



# A Tanizaki Feast

THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
IN VENICE

Adriana Boscaro and Anthony  
Hood Chambers, Editors

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES

# A Tanizaki Feast

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**A Tanizaki Feast**  
**The International Symposium in Venice**

Edited by Adriana Boscaro  
and Anthony Hood Chambers

Center for Japanese Studies  
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## Preface

This volume presents eighteen papers originally prepared for Tanizaki Jun'ichirō: An International Symposium, which convened in Venice in 1995. The papers have been significantly revised, and some expanded, for this publication.

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), on whose writings this volume focuses, was prominent in Japan from his literary debut in 1910 until the end of World War II; he became the preeminent living Japanese writer with the complete publication in 1948 of *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*), which the government had suppressed during the war. In 1949, Tanizaki received from the emperor the Order of Culture, the highest honor the government can bestow on an artist. In his seventies he was still able to shake the public with the audacity of works like *Kagi* (*The Key*, 1956) and *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62).

Tanizaki's place in the history of Japanese literature seems secure. In addition to his own fiction, plays, poetry, essays, scenarios, and translations of Western literature, Tanizaki is remembered in Japan also for translating the eleventh-century classic *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) into modern Japanese. His complete works have been published repeatedly. He is well represented in series, anthologies, and textbooks of modern Japanese literature; virtually every bookstore in Japan sells his novels and stories; and many of his works have been adapted for the stage, television, and film—even for ballet, opera, and the bunraku puppet theater. A major literary prize is named for him.

Tanizaki's reputation has gradually spread around the world. He was translated as early as 1917 (*Shisei*, into English) and achieved widespread international recognition during the 1950s and early 1960s with translations into English and other languages. In 1964, Tanizaki was elected to honorary membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the first Japanese to be so honored, and it is widely believed

that he was being considered for the Nobel Prize in Literature. His works have been translated into at least twenty languages: Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish. Donald Keene's assessment appears to be coming true: "It is likely that if any one [Japanese] writer of the period [the twentieth century] will stand the test of time and be accepted as a figure of world stature, it will be Tanizaki."<sup>1</sup>

Riding the crest of Tanizaki's international recognition, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō: An International Symposium convened on 5 April 1995. Twenty-two speakers from seven countries addressed an audience of about two hundred students and scholars in the magnificent Aula Magna of the University of Venice.

The papers are arranged here roughly in the order in which the works they discuss were published. We hope that the reader will find all of them savory.

#### THE SYMPOSIUM, VENICE, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The organizers of the symposium sought to bring together scholars of Tanizaki who in many cases had never met before, to enable them to discuss their projects at length, to give students from Italy and other countries the opportunity to meet and talk with the scholars whose texts they study, and to remind everyone that many aspects of Tanizaki's work are still relatively neglected: his poetry and plays, his brief career in film, his translations from Western literature, his pioneering detective stories, and the significance of food in his works, to mention a few.

Behind the decision to organize the symposium lies the coincidence that 1995 was the thirtieth anniversary of the author's death and also the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Studies Institute at the University of Venice.

Venice hosted courses in Japanese in 1873–88 and 1908–9 when the Faculty of Commerce offered free courses in the Japanese language as a result of a crisis in silkworm breeding in Europe. During those years, six Japanese teachers occupied the Japanese chair. Among them was Ogata Korenao (in 1876–77), son of Ogata Kōan, the famous late-Tokugawa physician. In November 1965, the University of Venice decided to include Japanese among the languages and literatures taught at the university level.

By the 1960s, a number of Tanizaki's works had been translated into Italian, giving students an opportunity to enter his fictional worlds. Tanizaki was soon chosen as a subject for seminars at the university. The

results were exciting, leading to many graduation theses and then to the publication of a number of studies and translations of Tanizaki. Meanwhile, Italian publishers returned to Tanizaki in the 1980s, after a decade of silence, with a collection of short stories written between 1910 and 1917, and in 1988 they included Tanizaki in a series of literary classics.

Against this background, the symposium took shape rapidly. Several achievements anticipated it, welcoming the participants to Venice and celebrating the event. Three volumes containing Italian translations of Tanizaki stories, novellas, essays, and dramas appeared in Venice bookshops. In addition, symposium participants were presented with a preliminary version of a work still in progress, "Tanizaki in Western Languages," a bibliography of translations and studies in European languages with a list of films based on Tanizaki's works.

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Among the speakers were three who discussed Tanizaki from a personal perspective: Shimanaka Hōji, Tanizaki's publisher and friend; Ibuki Kazuko, Tanizaki's research assistant and amanuensis from 1953 to 1965; and Takeya Naomi, of the Osaka University of Arts, who organized an international campaign to preserve Ishōan—Tanizaki's house at Sumiyoshi and the setting for *The Makioka Sisters*—when it was threatened by Kobe officials. Since their papers do not appear in this volume, we provide brief summaries here.

In "*The Key* and Obscenity," Mr. Shimanaka addressed the troubles Tanizaki encountered with public opinion in the 1950s. Tanizaki had begun writing *The Key* after finishing *The Makioka Sisters*, *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (*Captain Shigemoto's Mother*, 1949), and his second translation of *Genji*. *The Key* represented a return to a different, more daring approach. Serialization began in the January 1955 issue of *Chūō Kōron*, with illustrations by Munakata Shikō. This was the time of the *Chataree saiban* (the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* case), and it is perhaps no surprise that the mass media and some politicians attacked Tanizaki's new novel as pornographic. These attacks fueled a national debate on the relationship between pornography and literature. Mr. Shimanaka explained that Tanizaki had originally planned a four-part novel, following the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (introduction-development-turning-conclusion) pattern of traditional Chinese poetry, but when the controversy arose Tanizaki decided to omit the third part (turning). Accordingly, the text we read today is not the novel Tanizaki envisioned, and one can only guess what the "turning" might have involved. In any case, we can easily place *The Key* in a chain whose other links in-

clude “Shisei” (The Tattooer, 1910), *Manji* (*Quicksand*, 1928–30), and *Diary of a Mad Old Man*. A final link takes us to the work discussed by Ms. Ibuki.

Of the many things Ms. Ibuki witnessed during the years she worked with Tanizaki, she recalled in particular a novel that was never written but for which she had done research on the writer’s behalf. Tanizaki had sketched out the novel he intended to write, even specifying the protagonists’ extraordinary names: Amagatsu Agon and Akako, his wife. It was to be the story of an elderly man who abandons his wife and family to spend his last days with a much younger woman and dies of a heart attack brought on by overindulgence in carnal pleasures. There is nothing here so different from other Tanizaki pieces, but what might have set this work apart are the surprising intentions behind Amagatsu’s strange behavior: it seems that Tanizaki planned to tell what the man “sees” as he watches his lover, his wife, and his children from the grave. Ms. Ibuki speculated that this novel might have been Tanizaki’s farewell—his testament—to his family, and she suggested connections with *The Key* and *Diary of a Mad Old Man* as well as a comparison with Origuchi Shinobu’s *Shisha no sho* (*Book of the Dead*).

A touching moment came with Ms. Takeya’s account of the Hanshin earthquake of January 1995, which destroyed her parents’ house and damaged her flat. Though a specialist in Italian literature, she became involved in a 1986 dispute with Kobe authorities who had decided to demolish Tanizaki’s former home to make way for an elevated railroad. When she realized that she could accomplish little by herself, she looked abroad to friends, scholars, and readers of Tanizaki for help. The international response was immediate. Faced with a flood of letters and signatures, the mayor of Kobe compromised: Ishōan was dismantled and rebuilt two hundred meters to the north. The surroundings are less pleasant than before, as Ms. Takeya’s slides suggested; in fact, Ishōan now stands in the shadow of a railroad arch. But stand it does, thanks to the relocation, for the other old, wood-frame houses in the Sumiyoshi area were destroyed by the earthquake. Having journeyed to Venice to tell of her personal relationship with Ishōan, Ms. Takeya took leave of the audience with words of hope and gratitude: “Many thanks from Kobe. Ishōan is standing.”

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A well-known 1964 photograph shows Tanizaki sharing a laugh with Howard Hibbett, Edward Seidensticker, and Donald Keene. For a time, it appeared that all three of these pioneering scholars would participate in the Venice symposium, but the plan failed to materialize because Professor

## Preface

Seidensticker was not present. This was the only flaw in an otherwise exciting event. We like to imagine that Tanizaki's spirit, summoned by the passionate words of so many friends, joined us as we followed Munakata Shikō's images of the Buddha's footprints through the Venetian *calli* and bridges. He would surely have agreed that Venice was a seductive setting for discussions of one of the great writers of the twentieth century.

The organizers of the symposium and the editors of this volume are deeply grateful for the friendly support of Tanizaki specialists around the world. The enthusiastic cooperation of the scholars whose names appear in this volume lent strength to requests for grants in support of both undertakings. Thanks are due to the University of Venice, the Japan Foundation, the Toshiba International Foundation, and to the late Mr. Shimanaka Hōji, at the time chairman of Chūō Kōronsha, without whose generous support the symposium would have not been so successful. The editors also wish to acknowledge Mr. Sujeet Mehta's assistance in preparing the papers for publication. Thanks are due as well to the anonymous reader who reviewed an earlier version of this collection and whose valuable suggestions have helped to shape the volume. Finally, the editors and other contributors are grateful to Mr. Bruce E. Willoughby and the staff of the Publications Program of the Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, for bringing this feast to fruition.

## NOTE

1. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 721.



# The Colors of Shadows

Maria Teresa Orsi

## COLOR: A KEYNOTE TO REALITY

In literature, as in the figurative arts, color may become a description, symbol, or portrayal of a profound inner reality and sometimes becomes all of these things at once. Goethe automatically associated each color with a specific emotion; in Japan, this type of objectification of emotional reaction seems to have found credence with Natsume Sōseki, who, in his studies on the impact a literary work may have on the reader, analyzed the use of colors in literature and their possible psychological effects.<sup>1</sup>

Color may also be a form of manipulation—the enforcement of a certain interpretation of reality. The manipulation does not, however, necessarily operate on a conscious level. Borrowing from Nietzsche, we may say that each artist paints his world in fewer colors than exist in reality and that he is blind to certain colors. This is not a flaw: it is precisely because of this simplified view that the artist perceives color harmonies that have a strong appeal and may enhance nature itself. In other words, it may be said that literature transcends itself through chromatic details, and, as Rimbaud suggests in *Voyelles*, poetic language expands, drawing closer to other forms of artistic expression and seeking accessibility to all the senses.

Language, of course, is the point of departure in this bid for self-transcendence. As far as Japan is concerned, one need only recall that the word for color, *iro*, has a wide range of significance, which encompasses human relationships—especially those between men and women. The primary meaning of *iro* in classical Japanese is “color of the face,” “outward appearance,” and hence “womanly beauty,” “desire,” or “attraction.” *Iro* became a trope for “object of desire,” “woman,” and even “prostitute.” In his essay *The Colors of Poetry*, Ōoka Makoto quotes a passage from Ki no Tsurayuki’s preface to the *Kokinshū* as an emblematic example of the complexity of *iro*:

Because people nowadays value outward show (*iro*) and turn their minds toward frivolity, poems are mere empty verses and trivial words. The art of composition has become the province of the amorous (*iro*), as unnoticed by others as a log buried in the earth; no longer can it be put forward in public as freely as the miscanthus flaunts its tassels.<sup>2</sup>

In this instance, the overlay of meanings is clear, so that *iro* stands not only for color but also for feelings; when Tsurayuki states that “people nowadays value outward show and turn their minds toward frivolity,” we cannot help thinking of a world in which colors and love are indivisible.<sup>3</sup> This semantic polyvalency occurs regularly in Japanese literature, from the poems in the *Kokinshū*, which Tsurayuki seems to criticize, to the novels of the Tokugawa era, on up to the works of Mishima Yukio.

#### RED AS THE TATTOO

We should not be surprised that Tanizaki also attached considerable importance to color, given his meticulous descriptions of emotions of the soul that match the life of the senses: the appreciation of music, intoxicating fragrances, and the sensuality emanating from the warmth and softness of the skin. In his early works, dating from 1910 (when “Shisei” [The Tattooer] was issued) to 1923 (which saw the publication of “Ave Maria”), the author appears to ascribe great significance to colors, which permeate the atmosphere of his tales and are employed to create as rich and evocative a setting as possible. In his chosen palette, Tanizaki seems to reject the abstraction of primary colors in favor of their nuances, which he captures by means of a lexicon that not only draws the reader into the concrete sphere of tonalities but also contains, sometimes by implication, an idea of the materials from which colors are obtained: flowers, leaves, roots, minerals. A primary color shows no nuances. It is a mental attitude, a concept, and not a quality inherent in objects. Not coincidentally, perhaps, a general term for a primary color (*aka*, red) is used in “Ave Maria” in the metaphorical battle of the dolls, which alludes to a conflict between two abstract principles synthesized in white and red.

The brief tale “The Tattooer” is pervaded by colors that Baudelaire might have described as “corrompus, riches et triomphants,”<sup>4</sup> but red unquestionably predominates: a red that is not only *aka* but is likened to the color of Ryūkyū cinnabar (*Ryūkyū no shu*) and to that of flames, coral, or the morning sun. The purpose of this high-pitched chromatism would seem to be that of extending and completing the color red and even of taking it beyond its field of tonalities. The dynamic of these contrasts evokes the

*ukiyo*e of the late Edo period and suggests images emanating from a hallucinatory world.<sup>5</sup> In “The Tattooer,” as in other tales of his youth, Tanizaki uses color as a symbolic, rather than descriptive, device, a choice certainly influenced by the European Symbolist and Decadent Movements. Conversely, in Tanizaki’s mature works—which could hardly ignore the synthetic, codified approach of *In’ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*, 1933)—the chromatic element is diluted and diminished. Pure description seems to prevail over symbolism, and the author attaches less weight to the creation of a world in which “the senses, no less than the soul, have their spiritual mysteries to reveal.”<sup>6</sup> There are exceptions, of course; one need only mention the ink with which the central character of *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62) records the footprint of his young daughter-in-law, with whom he is infatuated. Needless to say, the ink is red.

In “The Tattooer,” light is essential (in the classical Japanese vision, red tends to be associated with light) and heightens the colors’ brilliance. In particular, we find the glitter of gold—the rays of sunlight that trace gilded waves on the girl’s face and on the shoji. Ultimately, red and gold merge in references to the sun and flames. Everything appears to lead consistently to the final scene, with the apotheosis of a color that blends the light of the newly risen sun (the symbol of life) with the vermilion of the tattoo. The fiery glow they create perhaps expresses the victory of sensuality over life. The tattooer’s soul is drawn into and consumed by the triumphant blaze. The soul here is an expression of voluptuousness and passion, and for this reason it cannot break away from the body. Instead, it transmigrates into the body of the woman, drop by drop—drops of red blood—betokening total subservience to the woman who awaits the artist. This corporeality annihilates all attempts to escape the materiality of color, which is inevitably represented by red and a gold that combines red and yellow (the yellow of the girl’s *furoshiki*).

According to the most firmly established belief, yellow is the color of light. Leonardo da Vinci expressed himself in these terms, and the concept was later championed by the Impressionists. Nevertheless, yellow also represents calm, optimistic brightness and spiritual clarity, moods that are far removed from the atmosphere of “The Tattooer.” If anything, Tanizaki associates yellow with the (yellow) cover of the book that Dorian Gray receives as a gift from Lord Wotton; this book, in which Dorian finds the blueprint for his own life, poisons him and teaches him to look upon evil “simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful.”<sup>7</sup>

Dazzling colors also reign in “Himitsu” (*The Secret*, 1911), where red represents intemperate, eccentric behavior and the central character

states that anything lacking in strong colors is of no interest to him. The rug onto which he throws himself after returning from his nocturnal adventures is scarlet (*hiiro*); carmine (*beni*) is the color of the nail polish and the rouge he rubs onto his cheeks to complete his "metamorphosis" from man into woman. Most importantly, red appears in the final sentence of the story as the color of blood. This sentence has clear symbolic overtones. The quest for experience as an end in itself, the value of which lies not in its outcome but in its "color," parallels an interpretation of life offered by the European Decadent Movement and links the characters in Tanizaki's early short stories with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

In his search for sensations that would be at once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness that is so essential to romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought that he knew to be really alien to his nature, abandon himself to their subtle influences, and then, having, as it were, caught their colour and satisfied his intellectual curiosity, leave them.<sup>3</sup>

#### WHITE AS THE FEET OF FUMIKO

In "The Tattooer" and "The Secret," red, an ostentatious color, includes powerful sexual associations besides producing a maximal emotional impact. Yet even in Tanizaki's early works red competes with white, which is employed to emphasize the allure of a woman's body—her hands, feet, and face—and is subsequently identified directly with female beauty. The exaltation of the skin's whiteness (softened to some degree by pink, amber, or ivory nuances) recurs throughout the author's works, from "The Tattooer" to *Diary of a Mad Old Man*.

Adopting this materialist point of view, Tanizaki reverses the idea of white as the color of spirituality, as it is perceived in the Manichaean concept of a struggle between white and black, where black is the material element and at the same time a dark cavern containing all colors. In literature—European romanticism being a case in point—white expresses spirituality precisely because it is free of color. Newton's proof that, from a scientific viewpoint, the reverse is true has done little to change this view.

For Melville, too, white is "the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity"; yet it is simultaneously "the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind."<sup>9</sup> The supernatural whiteness of the whale—which Melville compares to that of the polar bear, the white shark, the albatross, the white of the breaking surf, and the walls of Lima—becomes more sublime, elusive, and terrifying precisely because "in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible

absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors.”<sup>10</sup> The white behemoth—which attains the dimensions of an abstract symbol for the quest for a truth, incompatible with human existence—is set in contrast to the world of colors, “subtle deceits, not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without,”<sup>11</sup> which misleads men but also assures their survival.

When using white in a context of sexual love, Tanizaki succeeds in “humanizing” it by means of a series of subtle but essential nuances. White assumes a number of qualities drawn not from the world of ideas but from nature: in “The Tattooer,” the girl’s “rose-tinged” toenails are likened to “the shells that one finds only on the beach at Enoshima”;<sup>12</sup> in *Shunkinshō* (*A Portrait of Shunkin*, 1933), the music mistress’s face has “a flowerlike, pearly delicacy”;<sup>13</sup> and in *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*, 1925), the dancing teacher’s hands are remarkably white, and “her pale lavender veins, faintly visible beneath the white surface like speckles on marble, were weirdly beautiful.”<sup>14</sup>

The triad composed of white, the world of nature, and sensuality reaches its highest expression in *In Praise of Shadows*, where Tanizaki praises the special color of traditional Japanese paper (*washi*). It is an imperfect white, acquiring nuances that arouse the visual and tactile senses.

[T]he texture of Chinese paper and Japanese paper gives us a certain feeling of warmth, of calm and repose. Even the same white could as well be one color for Western paper and another for our own. Western paper turns away the light, while our paper seems to take it in, to envelop it gently, like the soft surface of a first snowfall. It gives off no sound when it is crumpled or folded, it is quiet and pliant to the touch as the leaf of a tree.<sup>15</sup>

White has other sexual connotations as well. Food similes are one of the devices Tanizaki uses most frequently, although he adopts the same technique even when the object of desire has different colors. Comparisons with food, as a means of emphasizing a feature of womanly beauty or form, had been adopted by other authors, most notably by Natsume Sōseki, whose central character in *Sanshirō* (1908) says of the girl he has just met: “It was a tawny, foxlike shade, the color of a white, translucent rice cake that has been lightly toasted, its texture incredibly fine. That was the only way for a woman’s skin to be.”<sup>16</sup> In *Sanshirō*, this simile has a somewhat rustic, homely ring, emphasizing the boy’s provincial roots. Tanizaki’s references to food, however, have a different texture, which, if anything, sharpens the eroticism and sensuality of the situation. In “Akuma” (*The Devil*, 1912), Teruko’s feet are likened to *hanpen*, a soft, white, boiled paste of fish and potatoes.<sup>17</sup> In “Fumiko no ashi” (*Fumiko’s Feet*, 1919), the girl’s feet re-

mind the central figure of “a summer dish, strawberries sprinkled with milk. The blend of color in the curves of her feet was exactly like that of strawberry juice mixed with milk.”<sup>18</sup> In *Naomi*, Naomi’s body is as white as the flesh of an apple, her back as pale as milk.

In Tanizaki’s imaginary universe, even night may be identified with white. The narrator-protagonist of *Naomi* states:

*Night* is usually associated with *darkness*; but to me, night always brought thoughts of the whiteness of Naomi’s skin. Unlike the bright, shadowless whiteness of noon, it was a whiteness wrapped in tatters, amid soiled, unsightly, dusty quilts; and that drew me to it all the more.<sup>19</sup>

This white is unique. The color of night depends on two basic conditions: the reflection of the moon, a light that more than any other lacks the warm tones of day but is no less sensual than sunlight; and night’s status as a kingdom of no color—or rather a kingdom in which all colors converge into the two fundamental protocolors, black and white.

Woman and night, Tanizaki explains in *Ren’ai oyobi shikijō* (*Love and Lust*, 1931), have, it would seem, always been indivisible for the same reason—white needs black and vice versa. To the sensuality of the female body, night adds a bewitching sense of mystery. At night, woman, with her “moonlike pallor and her dewy fragility,” becomes “a vision of a dream world” far more exciting than the reality of day.<sup>20</sup> And the idea that the essence of sensuality may be found in this strange dimension, attained only when sleep blurs with wakefulness and hallucination with rationality, recurs frequently in Tanizaki’s work, from the early “Aoi hana” (Aguri, 1922) to *Kagi* (*The Key*, 1956) and *Diary of a Mad Old Man*.

Cinema provides a particular type of dream, sharply defined by black and white imagery. The images in “Ave Maria” are those of sensual love and death, merging in a way that is consistent with Tanizaki’s erotic world. The darkness of the movie theater, slashed by the beam of white light projecting images onto the screen, provides a black and white version of reality that makes the central character believe that he is wandering in the valley of death but at the same time intoxicates him with the perfume of the women seated nearby. Later this fusion of black and white creates a silver snake glittering on the screen: the beautiful actress Bebe Daniels emanates a flood of white light that blazes like silver. A similar shower of light appears in one of the central images of *The Key*, in which the protagonist’s quest for white is so obsessive that he resorts to a fluorescent lamp, the means by which he seeks to satisfy his most secret desires. The female body and the whiteness of the skin are thus brought, in almost blind-

ing splendor, to a state of perfection in which the tiniest details are thrown into relief. This is scarcely surprising, because the most richly sensual images in this work are accompanied by light (an essential medium of photography, which is, of course, the sister of cinema) and vivid colors, more intense than real ones.

White is also a quality of a spirit endowed with ideal beauty and may, to some degree, represent the transcendence of sensuality in an idealized vision of woman. The ideal assumes cosmic dimensions, and woman becomes the source of every action and thought: "White = woman. And she is not only the mother of my body. Might she not be the mother of all things that are within me, my life, my thoughts, my ideals?"<sup>21</sup> Could it not be, the author wonders, that sexual desire itself is, after all, a sense of eternal yearning for white? This means that desire is not—and must never be—either trivial or fleeting. Desire is the result of a long maturation process, taking woman to the center of a dimension that tends to overcome all limits, to attain eternity. "Ave Maria" presents, in some measure, the reverse of the conflict between colors seen in "The Tattooer," where red overpowers white. Here, white defeats red. The central character, who is still a child, plays with two sumo wrestler dolls. Initially he is convinced that the red doll must be stronger than the white one, but then, perhaps influenced by a scene from kabuki, he changes his mind, persuading himself that white encapsulates the qualities of refinement, courage, and dignity. At the end of a long process, white becomes synonymous with perfection and the object of desire is not so much woman as white—perfect, absolute, and unattainable, craved precisely because of its unattainability.

Later to fade in a world where white eventually blends with shadow, the symbolism Tanizaki used early in his career emerges in the marble statues of "Aguri" and "Ave Maria," two stories published within a year of each other. In "Aguri," the perfect form and gleaming surface of the marble statue fixed in the central character's mind (which is as dark as a secret room) are reminiscent of the aesthetic ideals and myths (especially Pygmalion) of ancient Greece. In the film that the central character of "Ave Maria" sees with Nina, the statue glimpsed between the black velvet curtains is perhaps more art nouveau than classical in style, yet it, too—its transparent surface synonymous with perfection—seems almost to come to life, to be transformed into a ravishing woman. In *In Praise of Shadows*, the statue is replaced by an image whose roots lie in classical Japan: "Our ancestors cut off the brightness on the land from above and created a world of shadows, and far in the depths of it they placed woman, marking her the whitest of beings."<sup>22</sup> In this instance, the identification of female beauty with white is less important than the need for glimmering whiteness to be

surrounded by shadows. By highlighting volumes and contours, Tanizaki does not seek to create a chiaroscuro effect but to emphasize the affinity between light and darkness.

In *In Praise of Shadows*, the concepts of “shining white” and “dazzling whiteness” assume a negative quality, manifested in an ideological rejection of the West. With an odd touch of irony, Tanizaki criticizes at length the “hygienic” white that had been imported into Japan. His view is strikingly analogous to the widespread interpretation that white represents the efficiency and hygiene of the bourgeoisie, who feel obliged to white-wash their walls and eradicate all traces of past events and peoples, displaying a “civilizing” mentality, which, in the compulsion to sweep everything clean, wipes out areas of shadow.<sup>23</sup> In *Randa no setsu (On Indolence, 1930)*, the patently false teeth of Hollywood actors, flashed relentlessly in the pages of glossy magazines, remind the author that in the past excessively perfect teeth gave the impression of evil and wily brutality. In *In Praise of Shadows*, Tanizaki maintains that white tiles in the bathroom banish elegance and contact with nature. In clinics, likewise, the white walls and coats, together with the metallic glint of surgical equipment, hurt the eyes and do nothing to calm a patient’s shattered nerves.

Behind these observations, one perceives a far more generalized rejection, prefiguring a culture clash in which Tanizaki, identifying himself (albeit momentarily) with Matsunaga in *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi (The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga, 1926)*, compares the brilliant white, the strong colors, and the metallic, merciless light of the West with the quiet allure of shadows.

#### BLACK AS THE HEADBAND OF CONFUCIUS

A preference for noncolors—or rather an intellectual process based on diluting color until it is totally suppressed—is an aspect of Japanese aesthetics. Further, to quote the scholar Izutsu Toshihiko, “the real depth of the beauty of black and white is revealed only to eyes that are capable of appreciating the splendor of rich, vivid colors, with all their gradations and nuances. Otherwise, the end result of the elimination of color . . . would be merely a total lack of color in a purely negative sense, which would fail to stimulate any aesthetic feeling.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, a long tradition of praising color, allied with a fine, discerning awareness of the potential combinations of all colors and shades, enables Japanese viewers to appreciate black and white fully.

In this context, the relationship between the presence and absence of color is illustrated in a celebrated poem by Fujiwara Teika, the same

poem that underlies the aesthetic perception of *wabi* in the tea ceremony:

*Miwataseba hana mo momiji mo nakarikeri  
ura no tomaya no aki no yūgure*

If I look around, I find no flowers, not even red maple leaves:  
near the bay a hut of branches in the autumn twilight.<sup>25</sup>

According to Izutsu's interpretation, which is confirmed in treatises on the tea ceremony:

Our mind is offered a vision of brilliant colors, which, however, is negated and eliminated immediately afterward. Indeed, what actually takes place here is not even the act of negating colors: in this context, the negation of richly colored words represents a metaphysical process whereby vivid colors are returned to the most basic color, that is, to the color that is not a color.<sup>26</sup>

In black and white paintings, the India ink and circles of light created by the brush express the essence and form of objects; in the end, the white of the paper and the black of the ink contain all colors.<sup>27</sup> It is this kind of black, with its mysterious allure, that Tanizaki pictures emanating from the hair and black-dyed teeth of ladies-in-waiting during the Heian era. This would seem to signify that all reality derives from women; one glimpses a matriarchal vision of the cosmos. There is no sense of mourning; on the contrary, reality may be conveyed through a black and white interpretation, by means of an artistic device recalling that of painting. According to some, the black found in the hair of Japanese women is the absolute color par excellence, yet even this black has no life unless it is set off against the white of the face. Kawabata Yasunari makes a similar juxtaposition when, in *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*), he writes that it is the black of the hair that enables a white face to shed warmth, even though the image reminds him of cold nights in the land of snow.<sup>28</sup>

In Tanizaki's "Kirin" (1910), which is richly seamed with symbolic values, black and grey are the colors of Confucius, the representative of wisdom. The philosopher wears a black band on his forehead, and, although this could simply serve to provide historical authenticity, the author's lack of realistic intent highlights the symbolic meaning of black, the perfect synthesis of all colors. This black represents the supreme beauty of a dark world, lying beyond the garish trivialities of the delights of the flesh. For this reason, Confucius's virtue is not a negation of beauty but its transcendence. This logical transition is clearly discernible in the contrast between the achromatism of Confucius—who, besides a black headband, wears a

weather-beaten fox-fur cape—and the orgy of color surrounding the queen. Nanzi's palace is spangled with five iridescent colors and a clutter of gold and jewels, creating an immediate sense of luxury and a fusion of beauty and reflected light that contrast with the Confucian idea of virtue.

#### BLUE AS MYSTERY

A strong thread of continuity runs between black and blue. Blue is the color of darkness or semidarkness, while red is the color of light. In Tanizaki's particular mode of perception, this continuity is especially important, as is the fact that, when his interest in light wanes, even red is permeated with blue: "The men of centuries past," he states in *In Praise of Shadows*, "dyed their women's red lips dark blue, and adorned them with mother of pearl. It was like removing all traces of blood from their voluptuous faces."<sup>29</sup>

Even Tanizaki cannot escape certain psychological interpretations, according to which blue signifies coldness, distance, and even tranquillity; nevertheless, he would appear to have drawn his range of blue tones from the twilight world that filled his aesthetic vision long before he wrote *In Praise of Shadows*. In "The Secret," the central character is attracted by an indigo blue kimono with tiny, irregular motifs. Indigo blue (*ai*) and, more broadly speaking, the entire range of blue have virtually nothing in common with the high-keyed chromatism of works written in the same period. Blue does, however, fit in with the wholly Japanese aesthetic vision, synthesized in the concept of *iki*, which, having evolved in Edo during the Tokugawa period, viewed the infinite shades of grey, brown, and blue as the height of finesse.

In his essay "*Iki*" no *kōzō* (*The Structure of "Iki,"* 1931), the modern theorist Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941) claims:

When one tries to think of a color that, despite its bright tonality and a high degree of saturation, is *iki*, it is fitting that this color verges, in a sense, on black. And if one wonders what this color might be, one must necessarily think of a color that, in accordance with the Purkinje phenomenon, is compatible with the light of dusk. . . . [G]reen, blue, and violet persist even in the soul's twilight gaze. Therefore (to confine the discourse to tonality), it may be affirmed that similar colors, such as green and blue, are more *iki* than so-called dissimilar colors, like red and yellow. It is also permissible to maintain that cold colors, based on blue, are more *iki* than warm colors from the gamut of red. It is therefore possible for dark blue and indigo to be *iki*. . . . In short, the color *iki* is, as it were, the persistent, passive image that follows an experience of light.<sup>30</sup>

The mysterious woman at the center of “The Secret” appears swathed in a sky blue cloak. Dark blue and indigo, contrasting with the vivid colors the protagonist drinks in, suggest a wholly chromatic interpretation of the tale in which an attraction to strong colors becomes synonymous with a craving for excitement and the rejection of delicate, refined sensibilities. In the search for mystery, the protagonist attempts to combine these two worlds. The attempt fails, however, for the color of mystery, as weak as the glimmer of a lantern, seduces but never satisfies. In this sense, the color of mystery clashes with the most striking and recognizable of colors—the color of blood. On the other hand, eccentricity, like mystery, has its allure, and paradoxes may coexist in eccentricity. The man who pretends to be a woman, and whose fresh look at the world through false female eyes does not prevent him from retaining male heterosexual desires, is the same man who seeks shadows so that he may throw himself into the gaudiest of colors.

Satsuko, in *The Diary of a Mad Old Man*, wears an azure blouse; Naomi, her metamorphosis from young girl to femme fatale at last completed, dons a French evening dress of soft blue crepe; and Nanzi, the cruel princess in “Kirin,” dresses in pale blue with cloudy nuances. In these instances, the color reference may be interpreted as a deliberate contradiction. Light blue, which suggests calm and peace of mind, swathes the bodies of treacherous, disturbing women. In contrasting the women’s true nature with the colors they wear, Tanizaki uses a literary device of which he is fond. Something similar takes place in *Madame Bovary*, where “descriptions of Emma frequently include the colors azure, light blue, and dark blue.”<sup>31</sup> When Charles first sets eyes on Emma, she is wearing an azure dress from beneath which she exudes her dazzling sensuality and ambiguous charm.

“Aguri,” in which color serves as a cultural reference and is, so to speak, a color of the mind, deserves to be treated in its own right.<sup>32</sup> The literary allusion to Novalis, conveyed through symbolism and the codification of a dialectic relationship between reality and imagination, takes on a provocative meaning. The blue flower for which Heinrich von Ofterdingen yearned, and which symbolizes the ideal of a pure and perfect life, certainly remains an ideal of perfection for Tanizaki, but it is an entirely material, carnal perfection. Such an ideal is pursued not in the mystical quests of Ofterdingen but in the purchase of Western garments that will turn Aguri into the perfect object of desire.

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To conclude, it may be said that the diversity of Tanizaki’s uses of color, depending on the time and circumstances, does not imply an inner conflict

and that undue stress should not be placed on a conscious breach between two different ways of perceiving the world of color. Tanizaki's roots lie, in fact, in the "classical" Japanese vision, which presupposes the exaltation and disavowal of color by turns. At the same time, we must never underestimate the influence on Tanizaki of Western culture and, in particular, his early admiration for symbolism. Red and blue in all their gradations, together with black and white, may be viewed as keys presented to us by Tanizaki so that we may break into his literary universe. The author suggests as much through the colors included in one of his last novels, *The Key*. In a dream, the central character sees his wife immersed in blue; her hair is black, her lips red, and her nose white. In the early short stories, this choice of colors would seem to be influenced by the Decadent Movement and the urge to invent a world crowded with sensations and colors, so gorgeous, brilliant, and perverse as to vie with that of Oscar Wilde. Later Tanizaki's love of color is undiminished, but it is conveyed with a sensitivity that draws heavily on Japanese culture. Although his relationship to light changes, and shadows begin to dominate, Tanizaki never loses his awareness of color, its infinite variety and endless resonance.

## NOTES

1. In *Bungakuron* (*On Literature*, 1907), Sōseki examines the function of "simple sensory elements" within a literary work. He bases his observations on the role of colors on *Outlines of Psychology* (1902), by the German philosopher Wilhelm Max Wundt (1832–1920), and on *The Colour-Sense: Its Origin and Development* (1879), by Charles Grant Allen (1848–99). See *Bungakuron*, in *Sōseki zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 41–44.
2. *Kokin wakashū*, *Nihon koten bungaku taikai*, no. 8 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 97. The translation is by Helen Craig McCullough, in *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 5.
3. Ōoka Makoto, *The Colors of Poetry* (Oakland: Katydid Books, Oakland University, 1991), 38.
4. "Correspondances," in Charles Baudelaire, *Poèmes* (Paris: Hachette, 1951), 32.
5. Cf. Usami Eiji, "Yami, kin, hai—Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no shikichō," in Ōoka Makoto, ed., *Nihon no iro* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1992), 133. The author adds, "we perceive the image clearly like a hallucination accompanying the movement of the colors. But at the same time, these images, which flare up and die down before our eyes, highlight the conceptual and inferential mechanisms in the other parts of the text and lose the imaginative dynamism that colors possess" (*ibid.*).
6. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 133.
7. *Ibid.*, 147.
8. *Ibid.*, 132.
9. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or The Whale* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 212.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Shisei*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1972–75), 1:65; hereafter TJZ.
13. *Shunkinshō*, in TJZ, 13:543.

14. *Chijin no ai*, in TJZ, 10:683–84; the translation is by Anthony H. Chambers, in *Naomi* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 68.
15. *In'ei raisan*, in TJZ, 20:525–26; the translation is by Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker, in *In Praise of Shadows* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 9–10.
16. Natsume Sōseki, *Sanshirō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko and Iwanami Shoten), 37; the translation is by Jay Rubin, in *Sanshiro* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 27.
17. "Akuma," in TJZ, 1:280.
18. "Fumiko no ashi," in TJZ, 6:381.
19. *Chijin no ai*, in TJZ, 10:155; Chambers, *Naomi*, 121.
20. *Ren'ai oyobi shikijō*, in TJZ, 20:269.
21. "Ave Maria," in TJZ, 8:583.
22. *In'ei raisan*, 549; *In Praise of Shadows*, 33.
23. Cf. Manlio Brusatin, *Storia dei colori* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 95–96.
24. Cf. Izutsu Toshihiko, "L'eliminazione del colore nell'arte e nella filosofia dell'Estremo oriente," in S. Sambursky et al., eds., *Il sentimento del colore, l'esperienza cromatica come simbolo, cultura scienza* (Ascona: Quaderni di Eranos, 1990), 200. On this subject, see also Ōoka Makoto, "Koten shika no iro—"irobanare" o megutte," in *Nihon no iro* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1992), 59–75.
25. *Shinkokin wakashū*, *Nihon koten bungaku taikai*, no. 28 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), 101.
26. Cf. Izutsu, "L'eliminazione," 211.
27. On this subject, see Jō Kazuo, *Shikisai no uchūshi* (Tokyo: Meigensha, 1993), 25.
28. Kawabata Yasunari, *Yukiguni* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Bunko, 1966), 36.
29. *In'ei raisan*, 549.
30. Kuki Shūzō, "*Iki*" *no kōzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1987), 73–74.
31. Cf. Dacia Maraini, *Cercando Emma* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993), 13.
32. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772–1801), translated into Japanese with the title *Aoi hana* (*Blue Flower*), enjoyed great success in Japan, particularly from 1905 to 1920. The specific reference to the theme of a sought but unattainable ideal, symbolized by the blue flower, is found in the poems *Aoki hana* and *Kimi* (1909) by Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942). Many of Hakushū's contemporary poets and writers, including Wakayama Bokusui, Miki Rōfu, Hagiwara Sakutarō, and Satō Haruo, were inspired in varying degrees by Novalis's work.



# The West as Other

Paul McCarthy

The foreign (commonly) and the foreigner (less commonly) appear in various guises in Japanese literature. One thinks of the sinister European aristocrat in Mishima's *Kinjiki* (*Forbidden Colors*) and of the repellently hairy Westerner glimpsed on the train with his Japanese catamite in Kawabata's *Yama no oto* (*The Sound of the Mountain*). There are, of course, more positive representations as well: the complexly human Jesuits in Endō Shūsaku's Kirishitan works, and the engaging young Frenchman in his *Obaka-san* (*Wonderful Fool*), rumored now to be running a bar in Kabuki-chō. In Tanizaki, the images of the foreign are quite frequent, mostly consistent (except for *Sasameyuki* [*The Makioka Sisters*], always the grand exception to generalizations about Tanizaki), and highly significant for the author's imaginative world.

Ken K. Ito, in his *Visions of Desire*, has discussed the foreign as Other in relation to several major novels.<sup>1</sup> I would like to explore the same theme, with some variations, in regard to *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi* (*The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga*) and *Yōshō jidai* (*Childhood Years: A Memoir*). Otherness can be exemplified in many different polarities: male/female, sacred/profane, everyday/bizarre, domestic/foreign. It plays a central part in the human imagination, acting as a powerful spur to fantasy. In the form of the exotic, its role in the sensibility of the romantics and the decadents has been analyzed by Mario Praz (*The Romantic Agony*),<sup>2</sup> while its powerful political-cultural effects have been exposed and deconstructed by Edward Said (*Orientalism*).<sup>3</sup>

The exotic Other appears in several distinct forms in Tanizaki. If that which is removed from us in time, though not place, may be called "exotic" (a reasonable extension of the word, in my view), the stories set in premodern Japan (Edo, Sengoku, Heian) qualify as exotic (of the Japanese, nonmodern type). Tales like "Kirin" are both geographically and temporally exotic (Chinese, nonmodern). Other stories and essays based on

Tanizaki's travels in China in 1918 and 1926 represent an exoticism that is contemporary and neither Japanese nor Western, and the extraordinary "Bishoku kurabu" (The Gourmet Club), with its culinary eroticism, transfers this exotic/contemporary setting to Japan (Yokohama's Chinatown, or "China in Japan," we may say). Here rare and outlandish Chinese dishes are presented to blindfolded customers at a private restaurant-club, whose young Chinese waitresses literally hand-feed the guests. The tastes, smells, and textures of the delicacies of the table blend with those of the delicate hands that proffer them.

But the Other that is the subject of this paper is, of course, the West and Westerners. Usually these are encountered in Japan: it is perhaps only in *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* that the West is used as an actual (partial) setting for the story. There are the well-known portraits of Naomi, the Japanese bar girl whose lover, building on her "Mary Pickford looks," transforms her into his ideal Western flapper in *Chijin no ai (Naomi)*; of the Eurasian prostitute Louise in *Tade kuu mushi (Some Prefer Nettles)*; and of the socially liberated, Western-acting, tradition-defying Taeko in *The Makioka Sisters* (though again, as always with this novel, the matter is more complex than this might suggest). In *Childhood Years*, however, we have real Westerners (women, of course), not merely semi-Western or Westernized characters. Tanizaki, in these memoirs written near the end of his long life, recalls how these foreign figures appeared to him as a boy (in the process, perhaps reinventing them—we shall never know): "the Summers, an English family, had opened a private language school. Its official name was . . . the Grand Academy of European Culture. . . . No one called it that, though; it was usually referred to simply as 'Summers.'"<sup>74</sup> The double name, one pretentious, the other casual to the point of derisiveness, sets the tone for the rest of the account. Everything is ambiguous, capable of double interpretation. Are the women "really English" or "simply a random collection of Caucasians of various types who had drifted over from Shanghai or Hong Kong"? They are "a group of 'lady foreigners' of charming appearance ranging in age from eighteen or nineteen to about thirty." They "claimed to be sisters" and were accompanied by "an old woman who was said to be their mother," but "for sisters, they bore very little resemblance to one another." The dubious character of the Summers sisters is at last specified: "the foreign women were in the habit of secretly accepting upper-class Japanese gentlemen as 'clients.' . . . Some Kabuki actors . . . came to Summers' to buy (or was it, perhaps, in their case, to be bought?)." <sup>75</sup> Thus, the *soi-disant* English teachers turn out to be selling other services (not buying, presumably, despite Tanizaki's wicked little thrust at both parties to the transaction). So these "earliest" of Tanizaki's foreigners are already linked to sexuality—and of a rather shady, titillating sort.

Their physical surroundings, too, are described, and here the emphasis is on the richness and strangeness of it all: “the second-floor rooms were furnished with luxurious carpets and fine lace curtains, and the arrangement of the chairs and tables and beds made one feel as if one were actually in a foreign country: it was like awakening to a strange new world.”<sup>6</sup> This description of the Summers’s quarters may remind us of other Western interiors in Tanizaki. Take, for example, the more highly colored and detailed account of the Western wing in the rich children’s mansion in *Shōnen* (*The Children*), with its great hanging lamps with multicolored shades, thick wine-colored carpets, gilt chairs, mirrors, musical clock, and piano. Here, and elsewhere, Western interiors suggest wealth, luxury, and sensuous delights of great variety; they constitute a “strange new world,” an embodiment of the imagination’s flight from the tyranny of the everyday into the realm of fantasy.

There is yet another note struck in the description of the Summers, however, apart from ambiguous sexuality and exotic luxury. This is the note of political-cultural criticism—short, but sharp and clear. Tanizaki has made it plain that the quality of the Summer girls’ teaching was not high. By contrast, the tuition fees charged were. The reason was that, “since the British standard of living was so much higher than our own, and since they were regarded as representatives of a more advanced, civilized nation come to enlighten our backward countrymen, everyone accepted such high fees as natural and inevitable.”<sup>7</sup> The irony is apparent and seems directed equally at the inadequate representatives of “a more advanced, civilized nation” and the too-ready acceptance of bogus superiority by his “backward countrymen.” A page later, the same kind of point is made, with the same tone of irony, this time with regard to the physical attributes of the two races: “But in the eyes of the poor stunted Japanese of that time, she appeared a person of dignified and commanding presence, a member of the superior White race.”<sup>8</sup> This of someone described as “in fact a rather ugly girl . . . pug-nosed, with a large mouth and prominent, fleshy cheeks” who “even during class would begin to titter at nothing at all and have to struggle hard to control herself.” Whatever the boy Tanizaki may have thought of his Western lady-teachers, the aged writer shows an awareness of Meiji period cultural politics, the balance of power, and their effects.

*The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* (1926) tells the story of a man who moves between two cultural poles and is transformed both mentally and physically as he does so. Every three or four years (*ashikake yonen*) his tastes, his attitudes, and even his physique undergo extraordinary changes, which culminate in actual motion toward one pole or the other and are accompanied by a change in identity, including name. As Matsunaga, he is the heir of an old, established family in Yagyūmura, Yamato, in the

cultural heartland of traditional Japan. In this, his accustomed, normal role, he encourages his wife's interest in Japanese literary classics, devotes himself to Chinese texts collected in his grandfather's day, and goes on short journeys to immerse himself in the natural and cultural beauties of his native region: the plum blossoms of Tsukigase in March, the cherry blossoms of Yoshino in April, the wisteria of Nara in May. He visits the Tōdai, Yakushi, and Hōryū temples, recalling as he does so that generations of his ancestors have worshipped the buddhas there enshrined in just the same way. And it is not only these special sites that move him: as with the essayist of *In'ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*), written some seven years later, the ordinary colors, sounds, smells, and tastes of everyday Japanese life are a source of deep comfort and quiet pleasure to Matsunaga. Though they are not quite as detailed or lyrical as those in the more famous essay, the story contains descriptions of the smell of the morning miso soup, the quiet colors of bowls of rice, *tsukemono*, seaweed soup, and sea-bream sashimi arranged on a lacquer tray. The Yamato sections of the story constitute a kind of rough sketch or early study for the fuller portrait of Japanese aesthetics given some years later.

If the Japanese pole is represented in the first instance by Yagyūmura and Yamato, and secondarily by the pleasure quarters of Gion and Shinmachi, the Western pole is epitomized in Paris, well represented in Shanghai, and at least discernible in the Ginza and parts of Yokohama and Kobe (the West in Japan). Depending on the state of the world, and of his finances, Matsunaga-turned-Tomoda moves to one or another of these "Western" enclaves. During this phase, everything that has pleased him (and was later to please the essayist of *In Praise of Shadows*) in the Japanese way of life is now found to be inferior and repellent:

I may be Japanese, but I now live virtually like a Westerner. . . . I'd visited Yokohama a couple of times and through the introduction of a dissolute friend had had a glimpse of a strange land of dreams, one which Japanese can rarely enter: the pleasure district reserved for white men. From then on, I cursed all things Oriental, everything dim and gloomy. . . . Oriental elegance and refinement are the opposite of all that's spontaneous and genuine. They're not for the young and healthy, for people of normal vitality. No, they're for decrepit old men who delight in the boring because that's all they're capable of. In fact, they're just a kind of timid perversity of taste, mean-spirited humbug.

When the old men sing, for example, it's never with a full-throated sound; they prefer a reedy sort of voice, which they think more chic. In a man's presence, a woman makes no effort to show her physical beauty; on the contrary, she seeks to conceal it as much as possible under her wide obi and long kimono sleeves.

That's supposed to be more erotic. But it's not so: when they try to sing, they must resort to falsetto for the high notes, while they lack the breath to sustain the long notes. If they should try to display their physical charms, one would find their skin too muddy, their limbs too ill-proportioned. They just aren't up to it!<sup>9</sup>

If the Yamato sections anticipate *In Praise of Shadows* in a direct, straightforward way, the Western sections do so by way of mirror reversal. The very qualities that are praised in the later work, as well as in the Yamato sections of the present one, are castigated here, with only a slight shift in vocabulary. A room is seen not as suggestively shadowy but as dim and gloomy. Voices and tones are not restrained, modest, mysterious, with a slight cloudiness but rather are reedy falsettos. Complexions that might have been praised as "not dead white, but with a slight yellowish overtone, giving a soft, sweet effect" are here seen as merely "yellow" and judged "very unpleasant." Every quality is passed before the evaluating mirror and finds itself reversed. Moreover, this happens several times, since Matsunaga/Tomoda oscillates between the two poles with some frequency.

With the rejection of the "passive East" comes a devotion to an antithetical West: "There one would find the very opposite of 'subtle effects' and 'hidden implications'—strong colors, violent stimuli, alcohol to set one's tongue aflame, an aggressive hedonism that savors every pleasure to the full and beyond, a world of intoxication of which one never tires. Seeking this quintessential West, then, I made for Paris."<sup>10</sup> For Tomoda, the West is merely a place of physical, sensuous, and sensual experience. The specific references in the Western sections of the story are to food (chateaubriand), drink (champagne, sherry, cognac, absinthe, and vermouth), and women (voluptuous, available, and almost always fair skinned: the adjective *white* appears again and again). The West is the sphere of freedom, conceived not politically or intellectually but as a kind of unbounded psycho-physical energy—freedom from family ties, from the restraints of custom, convention, and morality, from the tyranny of the everyday. The tango and Apache dances that Tomoda so energetically performs with the foreign women in the Yokohama brothels represent this aspect of wild abandon.

When, after some time in Paris, the reaction against the West sets in and Tomoda is pushed back toward Japan, Yagyūmura, and his identity as Matsunaga, this too is expressed in physical, material-cultural terms. The high-speed motorcars and the tall buildings with their electric elevators induce panic in Tomoda. Knives and forks seem like the claws and teeth of carnivorous beasts, Western singing voices like the howling of wild animals. And the adored white skin of Western women begins to terrify and

appall. With his love for the concrete and shocking detail, Tanizaki makes Tomoda conclude: "I grew sick of all the odors of the West, those characteristic odors of the White race which permeate their face-powders, their perfumes, their clothing, their foods, everything."<sup>11</sup>

Some Japanese critics (early on and notably Nakamura Mitsuo)<sup>12</sup> have criticized Tanizaki's representation of the West on the grounds that it is bereft of spiritual, intellectual, or political meaning, that it is conceived solely in terms of material culture and sensuous experience. If Tanizaki had intended to provide his readers with an objective portrayal of some actual West, certainly we would have to agree that he failed. But it is clear, I think, that the West exists within Tanizaki's fiction as an almost purely subjective construct, something to set over against other things—the Japanese, the traditional, or the everyday world of most of his characters (and assumed readers). It is an object of fantasy or imagination, significant not in itself but as it works upon the characters and is worked upon by them. This is not, of course, a completely satisfactory response to a critic like Nakamura: he might respond by asking if it is not somewhat irresponsible to give such a subjective, partial account of another great civilization, even within a work of fiction. He might ask if there is not too great an imbalance between the fictional portrayal of Japan—far more rich, nuanced, and varied—and that of the West and if that imbalance does not make for a certain inadequacy, even as fiction. The debate will no doubt continue, as will the somewhat parallel debate concerning the meaning and value of Tanizaki's imaginative portrayal of women.

NOTES

1. Ken K. Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
2. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, translated by Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
3. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
4. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. *Yōshō jidai*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966–70), 17:235; *Childhood Years: A Memoir*, translated by Paul McCarthy (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International, 1988), 166.
5. *Yōshō jidai*, 237; *Childhood Years*, 168.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Yōshō jidai*, 236; *Childhood Years*, 167.
8. *Yōshō jidai*, 238; *Childhood Years*, 168–69.
9. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 10:471–72.
10. *Ibid.*, 472.
11. *Ibid.*, 483.
12. Nakamura Mitsuo, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ron* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1952), 146ff., 150ff.

# Prefacing “Sorrows of a Heretic”

Ken K. Ito

Among the hundreds of prefaces and forewords that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō wrote during his long career, none is more fascinating than the preface that he appended to “Itansha no kanashimi” (Sorrows of a Heretic) at the time of the story's initial publication in July 1917.<sup>1</sup> This preface, entitled “‘Itansha no kanashimi’ hashigaki” (Sorrows of a Heretic: Preface; hereafter “Hashigaki”),<sup>2</sup> is justifiably famous, for it is here that Tanizaki makes the claim that “Sorrows of a Heretic” is his “one and only confessional work” (*kono ippen wa yo ga yuiitsu no kokuhakusho de aru*, 23:23). This often-quoted characterization of “Sorrows” has very much influenced the way that the work has been read.

Yet this preface is a complex text in its own right, and it bears on far more than the autobiographical nature of the story. The “Hashigaki” deals with a constellation of issues, comprising publication history, ideology, and intentionality. There is an obvious rhetoricity to the preface—in the sense that it seeks to enforce a certain mode of reading upon “Sorrows of a Heretic”—but this rhetoricity ends up calling attention to the rhetoric within both the preface and the story and finally reveals a grating ambivalence about the autobiographical project. My aim in this paper is, through reading the “Hashigaki” and the story in relation to each other, to ascertain how their rhetorical strategies support or contradict the supposedly “autobiographical” project.

First, a short consideration of the general nature of prefaces to works of fiction: prefaces constitute part of what Gérard Genette would call the “paratext”; they belong to the verbal, visual, and material apparatus—also including such elements as titles, illustrations, and the names of authors—that forms a “threshold” between the text and the exterior that lies beyond it.<sup>3</sup> Genette points out that this threshold is rife with vigorous interpretive activity. The paratext forms a “zone not just of transition, but of *transaction*; the privileged site of a pragmatics and of a strategy, of an action on the public in the service, well or badly understood and accomplished, of a

better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading—more pertinent, naturally, in the eyes of the author and his allies.”<sup>4</sup>

The preface is a particularly potent part of the paratext because it leads an ambivalent metanarrative existence. On the one hand, it is by definition lesser than the work that it precedes. A precondition for its existence is the designation of another text as the primary narrative. On the other hand, the preface makes a claim for authority over the text that authorizes its existence. It interprets the latter’s contents or tells us about the conditions of its origination. This claim of authority is redoubled when an author writes his own preface. A document that can declare itself to be a more direct enunciation of its creator, the preface can destabilize the apparent hierarchy by revealing the intentions and experiences that stand behind the “main” narrative. In this dynamic, the preface is aided by its nonfictional status. Counterpoised with a fictional text, it can lay claim to being closer to an actual, lived experience. It is aided, as well, by the peculiar temporal qualities of preface writing. Written last, but coming first, the preface strives for precedence both in terms of order of narration and in terms of the perspective gained through its retrospective view.<sup>5</sup>

These paradoxical qualities are stunningly present in the “Hashigaki.” The tense relationship between preface and story is played out here in the face of two of the major authorizing institutions of Taishō literary culture: the *bundan* and the state, the latter more specifically in the form of government censorship. In both cases, the “Hashigaki” manifests an apparent acquiescence that masks the manipulation and subversion of institutional ideologies.

To begin with the *bundan*, it is worth noting that “Sorrows of a Heretic” appeared at the very moment when the genre that would later come to be known as the *shishōsetsu* was reaching its ascendance. By 1917, Japanese Naturalism had made its way through the literary culture, leaving in its wake an ideology that associated seriousness with autobiographical realism. A second wave of autobiographical writing was well under way. Kasai Zenzō, Chikamatsu Shūkō, and Shiga Naoya had all begun to publish around the Meiji to Taishō transition (1912). Thus, while the conventions of the *shishōsetsu* would not be described and codified until the mid-1920s, when writers such as Kume Masao and Uno Kōji formulated a particular critical discourse about the form, the conventions themselves were being employed in praxis by 1917. “Sorrows of a Heretic” appeared in a literary milieu where substantial credit was given to an epistemology that restricted the knowable to the experience of a single person and where this epistemology was given literary expression in tightly focalized narratives that encouraged a reading that identified the writer with both the narrator and the protagonist in his stories.

Tanizaki, of course, had begun his career as an opponent of Naturalist autobiographical writing, and his early Taishō years had been occupied by fantastic and romantic affirmations of desire and evil, which could hardly be mistaken for autobiographical writing. Yet he was not unaware of the rhetorical power and appeal of the *shishōsetsu*. Satō Haruo relates an instance when Tanizaki himself invited comparison between "Sorrows of a Heretic" and "Wakai" (Reconciliation), Shiga Naoya's brilliant, quintessential *shishōsetsu*, which was published in the same year. The following is Satō's well-known description of the episode:

Around the time that Shiga Naoya's "Reconciliation" was being praised as a great work, Tanizaki once asked me, with the serious and earnest look that he sometimes assumed, whether his "Sorrows of a Heretic" was inferior to "Reconciliation." I told him that I didn't evaluate "Sorrows" all that highly. For Jun'ichirō in those days, it was unaffected and clearly not a bad piece of work. But ranged among his successes, it was at best below average. . . . The reason for his attachment to the work must lie not with the work itself but with the depth of his memories of the days written about in the work.<sup>6</sup>

Tanizaki's uncharacteristic insecurity, which receives no sympathy here from the characteristically acerbic Satō, reveals his sensitivity to the *bundan's* high regard for Shiga's version of the *shishōsetsu*. It is also worth noting that Satō has anchored the significance of "Sorrows of a Heretic" in its autobiographical content; he has read the story as a *shishōsetsu*.

The "Hashigaki" is a bald attempt to take advantage of the central characteristic of *shishōsetsu* writing that Edward Fowler has called the "rhetoric of sincerity."<sup>7</sup> The preface insists upon the literal truth of the contents of the story and seeks to equate the author with the protagonist. This endeavor begins with disavowing the autobiographical nature of two earlier stories, "Shindō" (The Child Wonder) and "Oni no men" (Devil's Mask), where Tanizaki had assigned to his protagonist qualities and experiences associated with himself:

Such stories as "The Child Wonder" and "Devil's Mask," which many readers believe to be based upon my own background, in reality used a youth in circumstances somewhat similar to mine in order to enliven a puppet that existed only within my mind. But this work, "Sorrows of a Heretic," is rather different. Leaving aside the characters on the periphery, at the very least the family of four that appears here is an honest and unreserved description—to the extent possible and to a point allowable—of the truth as it appeared to my heart at that time. In this sense, this piece is my one and only confessional work. (23:23)

The revelation regarding the essential fictionality of the earlier stories, made from the author's privileged viewpoint, argues for the fundamental difference of "Sorrows" from its predecessors. Yet the revelation is not the entirely innocent admission that it seems, for it also demonstrates Tanizaki's acute awareness of the dynamics of *shishōsetsu* writing and reading. "The Child Wonder" and "Devil's Mask" had featured "youths in circumstances somewhat similar" to those of the young Tanizaki because the author knew that this would "enliven a puppet that existed only within [his] mind"; these earlier narratives had taken advantage of preexisting conventions of reading that gave authority to texts in which authors could be identified with their protagonists. The author of the "Hashigaki" is a writer who knows how easily the fictional and the factual can be joined in what is represented as an "autobiographical" story. The discovery of this kind of awareness prompts a more careful reading of the "Hashigaki." In such a reexamination, it is difficult to miss the generous presence of qualifications attached to the designation of "Sorrows" as an "honest and unreserved description." If the "characters on the periphery" must be left outside of the circle of honest description, then there is at least an implicit admission that fabrication and created characters have entered the story. This is a serious admission to make regarding any text that aspires toward literal truth, for the insertion of the imagined into the experienced casts doubt upon the status of the entire enterprise. It is, however, a particularly serious admission to make in reference to "Sorrows" because "characters on the periphery" occupy an important place in the work. Rather than simply focus upon the impoverished nuclear family of father, mother, son, and dying daughter, the text also depicts the protagonist's rocky relations with his circle of male friends. The death of one of these male friends, to whom the protagonist, Shōzaburō, never returns money that he borrows, is developed in the story as a plot element parallel to the death of Shōzaburō's sister.<sup>8</sup> Thus, to designate as fictional the parts of the story other than those dealing with family is to say that much of the text is a fabrication.

Moreover, even when it comes to the family, the statement in the "Hashigaki" exhibits considerable equivocation. The "truth" here has been exposed only "to the extent possible and to a point allowable." The demands of propriety, the preface implies, will not allow a full revelation. The "Hashigaki," then, subverts its own assertion of honesty as it plays to the "rhetoric of sincerity." While it seeks to represent "Sorrows" as a piece of autobiographical writing, and thereby gain access to the respect accorded by the *bundan* to personal confession, it slyly points to the limitations and contradictions implicit in autobiographical fiction.

The approach that the "Hashigaki" takes to the other authorizing institution that it addresses, the state apparatus of censorship, is similarly

slippery. The "Hashigaki" begins by telling us something of the prepublication history of "Sorrows." The story had originally been completed in August of 1916 and had been meant for the September special edition of *Chūō Kōron*. It had already been set in galley form when the *Chūō Kōron* editors got cold feet, fearing that the publication of the story would result in the entire issue being banned. The editors' trepidation is to a point understandable: Tanizaki was something of a marked man in terms of government censorship. His works had been banned four times in 1916 alone.<sup>9</sup> And *Chūō Kōron* had been directly affected by the banning of its March 1916 issue because it included Tanizaki's play *Kyōfu jidai* (*The Age of Terror*). What is interesting in the instance of "Sorrows," however, is the aspect of the story that made it a potential censorship victim. All of Tanizaki's other banned works had been singled out because of their eroticism and their often perverse sexual content. Now the editors of *Chūō Kōron* feared censorship for another reason altogether: they thought "Sorrows" might be judged to be harmful to public morals because of its stark and stinging portrayal of a dysfunctional family. The "Hashigaki" describes this situation as follows:

According to the opinion [of my editors], this story is rare among the products of my pen for the obvious moral sentiments that flow through its foundations. Nevertheless, at various points in the piece, the clashes between parent and child are depicted with extreme bluntness; scenes such as those where the father and the son revile each other in repugnant terms are narrated in a manner that seems too intense. Thus, though the work generally supports public morality, perhaps viewed from the perspective of the authorities, who are obsessed with the minutest expressions in each and every line, the story as it stands would be judged to be harmful to the unsophisticated reader and would be faced with the misfortune of being banned. In any case, there had recently been a reappointment of the chief of the Police Bureau, and so, if possible, it would be preferable to publish the piece after hearing the policies of the authorities on bans and fully revising those passages needing revision. This was the gist of what I was told. Since then, for nearly a year, this manuscript, still in galley proofs, has been buried futilely in the depths of the files. (23:22)

This is an oddly ambivalent statement. On the one hand, it seems to acknowledge the presence in "Sorrows" of unwholesome and dangerous material. In the work, "clashes between parent and child are depicted with extreme bluntness," and this cannot but undermine the official ideology of the family state. Yet, on the other hand, repeated assurances are offered that "the work generally supports public morality." There is more than a hint here of condescension toward the authorities, "who are obsessed with

the minutest expressions in each and every line” and are thus incapable of understanding the whole. At the same time, rather than challenge the small-minded censors, the chosen course is to hear their policies and comply by “fully revising those passages needing revision.” Perhaps the foremost indication of ambivalence in this passage is that it borrows another’s discourse. Most of this paragraph is delivered as a paraphrase or an indirect quotation of what Tanizaki was ostensibly told by his editors. This is much clearer in the original, where a stylistic differentiation is made in the paraphrased sections. By using this strategy, the author has already distanced himself from the decision to hold back the story. His complicity has been limited to repeating a conclusion reached by others.

Recognizing the ambivalence of such a rhetorical strategy has consequences for understanding the notorious conclusion of the “Hashigaki,” where gratitude is expressed toward the most senior of the censors:

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciations for the kindness of Chief Nagata of the Police Bureau, who, in between his heavy official duties, personally took on the labors of censoring this manuscript prior to publication and even appended a careful critique. (23:25)

Jay Rubin says that “one searches in vain here for a hint of facetiousness.”<sup>10</sup> While I have the greatest respect for Professor Rubin’s sense of humor, I think that in this instance his usually acute appreciation of irony has deserted him. Even if one has not taken note of the ambivalence present in the prior references to censorship, the florid diction of this expression of gratitude should lead us to see that a tongue is being planted firmly in cheek.

The ironic, doubled attitude shown toward the ideologies of sincerity and family can perhaps best be understood by examining their interaction. The rhetoric of sincerity had been yoked since the Meiji period to a preoccupation with an individuality perpetually in conflict with family. From Tayama Katai to Shiga, what had nurtured modern Japanese autobiographical fiction was the vision of family as a restrictive institution against which the writer needed to struggle in both his role as the protagonist of his story and his role as the story’s recorder. By seeking to harness the rhetoric of sincerity for his own uses, Tanizaki was necessarily associating himself with its routine subversion of family. Since this was precisely the element that was going to call down the wrath of the authorities, he needed to make the counterargument that he was sincerely a supporter of family. The pursuit of these conflicting dual objectives—manipulating the rhetoric of autobiographical fiction while sidestepping the censors—is what gives the “Hashigaki” its frenetic tone.

Much of the stridency of the "Hashigaki" is linked to its obsessive discussion of the timing of the writing and the publication of "Sorrows." What I want to argue here is that this discussion works to establish a doubled time of narration that helps simultaneously to satisfy the paradoxical ideologies of sincerity and family.

In discussing the narrating instance, it is worthwhile to note at the outset that, if we go strictly by evidence in the story, the time of narration of "Sorrows" is somewhat ambiguous. The story is told retrospectively from a distance of some years. We are told at the conclusion that Shōzaburō became a writer shortly after the death of his sister by penning imaginative stories that went against the grain of the Naturalist fiction popular "at that time," and so we need to assume that the story takes place roughly around 1910 and is told some years later. But nothing indicates an exact time of narration. The "Hashigaki" seeks to fill this omission with not one but two precise times of narration. The first time of narration provided by the "Hashigaki" is the summer of 1916, when Tanizaki initially wrote "Sorrows." The "Hashigaki" makes it clear that there were certain enabling conditions that led to the writing of "Sorrows" at that time. These conditions are described in the following passage, which appears in the "Hashigaki" just after the declaration that "Sorrows" is Tanizaki's "one and only confessional work":

While I had wanted to write this piece for four or five years, I felt sorry for my parents, who were in serious straits in those days, and for a long time I could not bring myself to take up my pen. But two years ago, just around the time when I was married, my parents finally received the rewards due to the good and found some luck after twenty years of hardship. Taken up again by a world that had abandoned them, they were able, through the sympathy of friends and relatives, to run a considerable business. At about the same time, I set up a household in Mukōjima, and my wife gave birth to my parents' first grandchild.

Even after I moved from Mukōjima to Koishikawa, my father and my mother came to visit us every Sunday from their house in Nihonbashi. They would hold their grandchild upon their knees, praise the flowers in the garden, and return home after having enjoyed themselves for the day. My wife, with her gentle temper, was also a great favorite of theirs. Unfilial as I was, I hoped that at least my wife and daughter would act as my substitutes and be as good as possible to my parents. Thus, the intense conflict between parent and child of the sort depicted in this story had totally disappeared at that time, and I could write this piece with a clear conscience. (23:23)

Something quite startling has happened. Despite its pointed depictions of clashes between parent and child, "Sorrows" has been turned, through the

designation of a time of writing, into the product of a filial son. Tanizaki tells us that he had delayed writing the story out of consideration for his impoverished parents. He had waited until his parents' fortunes had changed and he had fulfilled his duties as a son by marrying a gentle wife and fathering a first grandchild. It was then and only then, when the conflict had "totally disappeared," that the writer could tell his story with a "clear conscience." Susan Napier has insightfully identified the dynamic in Japanese confessional literature in which a writer could "purge himself and demonstrate the sincerity of his suffering, thereby gaining absolution and reentry into the collective fold."<sup>11</sup> Tanizaki consciously makes use of this dynamic in his preface. He represents the antisocial or antifamily impulses portrayed in his story as the confession of a man who has returned to the "collective fold." The time of writing is consciously specified to mark his return. The implication of such a narrating situation, of course, is that the censors have no business touching the work of an artist who is now so supportive of family values.

If the initial time of narration establishes the writer as a filial son, the second time of narration turns the writer into a loving son, deep in mourning for his mother. While "Sorrows" sat in galley form because of the *Chūō Kōron* editors' fears, Tanizaki's mother died. The "Hashigaki" describes in heartrending terms the circumstances of this death, which had occurred while the writer was out of Tokyo. Upon receiving a telegram telling him that his mother had suffered a heart attack and was near death, Tanizaki had hurried back to the city, only to find her cold corpse, which had miraculously regained a youthful beauty. His mother's death, the writer says, has given his story a special significance:

I now publish this story as a fitting memorial. I dedicate it to a woman who was the mother of an artist, as a remembrance of a time when she was still alive. This story uses for its materials a period seven or eight years ago when our family had sunk to the depths of misery. My father, my mother, and I had then harbored a feeling close to despair in our attitudes toward life. Last year, as I wrote this and came to the passage depicting my mother's suffering, I recalled the wretched circumstances we were in back then, and I could not but shed unintended tears. Recently, when I took out the old manuscript, mourning my mother, I could not keep from being moved anew. When one thinks about it, this month and this year mark the seventh anniversary of the death of the sister in this story. The day that this appears in *Chūō Kōron*—the first of July—coincides exactly with the forty-ninth day since my mother's death. To me, the fact that something I wrote last summer had remained unpublished until now seems somehow not an accident. (23:24)

The problem of censorship has been conveniently forgotten here, and the delayed publication of "Sorrows" has been attributed to an act of fate that held back the story until its proper moment. This proper moment is emphasized through an obsessive attention to time. The writer was moved to tears "last year" when he wrote the story; the tears returned "recently" when he took out the manuscript. The emotions of the initial time of narration have not only remained, they have been intensified in the new situation. What is more, there is an uncanny numerical significance in the timing of the publication. The story is being published in the seventh year since the death of Tanizaki's sister; it will appear at the beginning of the seventh month on the forty-ninth day after his mother's death. This proper moment, almost supernaturally determined, joins the initial time of writing as a second time of narration. The force of the dedication in memoriam creates a narrating instance located after the death of the writer's mother.

The emotional outburst that follows the paragraph I have just discussed underscores this doubling:

In this story, I do not at all write about my mother and my sister as if they were exceptional people. It is because they were not exceptional that their deaths resound all the more sadly and pathetically in the heart of a man who was their flesh and blood. Had they been given a choice between dying young as exceptional people and growing old without being exceptional in any way, they would surely have chosen the latter, no matter how much sadness and suffering this meant. Death is *Nothing*. Life, at least, is *Something*. No matter how difficult it is, surely *Something* is better than *Nothing*.

I want to convey, through my art, what they were like when they were alive and allow them to live on as *Something*. "My mother, my sister, you are still alive here," I want to shout toward the two souls that have returned to the skies.

Yet, if souls are imperishable, then death may perhaps not be *Nothing*. If that is the case, their two souls will probably read this work and smile, thinking, "That, too, happened to us when we were alive." For I cannot believe that their life after death is harder than their life on earth. They were not the kind of people who would fall to hell. Without a doubt, they were good. (23:25)

The writer here bares his intention to convey what his sister and his mother had been like "when they were alive." This is a narrative project that can transpire only after their deaths. Thus, there is more than an implication of the contradictory assertion that the work was written after the demise of the writer's mother and sister. Conveniently, the fact that they are dead does not keep the mother and the sister from appreciating the writer's artistry. A scene of heavenly reading is conjured, where the souls of the writer's

mother and sister attest to the truth of his confession. The second time of narration is emphasized through being tied to a situation of reception that is not possible at the initial time of narration.

To summarize, then: through imposing a doubled time of narration, the “Hashigaki” seeks to ingratiate “Sorrows of a Heretic” with both the *bundan* and the censors. That the initial narration of the story had to wait until the principals had escaped the straitened circumstances in which they are depicted attests to the biographical “truth” of what is written. The second narrative instance drives home this factual authenticity, for it allows the story to be presented as a memorial to the author’s mother, who can attest to the story’s veracity from her perch in the heavens. “Sorrows of a Heretic” is represented as being replete with the kind of “sincerity” demanded of serious literature. At the same time, the story is separated from the hostile depictions of family present in most *shishōsetsu* because the two narrative situations speak eloquently for its author’s essential filial piety.

The ironic manipulation of authorizing discourses that we see in the “Hashigaki” must warn us away from reading through “Sorrows of a Heretic” to its author’s life or some kind of simple ideology. It should tell us to look for the complex, doubled, and reflexive. When we begin to view “Sorrows of a Heretic” from this perspective, we see a text that is constantly negotiating the kind of terrain laid out in the “Hashigaki.” We cannot deny that there are some biographical elements to “Sorrows,” but much of the story advertises itself as a construction. In contrast to the *shishōsetsu* convention of presenting the illusion of a “slice of life,” “Sorrows” has a deliberate structure. As I have already mentioned, the segments dealing with Shōzaburō’s relationship with his friends, which the preface implies are made up, counterbalance the story’s focus upon the family. The death of the gullible Suzuki, who lends Shōzaburō money, provides a parallel to the death of Shōzaburō’s sister. This death, in turn, establishes a strong closure for the story. The short epilogue, following the sister’s death scene, in which we learn that Shōzaburō later became a writer who used “the mysterious nightmares that fermented in his head” as the basis for fiction that was “completely different in tone from the Naturalist fiction popular at the time,” provides information that associates Shōzaburō with the actual Tanizaki. Yet the epilogue also functions as a deliberate frame, echoing the beginning of the story within one of Shōzaburō’s dreams. That the dreaming protagonist of the opening turns into the writer of dreams in the epilogue is a deliberate mark of selection and organization in a fictional narrative.

There are other rhetorical aspects of “Sorrows” that call attention to its fictionality. The restriction of point of view to the protagonist, per-

haps the most consistent hallmark of the *shishōsetsu*, is violated with impunity in the story. There are scenes, in the sections of the story dealing with Shōzaburō's friends, where other characters gather and discuss Shōzaburō behind his back. Such scenes are not possible within the conventional epistemological framework of the *shishōsetsu*, where the narrator and protagonist share the boundaries of what can be known. It should also be noted that Shōzaburō is portrayed with considerable irony and humor; after all, he is a self-proclaimed genius who fervently believes that the preservation of his intellectual gifts hinges upon regular elimination. All of these narrative features combine to create a text that, rather than conjuring an illusion of transparency vis-à-vis an actual external world, flaunts its fictionality.

Turning to the ideology of family, it cannot be denied that the text demonstrates that Shōzaburō's relationship to his family defines his identity. His relationship with his friends is explored partly to show the relative weakness of such ties compared to his enduring bonds to his parents and his sister. Shōzaburō's sympathy and affection for his impoverished parents are palpable, but these feelings coexist with a bitterness and self-hatred that comes from his identification with such feckless people. The text acknowledges that the family can destroy as much as it can create. The story's complex attitudes toward family are evident in a passage such as the following, which details Shōzaburō's feelings toward his father:

His contempt for his father did not mean, of course, that he went out of his way to shower his father with insults or that he raised his hand against him. If he could do that, he would probably not have needed to feel quite this degree of unpleasantness. If he could regard his father as someone separate, if he could treat him that way, then he could surely be a little happier. If the person insulting him had been a stranger, then he could insult him right back without any hesitation. If the person who misjudged him were a stranger, then he could readily attempt to set him straight. If it were a stranger who was pitiful, despicable, impoverished, then he probably could have comforted him, or avoided him, or shown him some charity. Depending upon the circumstances, he might have been able to sever all ties. It was only because this person was his father, his flesh and blood, that he was deprived of all such options.

That this was the case did not necessarily mean that there was some kind of morality in him. A strange feeling that was at once dark, depressing, and angry, which could never be explained by a fixed and ossified word like *morality*, and which stuck in his chest and pressed down upon his head, constantly lay between him and his father, and he could not be open with him. When from time to time he came before his father, his rebelliousness mounted, and his frustrations and his fury bubbled up within

him. But when he saw his father's emaciated face and saw the painful shadows, depressing shadows that inspired pity, Shōzaburō became unable to speak or to act. When he thought that he had been born of this old man's blood, he felt something unendurable that made his whole body go rigid. (4:404-5)

If "Sorrows of a Heretic" captures here something of the love and identification, fury and disappointment, that tie parents and children, it does so outside the bounds of a "fixed and ossified word like *morality*." The hegemonic ideology of family, to which the preface refers, cannot admit a view of family that is at once so dangerous and so powerful. The doubled, self-conscious rhetoric of the preface both conceals and reveals this un-sparing view whose truths transcend confession.

## NOTES

1. There is also a second, shorter preface, interesting in its own right, which was inserted at the beginning of a slim collection containing "Sorrows" and three other pieces, published by Oranda Shobō in September 1917.
2. All citations of "'Itansha no kanashimi' hashigaki" are from *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966-70), 23:22-25. References to *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū* are hereafter shown within the text with volume and page numbers in parentheses.
3. I am grateful to Professor Anne Bayard-Sakai, who pointed out at the conference that the title "Itansha no kanashimi" (Sorrows of a Heretic) possesses important paratextual functions. She noted that the mention of sorrows in the title showed a stance of repentance. In this regard, it is worth observing that the notion of heresy implies the existence of an orthodoxy, whose presence is affirmed through the very act of transgression. The title allows itself to be read so that the "sorrowing heretic" can be either the author or the protagonist. Thus, it, too, works toward encouraging a "confessional" reading of "Sorrows of a Heretic."
4. Gérard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (spring 1991): 261; emphasis in original.
5. In formulating this paragraph, I have been aided by Kevin Dunn's *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), esp. ix-xii.
6. Satō Haruo, "Jun'ichirō, hito oyobi geijutsu," *Satō Haruo zenshū*, 12 vols. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1966-70), 11:362; quoted in Yoshida Sei'ichi, "Itansha no kanashimi," in Ara Masahito, ed., *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1972), 111.
7. Edward Fowler, *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
8. The parallel structure of the two deaths is suggested by Nakagami Kenji in "'Itansha no kanashimi': Itansha no imi," *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 23.10 (August 1978): 41.
9. My information on the publication bans on Tanizaki's works comes from Jay Rubin's stimulating study, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 137-41.
10. Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals*, 141.
11. Susan Napier, *Escape from the Wasteland: Romanticism and Realism in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Ōe Kenzaburō* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991), 45.

# The Maternal Landscape of “Longing for Mother”

A. V. Liman

*Does it long too for days past:  
The crying bird that wings  
Over this well lying in the shade  
Of the yuzuriha, its foliage ever green?*<sup>1</sup>

In his perceptive *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ron*, Noguchi Takehiko suggests that Tanizaki lost his mother twice: when she died on 14 May 1917, he lost her finally as a human being and physical parent, and yet long before that he had lost her as his ideal embodiment of the “eternally young and beautiful woman.”<sup>2</sup> From sketches and memoirs like “Watakushi no kakei” (My Family Line), “Umareta ie” (The House Where I Was Born), “Banshun nikki” (Late Spring Diary), *Yōshō jidai* (*Childhood Years: A Memoir*), and others, we get a good glimpse of what kind of person Tanizaki’s mother, O-Seki, was: a rather spoiled but charming *hakoiri musume* of small, plumpish build and lustrous, white skin, who couldn’t even cook the obligatory rice. One can imagine her torment and bewilderment when unpleasant domestic chores were forced upon her after the family was struck by ill fortune. Nagae Hironobu points out that, although Jun’ichirō mentions in “Late Spring Diary” that his father sent a postcard warning him of his mother’s precarious health on 30 April 1917, the author’s diary ends on 4 May.<sup>3</sup> If, indeed, he left for a mountain resort on the fifth, he most probably did not see his mother even once before she died. Ironically, his mother died of heart failure resulting from erysipelas, a disease that cruelly blemished her once perfect skin. Jun’ichirō, perhaps not quite unavoidably, returned home only after O-Seki had breathed her last:

Without changing out of my travel clothes, I went up to the body, now cold, and lifted the small, thin towel covering her face. The last ugly traces of erysipelas had disappeared; and that beautiful

face, which had once graced the local town posters and caused not a few to mistake her for my sister, was now as pure and clear as porcelain.<sup>4</sup>

A profound sense of loss, a yearning to resurrect the ideal, and perhaps a degree of remorse for avoiding his dying mother are reflected most clearly in two stories, one written in 1919 and called “Haha o kouru ki” (Longing for Mother) and the other written in 1921 and entitled “Fukōna haha no hanashi” (A Tale of an Unhappy Mother).<sup>5</sup> Noguchi suggests that “A Tale of an Unhappy Mother” is diametrically opposed to “Longing for Mother,” but is it really? While in the first story the reality principle wins and the older son chooses wife over mother, eventually mother and son are reunited in death. Though completely different in tone, the finales of the two stories are not all that different. What is different, however, is the nostalgic, Hiroshige-like prettiness of “Longing for Mother.”

In this paper, I concentrate mainly on “Longing for Mother,” one of Tanizaki’s richest and most complex early stories. As the author himself has written, his initial conception of the story was influenced by Satō Haruo’s *Tsukikage* (*Moonlight*). The famous opening of Tanizaki’s story is as follows:

The sky is leaden, the moon engulfed in clouds; but light streaks down from nowhere, giving everything a pale, whitish glow. The glow is eerie and phantasmal, bright enough to reveal each pebble in the roadside yet still so dim that my vision blurs when I gaze into the distance. It is the glow of an alien, infinite realm, far, far away from the land of the living. (467)

Moonlight dominates the poetics of the entire story. Yet from the very beginning Tanizaki deliberately blurs the image, giving it an otherworldly, ambiguous quality: it is eerie and phantasmal, and we are not sure whether the night is moonless or moonlit. It is as if the child in the story were gazing through a long tunnel or through the milky skin of a woman’s body toward the lost paradise of his childhood.

There is no need to emphasize the enormous importance of the moon image or the sophisticated moon aesthetics in traditional Japanese culture. In the Greco-Roman tradition, there is an emphasis on the correspondence between the moon’s phases and the dominant aspects of archetypal femininity; like other representations of the great mother, the Greek Ephesian goddess had her typical virgin, mother, and crone aspects, often symbolized by the new, full, and waning moons. In our psychological context, the cool light of the moon may also be associated with lunacy or the passionate rush of blood, while in the Japanese tradition it is above all the Buddhist

symbol of the *tathāgata*, the perfect and complete enlightenment: “As I gaze at the moon hiding behind the mountain ridge, I too am in the West (paradise) of the heart.” To Saigyō, a moon poet par excellence, the promise of paradise is suggested by the moon over the mountain ridge; to Tanizaki, the “West of the heart” is the moonlight glowing on his mother’s skin. Yet the transcendental quality of the moon poetics is still there, suffused with subtle eroticism. In the afterword to his translation, Edward Fowler makes an important point: contrary to the convenient “Kansai transfer” theory, Tanizaki’s transition from fin de siècle modernity and his “diabolic period” started more organically before the Great Earthquake. “Longing for Mother” represents the beginning of Tanizaki’s growing concern with traditionalist themes and is undoubtedly a “jubilant and absolute” revel in sentimental nostalgia.<sup>6</sup> But what is crucial to realize is that it is a highly articulated nostalgia of the artist, and the sentiment is not that of a forlorn child. Still, this is a story of return and new departure: the dreaming man yearns to return to the point where he and his mother were one body and to reorder the inevitable experience of separation and loss. A great deal has been written about Tanizaki’s “womb nostalgia” and his “mother complex,” often in a too sweeping and haphazard way.

In a chapter of her *Desire in Language* called “From One Identity to an Other,” Julia Kristeva argues that language, as a symbolic function, constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drives and a continuous (umbilical) relation to the mother. On the contrary, poetic language (in which the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed, instinctual, maternal element. We may not agree with some of Kristeva’s more outrageous statements—for example, “*poetic language would be for its questionable subject-in-process the equivalent of incest.*” But when she quotes the Marquis de Sade, who wrote “Unless he becomes his mother’s lover from the day she has brought him into the world, let him not bother to write, for we shall not read him,” she takes the argument pretty close, at least metaphorically, to the core of the Tanizaki problematique.<sup>7</sup>

With its eerie dream logic, its extraordinary frequency of murky onomatopoeia, and the prolonged lyrical finale of mother and son melting in a flood of tears, the story does invite the “womb nostalgia” reading. And yet upon a closer look we notice that the little boy travels through a nocturnal landscape that is blurred, hazy, and unintelligible only in the beginning and becomes increasingly finely chiseled and defined as he moves on. So the progress of the story and the boy’s journey start from the tactile immediacy of the child’s undivided womb existence, move toward the threat of separation in the outside world, and finally lead to a kind of sophisticated

symbolic reconciliation of mother and child. Since the story is so cinematic, we might also say that its perception moves from scenery shot through a soft filter to an overexposed frame in the finale. Tanizaki's imagery in his early stories was often influenced by film aesthetics: "The pale, still scene resembles an old motion picture stopped at midframe" (473).

If this were a conventional womb-return story, then the milky, otherworldly whiteness and the undifferentiated "oceanic feeling" would have been placed at its end; instead, it is at the outset of the boy's journey through this strange landscape that he relives the womb experience and then approaches a mysterious realm represented by the hoarse, whispering, *kasa-kasa* sound made by some pale objects whose identity remains a mystery to him. He also hears the unmistakable pounding of the ocean surf. The first sound is indeterminate and threatening, the other primordial and reliable. Edward Fowler chose not to approximate or retain the expressive onomatopoeia: *do, do, dodon to iu, hontō no umi no oto ga kikoete kita* (I could hear the true sound of the sea: *do, do, dodon*). Is it the pounding of the ocean's surf or the heartbeat of the mother's body, the most powerful rhythm that one hears before birth? Clearly the opening scenery of the story and its perception seem to be placed somewhere on the edge between this world and the prenatal world of the womb.

At first sight, it looks as if the boy's orientation through this deceptive landscape is purely visual: he counts the telegraph poles, spots a light in the distance, and so forth. The road on which he walks is lined on both sides with rows of pine trees and on the left with telegraph poles standing about a hundred feet apart. As he walks on, he counts these poles, thinking that they are his only company. In other words, they are the only visible sign of a human, "rational" order imposed on the landscape, and they mark the passage of time. If this were a realistic description, not distorted by dream logic, the boy would be walking along a huge lotus pond, indeed, having passed at least 150 poles: it would be around fifteen thousand feet (or four and one-half kilometers) long. But of course the child's sense of distance and proportion is unreliable, as he walks through a liquid world of sound and smell and the marsh grows to this monstrous size precisely because of its emotional and sensuous impact. With considerable irony, the quintessential symbol of rebirth and salvation—the lotus leaf—and the marsh it grows from are presented as images of death, even a womb of death. In Indian Tantrism, the lotus flower is usually interpreted as the womb. Significantly, the forlorn shanty of the child's "false mother" sits right on the marsh's edge. As in the fairy-tale landscape of trials, the boy has to go through the crushing disappointment of encountering this *mater terribilis*, whose "faint voice is even hoarser than the lotus leaves rustling in the pond" (470). At this point, the boy painfully "awakens" from his

symbolic womb existence and confronts a sinister landscape of time and death, a landscape that has robbed him of his beautiful mother. Though she rejects him, the old crone is his mother, aged and ugly. Like a rejected lover, the boy resents the crone’s denial. It is a complex, symbolic denial: it cancels the “lovers’ bond” that O-Seki and Jun’ichirō used to have and shows the mother’s reluctance to reveal her present identity to her beloved child as well as the child’s inability to accept time and transformation.

Several Japanese critiques of the story do relate the old crone and her house to Jun’ichirō’s painful experience of losing his Nihonbashi haven and seeing his mother’s physical deterioration after she had lost her privileged position in the world. Yet there are wider symbolic connotations that transcend the personal trauma: all archetypal aspects of femininity (or permutations of the “mother” image) are not only symbolically represented here—with the old crone as Hekate or *mater terribilis*, the elusive shamisen balladeer as foxy Diana, and the *baya* of opulent and fragrant breasts as *mater nutrix* or Demeter—but each of these figures occupies a distinct place in the story’s space. In Jungian terms, they rule their territory, which is imprinted by their psychic aspects and, in turn, metaphorically defines them by its natural features.

In fact, all the images that the boy encounters in this magical landscape have a distinctly archetypal quality, or, if you wish, the feel of primal sceneries. On the one hand, in his *Bungaku ni okeru genfūkei*, Okuno Takeo argues that every human being has a primal landscape that is deeply imprinted in his or her soul; the longer and more intensive a child’s stay in a distinctive cultural landscape, the deeper and more lasting the experience. On the other hand, in an essay about country roads (*Feldweg*), Martin Heidegger muses about the mystique of ancient field roads. Rather than learning the feel, direction, and lure of these roads by experience, he suggests, we inherit them. They are “written” so deeply into our subconscious, or into our genes, that we recognize them as being intimately familiar without ever having stepped on them. As the boy begins to “read” its sights and sounds with increasing accuracy, the landscape becomes less witchlike and more nurturing and “maternal.” The harsh initial dualities of fondly remembered urban color (Nihonbashi, Nishiki-chō) versus rural squalor recede, and the hostile sounds of the dark marsh in an ill-defined scenery give way to a peaceful, moonlit clarity. At the moment when the child reaches the ocean, one has a distinct feeling that his perception has broken through into a state of “illumination”:

“The moon! Yes, it’s the moon,” I cry. “The moon is shining on the ocean!” . . .

I stop in my tracks, ecstatic. It is a beautiful sight. The road parallels a rugged, winding shoreline pounded by foamy surf.

Windblown pines cast bizarre shadows along the roadside, and I recall picture postcards I have seen of the splendid groves at Miho, the Bay of Tago, the Suminoe coastline, the beach at Akashi. (472)

From the very outset of the story, even at his most “lost,” the boy clearly recognizes the pine trees and the wind soughing through them. Their memory is deeper than just that of the postcards, and his primal scenery of pine and moon are clearly of the kind that Heidegger calls “inherited”; as such, his is a trip through every literate Japanese man or woman’s ur-landscape: “Perhaps I saw it before I was born, and dormant memories of a previous world have now been revived” (473).

These “memories” from his prenatal world have a subjective, dream-like fluidity in which life and death, subject and object freely intermingle:

If I don’t hurry, I may be frozen in my tracks, like the windblown pines on this beach. Turned to stone, I would stand here, drenched in cold moonlight year after year, a fossil on the strand. . . . And yet anyone witnessing the scenery in front of me would surely think death inviting. (473)

In one moment, the boy observes, or imagines, a dynamic swell in the center of the sea, where the shining water seems to be pulled up by the moon; in the next, he perceives himself as the only living thing in a dead landscape. He wonders whether it is the shadows of things that are real or the things themselves. When he starts talking to his own shadow, we have a feeling that he is finally stepping out of his self-contained inner world and beginning to grope for a perception of “otherness.”

And then a strange sound brings the landscape to life, as some truly “other” human being enters this I-landscape. And a bold creative motif that transcends the autobiographical, traumatic experience enters the narrative here: it is the boy’s mother, dressed as an itinerant musician, who produces plaintive notes—sounding like *tempura kuitai*—on a Shinnai shamisen. Like a mysterious *kitsunebi* (literally, fox fire; will-o’-the-wisp), she leads the boy on until he finally catches up with her and we get one of the longest weeping sequences in Japanese literature. Again, as in the series of trial questions for the right name in a fairy tale, the boy gradually comes to understand that the young woman is neither fox, nor “auntie,” nor older sister, but his mother. Perceiving his mother as a fox puts her in the remote realm of wilderness and safely distances her from the boy’s erotic longing. There is something extremely chaste and elusive about the fox, especially a white one; her cunning face seems to intrigue man as the mirror of his own intelligence, and yet she also remains the forever enigmatic “other.” In Western culture, the virgin-mother is represented by the youthful huntress

Diana, in the Japanese by this smart, elegant, and mysterious animal who not only transforms herself but acts as a transformer of human shapes and relationships.

In one of his art parables, *Life Is Elsewhere*, Milan Kundera proposes that a lyrical poet is forever banished from real life and from acting in it as an adult novelist, for he continues to live in the undifferentiated, uterine fantasy world of the child. An anima-dominated man is unable to cut the umbilical cord and achieve objective distance either from mother or from landscape as an extension of her body. Yet the boy’s rediscovery of his mother’s face toward the end of the story not only has the objective quality of a painting; it is very much like the discovery of a majestic landscape:

The tip of her nose comes slowly—ever so slowly—into view from behind her cheek, just as a promontory which one sees from a train window comes into view, little by little, from behind a hill as the train moves forward. . . .

What lies beyond her nose is a mystery, like the other side of the moon. And like the lovely painting it resembles, her face is two-dimensional. (476)

I think that, despite the dripping wetness of the final reunion, Tanizaki achieves an extraordinary degree of aesthetic awareness here: there is an arousal of artistic sensibility in the child, and the reunion is not an infantile one. Now it is not a question of need and nourishment but of objective permanence, as the mother becomes a living painting that sheds human tears. The sorrow of the moonlit landscape is shared by two individuals who have recognized each other’s distinct identity and forgiven each other in an act intensely private and eloquently cultural at the same time. This is far more than the primal scenery of an individual; it is the quintessential sentimental scenery of his culture. As such, its imagery contains a wealth of traditional poetic associations: the pine and moonlight scenery of Miho in the Noh play *Hagoromo* (*The Feather Mantle*) and some direct echoes of *Matsukaze* (*The Wind in the Pines*) such as “And even the moonlight wets our sleeves with its tears of loneliness,” “We’ve no companion but the moon,” and many, many others.

In Japanese children’s talk and some dialects, *mamma* is rice, and in many languages “mama” is the first sound the child emits as it gropes for the nurturing breast. In the haunting verbal approximation of the shamisen’s sound—*tempura kuitai* (I want to eat tempura)—we get both an association of the sensuous warmth of the nurse’s breast and a sophisticated level of cultural reminiscence. As the reader’s mouth chews on these sounds, they almost become edible themselves; yet, while the murky, labial

*mm* of *tempura* still suggests skin-to-skin contact, the shrill *i-i* of *kuitai* bespeaks the cool distance of art.

Like Kaguyahime, mother has become a woman made of moonlight, and yet the artist will forever dream of the sweet fragrance of her breast.

NOTES

1. This *waka* (*Man'yōshū* 111, by Prince Yuge) opens Tanizaki's "Haha o kouru ki," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966-70), 6:191-219. The translation is by Edward Fowler, in "Longing for Mother," *Monumenta Nipponica* 35.4 (winter 1980): 467-78. Hereafter, numbers in parentheses refer to pages in this translation.
2. Noguchi Takehiko, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ron* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1973), 274.
3. Nagae Hironobu, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō shiron* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1988), 137-38.
4. *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 14:82. Translated by Edward Fowler, in "Tanizaki's Sentimental Education," *Monumenta Nipponica* 35.4 (winter 1980): 481-82.
5. The narrator of "A Tale of an Unhappy Mother" tells the story of his older brother, who has been involved in a weird accident: on a boating excursion with his wife and his mother, the boat capsizes and the man instinctively saves his wife first, forgetting about his mother. The mother survives, but grief drives her to madness and ultimately to premature death. Her older son, suffering from unbearable remorse, commits suicide.
6. Fowler, "Tanizaki's Sentimental Education," 479.
7. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 136; emphasis in the original.

# Eroticism, Grotesquerie, and Nonsense in Taishō Japan: Tanizaki's Response to Modern and Contemporary Culture

Suzuki Sadami

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, though one of the greatest of modern Japanese writers, has not enjoyed a uniformly favorable reception from the critics. Before World War II, progressive critics affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party and the Proletarian Literature Movement considered Tanizaki a reactionary. For example, Miyamoto Yuriko (1899–1951) describes Tanizaki as feudalistic in her essay “Fuyu o kosu tsubomi” (Buds Shutting in for the Winter, 1934).<sup>1</sup> Opposing this stance, Kobayashi Hideo (1902–83), a pre-eminent Shōwa critic, writes in “Watakushi shōsetsu ron” (On the I Novel, 1935) that Tanizaki's works possess the feel of human life instead of ideological-political thought. More recently, Odagiri Hideo has argued that Tanizaki took no ideological-political stance at all.<sup>2</sup>

Even those who consider Tanizaki a great writer tend to regard his output in the second decade of the twentieth century and the early 1920s less highly than his work from *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*, 1925) onward. Noguchi Takehiko, among the most astute Tanizaki critics in contemporary Japan, notes a slump in Tanizaki's mid-Taishō work.<sup>3</sup> The mixed reception of Tanizaki's early work seems to have to do with the fact that it anticipates, in many respects, the so-called culture of eroticism, grotesquerie, and nonsense (*ero guro nansensu*) as well as the literature of fantasy.<sup>4</sup> *Ero guro nansensu* refers to the main characteristics of Japanese mass culture in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Typical examples include the detective stories of Edogawa Ranpo (1894–1965).<sup>5</sup> In this essay, I discuss briefly the significance of “eroticism, grotesquerie, and nonsense” in early-twentieth-century (Taishō) Japan and the Tanizaki works that exhibit a critical stance—a spirit of resistance—toward the dominant culture of that age. Further, I show that Tanizaki maintained this stance during the Shōwa period. Although Tanizaki does not formulate a clear political stance in the texts, he is, as a critic, one of the most politically minded writers of twentieth-century Japan.

## FEATURES OF TANIZAKI'S EARLY WORKS

Tanizaki's "Shisei" (The Tattooer, 1910) describes the extraordinary transformation of a young girl on whose back is tattooed a huge black widow spider. As Seikichi, the tattooer, has "poured [his] soul" and the best of his art into the tattoo, the originally shy and withdrawn girl becomes the femme fatale of his dreams. Conscious of her new powers, she not only declares "I can bear anything for the sake of beauty" but triumphantly announces to Seikichi: "You are my first victim!"<sup>6</sup>

Clearly drawing its inspiration from masochistic desires, "The Tattooer" envisions an ideal of female beauty that not only bewitches men but drives them to self-destruction. The text also provides one of the earliest examples of Tanizaki's well-known foot fetishism:

As she left the tub, too weak to dry herself, the girl pushed aside the sympathetic hand Seikichi offered her, and sank to the floor in agony, moaning as if in a nightmare. Her disheveled hair hung over her face in a wild tangle. The white soles of her feet were reflected in the mirror behind her.<sup>7</sup>

Viewed from a different angle, the mirror behind the girl surely reflects more than just the soles of her feet; at least part of her body, naked, beautifully tattooed, and writhing in pain, would be visible. The text, however, seems to tempt the reader with the voyeuristic and sadistic pleasure of watching the young woman's suffering.

A complex eroticism characterizes most of Tanizaki's writings in the early twentieth century. In "Himitsu" (The Secret, 1911), for instance, we encounter a man who likes to wear women's clothing and powder his face, with results that are "a bit grotesque."<sup>8</sup> "Hōkan" (The Jester, 1911) includes a "nonsensical" scene depicting the uproarious behavior of a crowd observing a long-necked balloon painted with a human face. In "Ningyo no nageki" (The Mermaid's Sorrow, 1917), we find an erotic scene featuring the naked body of a mermaid, the protagonist of the story, illuminated by candles. In "Jinmenso" (The Growth with a Human Face, 1918), we read of a boil with human features. Finally, "Aozuka-shi no hanashi" (The Story of Mr. Aozuka, 1926) depicts a man who satisfies his perverse sexual tastes by fantasizing grotesquely enlarged versions of various body parts of his favorite actress and having sexual intercourse with an exquisite rubber replica of her.

Though sometimes unjustly characterized as merely abnormal or eccentric, Tanizaki's works from this period skillfully combine fantasy and eroticism with the lurid and grotesque as well as with the absurd and the

nonsensical. The result is an uncanny foreshadowing of the *ero guro nansensu* culture of the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the following, I discuss briefly some aspects of this body of texts.

“The Tattooer” begins with the words: “It was an age when people still possessed the noble virtue of foolishness (*oroka*), when life was not such a harsh struggle as it is today.”<sup>9</sup> Let us pause for a moment to consider the historical context in which this story was written. The year 1910 was a time of fierce competition among Western imperialist powers; only a few years before the story’s publication, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) had produced a staggering 230,000 casualties on the Japanese side. The result—in the first postwar years when the population was rapidly moving to the big cities—was a serious labor shortage, which in turn stalled the establishment of large factories and the development of heavy industry and the chemical industry. Tenant farmers grew increasingly dependent on second jobs, away from home, while factory workers and other city dwellers were buffeted by the ruthlessly competitive society that was emerging. Herbert Spencer’s social evolutionism, which was introduced in Japan in the 1880s, and Darwinist thought, which emphasizes so-called natural selection, were generally accepted as “scientific” explanations of the struggle for existence.

Seen in this context, “The Tattooer” reveals a threefold textual intent. First, the painstaking description of Seikichi’s tattooing and the introduction of an ideal of female beauty that feeds on men’s life energy implicitly valorizes such decadent, futile, and “foolish” pursuits as art and the worship of women. Second, the praise of “foolishness”—its characterization as a “noble virtue”—in the opening sentence of the story is clearly a piece of nonsensical logic; the ironic affirmation of foolishness implies an elitist contempt for, and desire to escape from, the selfish, materialistic, and profit-oriented world of capitalism. This is coupled with, third, an idealization of Tokugawa culture, which in turn suggests that the text’s critique of modern civilization takes the form of a celebration of decadence.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY JAPAN

Let us consider next the historical conditions that led to the formation, toward the end of the Meiji period, of an intellectual climate in which the exploration of emotions, the body, and sexuality could flourish. Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War marked the beginning of a new epoch, relatively free of the nationalist fervor that had swept the country during the war. A season arrived in Japan when two or three emotions—of looseness or ennui, of seeking liberation or relief—coalesced and haunted intel-

lectuals. A representative expression of ennui is “Doko e” (Where To? 1908) by Masamune Hakuchō (1879–1962). Representative examples of the trend of seeking relief can be seen in many “new religions,” such as the Omoto sect, and in religious literature. An example of the latter is *Shukke to sono deshi* (*The Priest and His Disciple*, 1916), a play by Kurata Hyakuzō (1891–1943) depicting a disciple of Shinran painfully divided between love and religion. Finally, the search for liberation gave rise to violent emotion. Popular discontent with the government, industrial capital, and the landowning class took increasingly violent forms. This violence, initially sparked by dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), reached a peak in the rice riots of 1918. Unrest paved the way for the advent of so-called Taishō democracy—a liberal political atmosphere that allowed party politics to evolve as never before.

A parallel trend was what the critic Isoda Kōichi has called a “revolution of emotion” (*kanjō kakumei*),<sup>10</sup> heralded by unabashed, passionate expressions of desire such as the confession “I’m starving for a woman” (*Watashi wa onna ni uete iru*) in Mushanokōji’s *Omedetaki hito* (*An Innocent*, 1910). Not only did such declarations seriously challenge the rigid Confucianism underlying the “public morality” (*kokumin no dōtoku*) instituted by early Meiji policymakers (especially in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890), but they celebrated the joys of life at a time when death pressed in on all sides.<sup>11</sup>

Only three years before the publication of *An Innocent*, *Futon* (*The Quilt*), by Tayama Katai (1871–1930), had caused a public uproar with its blunt depiction of a middle-aged writer’s abject desire for his young live-in pupil. Widely regarded as the author’s unadorned confession, the protagonist’s sinful thoughts were considered scandalous.

*The Quilt* was written in the spirit of Japanese “naturalism,” which had moved from exposing social ugliness to revealing the ugliness of the human mind. Donald Keene has pointed out the considerable influence *The Quilt* had on *shishōsetsu*, remarking on the close identification of Katai himself with the protagonist of his novel and on the view of many Japanese critics that *The Quilt* is uncritical.<sup>12</sup> As Gotō Meisei notes, however, there are indications that Katai intended to parody his protagonist.<sup>13</sup> *The Quilt* was followed by many other so-called *jōchi shōsetsu* (stories about foolish infatuations)<sup>14</sup> or *watakushi shōsetsu*<sup>15</sup> in which protagonists play at being consumed with blind passion. Among *jōchi shōsetsu*, Mushanokōji’s *An Innocent* bears a self-parodic title. *Santarō no nikki* (*Santarō’s Diary*, 1914), by Abe Jirō (1883–1959), one of the most famous works of the Taishō period, presents a fictional journal writer who has lost his way and seeks relief. His name, “Santarō,” traditionally meant “foolish boy.” In early-

twentieth-century Japan, the narrators or protagonists of many works in the I-narrative style are comical, as though they were deflected images of the authors. This pose gives the impression that each author chose to drop out of the state and the social order—chose, that is, a position of moral decadence. To use the words of “The Tattooer,” many authors “possessed the noble virtue of foolishness” in the early twentieth century, when competition between nation-states, and between individuals, grew more and more violent.

The art of self-parody, or the tragicomical image of the decadent author, can also be observed in many of Tanizaki’s works. An example is the protagonist’s cross-dressing in “The Secret,” already mentioned. In “The Tattooer,” Seikichi’s blind desire to tattoo the girl’s body and to posit an ideal female beauty makes him her first victim. Sacrificing himself to a woman’s beauty is not only the reverse of the usual predominance of men over women in modern Japan but also an aesthetics of decadence. It is said that the big, beautiful, female black widow eats the little, ugly male after the sexual act. Seikichi’s act of tattooing the girl’s back, thus imparting to her his life energy, is similar to the sexual act of a man who expends all his energy in watching his lover’s body brighten in ecstasy and to the act of a male spider who presents all of himself to his lover.

Apart from the issue of self-parody in decadence, the changes in the portrayal of sexual desire from *The Quilt* to *An Innocent* may indeed be considered revolutionary. In the midst of this “sexual revolution” are features later designated as *ero guro nansensu*. For example, the poem “Kuchitsuke no toki” (When We Kiss, 1908), by Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942), contains images of ecstatic sexual bliss:

The dizziness of two young lives burning incessantly,  
 tangled so close in passion you can’t  
 tell them apart.  
 When our trembling lips meet, hot and yet not daring,  
 We quiver for an instant.

The poem continues:

Look, a pale moon looms in the west  
 while the light of the sun setting in the east  
 shakes with fever, billowing at sky’s end.<sup>16</sup>

The ecstasy of desire throws the world into disarray, but the topsy-turvy vision may also be regarded as an indictment of the poem’s historical context.

The exploration of emotions, sexuality, and the body in late Meiji and Taishō literature manifested itself as more than simply a rebellion

against the dominant bourgeois morality and the normative concepts of heterosexual love; we also find unusual expressions of perverse or eccentric unconscious desires. For example, “Koi wo koisuru hito” (A Man Who Loves Love, 1917), a poem by Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886–1942), describes a young man who fantasizes sexual union with a white birch;<sup>17</sup> the poet and painter Murayama Kaita (1896–1919), in addition to boldly addressing the topic of homosexual love, dwells on the pleasures of a meal of human flesh in such poems as “Akuma no shita” (The Devil’s Tongue).<sup>18</sup>

Emerging in these examples are the contours of an aesthetics of the perverse and the grotesque, an aesthetics that defamiliarizes objects by stripping them of context and coherence. To put it another way, the art of nonsense is inherent in the textual strategies of the grotesque.

#### THE AESTHETICS OF DECADENCE AND THE REVIVAL OF TOKUGAWA CULTURE

To return to Tanizaki’s early works, “The Mermaid’s Sorrow,” although a fantasy in a Chinese setting, sets the stage for the author’s ensuing infatuation with things Western. Evidence of “occidentalism” notwithstanding, Tanizaki’s early writing is by no means consumed with unqualified enthusiasm for Western fads (*haikara*):<sup>19</sup> not only is the setting in “The Tattooer” unmistakably that of the Tokugawa period, but the long neck of the balloon in “The Jester” and the kimono worn by the cross-dresser of “The Secret” are obviously indigenous elements. What we find in these stories, then, is an aestheticist’s attention to Western style and Western things, which is not to be conflated with an infatuation with Western civilization.

The preoccupation with Western style in the art and literature of the Taishō period was rooted in imported nineteenth-century European romantic thought and bespoke a nostalgia for a supposedly more wholesome Japanese premodernity that was increasingly threatened by the forces of modern, Western civilization. A related trend was an escapist celebration of the sophisticated, urban, Tokugawa culture. A representative example of this trend is the poem “Shunchō” (Spring Morning, 1908?) by Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885–1945):

One rainy morning in spring,  
 the taste of life, bitter, sour.  
 When I feel I cannot be delivered from anguish,  
 never mind, never mind,  
 the chatter of decadent waves of illusion tempt me.  
 Atop them are works of Aubrey Beardsley, Gustave Moreau,  
 and Japanese—Tsuruya Nanboku, Kitagawa Utamaro.  
 I pray fervidly to the seabed,  
 where live the tragic, beautiful, erotic goddesses they picture.<sup>20</sup>

This poem hints at a secret about the birth of aesthetic decadence in early-twentieth-century Japan. Underlying the poet's emotions was anguish, or ennui. He knows that searching for a religious solution to his anguish would be fruitless, and so he comforts his ennui with an aesthetic ecstasy that revives the decadent art of both late-nineteenth-century Europe and late-Tokugawa Japan. Other representative examples of this trend can be found in the writings of Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), especially in such texts as *Hiyorigeta* (*Fair Weather Geta*, 1915), which describes a search through the wards and back alleys of old Tokyo for traces of the once-flourishing Edo culture.

Kafū contributed to Tanizaki's literary debut with his essay "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no sakuhin" (1911), part of his opposition to Japanese Naturalism. Edward Seidensticker has written as follows about this essay: "Kafū listed as one of Tanizaki's virtues his 'urbaneness.' In other words, he was a true son of Edo, and the Naturalists were among the country bumpkins sacking the city."<sup>21</sup> This characterization of Kafū's attitude has been generally accepted in Japan. Kafū, of course, was also "a true son of Edo," unlike many of the Japanese Naturalists. Another "true son of Edo," however, assumed the opposite attitude toward Naturalism and did not wish to encourage the "sybaritic" Tanizaki.<sup>22</sup> This was Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), who, as is well known, wrote romantic fiction in his early period, from "Rondon tō" (*The Tower of London*, 1905) to *Kusamakura* (*The Three-Cornered World*, 1906). While Sōseki said in "Watakushi no kojinchugi" (*My Individualism*, 1914) that even superficial "Europeanization" was an inevitable course that Japan would follow, Kafū, in "Kichōsha no nikki" (*Diary of One Who Returned to Japan*, 1909), severely criticized "Europeanized" Japanese society for its utilitarianism and unwillingness to create a true national culture. The protagonist of the "Diary," who has been exposed to the notion of national musics in Europe, wishes to create a new, national music for Japan, based on the shamisen and the popular urban music that developed in the Tokugawa era and had been kept alive by geishas. After the Grand Treason case of 1910, which involved the suppression of supposedly treasonous plans against the Meiji emperor, Kafū appeared to assume a decadent attitude and become lost in nostalgia for the popular urban culture of the Tokugawa. His famous essay encouraging the young Tanizaki, listing "urbanity" as one of Tanizaki's virtues, contains an implied criticism of contemporary Tokyo and therefore nostalgia for Edo.

Donald Keene has written, and many Japanese scholars and critics would agree, that Kafū adopted an attitude hostile to social and political matters and ridiculing the hypocrisy, coarseness, and vulgarity of his era.<sup>23</sup> In *Fair Weather Geta*, however, Kafū managed to capture the values of an older urban culture of Tokyo's backstreets while inveighing against super-

imposed modern, urban civilization. With his experience in Europe, and France in particular, Kafū cared only to apprehend true modernization as one that preserved and kept alive a traditional culture in the process of entering modernity.<sup>24</sup> Love of “urbanity,” for Kafū, meant a fondness for sophistication, and a hatred of war, competition, and the destruction of tradition. The ideological and political thrust of this kind of writing aims at deemphasizing and critiquing modern, Western-influenced urban culture by contrasting it with an equally sophisticated indigenous urban environment. A similar critical strategy in late-nineteenth- and turn-of-the-century European culture can be seen in John Ruskin’s cultivation of medieval art and industry and in Kropotkin’s identification with the world of Swiss watchmakers.

Nostalgia for the popular urban culture of the Tokugawa era touched not only Kinoshita Mokutarō and Nagai Kafū but many other Japanese people as well after the Russo-Japanese War. The term *Genroku ryūkō* (Genroku boom) appeared late in 1905 in the press. *Genroku*, which technically designates the era 1688–1704, was used to symbolize the golden era of tradesmen’s culture during the Tokugawa period. Tokugawa popular art, industrial design, and fashion were revived in early-twentieth-century Japan, signifying the people’s hopes for peace, prosperity, and enjoyment and for escape from the pressures of nationhood, conflict, and the struggle for power.<sup>25</sup> “It was an age when people still possessed the noble virtue of foolishness, when life was not such a harsh struggle as it is today.” This sentence at the beginning of “Shisei” and the idealization of the Tokugawa era, decadence, and aesthetics in Tanizaki’s early works emerged from just such a background.

#### THE ORIGINS OF *ERO GURO NANSENSU* AND THE CULTURAL CRITIC

What were the reasons for the overwhelming interest, characteristic of Taishō culture, in exotic artifacts and “other” times and places? The spirit of discontent and resistance that had sparked a series of outbreaks of popular violence gradually weakened after the Russo-Japanese War or found new goals in the cultural activities of the new urban middle classes. There was a general feeling of boredom and ennui, which eventually stimulated a lively interest in philosophy and the arts, especially among young people. In this climate, supported by a general enthusiasm for the possibility of social advancement through education, the so-called current of Taishō culturalism (*Taishō kyōyōshugi*) arose.<sup>26</sup>

An important characteristic of Taishō culturalism was a preoccupation with fantasy, the unconscious, and abnormal psychology. The last

was, in turn, stimulated by the development of the notion of sexual aberrance. Tanizaki's early work not only anticipated both this and *ero guro nansensu*, but it contributed greatly to the establishment of both trends. In "Akai heya" (The Red Chamber, 1925), by Edogawa Ranpo, the narrator explains his reasons for inventing methods of committing murder without arousing suspicion: "I have always been weary of life . . . and to me the normal man's daily routine is—and always will be—a hateful boredom."<sup>27</sup>

It is precisely the boredom of everyday life mentioned here—a boredom only the urban middle classes could afford—that helped bring about the sophisticated, Westernized, literary and artistic trends later known as *ero guro nansensu*, not to mention the Taishō interest in mysticism. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the trends of eroticism, grotesquerie, and nonsense, as well as the genres of fantasy and mystery, were absorbed into the effervescent *modan* mass culture that developed in metropolitan areas. Literary forms became more sensitive to contemporary changes in taste and more accessible. It was in this process that the designation *ero guro nansensu* became widely accepted. The origins of this phenomenon, as I have attempted to show, lie in the early twentieth century, in particular in works by Tanizaki. I have also suggested that in these early Tanizaki texts one can see an emerging resistance to, and critique of, modern materialistic, profit-oriented civilization.

The opening paragraphs of "The Jester" and *Naomi* offer evidence not only of this critical spirit but of Tanizaki's sensitive understanding of Japanese cultural history:

The Russo-Japanese War, which shook the globe from spring 1904 to autumn 1905, had finally come to an end with the Treaty of Portsmouth; new businesses sprang up, one after another, and a new aristocracy and a nouveau riche appeared, all in the name of strengthening the nation. The world was lively as a festival: it was mid-April, 1907.<sup>28</sup>

As Japan grows increasingly cosmopolitan, Japanese and foreigners are eagerly mingling with one another; all sorts of new doctrines and philosophies are being introduced; and both men and women are adopting up-to-date Western fashions.<sup>29</sup>

Having beautifully anticipated the *ero guro nansensu* phenomenon in these and other texts, Tanizaki turned his attention to the exploration of traditional Japanese aesthetics. This change in attitude is reflected in a series of historical and pseudo-historical works published in the early 1930s, as well as in the well-known *In'ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*, 1933–34). In typically ironic fashion, he later chose to situate his novel *Sasameyuki*

(*The Makioka Sisters*), written in part during World War II, not in the remote historical past eulogized by war propaganda but in contemporary Japan.

*The Makioka Sisters* realistically chronicles the disintegration of cultural values and bourgeois norms in the face of increasingly stringent wartime conditions. Yukiko's clothes and cuisine, for example, are poorer with each successive *miai* (formal meeting with a view to marriage), and, as time passes and the war intensifies, the sisters can scarcely afford to participate in the traditional seasonal outings of cherry blossom and maple tree viewing.

The symbolic and allegorical intent of *The Makioka Sisters* is clear. On one hand, Yukiko brings to mind noblewomen of the Heian period, and her name ("snow child") suggests the disintegration of Japanese traditional culture. On the other hand, Taeko, the youngest of the sisters, is a typical "modern girl."

Toward the end of the novel, Yukiko's betrothal to a young aristocrat is settled. Her fiancé is an engineer—an improper profession, to say the least, for a member of the prewar aristocracy. This is a clear anticipation of the major social changes to come in postwar Japan, while Taeko's delivery of an illegitimate baby, who dies immediately after birth, signifies the failure of post-1920 modernism.

The last scene of the novel, in which Yukiko suffers from diarrhea on the way to her wedding, is a riddle. The key to the puzzle is suggested in Yukiko's name, as well as her Heianesque depiction, both of which evoke traditional Japanese culture. The last scene thus symbolizes the weakening and contamination of this heritage in the wake of the war.<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, we can say that, while Tanizaki may appear to have pursued only his eccentric aestheticism, in fact he captured the tastes of those who like to deviate from the central course determined by the powers that be, and also captured their objective situation in each period. Tanizaki's early works and his work during World War II assume stances critical of the culture dominant in each period and predict aesthetic trends to come. While Tanizaki does not formulate a clear political stance in these works, he is, as a cultural critic, among the most politically minded writers of modern Japan.

In 1956, when Japan's postwar economic recovery was complete and a period of high economic growth was about to begin, Tanizaki published *Kagi* (*The Key*, 1956), a novel in which the techniques of the detective story and an unabashed depiction of the characters' sexual fantasies stimulate the reader's imagination. The text also conceals a murder plan, yet another indication of its affinity with the detective story genre. *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62) depicts an old man's sexual

obsession; the treatment of senility anticipates the contemporary preoccupation with the problems of old age.

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NOTES

1. Miyamoto used the word *feudalism* from her own particular point of view, that of the Japanese Communist Party, of which she was a leader. The JCP adopted the term as part of its strategy for democratic revolution on the basis of theses concerning a Japanese revolution formulated in 1932 by the Comintern. The revolutionary strategy depended upon a forced analogy between the Japanese emperor system and the Russian czarist system in disregard of the political and economic differences between the states.
2. Odagiri Hideo, "Kūdōka suru bundan," *Tōkyō Shinbun*, 8 June 1994, evening edition. Odagiri wrote this as one of a series of debates with the present author on the concepts of *junbungaku* (pure literature) and *taishūbungaku* (mass literature).
3. Noguchi Takehiko, "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō," in *Nippon gendai bungaku daijiten* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1994), 216.
4. In vogue separately during the early Shōwa period, the terms *ero-guro* and *nansensu* were joined after World War II. See Kida Jun'ichirō, "Toshi no yami to meikyū kankaku—ero guro nansensu jidai to Edogawa Ranpo," *Ranpo no jidai: bessatsu Taiyō, Nihon no kokoro* 88 (winter 1994): 4–6.
5. The term *tantei shōsetsu* (detective fiction) is used to refer to true detective stories as well as to mysterious and fantastic stories from the 1920s and 1930s in Japan. Ranpo learned well from Tanizaki's works of the 1920s and 1930s. See Suzuki Sadami, "Kaiki to modaniti—Edogawa Ranpo no tenkō," in *Modan toshi no hyōgen—jiko, gensō, josei* (Kyoto: Hakujisha, 1992), 88–114.
6. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, "The Tattooer," translated by Howard Hibbett, in *Seven Japanese Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 168–69.
7. *Ibid.*, 169.
8. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, "The Secret," translated by Anthony H. Chambers, in *New Leaves: Studies and Translations of Japanese Literature in Honor of Edward Seidensticker*, edited by Aileen Gatten and Anthony Hood Chambers (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1993), 162.
9. "The Tattooer," 169. I have modified the first part of Hibbett's translation of this sentence, which begins: "It was an age when men honored the noble virtue of frivolity" (sore wa mada hitobito ga "oroka" to iu tōtoi toku o motte ite).
10. Isoda Kōichi, *Kindai no kanjō kakumei* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987).

11. This evolutionary revolution had its origin in Takayama Chogyū's essay "Biteki seikatsu wo ronzu" (1901), in which Chogyū praised Nietzsche's thought, arguing that an individual's life has to aim for the satisfaction of instinct. As a declaration of individualism, the essay was influential in its time.
12. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 246–48.
13. Gotō Meisei is one of the most remarkable novelists in contemporary Japan. See his *Shōsetsu—ika ni yomi ika ni kaku ka* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1983), 46–48.

The comicality of the protagonist of *The Quilt* had already been pointed out by Masamune Hakuchō in his "Tayama Katai ron" (1931), and Hirano Ken recognized it in his "Tayama Katai II" (1961).

The roots of *shishōsetsu* must be sought not only in Naturalism but in a genre of religious confession influenced by Tolstoy's "My Confession" during the Tolstoy boom that followed the Russo-Japanese War. See Suzuki Sadami, "Zange no keifu," in "*Seimei*" *de yomu Nihon kindai—Taishō seimei-shugi no tanjō to tenkai* (Tokyo: Nippon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1996). "Naturalism" (*shizenshugi*) in Japan must be reexamined radically, both its theories and the realities of its texts. See Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru*, chaps. 6 and 7; and "*Seimei*" *de yomu Nihon kindai*, chap. 4–2.

14. *Jōchi shōsetsu* refers to novels of the mid-Taishō period dealing with men blinded by love for geishas. They are also called *yūtō bungaku* (literature of dissipation). A typical example is *Kurokami* (*Black Hair*, 1922) by Chikamatsu Shūkō (1876–1944). This literary trend began with themes of infatuation; elements of self-parody and tragicomic images of the narrator gradually emerged. See Osawa Masahirō's "Dentō wo yumemiru 'watashi': Chikamatsu Shūkō 'Kurokami' no bunseki," in Nakanishi Susumu, ed., *Nihon bungaku ni okeru watashi* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1993), 226–42.

Among critics around 1924, *jōchi shōsetsu* and other novels belonging to the same self-parodic genre were called *watakushi shōsetsu*. Other examples include "Kura no naka" (*Inside the Storehouse*, 1919) by Uno Kōji (1891–1961) and "Chichi o uru ko" (*A Son Who Sells His Father*, 1924) by Makino Shin'ichi (1896–1936).

15. The earliest use of the term *watakushi shōsetsu* occurred in Uno Kōji's novel *Amaki yo no hanashi* (*A Tale of the Sweet World*, 1920). In chapter 18, the author uses the term, as a translation of *Ich Roman*, or "I-novel," to refer to his style of fiction, distinguishing his work from, and criticizing, works published as novels in which narrators expressed their thoughts without offering any explanation of their lives (*Uno Kōji zenshū*, 12 vols. [Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968], 2:442–43). An example of the works criticized by Uno is "Kinosaki nite" (*At Kinosaki*, 1917) by Shiga Naoya (1883–1971), in which the narrator, whose name and circumstances are not explained, relates his feeling that life is not so far from death. Such works were called *shinkyō shōsetsu* by Kume Masao (1891–1952) in his essay "Watakushi shōsetsu to shinkyō shōsetsu," *Bungei Kōza* (January & May 1925), where they are idealized as employing a style in which the writer recounts his calm state of mind, escaping from self-anguish.

Thus, *watakushi shōsetsu* and *shinkyō shōsetsu* were clearly distinguished when the debate about them arose around 1924. Around 1935, however, a new literary generation began to refer to both as *shishōsetsu*. This accompanied the emergence of *tenkō shōsetsu*, which depicted the life and mind of an author after his conversion from left-wing politics, and the publication of "Watakushi shōsetsu ron," *Keizai Orai* (May–August 1935) by Kobayashi Hideo (1902–83).

See Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru*, 128–46; and Suzuki Sadami, "Kajii Motojirō kenkyū," Ph.D. diss., The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, Japan, 1997.

16. Kitahara Hakushū, *Hakushū zenshū*, 40 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1984), 1:33.
17. *Hagiwara Sakutarō zenshū*, 16 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1975), 1:65–66.
18. *Kaita no utaeru sono go* (Tokyo: Arus, 1921), quoted in Suzuki Sadami et al., eds., *Tokai no gensō*, *Modan toshi bungaku*, no. 6 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1991), 8–21.

19. The sophisticated, Western-style children's art and literature published during the Taishō period in magazines such as *Akai Tori* exhibit not only fantastic and fabulous elements but a penchant for mysticism. Such features can also be found in the children's stories of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) and Ogawa Mimei (1882–1961) and in the children's songs of Kitahara Hakushū. While the word *haikara* is still used by older generations in Japan, the word *modan*, connoting a new, Western, urban manner, began to spread around 1925. See Suzuki, *Modan toshi no hyōgen—jiko, gensō, josei*.
20. *Kinoshita Mokutarō zenshū*, 25 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 1:249.
21. Edward G. Seidensticker, *Kafū the Scribbler* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 45.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Keene, *Dawn to the West*, chap. 14.
24. Kafū wrote in *Fair Weather Geta* of his own “apathy toward society” (*Kafū zenshū*, 28 vols. [Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1963], 13:301). Nevertheless, he warned of the dangers of new companies (305), the “new education that has made the Japanese wily” (307), and civilization used as a weapon to harm others (307–8). He hated “unsightly imitations of European-style buildings, electric wires, and bronze statues in the center of Tokyo” (310) and loved “stupid, ignorant people” (307) for their primitive, foolish costumes (308).
25. On this nostalgia and its meaning, see Suzuki Sadami, “Hakushū kyshū,” *Bungakukai*, December 1995; and “Kindai no kyshū,” *Subaru*, January 1996.
26. *Taishō kyōyōshugi*, as it came to be called after World War II, was marked by a fervent interest in philosophy and aesthetics among young intellectuals of the Taishō period. In the mid-Taishō, Kuwaki Gen'yoku (1874–1946), a philosopher who joined the neo-Kantian circle, proposed the concept of *bunkashugi* (literally, culture-ism), which places premium value on cultural activity.
27. *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, 14 vols. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1969), 1:161. The translation is by James B. Harris, in Edogawa Rampo, *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Tokyo and Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1956), 146. Ranpo was a well-known writer of detective stories, *ero guro nansensu*, and fantastic literature.
28. “Hōkan,” in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 1:189.
29. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Naomi*, translated by Anthony H. Chambers (New York: Knopf, 1985), 3.
30. See Suzuki Sadami, “Gūi no bakudan—haisen shōsetsu o yomu,” in *Ningen no reido moshikuwa hyōgen no datsukindai* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1986), 90.



# The Plays of Tanizaki

Donald Keene

The least discussed part of the oeuvre of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō is surely his plays. Most studies of his career make no mention of them, even in a disparaging manner; one gets the impression that recent critics, accepting the judgment of their predecessors that the plays are of only peripheral value, hardly more than footnotes to Tanizaki's distinguished career, have not bothered to verify this judgment by personal examination of the texts. It can hardly be doubted that Tanizaki's novels, not his plays, account for his reputation and will be the reason why future generations will read him; but the plays figure conspicuously among his total output. Any study of Tanizaki's career must surely attempt to explain the author's devotion to a medium that brought him few rewards, material or otherwise.

Tanizaki wrote twenty-four plays, ranging in length from one to five acts, between 1910 and 1933. The first two works in his *zenshū*, both plays, brought him to the attention of the literary world even before the famous "Shisei" (The Tattooer). He wrote at least one play a year almost every year between 1910 and 1926, and during the early 1920s the plays were his chief literary activity. This was the period also of his film scenarios, and it has therefore been suggested that difficulties Tanizaki experienced in writing fiction caused him to turn to other mediums. It is true that the novels and stories of the early 1920s do not rank among Tanizaki's major works, and Tanizaki eventually came to dislike them so much he refused to have them printed in a collected edition of his works; but Tanizaki's plays were not confined to periods of slump. He wrote one play even during what was arguably his finest period, the 1930s, the five-act *Kaoyo* of 1933.

The plays, curiously enough, were the part of Tanizaki's works earliest introduced to the West. Two one-act plays were translated and published in an English-language newspaper in 1924.<sup>1</sup> The full-length *Ai sureba koso* (*Because I Love Her*) was translated into French as *Puisque je l'aime*

in 1925, as were the two short plays *Mumyō to Aizen* (*Mumyo et Aizen*) and *Eien no gūzō* (*L'éternelle idole*) in 1927.<sup>2</sup> *Okuni to Gohei* (*Okuni and Gohei*) and *Byakko no yu* (*The White Fox*) appeared in the collection *Eminent Authors of Contemporary Japan* in 1930–31, but as far as I am aware only one other play by Tanizaki has appeared in translation since then, *Mandorin wo hiku otoko* (*The Man with the Mandoline*), in my translation of 1972.<sup>3</sup>

The plays fall roughly into two categories—those set in the past (generally, either the Heian or Tokugawa period) and those set in more or less contemporary Japan. When writing the historical plays, Tanizaki used an artificial stage language similar to that of kabuki; he probably had performance by kabuki actors in mind and chose language with which they and kabuki audiences were most familiar. The dialogue in the modern plays, though somewhat stylized, is in a contemporary idiom. The modern plays were less likely to be performed than the period pieces because at that time there were extremely few capable actors or actresses of the modern theater (*shingeki*).<sup>4</sup>

Before discussing specific plays, a few observations can appropriately be made on Tanizaki's attitude with respect to his work for the theater. He clearly wished his plays to be performed; they were not intended to be *lesedrama* (a term already familiar in Japan), plays meant to be read rather than seen, though Tanizaki admitted he had little knowledge of the theater when he first began to write plays.<sup>5</sup> Tanizaki, convinced that his plays represented an important part of his work, seems to have hoped that their value would someday be recognized and that they would be performed more adequately. But it is not clear how familiar he became with the demands of the stage, even at the end of his career. He expressed great dissatisfaction with the production of *Okuni and Gohei* in 1949, mainly because the director had the actors move around the stage too much instead of delivering their lines in quiet immobility, building up tension in this manner.<sup>6</sup> The director, Takechi Tetsuji, well known for his productions of both kabuki and modern dramas, subsequently expressed his reservations about Tanizaki's plays. He thought that the language completely lacked the quality of theatrical dialogue; the lines were not speech such as might come from the lips of real people but novelistic descriptions or psychological explanations. Such speeches, Takechi wrote, have no relation to the dramatic situation, and the characters make their pronouncements with no sense of timing and without taking into consideration shifts in the moods or gestures of the other characters in the play.<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of such criticism, Tanizaki obviously felt confident that his long acquaintance with kabuki and his lively interest in modern drama and film gave him the qualifications of a playwright. But it still remains a

question what place the plays occupy in his career. It would be easy to dismiss Tanizaki's partiality for his plays as an example of *le violon d'Ingres*—an avocation for which a man wishes to be recognized rather than for his achievements in another art—but the interest of Tanizaki's plays goes beyond the scraping of an amateur violinist. The fact that they were quickly translated at a time when few other works of modern Japanese literature were being translated suggests that the plays possess considerable literary, if not theatrical, interest.

Their fortunes on the stage have not been brilliant. I have seen only one of them, *Kyōfu jidai* (*The Age of Terror*), performed, and all I can recall of the performance is that at the end the stage was littered with corpses. Only one figure was left at the end to survey the scene and shake his head, as if to say, "What in the world has happened here?" Revivals of this play have not been frequent.

Tanizaki, on the occasion of a revival of *Jūgoya monogatari* (*A Tale of the Night of the Full Moon*) in July 1955, wrote a brief comment giving his recollections of the fortunes of this play:

*A Tale of the Night of the Full Moon* is an old work, written thirty-eight years ago, in 1917, when I was thirty-two. It was later performed (just once) at the old Yūraku-za by the former [Matsumoto] Kōshirō and Hase Yoshiko and then once more at the Engiza in Akasaka by Sawada Shōjirō and Hisamatsu Kiyoko. Those performances both took place in the Taishō period. Probably few people nowadays are aware I ever wrote such a play. However, two or three months before publishing this work in the May 1917 issue of *Chūō Kōron*, I lost my mother. Although this had no connection with the surface of the plot, I wonder if my grief at the time was not expressed in this form. In any case, I, the author, can never forget this play, though it is not widely known, and I do not believe it is all that unsuccessful, even as a drama.<sup>8</sup>

From this brief statement one can gather how seldom Tanizaki's plays were performed, either at the time of composition or later. This particular play had been performed only twice before the 1955 revival. Other plays fared even worse: perhaps his best play, *Because I Love Her*, though published in 1921–22, was not performed until 1948. Only his one-act kabuki plays, *Okuni and Gohei* and *Mumyō and Aizen*, have enjoyed even a modicum of popularity, and some plays have never been professionally staged.

In the passage I have quoted, Tanizaki mentions his belief that intimate, personal feelings—grief over the loss of his mother—were at least indirectly conveyed in the play. Although Tanizaki was known as that rarity, a writer of fiction who did not depend heavily on personal experiences

and insisted on the primacy of the imagination, his plays at times are surprisingly revelatory of the author, though not necessarily on the surface.<sup>9</sup>

Tanizaki expressed the opinion that *A Tale of the Night of the Full Moon*, despite its neglect, possessed value as drama. It is clearly not one of Tanizaki's best plays, but (apart from the interest given the work by its personal associations with the author) it serves as a representative example of his work as a dramatist. The play, set in the Kan'ei period (1624-44), opens in the *tera-koya* where a *rōnin* named Tomojirō teaches the children of Yanaka, a rustic area outside Edo. His sister, Oshino, cooks and sews for him. A landowner of the vicinity, Sakubei, asks Tomojirō to marry his daughter. Sakubei has been impressed by Tomojirō's samurai-like consecration to his pupils, and Sakubei's daughter has fallen so passionately in love with Tomojirō that she threatens suicide if she cannot have him for her husband. Tomojirō politely refuses the marriage proposal. He is reluctant to disclose his reasons but in the end reveals his secret: he has a wife, but the wife is working as a courtesan in the Yoshiwara district. The wife sold herself into prostitution in order to buy expensive medicine for Tomojirō's mother, who was gravely ill. The medicine failed to cure the mother, but the wife must serve out her term at the brothel. During the forced separation between husband and wife, who remain deeply in love, they have constantly corresponded, and Tomojirō knows that, although his wife has given her body to other men, she is pure at heart.

Thus far the situation is reminiscent of *Chūshingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*), in which Koharu, the wife of the samurai Kanpei, is sold to a house in the Gion pleasure quarter because there is no other way to raise the money for a vendetta. We are not told what happened to Okaru afterward, but Tomojirō's wife, Onami, returns to her husband at the expiration of her contract only to discover that she is unable to resume her former, happy life with him. Although she is not suffering from any illness, she feels listless all the time and can do nothing but lie on the tatami and smoke a pipe (a habit she seems to have picked up in the Yoshiwara). During her three years of service, she has come to know the ugliness and baseness of the men who bought her body. At first, she supposed she was giving them only her lifeless corpse (*mukuro*) and that her soul remained unscathed, but she realizes that she is herself now no more than a corpse, a corrupted woman without a soul. She knows that her old love for Tomojirō will never revive. The only chance for happiness, she tells him, is for them to discard their loathsome corpses and pray for rebirth after death as pure human beings. The night of the full moon marks the third anniversary of the death of Tomojirō's mother. Sure that the moon (and the mother) will guide them to Amida's Pure Land, they commit suicide. Soon afterward,

Tomojirō's sister returns from the temple where she has made an offering to their mother. When she discovers the bodies, she gives vent to anger over their selfishness in not having thought of her when they killed themselves. This is where the play ends. The prominence of the dead mother and the belief that she will guide the couple to the Pure Land may have echoed Tanizaki's feelings at the time.

It is hard to guess the effectiveness of a play merely by reading the printed text. A reader can judge from the text the literary quality of the dialogue, but there are bound also to be moments of silence when an audience senses conflicts too deep for words, and these may not be apparent from the text. Bearing this caveat in mind, I confess that *The Night of the Full Moon* seems to me to be conspicuously lacking in dramatic quality; but I have never seen a performance, and my judgment of its possibilities on the stage may therefore be mistaken. The characters seem to me to be stereotypes and the dialogue uninspired. The most interesting development is the change wrought in Onami by her years in the Yoshiwara.<sup>10</sup> *The Night of the Full Moon* would probably have made a better short story than a play. Nothing dramatic occurs in the first act apart from Tomojirō's recitation of the circumstances that led to Onami's being sent to the Yoshiwara. The second act opens unpromisingly with Onami lying on the tatami, absorbed in recollections of what she has learned about men. This might have been of interest in a story, especially if the author permitted us to enter Onami's mind or cited some particularly terrible examples of the treatment she has received at men's hands, but a lethargic heroine does not keep our attention very long. The decision of Tomojirō and Onami to commit suicide might also have been more memorable if suicide were not the most frequently employed escape, at least in the Japanese theater. All in all, it is hard to share Tanizaki's admiration for the play.

We are brought here face to face with a curious fact that has already been noted by commentators: although Tanizaki's novels abound in dramatic incidents, his plays are often conspicuously undramatic. Readers of Tanizaki's fiction sometimes complained that he did not inform them what the characters were really thinking. Tanizaki replied: "In response to those who say that I have failed to describe what is going on inside Shunkin's or Sasuke's mind, I would like to counter with the question: Why is it necessary to describe their state of mind? Don't you understand their thoughts anyway from what I have written?"<sup>11</sup> But describing the thoughts of their characters is precisely what novelists most often do. Playwrights normally have no chance to present more than the words and actions of their characters, leaving their thoughts to the imagination of the audience, but the characters in Tanizaki's plays often explain and analyze their thoughts at length.

This, no doubt, is what Takechi Tetsuji had in mind.

Among Tanizaki's plays, *Okuni and Gohei* enjoys the highest reputation. Although Tanizaki did not approve of Takechi's production, he expressed admiration for two earlier productions, including one by Osanai Kaoru that severely cut the dialogue, unlike Takechi's, which preserved every word. Osanai's instinct was probably correct; Tanizaki's plays (and not only *Okuni and Gohei*) suffer from wordiness.

My own favorite among his plays is *Because I Love Her*, which is rather like a negative of a typical Tanizaki story: the male heroes in his works of fiction are often colorless, mere foils for the females, but here the hero is a colorful (to say the least) villain, and instead of a cruel female, Tanizaki's preferred variety of heroine, we have a hapless victim of overpowering love for a man who treats her abominably.

The first act of this play seems to me to be Tanizaki's finest achievement in the theater. Unlike most other plays by Tanizaki, the characters are entirely believable, and we become engrossed in their different, plausible reactions as they learn from a police officer of the theft and fraud committed by Yamada, a sometime actor who is now living with Sumiko, the daughter of the proud Hashimoto family. Yamada not only beats and kicks Sumiko but has implicated her in an act of fraud. Her waywardness has greatly upset Mrs. Hashimoto, her mother, and has infuriated her brother Keinosuke, who cannot forgive her for the disgrace she has brought upon the family. Miyoshi, Keinosuke's friend, loves Sumiko,<sup>12</sup> but we can gather that he yielded her to Yamada when it became evident she loved Yamada more than himself. He has since convinced himself that her decision to live with Yamada has been a necessary element in his abiding love.

The police have worked out a scheme whereby Yamada will be accused of theft but not of fraud, thus sparing Sumiko from blame as his accomplice. Her family will pay the victim of the fraud what he lost. Everything seems to have been worked out satisfactorily, and soon afterward Sumiko comes home. She says she has at last broken with Yamada. She could endure his brutality, and even being made his accomplice, but not his demand that she earn money for him by sleeping with other men. She says she is resolved never to see him again. At this point, Yamada, fleeing the police, bursts into the house and demands to see Sumiko. The police officer informs Yamada that he is to be arrested for theft. Yamada, realizing that he will not be charged with fraud because that would implicate Sumiko, is by turns sarcastic, insolent, and lachrymose in pleading to see Sumiko. His tears have the greatest effect: Sumiko, who has been listening to the conversation from the next room, reappears and confesses that she feels sorry for Yamada, who has no one else to whom he can turn. Although she knows

he is bad and a liar, she is returning to him. She will be in every sense his wife.

The act moves swiftly and convincingly. Sumiko's decision to stay with Yamada is believable in itself and fits in with the *akuma shugi* (diabolism) Tanizaki professed at this time. The play should have ended with this one act, but Tanizaki decided a month later to add two more.<sup>13</sup> The second act consists largely of a tedious and unconvincing monologue by Miyoshi in which he reveals to Sumiko that he considers himself to be even more sinful than Yamada. We otherwise learn that Sumiko, by command of Yamada, is now working in a cafe and that Yamada is being flagrantly unfaithful. The third act is equally unsatisfactory. Miyoshi, after showing what readers may find to be an intolerable amount of understanding for Yamada, confesses that he and Sumiko have recently had illicit relations. He asks Yamada to forgive them and to agree to Sumiko's becoming his wife now that he is sure of her love. But Yamada has one more trick up his sleeve: he sneeringly informs Miyoshi that it was by his command that Sumiko slept with him. She has turned over to Yamada the money (and also the photographs) that Miyoshi gave her. Sumiko begs Miyoshi's forgiveness. He leaves, but not without insisting that he, rather than Yamada, has become degenerate (*daraku*).

The play as a whole is unsuccessful, but the first act is engrossing, the closest Tanizaki came in his plays to the dramatic excellence of his fiction. Astonishingly, Tanizaki himself believed that the first act was "tediously long" and felt cold sweat at the thought of its being performed.<sup>14</sup> He hoped that the second and third acts would be performed without the first, preferably under the title *Daraku* (*Degeneration*). Such comments suggest that Tanizaki was not a good judge of his own plays. Perhaps what he really wanted to do in the theater is exemplified by Miyoshi's boringly long disquisition in the second act on love (*ai*) and sin (*tsumi*), a revelation of the hidden depths of his character, but in a play everything need not be spelled out in this manner. If Tanizaki had written without any preconception of what should be conveyed by a modern drama (as he did in the first act), he might have made the whole of *Because I Love Her* into the best play of the Taishō era and perhaps even of the first half of the twentieth century. As they stand, the second and third acts have at least the interest of refuting the oft-expressed view of interpreters of the Japanese psyche that the Japanese know only physical attraction, not love, and that they lack a sense of sin. One would like to imagine that Tanizaki was indirectly suggesting that Miyoshi had read too many works of European literature, or else that his portrait of Miyoshi was intended to show how boring good people are likely to be, as opposed to the charmingly evil Yamada, but

there is unfortunately nothing in the text to substantiate such an interpretation of the play.<sup>15</sup>

*Because I Love Her* could not be performed in Japan until after 1945 because of its alleged immorality. This was by no means Tanizaki's only losing battle with the censors. He described at length, in various essays and conversations, the narrowness and stupidity of the censors, who were all too ready to pounce on passages in the plays that they (but no one else) considered threatening to morals; he was sure that they, rather than the texts, were obscene.<sup>16</sup> The censors permitted some plays to be performed after Tanizaki had done considerable rewriting, but in other instances the demands for deletions were so extreme as to destroy the plays, and Tanizaki decided not to rewrite. *Because I Love Her* could not be performed without fear of censorship until after the war, when its failings, not its immorality, kept it from enjoying success.<sup>17</sup>

*Honmoku yawa* (*Night Tales of Honmoku*, 1922) was potentially a notable work, treating as it does Eurasians in Yokohama in anticipation of *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*). Tanizaki was uniquely qualified to write about these people, and there are many touches in the play (such as the fox-trot played on a phonograph during the opening scene) that stir nostalgia for their special world, but the play fails to convince. The only Japanese among the characters, Ohatsu, is the wife of the unfaithful Cecil Rowan, a Eurasian. He dislikes her because she refuses to learn how to dance and treats her with contempt. She bears every indignity, partly as a devout Christian, but also because she exemplifies old-fashioned Japanese womanhood. Her half-sister Yayoi (whose father was Portuguese) in the climactic scene of the play intends to dash a bottle of sulfuric acid into the face of a rival for the affection of the man she loves. Ohatsu innocently intervenes, only for the acid to fall on her husband's face. He, in a rage, dashes the rest of the acid into her face. Both are permanently disfigured. The bottle, as it happens, has been brought to the house by the man Yayoi loves, who has left it lying on the table while he goes swimming. In the last scene, Cecil shoots his former mistress, who has rejected him now that he is hideously ugly, and then turns the pistol on himself.

It is hard to believe in the reality of any of the characters or their actions, but Tanizaki, in an irate description of his disgust on seeing the film version of *Night Tales of Honmoku*, pointed out the implausibility of scene after scene, contrasting the crudity of the film with his subtle intentions.<sup>18</sup> But there was quite enough crudity in the original to encourage the director of the film to commit lapses of taste and plausibility. The play, typical of Tanizaki's "bad period," reveals how much more he was attracted to evil women like Yayoi than to the silently suffering Ohatsu, and he may

even have chosen to set the play in the foreign settlement in Yokohama because he despaired of finding Japanese women malevolent enough to satisfy him.<sup>19</sup> It would not be until the 1930s, when Tanizaki wrote *Shunkinshō* (*A Portrait of Shunkin*), that he could treat convincingly a woman whose beauty has been destroyed by an enemy. The plays, despite their flawed conceptions, seem to have provided him with material for his later fiction.

The plays are certainly not the equal of Tanizaki's masterpieces of fiction, but they form too important an element in his creative activity to be ignored. Needless to say, even in the worst of the plays there are some passages that could only have been written by the greatest master of Japanese prose of the century.

NOTES

1. They were *Shinzei*, translated by Glenn W. Shaw (*Tōkyō Nichinichi*, 10–13 July 1924), and *Okuni and Gohei*, translated by Isamu Suzuno (*Tōkyō Nichinichi*, 20 September 1924).
2. *Puisque je l'aime* was translated by Charles Jacob and published in Paris by Emile Paul Frères (1925); *Mumyō et Aizen* and *L'éternelle idole* were translated by Juntaro Maruyama and published in Tokyo by Hakuishisha (1927).
3. This translation appeared in *New Directions* 24 (New York: New Directions, 1972).
4. For an account of the difficulties encountered by the playwright Kishida Kunio in finding suitable actors for his plays, see J. Thomas Rimer, *Toward a Modern Japanese Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), esp. 86–93.
5. See "*Hōjōji monogatari kaiko*," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966–70), 22:423 (henceforth TJZ). This comment was made in 1958 on the occasion of a revival of the play.
6. See "*Okuni to Gohei shokan*," in TJZ, 22:372–79.
7. Quoted by Moriyasu Masafumi in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō: asobi no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1983), 333.
8. "'Jūgoya monogatari' no omoide," in TJZ, 23:301.
9. For a consideration of the plays and Tanizaki's beliefs and emotions, see Nagahira Kazuo, "*Hōjōji monogatari, Ai sureba koso*," in Kazamaki Keijirō and Yoshida Seiichi, eds., *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no bungaku* (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1954), 162–68.
10. I am reminded of Nagai Kafū's early short story "Sayo chidori" (Night Plovers, 1901), the tale of a prostitute who returns to her parents' home after ten years spent in the Yoshiwara. They hope she will settle down and marry a man who can take over their farm, but she is so bored by country life that she voluntarily returns to the Yoshiwara.
11. "*Shunkinshō kōgo*," in TJZ, 22:86.
12. The title of the play is derived from a statement made by Miyoshi: "Boku wa Sumiko san wo ai sureba koso, damatte jitto Sumiko san wo Yamada kun no te ni yudanete iru no da" (It's precisely because I love Sumiko that I have been patiently entrusting her to Yamada's hands without saying a word). See TJZ, 8:28. Tanizaki cites the title in "Gendai kogobun no ketten ni tsuite" (On the Shortcomings of the Contemporary Colloquial Style) as an example of the virtue of not needing to specify subject and object in Japanese and suggests that a translation including a subject, such as "Because I Love," would be more restrictive than he intended (see TJZ, 20:191). "That's What Love Does" might be closer to Tanizaki's stated intent, though it would be less literal.
13. The first act was published in the December 1921 issue of *Kaizō*; the second and third acts appeared under the title *Daraku* in the January 1922 issue of *Chūō Kōron*. The first

- act (in the TJZ edition) is fifty-nine pages long, the second twenty-eight pages, and the third seventeen pages.
14. “*Ai sureba koso no jōen*,” in TJZ, 22:150.
  15. We know that Tanizaki had read rather extensively in the works of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, and other dramatists. See Inazawa Hideo, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no sekai* (Tokyo: Shichōsha, 1979), 38–40, for a chart showing the number of references in Tanizaki's works to foreign authors and works. I wonder if Shaw's *Candida*, in which the heroine chooses to stay with the man more helplessly dependent on her, did not contribute to *Ai sureba koso*.
  16. See “*Eien no gūzō no jōen kinshin*” and “*Kyakuhon ken'etsu ni tsuite no chūmon*,” both in TJZ, 22:131–44. Tanizaki is particularly amusing when describing how the censors took exception to the exposure of the shoulders of a female character in one of the plays, though even more conspicuously bared shoulders were officially permitted in an evening gown.
  17. I recall Arthur Waley saying that it was planned in the 1920s to stage the play in London in an English translation. The plan fell through because no Japanese actors could be found who could speak English sufficiently well and it was feared that if English actors were made up to resemble Japanese they would look like something out of *The Mikado*.
  18. See “*Eigaka saretai Honmoku yawa*,” in TJZ, 22:167–79.
  19. See my *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 736–37.

# Tanizaki and the *Shinkabuki*

Jean-Jacques Tschudin

The very scope of Tanizaki's fictional oeuvre, as well as its incomparable appeal, often distracts attention from his forays into other areas of literary creativity. This is particularly true of his dramatic work, which has more or less sunk into oblivion and virtually disappeared from the repertoire of the *shingeki* and the *shinkabuki*. Though Tanizaki's dramatic work is, and will remain, a minor part of his creative output and of modern theater as a whole, I should like to demonstrate that it is far from devoid of interest and deserves a second glance.

The Chūō Kōronsha edition of Tanizaki's complete works (1981–83) includes (and we shall assume it to be correct) twenty-four plays, along with a handful of film scripts and a few “dialogues,” which we shall disregard here. Two striking facts are immediately apparent: first, all of his plays, with the exception of *Kaoyo* (1933), were written between 1910 and 1926, an era that theater historians rightly call the Golden Age of dramatists. Second, more than a third of these plays can be assigned to the hazy-edged genre known as *shinkabuki* (neokabuki), which made a point of adding new scripts to the traditional kabuki repertoire. Tanizaki showed no particular originality in choosing to write for the theater, however, or even in dividing his energies between Western-style modern theater (the so-called *shingeki*) and Taishō-era kabuki; most other contemporary writers also tried their hands at dramatic writing, moving fluidly among genres.

Moreover, genre hopping is by no means the most intriguing aspect of this period—which, it cannot be denied, witnessed the creation of very few dramatic masterpieces. Rather, the age presented a remarkable moment of deregulation before the barriers—often more ideological and commercial than artistic—of the early Shōwa years arose. It was a time of collaboration and experimentation, spanning the entire spectrum of the theater—actors, playwrights, producers, and critics. In Tokyo alone, the Taishō years saw dozens of small companies form (and, it has to be said, disband almost as quickly after putting on only one or two productions).

One of the important and original aspects of this situation was that a number of these theatrical adventures were undertaken by kabuki actors; the young stars of the hour<sup>1</sup> sought to foster links with literary coteries and actively invited scripts, partly to use in their experimental soirees, but soon also to complete and enrich their own repertoire, thus creating what would become generally known as *shinkabuki*. Equally important, young writers responded eagerly to these appeals, spurred by a keen interest in Western literature, progressiveness, and all things modern.

The new genre, if we accept it as such, is rather hard to define (other than chronologically, which is of little significance), since any provisional criteria turn out to be either too broad or too narrow, especially when applied to the works of a writer as resistant to labeling as Tanizaki is. Nevertheless, in the absence of a precise definition, we can put forward a few conditions that will permit us to talk about *shinkabuki*.

First, the historical foundation: deliberately or otherwise, the new genre rejected consideration of politics and current affairs. Indeed, from the dawn of the twentieth century, the kabuki let the emerging *shinpa* companies, like the one directed by the enterprising Kawakami Otojirō, monopolize the dramatization of gossip, scandals, melodramatic affairs, murders, and love suicides—in a word, all the stuff of which old *sewamono* (domestic plays) were made. The reasons for turning away from contemporary society are many and complex, and this is not the place to discuss them, but it is paradoxically by this rejection that the *shinkabuki* most radically severed ties to a tradition that it otherwise defended. Unlike the new style, the old kabuki was careful to stick close to the topical, so close that some plays were aptly termed *ichiyazuke* (pickles marinated overnight). Its *sewamono* were based on still-warm news items, and great feuds were brought to the stage before the participants' blood had even dried. Even Tokugawa censorship did little more than force writers to go through the motions of setting stories in the distant past and modifying characters' names.

*Shinkabuki* plays, on the other hand, are "period pieces" or, to use Miyake Shūtarō's delightful term, *magemono*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, plot and character selection hew closely to the dramatic conventions of the genre; the aesthetic and scenic choices of the kabuki must not appear arbitrarily forced upon the text, and it must be obvious that the script's potential can be fully realized only by kabuki actors.

The last criterion is admittedly subjective, yet it is crucial, particularly in the case of a playwright as personal as Tanizaki. If we examine his dramatic oeuvre in the uncertain light of these few indicators, looking when possible at the circumstances of an actual production (more than half his scripts were performed), we can estimate that ten to twelve plays were most

likely to have been staged as *shinkabuki*, including half a dozen belonging squarely to this genre (see the appendix).

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The years when Tanizaki was working for the theater coincided precisely with a period of profound change in his attitude toward Western arts in general. An initial reticence had given way to fascination, accompanied by an equally exaggerated rejection of Japanese artistic achievements. Later, of course, from the mid-1920s on, he would modify his stance as he gradually rediscovered the virtues of native aesthetics, culminating in *In'ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*, 1933–34). In the meantime, however, he looked down on Japanese art, and at first glance it appears somewhat contradictory that he produced period pieces for the kabuki even while condemning the native tradition.

A stark example of this conundrum is *Dokutan* (*The German Spy*, 1915), a text with strong autobiographical overtones, which flaunts Tanizaki's disdain for "the lethargic and degenerate sound of the shamisen and the facile, overblown, retrograde melodies of the *jōruri* and the *hauta*."<sup>3</sup> Tanizaki also avows a deep contempt for "a native land that offers [him] neither the accomplishment of European civilization nor the intense barbarism of the South Seas."<sup>4</sup> Harsh words, indeed; yet, almost simultaneously, he was immersed with obvious delight in writing tales and plays as "decadent," "baroque," and "degenerate" as *Otsuya koroshi* (*The Murder of Otsuya*, translated as *A Springtime Case*, 1915), *Hōjōji monogatari* (*The Tale of Hōjōji*, 1915), and *Kyōfu jidai* (*The Age of Terror*, 1916).

How are we to view these seemingly contradictory activities: as a surrender to commercial necessities and sponsors' dictates or simply as the youthful experimentation of a still unformed writer? There is a bit of both, perhaps, but above all we find a characteristic, though not overt, critical distance—the stamp of the master of a latent irony that surreptitiously scrapes the veneer from falsely passionate statements, the stance of someone unafraid to write that it "would be a thousand times better to grow up as a slave in their lands than as a prince in this country"<sup>5</sup> while still taking the utmost care not to swap the pleasures of Tokyo life for possible trials in the West.

Even before his move to the Kansai region and his rediscovery of the *ningyō jōruri* (puppet theater) and other traditional arts, Tanizaki did not deny his liking for kabuki; *Yōshō jidai* (*Childhood Years: A Memoir*, 1955), with its vivid, though uncertain, memories of the great Danjurō IX, stands as eloquent testimony to his childhood attachment to the art. The

lure of the theater withstood Tanizaki's more sensational pronouncements, putting them into perspective. In this light, we may readily imagine the pleasure he might have found in writing for the young stars of the Taishō era, Ichikawa Sadanji II, Ichikawa Ennosuke II, or Morita Kan'ya XIII.

In other respects, it is noteworthy that the chronological distribution of Tanizaki's works between the *shingeki* and the *shinkabuki* follows no pattern; there is no manifest shift or break. The choice of one genre or another seems to depend merely on his fancy at the time, on circumstance, and perhaps even on the wishes of the actors and directors. Regardless, it is fascinating to see the virtuosity with which Tanizaki manages to pour his personal themes into various formal molds, manipulating received narrative structures to his own ends.

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Within the sphere of *shinkabuki*, Tanizaki's pieces occupy a special position—marginal, in the strict sense of the word, and quite distinct from that occupied by the plays of Okamoto Kidō, Takayasu Gekkō, Mayama Seika, and Hasegawa Shin.<sup>6</sup> He certainly respects the ground rules: action set in the past, mostly during feudal times; relatively linear narratives devoid of the subplots and pleasant digressions of the old kabuki; elimination (with the odd exception) of the narrator; and general avoidance of all that Tsubouchi Shōyō meant by the term *mugen*.<sup>7</sup> Tanizaki's treatment of period materials, however, is enough to distinguish him from other playwrights of the school; he asks nothing of the explicit historical foundation, in most cases merely indicating the time of action to be the Edo period (exceptions are *The Tale of Hōjōji*, in which the original fable constrains him to historical accuracy, and *Kaoyo*, which is constructed along the lines of his stories based on old documents).

Above all, Tanizaki did not really join the push for modernization of the *shinkabuki* or the move toward Western theater, unlike most of the writers then working for the *shinkabuki*. The spirit of modernization that (to paraphrase Kawatake Shigetoshi's definition of the genre)<sup>8</sup> was to fertilize the old compost of kabuki so that new forms could bud is undoubtedly also present in Tanizaki, but it does not march under the same colors. Where Kidō (to confine ourselves to the most representative author of the genre) flaunts his modernity and the Taishō ideology of enlightened democracy—inserting into his heroes' dialogues “modern” and admirably individualistic statements that would certainly have caused an uproar in the period in which the play is set—Tanizaki holds back, imposing no ideological mask on his obsessive characters, whose only logic is that of their amo-

rous fixations. His male heroes, such as the young Shintarō in *Koi o shiru koro* (*The Age to Learn of Love*) or Tomonojō and his rival Gohei in *Okuni to Gohei* (*Okuni and Gohei*), live, kill, and die only to satisfy their passions. Their only motivations are the whims of the cruel beauty who enchants and apparently manipulates them.

Curiously, the result is that Tanizaki's heroes elegantly avoid the traps into which many *shinkabuki* characters step, thereby also escaping anachronism. Naturally they are not historical reconstructions—*katsurekigeki*'s worries about historical accuracy remain perfectly alien to Tanizaki<sup>9</sup>—but neither are his protagonists Taishō creations clad in old rags. Their connection to the supposed period of the fable is such that they never ring false. In contrast, we see that Kidō's "modern" hero is isolated; his individualism and glorious romantic rebellion are surrounded by the conventional. More importantly, we see how the imbalance thus created saps the credibility of Kidō's discourse. How can we take seriously the hero of *Minowa no shinjū* (*Love Suicides at Minowa*),<sup>10</sup> a high-ranking *bushi* who, finding himself opposed in his love for a beautiful courtesan, curses his breeding and dreams of an egalitarian society?

Tanizaki avoids this stumbling block because his protagonists live through one and the same drama: they are all caught in the same web, torturer and victim, manipulator and manipulated. Rather than parachuting a spokesman from his own modernity into a traditional plot, Tanizaki borrows all the conventions of the fable, only to twist them jubilantly about and put them at the exclusive service of his own ideas. His protagonists do not ring false because they escape the historical framework in a common movement, retaining relevance only to Tanizaki's world.

In this sense, *Okuni and Gohei* is a convincing example of the effect wrought by the author from a well-established plot—that of revenge against the background of *matatabimono* (a play of itinerant gamblers or entertainers). The piece sets up a stereotypical situation in which the widow (Okuni) of a murdered nobleman, accompanied by the dead man's faithful retainer (Gohei), braves the rigors of an interminable journey to find the murderer. The requisite elements are in place—loyalty beyond death, self-sacrifice, glorification of feudal values—and yet we quickly realize that this vendetta of honor is just a mask, a screen behind which the characters hide the conniving perversity of an illicit affair. It is the prey himself, Tomonojō, an infamous murderer, who anxiously follows the trail of the avenging couple. It is Tomonojō who has been watching them since the start of their interminable wandering, hiding beneath windows to treat *la dame de ses pensées* to his *shakuhachi* melodies, following in fascination their amorous frolics and the progress of their affair. And it is he who, tired of his

discreet voyeurism, instigates the encounter in which he asks the couple to let him in on their dealings, like a sort of faithful witness, so the three of them can embark together on a journey of no return. Failing this, he asks that they at least spare his life.

From the standpoint of Bushido, Tomonojō is a perfect antihero, making a wonderful speech in praise of cowardice, justifying his treacherous deed by asking how else one is to be rid of a love rival stronger than himself. To the end, he refuses to redeem himself by acting like a “man,” thereby robbing Gohei, an accomplished swordsman, of the satisfaction of anything resembling a duel. Admittedly, the two lovers refuse his propositions; yet behind their initial indignation, after a short comedy of self-righteous virtue, we soon see that their real reasons are different. They are uninterested in avenging the dead husband, washing away the insult in blood, and restoring the honor of the household; they kill Tomonojō only so they can conduct their affair openly. Thus, we come to understand that Gohei, this paragon of feudal virtue, is no better than Tomonojō. On a more restricted level, he, too, is prepared to do anything to follow his lover; he, too, is a true Tanizaki hero. The three characters are entangled in a web of interrelations from which nothing and no one can distract them. This self-contained network, though arbitrarily set during the Edo period, is neither ancient nor modern and belongs no more to the shogunate than to “Taishō democracy.”

*Okuni and Gohei* also derides martial values and ironically plays on generic conventions, but it is probably because irony for irony’s sake is not Tanizaki’s primary aim that the play works so well. He does not set out first of all to parody or to twist a genre around to expose its ideological shortcomings; rather, as in all his literary enterprises, he deconstructs conventions and then reconstructs them with a new coherence worthy of new demands—those of his own obsessions.

The process particularly manifest in *Okuni and Gohei* can be found at work, sometimes overtly, sometimes more discreetly, in other plays. In *The Age to Learn of Love*, to limit ourselves to a last example, the straightforward *sewamono* plot has the attractive Okin plotting with her lover, head clerk of the house, to kill the rightful heir and lay hands on his prosperous family business—a perfectly conventional tale except that the young heir is a Tanizaki-style hero who cheerfully goes along with the plot for the incomparable delight of dying at the beauty’s hands.

Of course, we need to question more closely the whole of his dramatic oeuvre. But, regardless of the success of his dramatic works (in truth, very uneven), Tanizaki sketches, on a small scale, a few possible avenues for a school of modern theatrical writing that makes good use of the aes-

thetic options of kabuki, just as, on a larger scale, he maps new perspectives for the historical novel. For the moment, at least, hardly anyone seems to have followed in his footsteps, but perhaps a talent as strong and personal as his is needed for the graft to take.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

As far as I know, Tanizaki's writings for the theater have not been studied as such, and references to his plays are scattered among general studies of his work. When the plays have been staged, the many books and documents on modern Japanese theater (histories, reminiscences, stage reviews, chronological tables, and so on) may be of use, even though they are more concerned with the productions than with the plays themselves.

APPENDIX

The following plays by Tanizaki may be classified, more or less exclusively, as *shinkabuki*.

*Tanjō* (*The Birth*): a one-act play on the birth of the emperor-to-be Goichijō in 1008. Published in *Shinshichō* (September 1910); never performed.<sup>11</sup>

*Zō* (*The Elephant*): a one-act piece depicting the Edo populace watching a parade and waiting for the passage of an elephant sent from Southeast Asia as a gift to the shogun in 1728. It was published in *Shinshichō* (September 1910) but never performed.

*Shinzei*: a short script devoted to the sad demise of the eponymous character, an adviser to Emperor Goshirakawa at the time of the Hōgen disturbances (1156), who is killed in the failed Heiji coup d'état of 1159. It was published in *Subaru* (January 1911), staged in Kyoto in 1918, and staged again by Sadanji at the Kabuki-za in 1926.

*Koi o shiru koro* (*The Age to Learn of Love*): a *sewamono* in three acts that concerns a conspiracy between a maid and a clerk to appropriate a lucrative business by doing away with the legal heir and the unexpected complicity of the victim. Published in *Chūō Kōron* (May 1913) but barred from performance on moral grounds, it was first staged in September 1981 in an adaptation by Takechi Tetsuji at the Kabuki-za, in observance of the seventeenth anniversary of Tanizaki's death, with Sōjurō, Takao, and Tanosuke.

*Hōjōji monogatari* (*The Tale of Hōjōji*): a historical drama in four acts set in 1020, the date of completion of Hōjōji, a temple in Kyoto. The play

centers on a young sculptor commissioned by the regent to create a figurine of a bodhisattva and on his lovely model, who is none other than Shin no Onkata, Michinaga's concubine. It was published in *Chūō Kōron* (June 1915) and produced by Ennosuke, with his Shunjū-za, on the Shintomi-za stage in October 1920.

*Kyōfu jidai (The Age of Terror)*: an incredible bloodbath in two acts. Its publication led to the seizure of the March 1916 edition of *Chūō Kōron*. A second, slightly toned-down version appeared in 1920 and was staged by the Teikoku-joyūgeki Company at the Yūroku-za in 1921 with Matsumoto Kōshirō and Sawamura Shunosuke. It was revived in 1951 and 1976 by young kabuki actors directed by Takechi Tetsuji.

*Uguisu-hime (Princess Nightingale)*: a one-act play, difficult to classify owing to Tanizaki's artful combination of his penchant for ancient history (in this case, that of the Heian court) and his interest in *moga* (modern girls). It was published in *Chūō Kōron* (February 1917) but never performed.

*Jūgoya monogatari (A Tale of the Night of the Full Moon)*: a two-act, typical *magemono*, presenting a *rōnin*, who teaches children in a village school, and his wife, who has sold herself to a brothel in a vain attempt to rescue her dying mother-in-law. Reunited, husband and wife decide to commit suicide to regain, in the next world, their lost happiness. It was published in *Chūō Kōron* (September 1917), produced first in 1919 by the Sōsa Gekijō on the Yūroku-za stage, then produced by Kōshirō with the Teikoku-joyūgeki in 1921, and revived at the Kabuki-za as part of the September 1991 program.

*So Tōjō (Su Dongpo)*: a drama in three acts, set in ancient China and centering on Su Dongpo (1036–1101), a well-known official, poet, calligrapher, and drunkard of the Song dynasty. Tanizaki builds his plot around Su Dongpo's affairs as a magistrate. It was published in *Kaizō* (August 1920) but never performed. (I include it tentatively among the *shinkabuki* plays because of its historical and East Asian background, but it could as well be staged as a modern play.)

*Okuni to Gohei (Okuni and Gohei)*: a one-act play set within the framework of a feudal vendetta; one of Tanizaki's great stage successes. It was published in *Shinshōsetsu* (June 1922) and staged at the Teikoku Gekijō in July 1922 with two great kabuki actors, Morita Kan'ya XIII and Bandō Jūzaburō III. The part of Okuni was given to an actress of the Teikoku-joyūgeki, Kawamura Kikue, in a production directed—according to some

sources—by Tanizaki himself. This was the only mixed-sex production of this play. It has been restaged several times but always with an *onnagata* in the female role; Fukusuke, for example, was a runaway success in this part in 1931. Since the war, celebrities like Utaemon and Jakuemon have played the part.

*Mumyō to Aizen* (*Mumyō and Aizen*): a play in two acts in which an ascetic, a bandit, and a femme fatale come into confrontation. It was published in *Kaizō* (January and March 1924) and produced by Sadanji in March 1924 at the Hongo-za with Shōchō playing the beautiful and dangerous Aizen.

*Kaoyo*: a five-act drama drawing upon the historical characters of the *Taiheiki* under whose identities Edo dramatists had disguised the protagonists of *Chūshingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*), the celebrated vendetta of the forty-seven *rōnin*: Kō no Moronao, En'ya Hangan, and his wife Kaoyo. As the stage directions in the text mention the *hanamichi*, we may assume that Tanizaki intended the play for the kabuki theater, but it was apparently never performed. Published in *Kaizō* (October 1933), it is the only play he wrote during the Shōwa era, as well as his last try at dramatic work.

We may add to this list *Otsuya koroshi* (*The Murder of Otsuya; A Spring-time Case*), published as a novella in *Chūō Kōron* (January 1915). Though practically forgotten in its original form, it has become one of the most successful stage adaptations of a Tanizaki work. Obviously written with the *kizewamono* conventions in mind, the novella was adapted and staged immediately after its publication, first at Osaka, then at the Shintomi-za in Tokyo, and later at the Meiji-za by Sadanji's company with Shōchō as the heroine. It has been revived several times, most recently in the early 1990s.

Other Tanizaki novels, mostly those with historical backgrounds, have been adapted for the kabuki stage. As such, they may be considered part of Tanizaki's contribution to the repertoire of *shinkabuki*. This is particularly true of *Shunkinshō* (*A Portrait of Shunkin*), adapted by Kubota Mantarō and staged in 1935 by the company of the famous *shinpa onnagata* Hanayagi Shōtarō, who naturally played the beautiful Shunkin. In addition, stage adaptations of *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (*Captain Shigemoto's Mother*) and *Mōmoku monogatari* (*A Blind Man's Tale*) have been produced recently at the Kabuki-za, the former in October 1993, in an adaptation by Uno Nobuo starring Tamasaburō and Kikugorō, and the latter in June 1994, in an adaptation by Funabashi Sei'ichi with Kankurō in the leading role.

## NOTES

1. Among the young Taishō stars who staged Tanizaki's productions appear, preeminently, Ichikawa Sadanji II (usually with the leading *onnagata* of his company, Ichikawa Shōchō II), Morita Kan'ya XIII, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, and Ichikawa Ennosuke II—the most dynamic and adventurous kabuki actors of the day. As far as Tanizaki's modern plays are concerned, it is worth mentioning that they were often staged by the *shinpa* theater. Therefore, as with their *shinkabuki* counterparts, Tanizaki's modern women, like Sumiko and Yayoi (the heroines, respectively, of *Ai sureba koso* [*Because I Love Her*] and *Honmoku yawa* [*Night Tales of Honmoku*]), were also portrayed by male actors such as Hanayagi Shōtarō, the great *onnagata* of this genre. (On translating the title *Ai sureba koso*, see n. 12 in Donald Keene's essay.)
2. *Magemono* (literally, topknot plays) were a throwback to Edo kabuki, as distinguished from the short-lived *zangirimono* (cropped-head plays) of the Meiji era written by Kawatake Mokuami for Onoe Kikugorō V. For a definition of *shinkabuki*, see Miyake Shotarō, "Shigeki to shinkabuki to no hassei" (The Growth of the Historical Drama and of the Neokabuki), in *Engeki gojūnen shi* (*History of Half a Century at the Theater*) (Tokyo: Masu Shobō, 1942), 358–86.
3. *Dokutan*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshu*, 30 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1981–83), 3:224.
4. *Ibid.*, 223.
5. *Ibid.*, 244.
6. These were the leading playwrights of the genre. Takayasu Gekkō (1869–1944), a rather conventional librettist, is known mainly for his historical dramas, but Okamoto Kidō (1872–1939) and Mayama Seika (1878–1948) remain the major *shinkabuki* dramatists of their time, as they wrote most of the new plays staged by Ichikawa Sadanji II. Hasegawa Shin (1884–1963) was an extremely popular playwright whose works are still staged regularly by kabuki and *shinpa* actors and are often adapted for the screen and television.
7. Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935) used the term *mugen*, or *mugengeki*, to describe the irrational, dreamlike, fantastic, and surreal elements that, in his analysis, prevent the traditional *jidaimono* of Edo from being true historical plays (see *Wagakuni no shigeki* [Historical Drama in Our Country], in *Tsubouchi Shōyō senshū*, 15 vols. [Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1926–27; Tokyo: Dai'ichi Shobō, 1977], vol. 7).
8. Kawatake Shigetoshi, *Nihon gikyoku shi* (*A History of Japanese Playwriting*) (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1964), 570.
9. *Katsurekigeki* is a theatrical genre that aims at historical accuracy. Led by the famous actor Ichikawa Danjurō IX, it flourished briefly during the first part of the Meiji era.
10. *Minowa no shinjū* (*Love Suicides at Minowa*), by Okamoto Kidō, was staged by Sadanji at the Meiji-za in September 1911. It is included in the volume devoted to Kidō (vol. 3, *Kidō-hen*) in *Nihon gikyoku zenshū: Gendai-hen*, 18 vols. (Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1928–29).
11. I consider a play as never having been performed if it does not appear in the standard—and generally reliable—sources listing theatrical productions of the Taishō and Shōwa eras. That being said, hundreds of small, and very often short-lived, amateur or semiamateur companies were active during that span, and it is possible that some of these plays were staged.

# The Literary Link: Tanizaki and the Pure Film Movement

Joanne R. Bernardi

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's contribution to the Japanese film industry between 1920 and 1921 was remarkable, if brief. He completed only a handful of film scripts during his short tenure at the newly established Taishō Katsudō Shashin film studio (better known as Taikatsu), and the legacy of his presence there is often overshadowed by developments at its rival studio, Shōchiku Kinema. Both studios had been established early in 1920 for the purpose of producing *jun'eigageki* ("pure" films): modern "action comedies" or "artistic films" independent of certain standard practices that were associated with methods of exhibition and production long associated with theater entertainment. The accomplishments of Tanizaki and his colleague, the Hollywood-trained actor and director Thomas Kurihara, met with some critical success, but the chronically underfinanced Taikatsu fairly quickly abandoned such projects in favor of a more mainstream, commercially predictable product. In the end, the heavily subsidized Shōchiku Kinema absorbed its smaller rival. Although at least one Shōchiku pure film survives in reconstructed form, the entire output of the Taikatsu studio—including all the films Tanizaki scripted and, in at least one instance, helped direct—is believed to be lost.<sup>1</sup>

Today all that remains of the studio itself is a stone marker in a corner of Yokohama's Motomachi Park, not far from the main commercial street that runs through the heart of the city. It is hard to imagine what this quiet residential neighborhood was like in March 1920 when Tanizaki first visited the small studio where he was to realize his longtime dream to become, if only briefly, a scenario writer. His own recollection of the experience, written one year later, suggests that on that day he was drawn to the exotic atmosphere of the city. Gazing from the car window at the "Western-style roads designed for horse-drawn carriages and the manners and dress of the Chinese and Westerners passing by," he was reminded of Shanghai. But, however much Tanizaki might have been drawn to the cosmopolitan

appeal of Yokohama, his detailed description of his arrival at Taikatsu and his exhilarated response to what he found there reveal a fascination with moving pictures that made the prospect of creating them irresistible. He described his arrival at the studio office, “a small building across the street from the old brick Japan Gazette Company,” accompanied by Kurihara:

Kurihara opened the door of the building and led me inside. There was only an old man of about sixty, called “Jimmy,” and I couldn’t see anyone in the small room downstairs. But as soon as I entered I could detect that uniquely sweet odor of film. “The developing room must be somewhere back here,” I thought, and discarded the cigarette I was holding, putting it out with care. “Please come upstairs,” Kurihara said, leading the way. Upstairs there was a small room facing the back streets, not too wide, but tidy and bright, with a window on each side. A large desk that seemed to be where Kurihara worked was placed against one wall. Inemi, the technician, came and greeted me, and said, “We would like you to take a look at two or three films made by our company.” Then he and Kurihara immediately began setting everything up. They put a household-model Acme projector on the desk. They attached an electrical cord to the projector, and closed the blinds of each window. The room that had been so full of sunlight from the clear, blue sky suddenly became pitch dark. The films appeared as a small image projected from one wall of this narrow room to the other. I watched two films there. One was of the cherry blossoms of Sankei Park, and one was about the silk industry, from the silk being made by the silkworm, to its appearance in a draper’s shop, made into an exquisite fabric, and ending with its transformation into the fancy attire of a city woman. Needless to say these were extremely ordinary pictures, but the inside of that bright room suddenly becoming dark and, most of all, that very small, brilliantly distinct reflection of a moving object projected like a glittering jewel on the wall, gradually lured me into a strange trance. A world that was less than a mere three or four square feet of light cutting through the darkness, where the silkworm’s figure wriggled silently—as I watched that I forgot that there was a reality apart from this small world. Outside this room was the city of Yokohama, the Sakuragi train station, and the train; and the fact that if I got on the train I could return to my house in Odawara, the fact that I even had a house in Odawara, all seemed unreal. After the projection was over, we left the office to go to the shooting studio at 77 Yamate Street. The air outside suddenly restored me to my senses. Then, as if I couldn’t believe my own eyes, I gazed at what was around me as if it were all rare and unusual.<sup>2</sup>

According to Tanizaki, the invitation to become affiliated with the Taikatsu studio occurred through the fortuitous intervention of a close friend,

the actor Kamiyama Sōjin, and his family. Then living in Odawara, Tanizaki often stayed at the Kamiyama home in Tokyo, and it was there that he was introduced to Shimo Nariyasu, an executive of the conglomerate that was financing the new studio. Shimo and Kurihara happened to stop by the Kamiyama home one day when Tanizaki was visiting, and after Tanizaki and Kurihara were introduced it was suggested that Tanizaki join the studio as “literary consultant.”<sup>3</sup>

It is possible that Tanizaki entered into an agreement with the studio in order to involve himself in a new endeavor at a time when he was at a crossroads in both his career and his personal life. It is also true that Tanizaki’s fascination with Western culture was at a peak when he joined Taikatsu, and this no doubt influenced his decision to enter motion picture production. A decade after he left the industry, he recalled that by 1919 he was already in the habit of making pilgrimages to theaters specializing in imported films, and when he joined Taikatsu he had become something of a connoisseur of films from the United States and Europe.<sup>4</sup> Tanizaki clearly had anticipated and hoped for a chance to try his hand at the new medium as early as 1917, when he published “Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai” (The Present and Future of Moving Pictures) in the September issue of the literary journal *Shinshōsetsu*. This essay, isolating and elaborating upon the unique attributes and artistic potential of film, began with an acknowledgment of his interest, “given the chance,” in writing a “Photoplay.”<sup>5</sup> It was his first significant statement in support of the new innovation referred to as “pure” film and was followed by the numerous essays, articles, and stories related to film that he continued to write up until the mid-1920s. In the context of these writings, Tanizaki’s reference in the above quotation to film’s “sweet odor,” his description of this first, intimate encounter with the apparatus of the medium, and his sensitivity to the medium’s potential to manipulate perceptions of reality all call to mind issues he regarded as pertinent to an understanding and appreciation of film.

“The Present and Future of Moving Pictures” was a timely piece, and a brief look at the cultural climate that informed it will help clarify the extent of Tanizaki’s interest in film. In 1917, discussion had reached a peak among supporters of pure film concerning the need to “modernize” the Japanese industry and realize the artistic potential of film by distinguishing between stage and screen drama. The predominantly young, educated fans who favored pure film production were familiar with both films and trade publications imported from the United States and Europe, and they advocated a reformation and total restructuring of the Japanese industry that would acknowledge the technological and artistic developments taking place overseas. Only two months before Tanizaki’s essay appeared,

Kaeriyama Norimasa, one of the earliest theorists of the pure film movement, published the first technical handbook on film production to draw heavily on American and European sources.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being an avid fan of films from both the United States and Europe, Tanizaki read imported trade journals as well (he admitted to thumbing through *Motion Picture Magazine*, *Shadow Land*, and *Photo Play Magazine* in order to relax).<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, he focused his essay on the most urgent concerns of the pure film movement. Admittedly no fan of the domestic product,<sup>8</sup> he addressed in particular the need to replace mainstream commercial practices inherited from or associated with the indigenous theater in favor of more “cinematic” ones: for example, more naturalistic (verisimilar) acting, cinematic frame composition and editing, and the use of women actors instead of the female impersonators (*oyama*) who dominated female roles until the early 1920s. Finally, he elaborated on those qualities of the new medium that would continue to fascinate him long after his active involvement in film production had ended: its superiority (in his opinion) to all other art forms; its ability to depict both realistic images and illusions; and the as yet largely untapped potential of classical Japanese literature as source material for film drama. Only a few years later, these issues would all be addressed by Tanizaki, in collaboration with his colleague Kurihara, at Taikatsu.

Tanizaki developed his argument for the recognition of the artistic qualities of film through a comparison between stage and screen drama. In his opinion, moving pictures were superior to stage drama for three reasons. First, unlike a stage play, which will vary with each performance, a moving picture can be shown repeatedly to different audiences in various locations. Moreover, thanks to the durability of celluloid, a single moving picture has the potential to reach multiple audiences over a prolonged period of time. Second, as a photographic medium, moving pictures are more versatile than stage drama because they are better suited to the portrayal of both realistic and fantastic (*mugen*) subject matter. Third, the moving pictures allow the writer freedom from the physical constraints of the stage, allowing for the manipulation of what appears on the screen and the order and location of the various scenes.

That screen drama can accommodate a broader range of subject matter than the stage seems to have been the most fascinating attribute of the new medium for Tanizaki. He acknowledged the medium’s propensity for portraying both subjectively realistic and imaginary (in particular, surreal or supernatural) images in an equally convincing manner. He refers to the “dreamlike” quality of film and the relationship between the worlds of reality and illusion as they are portrayed on film in several works.

“Jinmenso” (The Growth with a Human Face), a story written in 1918, explores the manner in which film can be used to contest the often thin line between the perception of on- and offscreen reality. In one episode of this bizarre story, a film projectionist ponders the hypothetical situation of an audience of one, an actor confronted with his own image on-screen. Which is the reality and which the illusion (the projectionist muses) if, as he is drawn into his performance on the screen, the actor becomes less and less aware of his physical presence?<sup>9</sup>

Tanizaki continued to pursue the question of the relationship between film and dreams in an essay he wrote following the Japanese release of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1921. The same year, in the essay “Eiga zakkan” (Random Thoughts on Film), he concluded that moving pictures were indeed “dreams men make with machines.”<sup>10</sup> But Tanizaki’s most potent reference to the subject appears in the novel *Nikkai* (*Flesh*, 1923), where he compares “the entire universe—all the phenomena of the world around us” to a film. “Isn’t it possible,” he writes, “that even though everything changes from moment to moment, the past remains wound up somewhere? Couldn’t it be that we are all nothing but shadows that disappear quickly and without a trace, while our reality lives on in the film of the universe?”<sup>11</sup> At Taikatsu, Tanizaki pursued his interest in the “dreamlike” quality of film in his original scenario, *Tsuki no kagayaki* (*The Radiance of the Moon*), and two pure films made in collaboration with Thomas Kurihara, *Hinamatsuri no yoru* (*The Night of the Doll Festival*) and *Jasei no in* (*The Lust of the White Serpent*). The opening scenes of the latter are translated in the appendix.

Tanizaki was not the only member of the literary establishment to express an interest in moving pictures or to lend public support to the pure film movement in the late teens, but he brought attention to the debate through his contributions to literary and general readership magazines. That his name was prominently featured in the prospectus for the Taikatsu studio was cause for rejoicing on the part of pure film supporters, but it hardly could have been surprising. Just back from the United States, Thomas Kurihara envisioned a mission at Taikatsu contingent upon a complete reformation of the Japanese film production system. In the United States, Samuel Goldwyn had decided to make writers the new stars of Hollywood—he vainly hoped that they might be less temperamental than actors—and within his company he had just formed a group of writers, Eminent Authors, Inc., to work at his studio. Following Goldwyn’s example, Kurihara and the Taikatsu executives opted to “emphasize the importance of the content of film scripts” and “produce superior films by building upon the ideas of the famous young author Tanizaki Jun’ichirō.”<sup>12</sup>

It is uncertain to what extent Tanizaki himself recognized the significance of his own role in the pure film movement. His brief involvement in film production has been interpreted as a recourse during a severe literary slump or an experiment in achieving something that could not be done in literature, and yet his surviving scenarios seem to confirm the enthusiasm he admitted to in his role as Taikatsu's "literary consultant." At Taikatsu, Kurihara rewrote Tanizaki's first attempt at an original scenario, *Hishochi no sawagi* (*Commotion at a Summer Resort*), as an American-style continuity script with numbered interior and exterior scenes, locations, camera angles, inserts, and expository and dialogue titles. But according to Tanizaki his own original scenario was "more than just a story." Remembering his early days at Taikatsu, he later wrote: "My manner of writing was quite detailed, and I gave specific instructions for each scene. . . . I even divided the story into scenes and made up titles. . . . Later, I gradually learned how to write film scripts myself, but at the time I knew nothing about film."<sup>13</sup> It is well known that when this first Taikatsu pure film, retitled *Amachua kurabu* (*Amateur Club*), was completed in November 1920, Tanizaki abandoned the novel he was serializing at the time in order to dedicate more time to film production.<sup>14</sup> One month later, immersed in his second scenario, *The Radiance of the Moon*, he wrote:

An author to provide a story and a scenario writer to adapt it are both necessary to make a film; for me to make my own art into a film and keep it my own work as much as possible, however, I must do more than simply provide the original story. I must adapt it myself. In short, it will be of value only if I can conceive of it not as a story but as the scenes of a moving picture. I am now training as a scenario writer with Kurihara and the actors as my teachers, but in the near future I think I will be able to write by myself. If I fail to do so, my involvement in film will have been meaningless.

The second story I am now writing, *The Radiance of the Moon*, is a tragedy with mysterious overtones . . . and I am confident it will make a good film. For practice, I am dividing it up into a scenario as much as possible. I keenly feel that there is no other way to express myself than to write a scenario by myself. I confess that I put my pen to paper with a happiness that I have not felt recently. I cannot help but be grateful for becoming involved in moving pictures, which I have loved for a long time.<sup>15</sup>

Tanizaki's enthusiasm was evident to the audience of *Amateur Club*. Although Tanizaki and Kurihara's first collaborative effort had the benefit of opening at the centrally located Yūrokuza Theater, many viewers no doubt were drawn to the film by the novelty of Tanizaki's participation. A play-

fully iconoclastic comedy about a group of well-to-do youths vacationing with their families at a resort area near Kamakura, the film was modeled on the American comedies that were popular in Japan at the time. When the film opened, a great deal of attention was devoted to Tanizaki's sister-in-law, the notoriously vivacious and modern Hayama Michiko (real name Ishikawa Sei), who played the central character, Chizuko. In her unusual costumes (ranging from a swimming suit to a medieval coat of armor), she romped about in an astonishingly uninhibited manner that would have been out of the question for a female impersonator, then the reigning diva on screen. But the real stars of *Amateur Club* were apparently the director and writer, who appeared—quite literally—in the opening credits of the film. In spite of the considerable publicity surrounding the establishment of Taikatsu and the news of Tanizaki's appointment as a special consultant, the first few minutes of the film were more exciting than anyone had expected. There was nothing unusual about the title card, "Amateur Club," followed by a second title card with Tanizaki's name. But what came next was a bust shot of Tanizaki himself in silhouette. After striking a match and lighting his cigarette, he exhaled, filling the screen with smoke. This was followed by a silhouette of Kurihara. Whether it was the presence of the popular Tanizaki on-screen or merely the novelty of the technique, this was a memorable experience for the audience. Two months after the film opened, one viewer wrote: "For a moment we experienced that solemn feeling that comes from being faced with the extraordinary, and yet in our hearts we couldn't help being a little amused. It wasn't that we were laughing at Tanizaki Jun'ichirō or feeling embarrassed for him. It was because his mischievousness made us smile."<sup>16</sup> It is understandable that this emphasis on the authorial responsibility of the director and writer made such an impression at the time. In 1920, the solo *benshi* was extremely popular, and a glance at the continuity transcriptions of both foreign (U.S. and European) and Japanese pictures in the trade press during the late teens—with credits listing the title, studio, and cast but neither the director nor the writer—gives some indication of the extent to which these two roles were ignored at the time.

After *Amateur Club*, Tanizaki wrote three scripts at Taikatsu, revealing a gradual progression toward the continuity-style format he refined in 1921 with *The Lust of the White Serpent*. These three scripts—*The Radiance of the Moon*, *The Night of the Doll Festival*, and *The Lust of the White Serpent*—were all published in magazines that were not considered trade publications, an unusual practice at the time.<sup>17</sup> In addition to lending importance to the craft of writing for the screen, the publication of Tanizaki's film scripts in such general-interest magazines saved them from the fate suffered by countless other silent scripts, which disappeared in the tumult

of postproduction. We are fortunate that they survive as enjoyable reading and as rare documents of an important moment in the history of Japanese cinema.

*The Lust of the White Serpent*, Tanizaki's third and final script at Taikatsu, is the most pleasurable to read, with its profusion of slow transitions (irises and fades, a characteristic of Tanizaki's scenarios), compact yet suggestive narrative passages, and atmospheric landscapes. In general, Tanizaki's approach in this script is more consciously systematic and detailed: there are detailed set and character descriptions and directions for camera angles (including a high-angle point-of-view shot that calls for a composition resembling a painting of the Tosa school,<sup>18</sup> a "panoramic view" pan,<sup>19</sup> and a "double exposure"<sup>20</sup>). Close-ups are used consistently to introduce the various characters, and there is even a request for real fishermen to be used in the opening scene. Tanizaki used art titles, but he used them selectively. They appear only twice: in a brief expository title later in the film<sup>21</sup> and in a poem from the *Man'yōshū* (the eighth-century anthology of poetry), which appears in the story by Ueda Akinari that was used as source material.<sup>22</sup> Appearing early in the script (between scenes 13 and 14), the title establishes the mood for the mysterious tale about to unfold.

*The Lust of the White Serpent* was not a unanimous success, and it has been credited with accelerating Taikatsu's decision to abandon its experimental pure film agenda. Perhaps the problem with the completed film had something to do with the fact that at ten reels—twice the length of *Amateur Club* and the most ambitious attempt at pure film to date—it had a script with approximately the same number of scenes. In Japan at the time, two hundred odd scenes was considered to be an exceptional number for a five-reel film like *Amateur Club*, but even the pace of this relatively innovative and popularly acclaimed film was criticized by some for being too sluggish.<sup>23</sup> The script for *The Lust of the White Serpent* suggests a considerably slower tempo, and the film fared no better in this respect. However impressive the magnificent sets and costumes might have been, critics found the individual scenes too long, the pace too slow, and the camera too static.<sup>24</sup> Tanaka Jun'ichirō has suggested that the film adhered too closely to the original source material, which gave it a lumbering quality accentuated by the awkward positioning of several of the intertitles. (The segment translated in the appendix roughly corresponds to the first few pages of the original story, and the resemblance is striking in both narrative situation and tone.) Tanaka adds that he found the acting impeccable, however, and concludes that Kurihara's failing health might have been to blame for the film's weaknesses.<sup>25</sup>

When *The Lust of the White Serpent* scenario was published in *Suzu no oto* in April 1922, Tanizaki wrote a short introduction in which he ex-

plained his role as the scenario writer and, more generally, the function of the scenario in the production process. We know from the reminiscences of actors who worked with Tanizaki and Kurihara that the working relationship among all the members of the Taikatsu staff was close, very much like that of a family,<sup>26</sup> and Tanizaki's introduction provides a glimpse of this. It also reveals the importance he placed on his role as the writer and an important member of the production crew. Apparently feeling that his responsibility as the author of the script did not end with the completion of a final working draft, he continued to participate on the set even when doing so involved traveling to various locations.<sup>27</sup> In his introduction, Tanizaki even expresses a desire to make readers more familiar with the medium and the scenario-writing process in particular. It was in fact this desire that had prompted him to publish the script.

This script is a dramatization of Ueda Akinari's *Ugetsu monogatari* [*Tales of Moonlight and Rain*] written for the Taishō film company. We set out in April in order to film the script, traveling to Kyoto, Nara, Hatsuse, and Hakone. We then returned to the studio in Yokohama to film the interior scenes. The shooting was finally completed four months later, in July of that year. During that time I was continuously in the company of the actors working under the director, Kurihara Tōmasu, and I often recall the many experiences and pleasant times I had with them on location.

Since its premiere at the Yūrakuzo in September of last year, *The Lust of the White Serpent* has been traveling the circuit of movie theaters in major cities throughout Japan, and many of you may already have had the opportunity to see the film. Although many aspects of the film naturally remain unsatisfactory, it is the first attempt in Japan to adapt classical literature into pure film drama, and for this reason alone I feel great satisfaction at having played a part in its completion. Film scripts by nature are not very suitable as reading material, in comparison with theatrical plays, but if those of you who have read Akinari's original work or seen the film—or plan to see it, for it will certainly be shown again in Tokyo in the near future—read this script with Akinari's original story or the film in mind, you will notice that it has its own interesting qualities.

I am often asked how one writes a film script. Just now the moving pictures are very popular, and many people would like to know more about them. In the hope that it might contribute to the appreciation of film in general, I have decided to use this opportunity to publish this scenario in *Suzu no oto*. Recently even the film world has been affected by the economic depression and shows signs of stagnating. I will be grateful if my work provides even the slightest stimulus.

May I remind you that this script is slightly different from the finished film. No matter what provisions are made before-

hand in the script, it is common for even better ideas to come to mind while shooting the film. When limited by natural topography or certain buildings on location, one must inevitably choose alternatives. Such changes occur frequently. Perhaps it would be interesting to compare such differences.<sup>28</sup>

Tanizaki did more than comment on the distinct characteristics of a film script in his introduction to *The Lust of the White Serpent*. For “cinema fans,” he thoughtfully included at the end a list with definitions of the technical terms (CU, LS, dissolve in, dissolve out, iris in, iris out, double exposure, overlap, background, foreground) that he had carefully and systematically used throughout the script.<sup>29</sup> Although Tanizaki left Taikatsu several months before the scenario was published, it was obvious that before leaving the studio he had become acquainted with the fundamentals of camera technique. His preoccupation with such details as the explanation of technical jargon no doubt gladdened the hearts of the “cinema fans” to whom his explanations were addressed. Iijima Tadashi, for example, a young university student at the time, has pointed out that the film diary he kept in those days consisted mostly of notations on every occurrence of a new technique that he came across during his routine visits to the movie theaters.<sup>30</sup> Although Tanizaki had already left Taikatsu, the preface to *The Lust of the White Serpent* proved that his allegiance still belonged to the vanguard of the reform movement.

There were several factors behind Tanizaki’s retirement from Taikatsu in November 1921, including Kurihara’s deteriorating health and Taikatsu’s decision, one month earlier, to forego support of the financially risky pure film in favor of the commercially stable *shinpageki* (Shinpa film).<sup>31</sup> It has also been suggested that Tanizaki’s apparent loss of interest in screenwriting was hastened by Kurihara’s inability to match the writer’s artistic sensibilities.<sup>32</sup> There may be some truth to this statement: Kurihara repeatedly postponed plans to film a number of works by Tanizaki, including *The Radiance of the Moon*, “The Growth with a Human Face,” and *Jakyō* (*Heresy*).<sup>33</sup> When Kurihara died in 1926, Tanizaki wrote that he had been so concerned about Kurihara’s health during his last days at Taikatsu that the studio’s rapid demise took him completely by surprise.<sup>34</sup> In fact, he had just moved his family to Yokohama. In a short entry in *Shinchō* in January 1922, Tanizaki suggested that he found it difficult to adjust to the “teamwork” the medium required,<sup>35</sup> but in later years his own explanation was that he just drifted away “naturally” as Kurihara’s health declined and the studio began having difficulties.<sup>36</sup> Regardless of what motivated him to end his association with Taikatsu, he retained a strong interest in film during his subsequent two years in Yokohama. He participated in the production

of at least one film, *Shitakiri no suzume* (*The Sparrow Who Lost His Tongue*), and his brother recalled animated discussions about film at frequent gatherings in Tanizaki's second Yokohama home.<sup>37</sup>

It is tempting to wonder what sort of pictures Tanizaki would have made had the Taikatsu management continued to promote the production of pure films; it is conceivable that he would not have left the company so abruptly if it had not changed its production policy. His decision in 1926 to remain permanently in Kansai, a major turning point in his career, marked the end of his active involvement in the motion picture industry. Ironically, it was while he was working on location in Kansai during the filming of *The Lust of the White Serpent* that he became interested in that region of Japan, and when his move to Kyoto put him next door to Makino Shōzō's film studio in Uzumasa (where several of his former colleagues from Taikatsu were employed), there was some speculation that he might return to film production.<sup>38</sup> Though such rumors were unfounded, he never entirely lost interest in film. He continued to write on film at least until the 1950s. Although he went through periods of profound disillusionment with the Japanese film industry—at one point he attributed his reluctance to return to screenwriting to the poor state of the domestic industry as much as to his having discontinued his “studies” before the sound revolution—his articles written twenty to thirty years after his tenure at Taikatsu reveal that he never lost his fascination with the medium itself.<sup>39</sup> His involvement in production was brief, but his evident interest in film, together with his literary prominence, stimulated an early interest in the concept of screenwriting in Japan.

APPENDIX

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE LUST OF THE WHITE SERPENT*

Period: not necessarily specific, but the costumes and manners should be appropriate to the early 1300s.<sup>40</sup>

Setting: should resemble the area along the road to Yamato in the province of Kii.<sup>41</sup>

(TITLE) *Fade in and out*<sup>42</sup>

LONG AGO, ON CAPE MIWA IN THE PROVINCE OF KII,  
THERE WAS A FISHERMAN NAMED ŌYAKE NO  
TAKESUKE. SEVERAL FISHERMEN WORKED UNDER  
HIM, AND HIS HOUSEHOLD WAS PROSPEROUS.<sup>43</sup>

#1. Exterior, the Seashore

(*Fade in*) The shore of Cape Miwa, Kii Province. Five or six fishing boats have just pulled ashore. Many fishermen (if possible, use real fishermen, altogether about twelve or thirteen men and women) are climbing out of the boats. They gather on the beach, carrying fishing nets and baskets of various kinds of fish. Standing on the right-hand side of the shore, awaiting their arrival, is Ōyake no Takesuke, who approaches and inspects their catch. Takesuke's oldest son, Tarō, is among the fishermen, directing the men and women on stage right. The fishermen empty the baskets of fish onto the sand.

#2. Exterior, the Beach

(*CU*) Part of the group, including Takesuke and his son, with the accumulation of fish in the center of the frame. Tarō counts the fish, sorting them one by one according to their size. Smiling, Takesuke watches him. Father and son exchange glances and appear to be pleased with the large catch.

#3. Exterior, the Beach

(*CU*) Takesuke and his son. "What do you say, Father? Look at the splendid sea bream we caught," Tarō says, displaying a fish before his father.<sup>44</sup> They look at each other and laugh.

(Insert Title)

HIS SON TARŌ, FOLLOWING HIS FATHER'S VOCA-  
TION, WORKED HARD EVERY DAY.

Takesuke is forty-five or forty-six years old, an aged man with a kind face. He is wearing a black lacquered hat (*eboshi*), a proper robe (*hitatare*) with long, voluminous square sleeves, and straw sandals on his bare feet. Tarō is a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, wearing pleated trousers (*hakama*) over a slightly soiled *kosode*, a silk garment with cotton wadding. (*Iris out* at the end of this scene.)

#4. Interior, Yumimaro's Room

(*Fade in*) The room of Abe no Yumimaro, a Shinto priest at the Shingū Shrine.<sup>45</sup> (*BC*) Two thick columns stand a short distance apart. Lattice-work has been inserted between the top and bottom of the columns. The top lattice is propped open, and light shines into the room. The floor is made of well-polished wooden boards. A desk stands in the center of the room. Facing it on the left is Abe no Yumimaro, seated on a tatami mat,

and on the right Toyoo, seated on a straw mat. A Chinese book is open on the desk, and Yumimaro is reciting the Chinese text aloud for Toyoo's benefit.

(Insert Title)

TAKESUKE HAD A YOUNGER SON, TOYOO. ALTHOUGH BORN TO A FISHERMAN, HE WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HIS OLDER BROTHER, TARŌ. TOYOO YEARNED FOR THE ELEGANCE OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF KYOTO, AND SO HE REGULARLY VISITED THE SHRINE'S HEAD PRIEST, WHO WAS EDUCATING HIM.

Toyoo raises his head and, pointing to a passage in the text, asks Yumimaro a question. (Toyoo is about eighteen or nineteen years old. He is wearing a silk hunting robe (*kariginu*), an *eboshi*, and loose, full, silk trousers (*sashinuki*). Yumimaro is around forty and wears a priest's garments.)

#5. Interior, Yumimaro's Room

(*CU*) Toyoo, asking a question. He is a handsome youth with a pleasant expression.

#6. Interior, Yumimaro's Room

(*CU*) Yumimaro, reading aloud in answer to Toyoo's question.

#7. Interior, Yumimaro's Room

Full shot of both figures. Yumimaro continues to read, Toyoo listens. (*Fade out*)

(Title) *Fade in and out*

IT WAS CLOSE TO THE END OF THE NINTH MONTH. BUT THAT DAY THE SEA HAD TURNED EXCEPTIONALLY CLEAR, AND THE SUDDEN RAIN RELEASED BY THE SOUTHEAST CLOUDS SOFTLY DRIZZLED.

#8. Exterior, the Seashore

(*Fade in*) A shot of the clouds in the sky. A suspicious rain cloud wells up in one corner of the heavens. Blown by the wind, it spreads darkly, widely, from the bottom to the top of the frame.

#9. Exterior, the Seashore

Same location as #1. Because of the sudden change in the weather, Takesuke, his son, and the fishermen quickly gather their things and pull the boats onto the beach.

#10. Interior, Yumimaro's Room

Having finished his daily lesson, Toyoo is about to take leave of his teacher and return home. Yumimaro takes a look outside and, knitting his brow, says, "Oh dear! What terrible weather. You should wait for the rain to stop." "No, it is nothing," Toyoo answers. He stands and exits to the left. Yumimaro, still anxious about the weather, sees Toyoo off.

#11. Exterior, Outside Yumimaro's Room

The veranda outside the room, shot from the garden. The rain is falling more heavily, and Yumimaro stops Toyoo. "You will have trouble in this downpour. You should take an umbrella," Yumimaro says, as he prevents Toyoo from leaving and goes for the umbrella. Toyoo sits down on the steps and stares absentmindedly at the rain in the garden.

#12. Exterior, the Seashore

Continuation of #9. The fishermen have finished pulling the boats up onto the beach, and they run off to the right through the driving rain.

#13. Exterior, Outside Yumimaro's Room

A shot of Toyoo sitting on the steps. Yumimaro comes out and gives him the umbrella. Toyoo thanks him courteously and exits to the right, holding the umbrella over his head. Yumimaro gazes after him. (*Fade out*)

(Art Title) *Fade in and out*

WHAT HARDSHIP THIS RAIN THAT FALLS ON CAPE  
MIWA! AND YET AT SANO CROSSING NO HOUSE IS IN  
SIGHT<sup>46</sup>

#14. Exterior, the Seashore

(*Fade in*) A view of the long coastline and Cape Miwa in the rain. The sky increasingly shows signs of an impending storm, and there is no trace of anyone on either sea or land. Soon the solitary figure of Toyoo approaches (*BG to FG*), holding the umbrella against the wind. (*MCU*) Toyoo stops and tilts the umbrella, as if looking for shelter from the rain. After glancing around, he takes a few more steps and looks straight ahead.

#15. Exterior, the Rush Hut of a Fisherman

(LS) A single rush-thatched hut by the sea.

#16. Exterior, the Seashore

A continuation of #15. Toyoo spies the hut in the distance and exits to the left, passing the camera.

#17. Exterior, the Hut

In front of the hut. Entering from the right, Toyoo approaches the shadow of the hut. As Toyoo shuts the umbrella and opens the cedar door, an old fisherman about fifty years of age appears from within. Seeing Toyoo, he politely bows his head. "Please come in," he says as he leads him inside. Toyoo enters the hut.

#18. Interior, Inside the Hut

The interior is a dim space enclosed by boards and a low ceiling. Sunlight shines faintly through the thatched eaves in front of the hut. No planks cover the dirt floor, which had been spread with straw mats. The old man guides Toyoo from the wooden door facing the camera and quickly closes it. He lays a round straw mat on the dirt floor and invites Toyoo to sit, saying, "This is a poor dwelling, but please rest here a moment." (The old man is wearing an *eboshi*, a padded jacket [*kosode*], and *hakama*.) Toyoo is being treated so politely that he says, as if he is inconveniencing the old man, "Please don't go to such trouble for my sake." From time to time, rain leaking through the rushes blows violently into the room.

#19. Interior, Inside the Hut

Cowering from the rain, Toyoo and the old man chat about the terrible weather (*full shot* of them both). The sound of the rain and the echo of the wind seem to be growing ever more violent. Then, as if he hears someone's voice, the old man goes to the cedar door on the right.

#20. Interior, Inside the Hut

From within, the old man puts his left ear to the door and asks, "Who is it, who's there?" Outside, someone taps on the door.

NOTES

1. Tanizaki directed portions of the film *Hinamatsuri no yoru* (*The Night of the Doll Festival*, 1921). At least part of the film, which starred his young daughter, was shot in his own home at Odawara.

2. "Eiga zakkan," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966–70), 22:101–2; hereafter TJZ. Unless otherwise stated, Tanizaki is quoted from this edition of his collected works.
3. "Eiga no koto nado," in TJZ, 23:292–93.
4. "Tōkyō o omou," in TJZ, 21:9.
5. "Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai," in TJZ, 20:13. The word *photoplay* appears in English. I have discussed this article in detail in "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's 'The Present and Future of the Moving Pictures,'" in Amy Vladeck Heinrich, ed., *Currents in Japanese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 291–308.
6. Kaeriyama Norimasa, *Katsudō shashingeki no sōsaku to satsuei hō* (*The Production and Photography of Moving Pictures*) (Tokyo: Hikōsha, 1917). The extent to which Kaeriyama's book reflects his familiarity with American and European language sources makes it unique.
7. Tanizaki's reference to his habit of reading these imported trade publications was published one month after he quit Taikatsu. See "Shina shumi to iu koto," in TJZ, 22:122–23.
8. See, for example, "Tōkyō o omou," 8–9.
9. "Jinmenso," in TJZ, 5:302.
10. "Eiga zakkan," 100.
11. *Nikkai*, in TJZ, 9:40–41.
12. "Taishō Katsudō Shashin Kabushiki Kaisha no setsuritsu," *Katsudō kurabu* 3.6 (June 1920): 24; reprinted in Makino Mamoru, ed., *Nihon eiga shoki shiryō shūsei*, 14 vols. (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1990–92), 13:170 (facsimile ed.).
13. "Eiga no koto nado," 293. *Hishochi no sawagi* is believed to be lost. Kurihara's continuity-style script was serialized under Tanizaki's name in the trade publication *Katsudō zasshi* (7.6–10 [June–October 1921]: no. 6:150–55, no. 7:140–47, no. 8:134–38, no. 9:136–40, no. 10:108–9). It is difficult to determine the extent of Tanizaki's contribution to this version of *Amateur Club*, although it seems likely that Kurihara's revisions, rendering Tanizaki's original scenario into a version closer to a continuity-style shooting script, were primarily technical. A shorter version of the *Amateur Club* scenario is included in *Horidasareta meisakusen*, a supplementary volume to *Nihon eiga shinario koten zenshū* (Tokyo: Kinema Junpō, 1966), 32–45. An Italian translation of this version can be found in Adriana Boscaro, ed., *Divagazioni sull'Otium e altri scritti* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 1995), 113–57.
14. In November 1920, Tanizaki informed the readers of *Chūō Kōron*, which was serializing his novel *Kōjin* (*The Mermaid*), of his decision to abandon the novel. See "Kōjin no genkō ni suite," in TJZ, 23:54.
15. "Sono yorokobi o kansha sezarū o enai," in TJZ, 22:96–97.
16. Satō Kiichirō, "Taikatsu no Yūrakuzō kōgyō ni suite," *Katsudō gahō* (January 1920); reprinted in Okabe Ryū, ed., *Kaeriyama Norimasa to Tōmasu Kurihara no gyōseki*, *Nihon eigashi sōkō*, no. 8 (Tokyo: Tokyo Film Library Council, 1973), 79. Few recollections of the film fail to mention the opening credits. See, for example, Uchida Tomu, "Taishō Katsuei jidai," in Okabe, *Kaeriyama Norimasa to Tōmasu Kurihara no gyōseki*, 94; Benisawa Yōko, "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō to Taishō Katsuei," in Iwamoto Kenji and Saiki Tomonori, eds., *Kikigaki kinema no seishun* (Tokyo: Libroport, 1988), 86; Hazumi Tsuneo, *Eiga gojūnen shi* (Tokyo: Masu Shobō, 1943), 139; and "Eiga no koto nado," 293.
17. *The Radiance of the Moon* (generally considered Tanizaki's first scenario after *Amateur Club*) was serialized in *Gendai* beginning in January 1921 (reprinted in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 30 vols. [Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1957–59], 11:133–82). The first thirty-eight scenes of *The Night of the Doll Festival* (1921) appeared in *Shin'engei* in 1923, and the magazine published a longer version the following year (reprinted in TJZ, 9:409–26). *The Lust of the White Serpent*, his final script, appeared in *Suzu no oto* in April 1922. Tanizaki is often credited with having written the lost script for *Katsushika sunago* (*Katsushika Sand*), a three-reel film based on Izumi Kyōka's novel of the same name, which opened a month and a half after *Amateur Club*. Tanizaki himself attributed the work to Kurihara, claiming that he wrote only a hasty first draft after having read the original work (see "Kurihara Tōmasu kun no koto," in TJZ, 22:194).

18. *Jasei no in*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū* (1957–59), 11:194. The painters of the native Japanese style Tosa school of painting (early fifteenth to late nineteenth centuries) were primarily employed by the imperial court. Accordingly, they specialized in painting courtly scenes, often drawing inspiration from classical literature. Their work was characterized by a flat, decorative composition; it was also colorful, delicate, and refined, with much care given to detail.
19. *Ibid.*, 208.
20. *Ibid.*, 215.
21. *Ibid.*, 213.
22. *Ibid.*, 189. The original story, “Jasei no in” (The Lust of the White Serpent), appears in Ueda Akinari’s eighteenth-century collection of ghost stories, *Ugetsu monogatari*. Akinari’s story is based on *Bai niangzi yong zhen Leifeng ta* (*Eternal Prisoner under the Thunder Peak Pagoda*), a Chinese tale with origins dating as far back as the Tang dynasty. “Jasei no in” has been adapted for film several times. In 1953, Mizoguchi Kenji and Yoda Yoshikata combined it with another story from Akinari’s collection, “Asaji ga yado” (The House among the Thickets) and Maupassant’s short story “Decoró” (Decorated!/How He Got the Legion of Honor) as source material for the well-known Kyoto Daiei production *Ugetsu monogatari*.
23. Iijima Tadashi, “Nihon eiga no reimei: Jun'eigageki no shūhen,” in Imamura Shōhei et al., eds., *Nihon eiga no tanjō*, vol. 1 of *Kōza Nihon eiga* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1985), 117.
24. Tanaka Jun'ichirō, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi*, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), 1:304; Iijima Tadashi, *Nihon eiga shi*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1955), 1:34.
25. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi*, 1:304.
26. See, for example, Benisawa Yōko, “Omoide: Modan na sakuhin,” in *Horidasareta meisakusen*, 46. Benisawa notes in particular that Tanizaki, rather than returning to his own home after a day’s work, often stayed the night at the home of another staff member.
27. See “Eiga no koto nado,” 346. Tanizaki wrote that, although he was often given credit for directing the film together with Kurihara, he only gave advice on the customs and manners of the period in which the film is set. Tanizaki had also participated throughout the production of *Amateur Club*. In a photograph taken of the film’s staff and crew on Yuigahama Beach (the setting for the opening sequence), Tanizaki, looking dapper in a white suit and large straw hat, is seated between Kurihara and Hayama. Kurihara, holding a pen, has what appears to be a shooting script balanced on his knee. Benisawa Yōko later recalled that Tanizaki stood next to Kurihara on the set, giving instructions along with the director.
28. *Jasei no in*, 185.
29. *Ibid.*, 186.
30. Iijima, *Nihon eiga shi*, 1:24–5.
31. The Shinpa film, the prototype for the *gendaiageki* (modern drama) film, relied heavily on the Shinpa theater for its inspiration and source material.
32. Iijima, “Nihon eiga no reimeī,” 116.
33. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi*, 1:302.
34. “Kurihara Tōmasu kun no koto,” 192.
35. “Shōsetsu mo kaki katsudō shashin ni mo chikara o sosogu,” in TJZ, 23:65.
36. “Eiga e no kansō,” in TJZ, 22:320. See also “Eiga no koto nado,” 295.
37. Tanizaki Shūhei, “Yokohama kara Kansai e,” *Kaisō no ani Tanizaki Jun'ichirō*, no. 8, supplement to TJZ, 9:7. See also “Honpō seisaku eigakai,” *Kinema junpō* 113 (October 1922): 4, for an announcement of a collaboration “in the style of *Amateur Club*” between Tanizaki, Hayama Michiko, Henry Kotani, and Kurihara. This is listed as a separate production (entitled *Zoku Amachua kurabu/Amateur Club, Part Two*, 1923) in “Taikatsu, Kurihara sakuhin kiroku,” in *Kaeriyama Norimasa to Tōmasu Kurihara no gyōseki*, 109.
38. Chiba Nobuo, *Eiga to Tanizaki* (Tokyo: Seiabō, 1989), 168, 176.
39. In “Eiga e no kansō” (320), Tanizaki laments the poor quality of Japanese film but admits that had he continued working in film production he might have tried writing one

- or two “talkie” screenplays. For an example of his later writings on Japanese film, see “*Akatsuki no dassō o miru*,” in TJZ, 22:386–91.
40. Tanizaki specifically calls for “costume and scenery resembling that of the Ōchō era”—the year 1311, during the reign of Emperor Hanazono (1308–18) in the late Kamakura period. For an English translation of Ueda Akinari’s original story, see “The Lust of the White Serpent,” in *Ugetsu Monogatari: Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, translated and edited by Leon M. Zolbrod (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), 161–84.
41. Tanizaki retains the archaic names, as used by Akinari, for present-day Nara (Yamato) and Wakayama (Kii).
42. I have translated the term *yomei* as “fade,” although in his introduction to the scenario Tanizaki gives the term the corresponding English word *dissolve*.
43. Cape Miwa, at the southern tip of Kii Peninsula, is now part of the city of Shingū. Akinari reads Takesuke’s family name as “Ōya.”
44. Dialogue not included in an intertitle was not unusual in silent scenarios; it heightened the sense of continuity and helped the actors remain in character.
45. This is an alternate name for the Kumano Hayatama Shrine in Shingū, one of the three holy places of Kumano, the old name of this area.
46. This title borrows a poem by Naga Okimaro from the *Man’yōshū* (*Kokka taikan*, no. 265):

Kurushikumo furikuru ame ka Miwagasaki  
Sanu no Watari ni ie mo aranaku ni

# The Double Face of Writing

Anne Bayard-Sakai

It is not legitimate to say of an author that he takes particular care over his choice of titles, since no one can profess to be a writer who does not pay close attention to what is the emblem, if not the face, of a text. Nevertheless, with Tanizaki, the title is a strong element of the work itself and perfectly fulfills its paratextual role.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Tanizaki attached great importance to the choice of names for his characters, a choice he exercised most meticulously. This is why the reader cannot fail to be surprised and intrigued to find in this author's bibliography a title like "A to B no hanashi" (The Story of A and B). Here is a title of the most trivial and insignificant kind; it retains only the most meager of the possible functions of a title—serving only as an index—and seems, in relation to the work, to be no more than a pleonasm. Furthermore, A and B, as the names of the characters themselves, amount to little more than indices, again of the poorest variety, since they seem to be no more than a borrowing of the first two letters of the alphabet without carrying any special meaning.

Bearing in mind this sort of double insignificance, and using the example of "The Story of A and B," we might examine the play in Tanizaki's work of "A and B rhetoric," or a rhetoric of the double face.

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"The Story of A and B," published in 1921, presents two cousins, A and B, who were brought up together and have become writers as adults.<sup>2</sup> Linked though they are by a shared past, they are poles apart, as A personifies good and B evil. These moral identities extend to aesthetic doctrine; one is a humanist writer who employs literature for the power of good, while the other is an exponent of the literature of evil. Having begun by providing this information, the text sets up situations that all ask the same question: which of the cousins will get the upper hand? The text states that a literature of evil is by definition impossible, and so B finds himself gradually

having to abandon his schemes and settle for a simple existence sworn to evil. Meanwhile, A achieves success as a writer, but, dedicated to his cousin's salvation, he cannot bear to see B's moral decay. Upon his release from prison, where his misdeeds have led him, B demands that A prove his desire to redeem him by surrendering to him all his talent and renown. Thenceforth B appropriates all the texts A has written, without anyone—even A's wife—being told of the swindle. Only upon B's death is all unraveled, but without really unraveling. On his deathbed, B returns A's work to him, but A refuses to break his word and maintains the mystery, though he cannot help but reveal it to his wife. The piece ends with this sentence: "Did A win, or did B?"

This summary is sufficient to show what at once sparks interest in the work and defines its limits: the schematic character of the oppositions invoked. But these oppositions deserve some interpretation. Tanizaki begins the story by pointing out that A and B are the names of two young people but also of two souls (*tamashii*), two consciousnesses (*jiko*)—two souls and, one might add, two concepts. In other words, the function of the two characters is to allow the eternal opposition of good and evil to be transformed into fiction. But they are clearly two characters, two cousins, as the author specifies. Theirs is the blood relationship that, among male family relations within the same generation, is the closest after brotherhood, linking two people with common grandparents. In other words, the cousins share a common origin, which leads us to presume that good and evil also have a common source and are perfectly symmetrical, just as the cousin-to-cousin relationship is symmetrical. This symmetry underpins the interplay of the characters. B, or evil, is a tempter figure, who constantly tests A's goodness and determination to save him. But he tempts precisely because the potential for evil is always inherent in good; otherwise, good would not have to prove itself through goodwill. As symmetrical interchangeability is necessary for temptation—one is tempted only by projection into the other's place—temptation necessarily reveals the secret, a sort of impossible sharing of identity between good and evil. This is why, by means of the mystification demanded by B, B becomes A and vice versa.

The progress of the two characters, A and B, thus traces a strange slide by which two initially opposed entities end up merging. A and B are cousins, certainly, but the text reveals them for what they really are—twins, at once diametrically opposed and yet radically identical. The tension of the work stems from this theoretically improbable opposition of two identical bodies.

But opposition, and no doubt identity, require for support a third element—a witness we might say. Here, this element is provided by A's

wife, who is in the end the sole repository of the truth (or a truth) when the secret is revealed to her. She supplies a point of reference in the story of A and B because, while implicated, she remains external. Contrary to expectations, Tanizaki never presents her as a direct factor in the cousins' rivalry. This can be interpreted in two ways. It might be thought that in a latent, subconscious way she is the only real object in the two men's struggle. In this scenario, A consents to be stripped of his literary identity for B's profit in order, conversely, to retain the sexual identity he has invested in his wife. But it could also be argued that the introduction of a love interest would disturb the conceptual schema explicitly intended by Tanizaki, leading the story astray into the realm of the morality novel; it would, in a way, entail making these characters real novelistic characters—that is, giving them more substantial names than A and B. The theoretical role assigned to A's wife would then be to prevent opposition from becoming lost in identity so that the tension of the work can be preserved. In this relationship, however, there is a third factor, literature. The opposition between and identity of A and B are, from start to finish, implied in literary choices, and one could suppose that Tanizaki projected himself into each of the cousins, particularly since the work dates from a watershed period (late Taishō) in Tanizaki's inspiration (from the "wicked" to the "good" Tanizaki). From this point of view, the conclusion to which the text points remains that "evil" literature is impossible; there is only "good" literature, real or not. In other words, literature itself is beyond opposition. It is singular, and in that sense it is no more good than evil. It just *is*, one might say, in an absolute sense.

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In dualist rhetoric, "The Story of A and B" represents an academic exercise. Identity, opposition, and symmetry are implied, but very abstractly, just as the "names" A and B are abstract. The structure Tanizaki designed encourages us to read this work as a sketch, a first pass, to be developed later. For this reason, it seems possible to connect this work with one Tanizaki published five years later, *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi* (*The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga*, 1926).<sup>3</sup>

One cannot fail to be struck by the resemblance between the titles. Their structure is identical, and one has a feeling that Tomoda and Matsunaga are simply reprises of A and B, which have progressed to the status of actual names. Apart from that, however, the title simply announces a story about these two characters, as if stating their names were enough to describe their relationship. The effect is to reintroduce the rhetoric of duality that we encountered earlier.

The story opens with a letter that the narrator, a novelist, receives one day from a woman unknown to him. She is worried about the disappearance of her husband, Matsunaga Gisuke, who, every three or four years (*ashikake yonen*), and for a similar period each time, leaves home without informing her of his whereabouts. Having seen one day among her husband's papers a card addressed by the novelist to a certain Tomoda Ginzō, she has taken it upon herself to write to ask him if he knows this Tomoda, and if Tomoda in turn is likely to know her husband—if, indeed, "Tomoda" is not an alias being used by her husband. Intrigued, the narrator realizes that his own dealings with Tomoda have undergone eclipses that correspond to the periods when Matsunaga has been present in his distant home province. The reader immediately guesses that under these two names hides the same individual, and the narrative leads to the confession of Tomoda/Matsunaga.

Comparing this story with the earlier "The Story of A and B," we can see the displacement Tanizaki has effected. "The Story of A and B" leads from an opposition (A versus B) to an identity (B assuming A's artistic identity), while *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* leads from an identity to an opposition by way of a schism. In other words, the problem for Tanizaki here is to stage a progression from the one to the other. Another aspect of "The Story of A and B" present also in *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* is the opposition between good and evil. Matsunaga becomes Tomoda when he can no longer stand the Japanese way of life, and the lure of life in the West—or in the Western style—grows too strong to resist. Of course, the Western way of life implies luxury, lust, and sensuality. Tomoda thus gives himself over to all these pleasures, until the moment when an illness, mixed with depression and satiety, grips him and sets him on a path toward the rediscovery of his identity as Matsunaga. Matsunaga's life in the province of his birth reintroduces him to Japanese traditions, epitomized by a pilgrimage (*junrei*) made by the family. At the heart of traditional morality, we reach the opposite of the demoniacal excesses of the West. The split identity of Tomoda and Matsunaga is therefore also a balance between good and evil: on one side is a fascinating but dangerous, venomous, and perhaps fatal evil (Tomoda explains one of his changes of heart as being caused by a fear of death); on the other side is a dull, but restful and safe, good. And, just as A outlives B, Tomoda needs to become Matsunaga again to survive.

This outline of transmutation of identity, reworked using theoretical oppositions, would remain just as abstract as that in "The Story of A and B" if Tanizaki did not take the trouble to give body to his characters in a literal sense. For with the splitting of identity there is also a bodily transformation, without which the cat would immediately be out of the bag. Tomoda seems altogether younger than Matsunaga (he says he is thirty-six,

while Matsunaga seems about forty), and Tomoda's corpulence makes him look younger while his alter ego's emaciation makes him look prematurely old. Furthermore, the weight difference has such a pronounced effect on the faces of the "two" men that photographs of them seem to belie their identity. The reader may regard this evidence with skepticism, but Tanizaki surely makes no claims of naturalistic realism here.

Except for what belongs to the strictly private itinerary of an individual, split identity is also lent meaning only with reference to third parties—witnesses or victims. We must note that, as in "The Story of A and B," there is deception here. The game of identity and opposition seems inevitably to entail an aspect of duplicity—someone passes himself off as something he is not (as with B) or refuses to be known as what he is (as with Tomoda). But what can prove or disprove an individual's identity if not his outward appearance? In that respect, *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* tells of a failed splitting of identity because the two victims of this duplicity, Tomoda/Matsunaga's wife and the novelist, manage to reestablish his identity.

In doing this, what do they restore to Tomoda/Matsunaga? If duplicity is linked to bodily transformation, one may surmise that the schism breaks the biographical continuity that allows us to say of an individual that, despite all the changes affecting him, he remains one. The bodily transformation effects a process of estrangement from oneself, which means that, in the paroxysm of their difference, Tomoda's body is not Matsunaga's body—Tomoda can no longer confess to being Matsunaga and vice versa. Thus, Tomoda and Matsunaga, adhering perfectly to their split identity, are its first victims. The witnesses to the schism serve, then, to reestablish their biographical continuity, to stitch up a torn story. In this regard, it is no coincidence that each witness supplies half of the biographical unit—one knowing only Matsunaga, the other (for most of the piece) dealing only with Tomoda; identity is rebuilt by joining the two halves.

But what this work also affords us, even through the duplicity of the failed split, is the delight that resides in the process of becoming alien to oneself. If, insofar as his strength allows, Tomoda/Matsunaga leads a double life, it is because he is fascinated by the West yet cannot help being drawn back to Japan. More profoundly, though, it is because Tanizaki knows that one can develop a taste for these inner breaks and that the pain of no longer being oneself is always accompanied by the pleasure of becoming someone else. The following passage shows this:

I was no longer Matsunaga Gisuke. I no longer had any connection with the unknown Japanese man in the photograph—that emaciated, glum-faced Oriental. Such was my inner cry when I threw the photograph to the ground. At that moment, I felt a new

joy running through me. I was no longer Japanese, I had become a Westerner; I chanted victoriously and, with my arms in the air, started dancing like a madman.<sup>4</sup>

By becoming Matsunaga again before witnesses, Tomoda abandons the Westernized life that he loves but that exhausts him. In the description of his metamorphoses that Tomoda gives to the narrator, it is striking to find statements that are taken up again, almost word for word, seven years later in *In'ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*, 1933). This is why the third link in the sequence can be found here: the fictional possibilities of "The Story of A and B" are exploited in *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga*, while the conceptual possibilities are developed in *In Praise of Shadows*. In this essay, the opposition between good and evil shifts toward an opposition between the beautiful and the ugly, reinterpreted by Tanizaki in terms of an opposition between Japanese tradition and Western modernity. I shall not dwell here on the different arguments Tanizaki uses; I shall concentrate instead on what forms one of the bridges between *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* and *In Praise of Shadows*, namely, the place of the body in the opposition.

In Tomoda's confession, Tanizaki makes him emphasize, among the reasons for his disgust with Japan, all that is dark (*usugurai*) about it—and, in particular, yellow skin. We know how much this element is invested in *In Praise of Shadows*: the skin is the inscription of darkness in the very body of the Oriental, and if this skin color as such is not presented as a quality it proves the affinity of Orientals with darkness. From this affinity, we can reconstruct Tanizaki's conception of this culture of darkness with, for example, the importance of touch in order to experience the flavor of things. We can also see that between *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* and *In Praise of Shadows* there has been a reversal—the darkness Tanizaki hated has become the most precious of values.

Finally, in order truly to understand what is at stake in this transformation, I shall concentrate on the roles accorded to literature in the two works. In *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga*, literature is presented directly in the form of the narrating novelist. Literature ensures the mediation between Tomoda and Matsunaga: the novelist is a partner to Tomoda in his drinking and womanizing, but he is also the recipient of the letter from Matsunaga's wife; he appreciates her old-fashioned distinction—very much a literary distinction, of course. In other words, through the narrator, the dual tension of literature is also presented, subjected to both fascination with the West and a traditional vision of Japan. (The fact that both this Occident and this Japan are purely fantastic—and therefore literary—merely strengthens the tension exerted on literature, according to Tanizaki.)

In *In Praise of Shadows*, paradoxically, it is no longer a question of literature as such. The preference Tanizaki assigns, though not without ambiguity, to the dark side of the essence of Japan over the glamour of the West leads, in terms of double-faced rhetoric, to the disappearance of the third element, mediation. The oppositions here are no longer effected by transformation from the single to the dual or vice versa, and so literature is no longer called upon as a witness. Presumably, it is absorbed into the text or the author's choice of darkness, but we all know that literature will not let itself be trivialized that easily.

In a way, for the blinded reader, literature becomes invisible, as it is too evident. It has to be sought in the voice of the narrator, the first person of the narration, whom we identify as Tanizaki himself—a novelist, of course. Compared to the narrative device of *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga*, here it seems that Tanizaki, removing all mediation, has thrown off his mask and shown himself as the simultaneously very single and very double Tomoda/Matsunaga: he assumes the duality of East and West, affirming his preference for oriental darkness. The narrative distance that separated the novelist-narrator from the double character has been filled, the novelist taking up the roles devolved upon Tomoda/Matsunaga.

But it must be remembered that the preference shown by the narrator of *In Praise of Shadows* for oriental darkness is fundamentally a *literary* preference, set by a novelist who is not bound to tell the truth but who has to stage, through his own words, something we may call a fictional opposition of two terms. The reader can, of course, consider *In Praise of Shadows* to be a “serious” essay, which has to be understood to the letter. But the flow of Tanizaki's work from “The Story of A and B” through *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* to *In Praise of Shadows* probably reveals *In Praise of Shadows* to be at least as much a novel as an essay. If so, this text bears the essence of what Tanizaki tried to formulate during those years—thus closing it by putting in a full stop.

#### NOTES

1. I use *paratextual* here in the same way Gérard Genette does in *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987).
2. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, “A to B no hanashi,” in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 30 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1981–83), 7:441–98.
3. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 10:409–93.
4. *Ibid.*, 475.



# Tanizaki's Art of Storytelling

Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner

What is not a lie has no attraction.<sup>1</sup>  
—Tanizaki, “Jōzetsuroku”

In his famous 1927 debate with Akutagawa on the relative importance of plot, Tanizaki maintains that a literary work should first of all hold the reader's interest throughout. In insisting on the importance of invention, or untruth, he not only distances himself from the then popular *shishōsetsu* mode of fiction, with its flat factualisms and gestures of sincerity and pathos, but he gives a fine description of his principles as a professional storyteller. “I am sure that truthful stories are also valid,” he writes,

but in recent years I have come to prefer the devious to the straightforward and the noxious to the innocuous; and I like complicated things that are embellished with maximum intricacy. . . . That is why I make it my practice to read about subjects that are as remote from the present as possible. . . . [S]uch works can persuade me that I am reading about an imaginary world.<sup>2</sup>

Typically, Tanizaki insists on an imaginary world and not an illusion of reality with mimetic depictions such as postnaturalist and “proletarian” literature would present. The easiest device for creating this consciousness is the introduction of a historical, cultural, or narratorial distance. Accordingly, his preference for multiperspective narration, the juxtaposition of different voices, and the use of documents, whether authentic or fictitious, is well known. Also well known are his irony and humor, additional elements that account for his excellence as a writer. What I want to show here is how Tanizaki weaves these narratorial devices together and how they constitute something of a metadialogue with the reader, with whom Tanizaki shares, tongue in cheek, his pleasure of contriving a story.

Let us take an example from his middle years, *Bushūkō hiwa* (*The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*), completed in 1935. In his preface

("Bushūkō hiwa jo"), the narrator cunningly announces the biography of a famous warlord, all the while alluding to well-known legends and historical figures, though his narratorial interest is captured above all by his hero's abnormal sex life. By procuring and carefully comparing different sources, hitherto undiscovered and equipped with a particular authority, he seeks to support his credibility. Once the reader has entered the story, the narration develops a considerable pull, strong enough to make the reader disbelieve the fact that all these sources—the Nun Myōkaku's "Dream of a Night," the *Memoirs of Dōami*, the *Tsukuma War Chronicles*, and Terukatsu's portrait, described so thrillingly—should be no more than fictions devised by the author. We simply "forget" that we are caught in a complex web of "absurd fabrication,"<sup>3</sup> though the author admits it from the beginning by explicitly denying it. The more the narrator appears to get on the track of the truth by comparing and checking his sources, and the more he speculates and conjectures about the motives and feelings of his figures, the tighter his grip on the reader becomes. Whether or not we care for war histories and sexual aberrations, we are captured by the story, the inner development of which, as we are made to discover, holds the core of its fascination.

Just as the author brilliantly plays with his material in the guise of his narrator—he discovers contradictions in those "contemporaneous" documents that sound so very authentic, unmasks distortions in the war histories, and tilts the official, heroic images into the ridiculous—he also plays with his reader, whom he repeatedly sends down the wrong path in his feigned ignorance, only to confront him later, seemingly astonished, with the "true" version.

The author's subtle control of his reader is also apparent in the dense succession of contrasts: the very moment we have entered a scene of highest aesthetic refinement, it turns into the cruel or the grotesque. Take the example of an elegant poetry contest (*uta no kai*), which Lady Kikyō has designed in order to present her husband Norishige, the lord of the castle, as a perfect host and lover of the arts. On this occasion, he is hit by an arrow, which mutilates him. Or take the bucolically embroidered scene in which Terukatsu's lovely young wife innocently catches fireflies—a scene with strong allusions to the classical *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*). It abruptly turns into a sadistic game incited by Terukatsu. Conversely, the description of Dōami's tortures is followed by a peek at the tenderly flirting couple under the mosquito net. These vividly painted and densely assembled scenes engender in the reader a succession of hot-cold feelings.

It is this insight into the abyss of the human mind, as well as the psychological sophistication with which the bizarre story obtains its conclusive motivation, that ultimately make this work fascinating. Tanizaki

may have been familiar with Freud's psychoanalysis and Jung's ideas on archetypes—an assumption backed by his choice of vocabulary—but the artistic formation of the stirrings of the unconscious, the look into the “deep well” (another suggestive literary metaphor in Japan), and the discovery of the “secret paradise” perceived through an “endlessly eddying, spinning wheel of fantasies” indicate a familiarity with more than the theory and pathology of Western psychology: they also demonstrate a reliance on the store of indigenous sources of experience in dealing with the workings of the human soul. Why should the discovery of the unconscious, which in Europe took place in the late nineteenth century, not have been possible much earlier in a culture with a completely different orientation?

Nevertheless, the associations, metaphors, and objects possess surprising powers of persuasion and an obvious universality. We need only think of the “nose, this important object,” the meaning of which is central to the story, as, for instance, a “vital feature” (*taisetsuna mono*). It is all the more important, since, as the narrator has it: “A missing nose was far more difficult to deal with than a missing head” (46). Though the official version tries, albeit without success, to cloak Terukatsu's “minor changes of his features,” calling the nose “only a bit of flesh,” the mere mention of the word in Japanese evokes erotic connotations. Tanizaki brings these fully into play: one only has to visualize the homoerotic assonances in the scene in which young Hōshimaru peers “directly into the nostrils of the slightly upturned nose” (42) of the enemy commander. Or think of the mad reinterpretation of the poem on the “village of falling blossoms” from *The Tale of Genji*, which, because of the homology of the Japanese words for “blossom” and “nose,” becomes the “village of falling noses” and prompts a chain reaction of further associations.

Speaking of humor, it seems all too obvious that the whole macabre story is pervaded by a subtle or openly sarcastic sense of the comic and parodistic exposure. Take, for example, the disassembly of martial postures, masterly executed in the description of the hero's portrait in armor. Should the angry look of the general (like that of a “bloodthirsty tiger”) not better be read as the pained expression of a “man suffering from rheumatism” (11)? Or take the poetry competition arranged for the noseless Norishige, who—in a more literal translation—“has recently become a *tengu* in *waka*-making” (*waka ni kakete wa sakkon ōi ni tengu ni narikakete iru*).<sup>4</sup> *Tengu* (a demon with a long nose) is part of this idiomatic expression, which means “to be proud of, to boast of.” The irony is, of course, that the expression is applied to the noseless Norishige. Yet another humorous example is the scene in which poor Norishige, already disfigured with a hare-lip, is stricken by further mishap:

It was a heavy blow to his appearance, of course, to lose his right ear when he had already acquired a harelip, but this was preferable to losing his nose. It could be argued that losing an ear is even worse than gaining a harelip or going noseless, because it upsets the symmetry of the face; but this is something that each will have to decide for himself. (70)

Similarly, the remark that the sight of their noseless general would have frightened his men considerably contains biting irony, for “[t]he bacterium of the disease that causes one’s nose to fall off had been introduced to Japan at about this time, along with tobacco, but surely had not spread very far yet” (50). This section, by the way, is one of five in which the text alludes to Europe.<sup>5</sup> (In passing, we may note that the author, notwithstanding his detailed descriptions, cannot be pinned down to a romanticized, idealized depiction of Japan’s past—though this is sometimes assumed—nor does he appear interested in presenting a simple pattern of superiority or inferiority in the relationship of the two civilizations. Quite the contrary: he maintains his ironic, unmasking gaze vis-à-vis both.)

The pleasure of reading Tanizaki’s works, then, lies to a great extent in a complicity between narrator and reader, effectively established by the author’s well-honed narratorial devices. As the author suggests, we need not even be taken to the remote past to enjoy the posture of complicity. In a meticulous study of a recently rediscovered work (first published in twenty-four installments in the *Fukuoka Nichinichi Shinbun* in 1917), Matthias Hoop has shown how the text in question, “Kozō no yume” (Kozō’s Dream), functions simultaneously as a quintessential Tanizaki narrative and as a metatext on the art of literature. The young apprentice who tells his story from a more or less intimate perspective (oscillating between a quasi accomplice [*ore*] and a more “objective” view of himself) is at once a part of the narrated world and a narrator who directly addresses the reader.<sup>6</sup> Half of this narrator’s characteristic stance is that of the innocent young man dreaming of a beautiful caucasian magician, Miss Mary, for whom he feels a complex mixture of erotic longing, disgust, awe, and an infantile desire for protection and love. The other half is that of the conscious, precocious, would-be artist, through whom the author voices his ideal of a beauty rooted in the evil, decadent, and morbid. Together, the two halves reinforce Tanizaki’s idea that mastery lies in perfecting the false and fictitious (*uso*). According to Tanizaki, this form of art transcends the superficial, seizing us with an intoxicating vigor to the point of self-destruction. Such is Tanizaki’s fin de siècle theory of art, which nevertheless is supertemporal enough to thrill us with his brilliant narratives.

NOTES

1. "Uso no koto de nai to omoshiroku nai." From "Jōzetsuroku," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 30 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1981-83), 20:72.
2. Ibid. The translation is by Donald Keene, in *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 755.
3. The quotation is from the English translation, by Anthony H. Chambers, in *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi and Arrowroot* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 2. Subsequent quotations from this translation are noted by page number in the text.
4. The English translation of this reads "as he was getting all puffed up over his own poetry" (103).
5. On another level, we may detect another form of allusion to Europe. Anthony H. Chambers, in his *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki's Fiction* ([Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994], 54-55, 137, n. 14), points out that the work under discussion was in part modeled after Thomas Hardy's "Barbara, of the House of Grebe."
6. Matthias Hoop, *Doppelspiel der Narration: Text, Autor, und Protagonist in der Erzählung "Kozō no yume" von Tanizaki Jun'ichirō*, Iaponia Insula, no. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).



# The Function of Source References in *Arrowroot*

Jacqueline Pigeot

*Yoshino kuzu* (*Arrowroot*) is a classic example of a story with a complex and subtle structure. While Japanese specialists, such as Hirayama Jōji,<sup>1</sup> have published admirable studies of the work's sources, I am interested here in the function of references to sources in the work. This paper seeks therefore to contribute to the study of Tanizaki's narrative techniques, a study that has already been undertaken by researchers such as Hashimoto Yoshi'ichirō, Itō Sei, and Anthony H. Chambers.<sup>2</sup> I should like to adopt a particular perspective: the way the work unfolds and the path it takes. Tanizaki himself invites us to adopt this point of view: he regarded as essential the organization and structure of the work ("*mono no kumitatekata, kōzō no omoshirosa*").<sup>3</sup>

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*Arrowroot* contains references to different kinds of sources. I shall begin with the historical and literary ones.

First of all, it is important to note that not all the references are put into the mouth of the same character; some are given to the principal narrator, who relates the account of the excursion to Yoshino. But we know that along the way the narrator hands the narrative over to his companion, Tsumura, who becomes the second narrator (Chambers has compared them to the *waki* and the *shite* in Noh). This second narrator, too, refers to various sources.

Let us take up the story as it unfolds. The first narrator introduces himself as a novelist who wants to write a historical novel about the unfortunate Prince Jitennō (the Heavenly King), who was assassinated in the mountains of Yoshino in 1457. The novelist is going on an excursion to Yoshino with the express purpose of conducting research on the places where this historical figure lived. He has, however, already gathered ample information on Jitennō: the narrator mentions numerous documents, notably

half a dozen antique chronicles. What is the purpose of these references? They are, of course, intended to give the reader an initial picture of a land steeped in history and legend.

I should like to stress here two particular points: the first is that most of these sources (except perhaps the *Taiheiki* [*Record of the Great Peace*]), being unknown to the average Japanese reader, will not stir any echoes in him. They are, as it were, "cold" sources. The second point is that these sources are not exploited in any way. Prince Jitennō is forgotten until the last chapter, at the end of which the narrator declares that he is giving up writing his novel, as he feels "drowned in the abundance of materials."

Although the technique, which consists of presenting historical sources in the first chapter, seems to anticipate novels like *Bushūkō hiwa* (*The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*), *Kikigakishō: daini Mōmoku monogatari* (*Notes on an Interview: A Second Blind Man's Tale*), and *Shōshō Shigemoto no haha* (*Captain Shigemoto's Mother*), the difference is considerable. In the later works, a narrator exploits the sources to develop the plot, but in *Arrowroot* there is none of that. We are dealing with what I would call "sterile" sources. What, then, is their purpose in the structure of the story?

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In the second and third chapters, the narrator tours Yoshino, mentioning numerous works associated with places along the way: poems from the *Man'yōshū*, Noh and *jōruri* plays, and geographical texts from the Edo period. Most of these sources, unlike those cited earlier, are familiar and evocative to the reader. As has been pointed out, these references enrich the portrayal of Yoshino, lending literary and legendary substance to the region. Like the ancient poets, Tanizaki knows that the history of the "famous places" (*meisho*), and the legends and poems connected with it, form one of its main attractions, amplifying its emotional power.

The third series of references is entrusted to the second narrator, Tsumura, who recounts in flashback how he has found in Yoshino the family of his deceased mother. As early as the second chapter, Tsumura cites the *jōruri* play *Yoshitsune senbonzakura* (*Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*), but it is not until the fourth chapter that the references increase in frequency and are developed: here the works in question are the songs "Konkai" (*The Cry of the Fox*), which is quoted in its entirety, and three *jōruri* plays: *Ashiya Dōman ouchi kagami* (*Ashiya Dōman and the Palace Mirror*), *Tanba no Yosaku* (*Yosaku from Tanba*), and *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* again. These references appear when

Tsumura talks of his nostalgia for his mother, whom he lost as an infant. All the works to which he refers relate to the theme of the mother figure. Notable among these is the legend of a vixen separated from her human cub-child. As Chambers points out, the purpose of these references is to reinforce the central theme of the work, the quest for the lost mother.

I should like, however, to highlight two other aspects, beginning with the attitude of the second narrator toward the sources, which is very different from that of the first. For the first narrator, the texts are merely raw material: they stimulate his imagination, but he is emotionally detached from them. He has what might be called a professional relationship with them.

For Tsumura, however, the literary texts referred to have a strong emotional value, especially *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* and "The Cry of the Fox." Tanizaki focuses on Tsumura's total identification with the fictional characters that appear in these sources. Thus, regarding Tadanobu the fox:

I likened myself to fox-Tadanobu. In my imagination I was lured on by the sound of the drum on which my parent's skin was stretched, and followed Lady Shizuka through the cherry-blossom clouds of Mount Yoshino. (176-77)<sup>4</sup>

And, again, concerning the play *Yosaku from Tanba*:

The mother of my dreams was like the mother of the packhorse driver Sankichi on the stage—the splendid noblewoman Shigenoi, wearing a magnificent robe and serving as nursemaid to a daimyo's daughter; and in my dreams, I was Sankichi. (176)

We could find similar passages regarding the other sources, indicating the vital importance these literary texts hold for Tsumura. They have become part of his personality.

From the point of view of the construction of the novel, these references to well-known works or legends (as distinct from the references in the first chapter) give solidity and substance to the rather insipid Tsumura. Tanizaki defines him as "a well-bred young man," a "decent young man." A decent young man is hardly material for the hero of a novel, yet by identifying this decent young man with Tadanobu the fox—or with Abe no Seimei, son of the vixen Kuzunoha, or even with Sankichi, son of Shigenoi—Tanizaki lends him romantic stature. The references therefore play an essential part in the construction of Tsumura's character.

The second aspect I would like to touch upon concerns the structure of the plot. The sources drawn upon by Tsumura, which all deal with

separation from and nostalgia for an absent woman, seem to presage, by contrast, the conclusion of the story—that is, Tsumura's reunion with his mother: that is, reunion with the village of Kuzu (where, we are told, nothing has changed since his mother's day) and with a living replica of her in the person of his cousin Owasa, to whom he is married by the end of the work.

Thus, while the sources mentioned by the first narrator do not lead to anything positive, the sources mentioned by Tsumura point to the conclusion, connecting with it by way of a sort of reversal; nostalgic reverie is replaced by life, by a happy reality. We could perhaps deduce from this that the intensity of a dream is a necessary condition for the dream to come true: the meeting with Owasa, a perfectly real, living woman, is the fruit of long years of fervent searching in the imagination.

If we look at the narrative path of the work, we can, I think, solve the puzzle I have been talking about: why this mass of fruitless texts in the first chapter? Perhaps they are included to highlight, by contrast, references to the poetic and dramatic works, imbued as they are with Tsumura's emotion (and that of the reader). We have, then, a structure of three successive waves: first, the cold, impersonal texts, followed by works steeped in dreams and legends, and finally the happy reality.

Tanizaki is, however, too subtle a writer simply to juxtapose the two narrators as antithetical figures. The transition from one to the other is handled with great skill.

At the start of the second chapter, when the two companions arrive in Yoshino, the first narrator sees Mounts Imo and Se and refers to the famous play *Imoseyama onna teikin* (*Mount Imo and Mount Se: An Exemplary Tale of Womanly Virtue*), undoubtedly a highly important reference in Tanizaki's eyes, as it lends its title to the chapter. On this subject, the narrator harks back to his first trip into Yoshino, with his mother. Beholding the same landscape, she put him on her knee and said softly in his ear: "Do you remember the play about Imoseyama? Well, there is the real Imoseyama" (153). This is the only occasion in the whole work when the first narrator mentions either his mother or that first trip into Yoshino. From the point of view of narrative coherence, this allusion is somewhat surprising, but it seems very fitting as regards thematic development. The first narrator is introducing here, by means of a personal memory, the theme of the mother, later to be taken up and thoroughly developed by the second narrator<sup>5</sup> (just as in *Noh* one or two seemingly insignificant words from the *waki* anticipate the theme to be picked up by the *shite*). In addition, the theme of the play *Mount Imo* is not the separation of mother and son but young love. So this reference also points to the second theme of the work, Tsumura's love for Owasa.

I wonder, however, whether there is not another element in this reference, and it is with caution that I present this theory. I recently saw a bunraku presentation of *Mount Imo* at a time when I was immersed in *Arrowroot*. One detail struck me: after the two lovers have died on opposite banks of the river, Hinadori's mother decides to send her young daughter's corpse over to the other bank, to the house where her lover has died, so that they can finally be together. She places the body on a koto, which serves simultaneously as a sort of coffin and a boat in which to cross the river. At this moment, koto music is heard from the musicians' cage, the *geza*, which is used for special effects. Tanizaki loved this play so much, and saw it so many times, that he could not have failed to notice this detail. I wonder, therefore, whether the narrator's reference to seeing Imoseyama with his mother is not intended to prepare us for two important scenes later in *Arrowroot*: Tsumura's recollection of the scene of his childhood when he saw his mother playing the koto and the scene in which, at his Aunt Orito's house, he finds his mother's koto. What we seem to have, then, at the start of the account of the excursion to Yoshino, is a veiled exposition of Tsumura's "theme" in its various aspects, a sort of *fukusen* through a literary reference.

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So far, I have dealt with written sources, historical and literary. I should like now to extend my analysis to other "sources" referred to in *Arrowroot*.

*Arrowroot* is presented as the account of a double quest: the first narrator's inquiries about Jitennō and Tsumura's inquiries about his mother. Tanizaki mentions numerous sources of information upon which each character builds his search, but I shall cast aside distinctions between documentary and oral, real and fictitious sources.

What is the purpose of these references? Here is one example.

Tsumura, who, as we have seen, identifies himself with Tadanobu the fox, is interested in documents concerning this character and his partner Shizuka. Tsumura takes a particular interest in Shizuka's drum, which sports the skin of the mother vixen. This is the famous Hatsune Drum, which gives its name to the third chapter of *Arrowroot*. The character who keeps these documents, a peasant named Ōtani, therefore constitutes a first "source." This informant turns out to be incompetent; Tanizaki emphasizes that Ōtani has no idea about history and cannot provide any "solid information." To cap it all, Ōtani speaks with such a broad, rural accent that it is hard to make out what he is saying. As for the artifacts, they are of doubtful authenticity, some of them obviously being fake. The famous drum itself has lost its skin. All in all, the search is most disappointing, and so we

may wonder why Tanizaki devotes several pages to it. The answer is given at the end of the same chapter. Before leaving Ōtani's home, the two travelers eat some ripe persimmons, called *zukushi*. The description of the scene takes up a long page, ending as follows:

As I listened to this account, I gazed at the pearl of dew in my hand. It was as though the mystery and the sunshine of the mountains had congealed on my palm. I have heard that country people visiting the capital used to take packets of soil home with them as mementos; and if someone were to ask me about the color of the autumn at Yoshino, I think I would take some of these persimmons home to show.

In the end, what impressed me most at the Ōtani house were the ripers [*zukushi*], not the drum or the documents. Tsumura and I each devoured two of the sweet, syrupy persimmons, reveling in the penetrating coolness from our gums to our intestines. I filled my mouth with the Yoshino autumn. Even the mangoes of the Buddhist texts may not have tasted as good. (165-66)

Tanizaki says it here explicitly: more than the antique documents, more than the dusty archives, the best way to understand Yoshino is actually to taste these flavorful persimmons. It seems, then, that the references to sources here are intended to bring out the pure sensation of sight and taste, which proves much more "instructive" than the documents.

This transition from lifeless document to living sensation constantly recurs in *Arrowroot*. I believe this to be a deliberate technique. Without analyzing other examples, I shall briefly list some below.

In the fourth chapter, Tsumura relates his visit to the shrine at Shinoda, where he goes in search not of his real mother but of Kuzunoha, the mother vixen in the legend onto which he projects his own life story. His visit to the place where Kuzunoha is revered leaves him unsatisfied; he says it has given him "small comfort." But he continues:

On the way back, I could hear wafting here and there through the dimness of the *shōji* of the peasants' houses the clatter of looms: *tonkalali tonkalali*, a sound that filled me with unbridled nostalgia. . . . I cannot say how much the sound of those looms fulfilled my wishes.

Here the pure sensation is an auditory one—*tonkalali tonkalali*—and again it is this that, like the tasting of the persimmons, finally fulfills the character's expectations.

In the fifth chapter, Tsumura chances to find a document important for his search, a letter that his mother, when she was a geisha, received from her own mother. This letter contains several important pieces of in-

formation, notably the name of the geisha house where his mother was employed and the address of his relatives in Yoshino. Tsumura also learns that his relatives are in the papermaking business. The letter is not fully dated, however, and it mentions the names of several people whose identities are unknown. All in all, the document provides only patchy and often obscure information (the narrator emphasizes the latter point). Analysis of the content of this source, therefore, yields very modest results. Then, suddenly, Tsumura is gripped by profound emotion:

[T]he paper, though aged to a beautiful brown, was of finer texture than modern paper, and very sturdy. Tsumura held it to the light and examined the strong, thin fibers. He recalled the lines, “Your mama and Orito worked hard to make this paper. Our hands are chapped and cracked and the tips of our fingers torn.” He sensed that the paper, which was not unlike an old woman’s skin, held the blood of the woman who had borne his mother. No doubt his mother, too, when the letter arrived at the house in Shimmachi, had pressed it reverently to her heart as he had done; and so, “Bearing the fragrance of the sleeves / Of the one of old,” the letter was a doubly sweet and precious remembrance. (183)

Here, again, a sensory impression produced by an object allows Tsumura to make contact with reality.

Also in the fifth chapter, Tsumura rediscovers his mother’s family, in particular his Aunt Orito. Tanizaki emphasizes, though, that she is a deficient “source” who has only incoherent and barely audible information to offer. She is a sort of double of Ōtani. Here, again, it is a sensation that revives the image of the mother, namely, Tsumura’s discovery of her koto with its well-worn finger picks. As a “document,” this koto, like Shizuka’s drum, is a scanty source. Tanizaki emphasizes that no one knows either when or how his mother acquired the instrument or when and how it turned up in Kuzu. He is careful to point out that a letter of explanation, now lost, had originally accompanied it. Once again, we are presented with a patchy source.

The plectra were worn down from long use. Moved by the thought that his mother had slipped them on her delicate fingers, Tsumura could not resist the urge to try one of the plectra on his little finger. The scene from his childhood, an elegant woman in an inner room performing “The Cry of the Fox” with her teacher, flitted before his eyes. (190–91)

The sensation here is tactile, the contact of the finger with the worn pick; this contact not only symbolizes but also consummates the reunion with his lost mother.

I shall finish with the final scene of the work, which is brief but admirable. The first narrator, who, as we have seen, abandons his planned novel in the face of a surfeit of written sources, completes a perilous trip in search of local "sources." His inquiries, which take him into the Shionoha gorges, in fact turn out to be a perfect failure, humorously recounted by Tanizaki. The narrator has as a guide a local man who is his "source" of information. This guide is rather like Ōtani: while he knows a great deal about the traditions connected with the various sites, he, too, is a gullible individual, totally lacking in common sense and certainly not someone to believe. Moreover, as if to press home the futility of his field research, the narrator declares that the road was so dangerous that he did not even see the places he had traversed: "I lack the qualifications to describe the scenery in detail" (198). The search is meticulous, but the narrator draws a blank and returns empty-handed. The following scene describes his arrival back in Shionoha:

Just as I turned to look, someone called to me from the suspension bridge above.

"Hello!"

It was Tsumura, crossing the bridge toward me with a girl, no doubt Owasa, behind him. The bridge swayed slightly under their weight and the sound of their wooden sandals echoed in the valley. (198-99)

This clatter of *geta* filling the valley is yet another instance of lively, pure sensation. To evoke it, Tanizaki uses an onomatopoeic expression, *ko-n, ko-n*, a sound that echoes the *tonkalali tonkalali* of the looms in Shinoda. These rough, primitive noises seem to deride the historians' documents and even to outmatch "The Cry of the Fox" in expressive power. They mark the triumph of life, not only over the history recounted in the chronicles but even over legends and dreams.

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To conclude: the references to sources, as well as the repeated effect of shifting and breaking—especially the technique of preparing for the sudden, immediate, and delicious contact with life by evoking all sorts of traditional sources (history, myth, family memories)—play a striking variety of functions. A story of return to origins, *Arrowroot* also exalts the happy reality of the present moment.

#### NOTES

1. Hirayama Jōji, *Kōshō Yoshino kuzu* (Tokyo: Kyūbun Shuppan, 1983).

## The Function of Source References in *Arrowroot*

2. Hashimoto Yoshi'ichirō, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no bungaku* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1976); Itō Sei, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō no bungaku* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1970); Anthony H. Chambers, "A Study of Tanizaki's *Yoshino kuzu*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41.2 (1981): 483-505; Anthony H. Chambers, *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki's Fiction* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994).
3. See Tanizaki's 1927 "Jōzetsuroku" (Garrulous Jottings), in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 30 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1981-83), 20:69-166.
4. This quotation and most that follow are taken from the translation by Anthony H. Chambers, *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi and Arrowroot* (New York: Knopf, 1982). Page numbers in parentheses following quotations refer to this edition.
5. Hashimoto points this out in his edition of *Yoshino kuzu*, in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō shū*, *Nihon kindai bungaku taikai*, no. 30 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1971), 348, n. 1.



# Presentiments

Kōno Taeko

The individuality of a writer inevitably springs from his or her individuality as a person. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō felt strongly that this world could, and indeed must, be a paradise for his mind and senses. This trust and conviction constitute his greatest distinguishing features and also define him as a writer. What produced in Tanizaki such confidence toward this world?

From around the time that Tanizaki entered elementary school, his family's business began to suffer setbacks that led to its financial ruin. At the time, Tanizaki was just old enough to begin to grasp what was going on around him. At such an age, the final glimpse of the lifestyle of a wealthy Nihonbashi merchant family just before it faded from view must have left a strong impression on him. As he grew older, the memory of this final glimpse must have taken on yet more rich and beautiful hues, arousing feelings of longing and nostalgia. In other words, it seems that his profound attachment to this past was transformed into his conviction that the present world could, and indeed must, become the very life that had vanished.

Let me repeat here that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, both as a person and as a writer, was possessed of the trust and conviction that this world must and surely could be a paradise for his mind and senses. In his mind and with his senses, therefore, he converted this world into a paradise. It is well known that after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 Tanizaki made a temporary move to the Kansai region and soon discovered an affinity for the place. Yet, even in this case, it was not simply a matter of Tanizaki taking a liking to Kansai. He *wanted* to like Kansai; indeed, he was possessed by an overwhelming desire to like it. I call this desire of his the "desire to affirm" (*kōtei no yokubō*). Throughout his career, it was this desire to affirm that drove Tanizaki to write. Let us consider how this desire manifested itself concretely in the distinguishing features of Tanizaki's literature.

Throughout the ages and throughout the world, the experience of lost love has led many authors to write outstanding novels on love. Yet in

Tanizaki's case it was the maturation of love, or the promise of love, that aroused his desire to affirm and motivated his writing.

If this is the first characteristic of Tanizaki's literature, then the second is masochism. At this point I should present my own understanding of masochism, but since space is limited I will make do with a brief explanation. I believe masochism to be a world of affection in which it is possible to become one with a loved member of the opposite sex and that this world is enabled only by the conscious actualization of an attitude that considers this union possible. Even the faintest shadow of doubt or uncertainty, which always haunts love in its usual form, would make this impossible. In other words, masochism must be a world in which the desire to affirm is realized to perfection.

Tanizaki's third characteristic is the one I have chosen as the theme for this essay. It is what I call "presentiment." Many of Tanizaki's literary works display presentiments that were later fulfilled to a startling degree in the life he led after writing them. Needless to say, the presentiments in Tanizaki's works are always hopeful ones. I would like to speak about the three major works that fit this description: *Kami to hito to no aida* (*Between God and Man*), *Tade kuu mushi* (*Some Prefer Nettles*), and *Sasame-yuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*).

First, let me discuss *Between God and Man*. Tanizaki behaved terribly toward his first wife, Chiyo, going so far as to enter into a relationship with Chiyo's younger sister, O-Sei. Tanizaki's close friend Satō Haruo sympathized with Chiyo, whereupon feelings of love grew between Satō and Chiyo. The upshot was a mutual agreement by which Tanizaki would marry O-Sei, and Chiyo would marry Satō, who had already separated from his live-in lover. But Tanizaki suddenly rejected this agreement and broke off relations with the now angry Satō. This rupture is known as the Odawara incident. Five years later, the two were reconciled. Over the course of their renewed relations, Tanizaki realized that Satō and the woman he had subsequently married were not getting along. Tanizaki and Chiyo shared the same situation. Eventually, Satō divorced his wife. Tanizaki finally considered giving up Chiyo to Satō, to which both Satō and Chiyo agreed. The divorce and remarriage that took place among these three is known as the "wife-transfer incident" of August 1930.

Tanizaki's *Between God and Man* was written three years after the Odawara incident, before he and Satō had resumed relations. This full-length novel fictionalizes the relationship among Tanizaki, his wife Chiyo, and Satō, as described above, not from the perspective of Tanizaki but from that of Satō.

In this novel, Hozumi, a former doctor turned writer, corresponds to Satō. The writer Soeda of course corresponds with Tanizaki and the gei-

sha Teruchiyo to Chiyo. After Hozumi and Soeda have become close friends, they both take an interest in Teruchiyo, who is characterized by the artless innocence usually associated with a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old girl unacquainted with the pleasure quarters. Later, Teruchiyo finds a patron and moves to Kyoto.

After just half a year, Teruchiyo's patron dies and she returns to Tokyo. The two friends are equally attracted to her. At first, they defer to each other out of mutual consideration, but then Hozumi decides to sacrifice his love for the sake of friendship, which results in the marriage of Soeda and Teruchiyo. (Teruchiyo is this woman's professional name as a geisha; with her marriage to Soeda she ceases to be a geisha, and so hereafter I will refer to her by her given name, Asako.)

With regard to the Odawara incident—specifically the severing of relations between Tanizaki and Satō—my thoughts are as follows: there was no problem with Tanizaki separating from Chiyo, whom he no longer liked, in order to marry O-Sei, or for Satō and Chiyo to marry, since they were in love. There was mutual agreement to this effect. Why, then, did Tanizaki suddenly call off the agreement? Tanizaki had thought of the original proposition simply as a way of sharing a bit of fun with Satō and as little more than an imaginary scenario. He thought that this was understood by both Satō and Chiyo. Satō and Chiyo, however, both leaped at the offer. Tanizaki did not much like Chiyo, and he was certainly overbearing toward her, but he was not terribly averse to her, either. There was a greater reason for him to call off the agreement than any lingering attachment to Chiyo. If Satō and Chiyo were to marry, the fulfillment of their love would signify, to Tanizaki, his own failure and defeat. It was success in love, the satisfaction of the desire to affirm, that energized Tanizaki's impulse to write. Love lost could do nothing but atrophy his art. This is why he hastened to call off the agreement.

In *Between God and Man*, Soeda acquires Asako because Hozumi sacrifices his own love out of friendship. But once Soeda marries her, he seems not to cherish Asako in the least. He does nothing but bring her sadness. Eventually Hozumi is compelled to ask Soeda: "Don't you have a responsibility now to love Asako? A responsibility to Asako, and to me, as well?"

The marriage between Soeda and Asako is the achievement of Soeda's love, but since it is also the result of Hozumi having sacrificed to Soeda his own love for Asako, it would be hard to say that Soeda is love's victor on all fronts. Since he wishes to be the total victor in love, he cannot stop competing with Hozumi for Asako's love even after he has married her. Moreover, he must achieve victory under equal conditions. For Soeda, it would not be a true victory to assume first place in Asako's heart by

following Hozumi's admonishment to be a good husband. Soeda even shouts at and strikes Asako in front of Hozumi to demonstrate that she makes no effort to leave his side despite such treatment. He says things like "I'll make you happy in a moment, so just let me have my say now" or "Doesn't it trouble you two to be so trusted by me?" and then bursts into hearty laughter.

Hozumi, who finds Soeda's behavior incomprehensible and feels he is being toyed with, comes to sympathize with Asako more and more. His feelings for her intensify, and resentment toward Soeda begins to burn in him. Still, out of respect for his friend, he too wants a fair contest and will not do anything underhanded. As for Asako, she is drawn to Hozumi as well as to her husband, Soeda. She may be unable to understand Soeda, who is engaged in an all-out competition with Hozumi over her, but she cannot simply view him as a man for whom she has no feelings. Even if he is a self-centered husband, she still finds him attractive.

This contest over love is brought to an end with Hozumi's murder of Soeda. Hozumi's torment takes on frightening proportions, until he finally commits the murder. One wonders if Tanizaki thought he might be murdered by Satō. He may even have sensed that he was writing this work just in case such a thing might happen, as a final testament to save Satō and Chiyo from harm by showing that he alone was the cause of the problem.

Nevertheless, Tanizaki in no way depicts Soeda as the loser in this work. Hozumi does marry the now widowed Asako, but since he has conquered his rival by killing him Hozumi is not a true victor, and eventually pangs of conscience drive him to commit suicide. This outcome reveals the depth of Satō's friendship as well as manifesting the author's will to affirm Soeda's victory and Hozumi's ultimate defeat. The outcome is also a resentment of Tanizaki's own victory.

Six years after the completion of this novel, Satō and Chiyo married, just as Hozumi and Asako do. The marriage gives one the impression that Tanizaki, while continuing to preserve his own victory, granted Chiyo and Satō the fulfillment of their love. They remained together until Satō's death parted them thirty-four years later. After Satō's death, Tanizaki was quoted in a newspaper as saying:

When our divorce and their marriage had been finalized, and we were about to make a public announcement, Satō suffered a minor brain hemorrhage. Since Chiyo had already become Mrs. Satō, I felt sorry for her, knowing that his illness must have brought her a great deal of suffering. It took a couple of years for him to recover fully. As he recovered, he regained his acuity, but he no longer had the frightening sharpness of his youth.<sup>1</sup>

On reading these words, one feels as though some presentiment had caused Tanizaki to conclude *Between God and Man* as he did and that the conclusion was realized six years later with Chiyo and Satō's marriage and Satō's unfortunate illness—which spelled Satō's defeat as an artist and Tanizaki's victory.

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Next I will discuss the presentiments that appear in *Some Prefer Nettles*. This being such a well-known novel, I will forgo a summary of the plot and proceed directly to my reading of it. Two presentiments of the protagonist, Shiba Kaname, function throughout this work. One is that he will soon be able to reach an agreeable divorce settlement with his wife, Misako, who has already ceased to be a necessary part of his life. The second is his presentiment of the sexual possibilities that the Kansai region might offer him. At the end of the novel, the two come together in a beautiful fusion. Needless to say, in this novel Shiba Kaname represents the author, Tanizaki, and Misako his wife Chiyo.

As I have already noted, Tanizaki possessed what I call a powerful "desire to affirm." Even were he to get a divorce, he believed that, were his wife to fail later, he, too, would be plagued by unpleasantness for the rest of his life, and this belief intensified his desire that their divorce should take a positive form. This aspect of Tanizaki is reflected in Kaname. At the same time, we are also struck by Kaname's insatiable desire, meticulousness, and tenaciousness, which have led to his current situation—indeed, as the story begins, Misako already has a lover named Aso (who never makes an appearance in the novel) and her postdivorce future holds the prospect of remarriage and the start a successful new life.

Kaname's other presentiment—the one regarding the sexual possibilities that the Kansai region might offer him—was also a presentiment Tanizaki held. With Tanizaki's move to the Kansai region after the Great Kantō Earthquake, his masochism became increasingly psychological. I believe he gradually realized that the Kansai region provided optimal conditions for a psychological masochist.

Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to explain what makes the Kansai region so suitable for a psychological masochist, and so I will have to abbreviate. Although it is true that masochism is not manifest in *Some Prefer Nettles*, the novel is peppered with hints of masochistic considerations. It was when Tanizaki himself felt a strong presentiment of the sexual possibilities Kansai could offer him that he finally agreed to let Chiyo go, and he was indeed able to settle their divorce under positive conditions.

*Some Prefer Nettles* was serialized in newspapers from December 1928 to June of the next year. The action of the novel takes place over the same period. Tanizaki and Chiyo did not divorce until more than a year later. It was not until then that Satō divorced his wife and Tanizaki's only daughter, Ayuko, was told that her parents were divorcing. Yet in *Some Prefer Nettles*, which had been completed more than a year beforehand, Aso is already single, and toward the end of the novel the major task of persuading Hiroshi to accept his parents' eventual divorce has already been accomplished. But that is not all. Let us take a look at the Chinese characters used to write Misako's name. The character *mi*, signifying "beautiful," is often used in women's names. The *sa* corresponds with the *sa* in Satō Haruo's name. In other words, the name Misako alludes to a felicitous presentiment—namely, a beautiful woman married to Satō Haruo. Tanizaki's presentiments show an astonishing accuracy.

In recent years, some Japanese writers have stated the opinion that Aso represents a lover of Chiyo's other than Satō Haruo. As far as the novel is concerned, I nevertheless believe that Aso corresponds to Satō Haruo.

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Finally, I will discuss *The Makioka Sisters*. Tanizaki's drive to write this novel came from the transformation of two elements into his "desire to affirm": first, the loneliness resulting from the marriage and departure of his sister-in-law Shigeko, who was the model for Makioka Yukiko; and second, the increasingly bleak and oppressive life created by World War II. Tanizaki was motivated to write out of his desire to affirm—in this case, his irrepressible desire to recapture the time when Shigeko still lived in his home and the whole family could indulge in cultural and culinary pleasures to their hearts' content.

The peculiar ending of *The Makioka Sisters* is well known. Yukiko, who has been suffering from an upset stomach for several days, takes a night train bound for Tokyo, with her older sister Sachiko and brother-in-law Teinosuke, en route to her own wedding ceremony. The novel ends with the comment that she continued to suffer from diarrhea after boarding the train. This rather ill-omened ending leaves us apprehensive that Yukiko's marriage will not be a happy one. For Tanizaki, however, this ending is replete with his desire to affirm and manifests a truly auspicious presentiment. In fact, it was this ostensibly bizarre ending to *The Makioka Sisters* that consummated the impulse that had driven him to write the novel.

Tanizaki's life saw the ultimate fulfillment of the hopeful presentiment suggested by *The Makioka Sisters*—that Shigeko, and the unrestricted life of cultural and culinary pleasure that the family enjoyed while she was

living with them, would both return. First, the war came to an end. Then, three years later—in 1948, several months after this magnum opus was completed—Shigeko's husband Akira became ill. He died the following year. In the essay "Setsugoan yawa" (Nocturnal Musings at Setsugoan), Tanizaki writes that since her husband's death Shigeko "has spent most of the year in Atami with M-ko." "M-ko" is, of course, Matsuko, Shigeko's older sister and Tanizaki's third wife. In other words, Shigeko spent most of the year living with her sister and brother-in-law, just as she had in the past. Thus, *The Makioka Sisters* also demonstrates the highly accurate presentiments in Tanizaki's literature, which fulfill his desire to affirm. For me, this uncanny aspect of *The Makioka Sisters* makes the novel all the more beautiful.

In his youth, Tanizaki was labeled a "demonic" or "satanic" (*akumashugi*) writer by himself and others. It seems that the Japanese concept of *akuma* is quite different from the Western translation of that word as "devil" or "satan." I will have to make do by defining *akuma* as a human being who possesses frightening supernatural powers. I do not sense such powers in the young Tanizaki, however. Rather, I see him gradually turning into a demon, both as a person and as a writer, with the uncanny accuracy of the presentiments in *Between God and Man* and later works.

Tanizaki once wrote a critique of Natsume Sōseki's *Mon* in which he criticized Sōsuke's and O-yone's belief that they are suffering retribution for their sinful love as they encounter one misfortune after another. Tanizaki believed that over a lifetime karmic cause and effect was less inexorable than that encountered by Sōseki's characters.

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As I write, the cherry blossom season is approaching. When I visit Tanizaki's grave at Hōnen'in during this season, I always recall those words. Tanizaki had the gravesite built during his lifetime. It consists of two natural stones, standing slightly apart, on which the characters *kū* (emptiness) and *jaku* (quietude) have been engraved in his own calligraphy. Shigeko and Akira lie in repose under the slightly larger *kū* stone, while Tanizaki and Matsuko rest beneath *jaku*. Between the stones stands a weeping cherry tree, its pink blossoms overhanging both gravestones like a heavenly canopy. It is said that upon dying an *akuma* goes to hell, but Tanizaki declared: "It's likely that the retribution for sins during one's own lifetime is much more lax and arbitrary than that."<sup>2</sup> The sight of his grave makes me think that this presentiment, too, must have been fulfilled: it is as if, far from having fallen into hell, Tanizaki is still enjoying this world, which he turned into a paradise for his mind and senses.

Kōno

NOTES

1. "A Critique of the Gato," in *Shinshichō*, September 1910.
2. *Asahi Shinbun*, 9 May 1964.

## *The Makioka Sisters as an Emaki*

Chiba Shunji

*Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*, 1943–48), often likened to an *emaki* (literally, picture scroll), has also been called a *fūzoku emaki* (genre picture scroll) of the Shōwa period. There is a certain persuasiveness to this description, yet it is hard to pinpoint just what makes it so. Nevertheless, if representative Japanese novels, such as Natsume Sōseki's *Meian* (*Light and Darkness*, 1916), Arishima Takeo's *Aru onna* (*A Certain Woman*, 1919), and Shimazaki Tōson's *Yoakemae* (*Before the Dawn*, 1929–34), can be compared to Western oil paintings piled high with pigment, it is difficult to deny the impression that *The Makioka Sisters* is more like an *emaki*. From what does this impression derive?

*Emaki* were brought to Japan from China in ancient times and developed independently there. A large number were produced from the Heian through the Muromachi periods; *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) *emaki*, *Shigisan engi* (*History of Mount Shigi*), and *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* (*Illustrated Story of Ban Dainagon*) are some of the well-known masterpieces from this era. *Emaki* do not contain only pictures; usually, illustrations alternate with *kotobagaki* (texts explaining the pictures). The combination of *kotobagaki* and illustration forms a story describing various joys and sorrows in life based upon literary, religious, and historical material. I would argue that our present way of thinking is deeply rooted in our ancestors' sensibilities, from which developed the original pictorial and literary form known as *emaki*.

When we look at *emaki*, we move our eyes gradually from right to left, unrolling the scroll with the left hand and rolling it up with the right. At any given time, the scene between our hands extends for about sixty centimeters; as we continue to unroll and reroll, the scenes slowly shift, creating a story. The most distinctive characteristic of *emaki* is this continuously flowing sense of movement. In this respect, the scrolls are similar to motion pictures; in fact, they are sometimes called "hand-held movies."

The main difference between *emaki* and Western paintings—as well as our own *kakejiku* (hanging scrolls), *byōbue* (folding-screen pictures), and *fusumae* (paper sliding-door pictures)—lies in this flowing sense of time. While works of the other varieties can be apprehended in their entirety in a single instant, *emaki* cannot. In *The Makioka Sisters*, we have the same strong sense of time. This characteristic is, however, common to every linguistic art that evokes images linearly; we cannot say that it is peculiar to *The Makioka Sisters*. Time sense is not, therefore, the foremost reason why *The Makioka Sisters* can be likened to *emaki*.

There must be another reason, one closely connected with the episodic arrangement of *emaki*. The *kotobagaki* and paintings alternate so that, despite the continuity of the whole, the integrity of individual episodes is preserved. Moreover, even if scenes were not interrupted by *kotobagaki*, they would still not have the close continuity that would logically necessitate the progression of scenes. In this sense, *emaki* resemble *The Tale of Genji*, in which each chapter is independent while at the same time joining with the other chapters to form a unified story. Clearly, this would seem to indicate a close connection between the conceptual modes of *emaki* and those that gave rise to *The Tale of Genji*.

In *The Makioka Sisters*, as well, the connection between episodes is so slight that we can describe the novel as a collection of parallel episodes. The story is structured around the five *miai* (formal meetings between a prospective bride and groom) of Yukiko, the heroine; inserted between them are various annual events such as blossom viewing, the Doll Festival, moon and firefly viewings, and Buddhist memorial services. It is possible to skip over some of these events without missing any of the plot; at the same time, however, these episodes play important roles in suggesting the passage of time, just as the episodic scenes in *emaki* convey the flow of time. This is one of the major similarities between *The Makioka Sisters* and *emaki*.

Another similarity is narrative technique. Though related mainly from the point of view of Sachiko and her husband, Teinosuke, *The Makioka Sisters* is governed by a shadowy narrator who controls the story like the *kuroko* (stage assistant) in a kabuki play. His point of view is never fixed—even within the space of a single sentence it can change freely. On some occasions, he describes the characters from an external perspective; on others, he enters deeply into their minds. At times, he merges his point of view with that of the character in question; at others, he writes with detachment. Frequently using the introductory phrase “to tell the truth” (*aritei ni iu to*), the narrator also delves into the past to explain hidden feelings of which the characters themselves have no knowledge. Let us look, for example, at the opening passage of the novel.

“Koisan, tanomu wa—”

Kagami no naka de, rōka kara ushiro e haitte kita Taeko o miru to, jibun de eri o nurikakete ita hake o watashite, sochira wa mizu ni, me no mae ni utsutte iru nagajubansugata no, nukiemon no kao o tanin no kao no yō ni misuenagara,

“Yukiko chan shita de nani shiteru” to, Sachiko wa kiita.

“Would you do this please, Koi-san?”

Seeing in the mirror that Taeko had come up behind her, she stopped powdering her back and held out the puff; her eyes were still on the mirror, appraising the face as if it belonged to someone else;

“And where is Yukiko?” asked Sachiko.<sup>1</sup>

The novel begins suddenly with a line of conversation. Unable to identify the speaker, the reader is kept in suspense and must read on. Common sense tells us that “Sachiko,” the subject of the last sentence quoted here, should be inserted so that the earlier sentence reads, “Taeko o miru to, Sachiko wa jibun de . . .” (Seeing in the mirror that Taeko had come up behind her, Sachiko . . .). With the addition, this would become a normal declarative sentence. In Tanizaki’s version, however, we cannot grasp who the agent is in “Taeko o miru to” (Seeing Taeko) because the subject, Sachiko, comes at the end of a long sentence that includes direct speech. We find ourselves at a loss as to who is seeing (*miru*) or who is powdering her back (*jibun de eri o nurikakete*). Which way is “that way” in “without looking that way” (*sochira wa mizu ni*)? Since the agent remains obscure, the reader is forced to identify with the person who is looking in the mirror in order to grasp the meaning of this passage. Only later does it become clear that this person is Sachiko.

Whether or not this shifting narrative perspective is possible in English or other languages, it can be done in Japanese, which allows for the flexible deletion of the agent. Following the opening sentence (“Would you do this please, Koi-san?”), the viewpoint is that of the agent (Sachiko), who is looking in the mirror until “. . . belonged to someone else”; with “Sachiko asked” (*to, Sachiko wa kiita*), the viewpoint suddenly changes to that of the narrator. Thus, within a single sentence the point of view varies, never converging on a single focus.

Let us next consider the passage:

“Etchan no piano o mitageteru rashii.”

—Naruhodo, kaika de renshūkyoku no oto ga shite iru no wa, Yukiko ga saki ni mijitaku o shite shimatta tokoro de Etsuko ni tsumakatte, keiko o mite yatte iru no de arō. Etsuko wa haha ga gaishutsu suru toki demo Yukiko sae ie ni ite kurereba

otonashiku rusuban o suru ko de aru no ni, kyō wa haha to Yukiko to Taeko to, sannin ga sorotte dekakeru to iu node sukoshi kigen ga warui no de aru ga, niji ni hajimaru ensōkai ga sumi sae shitara Yukiko dake hitoashi saki ni, yūhan made ni wa kaette kite ageru to iu koto de dōyara nattoku wa shite iru no de atta.

“She is watching Etsuko practice.”

—Ah, yes, they could hear the piano downstairs: Yukiko had finished dressing early, and young Etsuko always wanted someone beside her when she practiced. She never objected when her mother went out, provided that Yukiko stayed home to keep her company; but today, with her mother and Yukiko and Taeko all dressing to go out, she was rebellious and gave her permission, very grudgingly, when they promised that Yukiko at least would come home as soon as the concert was over—it began at two—and would be with Etsuko for dinner.

Since the sentence “Naruhodo, . . . iru no de arō” is introduced by a dash and the word *naruhodo* (ah, yes), it can be inferred that, though Sachiko had not been aware of it before, the matter has become clear to her as a result of Taeko’s answer. The narrator transcribes Sachiko’s inner voice, not her spoken words—here his viewpoint merges with that of Sachiko. But what about the next sentence? At first glance we may take it as an objective explanation, but since the sentence includes *taigū hyōgen* (expressions that show the speaker’s attitude toward the object) such as “ie ni ite kurereba” and “kaette kite ageru,” as well as the preceding “keiko o mite yatte iru,” we soon realize that Sachiko’s viewpoint is involved as well. Both “ie ni ite kurereba” (stayed home [for me]) and “kaette kite ageru” (come home [for her]) reveal the giving and receiving of action: in the former, the action is Yukiko’s from Etsuko’s point of view; in the latter, the action is Yukiko’s for Etsuko from Yukiko’s point of view. We can assume, however, that this sort of everyday conversational exchange is narrated in a unified form from Sachiko’s point of view.

Is this, then, a continuation of Sachiko’s inner voice from the preceding sentence? Obviously not. If this were Sachiko’s inner voice, *haha* (mother) would be replaced with a first-person pronoun such as *jibun* or *watashi* in “Etsuko wa haha ga gaishutsu suru toki de mo” (when her mother went out). When we compare the expression “nattoku wa shite iru no de atta” (she gave her permission, very grudgingly), at the end of the passage, with “nattoku shite iru no de atta” (she gave her permission), we find that the former is very close to Sachiko’s viewpoint. Thus, the passage, though undoubtedly written from the narrator’s perspective, does take Sachiko’s viewpoint into account.

“Naa, koisan, Yukiko chan no hanashi, mata hitotsu aru nen de.”  
“So—”

Ane no erikubi kara ryōkata e kakete, Taeko wa azayakana hakeme o tsukete oshiroi o hiite ita. Kesshite nekoze de wa nai no de aru ga, nikuzuki ga yoi no de, uzutakaku moriagatteiru Sachiko no kata kara se no, nureta hada no hyōmen e akibare no akari ga sashite iru irotsuya wa, sanjū o sugita hito no yō de mo naku harikitte mieru.

“Koi-san, we have another prospect for Yukiko.”  
“Oh?”

Taeko moved the bright puff from her older sister's neck down over her back and shoulders. She is by no means round-shouldered, and yet the rich, swelling flesh of Sachiko's neck and back somehow gives a suggestion of a stoop; her moist skin, glowing warmly in the clear autumn sunlight, looks taut, making it hard to believe that she is in her thirties.

It is safe to say that this is an objective description through “Ane no erikubi kara . . . oshiroi o hiite ita” (Taeko moved . . . back and shoulders). But what about the following sentence? At first glance it appears to be an objective description of Sachiko's skin; but if it were, the end of the sentence would be “harikitte iru” (is taut) not “harikitte mieru” (looks taut). To whom does it so look? To Taeko or to the narrator? If the former, then “Sachiko no” (Sachiko's) in “Sachiko no kata kara se” (Sachiko's neck and back) should be “ane no” (older sister's) or “kanojo no” (her), and it would be normal to use the past tense. We can, therefore, regard this sentence as an observation and judgment on the part of the narrator. This looks like an example of so-called *sōshiji* (narrator's comments), often remarked upon in the study of classical Japanese literature.

There is perhaps a danger of dwelling too much on details of expressions that are peculiar to Japanese. Nevertheless, as noted above, *The Makioka Sisters* is never narrated from a fixed viewpoint. The narrator enters and leaves the object of narration; his point of view is always unstable, and he varies his distance and angle at will. This is true of the whole work, and it is this freedom of viewpoint that *The Makioka Sisters* shares with *emaki*.

Since in viewing *emaki* we continually scroll from right to left, it is natural that our viewpoint constantly shifts as well. Frequently, several images appear concurrently, forcing us to change viewpoint flexibly in order to appreciate them.

Moreover, as we see in the famous *Genji monogatari emaki*, *emaki* typically are not organized according to one-point perspective but rely in-

stead on the technique of *shatōsho*, and especially *jikusoku*, projection. *Shatōsho* is a technique in which the actual lines of a shape are drawn in parallel form on the plan, as when we look at a cube from above. In the most frequently used *jikusoku* projection, the faces of a cube are depicted as a parallelogram, with the vertical axis of the cube in the foreground. In pictures drawn according to this technique, the viewpoint is naturally plural, so that multiple perspectives overlap and intermix. Details are depicted without logical connection to or regard for the whole; autonomy of detail, rather than any unifying principle, is held in higher esteem. This characteristic, as indicated earlier, is related to the parallel narration of episodes in *emaki*.

In depicting the interior of a room by *jikusoku* projection, the artist employs a special drawing technique, called *fukinuke yatai*, in which roofs and ceilings are removed in order to show every nook and cranny of the room. The composition of a picture that employs the *fukinuke yatai* technique provides a viewpoint that treats the inside and outside of the building continuously. It resembles a narrative technique by means of which the narrator, moving his viewpoint freely, describes both the interior and the exterior of the characters. This moving viewpoint in *emaki* inevitably results in time being expressed in the pictorial space and makes the viewer sense the passage of time. Scholars of *The Tale of Genji* have recently pointed out that the style of *Genji* shares a common heritage with this technique. I would argue that the same is true of *The Makioka Sisters*.

It was just after the completion of his first translation of *The Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō set about writing *The Makioka Sisters*; thus, some influence of *Genji* on *The Makioka Sisters* is only to be expected. *Genji*'s influence is most apparent in Tanizaki's narrative style: a narrator who comes and goes through the minds of the characters, and whose perspective is never fixed, is common to both *Genji* and *emaki*. While *The Makioka Sisters* makes us think of *emaki*, modern realistic novels remind us of oil paintings. This is because the latter are centered around a theme (a vanishing point), and everything within that space (the work of art) is arranged so as to limit the reader's (viewer's) perspective to a single point. *The Makioka Sisters* never has such a vanishing point (focus). The novel allows us to sense only visceral reality grounded in the flow of time.

Incidentally, *The Tale of Genji* was almost ignored by men of letters, including Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki, from the Meiji period onward. With a few exceptions, it had little influence. As Masamune Hakuchō observed, it is safe to say that no one but old-fashioned scholars of classical literature bothered to read it. It was not until the second decade of the

Shōwa period (1936–46) that *The Tale of Genji* suddenly began to be noticed by writers such as Hori Tatsuo, Kawabata Yasunari, and, of course, Tanizaki. There is no doubt that Tanizaki's modern Japanese translation of *Genji* had a great impact, and *Genji* received greater attention in the West at around the same time with the completion of Arthur Waley's English translation. With these two events, *The Tale of Genji* began to achieve its current status in the canon of world literature.

It would seem that the main reason Japanese writers turned their attention to *Genji* at this time is that modern realism had reached a dead end. Just as Hori Tatsuo compared *Genji* with Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Japanese writers influenced by Joyce, Proust, and Gide sought new forms for the novel. They turned to *Genji* as a refuge from modern realism and, as it were, a stimulus with which to resuscitate the modern novel. In "*Shunkinshō kōgo*" (Postscript to "A Portrait of Shunkin"), Tanizaki, too, displays a deep distrust of the realistic novel of the modern period, saying, "when the novel form is used, greater adroitness brings diminished plausibility."<sup>2</sup> We must not forget that criticism of the modern realistic novel underlies Tanizaki's literary course from his first *Genji* translation to the writing of *The Makioka Sisters*.

Nakamura Shin'ichirō wrote that *The Makioka Sisters* is "geographically close to *The Tale of Genji*; and chronologically close to *À la recherche du temps perdu*." Whether or not it is the equal of Proust's novel, *The Makioka Sisters* can safely be said to recover a Japanese way of thinking and aesthetic sense central to the traditional stratum of *monogatari* but buried since the Meiji period under Western literary theories. In seeking to revive these qualities, Tanizaki strove to transcend the ossified strictures of realism, an effort that linked him to writers around the world.

#### NOTES

1. Translations from *Sasameyuki* have been adapted, by the editors, from the opening paragraphs of Edward G. Seidensticker's translation, *The Makioka Sisters* (New York: Knopf, 1957).
2. From Anthony H. Chambers's translation, "Postscript to 'A Portrait of Shunkin,'" *Monumenta Nipponica* 35.4 (winter 1980): 464.



# *The Makioka Sisters* as a Political Novel

Anthony Hood Chambers

The distaste with which Tanizaki Jun'ichirō viewed modern Tokyo is well known, but government censorship prevented him from stating one of its causes until after World War II. In August 1962, in a *waka* he inscribed on a *shikishi* for Edward Seidensticker, he blamed “rustic samurai” for ruining the city of his childhood:

Furusato wa inakazamurai ni arasarete  
mukashi no Edo no omokage mo nashi<sup>1</sup>

My hometown: by rustic samurai laid waste,  
and of old Edo not a trace remains.

In *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*), most of which he wrote during the war, Tanizaki scarcely mentions “rustic samurai” or their modern heirs, the military, but he denigrates Tokyo—their headquarters and the city they had, in his view, ruined—and holds up the Kansai (the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe region) as a more appealing alternative. I will propose here that Tanizaki indirectly made a political statement by omitting the military and its nationalistic ideology from the world of *The Makioka Sisters* and by disparaging Tokyo in contrast to the Kansai.

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A common view sees *The Makioka Sisters* as a nostalgic chronicle of upper-middle-class life in Japan just before the war, at least as that life was led by one family. Origuchi Shinobu, for example, saw *The Makioka Sisters* as a document of social history: “What is depicted here is Japan’s middle-class society,” he wrote in 1949. “The author has earned our gratitude, for the fact that at least this much was written down means that the fair dreams of the middle class, now in the process of disintegration, have been preserved

for posterity."<sup>2</sup> More recently, Donald Keene has echoed Origuchi's social-history view in saying that Tanizaki "seems intent on preserving for posterity the memory of Japan in the old days—not the Heian past or the Japan of Tanizaki's youth, but the mid-1930s, when it was still possible for people of the upper middle class to lead civilized, even cosmopolitan lives."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the Japan depicted in *The Makioka Sisters* is unrepresentative of Japan from November 1936 to April 1941, when the novel is set. The world of *The Makioka Sisters* is not "prewar," as is often said. Japan was at war in China during all but the first few months of this period, and yet Tanizaki omitted from the novel's social landscape the ultranationalism, the xenophobia, and the dominant role played by the military in Japanese society at the time. The novel's first reference to the Japanese invasion of China, which had begun in July 1937, illustrates how the narrative marginalizes such events:

The coolness of autumn had come overnight to the Kansai region. Sachiko and Teinosuke were facing each other across the breakfast table, Etsuko having left for school, and it came to Sachiko, who was reading of Japanese carrier-based raids on Swatow and Chaochow, that the coffee in the kitchen smelled better than usual.

"It is autumn," she remarked, looking up from the newspaper. (111, slightly revised; 15:180-81)<sup>4</sup>

In this passage, Tanizaki subordinates the war in China to an awareness of the changing seasons, a sensibility that has its roots in the tradition of court poetry.

Tanizaki was unable to express explicit disapproval of the military or the prevailing ideology during the war years, but one indirect form of resistance was available to him. To purge ultranationalism and militarism from the social landscape of *The Makioka Sisters* was to repudiate them and so was to take a political position. The novel's political orientation was not lost on the censors, who protested on the basis of the first few chapters that *The Makioka Sisters* "goes on and on detailing the very thing we are most supposed to be on our guard against during this period of wartime emergency: the soft, effeminate, and grossly individualistic lives of women."<sup>5</sup> In publishing the novel, according to the censors, *Chūō Kōron* "showed the rankest indifference to the war effort."<sup>6</sup> Keene suggests the subversive effect of Tanizaki's strategy when he writes that "the relaxed, gossipy atmosphere of *The Makioka Sisters* was precisely what appealed to readers bored or exhausted by the daily appeals to their patriotism."<sup>7</sup> Part of Tanizaki's strategy was to idealize the Kansai region as a gracious, cosmopolitan bal-

ance between the best of traditional Japan and the best of the modern world and to denigrate Tokyo, which in the novel stands for everything unappealing about the new Japan.

In the late 1930s, a case could still have been made that Kyoto and Osaka remained the cultural and mercantile heart of the country, while Tokyo—the center of military culture since the Edo period and more recently the prime destination of ambitious rustics—might still have been seen as a cultural backwater. In writing *The Makioka Sisters*, Tanizaki built on these perceptions of Kansai and Kanto. As Nakamura Shin'ichirō has written: “The distance between Tokyo and Osaka has, in this novel, been made far greater than it really is.”<sup>8</sup> The Kansai of *The Makioka Sisters* is an “alternative Japan”: the Japan of middle-class Kansai, a modern heir to the aristocratic culture of Kyoto and the mercantile culture of Osaka, and the epitome of a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, modern Japan. In *The Makioka Sisters*, Kansai people compose *waka*. They make a ritual of viewing cherry blossoms. They study Japanese dance in a rarefied, almost extinct, Osaka form. That other major strand of Japanese tradition—the military—is an important part of Kansai history, too, but it has no place in the Makiokas' lives. What is more, the Makiokas' Kansai is modern and cosmopolitan: the family has German neighbors and Russian friends and Yukiko knows Western music better than Japanese. The Makiokas love their Kansai and deplore Tokyo. From their perspective, Tokyo—formerly the shogun's capital in the eastern hinterlands and now the seat of a xenophobic, militaristic government and symbol of the new Japan—is “a distant, utterly foreign country” (217; 15:356). In this view, the novel's view, Kansai is the true Japan. Tokyo is an aberration.

The Makiokas' garden at Ashiya is a microcosm of their “alternative Japan,” a comforting embodiment of both court tradition and cosmopolitanism. The litany of flowers that recurs in each garden scene recalls the fixed routine of cherry-blossom excursions and the family's other courtly *nenjūgyōji*. Sachiko has even had a cherry tree planted in the garden because she wants “to go cherry viewing at home” (84; 15:136). In Sachiko's world, the common association of cherry blossoms with samurai is never made.<sup>9</sup> The garden is cosmopolitan as well, harboring foreign plants and serving as a common ground where the Makiokas socialize with their European neighbors. And the garden is a soothing retreat from flood and typhoon, distressing news, quarrels—and especially a retreat from Tokyo. Each time we see Yukiko in the garden, she is rejoicing to be in the Kansai and either relieved to be back from Tokyo or dreading a visit there.

The symbolic import of the garden is clearest after the flood of July 1938. Sachiko is the first to discover the garden's changelessness:

As the sun came out, Sachiko went down from the terrace into the garden. Two white butterflies were dancing over the lawn, which was greener and fresher for the rain. Among the weeds between the sandalwood and the lilac a pigeon was fishing for something in the puddles. The tranquil scene carried not a hint that there had been a flood. (180; 15:295)

Yukiko, too, heads for the garden when she returns from Tokyo just after the flood:

From the cab window, the damage around Narihira Bridge had seemed worse than she expected, but here everything was as it had always been. Not a leaf was disturbed. In the evening calm, hardly a breath of air touched the garden. The heat was intense, and the quiet gave the light and dark greens of the foliage a special limpidity. The green of the lawn seemed to rise up and flow through her. (201; 15:331)

“The tranquil scene carried not a hint that there had been a flood. . . . Everything was as it had always been.” Such a garden is impossible if the description is taken literally. The Makiokas’ garden is, rather, a microcosm of an ideal world.

The garden at Ashiya is specifically juxtaposed with Tokyo. The following passage both reinforces the garden’s role as a microcosm of the Kansai and contrasts the garden and the Kansai with Tokyo. Sachiko is just back from a distressing stay in Tokyo:

These last two or three days she had felt an intense affection for the familiar garden. It was good to go away now and then. Possibly because she was not used to travelling, she felt that she had been away at least a month, though it had been only ten days. She remembered how Yukiko treasured every minute, how she would walk through the garden, stopping here and there, when she had to go back to Tokyo. Yukiko was not the only one. Sachiko, too, was a pure child of the Kansai, and she now understood how deeply attached she was to the Kansai region. This was a most unremarkable little garden, but even here, smelling the pines, looking at the Rokkō mountains and the clear sky, she thought that there could be no finer place to live than here between Kobe and Osaka. How unpleasant Tokyo was, how dusty, gray, pushing. (243, somewhat revised; 15:398–99)

In the eyes of Sachiko, whose values represent the norm in *The Makioka Sisters*, Tokyo’s only redeeming features are the kabuki theater—a relic of the merchant-class tradition—and embodiments of the court tradition, the emperor and his palace. Tokyo is alien to Sachiko in every other

respect, as the following demonstrates. Here, too, Tokyo is contrasted with an idealized Kansai:

There was something dry and harsh in the Tokyo air that made Sachiko sure she would always be a stranger there. . . . It was as though she had come to a distant, utterly foreign country. . . . [T]he streets seemed to her quite unlike those of Kyoto and Osaka and Kobe—they seemed rather like what one would expect in a frontier city in Hokkaido, or even in Manchuria. . . . Why . . . was it so lacking in warmth; why were the faces so cold and white? Sachiko thought of the brightness of the sky and the earth in her own Ashiya, and of the softness of the Ashiya air against her skin. If this were Kyoto, she would feel at home in a street she was seeing for the first time. She would even want to stop for a chat with someone. But in Tokyo, wherever she went and however diligently she searched, she never felt that she had ties. She was an alien. (217, somewhat revised; 15:356–57)<sup>10</sup>

Sachiko's destination in Tokyo is Tsuruko's house at Shibuya. New and superficially attractive but cramped, drafty, and unstable, the house is an appropriate emblem of the Tokyo of the novel. The most telling detail of all is that Tsuruko's house has no garden.

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To summarize: In *The Makioka Sisters* Tanizaki repudiates Japanese ultranationalism and militarism by minimizing their role in the Makiokas' world and by extolling the Kansai region, in contrast to Tokyo, as a cosmopolitan, nonmilitary version of Japan that preserves the best of premodern tradition and enjoys the best of the modern world. In this sense, *The Makioka Sisters* is not "an escape from reality" (as Nakamura calls it)<sup>11</sup> but, in the context of the war years, a subversive reminder of the nonmilitary roots of Japanese culture and a sort of "secret history" of Japan from 1936 to 1941.

The controlling image of the novel, given in the title *Sasameyuki* ("lightly falling snow"), suggests that the Makiokas' Kansai is a world on the brink, a forest of cherries still in bloom but already beginning to flutter to the ground like snow. Though the Makiokas turn to their garden for solace, they know that the blossoms will fall and their world is changing. Teinosuke's poem at the end of chapter 19—at the conclusion of the definitive blossom-viewing excursion—expresses a wistful desire to preserve the Makiokas' vision of Japanese society:

Ito semete hanamigoromo ni hanabira o  
himete okamashi haru no nagori ni (15:146)<sup>12</sup>

Let me hide at least a petal  
 In the sleeve of my flower-viewing robe,  
 That we may remember the spring. (91)<sup>13</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō kashū* (Osaka: Yukawa Shobō, 1977), 348. Tanizaki echoes another man of aristocratic taste, Kamo no Chōmei, who lamented military influence on an earlier capital: "I could see on the roads men on horseback who should have been riding in carriages; instead of wearing court robes they were in simple service dress. The manners of the capital had suddenly changed and were now exactly like those of rustic soldiers" (Kamo no Chōmei, *Hōjōki [An Account of My Hut]*). The translation is by Donald Keene, in Donald Keene, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (New York: Grove, 1955), 200–201. Tanizaki's disdain for the military had a long history. In 1903, when he was seventeen, he wrote: "Ever since I was a small child I had disliked military men most of all human beings" (from "Shunpū shūu roku," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. [Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966–70], 24:76, translated by Donald Keene in *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984], 724).
2. Origuchi Shinobu, "Sasameyuki no onna," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō*, *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho*, no. 46 (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1972), 55. The translation is by Ken K. Ito, in *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 192.
3. Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 775. The late 1930s would be more precise.
4. Numbers following quotations and paraphrases from the novel refer to the page numbers in Edward G. Seidensticker's translation, *The Makioka Sisters* (New York: Knopf, 1957), from which all quotations are taken, and to volume and page numbers in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*.
5. Hatanaka Shigeo, *Oboegaki: Shōwa shuppan dan'atsu shōshi* (Tokyo: Tosho Shinbun, 1965), 166. The translation is by Jay Rubin, in *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), 264.
6. Hatanaka, *Oboegaki*, 166; Rubin, *Injurious*, 264.
7. Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 774.
8. Nakamura Shin'ichirō, "Tanizaki to Sasameyuki," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō*, 57. Nakamura uses the phrase "alternative Japan" (*mō hitotsu no shin no Nihon*) on p. 58.
9. The proverb "hana wa sakuragi hito wa bushi" appears as early as the *Kanadehon Chūshingura* of 1748.
10. The reality was different. Tanizaki Matsuko, on whom the character of Sachiko is based, told me that her first impression of Tokyo, in 1923, was of a city much greener than Osaka. Far from loathing Tokyo, she lived there and in nearby Yugawara for all of the twenty-five years she survived her husband.
11. Nakamura, "Tanizaki to Sasameyuki," 57.
12. Tanizaki Matsuko told me that she herself was the author of this and all the other *waka* in *Sasameyuki*. Tanizaki appears to have attached special significance to the poem. He chose it as his flyleaf inscription for at least one gift copy of *Sasameyuki*. It is also significant that he planned to cease serialization of *Sasameyuki* after the June 1943 installment, which ends with this poem. (In any event, serialization ended, with the March 1943 issue, at chapter 13.) For all he knew in the spring of 1943, chapter 19 might be the last to see print, and this poem might mark the end of the novel. Even under the best of circumstances, this passage would have been the last his readers would see until the end of the war. I am indebted to Chiba Shunji's "Sasameyuki ron" (*Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 52.4 [April 1987]: 131–44) for drawing my attention to these circumstances.
13. I have changed "I" in line 3 of Seidensticker's translation to "we."

# Illness, Disease, and Medicine in Three Novels by Tanizaki

William Johnston

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's short story "Kyōfu" (Terror, 1913) begins: "It was early last June while I was in Kyoto that the illness menaced me."<sup>1</sup> With this line, Tanizaki introduces not only a story but a theme that he contemplates in fiction and other writings throughout his career. That theme is illness and, by extension, disease and medicine. Although "Terror" focuses on a mental illness, Eisenbahnkrankheit or "fear of railways" (literally, railroad disease), its manifestations are both powerful and central to the story. Another early short story, "Aoi hana" (Aguri, 1922), starts with the line "*Getting a bit thinner, aren't you? Is anything wrong? You're not looking well these days . . .*" (italics in the original).<sup>2</sup> When this was written, most people in Japan would have associated the central character's loss of weight and fatigue with the threat of tuberculosis, a disease that Tanizaki uses more explicitly in yet another early story, "Itansha no kanashimi" (Sorrows of a Heretic, 1917).

Tanizaki portrayed illness, disease, and medicine in his later fiction as well. Although comparing his use of these themes in earlier and later works would be a worthy project, this essay focuses rather on how he uses them in three later works: *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*, 1943–48), *Kagi* (*The Key*, 1956), and *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62). The final scenes in these works provide an apt introduction to his use of pathological and medical themes in each.

At the end of *The Makioka Sisters*, one of the book's central characters, the elegant and reticent Yukiko, suffers from diarrhea while on the train from Kyoto to Tokyo, where she plans to marry. *The Key*, written in the form of two diaries, ends with Ikuko, one of the two diarists, elated over the death of her husband, the other diarist, as a result of his conscious mismanagement of his high blood pressure. The title of the third work—*Diary of a Mad Old Man*—by itself implies the pathological thread that ties the book together, although not all of the illnesses involved are mental.

This novel ends with a passage written by the protagonist's daughter, who describes the treatment of her father's angina pectoris after a stroke. Although none of these works begins with illness as clearly as "Terror" and "Aguri" do, disease and its treatment become integral to each novel by the end. Their plots unfold according to the interplay of illness, disease, and medicine among their characters. Hence, to understand the significance of these themes, a reading of these works must adopt the perspective of the mid-twentieth-century Japanese reader for whom Tanizaki wrote. While this paper does not pretend to offer an exhaustive discussion of the medical aspects pertinent to these three novels, it does attempt to outline their main roles.

#### DISEASES OF A FAMILY IN DECLINE

As the most complex and lengthy of the three novels, *The Makioka Sisters* makes the most intricate and developed use of illness, disease, and medicine. Consistent with his treatment of other themes and issues, Tanizaki uses these in subtle ways.

In the first two-thirds of *The Makioka Sisters*, the Makioka family hides a secret, both from outsiders and from the reader, that is central to the novel: the disease that has killed the sisters' mother. In taking her life, this disease has sown seeds of decline (though by no means the only ones) in the family long before any of the sisters has come of age. Both explicitly and implicitly it plagues the Makiokas' attempts to find Yukiko a husband.

The effect of this disease on the family is clearly revealed only after several failed attempts to find a suitable marriage partner for Yukiko, when the Makioka family receives word that Mr. Sawazaki, an eligible Nagoya millionaire, is interested in her. Arrangements are made for a luncheon at which Yukiko could meet him, but when the parties assemble Sawazaki's dress and demeanor show that he has little real interest in a match. He leaves without any discussion of further contact. Being snubbed in this way has devastating effects on the family: "Never before had the Makiokas been so humbled. Always they had felt that the advantage was with them, that the other side was courting their favor—always it had been their role to judge the man and find him lacking."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the narrative does not state explicitly why Sawazaki so abruptly rejects Yukiko.

Soon after this incident, more than two-thirds of the way through the novel, we discover the contents of this Makioka family secret and, by implication, not only the reason for Sawazaki's abrupt rejection of Yukiko but for other events as well. While making preparations for memorial services to mark the twenty-second anniversary of her death, Sachiko reminisces on her mother's last days:

The circumstances of her mother's illness and death had something to do with the fact that Sachiko, fourteen at the time, saw her mother as fresher and younger than she actually was. Though victims of consumption often become repulsively pallid and emaciated, Sachiko's mother preserved a strange charm to the end. Her face, a cleaner white, took on no shadow, and her hands and feet, thin though they were, still carried a warm glow. She had fallen ill shortly after Taeko's birth. . . . There was a telephone call one morning, and she was dead shortly after Sachiko and the rest arrived at her bedside. The autumn rain, which had been falling for several days, beat against the glass doors at the veranda. The little garden sloped gently off to a mountain stream and all down the slope autumn *hagi*, beginning to shed its blossoms, was pounded at by the rain. With the water rising and people talking excitedly of a flood, the sound of the rushing water was far stronger in their ears than the sound of the rain. Sachiko would tremble as a stone in the bed of the stream, grinding against another, shook the foundations of the house, and she would wonder what to do if there should indeed be a flood. But at the sight of the quiet, utterly tranquil face of her mother going away as the morning dew, she quite forgot her fears, and felt as though something cool had swept over her, as though she were being drawn in by a vision and washed clean.<sup>4</sup>

This passage arguably deserves the praise that the literary critic Nakamura Shin'ichirō has given to the description of Taeko as she lay suffering from dysentery: it is of "infinite beauty," one that could "arouse envy in Proust."<sup>5</sup> It is also a passage that reveals the irony of the Makioka family's attitude toward its decline.

This irony would have been obvious to many contemporary readers, for whom *haibyō*, or consumption, as pulmonary tuberculosis was commonly called in Japan until the 1950s, was a familiar disease. Not only was the disease familiar, but so were its social implications, which since the 1950s have been largely forgotten. Tuberculosis was Japan's largest single cause of mortality during the first half of the twentieth century. Along with insanity, leprosy, and syphilis, it was a disease that most Japanese considered hereditary—a sign of "tainted blood"—despite the discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1880. Admission that a family member had tuberculosis made the entire family line suspect, and prospects dimmed for the marriage of eligible family members. As is well known, and as we see on several occasions in *The Makioka Sisters*, investigation not only of prospective marriage partners but of their families was a common practice in prewar Japan, and it was standard practice for private investigators to examine the death certificates (which were public documents) of deceased family members to see if anybody had died of a "suspect" disease.<sup>6</sup>

A reading of *The Makioka Sisters* with this in mind gives several passages a significance that might otherwise be overlooked. Early in the novel, we discover that Yukiko's physique, despite her good health, has portentous meaning: "Her arms were very little fuller than Etsuko's, and the fact that she looked as though she might come down with tuberculosis [*mune no yamai*] at almost any time had helped frighten off prospective husbands."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, through an intermediary the family does find a prospective husband for Yukiko, a Mr. Segoshi. Ostensibly because of Yukiko's delicate build—but implicitly because he has investigated the Makioka family's medical history and discovered that Yukiko's mother had died of tuberculosis—Segoshi inquires into Yukiko's health. The family has an X-ray taken to show that her lungs are clear; all seems to be going well when the Makiokas' own investigations reveal that Mr. Segoshi's mother has what today might be diagnosed as Alzheimer's disease. As a result, the Makiokas break off negotiations for what Teinosuke calls a "good reason." Later, Teinosuke and the intermediary, Mrs. Itani, agree that "Mr. Segoshi probably thought they already knew about his mother."<sup>8</sup> What remains unstated is that Segoshi also probably knows about Yukiko's mother and assumes that a tacit agreement has been reached mutually to overlook their mothers' blood-tainting diseases. Instead, the Makiokas see nothing out of place in their family and remain far more worried about a cosmetic spot on Yukiko's eye than about the shadow that their mother's death casts on their fortunes. Soon after this episode, Sachiko comes down with a cold, and we discover that she has a susceptibility to bronchitis, which easily can become pneumonia; at the time, both diseases were also euphemisms for tuberculosis.

In this light, it is not surprising that Sawazaki abruptly cuts off negotiations with the Makiokas. A man of his means could not be expected to negotiate a marriage without first having conducted a thorough investigation of his prospective mate's family, an investigation that would reveal their mother's death from tuberculosis.

The circumstances surrounding the death of the Makioka sisters' mother raises several moral and ethical issues, the most important of which arguably concerns their memory of the past and vision of the present. If it is true that Yukiko's appearance made her look "as though she might come down with tuberculosis" and had "helped frighten off prospective husbands," as we are told early in the novel, then it can hardly be true that until their experience with Sawazaki "it had been their role to judge the man and find him lacking." Sachiko's remembrances of her mother's death also raise the issue of the relationship between vision and memory. As an adolescent girl at the time, she had wanted to see her mother's death as something beauti-

ful. Sachiko “saw her mother as fresher and younger than she actually was,” and when her mother finally died Sachiko felt “as though she were being drawn in by a vision and washed clean.” Yet at the same time the rising waters outside are shaking the foundations of the house. Her mother’s death—at least as she remembers it—does not reflect the reality of the painful and drawn-out death that most persons who died of tuberculosis experienced, a much more accurate depiction of which appears in Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*.<sup>9</sup> Sachiko’s vision of her mother’s death is a far cry from the scene that was the object of Nakamura Shin’ichirō’s praise, in which Taeko lies ill with dysentery and possibly with anthrax. The most telling difference is one of cleanliness:

It was natural that Taeko, unable to bathe, should be a little dirty, but there seemed to be rather a special kind of uncleanness about her. Ordinarily she was able to hide the effects of her misbehavior under cosmetics. Now, as a result of the emaciation, a certain darkness, a shadow of what one might call dissoluteness, had come over the face and throat and wrists. It must not be supposed that Sachiko was immediately conscious of all this, but there her sister lay, like a charity patient picked up in a gutter, her arms lifeless on the bed, as though she were quite exhausted from something besides the dysentery, from her intemperance over the years. A woman Taeko’s age, long in bed, often seems to revert to the pretty little girl she was at twelve or thirteen, to take on a cleanness, a spiritual quality almost. With Taeko it was the opposite: she had lost her youthfulness, and she even looked older than she was.<sup>10</sup>

As in the passage depicting the death of the Makioka sisters’ mother, this does not describe events as much as it describes the way Sachiko sees them—or rather wants to see them. As Ken K. Ito points out:

[T]he description of Taeko emphasizes nothing so much as the way Sachiko’s aesthetic values accord with her standards of morality. She sees little of beauty in her sick sister. Beauty for her means the light and purity of the Ashiya atmosphere. Darkness, shadows, and muddiness merely function to emphasize the repugnance of disease, defilement, and moral lassitude.<sup>11</sup>

As Ito implies, disease by itself is not repugnant to Sachiko; by itself it does not signify defilement, as her own recollection of her mother’s death shows. Rather, it is moral lassitude that makes Taeko’s disease repugnant and emblematic of her defilement. The same is true of Taeko’s miscarriage, which occurs just as the Makiokas finally succeed in arranging Yukiko’s marriage to the illegitimate son of an old court aristocrat.

A juxtaposition of Sachiko's vision of her mother's and Taeko's sick-bed scenes reveals one of this novel's ironies. Sachiko's memory of her dead mother's face has made her "forget her fears" and feel "as though she were being drawn in by a vision and washed clean." But this vision is a chimera, an idealized view of the past. In fact, her mother's disease is itself a cause of the Makiokas' decline. However, Taeko's illness makes Sachiko see "a shadow of what one might call dissoluteness." But it is Taeko, with her dissoluteness and her all too real afflictions, who most clearly reflects the Makioka family's present and future.

Those who see in this novel simply an idealized vision of bourgeois life in prewar and early World War II Japan have overlooked the ironies that Tanizaki depicts in that life. The Makioka family is shot through with disease—a fitting situation in that the family has entered the shadowy domain between prosperity and decline and is closer to the latter than the former. Until the novel's final pages, Yukiko is the healthiest member of the family. But on the train, on her way to meet her future husband, she is afflicted with diarrhea, a disease more similar to Taeko's than the one that killed her mother. Thus, at the end of *The Makioka Sisters*, we find the reality of a defiled but living present finally overtaking the vision, indeed the illusion, of a pure but dead past.

#### THE UNION OF EROS AND THANATOS IN *THE KEY*

*The Key* explores how sadomasochism first revives and then annihilates the flagging relationship of a married couple. The story revolves around the surreptitious communication between the two protagonists through their hidden diaries; husband and wife each correctly assumes that the other is reading her or his diary. This narrative structure recounts both concrete events in the lives of Ikuko and her husband (who remains nameless throughout) and the inner voices of each, but it also creates an ambiguity between the reality of concrete events and the illusions of the protagonists' inner voices. At times, it is impossible to distinguish fact and fiction. Toward the end of the novel, Ikuko tells the reader that on at least one occasion she has deliberately recorded misleading information in her diary.

The ambiguous lines between reality and fantasy in *The Key* by no means diminish the importance of illness, disease, and medicine in this work. On the contrary, the ambiguity demonstrates how these themes work on both sides of the boundary between reality and fantasy. For example, Ikuko writes in her diary entry for 10 April:

I don't know whether I ought to mention it, or what may happen if he reads this, but the truth is, he isn't the only one whose health

is bad. I'm not much better off myself. I began to be aware of it in January. Years ago, of course, when Toshiko was about ten, I started coughing up traces of blood, and the doctor warned me that I was showing symptoms of tuberculosis. But since that had turned out to be a mild case, I didn't worry too much about these new symptoms.<sup>12</sup>

This passage leads the reader to believe that Ikuko herself is ill with tuberculosis. Despite Ikuko's insistence that her case was a mild one, and the postwar advent of antibiotics, many Japanese people in 1956 still considered tuberculosis a threat to life and well-being. As a result, even a brief mention of the disease in this narrative would have been an unmistakable flag to the contemporary reader. It signals yet another move in the sadomasochistic dance between life and death that holds Ikuko and her husband together. This move simultaneously reflects Ikuko's illusion and feeds her husband's fantasy, bringing them both closer to the ultimate reality of his death.

On 11 June, Ikuko reveals that her diary entry of 10 April was misleading: "Of course I wasn't at all sick."<sup>13</sup> With regard to other statements about her health, in which she has described more advanced signs and symptoms of tuberculosis, she writes: "Those were all downright lies. I was trying to lure him into the shadow of death. I wanted him to think I was gambling my own life, and that he ought to be willing to risk his."<sup>14</sup> Ikuko uses deception as a murder weapon; her husband uses deception as a suicide weapon. In the end, both achieve their goal.

The husband, whose health remains generally unremarkable in the first half of the novel, writes on 28 March about the findings of his physical exam that day. Both systolic and diastolic readings were, he writes, "around two hundred." His physician, Dr. Noma, tells him that he must give up sex, alcohol, salty foods, and stimulants.<sup>15</sup> So far, the husband has experienced a growing sexual interest in his wife, paralleling an apparently increased interest in life itself. When the physician tells him that he must give up sex, then, it becomes clear that he must choose either a sexual life that is intense but dangerous or a nonsexual life that is dull but safe. In a series of conscious choices, the husband decides to continue sexual relations with Ikuko and also to indulge in the occasional drink of alcohol and meal of nearly raw meat and other foods that would exacerbate his high blood pressure. He knows that his physicians fear for his life should he not change his habits, but he decides not to modify his lifestyle. As a result, he suffers a stroke during sexual intercourse.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the husband brings about a union of life and death, of Eros and Thanatos.

Tanizaki's descriptions of the husband's illnesses are realistic and based on his own experience with high blood pressure. Unlike the husband

in *The Key*, however, Tanizaki followed his physicians' advice, and his condition did not become life threatening.<sup>17</sup>

The unfolding of *The Key* depends entirely upon the husband's medical condition and his deliberately suicidal manipulation of it. His grasp of life depends upon his walking eagerly into a suicidal situation.

#### FOOT FETISH AS LIFELINE

Whereas the diary entries in *The Key* carry the reader through two interwoven sexual journeys toward one person's death, *Diary of a Mad Old Man* depicts how an old man's foot fetish becomes his lifeline. Tanizaki challenges popular notions of sexual perversion and normality by making a lifeline out of a foot fetish.

Of the three novels I discuss here, *Diary of a Mad Old Man* is the most thoroughly medical. The diary of Utsugi Tokusuke, the "mad old man" of the title, focuses in particular upon two main topics in his life: his relationship with his daughter-in-law and his health. This is not to say that Utsugi's diary lacks the ambiguities between reality and illusion that pervade *The Key*. At the beginning of the novel, Utsugi states: "I have no homosexual inclinations." Yet after reflecting on the issue for a few more lines he concludes: "I must admit to a certain [homosexual] inclination."<sup>18</sup> After this, he proceeds to recount his "single" homosexual experience. Given Utsugi's initial denial of any such inclinations, however, the reader can only wonder whether he has indeed had only one homosexual experience or if he is revealing only a glimpse of a facet of his sexual life that would otherwise remain hidden.

In this context, we find Utsugi at the beginning of the novel going to a kabuki performance, where he becomes cold and uncomfortable, in order to watch his favorite male actors playing the parts of women. Yet the issue here is not one of homosexuality but rather one of sexuality. The outing is a manifestation of his will to live. Utsugi endures his pains and illnesses only so that he can enjoy certain pleasures, which become his sole purpose in life. In this performance, the pleasure is in watching men become some of the most feminine of women; later in the novel, the intense pleasure he receives from sucking on his daughter-in-law's foot helps him overcome various pains and discomforts. In each case, the pleasure he receives is a basic, life-giving force, one whose absence gives him the desire to live through illness in order to obtain yet more pleasure.

Utsugi's illnesses thus become integral to the novel. We see them as forces that oppose his will to live. Without his illnesses, Utsugi would be little more than a hedonist telling the story of his pleasures and flirtations.

Because of his afflictions, however, he is a man engaged in a struggle for life itself. At his age (the novel implies that he is in his seventies), every infirmity becomes something of a memento mori. Since these constant reminders of death are integral to the narrative in this way, it is hardly surprising that Tanizaki describes Utsugi's afflictions in detail. As the novel proceeds, the afflictions progress from rheumatism and the sequelae from a stroke that he has suffered earlier in his life to high blood pressure, another stroke, and finally angina pectoris. Other characters describe Utsugi's health at the end of the novel. His attending physician goes so far as to speculate that the chest pains from which Utsugi suffers are "neurotic," implying that the symptoms of angina are of his own psychological making and without somatic basis.<sup>19</sup>

Once again, this implication directs the reader's attention to the importance to the narrative of Utsugi's illnesses and afflictions. Rather than being life threatening, Utsugi's illnesses indirectly become life giving. Early in the novel he writes in his diary: "It's odd, but even when I am in pain I have a sexual urge. Perhaps especially when I am in pain."<sup>20</sup> For most people, old age and the pains that may accompany it lead toward death, which becomes a release from pain; yet in this narrative the pains of old age only reinforce Utsugi's sexual urge and strengthen his already tenacious hold on life.

By constructing *Diary of a Mad Old Man* in this way, Tanizaki once again demonstrates his use of irony and his ability to stand the conventional world on its head. As the title implies, Utsugi's main "illness" is his "madness." (The Japanese word for illness in the title, *fūten*, carries more of a clinical nuance than does the English word "madness.") According to the report of an attending nurse, a psychiatrist has evaluated Utsugi as follows:

The doctor gave them the opinion that the old gentleman was subject to what might be called abnormal sexual impulses: at present his condition was not serious enough for him to be considered mentally ill; it was just that he constantly needed to feel sexual desire, and in view of the fact that it helped to keep him alive you had to take that into account in your behavior toward him.<sup>21</sup>

Portrayed in the role of a modern authority figure, the physician appears as the possessor of superior knowledge in the form of science. He observes that the "old gentleman" has "abnormal sex impulses." But on what does the physician's science base its concept of "normality"? In the early 1960s, many Japanese still maintained a view of sexual pathology

based on the ideas of Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902). This German psychiatrist published the first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, his classic work on sexual deviancy, in 1886; it remained in print forty years later. Japanese editions had appeared by the early twentieth century, and the book remained the basis for ideas concerning sexual deviancy until recent times. According to Krafft-Ebing, foot fetishism was decidedly abnormal; most Japanese, in accepting the authority of modern medical science, also accepted his definitions.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Krafft-Ebing's notions of normality were above all the subjective, moral judgments of his gender, race, age, class, and time. The only "normal" sexuality for Krafft-Ebing was the heterosexual love found in marriage. He classified all other forms of sexual love as abnormal according to a sliding scale of abnormality. As a result, he interpreted homosexual love and sexual practices that involved any form of fetishism, and especially foot fetishism, as pathological behavior. Unlike the case of most other pathologies, however, it is not clear what harm is done, or to whom, as a result of the practice of foot fetishism. Neither the fetishist nor the person whose foot becomes the object of adoration suffers any dysfunctional consequences (other than cultural scorn) as a result of the fetishism. Nevertheless, textbook psychiatry in Japan during much of the twentieth century has continued to use Krafft-Ebing's model of "normal" and "pathological" sexuality.<sup>23</sup>

This is precisely the point where Tanizaki stands the moralistic thinking of modern medicine on its head. On the one hand, Utsugi's attending psychiatrist cannot avoid declaring his patient's sexual behavior abnormal. In the psychiatrist's eyes, Utsugi's madness is indeed medical and pathological, even if not so severe as to call for institutionalization. On the other hand, Utsugi's psychiatrist also observes that his patient's constant sexual desire keeps him alive. One cannot help but ask (even if rhetorically) how is it that Utsugi's "pathological" behavior—his foot fetish—is so beneficial to his health. In the end, it is not Utsugi's behavior that is pathological but rather the value system that calls him "mad" for being in touch with his sexual impulses. Thus, when Utsugi's fetish is placed in the context of contemporary Japanese psychopathology, the irony of *Diary of a Mad Old Man* comes into sharper focus.

#### CONCLUSION

Recognition of Tanizaki's use of illness, disease, and medicine in the context of contemporary understandings is a powerful tool that enables insights into his texts that readers otherwise would miss. All three of the

novels discussed here contain subtle ironies that become visible when the texts are considered in the context of contemporary medical thought. In all three novels, Tanizaki demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of contemporary medical ideas and practices. He uses details such as the names of specific symptoms, diseases, and medicines to create a texture that is both rich and realistic. Yet these aspects of his novels become fully accessible only when the reader grasps contemporary nuances of illness, disease, and medicine.

This essay does not illuminate these themes completely in the three works examined, much less throughout Tanizaki's work. Rather, I would like to encourage readers to question Tanizaki's use of illness, disease, and medicine in his works and to endeavor to place these issues in a context that is as close as possible to that in which his contemporaries understood his works. By doing so, our understanding of Tanizaki's already rich use of irony in his fiction becomes even more profound.

#### NOTES

1. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, "Terror," in *Seven Japanese Tales*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1963), 85.
2. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, "Aguri," in *Seven Japanese Tales*, 186.
3. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *The Makioka Sisters*, translated by Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Knopf, 1957), 356.
4. *Ibid.*, 362–63. I have modified the translation of the original *haibyō* to read "consumption." In contemporary Japanese usage, *haibyō* was a translation of the German term *Lungenkrankheit*, a euphemism for "pulmonary consumption."
5. Quoted in Ken K. Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 207.
6. For sociological and anthropological sources on the investigation of the families of prospective marriage partners, see Namihira Emiko, *Byōki to chiryō no bunka jinruigaku* (Tokyo: Kaimeisha, 1984), 107–19; Ronald Dore, *City Life in Japan: A Study of a Tokyo Ward* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 66; Margaret M. Lock, *East Asian Medicine in Urban Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 90–91; Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61–62.
7. Tanizaki, *The Makioka Sisters*, 26.
8. *Ibid.*, 65.
9. Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage, 1961), 442–45. This work first appeared in English translation in 1924, so it is possible that Tanizaki based this scene in *Sasameyuki* partly on the deathbed scene of Frau Buddenbrooks. Both occur as the autumn rains pound on the window panes of their mothers' sickrooms. Despite numerous similarities in these works, however, and particularly in this scene, I know of no evidence that Tanizaki used Mann's work in this way.
10. Tanizaki, *The Makioka Sisters*, 430–31.
11. Ito, *Visions of Desire*, 207.
12. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *The Key*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1960), 111–12.
13. *Ibid.*, 181.

14. Ibid., 182.
15. Ibid., 94.
16. Ibid., 133.
17. Anthony Chambers has suggested in conversation that Tanizaki explored through his fiction the possible consequences of a life lived more recklessly than his own.
18. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1965), 4.
19. Ibid., 169.
20. Ibid., 26.
21. Ibid., 163.
22. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, translated by Harry E. Wedeck (New York: Putnam, 1965), 36–38, 39, 159–60.
23. See, for example, Hada Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, *Hentai seiyoku ron* (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1920), 353, 528–30. This work was widely read among specialists in psychiatry and forensic medicine before and during World War II.

# In Pursuit of the Prints of Those Feet

Adriana Boscaro

*To his sharp eye, a human foot was as expressive as a face. This one was sheer perfection.*<sup>1</sup>

These well-known lines from “Shisei” (The Tattooer, 1910) are emblematic of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s preoccupation with feet, a topic I would like to reexamine—even if at a first glance it may seem that the subject can be taken for granted, if not trivialized. Almost any study of Tanizaki will deal with masochism and foot fetishism, and Tanizaki himself makes explicit references to Krafft-Ebing (in *Jōtarō*, 1914, and again in “Nihon ni okeru Kurippun jiken” [A Crippen Affair in Japan], 1927). The assertions of the author of *Psychopathia Sexualis* lend authoritative validation to situations in which a character may feel himself to be aberrant. This is the case with the young painter in “Fumiko no ashi” (Fumiko’s Feet, 1919) as well: torn by a passion that he considers “inherently hateful and abnormal”<sup>2</sup>—the irresistible feeling of adoration for women’s feet, a feeling that brings him “to the point of worshipping them as deities”<sup>3</sup>—he takes great care to hide his shameful inner desires. Then, to his stupefaction, he makes a twofold discovery, which finally liberates him:

Only recently, while going through a certain book, I learned that I am not the only one to possess such a foolish mental process; on the contrary, there are many persons in the world who are called “foot fetishists.” . . . After that, I secretly tried to meet at least one of my fellow creatures. And whom should I find but old Tsukakoshi! I am quite sure that, as he has never read the new books on psychology, he does not know words like *foot fetishism* and never dreamed of finding another like himself. Possibly he believed, as I did when I was a child, that he was the only one afflicted with such proclivities. If he had been my age, it would have been one thing, but I felt it unnatural that an old man who

called himself a genuine and refined *edokko* harbored such a modern and abnormal sensibility.<sup>4</sup>

Once the painter discovers that his proclivities are not at all unnatural, a secret understanding between him and Tsukakoshi is immediately formed. Irrespective of age, social position, and circumstances, they are joined by a love for beauty and a worship of refined things. In the crescendo of emotions surging through these two men, the aseptic lists of human aberrations given by Krafft-Ebing are transformed by the imagination of “the ‘chaste’ Tanizaki, master of eroticism” (to borrow the perceptive words of the Italian writer Goffredo Parise).<sup>5</sup>

Much of Tanizaki’s oeuvre concerns the “chastely erotic”; it is particularly clear in some of his works that the principal element is neither the rapture of sexual pleasure nor the excitement of the senses but the extraordinary joy of reveling in the beautiful—the inner resonance stirred by the transference of the whole into a part, specifically, “woman” into “feet.” As Mishima rightly suggests in a 1962 essay, such an absolute artistic apotheosis of the foot exists nowhere else in literature.<sup>6</sup> In the complex game of seduction, in which a man strives to create an unattainable woman—a goddess to worship and serve—Tanizaki transforms the foot into the sublime, letting loose his imagination with an inexhaustible wealth of descriptions:

Exquisitely chiseled toes, nails like the iridescent shells along the shore at Enoshima, a pear-like rounded heel, skin so lustrous that it seemed bathed in the limpid waters of a mountain spring . . .<sup>7</sup>

The soft flesh of this little boy’s heel; the toes of his feet, charming as fern-tips; the feel of the slender ankle bone; the high instep; the long middle toe, pointed to resemble the prow of a ship . . .<sup>8</sup>

The nails of Ofumi’s feet . . . gave the impression of having been “set” because they looked like jewels set since birth on the tips of her toes. Were the toes separated from the insteps and collected on a string, the result would be a splendid, queenly necklace. Even treading the ground artlessly, or spread shamelessly on the tatami, her feet displayed an almost architectural beauty.<sup>9</sup>

The skin, as white and glossy as ivory, had clearly been looked after carefully. To tell the truth, ivory lacks such a color: one can have a vague idea of it only by imagining ivory rinsed in the warm blood of a young girl. It was a mysterious color, overflowing with sublime freshness and beauty.<sup>10</sup>

Another striking element in Tanizaki’s writing is the relationship between feet and food. Perhaps to make his descriptions still more “appetizing,” he indulges in metaphorical substitutions of feet for food. It is as if

he had an instinctive urge to devour the feet with a joyful greed, like a gluttonous child or a voracious old man.

Granted, this urge is by no means novel: in many cultures, for example, one can observe a mother express affection for her child by saying “you’re so cute I could eat you up.” Tanizaki, however, takes this desire-food link to another level entirely. His long descriptions and digressions on food assume the flavor of an unbridled gastronomic epicureanism, which he expresses through common, almost trivial, pictures to be devoured by the eyes: feet appear as “graceful and slender as sandfish (*yanagikarei*)”;<sup>11</sup> “soft *hanpen*”;<sup>12</sup> “plump, white little dumpling[s]”;<sup>13</sup> “winding like an eel”;<sup>14</sup> and, seen from behind, “the plump and fleshy crowns of the five crouching toes were aligned like a row of shell mussels.”<sup>15</sup>

Then there are sensations that tickle both the eyes and the taste buds: “When I saw those feet, they reminded me of a summer dish—strawberries sprinkled with milk. They did have the color of strawberry juice mixed with milk.”<sup>16</sup> Again he weaves complex images:

[T]he five toes lay close together like the letter *m* and were lined up as regular as teeth. They stood out so clearly that I wondered if they were made of *shinko* pastry modeled as a foot, with the toes marked by delicate scissor strokes. . . . If a skilled artisan had cut the shell of an oyster into thin flakes, had sharpened those flakes scrupulously with scissors, and had delicately put them at the extremity of the *shinko*, only thus would it be possible to give form to such exquisite nails.<sup>17</sup>

And finally there is the desire to combine physical nourishment with that of the senses: “If Ofumi brought her foot near his mouth after placing a piece of gauze, soaked with milk or broth, between the toes, . . . he would suck greedily. Since his disease had worsened, this way of eating, which he had invented, had become a habit.”<sup>18</sup>

Tanizaki personifies feet, as well, giving us feet that “laugh” and “wink,” whose frightened toes “crouch with an expression of horror” or “are bent with a perky air.”<sup>19</sup> Beautiful and provocative, sometimes ugly and dirty, but always fascinating and desirable, they are considered the exclusive property of he who has washed, cuddled, and pressed them against his breast. All this is to be found in the scene under the mosquito net in *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*, 1924), where the “friends” dispute possession of the feet that Naomi generously offers until, exhausted, they yield to Jōji:

Ah, this foot: this peacefully sleeping, white, beautiful foot; this was mine—I’d washed it with soap in the bath every night since she was a girl. And its soft skin! Her body had shot up since she was fifteen, but this foot was as loveable as ever. It hardly seemed

to have developed at all. Yes, the big toe was just as it had been. The shape of the little toe, the roundness of the heel, the swelling flesh of the instep—all were just as they had been. . . . Before I realized it, I was pressing my lips softly to the top of her foot.<sup>20</sup>

With his usual irony, Tanizaki plays with contrasts. Even as old Tsukakoshi beseeches Fumiko to trample his forehead with her soft foot and surrenders himself to the exquisite sensation, we are simultaneously made aware of Fumiko's disgust—she reacts “as if stepping on a caterpillar.”<sup>21</sup> When she reproaches him for his excesses, Tsukakoshi compares himself to a “slug that dissolves when sprinkled with salt.”<sup>22</sup> The old man of *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62) contrasts feminine beauty with his own ugliness: he makes himself repulsive in order to arouse disgust in Satsuko, thereby increasing the distance between them and heightening his adulation for her.

I got out of bed and went over to stand before her. Then I took out both my upper and lower plates . . . and clenched my gums hard, shriveling up my face as much as I could. My nose flattened down over my lips. Even a chimpanzee would have been better-looking. Time after time I smacked my gums open and shut, and licked my yellow tongue around in my mouth.<sup>23</sup>

The only result is that the indifferent Satsuko reproaches him for having done this only to excite himself. When he succeeds in the difficult task of “painting” the soles of Satsuko's feet red and trembles with joy as he imagines his own gravestone, her response is absolute indifference: “The ink won't get on my clothes?”<sup>24</sup>

The old man describes how, as he lies under the *bussokuseki* that immortalizes her footprints, Satsuko will simultaneously sneer and hear his bones creak. But it is a literary image: we cannot believe that the gushing vitality of such a lover of beauty may be interrupted, that there can be an end to his throbs and heartbeats, longings and desires. The young painter of “Fumiko's Feet” suggests that to Tsukakoshi, expiring in the throes of ecstasy, “Fumiko's beautiful foot on his face must have looked like a purple cloud descending from paradise to welcome his soul.”<sup>25</sup>

The earthly adventures of the old man are over, but in Amida's Paradise, who knows . . .

#### NOTES

1. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, “The Tattooer,” translated by Howard Hibbett, in *Seven Japanese Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 163; “Shisei,” in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1972–75), 1:65; hereafter TJZ.

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2. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Fumiko no ashi," in TJZ, 6:381.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 382.
5. Goffredo Parise, "Il 'casto' Tanizaki maestro di erotismo," *Il Corriere della Sera*, 26 January 1983.
6. Mishima Yukio, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ron*, in *Mishima Yukio zenshū*, 36 vols. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973-76), 30:284-90.
7. "The Tattooer," 163; "Shisei," 1:65.
8. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Ave Maria," in TJZ, 8:572.
9. "Fumiko no ashi," 378-79.
10. Ibid., 381.
11. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Fūten rōjin nikki (Diary of a Mad Old Man)*, in TJZ, 19:82.
12. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Akuma," in TJZ, 1:280.
13. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *The Bridge of Dreams*, translated by Howard Hibbett, in *Seven Japanese Tales*, 104; *Yume no ukihashi*, in TJZ, 18:154.
14. "Ave Maria," 543.
15. "Fumiko no ashi," 379.
16. Ibid., 381.
17. Ibid., 378.
18. Ibid., 391.
19. Ibid., 379.
20. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Naomi*, translated by Anthony H. Chambers (New York: Knopf, 1985), 112; *Chijin no ai*, in TJZ, 10:143.
21. "Fumiko no ashi," 391.
22. Ibid., 387.
23. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, translated by Howard Hibbett (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1967), 100-101; *Fūten rōjin nikki*, 101.
24. *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 156; *Fūten rōjin nikki*, 157.
25. "Fumiko no ashi," 392.



# Comic Mischief

Howard Hibbett

The novels of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō frequently confront the reader with a disconcerting scene of comic mischief. This descent (or rise) into farce can be puzzling. What, now and then, tempted this master of exquisitely modulated prose to tip the balance of his fiction toward the absurd? From the beginning of his career, Tanizaki freely mingled elements later stigmatized as *ero guro nansensu*, sometimes carrying his suave depiction of the erotic and grotesque to nonsensically outlandish lengths. Hence the occasional lapse into farce: a comic violation of taboos, uncensored fantasies at a safe distance from ordinary social reality.<sup>1</sup>

Like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Tanizaki is a subtle ironist seldom accused of possessing an irrepressible sense of humor. Both writers excel in depicting pain; both pursue the theme of humiliation with mordant irony, usually far from comic, but express it in a manner as different as their celebrated clash of temperaments and artistic aims would suggest. Akutagawa relies on medieval settings and modern ironies to justify retelling the congenially sadistic tales that he found in the *Konjaku monogatari* (*Tales of Times Now Past*), and his somber self-portrait as Horikawa Yasukichi yields at last to sketches of excruciating self-analysis. His social and political satire remains resolutely literary—"Literary, All Too Literary" ("Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na," the title of a 1927 essay by Akutagawa)—even at its most expansive, in *Kappa* (1927), when his gloomy Gulliver visits a depressingly topsy-turvy Wonderland. Tanizaki, on the other hand, has a robust impulse to mock his characters and himself. His satirical view of cultural differences inclines toward grotesquely exaggerated self-parody, culminating in the late novels *Kagi* (*The Key*, 1956) and *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1961–62).

Humiliation constitutes a theme in Tanizaki's early stories as well, sometimes with the racy worldliness of Edo erotic humor. In "Hōkan" (*The Jester*, 1911) he introduces one Sanpei, a Meiji practitioner of this tradi-

tional Yoshiwara métier, who has been so unprofessional as to fall in love with a geisha. She enjoys hypnotizing him, an amusing parlor trick to which he seems peculiarly susceptible, and putting him through various antics. (In fact, he is only faking, since he takes a masochistic pleasure in being ridiculed by her.) One night, though, he is stripped naked and subjected to undescribed (and, at the time, undescrivable) sexual teasing at the hands of the geisha, who later pretends to have spent the night with him. Pretending for his part that he has been duped by his little love affair, he responds knowingly when his patron, who has arranged their rendezvous, comments that he seems to be quite a lover. The story ends with Sanpei's self-deprecating "professional" laugh—Tanizaki uses the English word, perhaps to emphasize Sanpei's anachronistic role as a "professional" pleasure-quarter clown—as he taps the other man's forehead playfully with his fan.<sup>2</sup>

Tanizaki's teasing irony not only colors his essays—to the confusion of anyone who attempts to systematize his thoughts in praise of Japanese tradition—but also pervades his fiction. And his irony takes a mocking, self-reflexive turn, in comic contrast to the deadly serious *shishōsetsu*, or "I-novel," whenever his tale veers toward parodic confession. In *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*, 1924–25), Jōji (George?) is a foolishly infatuated, youthful alter ego, the obsessive addict of things Western in general and of the corruptible Naomi in particular; his confession of cultural and sexual enslavement reveals the narrator as an object of ridicule, the butt of the joke. And decades later Utsugi Tokusuke, the "mad old man" of *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, is the scandalous diarist of his own self-abasement, including a severe case of foot fetishism presented in savory detail. Both are tragicomic creations, drawing on the supposed proclivities of their well-known author.

Numerous scenes in these artfully narrated "confessions" and presumably "private" diaries exhibit the exaggerations of farce, "that other 'lower form,' which stands to comedy as melodrama to tragedy."<sup>3</sup> Tanizaki sharpens his ironic edge against the conventions of the I-novel, newly emerging at the time of *Naomi* but already a firmly established mode of reading. What Louis Menand calls the "ordinary readerly operation of dissociation,"<sup>4</sup> separating author from fictional double, had become the exception rather than the rule. Tomi Suzuki has recently traced the evolution of this tendency in modern Japanese literature and devotes the final chapter of her book to Tanizaki's subversion of the I-novel in *Naomi*.<sup>5</sup> Among other indignities, the long-suffering Jōji is powerfully attracted not only to his faithless, promiscuous Naomi but to Madame Shlemskaya, the Russian dance teacher—she of the short whip and scowl and "the faint, sweet-sour combination of perfume and perspiration."<sup>6</sup>

Masochistic submission to a femme fatale is of course an immensely varied theme in Tanizaki's fiction. Even in the sympathetic comedy (with

claws) of *Neko to Shōzō to futari no onna* (*A Cat, A Man, and Two Women*, 1936), the beleaguered Shōzō is badly treated by all three females: his wife and ex-wife, both troublesome in the extreme, and his enigmatic cat, Lily, who in the final scene rejects him with a blank stare. Lily is the focus of attention in the struggle to possess Shōzō, whose slavish love for her is resented by the new wife, Fukuko, and deviously exploited by the old. Both women appear to be overmatched by the cat.

For example, the seductive Lily, described in the manner of a romance novel but known to have drawn blood, is accustomed to sharing her master's bed. Fukuko, in a farcically contrasting bed scene, makes up her mind that Shōzō must choose between them. She begins by pinching his buttocks—hard—and progresses to determined scratching, a tactic she has learned from Lily: "If that cat can scratch you, so can I—I'll scratch you from head to foot!"<sup>7</sup>

Tanizaki's more sadistic heroines rarely betray a sense of humor, but their cruelty, real or imagined, flowers in satirical scenes of humiliation. The tormented protagonist of his late masterpiece *Diary of a Mad Old Man* is at the mercy of his son's wife, a mischievous and thoroughly up-to-date young woman who takes lovers, drives fast cars, adores boxing matches, especially the bloody ones, and delights in teasing her doting father-in-law, at whatever risk to his rapidly failing health. Satsuko—her name carries a sinister double echo of *bosatsu* (bodhisattva) and *satsujin* (murder)—begins to let him take certain liberties, though not without an ulterior purpose. His diary entry for 18 August notes the following conversation, conducted as she is about to take a shower (in high-heeled sandals):

"Shall I let you do some necking today, Father?"

"What's 'necking'?"

"Don't you know? . . . It's a kind of petting!"

"You'll have to explain that too."

"Old people are a real nuisance! It means to caress and pet someone all over. And then there's 'heavy petting'—I can see I have a lot to teach you."

"So you'll let me kiss your neck?"

"As long as you're properly grateful."

"I couldn't be more grateful. But why am I so lucky? I'm worried about the consequences."

"That's the way to look at it! Just don't forget that!"<sup>8</sup>

One consequence of a damp embrace turns out to be a three-million-yen cat's-eye ring ("I didn't realize necking was so expensive!") from the Imperial Hotel Arcade.

Tanizaki's Old Man goes on collecting erotic thrills and adding new items to his museum of symptoms until he is on the verge of death. He is a

perversely comic creation, a character calculated to shock the Japanese bourgeoisie, as Tanizaki had so often done throughout his long literary career. Ever since the publication of his earliest works in 1910, he had worried editors with his penchant for tales of masochistic humiliation, often exaggerated to the level of incongruous farce. In *Manji* (*Quicksand*, 1928–30) a self-identified “author” (the identification somewhat muted in revising the first edition) has an ambiguous relationship with a young woman who supplies him, in a breakneck monologue, with the material for a sensational novel, ending with a dubious double suicide. Meanwhile, the reader has been given a parodic faked suicide attempt among other outrageous deceptions. One finds even that obligatory scene of bedroom farce—the sudden appearance of the husband. Here, however, the illicit lovers are women, his wife and the alluring Mitsuko, who has pretended to be pregnant in order to deceive him. “There is a mad moment of slapstick as the two women stuff pillows into the front of Mitsuko’s kimono to make her look sufficiently enlarged.”<sup>9</sup>

“Sister, what month did you tell him I was in?”

“I forget exactly what I said, but I told him it was noticeable, so you ought to be six or seven months along.”

“I wonder if this makes me look like six months.”

“The whole thing has to be puffed out rounder.”

With that, all three of us began to giggle.

“Why don’t I bring some more stuffing?” Haru said, and she came back with towels and other things. . . .

After we had kept him waiting about half an hour, we managed to finish making a six-months’ stomach for her and went to meet him. . . .

He was sitting there stiffly in his business suit, knees together, with his briefcase at his side.

“I’m sorry to disturb you,” he told Mitsuko. “For a long time I’ve been wanting to come to see how you are, and I happened to be going by just now.” Maybe it was only my imagination, but he seemed to be staring at her stomach.

“You’re very kind,” Mitsuko said. “I’m afraid I’ve been imposing on Sister.” And she murmured a few ingratiating remarks to apologize for spoiling our vacation plans and then said how grateful she was to me for coming to cheer her up. All the while she was delicately screening her stomach with her fan. Haru had been clever enough to choose a room so dim that it seemed to need a lamp even in daytime. Mitsuko was sitting in its farthest corner, and what with that airless room and all the stuffing inside her kimono, she was panting and dripping with sweat. She looked utterly convincing. A first-rate performance, I thought.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the betrayed husband himself is only pretending to be deceived, and he later reveals a similarly fatal weakness for Mitsuko. Layered decep-

tions are combined into baroque contrapuntal confessions; richly developed fantasies embody a carefully crafted scenario of dominance and submission. Primary and secondary narrators both have roles to play.

Fantasy and control are necessary elements in masochistic self-gratification, and Tanizaki's narrators reveal their traces more or less clearly in the course of telling their stories. The caricatured protagonist can take many forms: an ordinarily discreet gentleman (*The Key*), a wayward housewife (*Quicksand*), a humiliated underling (*Shunkinshō* [*A Portrait of Shunkin*]), or a self-effacing narrator, cultivated and urbane but full of prurient curiosity (all of the above).

Often, theatrical humiliation is expressed in a scene of full-blown farce. The avuncular Jōji is not only treated cruelly by Naomi, but he is humiliated by dancing lessons in the clutch of the formidable Madame Shlemskaya, possibly lashed now and then by that little whip, like her other students, or scratched by her glowing pink nails, each carefully trimmed to a sharp, triangular point. Yet the lessons are his greatest pleasure. Pain and pleasure are also indissolubly mingled in the pages of *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, as in the farcical scene when Satsuko permits a frenzied but terribly botched effort (at the cost of further humiliation and severely elevated blood pressure) to make vermilion rubbings of the soles of her feet. *Quicksand*, like classical Western farce, speeds and thickens the plot with multiple duplicities, sexually motivated deceptions, and hoaxes sustained by disguise, concealment, and contrived mishaps. Painful as they are, these cruel tricks have a hint of masochistic complicity about them along with a mischievous method to their madness. Exaggerations proliferate, in a virtuoso structure of absurdities, until the maniacal game takes a last, fatal turn.

Tanizaki's superb control of his craft enables us to enjoy these revelatory moments (though some readers seem to find them less than pleasurable) without feeling obliged to decode their meaning. The intensity of obsessive love can stimulate sudden shifts toward the farcical extreme of the tragicomic spectrum. Comic mischief abounds in Tanizaki. Obsessions are mocked, as well as being freely indulged, in a drama of absurdity, of unreal pain and cruelty, turning forbidden impulses into art.

#### NOTES

1. These scenes in Tanizaki afford the reader a private experience parallel to that of a theater audience, as described by Eric Bentley: "Farce in general offers a special opportunity: shielded by delicious darkness and seated in warm security, we enjoy the privilege of being totally passive while on stage our most treasured unmentionable wishes are fulfilled before our eyes . . . and all without taking the responsibility or suffering the guilt?" (*The Life of the Drama* [New York: Atheneum, 1965], 229).

2. *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, 28 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966–70), 1:187–208; “Buffone di professione,” translated by Adriana Boscaro, in Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Pianto di sirena e altri racconti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1985), 30–44.
3. Bentley, *Life of the Drama*, 218.
4. *New York Review of Books*, 13 July 1995, 10.
5. Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
6. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Naomi*, translated by Anthony H. Chambers (New York: Knopf, 1985), 61, 69.
7. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women*, translated by Paul McCarthy (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International, 1990), 19.
8. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1965), 71.
9. Ken K. Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 128.
10. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, translated by Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1994), 165–67.

# The Film Adaptations

Donald Richie

Few authors are pleased with film adaptations of their work, but even fewer can have been as disappointed and displeased as Tanizaki was.

There were several reasons for this. Foremost was that, unlike most authors, Tanizaki knew a lot about film. He had written four original scripts and helped direct one of them. Further, he had seen that the cinema was, despite its popular orientation, a nascent art.

"In my opinion," he wrote in 1918, "the moving pictures are a true art form, and the one with the greatest potential for development in the future."<sup>1</sup> And a year earlier he had written in his major essay "Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai" (The Present and Future of Moving Pictures): "To tell the truth, I far prefer the motion pictures to the plays staged . . . in Tokyo today, and I find in some of them an artistic quality that Kabuki or Shinpa plays rarely achieve."<sup>2</sup>

He did not, of course, mean Japanese films. Despite his efforts, these had not yet achieved a truly artistic level: "I hope I am not letting my enthusiasm carry me away when I say that any film, as long as it was made in the West, regardless of how short or how silly it may be, is a lot more interesting than present-day Japanese plays."<sup>3</sup>

What he admired in well-made Western films he indicated in his 1921 essay "Eiga no tekunikku" (Movie Technique). Written to edify Japanese film fans on the formal aspects of cinema, it "necessarily stops at a rudimentary level; yet its primary thrust is obvious and impressive: Tanizaki recognizes film as a type of narrative, and cinematic technique as a kind of narrative style."<sup>4</sup>

Film, indeed, enriched his own later style. In *Yōshō jidai* (*Childhood Years: A Memoir*), he writes on the first page that his memories of his birthplace are limited to a fragment of one day, "like a single frame from a scene in some film."<sup>5</sup> And in *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*), Jōji looks at Naomi: "As I concentrated my gaze, the light that blazed on her skin burned more and

more brightly. . . . Certain parts of her body were enlarged with the greatest clarity, like close-ups in a motion picture."<sup>6</sup>

This understanding of the role of the close-up in its cinematic context was evident as early as the 1918 essay in which he wrote that if you stare intently at a human face, no matter how ugly a face it might be, it seems to conceal a mysterious and solemn eternal beauty: "I particularly have this feeling when I look at the 'close-up' of a face in a moving picture . . . cutting out a part of the scene and enlarging it—in other words, showing a detail—greatly increases the effect of the drama and adds variety."<sup>7</sup>

Typically, Tanizaki threw himself into this interesting new medium. In 1920, he became script consultant for the recently formed Taishō Katsudō Shashin film studio in Yokohama, and, though "his official duties required his presence at the studio once a week, . . . he became so involved in the writing of screenplays and participating in the production process that he ended up being there over half of each month." In consequence, "Tanizaki's attention was diverted from the writing of fiction: two major novels started around this time were abandoned incomplete."<sup>8</sup>

Though Tanizaki's inclination toward the foreign film was partially a product of his celebrated infatuation with the West, it was also due to foreign filmmakers' better understanding the nature of this new narrative. And it was this that, in his opinion, the Japanese cinema was to emulate.

When it did not do so, Tanizaki lost interest in film. Shindō Kaneto, who was to direct several Tanizaki adaptations, was of the opinion that Tanizaki lost interest because the Japanese filmmakers of the period simply did not have the technique to realize what the novelist saw as their potential.

The author lost interest, said Shindō, because of "the gap between his vision and the completed films."<sup>9</sup> Since Tanizaki had elsewhere stated his belief that films were realistic dreams, it was perhaps this inability of early cinema to create the necessary realism that might have disappointed him. As Joanne Bernardi has written: "[W]e can only speculate how different his experience . . . might have been had the technology of the medium been as advanced as it is today."<sup>10</sup>

That Tanizaki knew so much about the potential of cinema predisposed him to a criticism of most of the efforts of the young Japanese filmmakers. Later, though he had praise for some films (such as Taniguchi Senkichi's 1950 *Akatsuki no dassō* [*Escape at Dawn*]), he never really had anything good to say about the adaptations of his own works. And with good reason.

The first of these was Shimazu Yasujirō's 1935 version of *Shunkinshō* (*A Portrait of Shunkin*). Of it, Tanizaki wrote how disappointed he was, saying that "had he done the film himself he would have emphasized the contrast between reality and fantasy."<sup>11</sup> That this contrast would be

noticeably missing in all the later adaptations was one of the reasons for Tanizaki's discontent.

Another is indicated by director Itami Mansaku's thoughts on the same version of *A Portrait of Shunkin*. Comparing the original with Shimazu's film, Itami concluded that the film proved that such a thing as the perfect adaptation did not exist. This is because the producers and directors are given only two choices—literature or cinema. These are manifestly different. And this is where the trouble lies: "Exaggerating only a little, I would say that a completely faithful literary adaptation is fundamentally impossible. . . . What one does is make not an adaptation, but some sort of creation which is entirely new and different."<sup>12</sup>

True as this theory is, it was not one to appeal to Tanizaki, who would have preferred, on the one hand, a literal, "realistic" version of his works and, on the other, a treatment that would emphasize the contrast between this reality and a fantasy he thought of as one of the attributes of cinematic narrative. As critic Honjō Keisuke has observed: "What Tanizaki wanted in the cinema was just those fantasies that could give rise to those waking dreams,"<sup>13</sup> for which he thought cinema so eminently suited.

What he got in most of his adaptations was nothing like what he wanted. The films were indeed new and different but not in Itami's sense. They were also, as a rule, inferior as films. They traduced the original and offered nothing in its place.

Though Tanizaki would have agreed with such a judgment on the body of his filmed work, there are, I feel, some exceptions. I would excuse the adaptations of Toyoda Shirō from such censure. The 1956 *Neko to Shōzō to futari no onna* (*A Cat, A Man, and Two Women*) is a fairly literal version of the novella and one that transposes its playful spirit into truly cinematic terms. Of it, however, Tanizaki seems to have published no opinion.

On some of the other adaptations, his opinion is well known. The late Daiei Motion Picture Co. president, Nagata Masakichi, remembers: "Tanizaki was more trouble than anyone. He didn't like anything we did, and as soon as he had seen the finished picture he got busy on the phone. Vindictive, that is what he was."<sup>14</sup>

Again, with reason. Daiei was decidedly unfaithful to the original in its 1959 version of *Kagi* (*The Key*). Not only was the story entirely changed (cast dies at the end, maid kills them), but the advance publicity was so scurrilous that the irate author forced the company to apologize. As the newspapers had it, Daiei apologized to Tanizaki because

it [had] damaged the artistic quality of Tanizaki's literary work . . . and [it] expressed deep regret for having caused great inconvenience to him and to Mrs. Tanizaki by insinuating that the hero-

ine of the novel was Mrs. Tanizaki herself. Daiei pledged it would pay full attention not to make similar mistakes in the future.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, it did nothing of the sort. In its next Tanizaki adaptation, the 1962 *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*), the company allowed director Kimura Keigo to turn this moving work into a Daiei sex comedy and permitted such excesses as having the hero bulldoze his formal Japanese garden as tribute to the fair charmer.

The fate of *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*) in all three film versions is instructive and helps us understand the author's exasperation. The 1950 version contented itself with mere parts of the story, and though it insisted upon the Osaka accent, which is so much a part of the experience of the novel, it undercut its own efforts. Edward Seidensticker says of one of the actresses: "Hideko Takamine, for all the skill of her performance, has not heard the end of it. She did not sound like Osaka and all her enormous talents did nothing to cover up the fact."<sup>16</sup>

Of the 1959 version, by house director Shima Kōji, Seidensticker reports that, despite a more authentic Osaka dialect, the film has

a wholly inert script. It would be nice if we could do what the new critics are always telling us to do—look at the work before us and forget about incidental considerations. Among the incidentals in this case would be the novel from which the movie was made.<sup>17</sup>

I myself joined Tanizaki in his disappointment when I wrote: "[T]he film adaptation is utterly unfaithful to the spirit of the book."<sup>18</sup>

In Ichikawa Kon's 1984 version—which Tanizaki did not live to see—the unfaithfulness became willful disregard. The Osaka dialect was forgotten, new story lines were included (Sachiko's husband Teinosuke is more than a little interested in Yukiko, one of his sisters-in-law), and a general triteness is created by turning the work into what has rightly been called a kimono show.

Nor was Daiei alone in its depredations. When *Hakujitsumu* (*Daydream*) was released in a soft-core pornography version, the author was so angry that it is said he wanted to sue. Of it, critic Mary Evans wrote: "[I]t has been suggested that Tanizaki's original story had to be expanded by the script writers . . . [but] his story was not so much expanded as blown up—a process which usually disturbs . . . original outlines." In conclusion, she writes: "[T]here have always been theaters for this kind of revolting trash, but they didn't use to carry the honorable name of Shōchiku."<sup>19</sup> Not content, the movies had another go at this hapless work in 1981, when it was made into hard-core pornography—Japan got only a censored version, but the West saw the mad dentist in full frontal action.

Tanizaki would not, of course, have objected to pornography as such. But he would have objected to the vulgarity, the lack of imagination, and the pandering to an envisioned audience that is so much a part of commercial filmmaking. The blending of reality and fantasy that *Daydream* represents would, he might have thought, offer the filmmaker an opportunity to show what cinema could do. In the event, commercial considerations prevailed.

Another, final reason for Tanizaki's displeasure with the film adaptations of his work would slightly exonerate the guilty companies. The author himself indicated the problem when he wrote that certain works (*The Divine Comedy*, for example) could be filmed but not staged.<sup>20</sup> Analogously, he might have speculated (but did not) on the kind of novel that could neither be staged nor filmed.

These are works that depend upon an interior life that is not showable but itself animates the work. All film versions of *Moby Dick*, for example, are, in the immortal phrasing of Rosalind Russell, "about this whale." Indeed, the better the book, the less it is suited for film.

Movies excel in the surface realism Tanizaki so admired, and novels excel in that mysterious inner life with which his own work is so filled. Yamazaki Toyoko's *Bonchi* can make an admirable movie; *The Key* cannot.

In this sense, then, Tanizaki's major works are too good to be filmed. Whether the author would here concur is problematic. In his view, the nascent commercial cinema was to become capable of surmounting this drawback through its combination of fact and fancy. Of course, it did no such thing. It turned the novels into products that were only occasionally able to surmount studio intentions and transform themselves into art.

Since Tanizaki did not give serious thought to the cinema during his later years, we cannot know what he might think now that the movies possess the kind of technique he anticipated. We can, however, appreciate the irony of a serious film scholar having most of his works traduced by the movies, and we can applaud his early findings and sympathetically share his disappointment and displeasure at what commercial cinema did to his work.

#### APPENDIX

#### TANIZAKI WORKS MADE INTO FILMS

"Shisei," 1910

*Irezumi*, 1966, Masumura Yasuzō

*Irezumi*, 1984, Sone Chūsei

*Otsuya koroshi*, 1915

*Otsuya koroshi*, 1922, Nakagawa Shirō

- Otsuya koroshi*, 1934, Tsuji Kichirō  
*Otsuya koroshi*, 1951, Makino Masahiro  
*Kyōfu jidai*, 1916  
*Onna gokuaku cho*, 1970, Ikehiro Kazuo  
“Yanigiyu no jiken,” 1918  
*Kōkeimu*, 1964, Takechi Tetsuji  
“Jinmenso,” 1918  
*Oiran*, 1983, Takechi Tetsuji  
*Honmoku yawa*, 1922  
*Honmoku yawa*, 1924, Suzuki Kensaku  
*Okuni to Gohei*, 1922  
*Okuni to Gohei*, 1952, Naruse Mikio  
*Ai sureba koso*, 1922  
*Daraku suru onna*, 1967, Yoshimura Kōzaburō  
*Chijin no ai*, 1924  
*Chijin no ai*, 1949, Kimura Keigo  
*Chijin no ai*, 1960, Kimura Keigo  
*Chijin no ai*, 1967, Masumura Yasuzō  
*Naomi*, 1980, Takabayashi Yōichi  
*Mumyō to Aizen*, 1924  
*Oni no sumu yakata*, 1969, Misumi Kenji  
“Hakujitsumu,” 1926  
*Hakujitsumu*, 1964, Takechi Tetsuji  
*Hakujitsumu*, 1981, Takechi Tetsuji  
*Rangiku monogatari*, 1930  
*Rangiku monogatari*, 1956, Taniguchi Senkichi  
*Manji*, 1930  
*Manji*, 1964, Masumura Yasuzō  
*Manji*, 1983, Yokoyama Hiroto  
*Berlin Affair*, 1985, Liliana Cavani  
*Mōmoku monogatari*, 1931  
*Oichi no kata*, 1942, Nobuchi Akira  
*Ashikari*, 1932  
*Oyū-sama*, 1951, Mizoguchi Kenji  
*Shunkinshō*, 1933  
*Okoto to Sasuke*, 1935, Shimazu Yasujirō  
*Shunkin monogatari*, 1954, Itō Daisuke  
*Okoto to Sasuke*, 1961, Kinugasa Teinosuke  
*Sanka*, 1972, Shindō Kaneto  
*Shunkinshō*, 1976, Nishikawa Katsumi  
*Kaoyo*, 1933  
*Akutō*, 1965, Shindō Kaneto

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- Neko to Shōzō to futari no onna*, 1936  
*Neko to Shōzō to futari no onna*, 1956, Toyoda Shirō
- Sasameyuki*, 1943–48  
*Sasameyuki*, 1950, Abe Yutaka  
*Sasameyuki*, 1959, Shima Kōji  
*Sasameyuki*, 1983, Ichikawa Kon
- Kagi*, 1956  
*Kagi*, 1959, Ichikawa Kon  
*Kagi*, 1974, Kumashiro Tatsumi  
*La chiave*, 1983, Tinto Brass  
*Kagi*, 1983, Kimata Akita
- Fūten rōjin nikki*, 1962  
*Fūten rōjin nikki*, 1962, Kimura Keigo
- Daidokoro taiheiki*, 1963  
*Daidokoro taiheiki*, 1963, Toyoda Shirō

## NOTES

1. Joanne Bernardi, "The Early Development of the *Gendaigeki* Screenplay: Kaeriyama Norimasa, Kurihara Tomas, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, and the Pure Film Movement," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992, 169.
2. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West—Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*, vol. 1, *Fiction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 747.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ken K. Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 75.
5. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Childhood Years: A Memoir*, translated by Paul McCarthy (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1988), 3.
6. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *Naomi*, translated by Anthony H. Chambers (New York: Knopf, 1985), 221.
7. Bernardi, "Early Development," 95, 94.
8. Van C. Gessel, *Three Modern Novelists: Sōseki, Tanizaki, Kawabata* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 102–3.
9. Bernardi, "Early Development," 187.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 163.
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15. Anon., "Daiei Motion Picture Company Apologizes to Tanizaki for Publicity for *Kagi*," *Yomiuri Japan News*, 18 June 1959.
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18. Donald Richie, "Sasameyuki," *Japan Times*, 22 January 1959.
19. Mary Evans, "Hakujitsumu," *Japan Times*, 26 June 1964.
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# Chronology of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

Based on Nomura Shōgo, *Denki Tanizaki Jun'ichirō* (Tokyo: Rōkkō Shuppan, 1974).

1886 (Meiji 19), 24 July: Born in Nihonbashi, downtown Tokyo, eldest child of Kuragorō and Seki. Siblings: Kumakichi (b. 1885, died in infancy), Seiji, Tokuzō, Sono, Ise, Sue, Shūhei. Tokuzō, Ise, and Sue were sent to foster families.

1892, September: Enters Sakamoto Primary School.

1898: Publishes the journal *Gakusei kurabu* with school friends.

1900: Attends special schools for lessons in English and classical Chinese.

1901: Enters middle school (ninth grade) at Tokyo Furitsu Daiichi Chūgakkō (now known as Hibiya High School).

1902: Lives as a houseboy and tutor with the Kitamura family. Skips a grade in school.

1905: Graduates; enters the English Department of Daiichi Kōtō Gakkō.

1907: Love affair with one of the Kitamura's maids discovered; he is forced to move out.

1908: Graduates at the top of his class; enters the Japanese Literature Department at Tokyo Imperial University. Determined to become a writer, he starts writing. Suffers a nervous breakdown.

Chronology of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

1909: Participates in the revival of a student literary journal, *Shinshichō*, in which he publishes the plays, stories, and essays he has written in the past few years, including "Shisei" (The Tattooer).

1911: Grandmother and sister Sono die. He is forced to withdraw from the university for failing to pay his fees. The novelist Nagai Kafū gives his work a rave review, launching his career as a writer. Begins to publish in major magazines.

1912: Visits Kyoto and Osaka to write a series of articles for a Tokyo newspaper. Suffers another nervous breakdown. Fails military health exam.

1915: Marries Ishikawa Chiyo.

1916: Daughter Ayuko born.

1917: Mother dies.

1918: Travels to China via Korea and Manchuria.

1919: Father dies. Moves to Odawara.

1920: Begins to write screenplays for Taishō Katsudō Shashin, a film studio in Yokohama.

1921: A plan to yield his wife to Satō Haruo falls through. Moves to Yokohama. Leaves the studio.

1922: Takes his wife and daughter to Kōyasan, Yoshino, and Kyoto.

1923, spring: Takes wife and daughter to Kyoto and Nara. On 1 September, the Great Kantō Earthquake forces him to evacuate to the Kansai region with his family. They live in Kobe, Kyoto, and then Kobe again.

1926: Travels to China via Nagasaki. Later travels to Yoshino, Nara, and Awaji. Reconciles with Satō Haruo. Moves to Okamoto.

1927: Conducts debate with Akutagawa Ryūnosuke over the nature of the novel. Meets Nezu (née Morita) Matsuko. Travels to Awaji. On 24 July, Akutagawa commits suicide.

1928: Begins construction of a house of his own design in Okamoto.

Chronology of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

1930, August: Divorces Chiyo, who marries Satō Haruo. In October, visits Yoshino, writes *Yoshino kuzu* (*Arrowroot*).

1931: Marries Furukawa Tomiko. From May to September, they live at Kōyasan while he studies esoteric Buddhism and writes *Mōmoku monogatari* (*A Blind Man's Tale*).

1932, December: Separates from Tomiko; relationship with Matsuko begins.

1933: De facto divorce from Tomiko.

1934: Begins to live with Matsuko, who leaves her husband and reverts to her maiden name.

1935: Marries Matsuko. Begins his first modern-Japanese translation of *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*).

1936: Moves to the Sumiyoshi house he named Ishōan.

1937: Elected to the Imperial Academy of Arts. Suffers from beriberi.

1938: Completes first *Genji* translation.

1941: Elected to the Japan Academy of Arts. First grandchild (Momoko) is born.

1942: In Atami, begins writing *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*).

1943: Publication of *The Makioka Sisters* suppressed. Moves to Uozaki.

1944: Moves to Atami to escape air raids. Publishes book 1 of *The Makioka Sisters* privately.

1945: Moves to Tsuyama, Okayama, to escape air raids, then to Katsuyama. Uozaki house destroyed in a raid. On 13 August, Nagai Kafū visits.

1946: Moves to Kyoto. Does much of his writing at a subtemple of Nanzenji.

1947: Participates in a literary discussion with other writers in an audience with the emperor. Adopts Matsuko's daughter Emiko. Receives the Mainichi Prize for *The Makioka Sisters*. High blood pressure interferes with writing.

1948, May: Completes *The Makioka Sisters*.

1949: Receives the Asahi Culture Prize for *The Makioka Sisters*. Dines with the emperor. Moves to Shimogamo, Kyoto (Senkantei). Awarded the Imperial Award for Cultural Merit.

1950: Buys a house at Atami, names it Setsugoan.

1951: Begins work on second *Genji* translation.

1956: Sells house at Shimogamo.

1958: Pain in the right arm makes writing difficult.

1963: Receives the Mainichi Grand Prize for Art for *Fūten rōjin nikki* (*Diary of a Mad Old Man*).

1964: Begins his third *Genji* translation. Elected an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Moves to a new house in Yugawara.

1965, May: Visits Kyoto. Falls ill on 25 July, dies on 30 July at Yugawara. Funeral on 3 August in Tokyo. Ashes buried at Hōnen'in, Kyoto, and also at the Tanizaki family temple in Tokyo, Jigenji.

1991, 1 February: Tanizaki Matsuko dies in Tokyo, at age eighty-seven. Ashes buried at Hōnen'in, Kyoto, with Tanizaki's.

1995, January: Okamoto house destroyed in a major earthquake; Ishōan, which had been relocated, survives the quake. In April, international symposium on Tanizaki at the University of Venice marks the thirtieth anniversary of his death.

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