eyes, and follow the encounter between them. But whereas the act of *kaimami*—peeking into a room through an opening in a sliding door, past a slightly folded screen, or through a curtain moved by a sudden gust of wind or by a cat jumping out—can pretend to be something natural and “innocent,” the peeking of the voyeur is always a breach of some norms, a breach of a taboo. Tanizaki amplifies this effect in his novel by introducing the device of the key. The diaries are hidden in drawers, the drawers are locked, and the key to each is kept in a “secret” place. Thus the key is a symbol of the breach of a taboo not only by the husband and his wife, who read each other’s “private” diaries, but also by readers of the novel, who are made witnesses of this game of hide-and-seek.

This dynamic of the key, though crucial, has further ramifications. The title of the novel can be interpreted also as the key to the awakening of a woman’s latent or suppressed sensuousness. Since this awakening is achieved through the process of writing, it could be cogently argued that “the key” is not merely a key to a locked/open drawer but also a key to *ars erotica scriptum*. It is in this particular meaning that, for me, as a critical reader of classical Japanese literature, Tanizaki’s novel bears the strongest affinity to the classical tradition. Here again, one is tempted to draw a parallel, this time not with a specific classical text but with a similar interpretation of eroticism in classical Japanese literature: Peter Greenaway’s film *The Pillow Book*, which seems to share *The Key*’s unfavorable reputation in Japan, especially among scholars of classical Japanese literature. However, whereas in Greenaway’s film the eroticism of the process of writing is a pivotal issue, a message clearly (and perhaps even a trifle pompously) defined through both content and expression, in Tanizaki’s novel, as in the works of classical literature, this notion is not narrated but is, rather, a characteristic of the *écriture* itself.

Although the novel is comprised of two diaries, the dates of their entries—beginning with January 1 (in the case of the husband’s diary) and ending on June 11 (in the wife’s diary)—with few exceptions do not overlap but form a temporal succession. Needless to say, this succession conveys the idea of the flow of time, but it can

3. The episode is No. 24 (*It Is so Stiffingly Hot*) in the short version of the translation included in Penguin Classics (Morris, trans., 1967), and one of the keywords in it is *tsuyu* (dewdrops)—a poetic word saturated with erotic connotation (I have discussed this in Kristeva 2003/4). Ivan Morris manages with admirable elegance to convey the subtle nuances of the original, marked by “the charm of the dew” (*tsuyu no aware*): “It amuses him to think that a man has probably been spending the night here and has only recently got up to leave, just as happened to himself. Perhaps that man too had felt the charm of the dew” (1967, p. 61).

also be perceived as the flow of writing, which in turn exemplifies the flow of sensuousness and passion. In January, it is the husband who starts the game and plays the leading role. The entries in his diary are more frequent and much longer. However, at the end of the month, for the first time, the entries in the two diaries overlap (on January 29 and 30). This signals the beginning of the sensuous self-consciousness of the wife and her impulsive desire to accept the game. The flow of the February entries is almost equal; at the end of the month (February 27), each spouse admits to reading the other's diary—a sign of the shift from subconscious desire to conscious action. The intensified flow of the March entries (more frequent and longer than the February and even the January entries) marks the successful development of the husband's initial plan. The awakened sensuousness of the wife is further kindled by her sexual desire for another man. The shy, traditional woman turns into a *femme fatale*. Her first victim is the husband himself: the overlapping entries on the last day of March mark the apogee of the collision between them and signal the husband's breakdown. The consequent entries in the wife's diary for the first days of April are the shortest in the whole novel: "Went out this afternoon. Back by evening."<sup>4</sup> They register her independence not only from the norms of traditional morality but from her husband's will as well: her sentences are burnished with an awareness of her power. The final two successive entries in the husband's diary (April 13 and 15) are long and saturated with desperate longing. The dialogue is broken. The metamorphosis is complete. The Western clothes of the wife symbolize her total rejection of traditional norms and of her former self.

At this point the husband's diary stops. He is immobilized by a stroke. The flow of writing, however, does not cease. Neither does the flow of the wife's sensual and sexual energy (entries appear almost daily in her diary during the last half of April). The husband's final question (recorded in the wife's diary entry for April 23) is quite suggestive on this level of meaning (the flow of writing = the flow of sensuality): he asks her whether she is continuing to write in her diary. In concordance with this, the last daily entry in the wife's diary (May 1) hints at the possibility that the husband, who is no longer able to read the wife's diary, has had their daughter read it to him. The next day, the husband dies. This brings to an end the daily records in the wife's diary. The absence of a reader exempts the diary from carrying out its proper function.

More than a month passes before the wife resumes her diary. This time, however, the nature of the writing is quite different. It is not the here-and-now narration characteristic of modern diaries; rather, it bears a strong resemblance to the lyrical diaries of classical literature written *post factum*. It comprises an incessant flow of writing, and likewise an incessant flow of sensuality and passion par excellence. For three days (June 9–11) the wife recollects past events and confesses her feelings and intentions. Her confession suggests that she has not been merely a passive "victim" of her husband's plot. Instead, having realized the nature of his intentions from the very beginning, she had skillfully manipulated him. Since the husband is

4. Hibbett (trans.) 2001, pp.100–101.

now deceased, it appears that the addressee of this confession, be it truth or fabrication, is the reader of the novel, who is stimulated to reconsider the events narrated in the diaries from a different perspective. Yet with a skillful writer—that is, a “liar” such as Tanizaki—one must be on the alert. There is a very peculiar detail at the beginning of the wife’s confession: it starts with a somewhat too precise registration of the dates. The husband died on May 2, and thirty-eight days have passed since then. The writing of the confession begins on the thirty-eighth day and progresses for three days, for a total of forty days. Now, according to Buddhist belief, the soul of the deceased reposes on the forty-ninth day after physical death. Is it not possible, therefore, that this confession is meant for the husband? Is it revenge? Is it an attempt to assuage his restless soul by acknowledging that the dangerous scheme initiated by his boundless (and, for this reason, distorted) love had fully succeeded? Maybe it is both, or neither. The reader is left in an intermediate space of uncertainty and bewilderment. The closing words of the novel constitute both an end and a new beginning, an appropriate finale for the fluid structure of the novel.<sup>5</sup> Once again it is very “classical,” resembling closely, for instance, *Kagerō nikki* (The Gossamer Years, ca. 974–75) which ends with “a knock at the door” (*tataki kunaru*).<sup>6</sup>

The notion of flow, exemplified by the fluid structure of the novel and comprising its overall code (the flow of time, the flow of writing, the flow of sensuousness), is also manifested in such details as the significance of liquid (water, brandy). Likewise, the bathroom is an important focus of the narration: despite scant information about the daughter’s new lodgings, we are specifically told that it has running water; the prepared bath in the daughter’s lodgings is a signal to the wife that her lover is waiting for her; the husband, taking his unconscious wife home from the daughter’s lodgings, presses her damp hair tightly to his body. The brandy, which preludes each erotic scene, serves to hush the wife’s restrictive self-control and awaken her sexual desires. From this point of view it is particularly suggestive that Kimura, the young lover, is the first man beside the husband to pour brandy for her.

In this essay, I shall not elaborate on the crucial role of the flow in classical Japanese literature. Being a fundamental aesthetic and philosophical principle of this culture, the flow totally governs the process of signification in it: the flow of time in concordance with the change of the seasons, the flow of space in the *shindenzukuri* style of architecture, the many-layered silk clothes, the gradation of colors in the popular *nioi* pattern, the shining locks of black hair, the wisteria branches, sounds and scents, prose and poetry. However, we may posit that the most conspicuous evidence of the higher aestheticization and conceptualization of the notion of flow is

5. The novel ends with “. . .”—punctuation quite untypical for a Japanese text and therefore very significant. However, Hibbett’s translation of the final passage is much more definite than the original: “According to Kimura’s [the wife’s lover’s] plan, he’ll marry Toshiko [her daughter] when the mourning period is over. She’ll make the sacrifice for the sake of appearances; and the three of us will live here together. That is what he tells me . . .” (Hibbett 2001, p. 183). Suffice it to say that the last words, “*to yū koto ni natte iru no de aru ga,*” do not specify the subject.

6. In Edward Seidensticker’s translation: “Late on the eve of the new year there was a pounding outside.” Seidensticker (trans.) 1973, p. 167.

the graphic image of writing itself. Text written in the cursive *renmentai kana* style, developed by the Heian aristocrats, comprises flows of ink, which mingle with the incessant “rivers of tears” (*namidagawa*) of longing and passion.<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, the printed texts of modern literature are devoid of this striking aesthetic and erotic impact of the flow of ink. However, Tanizaki manages to suggest this impact by invoking yet another graphic device—the gender differentiation of the two scripts, *hiragana* and *katakana*.

As is well known, the *hiragana* script, in its initial *hentaigana* variant, is the script of the *wabun* literature of the Heian period (late eighth to late twelfth century) composed in the vernacular language, as opposed to the *kanbun* literature written in Chinese characters called *mana* (true script). Furthermore, the view is de rigueur that since *hiragana* (or simply *kana*, “provisional script”) was the only script women were officially permitted to use, it was called also *onnade* (women’s script). But does this appellation point only to the function of the script? Men were using *onnade* as well. Moreover, as we can see from surviving pieces of calligraphy, some men had mastered *onnade* to a level of perfection and pride. Here I shall refrain from embarking upon an exposition of the essence of *wabun* literature written in the *onnade* script and exemplified by the so-called *joryū bungaku* (women’s literature)—its highest achievement being *The Tale of Genji*. Yet it could be argued that the “femininity” of this literature is not due to the mere fact of its prevailing gendered authorship. Rather, the *wabun* literature of the Heian period signified woman, and the graphic image of the *kana* script was a vital element in this process of signification.

Even a reader who is ignorant of the classical Japanese tradition will easily recognize the feminine impact of the soft, curvaceous *kana* (*hiragana*) lines. This impact becomes even more palpable in comparison with the straight, angular lines of the *katakana* script. Developed from fragments of the Chinese characters (*kanji*) and used initially by Buddhist monks as auxiliary marks for reading Chinese Buddhist texts written in Japanese, *katakana* was first employed for actually inscribing a literary text, in combination with *kanji*, in the twelfth-century *Konjaku monogatari* (Collection of Tales of Times Now Passed). Thus, although *katakana* was not officially labeled *otokode* (men’s script), an appellation reserved for *kanji*, there is no doubt whatsoever that it was recognized as such. The reason, again, is not located only in its pragmatic function. Suffice it to say that an important characteristic of the protagonist of *Mushi mezuru himegimi* (The Young Lady Who Loved Insects), an anti-symbol of femininity depicted in the late Heian-period collection of short stories *Tsutsumi Chūnagon monogatari*, is that she used *katakana* because she could not write in *hiragana*.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the gender differentiation of the two scripts—*hiragana* and *katakana*—outpaces their practical use. It signifies, on the level of graphic image, femininity and masculinity, and thus delineates an important strand in the overall aesthetic and erotic code of Heian literature.

7. I have discussed this problem in more detail in Kristeva 2001, pp. 39–48, 408–423, etc.

8. Hirano (trans.) 1963, p. 24.

By implying a graphic differentiation in *The Key*, Tanizaki animates his novel with a many-layered effect. He not only manages to visualize the tension in the husband-wife relationship and to enhance the erotic impact of the novel, which can be duly termed a *sext* (sex + text), but also succeeds in the graphic visualization of both the narrative development and the pivotal message of the novel: the arousal of a female's suppressed sexuality through the flow of the senses and the flow of writing. The prevalence of *katakana* in the first half of the novel (especially in the January entries) signifies the husband's resolution to provoke his wife's sensuality and designates his leading role in the process. Conversely, the gradual shift from *katakana* to *hiragana* and particularly the lengthy *hiragana* outcome of the novel, which comprises almost one-third of the whole text, is a visual manifestation of the flow of femininity itself.

This signification on the graphic level poses great difficulty for translators. The usual practice is simply to ignore it in the text of the translation and to supply an explanatory note on the two scripts. However, as is evident from the brief analysis above, a supplementary note is most inadequate. As in the translation of (post)modern poetry composed in a specific spatial arrangement that is considered necessary to convey its visual image, so the graphic differentiation in *The Key* ought to be expressed. The most natural way seems to be through the use of italic type. The second French translation does so,<sup>9</sup> but with rather contradictory effect: it italicizes the husband's diary. This decision, apparently based on the function of the two scripts in modern times (*hiragana* being used in everyday practice, *katakana* as a provisional script for telegrams, etc.), fails to denote the meaning of the graphic differentiation of the scripts in the original. It could be cogently argued that since the lines of italic type are softer and rounder than normal print, it is the wife's diary that merits italicization. Moreover, in addition to their feminine impact, italics would provide another important benefit: since italic type is functionally associated with handwriting and letters, italicizing the final part of the text, comprising the wife's diary, would enhance recognition of the role of the writing process in the novel.<sup>10</sup> Needless to say, the difference between the two printing styles is not as palpable as the difference between *katakana* and *hiragana*. Neither can it be comprehended as a gender differentiation. The explanatory note remains an unavoidable necessity. However, the impact of the curvilinear as a sign of femininity is universal.

This evokes an association with Guido Crepax's famous cartoon based on *The Story of O*, and with Roland Barthes's comments on it.<sup>11</sup> In a short essay entitled "I Hear and I Obey," Barthes qualifies Crepax's 160 images as having "a single signified, but dozens of signifiers," and argues that "here once again is the Great, the

9. Bayard-Sakai (trans.) 1997.

10. Anne Bayard-Sakai explained to me her reasons for italicizing the husband's diary and accepted my arguments that it is the wife's diary which should be italicized—a method applied in the Bulgarian translation of *The Key* (Tzvetana, ed., and Barova, trans., 1994). The latter seems to be the first translation to take into consideration the graphic level of signification in the novel.

11. Barthes's essay (1985) is followed in Marshall Blonsky's *On Signs* by excerpts from Crepax's *The Story of O*. See Blonsky (ed.) 1985, pp. 56–60.

Unique Metaphor which says tirelessly, 'I love you,' and thus establishes the lyric discourse."<sup>12</sup>

The tenor of this general remark might refer more appropriately to the thoroughly eroticized lyrical prose of the Heian period than to Tanizaki's novel. However, Barthes's concrete analysis of the signs in Crepax's cartoon seems remarkably apt for a discussion of the role of graphic differentiation in *The Key*: "What is a sign? It is a piece of an image, a fragment of something murmured which I can recognize: without recognition there is no sign. As in every readable sequence, the signs formed by Crepax are of two kinds: those recognized as existing: a whip, a hat, buttocks, a position, a scene; those recognized as persisting: the identity of a face, of a grin, of a type, of a garment, of a style."<sup>13</sup>

Following this classification of signs, it could be argued that the two scripts in Tanizaki's novel indeed function as persistent signs par excellence. They serve not merely to differentiate the two diaries; they are integral elements of the overall erotic impact of the text. In other words, as in classical Japanese literature exemplified by *The Tale of Genji*, the eroticism of *The Key* is not merely narrated or represented but is an eroticism of the representation itself.

As Crepax's *The Story of O* suggests, this kind of eroticism is nowadays seen, most typically, in cartoons and *manga*, that is, in narration by visual images. Tanizaki's unique attempt to imply the graphic signification in his novel remained unnoticed, muffled by the roar of contempt over "indecent content and expression" that greeted its publication. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, the persistent eroticism of *The Key* is a precious legacy of a great writer, a nostalgic memory of times when literature still possessed the power to incite passions, create a social scandal, and even provoke debate in Parliament.

12. Barthes 1985, p. 54.

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## Tanizaki's *Tanka*

AMY V. HEINRICH

The great twentieth-century novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965) wrote poetry all his life, although he published very little of it. He was born and educated in Tokyo, and his early fiction demonstrated deep interest in Western literature and culture. He had an early interest in cinema, and wrote screenplays for the Taishō Katsudō Shashin (Taikatsu) studio in 1920 and 1921.<sup>1</sup> His renewed interest in traditional Japanese culture, following his move to the Kansai (Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe) region after the Great Earthquake of 1923 in the Kantō (Tokyo) region, is well known. His first translation into modern Japanese of *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) was made between 1935 and 1938, and was published in 1940.<sup>2</sup> It should not be surprising, then, that he was also interested in *waka*—or, to use its more common modern name, *tanka*—the traditional five-line, thirty-one-syllable poetic form.

A short poem sequence, “Ishōan jūshū” (Ten poems on Ishōan),<sup>3</sup> was published in Satō Haruo's journal, *Kototama*, in March 1932.<sup>4</sup> The poems were playful and elegant, printed entirely in *kana*, with plays on the meanings of *Sumiyoshi*, both a place name and words meaning “good to live in,” and on *matsu*, meaning “pine tree” and also an element in the name of his wife-to-be, Nezu Matsuko. The word *iro*, meaning “color,” used below to refer to the color of the pine, *matsu no iro*, also means sexual love:

けふよりはまつのかかけをたゝたのむみはしたくさのよもきなりけり  
*kyō yori wa matsu no kokage wo tada tanomu mi wa shitakusa no yomogi*  
*narikeri*<sup>5</sup>

1. Bernardi 1998.
2. Tanizaki left the *waka* in *Genji* in their original form, not converting them to modern Japanese, and setting them off from the prose text. They are printed in a two-line vertical format, with the break after the *kami-no-ku*, the first three lines.
3. Ishōan 倚松庵 was the name of Tanizaki's house in Sumiyoshi, where he lived early in his marriage to Matsuko.
4. Satō Haruo (1892–1964) was a prominent poet, novelist, and critic and a close friend of Tanizaki. They had a falling out over Tanizaki's first wife, Chiyo, whom Tanizaki treated “abominably,” and with whom Satō fell in love. Tanizaki at first agreed to “give” her to Satō, then changed his mind. They reconciled years later, after Tanizaki and Chiyo divorced, and she married Satō. See Keene 1987, pp. 738, 748.
5. This poem is cited and discussed by Ōoka Makoto in his article “Ishōan jūshū,” in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirōten* 1998, p. 40; the version published in *Kototama* omitted the nigoriten. In *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō kashū*, it appears as follows, on p. 11: けふよりはまつの木影をたゝ頼む身は下草の蓬なりけり (see Tanizaki 1977).

from today I will  
 have given myself over to  
 the shade of the pine,  
 humble mugwort living  
 in the undergrowth

Many years later, in 1977, his widow Tanizaki Matsuko privately published a large collection of his poems—mostly *tanka*, but also some *haiku*—to mark the thirteenth anniversary of his death. The volume, on thick, cream-colored paper and beautifully bound in handwoven fabric, was printed in a limited edition of 150 copies. The collection includes the poems published in *Kototama*, although they are printed using *kanji* as well as *kana*. Among them are:

さだめなき身は住吉の川のべにかはらぬまつの色をたのまん  
*sadamenaki mi wa Sumiyoshi no kawa no be ni kawaranu matsu no iro*  
*wo tanoman*

my transient self  
 I will entrust now  
 to the unchanging  
 color of the pines along  
 the Sumiyoshi River

住よしの堤の松よころあらばうき世のちりをよそにへだてよ  
*Sumiyoshi no tsutsumi no matsu yo kokoro araba ukiyo no chiri wo yoso*  
*ni hedate yo*

o pines upon  
 the river banks of Sumiyoshi  
 if you have a heart  
 keep me far distant, away  
 from the dust of the world<sup>6</sup>

Between the two publications, a volume of poems called *Miyakowasure no ki* (Record of the “Forgetting-the-Capital” Flower) was privately published in 1948. These poems are also included in the 1977 collection, where all are printed chronologically and a few have brief headnotes. The order and the headnotes in the 1948 volume differ from the structure of the 1977 volume, in which none of the long notes about wartime difficulties and fears is included. It is reasonable, then, to assume that Tanizaki deliberately selected the poems in *Miyakowasure no ki* and placed them in a particular order, with specific background information (factual or not). It is a remarkable and beautiful volume.

The full sequence of *Miyakowasure no ki* consists of 72 *tanka*, many with headnotes; they are numbered 1 through 43, with several of the numbers including

6. Tanizaki 1977, pp. 8–9.

more than one poem (number 13 includes eight poems).<sup>7</sup> Both the headnotes and the poems are written in Matsuko's elegantly beautiful calligraphy, and the book was designed and illustrated by Wada Sanzō.<sup>8</sup> (A printed pamphlet of the whole text is included with the handwritten volume, for legibility.) The volume provides a record of Tanizaki's experience from the spring of 1944, when the war was increasingly impinging on daily life, through the year-and-a-half to defeat, the fall and winter following, and on to the spring of 1946. The references to the war are primarily in the notes, rarely in the poems themselves. One poem mentions battles raging in the south. The headnotes discuss reasons to evacuate specific areas, the need for government approval for a wedding in China, an article in a newspaper about possible bombings, and rumors of invasion. No political position is taken or assumed.

The sequence presents an interesting human record, as the poems serve first to acknowledge and then to absorb changes, and at the end to contain and express the deep emotions brought about by those changes.<sup>9</sup> The sequence begins:

1. When, in the spring of Shōwa 19, my family and I thought again about whether to evacuate, we shook off the earth of Hanshin [the Ōsaka-Kōbe region], where we had been accustomed to living, and said our words of farewell to our neighbors.

あり経なばまたもかへらん津の国の住吉川の松の木かげに  
*arihenaba mata mo kaeran Tsu no Kuni no Sumiyoshikawa no matsu no  
 kokage ni*

when time has passed  
 we shall come back again!  
 to the shadows of the pine trees  
 by the river Sumiyoshi  
 in the region of Tsu

This poem is a pleasant enough marker of a change in circumstance. It notes the place Tanizaki and his family are leaving, and makes it clear that it was a “good place to live” (*sumiyoshi*) and that Matsuko was part of that goodness (*matsu no kokage*).

7. The poems are 1, 2, 3, 4 (four poems), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (three poems), 10 (two poems), 11, 12, 13 (eight poems), 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 (two poems), 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (three poems), 26, 27 (two poems), 28 (two poems), 29, 30 (three poems), 31, 32, 33 (two poems), 34, 35, 36, 37 (two poems), 38, 39 (four poems), 40, 41 (three poems), 42 (three poems), 43. The small roman numerals in this text are my additions.

8. Wada Sanzō 和田三造 (1883–1967) was born in Hyōgo Prefecture; he studied Western art in Japan and Europe, and was particularly interested in color. Late in his life he produced prints that merged Western and Japanese styles.

9. I have selected what seemed to me to be representative poems that would survive translation and illustrate the development of the sequence.

2. On April 15, seen off by various people, we leave Sumiyoshi Station.

ふるさとの花に心を残しつゝたつや霞の菟原住吉  
うばら  
*furusato no hana ni kokoro wo nokoshitsutsu tatsu ya kasumi no Ubara*  
*Sumiyoshi*

even as my heart remains  
 here with the flowers  
 of my old hometown,  
 ah, how the mist is rising  
 as I leave Sumiyoshi in Ubara

Even as the poet is talking about his heart remaining with the flowers, he is still playful: his actual departure, though his heart is going to stay on with the flowers of his home, is in line four of the original poem, in the word *tatsu*, a pivot word (*kakekotoba*) whose meaning changes in relation to what precedes and what follows it. The speaker of the poem is departing (one meaning of *tatsu*, here related to what comes before) as the mist is rising (the second meaning of *tatsu*, here related to the mist, *kasumi*, that follows).<sup>10</sup>

3. When we reached the small hut in Nishiyama at Atami, the household goods and furniture we'd sent on ahead had arrived before us, and we spent the rest of the day in the small house unpacking luggage, organizing things, and such. Before we knew it, days had passed; and the cherry blossoms throughout the countless mountains had all too soon passed their prime, and dropped their petals.

やまざとは桜吹雪に明け暮れて花なき庭も花ぞちりしく  
*yamazato wa sakura fubuki ni akekurete hana naki niwa mo hana zo*  
*chirishiku*

day and night swirling  
 like blowing snow in this mountain  
 village, these cherry blossoms—  
 even the garden without  
 cherry trees carpeted in blossoms

Just as the earlier poems played on dual meanings of words, so this one refers to an ancient poetic trope of how much petals of cherry blossoms, blown around as they fall, resemble snow. There is nothing in the poems as they progress into the spring to indicate that the writer is living in modern times, during a brutal war. The poems create a world less frightening, more elegant, than the real one.

In the next several poems, the real world begins to make a gentle appearance

10. I am grateful to Yamamoto Takeo for pointing out this *kakekotoba* (pivot word) to me.

in the form of a flower not mentioned in classical poetry, the *miyakowasure* (“forgetting-the-capital” flower), a wild spring aster not cultivated in Japan until the Edo period. Resembling a daisy with purple petals and a yellow center, it is rustic in appearance, more suited to a meadow than to a garden. Tanizaki’s references to the *miyakowasure* are new, and function as a light marker of his and his family’s move away from the Kyoto area:

4. When the family went out to buy flowers and asked, “What is this flower called?” we were told, “This? It is ‘forgetting-the-capital.’”

4. i. 花の名は都わすれと聞くからに身によそへてぞ侘びしかりける  
*hana no na wa miyakowasure to kiku kara ni mi ni yosoete zo wabi-shikarikeru*

as soon as I heard  
 the flower’s name, forgetting-  
 the-capital, this  
 wild spring aster drew me in,  
 as though we were sad together!

4. ii. 世を侘ぶる山のいほりの床に活けてみよこわすれの花をめでけり  
*yo wo waburu yama no iori no toko ni ikete miyakowasure no hana wo medekeri*

withdrawn from the world,  
 I relish their beauty—  
 forgetting-the-capital blossoms,  
 arranged in the alcove  
 of the mountain retreat

5. 名にめでゝ都わすれの花を生けし人ぞみよこを忘れかねたる  
*na ni medete miyakowasure no hana wo ikeshi hito zo miyako wo wasurekanetaru*

the very one who was  
 entranced by their name,  
 and arranged the forgetting-  
 the-capital flowers, is herself  
 unable to forget the capital

After this poem, the flower that gives Tanizaki’s 1948 volume its title disappears. Although the poet does not leave behind with it the use of wordplay and elegant variations on a theme, he has established his close personal ties to the center of classical Japanese culture, the Kyoto region, even as he has moved away.

In the next poem, Tanizaki switches his sense of place by referring to another poet who, like himself, was separated from Kyoto, comparing himself in his self-imposed exile to Minamoto no Sanetomo (1192–1219; r. 1203–1219). Sanetomo,

the third Kamakura shogun, living in the new military capital of Kamakura in the Kantō region, was eventually unable to compete militarily and politically—indeed he was assassinated by his nephew—yet strove to excel at poetry. Tanizaki refers to him by the high rank he achieved at the imperial court (Udaijin, or Minister of the Right), which by Sanetomo’s time was almost devoid of political power:<sup>11</sup>

6. Climbing up the mountain at dusk, looking out at Sagami Bay.

右大臣実朝もまたかくのごと見晴るかしけん沖の初島  
*Udaijin Sanetomo mo mata kaku no goto miharukashiken oki no Hatsu-  
 shima*

As Sanetomo,  
 Minister of the Right, once  
 must have done,  
 I look out over toward  
 Hatsushima in the sea

In other ways, however, Tanizaki begins to look closer to home, to his current world. He appears to be drawing the real world closer to him, to surround himself with more personal meaning.

7. In the corner of the little garden there was a *mikan* tree, and when June came, the aroma scented the house. It felt as though it were a bridge of fragrance from ancient times.

たそがれに咲ける蜜柑の花一つ老の眼にも見ゆ星の如くに  
*tasogare ni sakeru mikan no hana hitotsu oi no me ni mo miyu hoshi no  
 gotoku ni*

as it blossoms  
 in the gathering dusk,  
 to my aging eyes  
 the single orange blossom  
 shines forth like a star

Although there had been reason enough to think it wise to move away from potential targets, quotidian matters still required attention, and in September 1944, Tanizaki traveled alone back to Hanshin to take care of some business—and to address once again the good place to live among the pine trees:

11. The following poem by Sanetomo is number 93 in the medieval classic *Hyakunin isshu* (One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets): 世の中はつねにもがもななぎさこぐあまの小舟の綱手かなしも (*Yo no naka wa tsune ni mo ga mo na nagisa kogu ama no obune no tsunade kanashi mo*)—"If only our world / Could be always as it is! / How moving the sight / Of the little fishing boat / Drawn by ropes along the bank." The text of the poem and the translation are drawn from the Japanese Text Initiative (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/japanese/hyakunin/index.html>).



9. i. すみよしの松のみどりは変らねど頼みし蔭はつゆしげくして

*Sumiyoshi no matsu no midori wa kawaranedo tanomishi kage wa tsuyu shigeku shite*

the green color  
of the pines of Sumiyoshi  
is unchanging,  
but how thick the dew is now  
in the shade I so enjoyed

It may be making too much of a minor contrast—between the mist rising as he left and the dew thickening on his brief return—but certainly the un-lived-in quality of his previous dwelling was striking to him, and it no longer felt like home:

10. Now, whatever one might say about changing places to live, it had come to such a pass that the garden of my former residence had been idly left to the growth of weeds, and the air-raid dugout had become the hangout of weasels.

10. ii. ふるさとは今はいづくぞ若草の妻のこもれる伊豆の山家ぞ

*furusato wa ima wa izuku zo wakakusa no tsuma no komoreru Izu no yamaga zo*

where is home now?  
the mountain house in Izu  
the place my wife,  
sweet as new grass,  
dwells in now

In fact, it is only after his displacement becomes more real that there is the first and only mention of actual fighting, of the war as something occurring in the world in which he lives, rather than as an abstraction forcing him to move:

12. Fifteenth night.

みんなみ

南のはるけき海のたゝかひをおもひつゝ見る十五夜の月

*minnami no harukeki umi no tatakai wo omoitsutsu miru jūgoya no tsuki*

while thinking about  
the battles raging in the  
distant southern seas  
I gaze at the full moon  
of the fifteenth night

Having let in the real world, if just for a moment, the poet returns in memory to earlier springs, but the sentiment is somewhat jarring: however much he misses

viewing the cherry blossoms with his wife and daughters, it is not as though they are in imminent danger, fighting in the southern seas. So his next piece is a poem of regret for current lost pleasure rather than potential lost lives:

13. When, on October 2, I went from Hanshin into the capital to visit the Heian Shrine, I remembered how every spring for years in the past, my family, with the company of both sisters, would come to view the blossoms in the shrine garden, and I could not help feeling it deeply.

13. viii. 春来ともあやなゝ咲きそ糸桜見し世の人にめぐり逢ふまで  
*haru ku tomo ayana na saki so itozakura mishi yo no hito ni me-  
 guri au made*

although spring has come  
 don't rush to flower,  
 o weeping cherry trees!  
 until those who have been gone  
 come back again

Although winter proved difficult, returning to the east and his wife provided a brief respite. But on hearing rumors of potential bombings, they moved into the countryside. Then, additional worries of an actual American land invasion arose. The poet, as the man of the family, felt a heavy responsibility toward his family; despite feeling himself to be an old man, they evacuated again:

21. 花に来て花に別るゝ西山の柴の庵の旅のひとゝせ  
*hana ni kite hana ni wakaruru Nishiyama no shiba no iori no tabi no  
 hitotose*

having arrived to blossoms  
 now I'm parting from blossoms  
 at Nishiyama,  
 after one full year in the  
 wanderer's small brushwood hut

The full year of feeling displaced begins to appear in the poems. The rush of the next move away from the Izu peninsula, seen as a potential invasion site, toward western Japan, meant they sent ahead only daily essentials, and few of those. Leaving Atami on May 5, they moved to Okayama prefecture, stopping briefly at their old home on their way. From the time they moved to Tsuyama, there was less playfulness in the poems, no elegant pastimes, and a greater focus on the fundamental concerns of lodging and food:

24. So it seemed that the danger could be here, where we were. As the family felt compelled to escape to Shinshū as quickly as possible, on May 14 we left our old home, and with a one-night stopover in Himeji,

we reached Tsuyama the next day, on the 15th. Tōtōan (宕々庵) was a structure in a palace style, part of a second house of an old feudal lord, facing a pond.

鯉をどり睡蓮しげる水の上にわれも浮身を宿すべきかな  
*koi odori suiren shigeru mizu no ue ni ware mo ukimi wo yadosu beki kana*

the carp are leaping  
 on the water, the water lilies  
 flourish, here where  
 I too must find lodging  
 for my wandering self

ともしび  
 25. iii. 灯火をいましむる町を小夜ふけてわれは顔にも飛ぶ螢かな  
*tomoshihi wo imashimuru machi wo sayo fukete warewagao ni mo tobu hotaru kana*

in town where  
 streetlights are proscribed  
 night falls and  
 the fireflies flit about,  
 masters of the town

26. Thinking to send someone to beg for greens at a neighboring field.

夏の日のあつきめぐみの畑つ物得まくぞほしき豆も玉菜も  
*natsu no hi no atsuki megumi no hatatsumono emaku zo hoshiki mame mo tamana mo*

warmed and blessed  
 by the hot summer sun,  
 the fruit of the fields—  
 what we so longed for!  
 both the beans and the cabbage

The carp and water lilies are blessed in being where they belong, while the poet has to find a place to be. The fireflies, mere insects—albeit charming ones—take over the town, which was darkened, as all towns were, to avoid becoming targets of bombs. Finally, and most telling, the plainest of foods, growing in neighboring fields, become his objects of desire. More than anything, it is the beans and cabbage that represent a fundamental change in the tenor of the poems. This is no game, being evacuated; there are no more word games with a flower and its fanciful name, or with memories of cherry blossoms blowing about like snow.

In a long headnote to the next several poems, Tanizaki writes that—after the bombing and burning of the cities of Okayama, Himeji, and Akashi; seeing so many

people wandering through the streets, having lost their homes and families even in small towns in the mountains; and hearing rumors that one of these days, the town they were staying in would be bombed as well—he and his family decided, again, to move on. However, after packing up their house and goods, they could find no transport to move it all with them. In the end, the two of them, husband and wife, carried all that they could and left Tsuyama by train. “There are no words,” he wrote, “for the sadness of that occasion”:

27. i. さすらひの群にまじりて鍋釜を負ひ行く妹をいかにとかせん  
*sasurai no mure ni majirite nabekama wo oiyuku imo wo ika ni tokasen*

indistinguishable in  
 the vagabond crowd,  
 moving along with  
 pots and pans strapped on her back,  
 what can I do for my beloved?

Beans and cabbage, pots and pans, and vagabond crowds are a long way from the Heian Shrine adorned with blossoming cherry trees. To the poet, his cultivated wife belongs to the blossoms and is an anomaly with the kitchenwares on her back. But she blends in well; she is part of the world in an ordinary way because of the extraordinary times. The speaker of the poems begins to work through this puzzle in many of the remaining poems, once they are settled again.

They settled in Katsuyama, called “Little Kyoto,” and although Tanizaki makes it clear there is no comparison, with its surrounding mountains and fast-flowing Hozu River, it is not totally unlike the area of Kyoto around Arashiyama. Katsuyama even has clear little streams running through the town. Eventually, Tanizaki notes that the seven-character Chinese line of poetry carved on a pillar near his second-floor, six-mat study is not inappropriate: “Someone gazes at the moon, counting the time until returning” (有人对月敷 帰期).<sup>12</sup>

As his dream in poem 28.i fades, he seems finally to leave the capital behind and find some comfort, even beauty, in the ordinary—though the extraordinary is not far from his mind:

28. i. なつかしき都の春の夢さめて空につれなき有明の月  
*natsukashiki miyako no haru no yume samete sora ni tsurenaki ari-ake no tsuki*

waking from a dream  
 of my longed-for capital  
 in the spring,

12. My thanks go to Dr. Chengzi Wang, Chinese Studies Librarian at the Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University, for help identifying the writer of this poem as Gu Hongming (1857–1928).

the unfeeling moon  
in the sky at dawn

28. ii. 窓の戸をあくれば入り来やまざとの人に馴れたる雀うぐひす  
*mado no to wo akureba iriku yamazato no hito ni naretaru suzume*  
*uguisu*

when I open the shutters  
in they come—  
accustomed to people  
in the mountain village,  
the swallow, the warbler

30. ii. 草枕旅寝の床にしのおかな焼野が原のふるさとの月  
*kusamakura tabine no toko ni shinobu kana yakeno ga hara no*  
*furusato no tsuki*

in my wanderer's bed,  
grass for my pillow,  
I call it to mind—  
the moon of my old home shines  
on an expanse of burned fields

In these poems, the commingling in his mind of the ordinary—the birds, the moon—with the extraordinary aspects of the times—the burned fields—signals a process of reconciliation. The phrase *yakeno ga hara* (“an expanse of burned fields”) appears in several poems relating to his “old home.” But the ordinary beings—the village people, the swallow and the warbler—relate as they always have. When the war ends, Tanizaki goes further and commingles the past and the present in sadness and in resignation—a resignation that contains the strength of facing and accepting reality:

32. August 15; war over.

思ひやれつはものどもが剣太刀すてしゆふべの野辺の露けさ  
*omoiyare tsuwamonodomo ga tsurugitachi suteshi yūbe no nobe no*  
*tsuyukesa*

only think of it!  
all the nation's warriors  
have discarded their  
long swords    last night's fields  
   heavy with dew, with tears

When defeat comes, it seems that the ordinary and extraordinary merge. The poem marking the end of the war contains the word *tsuwamonodomo*, calling up the famous *haiku* by Matsuo Bashō (1644–94):

夏草やつわものどもが夢のあと  
*natsugusa ya tsuwamonodomo ga yume no ato*

The summer grasses—  
 For many brave warriors  
 The aftermath of dreams<sup>13</sup>

The setting of the Bashō poem is specific: Hiraizumi, the site of the last stronghold of the Fujiwara clan, whose defeat marked the end of the Heian period. The warriors whose dreams were reduced to summer grasses included the Fujiwara, who were defeated. The Minamoto (including Shogun Sanetomo's father) were victorious, but were later defeated in their turn. To Bashō, those warriors had been dead for five hundred years; to Tanizaki, Bashō himself was three hundred years gone. In placing the 1945 defeat within the context of eight hundred years, Tanizaki is seeing a kind of universal sorrow, a human futility.

In addition, the poems continue to express the idea that, as W. H. Auden puts it in “Musée des Beaux Arts,” the nature of suffering, its “human position,” “takes place / While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along,” and while nature continues in its course:

33.ii. たゝかひにやぶれし国の秋深み野にも山にもなく虫の声  
*tataikai ni yabureshi kuni no aki fukami no ni mo yama ni mo naku*  
*mushi no koe*

in a country  
 defeated in battle  
 the depths of autumn:  
 from the fields, from the mountains,  
 voices of insects calling

It is also possible to take pleasure in the world:

35. However, it's not as though there was never beautiful clear fall weather.

老いぬれば事ぞともなき秋晴れの日の暮れゆくもをしまれにけり  
*oi nureba koto zo tomonaki akibare no hi no kureyuku mo oshimareni-*  
*keri*

it comes with getting  
 old! I find myself  
 regretting  
 the solitary passing  
 of a bright autumn day

13. The translation is by Keene 1976, p. 104.

The ordinary has taken on greater meaning, whether from getting old (although Tanizaki was only about sixty at the time) or—more likely in this context—from having experienced enough hardship (or potential hardship) to treasure ordinary pleasures, be they the brightness of the weather or the glory of a piece of ripe fruit:

37. Winter comes.

37. i. 柿の実の熟れたる汁にぬれそぼつ指つめたく冬は来にけり  
および  
*kaki no mi no uretaru shiru ni nuresobotsu oyobi tsumetaku fuyu*  
*wa kinikeri*

my fingers, drenched  
 in the juice of a ripe  
 persimmon,  
 are chilled—  
 winter has come

Hardship, having been expected, neither surprises or troubles the poet:

37. ii. すさまじとかねても聞きし山里の物みな凍る冬は来にけり  
*susamaji to kanete mo kikishi yamazato no mono mina kōru fuyu*  
*wa kinikeri*

I've already heard  
 how dreadful it is—winter,  
 when everything  
 in this mountain village  
 freezes—winter has come

Just as, earlier, the plainest of foods became deeply desired, so the fact of simple shelter now brings contentment:

39. iv. しめやかに団樂しをればさやへと障子にきゆるうすゆきのおと  
まどみ  
*shimeyaka ni madoishi oreba sayasaya to shōji ni kiyuru usuyuki*  
*no oto*

sitting quietly together,  
 the sound of rustling,  
 as the light snow  
 hits and disappears against  
 the sliding paper doors

When the hard winter and bitter defeat are in the past, life and simple exuberance seem to be hard-won achievements to be celebrated:



41. Spring comes.

41. i. 山里に春は来ぬらし門に出て縄跳びすなり二十乙女も  
*yamazato ni haru wa kinu rashi mon ni dete nawatobi su nari ha-*  
*tachi otome mo*

it seems that spring  
has finally come to this  
mountain village:  
when I step from my gate,  
a twenty-year-old girl is jumping rope

41. ii. 漸くに雪は晴れたりうなみらはつらゝを折りてもてあそぶなり  
*yōyaku ni yuki wa haretari unaira wa tsurara wo orite moteasobu*  
*nari*

at long last  
the snow has cleared  
the little boys  
break off icicles  
to play around

As the poet starts to think of recovering his former life, he begins to integrate the sense of celebration he carries back to Kyoto from the village with the reality of life going on:

42. Wondering how long we would remain secluded in the mountains, and thinking that now would be a good time to look for a house to live in near Kyoto, a bit after mid-March I had a strong, wiry fellow carry some rice and soy sauce on his back, and went ahead by myself to the capital.

42. i. たゝかひに破れし国も春なれや四条五条の人のゆきかひ  
*tataikai ni yabureshi kuni mo haru nare ya Shijō Gojō no hito no*  
*yukikai*

even to a country  
defeated in battle  
spring has come!  
people coming and going  
on Fourth Avenue, Fifth Avenue

The final poem in the sequence reaches the height of poetic expression: in the five lines and thirty-one syllables, the tactile sensation of the caress expresses the difficulty of the war years and the toll they have taken on his wife:

43. The bustle in the streets, which had escaped the ravages of war, was even greater than I had heard, but the search for a house to live in was

not at all easy. As days passed in which I was paying for lodging while I searched around with difficulty, I was finally able to settle on a temporary residence in upper Kyōto near Anbaguchi, and in late May I called my waiting and secluded family to come join me. While I was inexpressibly glad when my family reached Kyoto, still I regretted they were too late for the cherry blossoms, and deeply moved by the remarkable difficulties and decline we had suffered since Atami.

朝寝髪枕きてめでにしくとせの手慣れの顔も痩せにけらしな  
*asanegami makite medenishi ikutose no tenare no kao mo yasenikerashi*  
*na*

stroking your  
 tousled hair, beloved,  
     for so many years  
     familiar to my touch,  
 how thin your face has grown

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# Tanizaki and the Way of Art (*Geidō*): Traditional Arts and Performance Skills

BONAVENTURA RUPERTI

The performing arts are an undeniably crucial and prominent segment of Tanizaki's works. From his short stories to his novels, the worlds of the stage, the theater, music, the cinema, and entertainment frequently form salient features, enhancing the atmosphere and animating dialogue. Examples range from cross-dressing in women's clothes in the story *Himitsu* 秘密 (The Secret, 1911)<sup>1</sup> to puppet scenes in the novel *Tade kuu mushi* 蓼喰ふ蟲 (Some Prefer Nettles, 1928),<sup>2</sup> from references to the puppet dramas in *Yoshino kuzu* 吉野葛 (Arrowroot, 1931)<sup>3</sup> to theater outings in *Sasameyuki* 細雪 (1943–47),<sup>4</sup> from a vision of Kabuki shows in *Kagi* 鍵 (The Key, 1956)<sup>5</sup> to an intense “sexual” encounter with an interpreter of female roles (*on-nagata*) in *Fūten rōjin nikki* 瘋癲老人日記 (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1961).<sup>6</sup>

Tanizaki also pays special attention to these same themes in his essays, such as *In'ei raisan* 陰影礼賛 (In Praise of Shadows, 1933),<sup>7</sup> which contains a discussion of the preeminent profession of aesthetics that is the creative peak of his vision in essay form. A less systematic and more erratic cornerstone of his conception of the arts, and the performing arts in particular, is undoubtedly *Geidan* 藝談 (Conversation about Art), published in March and April of 1933 in the magazine *Kaizō* 改造, under the original title of “Gei ni tsuite” 「藝」について (About Art).<sup>8</sup> As in *In'ei raisan*, where the dimensions of light and shadow necessarily penetrate the concept of space (and consequently architecture, the environment, and its development within space), in *Geidan* Tanizaki takes examples from a variety of artistic disciplines.

*Geidan* derives its structure and sequence from a conversation among five friends—Tanizaki; the painter Yasuda Yukihiko 安田靉彦;<sup>9</sup> his previous wife Oyō

1. *TJZ* 1, pp. 249–270.

2. *TJZ* 12, pp. 3–185.

3. *TJZ* 13, pp. 3–54.

4. *TJZ* 15.

5. *TJZ* 17, pp. 275–404.

6. *TJZ* 19, pp. 3–12.

7. *TJZ* 20, pp. 517–557.

8. *TJZ* 20, pp. 411–454. The complete translation in Italian of the testimony, along with other essays, is in Tanizaki 1995, pp. 229–276.

9. Yasuda Yukihiko (1884–1978) was a Japanese-style painter known above all for his paintings of historical subjects in an elegant and simple style that recalls the antique *yamatōe*. A native of Tokyo, he studied the style of the Tosa school at the Tokyo school of art. In 1914 he became responsible for the organization of the Japanese Academy of Art.

お葉, who was the older sister of Nakamura Kichiemon I 中村吉右衛門,<sup>10</sup> the Kabuki actor himself; and one of his fans, the owner of the new hot baths at Shūzenji 修善寺—about the display of acting by Kabuki performers. The conversation leads to idle chit-chat and then to a sort of monologue by Tanizaki, which shifts to the subject of painting and then to the cinema, the theater, poetry and novels. The debates and examples that arise branch out in new and ever-changing directions, resulting in a stimulating enrichment of discourse.

In the background, along with the inevitable distinctions between the different disciplines and artistic dimensions, is an ongoing comparison between the Orient and the West—that is, between Japanese art in the context of its past and traditions on the one hand, and its present and modern expressions on the other. Thus there are two sets of coordinates within which the discussion is located: the *spatial axis* of the Orient and the West, and the *temporal axis* that runs from the past (and tradition) through to the present (and modernization).

Another important key to interpretation is the historical context within which *Geidan* was constructed. Tanizaki wrote it in the early 1930s, when heated arguments and debates about the function of the arts, their merit, and their commitment to socio-political denunciation and critique—social commentary that could even be socialist or Marxist in its perspective—was shifting toward a dark period of ever more rigid nationalism, which eventually led to fascism and to the war that would be devastating for Japan. True to the thinking of the times, *Geidan* therefore displays a blooming and delicate sense of national pride, both in its justified celebration of the modesty, discipline, perseverance, devotion, and sobriety inherent to the masters of the traditional arts, and in its comparison of those masters to their counterparts in the West, as diverse as Balzac in literature and Chaplin in the cinema.

#### BODY AND TRAINING

The first fundamental trait that seems to distinguish the traditional arts, particularly the art of performance, is the formation of the artistic man. In Tanizaki's perspective the transmission of art occurs both through the master (whose figure is only fleetingly suggested) and through an "iron-fisted discipline" that decisively modifies and tempers preexisting natural qualities. Tanizaki's emphasis is not so much on the exemplary model of the master who should be imitated as on the training to the

10. Nakamura Kichiemon I (1886–1954) was a Kabuki actor who was extremely popular until just after the war. Firstborn of Nakamura Karoku III, he made his debut in 1897 with the name that he kept for his long career. He quickly reached vast popularity, accompanied by and in competition with Onoe Kikugorō VI, with whom he worked at the Ichimura theater from 1908. He became a star (performing leading roles) after conflicts with Kikugorō. In 1921 he became part of the Shōchiku performance society, and in 1943 formed his own company. A charismatic interpreter gifted with an intense dramatic ability—both in works set in an historic context (*jidaimono*) and those concerning current affairs (*sewamono*)—he distinguished himself in tragic roles due to his charismatic presence and the touching beauty of his speech.

limits of agony that these masters and the environment impose: total devotion over a long period of time, often accompanied by oppression, punishment, and abuse. The best-known symbol of such severe education, imposed almost with cruelty, is the Kabuki actor. In particular, Tanizaki refers to the example of Ichikawa Danjūrō IX 市川團十郎,<sup>11</sup> who was raised as an adoptive son by Kawarasaki Gonnosuke VI 河原崎権之助:

They say that when he was young, when he was brought up in the Kawarasaki house, he was subjected to such hard training twenty-four hours a day—to the point that the most peaceful moments were those he passed in the toilet—that it stands to reason that the great successes in the years to follow were not accidental. In short, when he was in the hands of his severe adoptive father, he practiced every aspect of the way of Kabuki, beginning with the sister arts, dance and music. He practiced and mastered all the techniques, from beginning to end. In his case, success may have also depended on his natural qualities, but it is easy to imagine the extent to which he was subjected to an iron-fisted discipline if one considers that his family was afraid that if he had continued in that way, he would certainly have been killed by his adoptive father.<sup>12</sup>

But his was not the only such experience:

It seems that this is true not only in the case of Danjūrō [IX]: in the past, training for the way of art (*geidō* 藝道) was just as cruel as the practice of infant torture.

Reading the testimonies of art by [Ichikawa] Chūsha [市川]中車<sup>13</sup>

11. Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1838–1903), the fifth son of Danjūrō VII (1791–1859), was welcomed as an adopted son by the Kawarasaki family under his debut name (Gonjūrō 権十朗). He reclaimed the name Danjūrō when he returned to his family in 1874, twenty years after his older brother Danjūrō VIII, firstborn of Danjūrō VII and an actor of great beauty and popularity, died in a violent way (most probably suicide) in 1854. He fully inherited the great tradition of his dynasty, the most eminent in the Edo theater, becoming the leading Kabuki actor in the Meiji era (1868–1912). As well as handing down interpretive models (*kata*) of the classical tradition, he dedicated himself to promoting the modernization of Kabuki in the field of playwriting, with dramas conceived according to historical references and perspectives (*katsurekigeki* 活歴劇), and to exalting the arts and dramas inspired by the solemnity of Nō (*matsubamemono* 松羽目物), using the more “natural” and realistic (*haragei*) interpretive techniques and his notable gifts in the field of dance.

12. *TJZ* 20, pp. 414–415.

13. After his debut at five years of age, Ichikawa Chūsha VII (1860–1936) became a student under the guidance of the Kabuki actors of the Onoe family. In 1880 he assumed the name Ichikawa Yaozō VII. In 1888 he became the student of Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, often accompanying him on stage. After the death of Danjūrō IX in 1903, he distinguished himself as one of the best interpreters of historical dramas. It was in 1918 that he actually adopted the name Chūsha. He was a celebrated interpreter, especially of the character Akechi Mitsuhide, for which he left a particular interpretive model (*kata*), mentioned also by Tanizaki.

and [Onoe] Baikō [尾上]梅幸,<sup>14</sup> one notes the stories about discipline that run through them with almost annoying insistence. These are often followed by the statement, “The youth of today, however, have it easy.” It seems that the adoptive father of Danjūrō replied to his natural parents: “It may be that your son will not be able to support this stress and will die, but if he survives he will become a splendid actor.” Thus the adopted father prepared Danjūrō, knowing that he was putting the young man’s life at risk.<sup>15</sup>

Tanizaki uses same argument in the case of Matsumoto Kōshirō VII 松本幸四郎,<sup>16</sup> whose artistic training is presented as a discipline that is gained at the cost of prolonged suffering at an early age, but that bears fruit in maturity and endures as an aura of ineffable mastery in old age:

It is thus in these situations that, because of difficult trials and tribulations—different from those of a man who adopted the way of the theater at a later age—the effects of discipline are unexpectedly revealed; in comparison to Ii [Yōhō], even [Matsumoto] Kōshirō appeared to me as a great actor.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, it is exactly this kind of training—imposed on Kabuki actors and the artists of the puppet theater from a very early age—that is a strong decisive factor:

If one thinks about it carefully, the strength of the Kabuki actors consists above all in having bodily acquired their mastery from childhood through this system of training. In the opinion of veterans such as [Ichikawa] Chūsha [VII], more recent methods are milder; but without doubt, between a person who took up the path of the theater at a later age and those who were severely disciplined with dance, the *shamisen*, the *jōruri*, and other skills from the age of innocence, even when they stand upon the stage in silence, there is a great difference.<sup>18</sup>

14. Onoe Baikō VI (1870–1934) was the great-grandson of Onoe Kikugorō III (1784–1849). He was adopted at the age of twelve by Kikugorō V, by whom he was trained for roles of young *onnagata* (*wakaoyama*), quickly achieving success in the family’s classical repertoire alongside his adoptive father. He subsequently achieved vast popularity, especially in feminine roles in social dramas, accompanied by Ichimura Uzaemon XV, interpreter of fascinating and elegant male roles. From 1911 on he was an exclusive interpreter for the Teikokugekijō (Imperial Theater), for which he was also leader of the company. He left a celebrated and precious testimony about the art of *onnagata*, the family Onoe, and the Kabuki in the text *Ume no shitakaze* (Wind under plums, 1930), which was originally published in installments in the magazine *Engei gahō* 演芸画報.

15. *TJZ* 20, p. 415.

16. Matsumoto Kōshirō VII (1870–1949), a student of Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, assumed the name in 1911. Famed actor of *aragoto* 荒事, with an imposing appearance and booming voice, he was one of the most celebrated interpreters of the character Benkei. A noted figure of the Kabuki in the Taishō and postwar periods, he put himself to the test in newly conceived dramas and in the first lyrical opera performed in Japan.

17. *TJZ* 20, p. 420.

18. *TJZ* 20, pp. 415–416.



Thus the molding of the body from a tender age, over many years, and with the most varied techniques of the performing arts is the secret to the success of the traditional actor.

#### BODY AND ENVIRONMENT

The formation of the man of the stage combines artistic education (dance, musical instruments [*shamisen*], recital, singing [*jōruri*], etc.) with—no less important in Tanizaki's eyes—the environment in which the artistic man grows (or grew):

I would like to call the reader's attention to this point: although today it is not exactly so, the Kabuki actors of the past had an education that was much different from our own. They lived from infancy on in an environment that children normally never experience; they grew up in a way that was different and antiquated, in a way that we cannot even imagine. [Ichikawa] Sadanji [市川]左團次<sup>19</sup> himself, for example, was enrolled at the same elementary school I was attending, but it seems that up until the final certificate, in practice he had never attended. Then there was the case of [Onoe] Kikugorō [尾上]菊五郎:<sup>20</sup> if one considers that in his childhood he was abducted and secluded in the country home of Chigasaki, where he was subjected to the enchanting influence of [Ichikawa] Danjūrō, it is extremely doubtful that he managed to acquire an adequate education. At that time the sons of actors had a predilection for feminine fashion, with silk scarves and black lacquered hats, and they put on mincing poses, pipes in their mouths: they were terribly sophisticated, and so we treated them like a completely different race, looking them over from head to toe and scorning them as aspiring geisha. . . . From morning to night they were subjected to grueling training sessions equivalent to child torture; they were certainly capable in practicing the arts (*geigoto* 芸事), but they did not have time to acquire knowledge, intelligence, and virtue. There was a dangerous propensity to retardation of mental

19. Ichikawa Sadanji II (1880–1940) was the son of Sadanji I. He appeared on stage at the age of four and in 1906 took on the name of his father. He was renowned for the solidity and grandeur of his interpretations, which were taken from both the classical and modern repertoires. Gifted with great stage presence, he was a supporting figure for the world of coeval theater: he founded the Jiyūgekijō (Free Theater) with Osanai Kaoru, recovered forgotten works from the ancient Kabuki of Edo and from the dramatist Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829), and inaugurated new works composed for the Kabuki by Okamoto Kidō and Mayama Seika (*shinkabuki*).

20. Onoe Kikugorō VI (1885–1949) was the son of Kikugorō V and heir to his father's prestigious name when he died in 1903. During childhood he was influenced by Danjūrō IX, who transmitted to him in particular the secrets of his great mastery of the dance. He played leading roles in the Ichimura theater company from 1908 on, along with Nakamura Kichimon. After the closure of the Ichimuraza, he joined the Shōchiku society, becoming one of its Kabuki stars before the war. A versatile interpreter of historic and current affairs dramas, from classical and contemporary repertoires, he was also a skilled dancer and an imitated performer of Kabuki dramas originally composed for the puppet theater.

development, and actors such as Nakamura Shikan 中村芝翫<sup>21</sup>—who it seems was not even able to count—were endowed with this trait even though they were celebrities in their art. . . . Until they finally managed to comprehend things, they wore silks like *chirimen* or *habutae* in contact with their skin, they reeked of the fragrance of thick face powder, they listened to *shamisen* and *tsuzumi* music, and their topics of conversation were limited to the theater and gossip about love affairs. . . . In that kind of atmosphere, it is natural that, from a conceptual and spiritual point of view, instruction was inferior to the standard level. . . . And yet, with their education in mind, if such individuals are able to interpret “social dramas” and “character dramas,” which are pregnant with pondering about the modern age, to the very end and to perfection, is this not due to the strength of art? Even if intellectually retarded, on stage they are extremely sensitive. They do not understand with their “heads,” yet they have a sixth sense for understanding the author’s intentions. The rules of the path of the theater seem to have—who knows where—something in common that can dissolve the time or distances between civilizations, and those who have been trained for various forms of expression, after various attempts in the end manage to get the point. They plunge into the contents from outside.<sup>22</sup>

The patrimony of expressive forms and refined, trained sensitivity that Kabuki actors receive thus allows them to master the nodal point in the widest variety of texts and dramatic compositions, as if these works have something within and beyond the conventions of the theater in different eras, and within and beyond the passions and affections to be expressed in the scene.

Tanizaki proposes the example of the elderly actor Ichikawa Chūsha, who was distinguished among the young interpreters in *Dōshi no hitobito* by Yamamoto Yūzō 山本有三 (1887–1974), and again mentions the case of Matsumoto Kōshirō in *Tosca*, with Ii Yōhō 伊井蓉峰<sup>23</sup> and Kawakami Sadayakko 川上貞奴.<sup>24</sup> He also

21. Nakamura Shikan V (1865–1940), later known as Utaemon V, was the son of Shikan IV. *Onnagata* leading man from the Meiji period to the Shōwa era, he began to recite alongside Ichikawa Danjūrō IX and Onoe Kikugorō V, becoming an authority on—and one of the most refined and intense interpreters of—female roles, particularly in historical dramas. He even impersonated women in the new historical dramas composed for the Kabuki by Tsubouchi Shōyō in a memorable way, and with modern sensitivity.

22. *TJZ* 20, pp. 418–419.

23. Ii Yōhō (1871–1932) was one of the most important exponents of the *shinpa*(*geki*) 新派(劇). Founder in 1891 of a reformed mixed theater company, in competition with the style of Kawakami Otojirō 川上音二郎 (1864–1911), he marked the prevalent aesthetic pathway of the new movement. In 1901, as leading actor of the Masagoza, he brought to the stage—with new scenery and direction—faithful versions of several works composed for the puppet theater by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724), Western works in translation, and new works composed for the *shinpa*. From 1917 on, with the actor Kawai Takeo 河合武雄 (1877–1942) and the *onnagata* Kitamura Rokurō 喜多村緑郎 (1871–1961), he was a protagonist in the period of greatest splendor of the “New Wave.”

24. Kawakami Sadayakko (1872–1946) was the second actress in Japan to set foot on stage after the 1629 prohibition that forbade women to perform Kabuki, and the first celebrated Japanese actress. Originally a geisha dancer in the Yoshimachi quarter of Tōkyō, she met and married Kawakami Otojirō, an

cites Ichikawa Danzō 市川団藏<sup>25</sup> once again, as we will see.

Thus on the one hand we have the *environment*, which forms a special kind of sensitivity in young actors and educates them about the sensuality of materials and about their own relationship with the body—in terms of the body's perceptions of external stimuli, its appearance, the choice of style and the construction of attitudes and expressions, and vis-à-vis the world and other human beings. This relationship with the body is also reflected in a more sensual than intellectual approach to the dramatic text to be staged. This special ability to feel emotions, affection, and sentiment is cultivated in an environment that is commonly considered to be unhealthy, without the common denominator of a regular education but with direct and continuous tactile and olfactory immersion in objects, sensations and emotions, places and situations.

On the other hand there is the *education* itself, which in the past was not the normal and regular scholastic instruction but training, above all, in the disciplines necessary to the man on the stage (dance, music, gesture, recital, chanting, etc.). These disciplines rely on the sensitivity nurtured by places frequented, conversations and customs, clothing, perfumes, makeup, and so forth.

A third element is the long period of *maturation*, which tempers the body and senses even in the later stages of life, when the fascination of the body and the mastery of one's physique have been lost—and are out of place—in a repertoire and context that are unfamiliar.

The three phases of *transmission*, *training*, and *creation* that lead to performing the arts on the stage are thus developed according to two factors that cannot be disregarded: (1) the body and the environment, which enrich tendencies, physique, and sensitivity, and (2) the transmission of knowledge (from master to student) and training in the various arts, in which the factor of *time* plays a sovereign role.

The difference between Kabuki training—rigorous and initiated at a very early age—and other kinds of training can be seen in self-confidence on stage, posture, and the attitude of the body in poses and movements. At a deeper level it is reflected in *interpretation*, which is the approach that the actor takes to the text. He brings this to the stage and lives it instinctively, with confident physical perception and

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exponent of the student protest theater and part of the movement for democratic rights. At the beginning, staying out of the limelight, she collaborated with her husband in the success of dramas about the Sino-Japanese War. She stepped on stage for the first time during the tour that they made of America and Europe beginning in 1899. In 1903 she made her debut in Japan, in a free version of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Following these activities, Kawakami Otojirō became one of the directors of the *shinpa*. Ever mindful of the novelties he had accumulated in the West and the signs of the times, he proceeded to organize performances, leaving his wife to the role of interpreter. In 1908 she opened a school for actresses. After the death of her husband, she withdrew prematurely from the stage.

25. Ichikawa Danzō VII (1836–1911) was the adoptive son of Danzō VI, one of the best-known actors in the Meiji period, alongside the exponents of the most illustrious dynasties, Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1838–1903) and Onoe Kikugorō V (1844–1903). A student of Danjūrō VII, he inherited the name Danzō in 1897. He was inimitable in antagonistic roles (*katakiyaku*) but had few opportunities to perform in the great theaters.

performance that are born of a profound familiarity with translating a text into a scene:

At the level of the comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the contents of the written dramatic text, they are probably inferior to the new actors who received a modern scholastic education, but once they reach the transposition phase on stage, their scenic performance often exceeds that of the *shingeki* interpreters.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Tanizaki underlines the contributions of Kabuki actors in the Jiyūgekijō (Free Theater) to the performance of Ibsen dramas under the supervision of Osanai Kaoru 小山内薫.<sup>27</sup> They also helped remodel the speech of the *kizewamono* 生世話物 (raw-life domestic drama) genre of Kawatake Mokuami 河竹黙阿弥 (1816–93), creating the way of reciting that is at the base of the *shingeki* (new drama, or Western-style theater) elocution:

For example, it is obvious that, behind the new works in costume, and also in the eloquence of translated dramas, the way of reciting elaborated by the Free Theater (Jiyūgekijō) in the execution of Ibsen's and Gorky's dramas has been broadly adopted and practiced up until today. In effect, the way of reciting the lines (*serifu* セリフ) in the modern theater does not originate from the “new school” (*shinpa*) but from the old theater [Kabuki]. I believe, therefore, that Kabuki actors from the end of the Meiji era must have remodeled the vocal expressions of the *kizewamono* 生世話物 of [Kawatake] Mokuami 河竹黙阿彌 and elaborated a natural speech, without pretense, which constitutes the foundations of the recital style of the *shingeki* of today. This was also possible because at the time there was that marvelous director Osanai [Kaoru]. Yet if Osanai adopted Kabuki actors from the old guard in order to establish modern drama in his own company, instead of using amateur players, wasn't it perhaps because he had confidence in their “art”?<sup>28</sup>

#### HUMILITY AND DEDICATION

The difference between Kabuki and more modern forms of performance lies in Kabuki's system of transmission, practice, set of skills learned from tradition, and sen-

26. *TJZ* 20, pp. 417–418.

27. Osanai Kaoru (1881–1928) was the founder of the Jiyūgekijō (Free Theater). After unfortunate experiences with playwriting for the *shinpa* (new school) and Kabuki actors, who were often irreverent toward dramatic texts, he nurtured the idea of a theater founded on the principles of E. Gordon Craig, which were not present in the local tradition. In 1924, at the conclusion of his fellowship with Ichikawa Sadanji II, he founded the Tsukiji shōgekijō (Little Tsukiji Theater)—the first Japanese theater with a fixed company—in collaboration with Hijikata Yoshi 土方与志. The theater staged dramas by Western authors, using technical organization, a production system, and scene equipment that were on the vanguard at the time. His premature death brought about a crisis and also the dissolution of the Little Tsukiji Theater.

28. *TJZ* 20, p. 418.

sitivity nurtured by the environment, not to mention Kabuki actors' familiarity with the stage, and with a wide variety of dramatic texts, developed from a very early age. The extreme versatility of Kabuki actors, derived from this set of ingredients, has no counterpart in other forms of theater, according to Tanizaki:

Nevertheless, one must recognize that the art (*gei* 藝) of the Kabuki is really versatile and has a broad range of applicability.<sup>29</sup>

To natural disposition—and to temperance produced through training under the severe guide of a master who uses imitation to transmit the “interpretive models” (*kata* 型) of the tradition he follows—we must add the cultivation of sensitivity and familiarity that nourish an extremely delicate refinement. And to practice begun at a very early age in the world of art, and the consequent familiarity with the stage, we must add the exercises for acquiring the strategies of skill (in the sister arts of music and dance) that transform an actor into an artist—skill mastered through total dedication of the body and of the mind, over time, to exercise of the disciplines necessary to dominate the stage.

Yet the harshness and relentlessness of the discipline in Kabuki, as well as the intensity of the training, are also found in other traditional arts, such as the puppet theater (*bunraku*). But whereas the different disciplines are united in Kabuki to forge the central figure of the actor, in the puppet theater voice and song are found in the singer (*tayū* 太夫), music in the *shamisen* player, gesture and dance in the maneuvers of the puppets (*ningyōzukai* 人形使). Difficult as it is to imagine, even greater severity is found in the world of the puppet theater (particularly in the case of the puppeteers) than in that of Kabuki:

If one then listens to the recitalists of *gidayū*[-*bushi*, “narrative singing”] or the musicians of *shamisen* in the puppet theater of Ōsaka, common are the stories of those who were beaten bloody by the master with blows to the head, or who lost their senses in a fall, having been pushed down from the second floor.<sup>30</sup>

In making his case, Tanizaki cites testimonies from the *Bunraku monogatari* 文楽物語 by Miyake Shūtarō 三宅周太郎:<sup>31</sup>

I am one of those who has read *Bunraku monogatari* by Miyake Shūtarō with great pleasure. I ask myself how many of the so-called artists

29. *TJZ* 20, p. 420.

30. *TJZ* 20, p. 415.

31. Miyake Shūtarō (1892–1967) was a theater critic who began collaborating with the magazine *Engei gahō* when he was a student at the Keiō University. Subsequently he began to write theater reviews for newspapers, showing a particular passion for Kabuki and introducing the way of the puppet theater to the general public through popular books, such *Bunraku no kenkyū* (1929, rev. ed. 1940) and its continuation (1941). From these the series “*Bunraku monogatari*” was collected and published in episodes in the magazine *Chūōkōron*, to which Tanizaki refers here.

(*geijutsuka* 藝術家) of today endured torments for their own “Art” (*geijutsu* 藝術) like those of the *jōruri* chanters, *shamisen* musicians, and puppeteers described there. When I listen to testimonies about training in the *bunraku*, I cannot help but think that “men of art” (*geinin* 藝人) like them are more authentic than “artists” (*geijutsuka* 藝術家) like us. If one compares their conduct of harsh application in their own way of art (*geidō* 藝道), one is forced to think that ours is milder by a long shot. ... In truth, their desire to appear as puppeteers in a situation such as the current one is true proof of the fact that they really love the art. There is nothing more important than art—not greed for money and, until now, not even the desire for glory. They are really “individuals abandoned by the spirit of the times,” “idiots unaware of the currents of the times,” and yet if their spiritual disposition of imperturbable devotion is fed by the art, then is it perhaps not our duty to examine the entirety of that art’s mysterious powers?<sup>32</sup>

Thus in *bunraku*, as in other traditional arts, the rigor of training is often combined with inadequate recognition on a social and economic level. In Tanizaki’s eyes, however, this makes the puppet theater even more worthy of appreciation precisely because it is the ultimate example of total dedication and humble abnegation to one’s own art. For Tanizaki, the *bunraku* masters’ art epitomizes the value of devotion and sacrifice to the arts, which the men of tradition would have respected:

I do not mean to unconditionally approve the old training method for which the elderly [Ichikawa] Chūsha feels nostalgia. Such training requires wasting an immense amount of time and energy and leads to useless physical suffering. The elders would say that “this is the medicine,” but I have the impression that there may be a pathway that gives the same results with a simpler method. Nevertheless, the resignation of the men of art who were tempered in the old way—resignation because of which one confides in art, art is the beginning and end of everything, it is not necessary to look beyond art, one considers the arts as his own life—[this] is a characteristic that is hard to find in the artists (*geijutsuka* 藝術家) who were trained in the Western style, and I find that it is precisely that mental state of seraphic serenity which is the only aspect one can be envious of.<sup>33</sup>

Tanizaki goes on to discuss how modernity has mitigated the cruel oppression that characterized the past. And with modernity, under the impulse of Western thought, a different conscience has emerged in the artist, in terms both of the discipline he practices and his own role. Called upon to have a greater awareness of himself—and of his profession vis-à-vis the social world and political reality—he loses his serenity and his humble capacity to concentrate on his art as the only

32. *TJZ* 20, pp. 429–430.

33. *TJZ* 20, p. 430.

reason for living. In this way the temporal hiatus of past/present, which was also outlined in the transformations within the world of traditional arts, also extends in a geographic-cultural direction: Orient/Occident. Blind devotion (and submission) seem in fact at odds with modernity and the West, where men are attracted to the practice of the arts at a more mature age and where, according to Tanizaki, artists are more attracted by the temptations of fame and economic recognition:

This does not mean that the artists from the Western school do not show zeal for art issues, but the ambition for fame and the desire for money are more widespread, and, at the level of service to the way of art, they are not the same as the “men of art” (*geinin* 藝人) who ignore fame and profit and forget the human world.

In effect, they are truly wary; in continuous tension, intelligent, incessantly contriving new ways of keeping in step with the trends of the times, they are impeccable and they elaborate a variety of difficult disquisitions to defend their position: in short, they are smart. In contrast, the men of art from an Oriental mold have a certain monotonousness and are naively honest; they are stupid; they remain immobile for ten years in their own field, almost as if it were the first day of briskly polishing their own technique; they are as innocent as children; even though they have masterful technique, they are not very good at composing theories; they do not trumpet concepts about art or such things; they take care of their effective capacities with extreme humbleness; in some cases they are even servile; they are passive in the face of the criticisms of the world, and as much as they are criticized they do not return fire in a clamorous way. The closer Western actors and musicians are to being first-rate, however, the more they seem to direct their interests in thousands of directions and the harder they work to not lose the position and popularity they have achieved; they give the unexplainable impression of insidious individuals whom one cannot really be fond of, whereas the Oriental men of art (*geinin* 藝人) in their obtuseness have warmth and stir up tenderness, and so their art and their humanity are closer together.<sup>34</sup>

An archetype of this Western artist profile would be Charlie Chaplin, with his tireless pursuit of new ploys by which to conquer the appreciation of the public.<sup>35</sup>

#### THE VALUE OF THE TEXT AND THE ROLE OF ITS INTERPRETER

Throughout his discussion, Tanizaki's outlines a vision of art that valorizes method over content. Art is first and foremost confident and expert technique—competency at, and dominance over, a brilliant capability that becomes more and more rounded and polished over the years. At times with monotony, traditional artistic method

34. *TJZ* 20, pp. 430–431.

35. *TJZ* 20, pp. 431–432.



masters its subject without expanding or evolving into exhibitions of never-ending progress.

As an example Tanizaki mentions the actor Ichikawa Sashō 市川左升 (II, 1883–1952?), whom he recognized in a scene in a very amateur film:

Since I would never have guessed that Sashō might appear in a film, . . . and since he wore a lot of makeup, at first I didn't recognize him, which made me think that *art was something really terrible*. Sashō was slightly strange when he recited in the dramas in translation of the Jiyūgekijō (Free Theater) tradition, yet even though he was not an excellent Kabuki actor, [in the film] it was evident that he had a talent much different from that of the normal movie actors: even finding himself in roles that were not at all congenial to his temperament (*gara* 柄), the difference clearly shone through.<sup>36</sup>

Once again, Tanizaki underlines the importance of devices not often perceived by laypeople—methods transmitted from father to son through generations of actors, skills that distinguish them from those who, though gifted, must improvise (in what can be only an external imitation of gestures and poses) when trying to reproduce the same charm. In this way even a well-trained modern actor like Sawashō 澤正 (Sawada Shōjirō 沢田正二郎),<sup>37</sup> putting himself to the test in the brilliant role of Sukeroku<sup>38</sup> from the Kabuki, was not prepared (as a traditional actor would have been) when he had to assume a particularly difficult pose on stage, and to his chagrin split a seam in his kimono:

When that movement is performed by [Ichimura] Uzaemon 市村羽左衛門<sup>39</sup> or by [Onoe] Kikugorō VI, even if his body appears to have the legs

36. *TJZ* 20, p. 416.

37. Sawada Shōjirō (1892–1929) was a theater actor who trained at the Bungei Kyōkai (Literary Association, 1909–13), founded by the well-read Tsubouchi Shōyō and by the aesthetic critic Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918). He was the brightest student there, along with the second great Japanese actress, Matsui Sumako (1886–1919). He later recited at her side in Geijutsuza, a *shingeki* company that soon drew a huge audience to Western-style theater. After the tragic death of Shimamura, followed by Matsui Sumako, in 1917 he founded the Shinkokugeki (New National Theater), which unfortunately did not enjoy success. He moved to Kansai, and in the postwar period reached great popularity with dramas inspired by serials and by cloak-and-dagger films, though he considered them secondary to his interest in the new theater and his respect for dramatic texts.

38. Sukeroku is a celebrated character and protagonist in various Kabuki performances, whose most famous variation ever played was *Sukeroku yukari no Edozakura* (Sukeroku and the Cherries of Edo), performed for the first time at the Yamamura theater at Edo in 1713, with Ichikawa Danjūrō II (1688–1758) in the role of Sukeroku. It was the only *sewamono* (domestic drama) inserted by Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859), in 1832, among the eighteen classics (*Jūhachiban*) of the repertoire of the Ichikawa family.

39. Ichimura Uzaemon XV (1874–1945) was the adopted son of Ichimura Uzaemon XIV, and was exclusively a Kabukiza actor. He gained extraordinary notoriety as a fresh interpreter of charming and elegant male roles in the most classical repertoire of the Edo Kabuki, in precious testimony of and as heir to interpretive models (*kata*) handed down from Kikugorō V.

wide apart, actually he does not open his legs with obtuse scrupulousness but just gives a particular angulation to his hips. He who has no dance training certainly cannot recognize this precaution, so if that same movement were performed in that costume by just anyone, the stitches would surely be ripped. The truth is that one deeply understands to what extent the art (*gei* 藝) is a sort of “magic art.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus it is not only Kabuki actors of almost superhuman mastery (the previously cited Danjūrō IX, for example) but also less exalted exponents of the art form who prove to be versatile and many-sided, even on other stages and in other repertoires, including the cinema.

Praising “the art of actors such as these, who developed day by day on the stage,” Tanizaki arrives at an appreciation for the theater that goes beyond the value of the work and the dramatic text to concentrate instead on the mastery and dexterity of the artist who acts upon the stage:

Perhaps we may consider as heresy a vision of the theater according to which, without consideration for the contents of the drama, for the unity of the whole or for other factors, only the art of the favorite actor is enjoyed; yet I feel a certain affection and a certain sympathy for that vision. Dexterity in the art (*gei* 藝) of each single actor is an element that is separate from the theater as a whole; distinct from an interest in the theater, there is that which one defines as an interest in the art (*gei no omoshirosa* 藝の面白さ) . . . something similar to the light of a pearl that has been carefully polished for years and years. The more one polishes it, the more it emits a formerly concealed brilliance (*yūgen na tsuya* 幽玄なつや): if one looks at the art (*gei* 藝) of the artists (*geinin* 藝人), one gets an impression of this sort. And the light of that pearl seems so precious! Tradition has it that Orientals have the habit of polishing antique objects by passing a cloth over them, rubbing each object for a long time over the years, with infinite patience. In this manner, the natural brilliance emerges from them, a brilliance which is like fine vintage wine, aging beautifully with time (*jidai no sabi* 時代のさび). To speak of polishing the art (*gei wo migaku* 藝を磨く) and enjoying the art (藝を楽しむ) is, in short, just this. The brilliance (*tsuya* つや) that emerges by rubbing patiently and carefully is the art (*gei* 藝). Even Westerners certainly understand the aesthetic dimension in which one rejoices at such taste; but are we not perhaps a little more radical?<sup>41</sup>

Since the concept of art as dexterity is not limited to the disciplines of the body—such as acting out scenes, or the manual ability of a painter or musician—but is also applied in a much wider way to writing poetry and novels, Tanizaki adds the following:

40. *TJZ* 20, p. 417.

41. *TJZ* 20, p. 422.

I believe that to arrive at first-class level in the arts (*geijutsu* 藝術), it is essential to possess such great ability that [the artist] can achieve anything he wants, even low-league virtuosity. Spectacular exhibitions and occasional tricks of dexterity are things that a serious actor should not challenge himself with; nevertheless, certain actors, although they do not possess the effective capacity of a conjuror, feign an annoying snobbishness that is reserved for high-level works. Even in the field of novels, there is certainly no lack of individuals who, though they refuse to dedicate themselves to vulgar works, on the grounds that they themselves are artistic writers (*junbungakusha* 純文學者), are actually afraid of comparing themselves with the able penmanship of popular writers (*taishū sakka* 大衆作家), or who, when they write their works, do not engage in the sacrifice and study of a popular writer.<sup>42</sup>

Thus he underlines the importance of artifice (*gikō* 技巧) and a virtuoso technique that are not pure exhibition and release but a hidden brilliance that is also relevant to writing, whether pure literature (*junbungaku*) or popular writing (*taishū bungaku*), yet that is often viewed with arrogance even by those who acknowledge the truth of art.

#### STAGE PRESENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS

Such mastery in the art of the stage (that is, of the body and its gestures) shows not only in movement itself but, even more impressively, in the immobility of a simple photographic pose:

It was not a bearing that required particular artifice (*gikō* 技巧), given that [Ichikawa Sumizō 市川壽美藏] was simply seated on a veranda with *geta* on his feet. It was sufficient to assume that pose; yet at the same time, there was something different. I didn't know how to explain the difference, so I looked more carefully: from minimal angulations of the hands or the feet—like the bend of the elbow or the expression of the fingers—from an imperceptible sigh which made the collar or the sleeves flatter, an elegant roundness emerged. Even though he seemed to be seated in a distracted way, in effect he was following the dictates of the Kabuki with due sagacity, so that each single fold of the kimono was different, although naturally so.<sup>43</sup>

Again, in the face of an actor in silence on stage, or appearing as a mute apparition in a scene, Tanizaki notes that the artist is aware of his own stage presence. Indeed, mastery of knowing how to present or exhibit oneself on stage is subtle but palpable:

42. *TJZ* 20, pp. 422–423.

43. *TJZ* 20, pp. 416–417.

About ten years ago, a friend of mine brought together various young *shingeki* actors and experimented with the cinematography of pure art. At the time those actors were marked as the new faces who knew the most about the arts and literature, and they were also serious individuals who interpreted with enthusiasm only selected dramas of top quality, yet when I was called to watch the first of those films, I realized that the good quality of the director in the stage direction and the plot are of secondary importance, and that more than any other thing, in the faces that were projected onto the screen, mastery was lacking. In the films of the time, it was common practice to call the actors one by one onto the stage in front of the camera and present them. Nevertheless, even in the simple act of presenting themselves in front of the spectators without speaking or reciting, since they are actors, the movement of their eyes should be particular and something in their faces should show ability and charm. For example, . . . when the *jōruri* chanter (*tayū* 太夫) is in pose in front of the bookstand and has not yet begun to pronounce a word, the atmosphere becomes charged with such sensations that the public holds its breath. Just as, when one comes into contact with old warriors who have returned from the battlefield, the gleam of arms and the whinnies of horses become perceptible to eyes and ears, so in the case of artists (*geinin* 藝人) there is something in their faces peculiar only to them, which gives the perception of the atmosphere of the theater or of the *yose* (storytellers' hall).<sup>44</sup>

The richness and power of the art are therefore expressed not only in action on stage, and not only in the movements of music and dance, but also in the limpid neutrality found in the absence of action—and in the moments before performance and exhibition.

To illustrate, Tanizaki cites a Western actor in the framework of the cinema—an art that does not have the immediacy of live stage presence: Paul Wegener (1874–1948), celebrated actor in films such as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *The Golem*, and *The Student of Prague*:

If, as in the Kabuki or the opera, some parts are transposed into dance or are in the form of song, everything is easier, whereas it is difficult to dramatize such a supernatural and mysterious world without using the power of music and dance, reciting with naturalness, without any form of hyperbole. If the actor who recites the part is inept, the result is something absurd and unbelievable. Wegener performs those arduous roles in a really enthralling way, without ever losing the tenor and the depth of a high-class work. His interpretation was different from the *haragei* (腹藝, literally, “belly art/performance”) of the Oriental school, but even though he did not make a minimalist gesture that stood out, with his presence on the screen clouds of terror were stirred up, around his body an

44. *TJZ* 20, p. 425.

almost enigmatic atmosphere fluctuated, and he gave the unexplainable impression of a “character who arrived in a land of dreams,” leading you to believe that if a human being had to appear in the world it could not have been otherwise. At the beginning I thought that Western actors, aside from the power of art (*gei* 藝), must have had preparation and a deep understanding of literature, unlike [actors] of the Kabuki or other types. And Wegener did manage to carry out a performing art of that kind because he fully understood the meaning of those high-level works: [therefore,] more than an effect of “dexterity” (*ude* 腕), perhaps it was an effect of “mind/head” (頭).

. . . The “mind” is important, but whatever one may say, the first thing is the art (*gei* 藝)! It is not about understanding with the mind: if one does not get there through art, it is all a pack of lies. To obtain those results in such difficult roles, Wegener [must also have] had to endow his body with the art of such “cowardly” dexterity: in the German art of the theater, there must be a secular tradition and a training method on which it is founded. Neither knowledge nor natural disposition should be neglected, but for an actor the most important thing is to accumulate experiences in various sorts of situations and adopt the “secret” of the stage. Only in this way can one demonstrate mastery in what one does and arrive at a level at which one plays the role without any effort at all.<sup>45</sup>

A juxtaposition thus reemerges between comprehension of the art piece, of the character and of the role, by means of one’s “head” (i.e., interpreting the character through mental understanding and intellectual reconstruction) and an alternative, sensitive approach by way of the body and the figure (i.e., sensuality)—or again, through strategies and dexterity passed down from tradition and practice. This opposition would seem once again to translate into a distance between modernity/the West (modern theater and the cinema) and tradition/the East (the Kabuki and the artists trained in the old school, whose mastery shines through even in film appearances and in other arts). Once again the importance of training and experience on stage (in various situations within the theater and dramaturgy) resurfaces, from expressive and natural realism to the dimensions of fantasy, mystery, and hyperbole, whether through dance or through other expressive manifestations.

#### THE DESTINY AND MANY FACETS OF THE ARTS

In his reflections about art, among the various twists and turns that are suggested here and there, Tanizaki also latches onto the theme of art’s sense and destiny:

Well, then, will that which we have defined as “art” (*gei* 藝), and the feeling of respect for this “art,” therefore slowly decline in each of the artistic sectors from now on? On this subject, I recently came across

45. *TJZ* 20, pp. 423–424.

something that strikes me a bit when I see the word “Art” (*geijutsu* 藝術). The characters that make up the term *geijutsu*, even if sometimes one may find them in texts from the past, have come to acquire a special meaning analogous to the current one, which is, needless to say, under the influence of the West. When we reach the point where we speak of “artistic education” (*geijutsu kyōiku*) even in the elementary schools in the country or in girls’ schools, rather than “Art” (*geijutsu*) and “artist” (*geijutsuka*), then the concepts of “art” (*gei*) and “man of art” (*geinin*) are those that are perceived as being nobler.<sup>46</sup>

As partly anticipated above, here one of the central reasons for the entire conversation emerges: namely, the distinction between *geijutsu* (“Art” in modern Western terms) and *gei* (“art” in its traditional Japanese forms).

If one emphasizes the necessity and value of art as cited above, by considering it to be technique (a set of techniques), one must nevertheless not neglect other elements. This is so because as a technique art is fed by the shrewdness of the masters’ tradition, by thorough training in the various disciplines of screen play, by the capacity to incorporate devices, and by an aesthetic sensitivity refined through the senses and through experience. Yet such art also embodies a sense of maturity, charged with significance, and an ongoing effort to exceed the ostentatious dimension of one’s own virtuosity in order to achieve a sober aridity, a lightness, a heedless dominance of the decline that comes with aging and the passage of time.

Thus affirming the value of maturity accumulated over the years, Tanizaki broadens his dialogue to address Ueda Akinari’s (1734–1809) prose literature and Ichikawa Danzō VII’s (1836–1911) interpretive art as it was in his old age:

If one reads the *Ugetsu monogatari* (Tales of Moonlight and Rain) by [Ueda] Akinari and thus latches onto [his second, much later masterpiece,] the *Harusame monogatari* (Stories of Spring Rains), one is even more impressed by the beauty of the writing. [When he wrote the latter,] this master of literature had lived more than seventy years, surpassing the luxurious expression of maturity, and was able to make the pen glide with composed nimbleness and produce an inexpressible flavor. By then he did not worry too much about composing an admirable text or elaborate artifices, yet over the years that had passed he had not lost his original charm. From beneath the patina of time, despite the rust, the sumptuous elements of the *Ugetsu* era glitter on the bottom like burnished silver, as when one looks at the tears in an old piece of frayed gold brocade. One gets this sensation also from Danzō’s art. And it is something different from a progressive and active spirit, which says that the more one ages the livelier he is, or that no matter how old you get you never stop looking for new discoveries. A diligent, obstinate spirit that does not know the meaning of rest in which to hesitate, insatiable, may be frequent among Westerners. Orientals, however, come to understand the plan of the

46. *TJZ* 20, p. 429.

heavens as they age, and there they find peace. No matter how much one becomes agitated or flustered, one resigns oneself to the fact that by now nothing more can be done, trusting a body that continues to age and waste away. On stage Danzō had by then lost all his vital energy, he was nothing more than a skeleton that moved. . . . Besides, as a result of the fact that his body no longer responded freely, his gestures were approximate, essential, even lazy. Yet in the effect of art that resulted from long months and years of practice, in those uncertain movements and that slowness of rhythm, he showed himself to be charged with indescribable prowess and significance. In fact he seemed very much himself, by then arrived at that point where, from the depths of the soul, serenity is released, and so, whatever he did on stage, or also when he did nothing, it spontaneously became art. Thus in the theater of the old Danzō, more than the interest of the performance itself, enjoyment consisted in the expression and the decadent flavor of the old actor's art (*gei* 藝). . . . What still remains vividly impressed on my memory is not so much the image of an intense, compact drama as the lone Danzō's mastery of art, for his gestures alone brought me to exclaim, "When a great artist withers, thus he reaches this level!"<sup>47</sup>

Here the power and charm of decanting well-aged techniques are lucidly depicted. Through the loss of liveliness and freshness they actually gain attractiveness, lightness, and sobriety, cloaking themselves in an elegance that is no longer solicited but that rises up naturally and spontaneously. This is the indescribable taste of art that originates from a life's devotion.

Dexterity versus sobriety can thus be added to the chain of juxtapositions that constitute a double pathway in the Japanese conception of aesthetics: the brilliance of gaudy exhibition is contrasted with the burnished sheen of ingrained artistry, the show of masterful glitz is contrasted with the indifference and serenity of the aged virtuoso, and so on. The fascination (of the sequence) of the latter terms, being aesthetically suffused and tinged, offers a calm and serene enjoyment that is less aggressive and enthralling than the pleasure elicited by youthful dexterity, but that nevertheless produces sensations of deeply touching, intense emotion. The fact that the traditional Japanese arts encompass this "approximate, essential, even lazy" approach to art in an artist's old age is also confirmation of the Japanese predilection for a story or a drama that is tragically intense, emotional and teary, rather than for the brilliant wit of a comedy.<sup>48</sup>

At this point, Tanizaki addresses the idea of the effect produced by the arts—in other words, their consolation value (*nagusami*). He begins by discussing the arts' portrayal of nature, nature's relationship with man, and man's ever-comforting return to the natural world. Within the man-nature relationship, man's soul appears to find consolation, delight, and relaxation in overcoming discomforts and human suffering. As if due to an effect of the arts, this process begins, above all, with *the*

47. *TJZ* 20, pp. 421–422.

48. *TJZ* 20, pp. 432–433.



*artist himself*. The artist accomplishes this by valuing purification and feeling in such a way that it allows him to transcend daily life and the tormenting problems of existence.

It is in precisely this way that Tanizaki himself arrives at affirming the artist's gifts and "purenness of soul." He argues that the fact that an artist does not reflect on the perturbations of existence in a script bears witness to the limpid spirit of that artist, who nevertheless manages to put serenity into a gaze—or into a song about nature, as in the case of the poet Kitahara Hakushū:

When tormented by the difficulties of life and by thoughts of pain or detachment, death or affliction, a man does not usually find relief even in the displays of nature (*shizen no fūbutsu* 自然の風物); when he is sad, even the smiling country landscapes, the blooming of the flowers and the chirping of birds, seem sad. Thus if these cures for vulgar human existence do *not* eat away at the spirit—if he looks at corollas of a thousand colors and is immediately touched by the beauty of those hues, if he contemplates the radiant light of a serene sky and his heart suddenly jolts in his breast—isn't this perhaps a sign that he has the heart of a child? Today there is the tendency to think that literature that doesn't come up to the level of reality is not real literature, whereas the truth is that sometimes it is more difficult to distance oneself from the complexities of daily reality and rest in an individual universe.<sup>49</sup>

And again, in distinguishing between art that looks intently at life and at its concrete manifestations (such as current affairs) and art that instead manages to free itself and flee from a world that is heedless and ephemeral, Tanizaki recognizes in the latter not a cowardly escape but a possible pathway to humble dedication and discipline, and thus to pureness and consolation:

In the common thought of the literary world of today, it is taken for granted that the literature that escapes reality is cowardly. Yet that point of view was born under the influence of Western literature: originally, the function of our literature was to make people forget the labors of the vulgar human world. I believe that even the literature of the Western school is often of benefit to morale, though that does not mean that traditional Oriental literature is to be ostracized; I believe that both can live together without any difficulty. It is said that evasion is a cowardly act, yet both in the nature of flowers and birds, wind and moon (*kachōfūgetsu* 花鳥風月) and in the nature of placid clouds and wild cranes (*kan'un yakaku* 閑雲野鶴), in a broad sense there is nothing that is not reality: we Orientals in particular feel intimate with the phenomena of the natural world, in which we rediscover the birthplace of our spirit. And thanks to this we forget, if just for a moment, the discomfort of human life and the stimulation of daily events. . . . Also, if we consider how this attitude becomes deeply

49. *TJZ* 20, pp. 439–440.

embedded in man's disposition, can we really reject it simply [by referring to it] as cowardice? And if we call it "cowardice" to avoid a difficult job in order to apply ourselves to an easier one, then [purportedly doing so will only make it apparent that] incessantly addressing ourselves to the past [i.e., following the classic models in art] is never a simple task.<sup>50</sup>

Here Tanizaki reveals the distance between (1) a modern vision that reclaims art's dialectic relationship with politics and society and condemns withdrawal into the self and into purely aesthetic themes, and (2) the reevaluation of an art faithful to the "Oriental" tradition of humble professional devotion, even translating itself into a gaze which turns toward the past. In particular, Tanizaki defends the latter and exalts art's spirit of consolation (*nagusami*), which seems ever more alive, vital, and necessary for present-day society:

The difficulties are the same in literature that looks directly at reality and invents new beauty by moving from that, and in literature that, considering the territory of beauty as fixed and immutable, continuously returns to that concept throughout the passage of time. Whereas with something new it is easy enough to move an audience, thanks to the diversity of the visual, it is very difficult to offer new emotions while continuing in the footsteps of the ancients. . . . For these reasons, even though it is an arduous task to exceed the ancients by looking for models from the past, the attempt has its interesting aspects for the artist.<sup>51</sup>

In a contrast brought to extreme proportions by the artistic, aesthetic debate of the then-new twentieth century, he sees equal difficulties in the artist's attitude and approach within a literature that seems to look to the past and within one that is open only to novelty and innovation, and to the urgencies of current affairs.

Despite the distance between the past and the present, Tanizaki discerns the value of reiterating what has already been said, pursuing antique models, revisiting ancient themes. For Tanizaki, art is not just the research and display of a singular personality; rather, art draws from the past, without a lively juxtaposition between tradition and innovation:

In most recent times, I feel that the task of the artist is not to express individuality and nothing but individuality; it is sufficient that the difference between the ancient man and the self be minimal, it is sufficient that the self be displayed in a way that is barely perceptible; in other words, I believe that it is not a bad thing that [the self] not show at all, that it be completely eliminated by the important results of the ancients. . . . Nevertheless, if art is more than giving others enjoyment, and is first of all enjoyment for oneself, then is it not true, perhaps, that there should not be contraindications in that sense? Apart from the pleasure of he who

50. *TJZ* 20, p. 440.

51. *TJZ* 20, p. 441.

enjoys, if one considers the question from the point of view of he who creates, [then one sees that] in lingering over a point and continuing to smooth it without resting, one experiences infinite emotion.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, in an era when readers were increasingly limited to young people with a literary background, Tanizaki seems inclined toward art that is aimed at a mature public:

For me, that way of seeing is in radical contrast to the modern conception of “Art” (*geijutsukan* 藝術觀), and I have a sort of fear about my inclination, day after day, in that direction. . . . Thinking about it carefully, one could say that in contemporary Japan almost no literature exists that is read by adults, that is literature for the elderly. . . . Those who read contemporary Japanese literature—in particular the so-called pure literature—are well-read young people between eighteen or nineteen years old and their thirties. . . . Yet when someone like me, by now near to fifty, thinks that his own pieces will be read only by young people, it is not without a sense of sadness. Furthermore, I put myself in the shoes of the reader; I cannot help but think that there must be something missing in contemporary literature if there is nothing worth reading aside from the classics. True literature can be defined as those texts from which, from youth through old age, one seeks comfort (*ian* 慰安) now and then, savoring them by the light of a lamp, and which one never tires of as life companions. Men in the learning phase read, but when they approach the idle months of incipient old age, they begin to want, above all, touching and sober writings. In those moments, they want to read literature that compensates them for the pains of the half-lifetime already passed and that makes them forget the regrets of the old age that will come—in other words, literature which, weighed against their past existence, makes them think that everything went well, that the events of the world, joys and pains, are all pleasurable; in other words, [writing] that will give them a sort of tranquillity and faith. This is what I mean by “literature that discovers the birthplace of the soul.”<sup>53</sup>

In Tanizaki’s opinion, the distance between the modern writer and the artist who follows the lines of tradition reflects the differences and distances among a public that is becoming more and more diversified between the generations. He launches his defense of literature that looks to the past, and that may even appear to be escapist, as follows:

One says that literature is a reflection of an era, and thus that, from the moment the ebbing of an era is reflected [in its literature], even in the world of today this kind of tendency [to a literature that looks to the past] can be born. Yet one could [also] say that, in times such as these, it is more

52. *TJZ* 20, pp. 441–442.

53. *TJZ* 20, pp. 442–444.

likely than ever that these [tendencies] will exist. Even literature that instills the thought of class and a climate of conflict is perhaps useful for the development of societal progress; but seen from another perspective, is the incessant stimulation of the human soul and endangering of the status quo really the task of art? For Westerners, who usually wish to adhere exclusively to reality, perhaps there are no other pathways for change, but for we who have Zen, Buddhist philosophy, and the thoughts of Laozi and Zhuangzi, even though we live in a world of violent tensions, I believe that it is natural to put aside in one's breast days and months of serenity. . . . It is good to use literature to provide a tool for debate, but is it perhaps not true that in the world of today, with the renovation of politics and the social system, suffering nevertheless continues to increase? **We do nothing else but advance, spurred on the entire year by the cry for renovation: and yet, behaving in this way, what kind of happiness do we ever expect? In any way that the world may change, dissatisfaction will still exist, and so the time when everyone will be happy may never come.**<sup>54</sup>

In affirming a concept of life that is relaxed and almost fatalistic, keeping his gaze detached and disenchanting, Tanizaki remembers and prefigures the dangers of the artist's political position in the present day. At the same time, however, almost ridiculing and reorganizing the presumed heroic positions of rebellion and protest of contemporary artists, he evokes the condition of the "man of art" in eras that were more brutal and perilous. And so the artist's continually dangerous position during the *senjūki* (Warring States) period seems much riskier to him.<sup>55</sup>

When faced with such life-threatening situations, as the writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) proclaimed, it is best for an artist to adopt an attitude of withdrawal and sacrifice, wise detachment from the political climate, surrender, and total dedication to the arts:

It is thus shrewder, before it is impossible to turn back, to try from the start to avoid the attention of the world and take on the attitude of he who sings the wind and the moon. . . . If we are able to shrug off the pretentious label of "artist" and hide ourselves in the city as "artisans" who address the people, this might be the way toward an easier and more secure lifestyle, rather than trusting the powerful or fleeing the world. . . . It is an inevitable choice if one considers that there are circumstances which make that more appropriate. What is more, it seems to me that it suits the nihilism of Oriental artists who, though feigning an apparent meanness toward the standard of "oppressed servants," delight in ironic observation while in their hearts they ridicule the valiant heroes of the empire.<sup>56</sup>

54. *TJZ* 20, pp. 445–446.

55. In portraying the difficult position of the artist in the Warring States period (*senjūki jidai*), at the mercy of the power relations between the warlords, who were potential patrons but also oppressors, Tanizaki cites the episode of the collaborative poetry (*renga*) of Akechi Mitsuhide (Samanosuke) with Nishinobō and Satomura Jōha on Mount Atago (*Jōzan kidan*, VI). *TJZ* 20, pp. 447–448.

56. *JZ* 20, pp. 448–449.

In this relationship between artist and the powerful, between artist and the public, Tanizaki thus holds that it would be suitable and useful if the artist were to reassume his simple position as a humble artisan:

Therefore, in conclusion, . . . I believe that lowering oneself to a simple artisan (*geinin*), given that this does not involve forcing or constricting, is a good thing. . . . Courting the masses and courting the powerful is the same thing; thus one refines one's own capacities in silence and with dedication, according to one's own artistic conscience, without worrying about large audiences. If the people do not understand, one will resign oneself, attributing the cause to a still insufficient commitment, or one will realize that one's art (*gei*) is not particularly deserving of notice in comparison to the performances of the ancients, and that one will inevitably remain entombed in anonymity as before; without a grudge toward men and without contempt for the world, one will enjoy one's work for itself. . . . Essentially, through "art" (*gei*) one sets forth along a sort of road toward supreme wisdom. This is certainly not a very easy journey, but if he actually manages to reach that destination, even a "man of art" (*geinin*) is not entirely despicable.

In the past, beginning with the Tokugawa period, . . . those who dealt with pure art (*jun geijutsu*), whether they were actors or artists or novelists (*gesakusha* 戯作者), had a low social position. Actors in particular were scorned as "beggars from the dry riverbed," and the men of art themselves sank down into that state. This low consideration perhaps seemed unfair, but depending on one's point of view, it may be considered correct. Indeed, beginning with the Meiji period, people started to look at "Art" (*geijutsu*) as something mysteriously sacred and hieratic; political themes and social problems were dealt with by novelists and playwrights, whereas in the past there had been no possibility that a clear concept of Art (*geijutsu*) could exist at a common level, and it was even more unlikely that men of art (*geinin*) and novelists (*gesakusha*) would express their opinions about political themes. Naturally I do not maintain that it is bad to look at Art (*geijutsu*) as something sacred; nevertheless, only individuals who suffer along this road for many years really begin to understand the ultimate essence of Art (*geijutsu*): is it not perhaps impossible to expect this of society in general? . . . The sacredness of Art (*geijutsu*) is preserved because only the artist in his environment knows the situation on the inside of this ivory tower, whereas if cats and wooden spoons [i.e., every man and his dog] start talking about Art (*geijutsu*), one gets the opposite effect.<sup>57</sup>

This rarified vision of art reaffirms the simultaneous need for humility and noble detachment, enveloped in an aura of sacredness that also needs to be preserved, even if it is not taken to an extreme.

57. *TJZ* 20, pp. 449–451.

Tanizaki also questions the validity and the competence of art critics. This of course touches on the crux of the relationship between artist and critic—namely, the problem of technical competence and the ability to comprehend what motivates art:

According to what the painter Yasuda Yukihiro states, among those who define themselves as art critics, there is no one who really understands painting. They put together various arguments, which from the viewpoint of the creator are all off track; thus the author gets no joy from being praised and feels no fear of being scorned, though in the same situation the judgments of an expert are like brushstrokes that he gathers one by one and from which illuminating indications or guiding ideas can sometimes be drawn. Therefore, the only ones who really suggest something that can be advantageous to the painter are the specialists. . . . The fact that the nonspecialists will never be able to know the efforts and failures of the writer is a cause of pride and pleasure for the author. . . . It is a good thing that the artist (*geijutsuka*) remains loyal to Art (*geijutsu*) through and through, and that the officials do not forget to perform their task as political administrators through and through. . . . In actual fact, doesn't one perhaps notice a tendency through which, as much as the sacredness of the arts (*geijutsu*) is broadly recognized, the true value of Art (*geijutsu*) has declined? Is it not perhaps true that, as in the past, when artists (*geijutsuka*) are scorned or persecuted, they commit themselves with greater seriousness?<sup>58</sup>

Although he affirms the sacredness—and the charm and power—of the arts, Tanizaki also reminds us of how little importance was traditionally attributed to the Oriental artisan. In this way he reverses the scale of values to the artist's disadvantage, preferring to reaffirm the wisdom of the artist who contents himself with a position of detachment and humility, leaving recognition of the sublime value and necessity of the arts to those who really have the sensitivity to do so:

In our country, Art (*geijutsu*) was placed on a level inferior to politics, religion, knowledge, and commerce, and on a worldly level I believe this is correct. Treatment that is favorable to artists (*geijutsuka*) is naturally a good thing, but even in this, if one exceeds the [proper] measure it is not entirely advantageous to the arts (*gei*). . . . However much one may say that now the situation has changed, today, as in the past, one can confirm that the artist (*geijutsuka*)—compared to those who engage in other professions—is sensitive, feminine, and cowardly. . . . However cowardly an artist (*geijutsuka*) may be, not until he contents himself with his own natural sphere of activities and polishes his own art (*gei*) will he be motivated to have no fear for his own life: if it is for the sake of art (*gei*), [then] without being conscious of it, his body will be ready to face death. This is the courage of the artist (*geijutsuka*). . . . One cannot help

58. *TJZ* 20, pp. 451–452.

but conclude that, if one really has a lot of free time, it is more intelligent to dedicate oneself with zeal to the way of the arts (*geidō* 藝道).

As often happens with Tanizaki, even in his works of fiction, he then distances himself from what he has said, imbuing everything, even himself and his own arguments, with the irony that distinguishes him. Thus what seem to be solid convictions are transformed into ravings of the moment—the singular position of a middle-aged writer, intentionally “conservative” and “antiquated.” But it is only a pose, the pose of an artist who is mature and wise, and who is ironic about the present and the future of the arts, in his own country and in the world, knowing that such ideas will become stronger with the passage of time:

This discussion about the arts (*gei*) has terminated by deviating toward other routes and transforming itself into idle talk without beginning or end, filled with contradictions; but to summarize what has been said, perhaps contemporary artists (*geijutsuka*) should respect the arts (*gei*) a little bit more than [they respect] abstract theories, and put themselves in a state of mind that is a bit closer to the men of art (*geinin*) from the past. I believe that it would not be a bad thing if a similar disposition of the soul were ostracized, especially today.

Nevertheless, I myself, who have articulated all these arguments, am evidently lacking in the virtue of humility. If I were a man of art (*geinin*), I would stay immersed in my work without saying anything. To be honest, as I have already said, it is not that I myself am completely convinced by these ideas of mine, and I also partly have the impression that I have pushed too far in getting big-headed; but it is not difficult to imagine that from now on, with the passing of the years, despite myself I will tend to be inclined more and more toward those opinions. When they get to my age, even the young who laugh at my intolerance will probably discover some points on which they will agree with me.<sup>59</sup>

59. *TJZ* 20, pp. 452–454.

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# Translating Imaginary into Images: *Manji*

MARIA ROBERTA NOVIELLI

The link between Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and the history of Japanese cinema begins with the origin of the “seventh art.” It is said that the famous writer saw his first film at the age of twelve, an event that was to be a sort of omen of his future passion for the field of cinema. The young Tanizaki seems to have been attracted by the sex appeal of the famous Hollywood stars, which he would later revive in his work through characters who have come to be unforgettable feminine figures in the history of Japanese literature.

Tanizaki's first direct experiences “in the field” began in 1917, when he showed an interest in the “Movement for a Pure Cinema” (Jun Eigageki Undō), a very popular movement during this period, and one of the first to praise the autonomy of film with respect to the intrusive ancestor from which it sprung, the theater. From this moment on, Tanizaki was aware of the expressive strength of film images and worked toward their ideal fusion with the literary text. Being one of the first Japanese authors to appreciate Chaplin's cinema, Tanizaki initially preferred the energetic and “caricatural” comedy typical of the American style to the native theatrical cut that he would later champion. He also underlined the importance of a contemporary text over one taken from the past, emphasizing the strength of a realistic narrative language rather than distant and elegiac nuances.

His interest saw him composing theoretical essays on cinema and actively cooperating with the newborn Taikatsu film company (a short form for Taishō Katsuei, born in 1920). The main characteristic of this small company, and of other contemporary independent productions, was to re-create the winning formula of American cinema as accurately as possible—especially in terms of the acting style of the performers, the agile narrative style of the screenplays, and the participation of an entrepreneurial-style director. Tanizaki took part in this with another director, Kurihara Thomas, and assumed the role of supervising the screenplay. Between 1920 and 1921 he worked on five productions: *Amateur Club* (*Amachua kurabu*, 1920), *The Beaches of Katsushika* (*Katsushika sunako*, 1920), *The Night of the Doll Festival* (*Hinamatsuri no yoru*, 1921), *The Splendor of the Moon* (*Tsuki no kagayaki*, 1921), and *The Lasciviousness of the Viper* (*Jasei no in*, 1921). This last production sparked a disagreement between Tanizaki and Kurihara that led to their separation and caused Tanizaki to lose interest in the world of cinema.

His interest in cinema dissolved further after he moved to Kansai as a consequence of the 1923 Kantō earthquake, though the bond between his written work and the film icons loved at the time endured. His passion for cinema clearly expresses itself in his famous essay *In Praise of Shadows* (*In'ei raisan*, 1933), in the

few lines that describe the effect of photography in cinema. Though Tanizaki never wrote about cinema again, his literary universe continued to naturally flow into the world of the movies.

At present, more than forty film adaptations of his works can be counted, making him one of the most highly regarded writers in Japan. However, he was almost never satisfied with the screen adaptations, often disagreeing with their interpretation because he did not recognize the spirit of his original texts. Some of his books recur more frequently as films, among them *Manji* (Whirlpool, 1928), one of the best-known titles in the Western world. There are four films taken from its tangled plot: the movie with the same title, filmed in 1964 by Masumura Yasuzō; the less interesting (again homonymous) version made in 1983, directed by Yokoyama Hiroto; the free adaptation made in 1985 by Liliana Cavani, titled *The Berlin Affair*; and a 1997 movie bearing the same title as the book, directed by Hattori Mitsunori (but undoubtedly less effective than the previous three).

Masumura's 1964 version is the subject of the present paper because of its perfect aesthetic fusion of the literary work (1928) and the film (released only a year before Tanizaki's death in 1965). The literary work is enriched by the director's three-dimensional scenes, for as we shall see, there is much more than simple passion as the plot. Besides the idealization of the feminine topoi, there is a true and pure image identification, an erotic universe with equally intense nuances, full of decadent sensuality.

#### THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF MASUMURA YASUZŌ

Beginning in 1952, Masumura studied in Rome for two years at the Experimental Center of Cinema. It is clear from his initial works that this experience of living in the heart of the Italian neo-realist movement was a determining factor for his future cinema. One sees in these early films a captivating energy, a quick rhythm in the dialogues and editing, as well as the modern traits of his characters, the absence of sentimental nuances, and a preference for common people of the lower middle class. To all this he soon added a kind of repulsion for the environment, preferring scenes where bodies and flesh filled the screen.

At the center of a famous quarrel that appeared in cinema magazines against the great "monsters of the past" (above all Ozu Yasujiro)—directors whom the young Masumura had criticized for the social conditioning they imposed, which altered a potentially sincere portrait of their characters—his expressive style soon acquired all those characteristics which distinguish his entire cinematic production. Denying the lyrical traits that characterized most Japanese films during those years, he chose characters with a very strong ego and uncontrollable desires, and soon concentrated on the universe of women. He stated that, "Contrairement à l'homme, qui n'est qu'une ombre, la femme est un être qui existe réellement, c'est un être extrêmement libre—voilà l'érotisme tel quel je le vois."<sup>1</sup>

1. "Entretien avec Masumura Yasuzo," in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n. 224, Oct. 1970.

Thus female characters soon come to be the center of some of his best films, all produced at the Daiei Cinema Company, and most are interpreted by the actress who would become his fetish, Wakao Ayako (who plays Mitsuko in *Manji*). These include unforgettable portraits of strong and sensual women dominating weak men, as in the cases of the nurse in *Red Angel* (*Akai tenshi*, 1966) and the tattooed femme fatale in *The Tattoo* (*Irezumi*, 1966). As in this last film, adapted from a work of Tanizaki's that very much resembles *Manji*, Masumura often transposes well-known novels offering a strong narrative style. Among the most famous titles are *The False Student* (*Nise daigakusei*, 1960, from the novel by Ōe Kenzaburō), *Thousand Cranes* (*Senbazuru*, 1969, by Kawabata Yasunari), *Blind Beast* (*Mojū*, 1969, by Edogawa Ranpo), and of course the third adaptation of a work by Tanizaki, *A Fool's Love* (*Chijin no ai*, 1967).

Most critics have accused Masumura of neglecting his original positions to devote himself to a kind of commercial and genre-like cinema. But one cannot fail to admire his deep dedication to depicting the human qualities of the individual characters in his work. Besides, we must credit his value as the promoter of an outstanding erotic cinema, which would eventually be considered a model for future Japanese filmmakers.

#### *MANJI*, WOMEN, ART, AND DEATH

Osaka. Through flashbacks, Sonoko (interpreted by actress Kishida Kyōko) narrates an unclear story in which she is the principal character. Descended from a wealthy family and married to a lawyer, Kakiuchi Kotarō (actor Funakoshi Eiji), the young woman attends a painting school where she meets a dazzling and fascinating woman, Tokumitsu Mitsuko (Wakao Ayako). The beauty of this woman influences Sonoko in her depiction of the image of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion. During the course of the painting's completion, the two women become more intimate and begin a sexually charged relationship without further explanation, heedless of Kotarō's disapproval.

One day Sonoko discovers that Mitsuko is having an affair with a man, Watanuki Eijirō (Kawazu Yūsuke), and she is led to believe that Mitsuko is pregnant (whereas Eijirō is actually impotent). Soon the tie between the two women involves both men, though in different ways: while Eijirō is able to convince Sonoko to make a blood contract that obliges her to accept him in the life of Mitsuko, her lover, Mitsuko in turn expands the relationships to involve Sonoko's husband Kotarō, thus entering into the couple's intimate life so deeply as to convince them to take sedatives at night to prevent them from having any sexual intercourse. The tragic ending shows a three-way love suicide involving Sonoko, Mitsuko, and Kotarō, just before their interlocking affair, probably blurred out by a faithful waitress, will become public and appear in the papers. Only Sonoko (in a tragic destiny?) will survive the suicide.

Although the plot is explicitly erotic, both the book and the film narrate the story in a direct way, without useless decorations or voyeuristic tumbling. The religious and ritual foundation of the two works is stronger than the erotic one. The

religious theme is immediately evident in the choice of title (a *manji* 萬字 is an equilateral cross with its arms bent at right angles 卍, a Buddhist symbol of the balance of opposites, and of infinite compassion and love). This theme is underlined early on in Sonoko's painting of the bodhisattva Kannon, and later in the ritual of the final suicide. In this last scene, the three lovers who are about to commit suicide pray in front of the portrait of Kannon and realize that they are themselves divinities shortly before taking their sleeping potions: in the center is "Mitsuko Kannon," and at her side are Sonoko and Kotarō as bodhisattvas.<sup>2</sup>

Besides representing adoration and an obsessive, overwhelming passion that spirals toward a tragic ending, the symbol of the *manji* evokes very clearly the relationships among the four characters. Bound by a desire represented by the intersection of what must be seen here as the four (rather than two) arms of the cross, and prompted by a destructive urge,<sup>3</sup> Sonoko, Mitsuko, Kotarō, and Eijirō each take a different direction of individual solitude, and each is the creator of his or her own destiny. At the center of the *manji* is their common obsession with the woman's body, including the idea that Mitsuko herself has, being almost totally absorbed by her own image.

It has already been mentioned that in Masumura's cinema production, as in that of contemporary directors such as Imamura Shōhei and Shindō Kaneto,<sup>4</sup> women are represented as having strong egos and an instinctive, irrational sensuality. The female protagonists of *Manji* state their desires and strongly claim them. Portrayed in the film with the same nuances underlined by Tanizaki in his book, Sonoko is the typical "classic woman" wearing a kimono, as if to evoke a faded past, whereas Mitsuko is her sensual and destructive counterpart, the image of a modern and Western woman. Sonoko is calm with her woman lover, willing to be manipulated and destroyed, and therefore becomes aggressive and adolescent with her husband, for whom she does not intend to give up any moment of pleasure. In contrast, Mitsuko is enthralling, never compassionate and very demanding with Sonoko, while seemingly under the authority of Eijirō and willing to follow his choices. Through her whims and her entangled strategies, it seems that it is she who drives her lovers wishes, absorbing their desires into her body and into her true and pure beauty, only to then return them in moments of ecstasy where masochism and sadism merge in harmony.

The two men, pointedly different (the husband calm, reflective, and rational, Mitsuko's young lover romantic and perverse), move on a similar basis: each one decides to comply with his own passion and, to do this, does not hesitate to force the other one into his plot.

2. Sonoko and Kotarō define themselves as *wakibotoke*, that is, the two bodhisattvas at the sides of the Buddha.
3. In both the book and the film, references to death are frequent, as are references to love suicides—promises to never leave each other, even beyond life. These statements are not induced by desperation but are stated with the emphasis of a promise of eternal love.
4. Shindō Kaneto, director of the famous *Onibaba* (1964), also wrote the screenplay of *Manji*.

The catalyst of the desire is art—and, more generally, what can be realized through what can be seen. An obsession with beauty is what links the four characters, and eroticism expresses itself through the bodies which constantly fill the screen. We begin with the painting and representation of the bodhisattva Kannon, originally male (in India and pre-Song-dynasty China) but in Japan invariably depicted with feminine traits (it is impossible not to alternatively recognize the four characters). Little by little, as Sonoko works on the painting, its face takes on the semblance of Mitsuko, making her the explicit object of veneration. Sonoko wants to study Mitsuko's body at all costs (she strips off the drape which covers her), and claims to possess it with a glance.

The camera follows these movements, and its angles further underline the direction of the glance. In the scenes where one of the women talks to one of the men, these angles are even sharper,<sup>5</sup> so as to enhance once again their feminine strength. Bodies are explored not in a voyeuristic way but through the smallest of details, which themselves evoke eroticism—sharp close-ups of skin, exposed napes, small gestures. A body often crosses the screen stealthily, either in the background or from one side to the other (as when Kotarō overhears Sonoko's phone call to Mitsuko), thus intensifying the power of glances; and when the image is perceived through a grating, it is further exalted by the effect it creates. Listening to Sonoko's confession, the writer's glance bears upon the scene and perfectly agrees with that of the spectator.

The result is an alternation of pictures with a high aesthetic effect for which the choice of colors is indispensable. The candor of the bodies always requires a selection of strong colors, often distributed on wide surfaces. Almost all the shots are indoors, so that the effects of light and shadow show all the erotic details as though they are floating drapes. Naked bodies, however, are never openly revealed. Rather, the image of the body alternates between being exposed and being hidden, thus paraphrasing the dream-like throb of the erotic crescendo in Tanizaki's original work.

And then there is death, which is, above all, a social status. As in the well-known *amour fou* (passionate or obsessive love), a relationship which is morally objectionable is doomed to end. The epilogue is foreshadowed in the first scenes, when at the painting school it is rumored that there might be a sexual relationship between the two women, who are therefore identified as “abnormal” and all but entirely ignored. It has in fact been asserted that *Manji* is a criticism of marriage and its “monad,” namely, conception.<sup>6</sup> In particular, it depicts the conjugal union as nothing but a hypocritical act imposed by tradition: Kotarō married Sonoko for her money, in a formal agreement that she is willing to accept only as long as he is able to satisfy

5. Usually, when it is the woman who is speaking the shots are taken from above, while the camera films from below when the dialogue involves the man.

6. Not only does Sonoko not intend to have children, and therefore uses contraceptive techniques read about in an American text (another “negative” influence from the Western world), but Mitsuko pretends to be pregnant in order to get Sonoko to return to her. It is necessary to underline the fact that Eijirō is impotent and therefore unable to have children.

her whims.<sup>7</sup> Yet the erotic freedom that upsets the balance of this institution, and disturbs the solid basis of society and morality, must necessarily come to an end.

As soon as the relationship between the two women is created, they are obliged to hide from the public. The shots of them are almost exclusively taken in narrow spaces, such as bedrooms, corridors, and hotels, which outwardly close in on the characters and their carnal desires. Yet the path toward *thanatos* (the death instinct) described in these spaces shows peculiar fractures: Sonoko survives the three-way suicide, and her desire remains unexpressed, while one of the arms of the Buddhist cross breaks.<sup>8</sup> She is left alone, and wonders whether she has been betrayed by her husband and by Mitsuko. She believes they wanted to die together, away from others, thereby excluding her from their dream. At this point Sonoko escapes the game definitively. In the last shot, while she is finishing her story and cannot avoid crying, for the first time she turns her back on the camera, which has always been fixed on her glance. Resurfacing from her deepest desires, Sonoko is ready to face the world once again.

7. One cannot forget the scene of the first (false) suicide of the two women, which is conceived as a wedding.

8. The balance of the *manji* (Buddhist equilateral cross) had already been broken when Eijirō had left the scene, after trying to blackmail Kotarō. Eijirō **didn't want Kotarō to tell anyone about their relationship** or about the contract Eijirō had signed with Kotarō's wife, Sonoko.

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# Tanizaki's *Naomi* and Nabokov's *Lolita*: A Comparative Essay

PAUL McCARTHY

To someone interested in both Japanese and American literature, the comparative study of the two great writers Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Vladimir Nabokov holds almost irresistible appeal. Each stands in the very front rank of the novelists of his own period and country. Each was highly prolific, producing works of startling variety in a number of genres. And each is known to the general public for allegedly scandalous works centering on the theme of sexual obsession. Nabokov's *Lolita* was finished in 1954 and first published by Olympia Press of Paris, known for its erotic offerings, after having been rejected by major American publishers due to the alleged immorality and perversity of its content.<sup>1</sup> It took several years for this modern classic to be published by mainline publishers in England and America. Similarly, Tanizaki had frequent problems with the censors, ranging from interference with his early (and to present-day eyes) completely innocuous *Itansha no kanashimi* in the 1910s<sup>2</sup> to the suppression of *The Makioka Sisters* (*Sasameyuki*) in the late 1930s due to its lack of nationalistic, militaristic content.<sup>3</sup> But the closest parallel to Nabokov's problems with *Lolita* is to be found in the 1950s controversy surrounding *The Key* (*Kagi*). Partial publication in the journal *Chūōkōron* led to critical charges of obscenity, so Tanizaki decided to alter and abbreviate his original storyline as he completed the work. As Shimanaka Hōji, late president of *Chūōkōron*, has said, we will never know what Tanizaki's originally planned novel would have been like, though it surely would have surpassed in boldness the already daring *The Key* that we now have.<sup>4</sup>

## TWO WRITERS

If the points of resemblance between these two great novelists are striking, however, so are their differences. Tanizaki was an *edokko*, a true Tokyoite, despite his love of and long residence in Kansai. He was intensely Japanese, not in a strained, self-conscious, ideological way but quite naturally, as one who had been born, raised, and educated in Japan, worked as a writer there all his life, and never left it save for short trips to not-too-distant Korea (then a Japanese colony) and China in the

1. For an account of the genesis of *Lolita* and its complicated publishing history, see Nabokov's essay "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," appended to most editions of the novel, e.g., Nabokov 1980, 309–315.

2. See Ito 1998, pp. 21–32.

3. See Chambers 1998, pp. 133–138.

4. Address to the Venice Conference by Shimanaka Hoji, April 1995.

1920s. Unlike eminent Japanese writers such as Nagai Kafū, who spent years in America and France; Mori Ōgai, who studied in Germany and had an ill-fated love affair there; and Natsume Sōseki, whose unhappy stay in England drove him to the brink of emotional collapse, Tanizaki never made a serious attempt to visit Europe or America. His knowledge of those continents was gained from extensive reading, and from those elements of contemporary Western culture that had been exported to and taken root in Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Nakamura Mitsuo, in his early, full-length study of Tanizaki, points to the limited, one-sided, and therefore inevitably superficial aspects of Tanizaki's "Westernism."<sup>6</sup> As a lover of literature and a professional writer, Tanizaki had a broad knowledge of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western fiction. He translated works by Stendhal, Wilde, and Hardy into Japanese, deriving ideas for the plot of *A Portrait of Shunkin* (*Shunkin-shō*) from Hardy's *Barbara of the House of Grebe*.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Wilde's story *The Sphinx without a Secret* was the inspiration for Tanizaki's own, very different story *The Secret* (*Himitsu*).<sup>8</sup> Thus there can be no question as to the breadth and depth of Tanizaki's knowledge of modern Western literature.

Nakamura's criticism, however, points beyond literature, to more general culture. He argues (I think convincingly) that Tanizaki's view of the West is one-sided and distorted. Apart from modern literature, there are almost no references in Tanizaki's work to the West's great tradition or high culture. Western religion, philosophy, political and economic theory are barely mentioned; or, if they appear, they are reduced to decorative motifs or consciously distorted. Examples of this last would be the reference to an icon of the Blessed Virgin in his grandfather's room as "this Western goddess" in Tanizaki's *Childhood Years* (*Yōshō jidai*),<sup>9</sup> and his use of the notion of Platonic ideas to characterize the "rubber lady" whose startling appearance provides the climax to *Mr. Bluemound* (*Aozuka-shi no hanashi*).

By contrast, Nabokov was a child of several cultures: born in imperial Russia, he learned French and English as a child in addition to his native Russian, fled with his family to Western Europe at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, attended Cambridge, and then lived in prewar Germany as an émigré Russian writer-intellectual. With the advent of fascism, he emigrated to the United States, where he made a living as a lecturer in Russian language and literature at various East Coast, largely Ivy League, universities.<sup>10</sup> He soon began to write fiction in English, and a highly polished, elegant, and idiosyncratic English it was. Although he complained of the loss he suffered by being forced to write in a foreign tongue, he is known as a consummate stylist in his adopted language. Like Tanizaki, he was exceedingly well read in the literature of several cultures—though these were all within Nabokov's

5. For a detailed account of Tanizaki's life, see Nomura 1974.

6. Nakamura 1952, especially p. 151.

7. Ito 1991, pp. 168–170.

8. For the relationship between the Wilde and Tanizaki stories, see McCarthy 1975, pp. 82–88; and McCarthy 1984, pp. 119–123.

9. McCarthy (trans.) 1988, p. 20.

10. For a detailed account of Nabokov's life, see Boyd's two-volume biography (Boyd 1990, 1991).

own European-centered tradition. Unlike Tanizaki, and virtually all Japanese writers, he felt no urgent necessity to immerse himself in the literature of an alien civilization: Western writers did not feel compelled to devote themselves to Eastern culture, although a significant few (Yeats, Pound, Waley, and others) did so voluntarily. The situation of Japanese, along with all other Asian intellectuals and litterateurs, was very different: they could adopt, adapt to, or react against Western culture, but they could not ignore it. Its impact on their own societies was too overwhelming to permit that option.

We must grant, then, in light of the above, that a simple comparison of the “multi-culturalism” of a Nabokov and a Tanizaki is by its very nature unfair, with the scales weighted heavily in favor of the Western party, who is familiar with several cultures within his own very broad European tradition, yet who may be ignorant of and indifferent to the equally broad stream of Asian civilization. The scales are thus weighted against the Eastern party, who as a matter of course has knowledge of several strands within Asian civilization (Buddhist, Confucian, Japanese nativist, for example) but must also confront and somehow master the very different traditions of the West and, in addition, “modernity.”

What Nakamura is demanding of the modern Japanese intellectual is that he come to terms with the *roots* of Western civilization (Jewish, Greco-Roman, medieval Catholic, Reformation Protestant, Enlightenment-inspired liberal humanist—the whole range of cultural standpoints extending back two to three thousand years), and not just with “modern Western civilization,” especially as reduced to its more obvious, scientific-technological, materialist-consumerist manifestations. He would argue, I think, that in their various ways, writers as different as Tsubouchi Shōyō, Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai, and Nagai Kafū have seriously engaged, respectively, with the cultures of Russia, England, Germany, and France. But he does not find a comparably serious encounter with the West in general, or any particular Western land and culture, in the writings of Tanizaki.

Nabokov, in contrast, engages many aspects of the various Western cultures he depicts—Russian, German, French, English, and American. Though some critics have found his comments on ideological and intellectual matters jejune,<sup>11</sup> he at least addresses a wide range of ideas that have been powerful in the modern world. His contempt for Marxism-Leninism is perhaps predictable, given his own background, but his attacks on fascism and racism are equally withering. Politically, he seems a supporter of the sort of liberal humanist policies associated with mainstream British and American politics (at least until very recently). Religion is not the subject of categorical statements, but its capacity for abuse by fanatics and hypocrites is acknowledged. Perhaps most famously, Nabokov heaps scorn on psychoanalysis, viewing it as a reductive pseudo-science and dubbing its founder “Dr. Fraud.” In the sphere of literature, he attacks those whom he views as overrated “middle-brow” writers, whose common characteristic is a tendency toward realistic description coupled with an interest in “ideas” (precisely corresponding to Japanese *shisō*) and literature

11. See, for example, Wood 1994, pp. 22, 210ff.

as a vehicle for those ideas. His impressive blacklist includes the likes of Balzac, Dostoyevsky, and Thomas Mann. Nabokov thus addresses, even if only incidentally, many of the topics that Nakamura finds wanting in Tanizaki's writings.

When it comes to popular culture, however, the two great writers have similar interests and approaches. Tanizaki delights in what remains of traditional Edo townsman culture: the Kabuki; foods like tofu, sushi, and sashimi prepared by specialty shops; and the like. He also delights in the fashionable contemporary culture of the West then being imported into Japan: spats and derbies; roast beef with "real Worcester sauce," as he makes a point of remarking; absinthe, champagne, and cognac; and (very prominently) moving pictures.<sup>12</sup> He not only enjoyed seeing early films but very quickly recognized their potential as *the* popular art form for modern times. During the 1920s he did a number of screenplays for Japanese studios, and contemporary students of film have expressed great interest in and admiration for this little-known aspect of his work.<sup>13</sup> Thus, at least up to his middle years, Tanizaki was a devotee of contemporary popular culture; and his utter lack of snobbism and strong confidence in his own taste allowed him to approach this *taishū bunka* (popular culture) with genuine zest, and not merely maintain an ironic distance. Popular culture provides a backdrop for his semi-comic novel *Naomi* (*Chijin no ai*), which we will be examining in more detail shortly.

Nabokov, for his part, makes rich use of American popular culture in *Lolita*. The narrator-protagonist is a European intellectual, an émigré making his living on the fringes of academia, whose involvement with the heroine leads to an *Odyssey*-like trip across America, focusing on its tourist sites/sights, its motels, fast-food joints, and institutions of learning, both higher and lower. Like Nabokov himself, one suspects, Humbert Humbert is fascinated, thrilled, and appalled by the spectacle of America in the 1950s. Naturally, there is a greater detachment from the cultural milieu than is the case with the protagonist Jōji in Tanizaki's *Naomi* (Humbert is a foreign intellectual/academic, Jōji a native white-collar worker), and more room for irony and even parody. *Lolita* is *not* satire, Nabokov himself tells us, since satire implies a reformative urge, which he claims to have none of vis-à-vis America. If Tanizaki's sensibility is essentially bourgeois (that of the Edo/Tokyo *shitamachi* townsman), Nabokov's is patrician (that of the rich, aristocratic class into which he was born). In terms of style, the interplay between Humbert's European learned/pedantic, consciously aesthetic language and the middle-brow-striving-after-high-culture tone of Mrs. Charlotte Haze or the vividly vulgar slang of her daughter Lolita is one of the great charms of the novel.

## TWO NOVELS

To turn now to the two novels that are our principal concerns, in Tanizaki's *Naomi*, the middle-class, middle-brow engineer Kawai Jōji discovers a girl working in a

12. For an account of Tanizaki's exposure to popular culture, both Japanese and Western, in his childhood and youth, see McCarthy (trans.) 1988.

13. See Bernardi 1998, pp. 75–92.

café and, finding she approximates his ideal “type,” establishes a relationship and begins to live with her. The relationship changes greatly over time: when they meet, Naomi is only fifteen, “a beginner—an apprentice, a budding hostess, so to speak,”<sup>14</sup> while Jōji is a solid, settled twenty-eight. He insists that his “original plan was simply to take charge of the child and look after her. . . . I was motivated by sympathy for her.”<sup>15</sup> His motives, then, are not immediately sexual. Yet he is thinking of the future. Immediately after his declaration of sympathy for the child, he remarks, “The best approach would be to bring a girl like Naomi into my home and patiently watch her grow. Later, if I liked what I saw, I could take her for my wife.”<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, however, “Naomi and I would play house, like children.”<sup>17</sup> And at first they do indeed literally “play”—at tag, “horsey,” and blindman’s buff. A stay at the seaside introduces a new and more intimate form of play, as Jōji starts regularly to give Naomi baths; and a year or so later, when the girl is sixteen, the relationship becomes sexual. By now, each seems committed to the other, and a legal marriage takes place, though this is kept secret. Although the two are oddly matched, very different in age, background, and education, there is nothing legally or morally wrong in their relationship, at least on a formal level. Moreover, the element which is shocking to a Western readership—raising a young girl with an eye to marrying her—is a motif familiar to Japanese readers from their great classic *The Tale of Genji*, in which the idealized lover-hero Genji does precisely this with one of the heroines, Murasaki. The classical parallel no doubt functions in part as parody, since Jōji and Naomi’s world is far removed from that of Genji and Murasaki; but the relationship itself has a demonstrable classical precedent, and that of the highest order.<sup>18</sup>

Nabokov’s Humbert Humbert follows a similar path in his relationship with Lolita, but the dark and scandalous elements are much stronger from first to last. Humbert comes across his ideal not in a café, where men in fact went to look for female companionship, but in the child’s own middle-class home in a New England college town. She is not fifteen, but only twelve; and Humbert’s interest is romantic/erotic/sexual from the very start. Lolita is a reincarnation of his first love, whom he identifies as “Annabel Leigh,” a name we will examine a bit further on. She is the “type” that he has spent his whole life in quest of. A ripe eroticism of description is present from the first moment he catches sight of her: “half-naked, kneeling, turning about on her knees, there was my Riviera love peering at me over dark glasses. It was the same child—the same frail, honey-hued shoulders, the same silky supple bare back, the same chestnut head of hair. A polka-dotted handkerchief tied around her chest hid from my ageing ape eyes, but not from the gaze of young memory, the juvenile breasts I had fondled one immortal day. . . . I saw again her lovely indrawn abdomen where my southbound mouth had briefly

14. Chambers (trans.) 1986, p. 4.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

17. *Ibid.*

18. For a detailed discussion of the parallels between *Chijin no ai* and *Genji monogatari*, see Hata 1989.

paused; and those puerile hips on which I had kissed the crenellated imprint left by the band of her shorts."<sup>19</sup>

The shift from these erotic imaginings to Humbert's own brand of active "play" is accomplished in a matter of days, scandalously but amusingly. Lolita gets a speck in her eye, and Dr. Humbert is on the spot: "Held her roughly by the shoulders, then tenderly by the temples, and turned her about. 'It's right there,' she said, 'I can feel it.' 'Swiss peasant would use the tip of her tongue.' 'Lick it out?' 'Yeth. Shly try?' 'Sure,' she said. . . . Bending toward her warm upturned russet face, sombre Humbert pressed his mouth to her fluttering eyelid. . . . My heart seemed everywhere at once."<sup>20</sup>

This rake's progress is interrupted when Lolita's mother, herself in love with Humbert, sends her daughter to summer camp to get her out of the way. Humbert marries the mother to be close to the daughter, but a tragicomic accident removes the mother from the scene. Now Humbert is in the position of foster father; and when, shortly after beginning a long journey with his new stepdaughter, he consummates the relationship, he is guilty not only of statutory rape (for Lolita is much too young to give informed consent) but also of quasi-incest. The sharp consciousness of both legal and moral guilt casts its shadow over the bulk of the novel, complicating and darkening the scenes of both lyric-erotic passion and parodic comedy. Nabokov's novel is, as a result, finally much darker in tone than Tanizaki's, and riddled with more unsettling ambiguities.

The two heroines, again, are alike in some respects but very different in other, more significant ones. Each is portrayed as naive and uneducated, yet capable of great cleverness when it comes to deceiving their older lovers. Jōji's preferred metaphors for Naomi are, in the first part of the novel, animal ones. She is compared to a "caged bird,"<sup>21</sup> "an alert dog,"<sup>22</sup> "a wild animal,"<sup>23</sup> and an "unruly colt."<sup>24</sup> Later, when Naomi is nineteen and is proved to have been unfaithful to Jōji with several different men (including, worst of all, a foreigner), Jōji thinks of her as "a harlot . . . this faithless, defiled woman,"<sup>25</sup> "this despicable slut."<sup>26</sup> When at last he decides to throw her out, his description runs: "Naomi looked like evil incarnate as she stood there. Her face was the perfect expression of a whore's defiant look."<sup>27</sup> And so he beats her, calling her "Dog! Fiend!" as he drives her from his house.

But within an hour or two, his feelings begin to change radically: "Little by little, the loathsomeness changed into an unfathomable beauty. . . . [Her face] was evil incarnate . . . and at the same time it was all the beauty of her body and spirit

19. Nabokov 1980, p. 39.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

21. Chambers (trans.) 1986, pp. 6, 21.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

elevated to its highest level. . . . How could I have turned on that awesome goddess?"<sup>28</sup> Here, what some critics have termed Tanizaki's diabolism (*akumashugi*) comes into play. The very fact of "evil" (accepting for the moment Jōji's highly biased judgement of Naomi) renders the other more beautiful. Instead of condemning or despising the other, the self kneels down in worship. This self-abasement expresses itself concretely in masochistic, fetishistic terms that are also regarded as typical of Tanizaki: "In the excess of my love, I got down on all fours and crawled around and around the room as though her body were resting firmly on my back even now. And then . . . I went upstairs, took out her old clothes, piled them on my back, put her socks on my hands, and crawled around that room too."<sup>29</sup> Continuing in this literally idolatrous vein, Jōji goes on to compare the now-absent Naomi to "a Greek statue or a Buddhist image . . . a work of art," which inspires in him "a deep, religious sense of gratitude."<sup>30</sup>

In time, and after many vicissitudes, Naomi and Jōji begin to live together again, through very much on *her* terms this time. In this, the last section of the novel, another descriptive motif that was present from the beginning now emerges with new emphasis: Naomi as a foreign, white goddess. From the first, she had reminded Jōji of the Hollywood film star Mary Pickford, and he had assured her that she looked Eurasian. Now she is described in terms of "a marble statue of Venus," with a "white body in a powerful halo, setting her off from the pitch-darkness around her."<sup>31</sup> Her skin, "a pure, vivid white,"<sup>32</sup> is kept free from hair by careful shaving, a novel practice sanctified by the example of "Western" or "American women."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, under the new regime, Naomi declares that "from now on, I'm going to spend my time with Westerners. They're more fun than Japanese." Poor Jōji can only submit. Then there is the matter of residence. Naomi insists on living on the Bluff in Yokohama, in "a Western house on a street where Westerners live," properly equipped with bedroom, dining room, cook, and houseboy.

Naomi, of course, gets the kind of life she wants, spending her days as a lady of leisure. After she has applied "white makeup to her entire body," she goes out with new friends with names like McConnell, Dugan, and Eustace. "She seems strangely Western as she goes around spouting English and making herself agreeable to the ladies and gentlemen at a party. Often I can't make out what she's saying. Her pronunciation has always been good. Sometimes she calls me 'George.'"<sup>34</sup> The reader will be smiling at this, but the narrator-protagonist is ready for that. Laugh or draw a moral, whichever you like, he says in the novel's last lines. Thirty-six-year-old Jōji is still madly in love with his twenty-three-year-old Naomi. It is—in a Tanizakian sense, certainly—a kind of happy ending.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 237.



Humbert Humbert's passion for Lolita is even greater than Jōji's for Naomi, being founded not on a fancied resemblance to an exotic movie-star but on a resemblance (real or imagined) to his first love, encountered when each of them was only twelve or thirteen, then loved, and finally lost. Her name, we are told, was Annabel Leigh, a reference to Poe's well-known poem *Annabel Lee*, which also celebrates a juvenile passion, the first line being "*She was a child and I was a child / In this kingdom by the sea.*" Poe's poem ends with the death of the girl and an ongoing, morbid passion on the part of her lover, thus resembling the ending of Nabokov's novel, as we shall see. (The poem itself may reflect Poe's own infatuation with and marriage to his thirteen-year-old cousin—life and art mirroring one another in complex ways.) Humbert goes on through the long years of youth and middle age always seeking another Annabel Leigh. And with the years, what must have once been a pure, youthful passion becomes—to the eye of the reader from the very beginning, and ultimately to the eye of Humbert himself—a neurotic obsession, tawdry, perverse, and destructive.

Thus, in *Lolita*, instead of Tanizaki's exotic "Mary Pickford," we have the "Eternal Girl" Annabel; instead of Tanizaki's patronizing animal metaphors, we have the worshipful celebration of the "nymphet"—a very young nymph, one of those beautiful, mysterious female deities who dwelt among the woods and streams of ancient Greece. Humbert invokes Virgil's heroines, Dante's Beatrice, and Petrarch's Laura as classical literary antecedents.<sup>35</sup> Now, Lolita is very much a girl of today (1950s America), and her lively, slangy speech, her casual-to-the-point-of-sloppiness dress, and her impudent, wayward manner are described in loving detail. But through it all there are glimpses of the Eternal Woman, or, rather, Eternal Girl-Child. Humbert sees her on a Sunday morning, dressed in pink, with rouged lips, and "holding in her hollowed hands a beautiful, banal, Eden-red apple"<sup>36</sup>—Eve tempting Adam in the person of Dr. Humbert. Later, when he has succeeded in having sex with her, he insists that it was *she* who seduced *him* (though he had, of course, drugged her and climbed into her bed by way of preparation): "My Lolita was a sportive Lassie. . . . Her kiss, to my delirious embarrassment, had some rather comical refinements of flutter and probe which made me conclude she had been coached at an early age by a little Lesbian. . . . I feigned supreme stupidity and had her have her way."<sup>37</sup>

Of course, we can hardly trust Humbert's account. He has a motive for making Lolita the seductress. His pose is, for much of the book, that of the sensitive, basically decent, if rather weak-willed, lover/victim: "I am not really concerned with so-called 'sex' at all," he assures us.<sup>38</sup> "I insist upon proving that I am not, and never was, and never could have been, a brutal scoundrel. The gentle and dreamy regions through which I crept were the patrimonies of poets—*not* crime's prowling ground."<sup>39</sup> This is special pleading with a vengeance, and Humbert is the arch-

35. Nabokov 1986, p. 19.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 131.



Unreliable Narrator. But it does seem likely that Lolita is not a virgin: precocious American youngster that she is, she has already lost her maidenhood by age twelve and a half, whether to “a little Lesbian,” as Humbert first imagines, or to one of that band of boy-rivals whom he comes to fear and loathe, and whom he characterizes with such fine venom: “The clean-cut, glossy-haired, shifty-eyed, white-faced young beasts in loud shirts and coats . . . gangling, golden-haired high school uglies, all muscles and gonorrhea.”<sup>40</sup>

All along, Humbert is in fear of a rival, though that rival turns out to be not those hateful high school boys but a playwright who has flickered in and out of the narrative from early on. During their second cross-country journey, Lolita escapes from Humbert to run off with Clare Quilty. Humbert is in despair, and devotes three whole years to the search for the couple. When eventually he finds Lolita, she has become the faded young wife, poor and pregnant, of a decent, working-class husband (not the licentious Clare Quilty, who has used and then abandoned her). In a moving scene, Humbert discovers love rather than lust within himself for the first time, and feels remorse and something like repentance for having destroyed Lolita's childhood.

The climax of the novel is a grotesque, blackly humorous murder scene in which Humbert gradually executes his rival and reflection, the odious playwright Quilty. (“Guilty,” he says as he repeatedly shoots him, verbally playful to the end.) The novel as we have it purports to be Humbert's confession and *apologia pro vita sua* as he awaits trial for the murder. In fact, he dies before he comes to trial, as does Lolita, in childbirth. Two lives (or three, if we count Quilty's) have been lost, and the ending is in no sense “happy.” But perhaps there is a hint of redemption in Humbert's change of heart (if it is sincere); and the scintillating, witty, wickedly beautiful text remains, with its evocation of Lolita, Nymphet eternalized by Art.

The language of the two novels provides another significant contrast. Each is a first-person narrative, and the style expresses the personality, tastes, and cultural background of each narrator-protagonist. Jōji's account is written in plain, simple Japanese: a naive, unliterary style reflecting his middle-brow personality. There is none of the stylistic richness of such early Tanizaki stories as *The Two Acolytes* (*Futari no chigo*), with its premodern Buddhist setting, or of a middle-period novel like *The Makioka Sisters*, which, though contemporary in setting, makes great play of both the characters' dialogues in Kansai dialect and the narration's elaborate flowing style. In contrast, Humbert's narrative voice in *Lolita* calls attention to itself in its very Nabokovian use of rare vocabulary, paronomasia, literary allusiveness, and a diversity of tones ranging from pedantic to romantic, apologetical to erotic. Some critics have suggested that Nabokov's novel is a celebration not of nymphets or perverse professors but of the American language.

Finally, let us glance at the names of the two heroines, which also serve as titles for the novels (or, in Tanizaki's case, as the title of the English translation). In Tanizaki's novel, Jōji is first drawn to Naomi precisely because of her name: “A

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–158.

splendid name, I thought; written in Roman letters, it could be a Western name.”<sup>41</sup> After learning her name, Jōji sees her as Eurasian, or as Mary Pickford-like. The name thus symbolizes his infatuation with “the West” of popular culture, as seen in Japan in the 1910s and 1920s. Tanizaki presents in the form of Naomi—the name and the girl—both the charms and the inadequacies of this reconstructed “West.” In a way, the name “Naomi” sums up the great theme of the novel: Japan’s encounter with a largely fantasized, contemporary, popular “West.” Japanese critics in particular have focused on the name’s significance, and one has proposed a suggestive contrast between Naomi and Nami, the heroine of the Tanizaki novel and that of Natsume Soseki’s *Kusamakura*, seeing the former novel as in part a critique of Soseki’s type of literature.<sup>42</sup>

In the case of Nabokov’s novel, the centrality of the name is obvious and undeniable, even as pure sound, with all its associations. “Lolita” is the title, the first word of the novel, and its last. In the famous opening paragraph, Nabokov indulges his love for alliteration: “*Lolita*, light of my life, fire of my loins.” The next sentence uses more alliteration even while describing and enacting the physical movement of the tongue as it pronounces the name: “*the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.*”<sup>43</sup>

One final point of resemblance between the two novels is the existence of a small-scale prototype for each: the short story *Aguri* (*Aoi hana*), published in 1922, two years prior to the start of serialization of *Naomi*, and the short story “First Love,” originally published in *The New Yorker* in 1948 and then revised in 1965 for inclusion in *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov’s volume of memoirs. Its original version thus precedes *Lolita* by six years. *Aguri* describes the relationship between an older man and a younger woman, though Okada is thirty-one at the start and thirty-four at the end, while *Aguri* is fourteen and seventeen. The gap is greater than with Jōji and Naomi, who are twenty-eight and fifteen, then thirty-six and twenty-three, respectively. *Aguri*, like Naomi, is described as Western-looking (“her legs were as slender and straight as those of any Western girl”),<sup>44</sup> with a taste for Western things and fashions from “the foreign shops of Yokohama.”<sup>45</sup> She is petted and indulged by Okada, and described with the same animal imagery Jōji uses for Naomi: “grooming her like a beloved pet . . . a leopard in necklace and earrings.”<sup>46</sup> Precisely like Naomi, she is imagined as a “marble statue of a nude woman” surrounded by dark velvet hangings.

The male protagonist Okada is, however, rather different from Jōji. For one thing, he is very much a narcissist, with a pronounced feminine side. Earlier, he had

41. Chambers (trans.) 1986, p. 4.

42. Asano 1990, pp. 97–115. This is a very helpful essay, which summarizes the views of earlier critics and advances new ideas, especially regarding Tanizaki’s critical stance regarding Sōseki, his literature, and its evaluation.

43. Nabokov 1980, p. 9; italics added.

44. Hibbett (trans.) 1965, p. 123.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

46. *Ibid.*

prided himself on "his plump white buttocks, as well rounded as a young girl's"<sup>47</sup> and "his smooth 'feminine' arms."<sup>48</sup> By the story's end, he is describing his body in terms not of narcissistic pleasure in its feminine beauty but of hypochondriacal fears of fatigue, weight-loss, illness, and death. The Western clothing in which he, too, had delighted now feels oppressive: "every part of the body was pressed and squeezed by clasps and buttons and rubber and leather, layer over layer, as if you were strapped to a cross."<sup>49</sup> He suspects his decline is caused by Aguri, who, in her role as leopard, is imagined as "ripping and tearing him to shreds, and trying to suck the marrow out of his bones."<sup>50</sup> In his fantasies, Aguri will continue to pleasure and torment him even after his death, in what is a foreshadowing of Utsugi's bones being trampled on in the tomb by Satsuko's lovely feet in Tanizaki's *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (*Fūten rōjin nikki*). Okada is an altogether more delicate and pitiable character than Jōji, who seems neither feminine, narcissistic, nor hypochondriacal. Whatever the similarities and differences among the principal characters, however, the working out of the same thematic relationship on a smaller scale a few years previous to the major novel is worth noting.

The genesis of Nabokov's novel is more complex. In his essay "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*,"<sup>51</sup> he tells us that he wrote a short story, of some thirty pages in Russian, when he was living in Paris in 1939–40. It featured a Central European man and a French girl-child, and was set in Paris and Provence. Like Humbert, the man marries the girl's mother to be close to the child. After the mother's death he attempts a seduction, failing in which he kills himself. This Russian-language prototype was abandoned and destroyed by the author at some point in the 1940s.

The English-language story "First Love," which was published in 1948, is quite different from the earlier Russian tale, and from the subsequent full-scale novel. The first half of the story is an evocation, very much in the style of *Speak, Memory*, of travel on the elegant *Nord Express* from St. Petersburg to Paris, full of careful observation and striking descriptions of quotidian details: reflections in the windows and mirrors of the rail car, the movement of telegraph poles glimpsed from the train, the look and feel of a luxurious valise with its attendant crystal and silver bottles, and so forth. The goal of the journey is Biarritz, near the Spanish border, where the "I" of the story encounters Colette, a little French girl just going on ten, some seven months younger than himself. This is not the first time he has fallen in love, but now he "knew at once that this was the real thing."<sup>52</sup> He wants to rescue her from her family, who are certainly bourgeois and probably abusive, but they are captured before they can make their escape, and have a final encounter, chaperoned, in a Parisian park.

This becomes, in *Lolita*, Humbert's primal encounter with a "nymphet." The

47. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

51. See note 1 above.

52. Nabokov 1971.

setting is not Biarritz but the French Riviera, and the two children are a bit older than in “First Love”—twelve or thirteen, with the boy being, again, a few months older. Annabel’s parents are loathsome, of course, and keep impeding the progress of their love. Eager for more than a few casual brushes as they play on the sandy beach in full sight of her parents, they steal away to a small cave (their version of the attempted elopement in “First Love”) and “had a brief session of avid caresses, with somebody’s lost pair of sunglasses for only witness.”<sup>53</sup> Humbert claims he was about to possess her when they were interrupted by two bearded aquatic vulgarians, whose cries of encouragement had the opposite effect on young Humbert. It was their last meeting, and Annabel was to die of typhus a few months later. The dream of the lost Annabel has obsessed him all his life, and he thinks of her when he first sees Lolita, thus setting in motion the long, elaborate tragicomedy that is the novel. It constitutes the grand theme of the book—the lifelong quest for the perfect lover, who has been found only to be lost forever.

Thus the themes of the two great novels are seen to have been at work in the minds of their authors over many years, and to have found expression in various forms, some shorter and less elaborately developed, but nonetheless filled with erotic passion and ironic humor from the beginning.

53. Nabokov 1980, p. 13.

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# Tanizaki's Reading of Sōseki: On *Longing for Mother*

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY CLARE CLERET

*Haha o kohuru ki* (Longing for Mother, 1919) is a work that is impossible to classify, part tale of mystery and imagination, part lyric poem. The main character is a child who, having traveled by night through a strange landscape, then along a beach by the sea, sees a graceful young woman walking in front of him playing the *shamisen*. He catches up with her; whereupon this unknown woman turns out to be his mother. In the final lines, the narrator states he has described one of his own dreams; and, indeed, the whole story is bathed in a dreamlike atmosphere. The slow pace, the haunting repetition of the same descriptive motifs, the absence of any logical progression of events, the difficulty in identifying objects and persons—all evoke the world of dreams.

As A. V. Liman says, the poetic quality of the work is due mainly to the fact that “moonlight dominates the poetics of the entire story.”<sup>1</sup> And as Liman further notes, in Tanizaki's imagination, the pale white light of the moon is closely related to the figure of the mother. The final scene of Tanizaki's *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (Captain Shigemoto's Mother, 1949–50) demonstrates that, thirty years after writing *Longing for Mother*, this motif was still alive and productive in the novelist's poetic language.

According to Tanizaki himself, the moonlight which distinguishes *Longing for Mother* has an extrinsic origin. This story, he says, “was written under the influence of *Tsukikage* (Moonlight),” a short narrative in which Satō Haruo (1892–1964) paints the beauty of the moon.<sup>2</sup> In this work, published in 1918, a year prior to Tanizaki's, the landscape is illuminated by the moon in a manner that renders it at once strange and dreamlike. Satō's description even contains expressions that Tanizaki repeats almost exactly.<sup>3</sup>

One notices, however, that Tanizaki's narrative differs from Satō's in at least two respects. One of these concerns the landscape he evokes: Satō Haruo describes an urban landscape, “evoking Amsterdam or Venice,” whereas in *Longing for Mother*, the setting is the remote countryside and then the seaside. Another difference is the point of view the author adopts, that is, the stance of the narrator. Almost all of Satō Haruo's description is narrated by a character who observes the landscape

1. Liman 1998, p. 34.

2. Tanizaki 1964, p. 393. For *Haha o kohuru ki*, see Tanizaki 1919. For *Tsukikage*, see Satō 1918.

3. On this point, see my observations on *Nostalgie de ma mère* in Pigeot 1997, p. 1716.

from the window of his room; only in the final lines does he “wish to walk in the moonlit night” and venture out into the strange fantasy town. By contrast, *Longing for Mother* recounts a long ramble through the heart of the countryside which comes to an end only in the final pages.

In these two respects, both of which differentiate *Longing for Mother* from *Moonlight*, Tanizaki’s story, it seems to me, recalls an earlier novel by Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), *Kōfu* (*The Miner*, 1908).<sup>4</sup> It may seem surprising that I should attempt such a comparison, for at first glance these two stories appear to have nothing in common. There is not a single miner in *Longing for Mother*, and there is no nostalgia for the mother (a character who hardly appears at all) in *The Miner*. The hero, far from searching for his mother, has totally rejected his family. Sōseki’s narrative, which is much longer and more expansive than Tanizaki’s, does not describe a dream; it is a transcription of an oral autobiographical account recorded by the author, the account of a man who, in his youth, was recruited by a procurer of cheap labor for a copper mine.<sup>5</sup> Sōseki’s novel is in fact a sort of bildungsroman, interspersed with reflections on the human condition—our contradictions, our “psychological phenomena,”<sup>6</sup> our capacity for allowing ourselves to be stripped of our ego, and even our doubts about the very existence of that ego. I must also mention the feigned detachment of the narrator and his occasional black humor, qualities that characterize many of Sōseki’s works. There is nothing similar in *Longing for Mother*.

Another difference lies in the general coloration of the two works—not only their emotional color, but the very material color of the worlds they describe. *Longing for Mother* may be considered a hymn to the whiteness of moonlight, culminating in the evocative description of the immensity of the sea spread out below its silvery rays, to the light of the moon to which the whiteness of the mother’s cheeks provides a response in the last scene. In contrast, *The Miner* traces a gradual entrance into a world of shadows, the hero finally losing himself in the bowels of the earth, at the bottom of the mine. The “blackness” of the mine is portended even in the opening pages. Even before he knew he would go down the mine, the narrator says: “I was walking with only one thought in mind: Go into the dark, you’ve got to go into the dark.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, he is contemplating suicide.

How, then, can one compare these two texts? From a purely narrative point of view, there are similarities of several sorts. Both stories are written in the first person and describe events in retrospect. In the dream described in *Longing for Mother*, the narrator finds himself transported back to the time when he was a child; in *The Miner*, the narrator says, “I look back at myself as a stranger and set down these recollec-

4. For the Japanese text of *Kōfu*, see Natsume Sōseki 1908, cited below as Sōseki 1908. Here and below I quote the excellent translation by Jay Rubin, published in 1988 as *The Miner*.

5. Rubin 1988, p. 171.

6. Sōseki 1908, p. 165; Rubin 1988, p. 134.

7. Sōseki 1908, p. 9; Rubin 1988, p. 6.



tions of my youth here on paper";<sup>8</sup> he even says: "I was a child, or, if not exactly a child, I was a slightly grown-up child."<sup>9</sup> Like the child in *Longing for Mother*, the young man's perception of persons and objects is naive.

Moreover, in their moral dimension, both protagonists have at least one trait in common: they present themselves as pusillanimous or even cowardly. Tanizaki says explicitly, "I've been a coward for as long as I can remember."<sup>10</sup> The main character in *The Miner*, without accusing himself directly of being cowardly, nonetheless implies that he is: in admiring a young boy walking alone in the mountains at sunset, he admits, "When I was his age, I was a little frightened to cut through Aoyama cemetery at night—and that's in the middle of Tokyo."<sup>11</sup>

Their situations in life, too, are similar. Although they come from prosperous families where for years they were cherished, both men are now separated from their loved ones and are impecunious. In *Longing for Mother*: "The sudden decline in my parents' fortunes has filled me with unspeakable sorrow. . . . Now I'm a shameful sight, dirty and shabbily dressed."<sup>12</sup> In *The Miner*: "For better or worse, I had been born into a family of more than middling means, and until nine o'clock the night before, I had lived as the classic pampered son."<sup>13</sup> But today, says the hero, he has "no money."<sup>14</sup>

In both cases, the traveler has left Tokyo, abandoning society and the environment in which he had been living with his family. At the beginning of the story, the narrator of *Longing for Mother* recalls in a nostalgic way the life that he led as a happy child, in the working-class quarter of the capital: "Will I never again take an evening walk through the streets of Ningyō-chō? . . . And will I never again see the fair at Suitengū Shrine?"<sup>15</sup> Sōseki, too, notes such a separation, albeit briefly, in his very first lines. "Left Tokyo at nine last night," his narrator states; and a little further on, "I hadn't talked to anyone since leaving Tokyo the night before." And even though he is leaving the capital of his own accord, he speaks of it with a certain melancholy: "Behind me, I can see Tokyo, where the sun shines . . . Tokyo is still there, warm and bright."<sup>16</sup> In both cases, reference to the capital serves as a means of accentuating the strangeness of the space in which the hero now finds himself, as well as his present state of dereliction.

The similarities between the two stories are even more evident in their description of the journey and the space within which it is undertaken. It is here, as noted above, that *Longing for Mother* clearly differs from *Moonlight* by Satō Haruo. In

8. Sōseki 1908, p. 50; Rubin 1988, p. 39.

9. Sōseki 1908, p. 36; Rubin 1988, p. 27.

10. Tanizaki 1919, p. 193. The translation cited is Edward Fowler's 1980 version; here, p. 467.

11. Sōseki 1908, pp. 58–59; Rubin 1988, p. 46.

12. Tanizaki 1919, p. 194; Fowler 1980, p. 468. Fowler abbreviates the evocation of the comfortable existence of the narrator as a child.

13. Sōseki 1908, p. 62; Rubin 1988, p. 49.

14. Sōseki 1908, p. 5; Rubin 1988, p. 3. In Sōseki the poverty of the hero is not a result of the decline of his family but of the breakdown of his relationship with them.

15. Tanizaki 1919, p. 194; Fowler 1980, p. 468.

16. Sōseki 1908, pp. 5, 10, 8; Rubin 1988, pp. 3, 7, 5.

*Longing for Mother*, as in *The Miner*, the narrator describes a long walk through a specific country landscape (described in greater detail below). In both cases, this episode figures in the first part of the narrative (to be more precise, in the first third of *Longing for Mother*<sup>17</sup> and in the first pages of *The Miner*).<sup>18</sup> In both stories, the main character walks indefinitely with no precise goal. He is alone, and he must overcome his fatigue. Says Sōseki: “Legs weigh a ton. Every step is torture”; then further on, “Now my legs are heavy.”<sup>19</sup> And this motif is repeated several times throughout the narrative. Tanizaki is less insistent, but he does say: “I was walking dragging my feet.”<sup>20</sup>

Moral discomfort is added to physical fatigue. In Sōseki, this takes the form of “anxiety,” which is due not only to walking but to the difficulties of his confrontation with life. In Tanizaki, too, there is a discomfort (“I feel very uneasy”) born of the solitary nighttime walk, a discomfort that later becomes “a vague terror.”<sup>21</sup>

But the most striking similarity is in the locations themselves. In both cases, a long “straight”<sup>22</sup> road cuts through the countryside. *The Miner* starts with these words: “Been walking through this pine grove for a long time now. . . . Just pine trees and pine trees.”<sup>23</sup> In the first paragraph of *Longing for Mother*, “a road . . . runs straight ahead of me. Rows of pine trees stretching as far as the eye can see flank the road on either side.” And the word *matsubara* (pine grove), which opens Sōseki’s narrative, also turns up later in Tanizaki.<sup>24</sup>

We have seen that *Longing for Mother* is set entirely under the glow of the moon, but not a bright clear moon. The first sentence of the text reads, “The sky is leaden, the moon engulfed in clouds,” and few lines further on, the narrator says, “before my eyes everything is misty.”<sup>25</sup> Sōseki, too, evokes a walk in a misty world—the fog being both that of the outside world and of his mind: “Since I’m walking with no particular goal in mind, I feel as if a big, blurry photograph is hanging in the air in front of my face. . . . I hate to think that this world of clouds is going to be out there, blocking the path ahead.”<sup>26</sup>

In Tanizaki’s description of the landscape, one of the strangest, most dreamlike elements is the following:

17. Tanizaki 1919, to p. 203; Fowler 1980, to p. 472. Thereafter the landscape suddenly changes to the seaside.

18. Sōseki 1908, to p. 17; Rubin 1988, to p. 14. In fact, the hero’s walk continues through the first third of the narrative until he arrives at the mine, to Sōseki 1908, p. 84 and Rubin 1988, p. 68; the young man is then led by the procurer and accompanied by other recruits.

19. Sōseki 1908, pp. 5, 7; Rubin 1988, pp. 3, 5.

20. “*Tobototo to aruite itta*,” Tanizaki 1919, p. 196; Fowler omits this expression. Hereafter the absence of reference to Fowler after a quotation from Tanizaki indicates an omission.

21. Sōseki uses the word *fuan*: Sōseki 1908, p. 8; Rubin 1988, p. 5. Tanizaki first uses the word *kokorobosoi*, then *usugimiwarui*. Cf. Tanizaki 1919, p. 195; Fowler 1980, pp. 467–468.

22. Sōseki 1908, p. 44, and Rubin 1988, p. 34; Tanizaki 1919, p. 193, and Fowler 1980, p. 467.

23. Sōseki 1908, p. 5; Rubin 1988, p. 3.

24. Tanizaki 1919, pp. 193, 195; Fowler 1980, p. 467.

25. Tanizaki 1919, p. 193; Fowler 1980, p. 467, translates “my vision blurs.”

26. Sōseki 1908, pp. 7–8; Rubin 1988, p. 5.

As I walk on, however, the fields give way to a vast, flat expanse. It looks like an inky, pitch-black sea, dotted with pale objects which flutter momentarily and then disappear. Their number increases with each gust of sea breeze blowing in from the left, and they rustle noisily, like an old man's hoarse, dry wheezing. . . . I fancy a resemblance in those fluttering objects to a goblin's sinister grin, the white fangs gleaming.<sup>27</sup>

I cannot resist noting, too, that in *The Miner*, though further on in the novel, we read:

Maybe it was my imagination, but the water rushing down to our left seemed to shine a little now and then. Not a brilliant glow, no. It was just that something dark and moving out there looked as though it had a shine to it. The water crashing against the rocks was fairly clearly white, and it made a continuous rushing sound. It was pretty noisy, and that made it pretty desolate.<sup>28</sup>

The affinities between these two works are as numerous as the differences one can so easily single out. Their similarities—between characters as much as between settings—seem to me undeniable; but are they sufficient evidence that Tanizaki had read *The Miner* and in some way been inspired by it? Parenthetically, let us note that one could also compare the setting of *Longing for Mother* to that of a short story by Guy de Maupassant (1850–93) called *La Peur* (Fear, 1907–10). In this story, told in the first person, the narrator walks through the night, not far from a “grey and menacing” sea that he can hear “grumbling,” along a “long straight road through the scrubland,” a “long empty road, interminable,” while the wind makes “the reeds whistle” and he feels his “heart beating with confused fear.” Would one wish to maintain that Tanizaki had read this short story and been inspired by it? It is hardly likely.<sup>29</sup> So why is the same not true of *The Miner*?

Before addressing this question, we must recall the series of similarities between the characters mentioned above, which have no equivalent in Maupassant. And, above all, we must appreciate the importance of the episodes that in both works punctuate the walk made by the main character. A light suddenly appears on the route of the child-narrator in *Longing for Mother*: “The light comes from an arc lamp fixed to the top of a telegraph pole. I stop right below the pole and stare a moment at my own shadow . . . ; had I not come across this lamp I might even have forgotten what I myself looked like.” And then he adds the strange remark: “Perhaps in the darkness I was transformed entirely into spirit and now that I have at last reached light, the flesh has returned.”<sup>30</sup> On the route taken by Sōseki's hero,

27. Tanizaki 1919, p. 195; Fowler 1980, p. 468.

28. Sōseki 1908, p. 64; Rubin 1988, p. 51.

29. Maupassant wrote two short stories with the title *La Peur*. The one that interests me is the lesser known of the two, which appeared in the journal *Le Figaro* in 1884, but was not published in a book until 1907–10. It begins with the words: “The train raced, full steam, into the shadows.”

30. Tanizaki 1919, p. 197; Fowler 1980, p. 469. Fowler translates: “my body was transformed,” but Tanizaki says “I” (*jibun wa*).

there is no episode of this kind. However, much further on in the novel, when the narrator is by a fire, he says, “I had the strange feeling that my soul had slipped out of me and into the red coals, where it was dancing like mad.”<sup>31</sup> Is the similarity of these experiences of separation of body and soul (*tamashii*, the same word in both Japanese texts) merely fortuitous?

Another episode, more fully developed and crucially important, is even more revealing. Until he sees the young woman walking in front of him playing the *shamisen*, the child-hero of *Longing for Mother* meets no other human being. There is only the episode wherein he sees a house, enters, and finds a woman whom he first thinks is his mother. He asks her for food because he is starving; but she turns out to be a shrew, refuses to give him any of the tasty dishes she is preparing; finally, she chases him away. This woman, as Liman says, represents the *mater terribilis*, the antithesis of the young, beautiful, loving mother who will hold the child to her breast in the last scene. What about in *The Miner*? On the first page there is a tea stand by the road traveled by the hero. There is a man standing there who looks him up and down and then calls to him. He is the procurer who will later recruit him to work in the mine.

What are the links between these two scenes? There are several. First, there is the way the two writers present the “meeting” of the hero with the dwelling and its occupants. Tanizaki: “I arrived in front of the house and peered through the blind. Just as I had imagined, Mother, a towel tied round her hair, is squatting before an oven, her back to me.”<sup>32</sup> In *The Miner*: “Here’s a tea stand. Through the reed blinds I see a rusty kettle on a big clay stove. A bench out front sticking a couple feet into the road. . . . A man in a kimono—a *hanten* or *dotera* or something—sitting there with his back this way.”<sup>33</sup> The same way of looking through a blind; the same human figure seen from behind, distinguished by a garment; the same presence of a stove inside: the setting is identical.

Then the character seen from behind turns around and reveals an uncouth expression. *Longing for Mother*: “Mother quietly lays down the blowpipe and rises slowly to her feet, still stooped forward. . . . Mother only stares at me in silence. Ashes from the oven cake the tufts of greying hair not covered by her towel. Her forehead and cheeks are deeply creased.”<sup>34</sup> In *The Miner*: “This fellow somewhere halfway between a *hanten* and a *dotera* spun around in my direction. He had these teeth black with tobacco stains and fat lips and he was smiling.”<sup>35</sup> One must not think that this man is smiling out of kindness. The next scene shows that he is delighted simply because he has found a victim. Like the “mother,” he is without pity.

The principal difference is that in Sōseki’s work the person in question is a man, and in Tanizaki’s it is a woman. A few lines further on, however, Sōseki mentions

31. Sōseki 1908, p. 119; Rubin 1988, p. 96.

32. Tanizaki 1919, p. 200; Fowler 1980, p. 470, modified.

33. Sōseki 1908, p. 5; Rubin 1988, p. 3.

34. Tanizaki 1919, p. 200; Fowler 1980, p. 470.

35. Sōseki 1908, p. 5; Rubin 1988, p. 3.

the presence at the stand of an old woman (*baa-san*), the same word used by Tanizaki. If, as I believe, Tanizaki drew some inspiration from these pages by Sōseki, one could say that he combined in one character—the false mother—the two companions, the procurer and the old woman, in *The Miner*. The unattractive, disturbing character of the procurer in Sōseki is carried over to the old woman in Tanizaki, as is the procurer's attitude to the young traveler. Tanizaki writes: "The old woman glares at me, bleary-eyed. . . . The old woman then took on a bad tempered expression and looked me over, taking me in from the soles of my feet to the top of my head."<sup>36</sup> Of the procurer, Sōseki says: "His face was serious and he kept it sitting there in a serious position, but damned if the whites of his eyes didn't start creeping up my face—mouth to nose, nose to forehead, over the visor and up to the crown of my cap. Then they started creeping down again . . . , the eyes finally arrived at the black marks my big toes had rubbed onto the platforms of my *geta*."<sup>37</sup>

The shrew in *Longing for Mother*, however, is also closely related to Sōseki's old woman. In the quest for the mother described in *Longing for Mother*, the shrew represents the antithesis of the good mother—the mother who feeds (*mater nutrix*)—because she refuses to give the narrator any of the soup or rice or grilled fish that she has carefully prepared (she says that she has prepared them for someone else, a hypothetical son): "I'm so hungry I could die! I made another attempt but she had her back turned and was busy saying nothing."<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that in *The Miner*, the old woman whom the narrator—who is also famished—finds at the stand is also a "cook." But the characterization of this woman appears to differ greatly from that of the shrew in *Longing for Mother*, who is cooking appetizing food but refuses it to the narrator; this woman is quite willing to feed the young man: "Would you like a *manjū*?" the woman asks. "They're fresh." However, the food she offers him is bad. "Fried 'em myself the day before yesterday,"<sup>39</sup> she continues. In fact, when he came into the shop, the narrator had seen the plate of *manjū*: "I had approached the table with the thought of eating some of these, but on close inspection I found that the *manjū* plate was swarming with flies."<sup>40</sup> It is this disgusting food that the old woman gives the hero—or rather sells to him for his last coins. Grasping and hypocritical, she is also the accomplice of the man who wants to recruit him. Thus one can see that in the two narratives the old women, despite an apparent difference in attitude at the start, play the same role. Both refuse to take on the role of earth mother that the heroes expect of them. In this sense, one can say that the old woman in *The Miner* prefigures the "false mother" in *Longing for Mother*.

36. Tanizaki 1919, p. 201; Fowler 1980, p. 471, modified.

37. Sōseki 1908, p. 6; Rubin 1988, p. 4.

38. Tanizaki 1919, p. 202; Fowler 1980, p. 471, modified. These remarks are based solely on the surface meaning of the text: Chiba 1982, pp. 85–86, has shown the ambiguity of the rejection of the son by the mother, which in fact inverts the rejection by the adult Tanizaki of the image of the mother become old and ugly.

39. Sōseki 1908, pp. 15–16; Rubin 1988, p. 11.

40. *Ibid.*

I do not know whether the parallels that I have tried to show between these two narratives have the support of my readers. One could object that very little of the vocabulary in the two works is identical. Even the blind that shields the house where the “bad mother” is cooking is a *yoshizu* in Sōseki and a *nawa-noren* in Tanizaki (although a *nawa-noren* appears later in *The Miner* in a similar context the next day, when the still-famished narrator wishes to halt again and enters a roadside shop through a *nawa-noren*).<sup>41</sup> The oven is called a *kamado* in *Longing* and a *hettsui* in *Miner*—and so on. Even the word *baa-san*, used with reference to the old woman in both works, is not written with the same character.

Moreover, Tanizaki, although he clearly states that he was inspired by Satō Haruo’s *Moonlight*, never to my knowledge refers to *The Miner* in such terms. There is no proof that he ever even read it; nor, if I am not mistaken, does Tanizaki ever mention *The Miner* in his essays. When he discusses Sōseki, the works that he refers to are *Meian* (Light and Darkness), *Kusa-makura* (Grass Pillow), *Mon* (The Gate), *Sore kara* (And Then), *Waga hai wa neko de aru* (I Am a Cat), and others—but not *Kōfu*.<sup>42</sup>

Even so, I cannot believe that the similarities I have noted—in main characters, secondary roles, settings, accessories, space—are merely coincidental; the resemblances are too striking. Though any one of them, taken separately, might raise doubts, the ensemble forms such a compelling whole that it seems impossible to attribute them to chance. Knowing *Longing for Mother* as well as I do, from having translated it, I could hardly believe my eyes when I read *The Miner*. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Tanizaki would not have read the novel by Sōseki, who was, after all, one of the major writers of his time. Thus it is that I imagine two scenarios, both of which are possible.

The first is that Tanizaki, in reading *The Miner*, was struck by several features of the narrative—the description of the boy walking alone through the pine wood; the episodes that take place along the way; the scene, quoted above, in which the soul is detached from the body; and perhaps the “moon bath” mentioned by the narrator at the end of *The Miner*.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, certain images (though not the words in which they were couched) impressed themselves deeply and precisely upon his memory—the road between the pines; the water with its undulating and murmuring reflections; the oven and the old woman seen through a blind; and so on. Then, several years later, Tanizaki writes *Longing for Mother*, a work entirely different, both in the totally personal nature of its theme—nostalgia for the mother—and in its structure. In crafting this work, he alters the settings, substituting the sea for the mountains in the second stage of the journey, and he writes with his own

41. Sōseki 1908, p. 48; Rubin 1988, p. 38, but the expression is not translated.

42. These remarks are based on a rapid reading of Tanizaki’s essays collected in vols. 20, 21, 22, and 23 of *Tanizaki Jun’ichirō zenshū*. I may have missed a reference.

43. Sōseki 1908, p. 188; Rubin 1988, pp. 152–53: “standing outside, bathed in the moonlight.” This paragraph should be read to the end. Cf. Tanizaki 1919, p. 206; Fowler 1980, p. 473: “drenched in cold moonlight.” In Japanese, the expressions are almost identical: compare Sōseki’s “*tsuki o abiru*” with Tanizaki’s “*gekkō o abiru*.”



personal vocabulary and sensibility, describing the landscape in far greater detail than Sōseki and introducing many elements of scent and sound. All of this he accomplishes by drawing on the stock of images acquired in his reading of Sōseki, which he has made entirely his own—so much so that they have become integral to his own imagination.

He may even have forgotten Sōseki's novel completely. But is this possible? Ironically, Sōseki himself seems to propound such a theory in *The Miner*: "You hear about people warning others not to forget what they've done for them in their hour of need, but of course they're going to forget. Swearing otherwise is just a lie"; he then goes on to cite a proverb demonstrating the universal nature of the phenomenon of forgetting.<sup>44</sup> Tanizaki's *Longing for Mother* would therefore be neither an act of plagiarism nor a deliberately constructed variant (as Tanizaki had done with Satō's *Moonlight*), but the result of internal alchemy and the involuntary workings of the memory. What we have here is the work of the mysterious mechanism of remembrance.

The second scenario is radically different. It assumes that Tanizaki had not forgotten reading *The Miner*, and that he deliberately wrote the first pages of *Longing for Mother* as a variation on Sōseki's theme, in order to compose a personal narrative. In this case he would have transformed the borrowed elements to make them fit a theme more typical of his own sensibility—would purposely have changed most of the words that appeared in the "original," the "ante-text," as it were. Thereafter, he would never have really laid Sōseki aside. Indeed, might not one imagine that Tanizaki's dream sequence is in fact either an impertinent allusion or a genuine homage to Sōseki's reflections on dreams, two of which are to be found in *The Miner*? "It's precisely because I can now look at my trip to the mine as an old dream that I am able to describe it for other people." And, further on: "All past events worth recalling are dreams, and it is in their dream-like quality that the nostalgia lies, which is why there has to be something vague and unfocused in the past facts themselves for them to contribute to the mood of fantasy."<sup>45</sup>

But if he did not forget *The Miner*, why did Tanizaki never acknowledge that he had borrowed from it—if one can call a "re-creation" borrowing? Is it likely that he would admit to having been inspired by *Moonlight* and hide the fact that he had also been inspired by *The Miner*? I shall not place the argument on a moral plane by referring to "dishonesty." I would like to note, however, that, unlike Satō Haruo—whose close personal relationship with Tanizaki is common knowledge—Sōseki had been dead for three years when Tanizaki published *Longing for Mother*; he could not have exposed the source of the loan. And even if he had still been alive, would Sōseki have been justified in doing so? Does he not say in *The Miner*, following the passage on forgetting quoted above, "People who loudly accuse others of

44. Sōseki 1908, p. 66; Rubin 1988, p. 52. Rubin does not translate the proverb *nodo-moto sugureba atsusa o wasureru*, given in Kenkyusha's *New Japanese-English Dictionary* as "Danger past, God forgotten," but which can be more literally rendered as "Once a mouthful has passed your throat, you forget that it burned."

45. Sōseki 1908, pp. 39, 87; Rubin 1988, pp. 29, 70.

bad faith or dishonesty or a change of heart are duly registered citizens of Flatland, raising their battle flags at the sight of printed hearts”<sup>46</sup> In a more serious vein, however, it should also be remembered that, if Tanizaki does consider Sōseki a major Meiji writer, he seems not to rank him with his contemporaries Kōda Rohan (1867–1947) or Ozaki Kōyō (1867–1903); and that whenever he mentions Sōseki, he abstains from enthusiastic assessment of his work.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps he therefore did not feel it necessary to pay him homage as one of his muses.

I wish, too, to move the debate onto a higher plane than that of the personal relationship between Tanizaki and Sōseki, the man and the oeuvre. To me it is far more interesting to examine Tanizaki’s strategies in the use of texts that inspire him, or at least stimulate his creativity. Far from being improbable, the game of hide-and-seek that he plays in *Longing for Mother*—acknowledging one key work, *Moonlight*, and concealing another, *The Miner*—is perfectly plausible, for the strategy behind it is clearly recognizable.

In every one of his works that is constructed from material in other texts, Tanizaki adopts a subtle strategy, different each case, for revealing/concealing his “borrowings.” For example, in *Shunkin shō* (A Portrait of Shunkin, 1933), in the first pages of the work he claims to have based his narrative on an early document, *Mozuya Shunkin den* (The Life of Mozuya Shunkin), which he describes in considerable detail (number of pages, type of paper, orthography), even though this document is entirely fictitious. Such a subterfuge is not unique to Tanizaki; it is widely used in Western narrative literature.<sup>48</sup>

The strategy becomes subtler still when, in a single work, Tanizaki plays the game of the false revelation and also the game of the hidden truth. Thus in *Bushū-kō hiwa* (The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi, 1935) he claims to have based his narrative on three archives, then proceeds to give their titles and thirty or so “quotations” that are in fact entirely the product of his own imagination, while abstaining from mentioning the numerous early chronicles that he frequently relied upon.<sup>49</sup>

One could say, however, that the case of *Longing for Mother* and *The Miner* differs slightly, in that the author makes no mention of his sources within the work itself but only later claims to reveal the origin of his work. Here again, Tanizaki likes to cover his tracks. It is known, for example, that six years after the publication of *Yoshino-kuzu* (Arrowroot, 1931), Tanizaki published an illustrated edition in which he indulged in a magisterial act of mystification: along with some authentic photo-

46. Sōseki 1908, p. 66; Rubin 1988, p. 52.

47. On Rohan’s superiority, see “Jōzetsuroku,” Tanizaki 1927, p. 165; for Kōyō, “Aru toki no nikki,” an essay that is exactly contemporary with *Longing for Mother*, see Tanizaki 1920, p. 92. The very short piece entitled “Sōseki sensei,” included in *Kajitsu shōhin* and written some six months after the death of Sōseki, contains no vibrant eulogy. See Tanizaki 1917, pp. 47–48.

48. This brings to mind Stendhal’s *L’Abbesse de Castro* (1839), a work that Tanizaki admired (see “Jōzetsuroku,” Tanizaki 1927, pp. 73, 81) to the extent that he attempted a translation—from English: see *Kasutoro no ama*, Tanizaki 1928, pp. 335–388.

49. According to Nonaka 1988, pp. 171–174, without naming it Tanizaki borrowed extensively from the chronicle *Asai sandai ki* (A record of three generations of the Asai), using roughly 40 percent of the text. See also Chambers 1994, pp. 17–29.



graphs, he printed the photograph of a letter sent to a courtesan by his mother—a letter, supposedly in his possession, that he quoted in the narrative. But this letter was pure invention: he had it written out calligraphically and photographed for the occasion!<sup>50</sup> In his afterword to *Mōmoku monogatari* (A Blind Man's Tale, 1930), an historical narrative that is faithful to early sources, although none are mentioned within the novel, Tanizaki says that he used five sources, which he names. But Mikame Tatsuji has shown that these stated sources relate only to the last part of the novel; and he goes on to enumerate at least fifteen others not mentioned by Tanizaki, borrowing which cannot be refuted because he sometimes quotes these documents verbatim.<sup>51</sup> Later, in his preface to *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (Captain Shigemoto's Mother, 1949–50), Tanizaki drops his mask and reveals his taste for fabrication in an explicit declaration:

For the most part this work is derived from classics of the Heian period. The author has named each of them and made it clear which sections are drawn from these sources. . . . The name of one fictional document—a “source” fabricated by the author—is also included, however, and the passages relating to it are products of the author's imagination. . . . In consideration of the general reader's interest, therefore, the author has chosen not to identify the fictional source here.<sup>52</sup>

Although *The Miner* is not a source for *Longing for Mother* in the same sense that early documents are for his historical novels, it is quite conceivable that Tanizaki adopted the same strategy when he revealed the secret of his creation to his readers.

Thus the second scenario that I propose seems just as probable as the first—in which case *The Miner* becomes another title to be added to the file concerning the game Tanizaki played with texts that stimulated his imagination. Yet I cannot conceal the fact that the first scenario also seems to me to be probable and attractive. Let readers make their own choice.

50. See Hirayama 1983.

51. Mikame 1974.

52. Quoted in Chambers 1994, p. 95.

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