THE POETICS OF RENGA IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF KAWABATA YASUNARI

by

NOZOMI RIDDINGTON

B.A. Tokyo Woman's Christian College, 1964
M.A. The University of Massachusetts, 1971
M.F.A. The University of Massachusetts, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Asian Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 1995

© Nozomi Riddington
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of **Asian Studies**

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date **April 19, 1995**
ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis  The Poetics of Renga in the Selected Works of Kawabata Yasunari

This thesis presents a study of Kawabata’s poetics of renga, a method derived from the Japanese literary tradition.

Chapter One explores the stylistic characteristics of renga sequences and their origin in the kotodama concept. In order to understand Kawabata’s desire for a new narrative form, the chapter also surveys works from Classical Japanese literature which have been moved by the renga dynamics.

Chapters Two through Five examine representative works from Kawabata’s three creative periods. Three short stories chosen from the early period demonstrate the young writer’s first encounter with the poetics of renga. They are touched by a temporal and spatial pattern of progression, a kotodama sensibility, and a visionary interest in death-life resolutions.

Chapter Three and Four discuss, in particular, the pre-war, middle period masterpiece, Yukiguni, and the post-war work, Yama no oto. Both novels exemplify Kawabata’s practice of writing individual episodes over a period of time and later integrating them as a single novel. Each work shows different aspects of renga. Yukiguni reveals his use of nature description both as a linguistic process and as an epithet function to create a narrative design. Both features are derived from a kotodama sensibility which has been for Kawabata’s characters a sometimes negative experience. Yama no oto, on the other hand, proceeds as a believable human drama performed in a post-war Japanese household. Chapter Four demonstrates how, beneath the narrative, there are layers of allusions waiting to interconnect the surface human drama, creating the ‘sound of the mountain.’ This renga effect is called hibiki (reverberation).

Chapter Five presents Nemureru bijo as Kawabata’s aesthetic manifesto by following his internal search for an ultimate vision of meaning. The discussion centers on the novel’s structural pattern and the integrated imagery of womanhood which leads to the ultimate motherhood achieved by the protagonist’s association of memories.

Kawabata’s life-long obedience to the disciplines of his literary past is characterised by his interest in the renga and in the kotodama dynamic within that form. This has allowed him to create a unique narrative technique, modern in its effect and classical in its method.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................... ii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. iv

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER ONE Aspects of *Renga* Technique .................................................. 4

CHAPTER TWO Early Period ............................................................................... 19

A. *Jurokusai no nikki* ....................................................................................... 19

B. *Shokonsai ikkei* ......................................................................................... 24

C. *Izu no odoriko* ........................................................................................... 25

CHAPTER THREE The Middle Period (Pre-War) ............................................... 39

*Yukiguni* ........................................................................................................ 39

CHAPTER FOUR The Middle Period (Post-War) ............................................... 62

*Yama no oto* .................................................................................................. 62

CHAPTER FIVE The Late Period ......................................................................... 94

*Nemureru bijo* ................................................................................................ 94

CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................... 105

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................. 112

Main Text ........................................................................................................ 112

General Works Cited or Consulted ................................................................. 112

Kawabata Yasunari’s Critical Works Cited or Consulted ................................ 114
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has enjoyed the interest of many individuals. I thank, first of all, my husband, Bruce, who teaches me the beauty of written English, and who patiently proofread my thesis in the final days. I am most grateful to my academic advisor, Dr. Kin'ya Tsuruta, whose knowledge of the cross-cultural and literary background of Modern Japanese novels were most inspiring, both in the seminar I attended and in consultations outside the class. I appreciate my friends, Michiko Kawamura, Midori Lindquist, Hiromi Adams and Yvonne Newcombe who prayerfully supported and encouraged me during the research and writing.

Finally, thanks be to my Lord Jesus, the Word who became flesh, and whose words are “sharper than any two-edged sword”. He declares:

All flesh is grass,
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.

--Isaiah 40: 6b - 8
INTRODUCTION

In the preface to his 1950 essay, “Shin bunsho dokuhon”, Kawabata Yasunari remembers, as a boy, his first reading of Genji monogatari and Makura no soshi. This recollection discloses how, in this boyhood experience, he received the nurturing which holds the secret of his own literary gift:

... I read anything that I found. Of course, I did not comprehend the meaning. I was merely following the reberveration of words and the tone that the sentences created.

I was simply enchanted by those (internal) auditory sensation and filled with my boyish bitter-sweet sadness. In other words, I was singing jibberish songs.

Looking back, it seems that this boyhood infatuation affected my literary creation a great deal. Even now when I am engaged in literary activities, I can hear the tune of the songs echoing. I cannot disobey their voices...

Kawabata was caught in a psycho-physical interplay, in the tension between the sensation and the meaning of the words he encountered early in life. This passage reveals that the nurturing he received was like a lullaby sung by the mother he never knew, and it had an impact upon him, a spell-binding power over him, and he confesses -- "I cannot disobey ..."

Kawabata, then, was conscious of this power of words from his youth. In a 1934 essay, “Bunsho” (Sentences), he expresses a sense of responsibility as a writer living in the early twentieth century. During the Meiji Period, Japanese writers laboured to integrate the spoken and written language. Current Western thought in the form of Dadaism, Expressionism and Surrealism had arrived. The stream-of-consciousness technique was introduced via James Joyce's novels; Marcel Proust's narrative technique of association by remembrance inspired many writers. In the face of all these Western influences, Kawabata suggested a new direction for young artists searching for a new style of writing. In the same essay, he reveals a fundamental understanding of words as kotoba. (a speaking leaf as defined in the preface of Kokinshu).

The word is not our own. First, we must gain a knowledge of it. Then, we recreate it as ours. The laws and customs, which are the contract of the social life, restrain the individual’s freedom. The same applies to the Word, that is the Covenant.

---


Kawabata, here, demonstrates an awareness of his own literary destiny. The covenantal, binding power of words appear and reappear in the long history of the Japanese literary tradition, and Kawabata acknowledges that “the tradition of our own mother tongue is more powerful than any literary man can imagine.” As a narrator, Kawabata listened intently to the voices and tones of Japan’s literary past in order to assemble his own personal creative mode, even while gathering to himself the movements within Western literature.

In the rich Japanese literary heritage, Kawabata confesses that the renga sequence of the Muromachi Period was a great inspiration to him. He examined his own craft in his 1962 essay, “Rakka ryusui,” and discovered an interest in creating images by association. He acknowledges that Makura no soshi is constructed of sentences linked by association, and that Genji monogatari reflects a narrative-by-associative progression reminiscent of a scroll-painting. He further explains that he finds the charm of renge and renku springing from an inherent poetic beauty. This provides a very important key for opening an understanding of Kawabata’s narrative style.

Howard Hibbett characterizes Yukiguni, as “unstructured, symbolical irrationality, typical of Japanese classical poetry.” Makoto Ueda develops the same topic in reference to Kawabata’s essays and observes that the spatial leap in his writing, from one sentence to the next, is representative of the unrestricted perception of a child. He further explains that Kawabata’s associative flight creates a new order of interconnection by juxtaposing unrelated imagery or objects. For Kawabata, this is the sense of “surprise” necessary for a plot, a feature which E.M. Forster describes in Aspects of the Novel. Ueda relates this characteristic to the communal ‘Za,’ microcosm that all participating poets can comprehend in their renge creation. Anthony Liman, in his approach to Yukiguni, re-classifies Kawabata’s novels to fit the genre of lyrical novel found in Freedman’s terminology.

---

Freedman refers to a new generation of writers in Germany, France and England, who sought innovation in the formation of narrative structure, and who fulfil the description of “the lyrical novel.” The traditional concept of the novel, characterised by a point of view and narrative plot utilized to produce a lively world of action, is restructured around a pattern of imagery. The process is similar to the lyric poem or the “qualitative progression” described by Kenneth Burke. Freedman expands on this by saying that in “the lyrical novel,” this progression is refashioned in conjunction with the narrative to transform the poet’s vision into a “woven pattern of tapestry.”

Kawabata’s novels, needless to say, reflect some of the qualities of a lyrical novel, but also something more peculiar to the Japanese tradition. Kawabata was born in a land where the power of the words was fully developed and widely expressed in songs, poetry and linked poetry. He was nurtured by an indigenous lyrical tradition, which, he admits, he intended to refashion. The task is a universal one for all great writers -- remaining loyal to tradition while creating a personal style.

Renga technique is often an over-worked concept when applied to Kawabata’s style. This thesis, however, will examine aspects of the technique in representative works from Kawabata’s four creative periods, the early period, the mid period (pre-war), the mid period (post-war), and the late period. Renga technique is the aesthetic dynamic that Kawabata absorbed from the Japanese tradition, and which he used to formulate his own vision of the literary text. Chapter One of the thesis, therefore, surveys some of the linking styles of renga creation and a characteristic dynamic -- progression by association. In order to reveal the pattern of “progression by association” in our subject’s novels, several examples are cited from different periods. Chapters Two to Five will then examine his major works to uncover and explain the methods he has employed in applying renga techniques.

---
8 Ibid., 18.
9 Ibid., 9.
CHAPTER I: ASPECTS OF RENGA TECHNIQUE

Kawabata Yasunari, in his 1962 essay entitled “Rakka ryusui” expresses his life-long interest in Japanese court literature and in the Fujiwara literary tradition. He declares, as well, a rekindled fascination with renga (linked verse) art.1 The aesthetic behind this form had evolved through the Heian Period and flowered fully during the Muromachi Period (1336-1568). This renga form was extensively practiced even among haiku poets. In this essay, he expands on the dynamics expressed in the techniques of association and progression.

... during the war, partly due to its fatal loss, I found myself particularly interested in the Muromachi Period and have been reading its classical works and scholarly works. Naturally, I have read the renga sequences and haiku sequences. ... beauty and charm lie in the symphonic creative act participated not by one poet but by many poets. ... It has been forty-five years since I became interested in the court literature; naturally, I have known the tradition of the Fujiwara Period a little more than that of the Muromachi Period. If one compares Makuranososhi (Pillow Book) to renga sequences, I think I see a particular beauty -- a poetic beauty -- in the renga creation.2

Kawabata’s interest is focused upon the organic life-force of spatial and temporal progression rendered in the art of renga. Etymologically speaking, this organic force behind the renga creative dynamics could trace its origin back to the kotodama belief held among the Japanese in the Ancient Age.3 Kawabata’s works certainly reflect his awareness, fascination and fearfulness towards the power of the language. One may easily understand how naturally Kawabata’s poetic sensitivities could be inspired by the notion expressed in kotodama belief-- the power of the word uttered in certain incantationary order affects human affairs. In its evolution, the poetic devices such as ‘makurakotoba’ (pillow word), ‘kakekotoba’ (pivot word) and ‘kigo’ (seasonal term

---

1 Kawabata Yasunari Zenshu (Collective Works of Kawabata Yasunari), Vol.12. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1970. 277-281. Kawabata discusses in this casual essay his preference for a traditional poetic--progression by association--over the stream of consciousness technique practiced by such Western writers as Joyce, Woolf, Proust, Faulkner and others. Hereafter, all reference to Kawabata’s collected writings in Japanese will be abbreviated KYZ.

2 Ibid., 278. The translation of the cited portion is my own.

3 Konishi Jin’ichi explains in A History of Japanese Literature, (Vol. I) : “In archaic times the kotodamawas alive throughout Yamato, and so people of those times never felt the need for an explicit concept called ‘kotodama.’ ...It did not occur to them to reflect that this process was caused by spiritual or occult properties hidden within the language. The later, ancient people could distance themselves from the spiritual and occult proerties within their language, and were able to observe them as objects. At least, this may be how the concept represented by the word ‘kotodama’ came into being.” New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1984. 204.
cherished among *haiku* poets), used in pre-*renga* *waka*, and post-*renga* *haiku*. In Kawabata, this awe-inspiring force has a mask called “beauty.” In addition, he is charmed by the soul-satisfying pleasure of communality experienced by all participants in this poetic form. Naturally, there is a difference between the creative act of one man producing a novel and the communal experience of linked verse. The beauty, however, which Kawabata hears behind the poetic form becomes the objective of a life-long artistic mission. Kawabata goes on to elaborate upon this in a later essay written during his visit to Hawaii in 1969 after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature. While looking at glass tumblers on a sunlit dining-table in the hotel where he was staying, he saw the gem-like beauty of these objects in a kind of aesthetic epiphany. For Kawabata, literature is an act of recreating the beauty discovered in a special moment such as this through layers of reflectors. The reflectors, in my view, are images linked by association. Ultimately, they bring the reader to the destination of the poet’s journey.

The origin of Japanese poetry is believed to be a question-response between a god and a man in the form of *katauta*. It is later named as “*Tsukuba no michi*” (*Tsukuba Way*). During the Muromachi Period the *renga* which was once an entertainment, rose to the level of a performing art. The demand for rule books defining the styles of linking verses increased in part due to the need to educate practicing poets. In *Renri hisho* (*A Secret Treatise on Renga Principles, 1349*?), one of the early rule books, Nijo Yoshimoto (1320-1388) explained the techniques and modes involved in *renga* creation. By definition, *renga* was a poetic sequence which progresses organically by alternating the first 5-7-5 syllables of *waka* verse with a latter part of 7 syllable-couplets. It was composed by a group of poets, in one sitting, at a selected locale. The aesthetic ideal of “*yugen* / *yoen*” (mysterious, ethereal charm) and the choice of diction were inherited from the Court tradition. The life of *renga* depended upon the orchestration of the subtleties linking each verse. Each poet required special skill in appreciating the associations held within the previously composed verse, while creating a new direction for the succeeding verse. The length

---


of each sequence varies from 36, 44, to or up to 100 verses. There was no specific topic or theme assigned to the composers of these verses. Topically, however, the sequence moved from considerations of the seasons, love, travel, the religious issues of death and life and reached beyond into the reality of dreams; one moved from the external landscape within the temporal frame of natural cycles to the internal landscape where human existence was cross-examined beyond the frame work of time. The communality experienced by all the participants became a journey back to ‘hon’i,’ the essential nature of things, namely, the primeval existence. The pleasure of this experience, therefore, depended upon an associative poetic mode. Each poet created illusion upon illusion through the passage of time. Kawabata was attracted to the organic beauty of this form. The creation of illusions through the passage of time and the journey back to the primeval world of ‘hon’i’ are the textual qualities of Kawabata’s works which will be examined in this thesis.

Let us now consider the stylistic features of the renga techniques. The basic linking techniques, called ‘futai’ (linking styles) in Nijo Yoshimoto’s terminology, are thirteen in number, ranging from hira-zuke (surface association mode), yotsude (conventional association mode), keiki (descriptive mode), kokoro-zuke (association by implied meaning), kotoba-zuke (linguistic association), uzumiku (association by hidden allusion), yosei (mode of lingering tone), aitai (contrasting mode), hikitagae (oxymoronic mode), kakushidai (linguistic play-mode), honka (allusion to a well-known poem), honzetsu (allusion to a well-known legend and a story), finally to nadokoro (allusion to a famous place). These styles could be reduced based on the essential nature of the link: the first is the descriptive mode where nature reflects the poet’s thought process; the second, the linguistic association by which metaphorical and allegorical transformation of conventional imagery takes place, and where pivot-words are frequent; the third, the lingering tone / evocation mode where meanings are given internally; and the fourth may be categorized as the allusion mode where references to the classics and legend set the tone. These linking styles of

---

variety are useful tools for examining Kawabata's narrative technique. Let us first examine parts of one of the most quoted one-hundred *ren ga* sequences, Sogi’s *Minase Sangin* (Three Poets at Minase), composed in 1488.

Sogi (1421-1502), the Muromachi *ren ga* master, is a poet highly regarded as "a poet of travel" by Basho, *haikai* master of the Edo Period. Kawabata, in his 1969 essay, "Horobinu bi" (Everlasting Beauty) refers to an episode involving Sogi’s death-bed dream in which he meets Fujiwara Teika’s phantom, and expresses his admiration for Sogi as a pre-eminent practitioner of Japanese poetics. *Minase sangin* was composed by three poets, Sogi and two of his disciples -- Shohaku, and Socho -- around 1488 in memory of Ex-Emperor Go-Toba. The sequence is begun by Sogi who describes the natural scene at Minase.

1. **Yuki nagara**
   
   *yamamoto kasumu*
   
   *yube kana*
   
   **-Sogi**

   Despite some snow

   the base of hills spreads with haze

   the twilight scene

2. **Yuku mizu toku**
   
   *ume niou sato*
   
   **-Shohaku**

   Where the waters flow afar

   the village glows with sweet plum flowers

3. **Kawakaznen**
   
   *hitomura yanagi*
   
   *haru miete*
   
   **-Socho**

   In the river wind

   a single stand of willow trees

   shows spring color

The first verse of this *ren ga* sequence, according to the Rule book, should describe an actual local scene. Most scholars recognize here the allusion to Ex-Emperor Go-Toba’s *waka* poem--"Miwataseba / yamamoto kasumu / Minasegawa / yube wa aki to / nani omoi ken." (Looking over, a haze hangs down the River Minase / evening feels like autumn again / what have I been thinking...

---

9 Makoto Ueda in his essay, "The taxonomy of *sequence,*" further expands on the relationship between linking styles and terms used by *haikai* poets in the Edo Period such as ‘*nioi*’ (fragrance), ‘*hibiki*’ (reverberation), ‘*utsuri*’ (reflection), and ‘*omo-kage*,' (semblance). *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature* ed. Earl Miner. New Jersey:Princeton UP, 1985. 102.

10 KYZ. 380.

A panoramic space is recreated in Sogi's *hokku*; however, the beautiful image of "distant mountains in haze" is presented as occurring in early spring with the addition of the descriptive word, "yuki nagara" (still snow-capped). There is a vision which looks through a scene from the past, and the sequence begins with a temporal lag between past and present. The evocative picture of the snow-capped mountains rising above the spring haze is not only a reproduction of the actual locale but also takes the reader into a primeval experience of beauty or *renga* aesthetics, *hon'i.*

Verse 2 continues in the descriptive mode by panning along the path of a stream which fades into the foot of the mountain. Drawing nearer to the early spring scene, the tactile sensation of fragrant plum blossoms in a nearby village is brought into range of the speaker's immediate perception, and his sense of beauty is enhanced by this olfactory experience. Verse 3 adds a wind over the river to the scene from verse 2, and creates the passage of time from early to prime spring time; we see the willows already fully leafed. The movement of the willow breaks the still-life imagery of the previous verses.

4. *Funesasu otomo*  
   *shiruki akegata*  
   --Sogi

   Daybreak comes on distinctly  
   with sounds of a punted boat

5. *Tsukiya nao*  
   *kiriwataru yo ni*  
   *Nokoru ran*  
   --Shohaku

   Does not the moon  
   of a fog-enveloped night  
   stay yet in the sky

6. *Shimo oku nohara*  
   *Akiwa kurekeri*  
   --Socho

   As wide fields settle with the frost  
   autumn has approached its end

In verse 4, the picture of moving trees recedes into the background of the spring dawn, as the sound of a small boat on the river becomes audible. The speaker's aural perception of punting suggests a scene of dense fog. Thus, verse 5 responds to the fog scene of verse 4, by adding a faint picture of the moon seen through fog. Spatial and temporal progression orchestrated by visual, olaferal and aural associations presents an overture to the coming journey. The haze in verse 1 reappears as a fog in verse 5 and now, in verse 6, congeals into a frost. In this category of elements the fog, a rising element, is contrasted to the frost, a falling element. The transformation
of fog (water imagery) into frost reveals time in motion. A lingering moon seen through the fog in verse 5 remains over the passing of autumn in verse 6. The frost-laden grass reveals, sharply, the passage of time.

7. Nakumushino
   kokoro tomonau
   kusakarete
   --Sogi
   The insects cry out
   but without regard for such desires
   the grasses wither

8. Kakine o toeba
   Arawanaru michi
   --Shohaku
   As I come to the fence in visit
   the once-covered path is clear

The chirping insects in verse 7 are found in the frost-bitten grass; from the moon in the sky to the microcosmic singularity of warbling insects, the focus shifts. The loneliness of the insect and the frosted brown grass are linked as cause and effect. The picture here evokes a sense of aware, a special sensibility to life-revelation. This linkage might be a good example of kokorozuke (association by implied meaning). The visual progression from verse 5 onward -- the moon in the fog, frost on the grass, warbling crickets in the withered grass -- halts when a new path is revealed in verse 8. Here the grass is localized alongside the hedge of the mountain retreat. The approaching visitor, finds a path revealed where the once-overgrown grass is now withered and flattened. Now the sequence is quietly taking a course through the natural scenes; and the aesthetic sensibility of aware is conveyed during this brief temporal and spatial progression.

The moon could be a companion on the lonely night during the journey. At the same time, it could reveal the stark reality of aloneness, while shining over the lonely traveller’s night sleep. The moon as well as the flower (cherry tree) holds the most important design seat in the renga sequence. Verses 18-22 in this “Minase sangin,” indeed, reveal a correlation between actuality and the world of dream-illusion.

18. Waga kusamakura
    Tsukiya yatsusan
    --Socho
    My wet grass pillow of the journey
    gives a weakened image of the moon
19. Itazura ni  
Aku yō ooku  
Aki fukete  
---Sogi  

19. Sleeping by myself  
dawn breaks on many yearnings  
and autumn nearly done  
---Shohaku  

20. Yume ni uramuru  
Ogino uwakaze  
---Shohaku  

20. The wind rustles upon the reeds  
begrudging the brief dream of love  
---Socho  

21. Mishiwa mina  
Furusatobito no  
Ato mo nashi  
---Socho  

21. All those people  
once seen often in the capital  
are gone without trace  
---Sogi  

22. Oi no yukue yo  
nani ni kakaran  
---Sogi  

22. What do the years of human life concern  
and what can I rely upon  
---Sogi  

The traveller's overwhelming loneliness here remains aloof from the beauty of the moon. This solitariness is further emphasized in the verse which follows. Many nights of lonely sleep portray the passage of time: autumn advances. The only place where the traveller can find comfort during these nights is in the world of dreams. The traveller’s wish to dream on is disrupted by wind crossing over the bush clover field. The stillness in the deepening autumn night magnifies the rustling wind. The diction in verse 21 is linked to the dream in verse 20 as “yume o miru” (to dream a dream). It is a home-coming journey into the past where the traveller finds no recognizable friends or relatives. It is much like an experience of Urashima Taro, a well-read legend known to all generations. Time is a deceiver, creating the discrepancy between Urashima’s experience in the under-sea world and the actual day-to-day world to which he returns. Time passage and the traveller’s sense of aging are thematically linked in verse 22. What does the future hold for the aging? Death, the termination of time, or life beyond the threshold? What vision and hope are held for humanity?

A little further down the road of this renga sequence, the traveller is admitted to a panoramic view of the hidden realm between dream and the human world.
29. Sueno naru
Sato wa haruka ni
kiritachite
--Shohaku

30. Fukikuru kaze wa
koromo utsu koe
--Sogi

A sense of space is created by these words -- "sueno" (the wide fields' end) and "haruka ni" (in a far distance); the hanging fog deepens the dimension of space. The speaker's inner feeling for the panoramic view progresses into a deeper shapeless presence like an image of fog. This is further intensified by the sound of a cloth-beating mallet in verse 30. The use of the word, "koe" (a voice) rather than "oto" (sound) conveys the presence of human hands behind the mallet beat. The scene is evocative, stirring the speaker's emotions. The critic-scholar, Konishi Jin'ichi, marvels at this example of yosei (mode of evocation or lingering tone).

80. Sayo mo shizuka ni
sakura saku kage
--Shohaku

81. Tomoshibi o
somukuru hana ni
akesomete
--Sogi

82. Taga tamakura ni
yume wa mieken
--Socho

Blooming cherry blossoms evoke a pale beauty enhanced by darkness. A contrast between the night stillness and the actively blooming cherry is a part of the intent of verse 80. Cherry blossoms certainly make a design seat; and especially, in the stillness of nightfall, they manifest a palpable

beauty. The garden scene moves into the house. Taken captive by the beauty created by the blossoms against the night darkness, the speaker forgets himself. A dislocation of time is inevitable; not only a spatial but also a temporal progression is manifested. In verse 82, the appreciation of beautiful blossoms is re-interpreted as in a dream world. A sense of passage expressed in verse 80 provides ground for the sense of waking from a dream. The verse, however, does not give way to bleakness. On the contrary, the suggestion of sleeping lovers brings the emotion of amorous love into play in the scene. The paleness of cherry blossoms in verse 80 becomes the lover’s beautiful complexion in verse 82. Thus, Minase sangin reflects varied linking styles both subtle and obvious, alongside the Muromachi aesthetic -- beauty lies in its evanescence --13, which may help the reader to appreciate how Kawabata’s works are integrated into a body called the novel.

In addition to linking styles, three other integrating principles of renga aesthetics deserve attention. Structurally, the progression reflects the three dramatic movements characteristic of Noh drama: ‘jo ’ (introductory segment), ‘ha ’ (development), and ‘kyu ’ (resolution). Aesthetically, the interplay between ‘mon ’ (design verse or bright quality) and ‘ji ‘ (ground verse or ordinary background) plays an important measuring role. “Borrowed from the vocabulary of ancient weavers, use of these terms in renga critics also correlates well with the idea of cloth-making.”14 The technique of progression by association which Kawabata admired in the classical literary tradition did not spring up suddenly in the fourteenth century. Brower and Miner, for example, have long noted that the Imperial Anthologies, Kokinshu (Collection of Ancient and Modern Times, 905) and Shinkokinshu (New Collection of Ancient and Modern Time, 1206), were “compiled as a coherent whole.”15 It has been widely recognized that the selected poems are not only in the topical order of seasons, travel, and love, but are also a “temporal progression”


designed to point to “a kind of narrative sequence or plot.” Brower and Miner are surprised to find yet “another technique of integration” namely “association” of images among the selected poems. This integrating principle of “progression and association” is more distinctly applied in Shinkokinshu, the eighth Imperial Anthology compiled by Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) and other poets. Brower and Miner note that Shinkokinshu serves a “pivotal” role in the development of integrating poetic technique. 

Jin’ichi Konishi, in his essay entitled “Association and progression: principles of integration in Anthologies and sequences of Japanese court poetry,” examines closely “a crucial aspect of centuries of a poetic tradition” as a key explanation to “the development and practice of the renga, or linked verses.”

Makoto Ueda in his article, “The taxonomy of sequence: basic patterns of structure in pre-modern Japanese Literature,” presents some basic structural patterns found in classical tradition. In referring to Kenneth Burke’s term, “Qualitative progression,” Ueda suggests a technique of associative progression that lies, as a key pattern, at the core of renga practices. With the characteristic technique of ‘progression by association’ in mind, examination of parts of several literary traditions will provide an understanding of the structural pattern in Kawabata’s works -- the renga technique in particular. Fujiwara Teika’s Kindai shuka (Superior Poems of Our Time), Sogi’s (in collaboration with two other poets) Minase sangin, Basho’s Okuno hosomichi, and Buson’s “Shunpu batei no kyoku” are all good examples not only of ‘progression by association’ but also of other structural patterns reflected in Kawabata’s works. Kindai shuka, compiled by Fujiwara Teika in early thirteenth century is a collection of eighty-three poems.

16 Ibid.  
17 Ibid., 403. Brower and Miner show the new technique which appears in the Anthologies compiled after Shinkokinshu. The orchestrated rhythmical alterations between ‘soku,’ distantly linked verses and ‘shinku,’ closely linked verses also help give something of an effect of the movement.” (p.404) This technique later developed, in the Muromachi Period, into the aesthetic which characterized the renga (linked verse) sequence.


19 Ibid., 68.


21 Ibid., 98.
poems selected from previous anthologies and arranged into “the integrated whole.” This may suggest the possibility of a timeless literary form to the modern reader. Individual poems selected from different periods are transformed into a larger whole in which the reader is carried through the temporal and spatial progressions of a travel motif (michiyuki). After the tumult of the love sequence, the journey turns inward. The last eight verses, four of which Kawabata refers to in his trilogy, Soribashi, reveal Teika’s intentional use of associations to propose a resolution of man’s struggle with time and the cycles of life.

77. Amatsukaze
Kumono kayaacji
Fukitojiyo
Otomeno sugata
Shibashi totodmen.

78. Chigiri okishi
Sasamega tsuyuo
Inochinite
Aware kotoshino
Akimo inumeri.

79. Nagaraeba
Mata konokoro ya
Shinobaren
Ushito mishiyo zo
Mio kakusubeki

O winds of heaven
Blow a barrier of clouds across the path
By which they came,
That for a moment I may keep in view
The forms of the Maidens of the Sky!

Depending for my life
On a promise fragile as the dew
Upon the moxa plants,
Alas, the autumn of this year
Has left me once again with broken hopes.

If I live on,
Perhaps I shall recall with yearning
This present sadness,
As I now look back with tenderness
I had thought this mountain village

Verse 77 is a well-known Hyakunin isshu selection, composed by Priest Henjo. A glimpse of a heavenly maiden enkindles the poet’s desire to capture her within the time-bound world. Man’s

22 Fujiwara teika’s superior poems of our time, Trans. Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner. Tokyo: Tokyo UP, 1967. 28-37. The two scholar-translators analyzed the whole selection and revealed a geographical-spatial progression along with the temporal movement and “the thematic integrity of love and tonal movement.”

23 In this trilogy piece, Kawabata quotes these four tanka carigraphied by Fujiwara Teika as Teika’s own creation. In actuality, they were chosen by Teika as a part of a compilation. Soribashi. KYZ, Vol. 7. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1981. 382.
experience of evanescent beauty and his desire to halt the fleeing moment sets up the direction of the sequence. Time does not guarantee any promise; in verse 78, the speaker comes to terms with the unrewarded in time which expires. The imagery of dew and the word, aware (sadness) portray the speaker’s heavy heart. In verse 79, the speaker makes an effort to distance himself from the sad theme of his life. The act of remembrance is, in itself, an antidote for a life of rejection.

80.  Sumiwabiba
     Mi o kakusubeki
     Yamazatoni
     Amari kumanaki
     Yowano tsukikana

     Worn out with living,
     I had thought this mountain village
     To be a safe retreat--
     But it casts a too searching radiance.
     In a cloudless sky, this midnight moon.

81.  Taga misogi
     Yutsukedori ga
     Karakoromo
     Tatsutano yamani
     Orihaete naku.

     For whose purification
     Was the cock that crows unceasingly
     Bedecked with streamers
     Here in the mountains of Tatsuta,
     Woven with beauties like a Chinese robe?

In verse 80, a spatial change takes place as the speaker retreats to a mountain villa. The love-desire motif is overlaid with sadness for a life that passes by. The brightly-shining moon reveals a speaker-hermit. There is no peace even in the mountain retreat. The diction employed in “nagaraeba” (“if I live longer”) in verse 79 and “sumiwaeba” (“worn out with living”) in verse 80 indicates that the speaker is aging. The rush of time quickens the hermit’s sense of its reality. The mountain villa in verse 80 has now changed to a particular place, Tatsuta, in verse 81, which is famous for its autumnal foliage. The crowing cock with the cotton streamer, according to medieval culture, was used to purify travellers at the barrier post outside the capital. In this reference, the journey (michiyuki) progresses from the mountain retreat to the capital. Autumnal foliage is described at its prime, as a scarlet Chinese robe recalling, perhaps, the heavenly maiden glimpsed and desired in verse 77.

82.  Kore ya kono
     Yuku mo kaeru mo

     Here it is, yes here,
     Where these set forth and those return
Verse 82 brings the traveller closer to the capital, and to the barrier post through which people come and go. The refrain-like rhythm created by such phrases, “kore ya kono,” (“this place, here”), “yuku mo kaeru mo” (“those going and those returning”) and “shiru mo, shiranu mo” (“friends and strangers”) convey the texture of human affairs. The name of the Osaka barrier post functions as a pivot word, meaning “a meeting place.” The speaker hears in the purifying rooster the actual comings and goings of travelers through this meeting place at the capital: a human reality is manifested here. The path through the barrier post, “Osaka no seki,” an allegorical depiction of life, connects verse 82 and 83. The speaker retreats deep into the mountains resigning himself to a life-sadness arising from evanescence. The imagery of the deer’s cry is an aural manifestation of brevity, sorrow and suffering — a compendium of human ennui. The cycle returns in full as nature moves deep into autumn. Fujiwara Teika saw the aesthetic value of synthesizing the dynamics displayed in these verses into an integrated whole.

One cannot speak of renga art in the Muromachi Period without appreciating Zeami’s Noh aesthetics and the dynamics behind its practice. Konishi Jin’ichi clearly identifies the commonality of unified imagery in Zeami’s plays, and also recognizes the technique of progres-
sion by association, one characteristic of *renge* in Zeami's Noh poetry. Many scholars would identify Noh plays such as "Matsukaze," "Eguchi," "Hagoromo," "Sotoba Komachi," "Kikujido" and Noh music (*yokyoku*) such as "Kurokami" as elements in some of Kawabata's major works. Curiously, however, Kawabata himself makes little reference to Noh theatre in his essays, in the trilogy (*Shigure, Soribashi* and *Sumiyoshi*), or even when discussing his love for Court Poetry and the *renge* art of the Muromachi Period. Kawabata's narrative technique hides behind a Noh mask with its allusion to the visionary interplay between reality and dream.

In the evolution of the Japanese literary tradition, *renge* art was widely practiced among *haikai* poets during the Edo Period. Aside from the *renku* sequences, Basho's (1644-1722) *Okuno hosomichi* (The Narrow Road to the Deep North) (1691 ?), for example, reflects the technique of progression by association. It appears that this classical work had an overwhelming effect upon Kawabata, and he alludes to it, for example, in *Yukiguni* and *Yama no oto*.

For the purposes of this thesis, reference to this resource will be limited to the following: *Okuno hosomichi*, a travel sketch consisting of prose and *hokku*; the work traces Basho's journey through the *utamakura* or beautiful locales famous in poetry. However, scholars have evaluated this literary piece as one man's *renge*-like sequence, partly because it was created from imagination rather than from journalistic observation. A passage describing one of the *utamakura*,

---


25 Critics (Ogiwara Seisensui, for example) re-evaluate some sections of *Okuno hosomichi* to be read as fictional; particularly in the Galaxy scene observed over the pounding Japan Sea and onward to the Ichifuri scene in which Basho encounters two prostitutes. Ogiwara comments how Basho has orchestrated *utamakura* place names with human affairs. By exaggerating and distorting the journalistic truth he produces a *renku* sequence. The prostitute's presence alongside Basho and Sora as they sleep under one roof on a moonlit autumn night not only creates a design verse within the sequence but also serves as a love theme. *Okuno hosomichi nato* (Notes on The Narrow Road to the Deep North). Shinchosha paperback series, Tokyo: Shinchosha,1956.123-127.
Matsushima, well-known as one of three beauty spots, conveys the magical charm of the place by analogy to the visage of a beautiful woman. Upon arriving at the locale, Basho finds himself too excited to create ordered poetry; so he simply surrenders his own creative urge (ego) to the magical power emanating from utamakura. What, then, is this magical power in the locale, which evokes a divinely beautiful woman’s visage? Buson’s “Shunpu batei no kyoku” (Song of a Horseback Journey in the Spring Wind) is another example of renga -like narrative form. It is a michiyuki composite of four hokku and hokku -like first lines in Chinese poetic form. One cannot easily dismiss the coincidence which connects the geographical background of Buson’s composite poem, called Kema, with Kawabata’s hometown region, Eguchi (presently in Osaka City). This may open some possible allusive connection between Kawabata’s Nemureru bijo and Buson’s poem. Shoji Takahashi evaluates Buson’s piece as a new form of linked-verse for Buson’s chosen theme -- the narrator’s homecoming journey to his mother’s house. The sequence, indeed, conveys a rhythmic pattern appropriately designed for a michiyuki scene. The visions of the two men of literature are a study in contrast in their use of ‘mother’ imagery. Buson conveys, at the end of the poem, a peace and harmony as the young girl sleeps like an infant with her aged mother. But, in Nemureru bijo, Eguchi, the protagonist, and his new wife are welcomed by his dead mother in a dream in which there is a transformation of dahlia-like flowers into an incident of blood-shed. The point should be made, however, that Buson’s piece is another example of a technique called “progression by association” located in the history of Japanese poetic consciousness. Kawabata is a modern novelist who was attracted to the renga form. How his works uniquely reflect renga structure will now receive closer attention.

26 Basho conveys his impressions and inner excitement in prose in Okunohosomichi. “Indeed, the beauty of the entire scene can only be compared to the most divinely endowed of feminine countenances for who else could have created such beauty but the great god of nature himself? My pen strove in vain to equal this superb creation of divine artifice. The narrow road to the deep north and other travel sketches. Trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966. 116.

There is an enduring question as to whether or not any literary creation can originate from within a writer’s imagination without reference to biographical data. It is generally accepted, in Kawabata’s case, that his early works are autobiographical. His experience as an orphan turned him inward to probe himself and to express something personal. The problem of the “orphan warp,” as Kawabata calls it, needed to be resolved in an immediate sense. Among the early works which reflect his bereavement at the loss of a grandfather, his last family member, and his longing to be cleansed from the “warped” self, are Jurokusai no nikki (A Sixteen-year-old’s Diary), Shokonsai ikkei (A Scene at a Memorial Service for the War Deceased) and Izu no odoriko (Izu Dancer). His essays and the trilogy -- Soribashi, Shigure, and Sumiyoshi, seem to indicate that he had submerged himself in the Japanese literary tradition from an early age. But to what extent was the young Kawabata aware of renga technique as a potential narrative device for a modern novel? How much of it was produced by an inborn sensibility? A close reading of three selected early works will reveal a youthful, artistic awareness and the experimental nature of his narrative technique.

A: Jurokusai no nikki (A Sixteen-Year-Old’s Diary)

The original diary was published in his high-school literary magazine in 1914, when Kawabata was actually fourteen years old according to the post-war, birth-recording system. He subsequently added both a fictional frame and so-called newly discovered journal pages at the ages of twenty-seven and forty-seven. The finished work with two postscripts, as Kin’ya Tsuruta correctly observes in his book Kawabata Yasunari-ron (On Kawabata Yasunari), reveals the writer’s mature artistic intention. For the purpose of examining Kawabata’s early narrative

---


2 Tsuruta gives a structural analysis of Kawabata’s work, Jurokusai no nikki, and shows that the writer transformed the original youth’s diary into a more objectively-controlled form of repose for the grandfather’s deceased soul. Kawabata Yasunari ron, Tokyo (Meijishoin, 1988), Chapter 1. 5-24.
techniques, let us focus on the segment originally written when he was fourteen.

The diary begins with a May-the-Fourth account when young Kawabata returns home in the dusk to his blind grandfather who is sick in bed. The simple description of the doorway being closed -- "The entrance gate was tightly shut lest any visitor should dare."\(^3\) (KYZ.9) -- imparts an air of some secrecy. He invites the reader to enter into a special space behind the closed gate, to the room where the old man is lying.

"I am home!" I called out but there is no one who would respond; and the house remains silent. I am filled with loneliness and sadness. I moved to within six feet of my grandfather's bedding;

"I am home!"
Kneeling closer to within three feet, I sounded out sternly;

"I've just got home now!"
Then, five inches away from his ear;

"I've just got home now, didn't you know, Grandpa?" (KYZ.9)

Young Kawabata creates a progression by reducing the distance incrementally, from the hollowness at the entrance hall to the point of communication nearest to the old man's ear. In this way the reader is quickly drawn to the old man in the scene. Along with the spatial progression from outside the house to the interior, Kawabata conveys the youth's psychological ambivalence by repeating the routine return-home greeting, 'tadaima' ("I'm home!")) in a slightly different tone each time he repeats it. After initially experiencing a dead silence the youth's need for contact is overwhelming. In this particular scene a linguistic play upon the original Japanese greeting 'tadaima' (literally, just NOW) and the adverbial word, 'ima' (meaning NOW) carries the reader through space into the youth's secret, existential battle against time. The old man's death is approaching and the youth covets fellowship -- immediate communal response. Immediately after this scene there follows a close-up description of the old man struggling to urinate in his chamber pot. In order to create a sense of immediacy, Kawabata strings together auditory and visual words such as the sibilant sound-effect of voiding, and the old man's agonized voice while urinating. He uses onomatopoeic refrain words -- 'shi-shi' for urine, 'chin-chin' for the male organ, 'iya-iya' for reluctantly, 'wana-wana' to describe physical trembling, 'goku-goku' to describe the sound

\(^3\) The Japanese work is cited from Kawabata Yasunari Zenshu (The Collected Works of Kawabata Yasunari). Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1980. Vol. 2. 5-43. All cited works by Kawabata will be referred to as KYZ, accompanied by the already-available English translation, or by my own English reading for the purposes of this thesis argument.
of water being gulped along with the up-and-down movement of the Adam’s apple.

“Why don’t you bring a pot and help me to wee-wee?”
It is unavoidable. I lifted up the front of his kimono and helped him as he requested. “Did you put it in? O.K.? I’m going to release it. Really O.K.?” Doesn’t he feel any sensations?
“Auh!, Auchi! Achichi, achichi, Auh! Auh!”
He feels pain when he tries to void. Along with his fading voice, I heard a mountain brook streaming at the bottom of the pot.
“Auh! Auchi! Auchi!” Tears are welling up in my eyes as I hear his unbearable suffering. Tea was boiled and I helped him drink. Ordinary green tea. With every swallow he takes, I have to help him sit up.
A barebone face, almost balding gray hair. Skelton-like hands trembling. Adam’s apple moving up and down in the crane-like long neck as he takes each sip. He had three cups. (KYZ. 10-11)

The sibilant alliteration in such words ‘shibin’(a urinary pot), ‘shi-shi’ and ‘oshikko’ (urination) moves to the word, ‘shimizu’ (mountain stream). At the instant of this juxtaposition of urination and a mountain stream, water imagery transforms into tears, and finally to tea that quenches the old man’s thirst. The juxtaposing of two disparate water functions is made possible by the young poet’s auditory perceptiveness and, further, by an intuitive understanding of nature’s life/death mechanism. When young Kawabata describes how the old man drinks green tea, he follows camera-like, in a close-up sequence from the outline of his old face, receding hair, bony hands, and to the Adam’s apple (the Japanese phrase nodobotoke, translates this as ‘Buddha in the throat’). A string of nouns conveys not only the young author’s hidden compassion for his grandfather but also hints at an animistic motive. The author’s perception of animism is soon associated with a sense of premonition, ‘mushi no shirase’ (a Japanese phrase meaning ‘something [like a bug] tells me’). When Omiyo, the fifty-year old helper, brings back the Oracle from the Shinto god of Harvest (commonly known as oinarisan, a Fox Deity), and reports that the grandfather has “a beast living in the stomach”, the magical power of the oracle distorts the youth’s perception of reality. By this time, young Kawabata’s obsession with the bizarre thought of a beast living inside drives him into a make-believe battle against the shadow of death.

---

4 Omiyo, a farm helper, represents a typical cult believer and the rationale of the common people. She consults with the medium about the old man’s medical condition -- he has had “no bowel movement for thirty days”. The Oracle’s suggestion that “some beast in the stomach” is causing the problem stirs up fear in the youth.
and, ultimately, against his own fear. Young Kawabata records how he performs a Sharmanistic ritual with a sword over the old man as suggested by Omiyo. By this, the youth transforms himself into a hero who explores an unknown realm in order to defeat the beast. At night, after Omiyo goes home, the young writer observes his grandfather closely. Fear seizes hold of him until the old man opens his blind eyes. Kawabata describes his relief from spell-bound fear as if "a ray of enlightenment shines into the dark underworld" (KYZ.14). The moment the old man opens his blind eyes is an epiphany, bringing the make-believe hero back to himself --"he regained his sense that such a beast could not exist; he felt his brains were cleansed" (KYZ.15).

The reader coming into the interior of the house has indeed seen the youth’s internal landscape. Progression and linguistic association are evident as a major narrative technique, though they are not refined in this early writing. One should note that Kawabata’s intuitive perception of life-and-death mechanisms in nature is a key to understanding why he can juxtapose two such incongruous entities, the sound of urination and a mountain stream sound. Both, in nature, encompass the element of water; and the release for the old man is a heavenly moment which is identified as a thirst-quenching, clean, mountain brook.

The May-the-Fifth entry, much shorter than the preceding one, proceeds temporally within the introductory frame: “Morning. When (at last) sparrows begin chirping, Omiyo arrives” (KYZ.15) The account starts with the noun, ‘asa,’ meaning ‘morning.’ The elliptical use of a noun hides the youth’s hidden, intense emotion. At the onset of the sparrow’s chirping, the youth must have felt relieved. His victorious internal stand against the superstition and its irrationality (ironically, this irrationality is deeply steeped in the daily life of people like Omiyo’s) now needs to be re-affirmed by the uttering of words. Omiyo’s words of encouragement are timely:

Is that so? Twice? Getting up at midnight and three o’clock, you helped your grandfather! How pitiful it is for a young man like you! Think positively that you are repaying your grandfather’s favours.........
I was quite satisfied with her words. (KYZ.16)

They have the power to console the youth who struggles, night after night, with his nursing duties. Omiyo can comfort him with her day-to-day life wisdom; yet, ironically, she troubles him with

---

another Oracle from the god of the Harvest -- "It is a possession... It won't happen quickly but gradually his body is going to decline" (KYZ.16). Young Kawabata wavers, hearing that the old man is possibly possessed; at the same time, entropy, nature's physical law, is inevitable.

The May-the-Sixth diary again focuses on the old man's eating disorder. The topic, once more, is his Grandfather's welfare, but here the young writer changes the narrative convention. Kawabata records what he has heard while taking a bath. The overheard conversation is stylistically distanced from the reader; instead, the young man's inwardness is seen to emerge. Just as he is submerged in the deep bath water, he is drawn into his own overwhelming fear of his Grandfather's death. The conversation between Omiyo and his Grandfather reveals the old man's loss of time-sense. In order to convey the sadness and loneliness of knowing that his Grandfather is gradually slipping away, Kawabata simply describes the ticking of the wall-clock and the sound of the air lamp burning --

At night, in the house, echoes only the clock on the wall and an air lamp flaming. From the deep of the dark room comes
"Weary, weary. Oh, weary (suffocating)." Pleading to the heaven, his voice comes spewing out in a thousand pieces. Soon, the voice stops. Again, silence prevails.....
His short, breathless utterances were continuing on and off. (KYZ.18)

The young man is helpless against the time-ticking; man's physical decline is inevitable: it is nature's irreversible law.

According to an additional account at age twenty-five, it seems that Kawabata made a vow to write a one hundred-page journal in homage to his Grandfather. The diary starts with a record of the old man's suffering in his final days. However, the account of each day not only reveals Grandfather's continual struggle, but also young Kawabata's internal psychological battle. In the first three-day introductory account, he demonstrates some of the early perspectives of his narrative technique -- progression by auditory/visual association, a poetic development of imagery correlation, and a unique perception of 'oneness' in the life-and-death mechanisms of nature.
B: *Shokonsai ikkei* (A Scene at the Memorial Service for the War Deceased)

*Shokonsai ikkei*, written in 1921, is a short story depicting the horseman acrobat, Omitsu, who experiences a psychological ambivalence that catches her between reality and dream-illusion. The story begins with a condensed sentence much like a *renga* first verse called *hokku*; which, according to the *renga* tradition, is intended to describe an on-site, actual locale, — "Soaring like the noise of a crowd, today is such a calm Autumnal day."  

(KYZ.47) Kawabata demonstrates a special perceptiveness by transforming the auditory sensation of noise into a visual image of smoldering incense rising straight upward. The calmness visualized in the motion of the incense describes the calm peculiar to an autumnal day. The Japanese expression here consisting of three Chinese characters, 'akibiyori' (literally, autumnal day's calmness) would give the reader a palpable 'feel' for the imagery. The speaker's numbed sensation expressed in the second sentence -- the first sentence of the second paragraph -- is linked internally with that expressed in the imagery.

Acrobat Omitsu is dazed before the crowd. Every time the horse she rides sporadically lifts his foreleg into the air, her own scattered limbs, recall their animal instinct and revive into one body coming together. And then, Omitsu loses focus. --- Out of nowhere, she can clearly see an old farmer's face in the distance and yet, curiously, she can fix upon a man nearby with loosened bow-tie, as if it were happening in a dream. (KYZ.47)

The narrator goes inside Omitsu to describe with a cinematic camera-eye how the distant object moves into the detail nearby, and reveals just how perceptually disfunctional she is. The descriptive shift from the remote object to the near-at-hand is a practice common to *renga* creativity. A peculiar discrepancy between the protagonist's internal sensation and the external world is unified by a kind of animistic impulse. The numbness she is experiencing is due to a perceptual transformation of outer reality into a dream world. Gradually, however, at this point in the introductory segment of the narrative, the protagonist's visual cognition of the noise expressed in the opening sentence is now identified as the hysteria of crowds gathered to the Memorial Service for the Deceased in the courtyard of the Yasukuni Shinto Shrine -- "It seems to Omitsu that the courtyard is in itself the hysterical space; the world outside seems hushed by contrast." (KYZ.47)

6 Currently, there is no English translation available. The readings are my own.
As Omitsu gradually moves to wakefulness, Kawabata takes the reader into the meaning of the "noise" imagery in the opening sentence. What awakens Omitsu from the dream-world is a survival instinct, the primeval human desire for food:

The aroma from roasting new chestnuts is offensive to her nose. She feels "I want to eat." This centrifugal desire recalls Omitsu from the dreaming deep to the surface of consciousness. (KYZ.47)

The olfactory sensation of roasting chestnuts arouses a rudimentary appetite, and brings Omitsu fully into the reality of her surroundings -- the crowds swarming to the memorial rites, the festival dedicated to the deceased souls in the National Shrine. The story unfolds at the onset of Omitsu's waking, moving in detail from one description to another. The camera passes from the soybean-roasting machine to a woman breast-feeding her baby on a "punctured air-bag like breast," and then to her husband skillfully rolling the chestnuts with steel chopsticks. Omitsu's internal camera continues to observe the detail of children arguing in front of the boiled-egg booth. The progression continues until Omitsu sees herself being observed. She is now in focus. This experience of being observed recalls a moment from the past when she was acclaimed as a horse-riding acrobat. By double-exposing the present moment over the past, Kawabata reveals why Omitsu, the protagonist, is sitting alone on horseback in the crowded courtyard. As the psychological crisis is already identified as a disfunctional, animistic force -- "a living creature," the remaining story moves toward the final crisis (catastrophe) of Omitsu's acrobatic failure. Structurally, the story unfolds in three movements of Noh-theatre-like dramatization: Omitsu waking to herself; then her future self manifested in the appearance of Otome, an older acrobat who visits the troupe to warn Omitsu to quit; and thirdly, Omitsu in the cacophony of her existential moment in the acrobatic performance -- a break-down of integrity. Later in his career, at the end of Yukiguni (Snow Country), Kawabata deals with this inner crisis of imbalance expressed in a protagonist's emotional collapse.

C. Izu no odoriko (The Izu Dancer)

Izu no odoriko, written in 1926, was the first widely recognized masterpiece among Kawabata's early works. The novel follows a pilgrimage motif through which the narrator, a young male protagonist, experiences the baptismal cleansing of his long-suffering "orphan warp"
as it is called in the novel. The novel, shorter than Kawabata’s later masterpieces is dramatically simple, with a ‘boy-meets-girl’ story that moves with the lyricism and dramatic tempo of the ‘jo-ha-kyu’ exercised in Noh theatre. The euphony arises not only from the protagonist’s poetic acumen but also from Kawabata’s use of water-imagery, his juxtaposition of images presenting the characters’ unspoken emotions, and his limited use of linked-verse style associations.

The novel consists of seven chapters. The first two introduce the narrator-protagonist who meets up with an itinerant troupe consisting of a young dancer,7 a young couple who have lost their second child while travelling, a young girl-helper, and a person described as a woman-in-her-forties. The novel opens with a grand vista from atop Amagi Hill on the Izu Peninsula. The description of the scene corresponds to a hokku,8 the first verse of a renga sequence.

A shower swept toward me from the foot of the mountain, touching the cedar forests white, as the road began to wind up into the pass.9

In the original Japanese, Kawabata personifies nature by referring to the “rain’s foot” (‘ama-ashi’, meaning, literally, rain-foot). The imagery of the Japanese language effectively portrays the fast pace of the sweeping shower; and the movement of natural force is palpable as the cinema-camera moves along the winding road to the Amagi Pass. In this sense, though the first-person narrator is mentioned, the real protagonist is manifested as animistic nature. After the opening vista, Kawabata shifts focus to the first-person-narrator-protagonist in order to identify who he is and why he is being rained upon in the Amagi Pass. The shift, however, is executed smoothly partly because Kawabata places the first person pronoun ‘I’ syntactically at the end of the opening sentence as in the following transliteration.

Along the winding road up into the Amagi Pass, a shower, touching the cedar (virgin) forests white, chased from the foot of the mountain, sweeping towards me.

I was a nineteen-year-old student, clad in a school-cap, dark

7 Kawabata consistently uses this noun, ‘the dancer’, as a symbolic pronoun throughout the narrative, even after his brother reveals her name as Kaoru. It is Kawabata’s intention that the young dancer remains symbolical in the novel. She is more than an ordinary character as Tsuruta concludes in a chapter on “Izu no Odoriko,” in his book, Kawabata Yasunari no geijutsu -- junsui to kyuusai (Art of Kawabata Yasunari's Works -- Purity and Salvation). Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1981.15-26.

8 According to the renga tradition, the hokku, the first verse, is to describe the actual locale where the poet is situated. The remaining verses proceed into imaginary space -- both internal and external.

9 The quotation is from Seidensticker’s translation. Hereafter, both the original citation from Kawabata Yasunari Zenshu and the English translation will be given. KYZ, Vol.2. 295, TID, 9.
kimono with an overlaid divided skirt, a book sack over my shoulder, and high wooden sandals. Today was the fourth day since I began my journey alone through the Izu Peninsula.

The first part of the second paragraph explains the narrator’s background in flash-back mode, while the latter describes him presently running forward to the tea-house at the North end of the Hill. By shifting to the space of the past, returning to the present and moving onward, Kawabata has created, stylistically, a wave-like motion.

This pattern continues as the young Dancer is introduced to the narrator who gives his first impression of her with a simile likening her to picture-book beauties. His sensibility in perceiving the actual Dancer as an art image, naturally, helps drive him into fantasy. Then, with a flashback account, Kawabata explains how the young narrator first notices the itinerant troupe and his absorption as he watches the Dancer perform before the Inn’s guests. Kawabata returns the reader to the present scene from the past, in particular to the private living quarters of the tea house. The tea house not only provides a place for the narrator to meet the Dancer face-to-face but also separates him from the troupe temporarily when he is invited into the private interior of the building.

Describing the protagonist’s experience in the interior space of the tea house, Kawabata allows the wave-like narrative to progress. The passage found in Kawabata Yasunari Zenshu which describes the old man who is dying within the room, is omitted in Seidensticker’s English translation. It should recall for the reader the experience a sixteen-year-old Kawabata describes in his early journal. Structurally and dramatically, Kawabata has created a spatial progression which rolls from the open vista at Amagi Pass, to inside the tea house, and on into the private quarters. It is much like the pattern experienced when he, as a sixteen-year-old, came home to be near his dying Grandfather. On another level, however, the protagonist has begun a pilgrimage into nature; first, he is submerged in the rain, and then, he encounters a dying old man who looks as if he were submerged in water.

The heat from the open fire struck me as she opened the door. I stood at the threshold; for a moment, I hesitated. An old man, swollen purple like a

---

10 I have attempted the transliteration here only to show Kawabata’s intention in the original Japanese.
11 The virginity of the protagonist is evident from his awkward manner with the Dancer. The exchange between the protagonist and the Dancer is repeated at the end of the story; however, the leave-taking scene is a reversal from this meeting in that, at the end, the Dancer remains awkwardly silent.
drowned man, is seated cross-legged. He slowly moved his eyes towards me; his eyes looked yellow, rotten to the pupils. He looks as if he were buried under the heap of trashed letters piled around him. I was petrified, seeing this monstrous, unhuman presence before my eyes.12

The image of a drowned man applied to the suffering old man presents a sharp contrast to the beautiful autumnal foliage in the valley outside. The old woman explains how the old man who sits in a waste of correspondence from all over Japan is looking for any possible cure for his paralysis. The narrator fumbles with his own emotions: he is dazed by the cold autumn shower and by facing the ugly death image revealed in the old man. The purging fire is more than comforting; it prevents him from drowning in his emotions. Kawabata shifts attention to the following description:

The car passed, shaking the teahouse as it crossed over the mountain. I wondered why he didn’t leave this Pass where even an Autumnal day became colder and where the snow is going to fall soon? Steam arose from my kimono and the purging fire was too strong to keep my head cool. (KYZ.297)

For a little while, the narrator segregated from the front tea room withdraws to the inner space where he encounters the ugly image of death. He is deeply submerged in his own speculation. His removal from the itenerant troupe wakes him to reality -- the Dancer and the troupe are social outcasts.

The last sentence of Chapter One is a structural parallel to the last sentence of Chapter Five. The end of the Chapter One describes drops of cold water dripping from the dark tunnel ceiling, while at the end of the Chapter Five, the narrator, after being rejected by a surrogate-mother-like woman-in-her-forties, is described as shedding tears.

Merging into the dark tunnel, I heard the cold dripping of water trickle down. There was a light at the other end, beyond the exit to Southern Izu.13

The dark tunnel is the narrator’s internal space where the reader is invited to enter. Emerging from the tunnel at the beginning of chapter two, the microcosmic view of the segregated troupe is

---


13 Seidensticker’s translation omits this particular sentence. The reading is my own. Because of these sentences, the end of chapter one is linked with the opening vista in chapter two. KYZ. 299. At the end of the chapter five, when the narrator is rejected by a surrogate-motherly woman-in-her-forties, Kawabata writes: “It was a dark town. It seems the drum beat ceaselessly waiting toward me. For no reason, tears came trickling down.” KYZ. 320.
restored to a close-up.

Lined on one side by a white fence, the road twisted down from the mouth of the tunnel like a streak of lightning. Near the bottom of the jagged figure were the dancer and her companions. Another half mile and I had overtaken them.

The conceit of the dark tunnel in Chapter One is linked, with cinematic effect, to the opening paragraph of Chapter Two. In a way somewhat similar to the opening sequence of Chapter One, however, the dancer and her companions rather than the power of nature personified become the subject of narrative concern.

The water imagery, which embodies the animism of the opening sequence, carries its current throughout the first chapter and permeates the entire novel. A close examination of orchestrated water imagery reveals one aspect of his poetic device called 'the progression.' In the waka / renga tradition, the poetic imagery taken from natural surroundings are categorized; and within each category selected dictions are associated in their primeval linguistic nature. For example, rain, tears and dew belong to one linguistic group from which is developed the associative diction of weeping, wet sleeve and lamentation. As previously noted, animism personified in the force of a shower in the novel's opening sequence transforms itself into various entities as the novel proceeds, and Kawabata effectively weaves the weft of this undercurrent. The selected list of such water imagery from each chapter will help the reader to understand Kawabata's intention.

Ch. I
They come in minstrel to the inn. ('nagashite kita" literally come afloat)
A tea house / Pouring tea
A strong heatwave came running.

An old man, puffed up purple like a drowned man
The rain dwindling
Cold drippings were trickling down.

Ch. II
A streak of lightning
The Port of Habu (literally, the Port of Floating Waves)
Come to swim
A small brook
Hot spring inn / Communal bath
Misscarriage (literally, floated-out birth)
It turned into a torrent
The sound of heavy rain
Opening the raindoor
The rainy wind
A shrill woman's voice sometimes came piercing like a lightning
Deep down in the rain
Getting into the bath
Splashing about the bath

Ch.III The brook, high from the rain
A draught of fresh water seemed to wash over my heart
A drifting minstrel has come.

Ch.IV She’ll wash your shoulder
A baby, transparent like water, was born.

Ch.V. I am thirsty
There is a spring below.
“Water!” I heard and started running
The water bubbled clear and clean from shady rocks.
I drank from my cupped hands. They wet their handkerchiefs and washed the perspiration from their faces.

Ch.VI For no very good reason I found myself weeping
I gave myself up to my tears.
It was as though my head had turned to clear water.

In Japanese culture the drifting troupe is called the ‘water trade,’ *nagashi* and Kawabata often uses the verbal associative expression, ‘*nagashitekita*’ (translated as ‘they came drifting’). The imagery of a running stream is recurrent even when describing, in Chapter One, the heat-waves emerging from the private quarter of the tea house, and, in Chapter Two, the flashing image of the white fence outside the tunnel like “a streak of lightening.” Alongside the wave-like motion created by a distinctive narrative technique, stream imagery effectively carries the reader to the heart of the narrator’s experience — pilgrimage. The gruesome analogy of ‘a drowned man’ which the narrator used to describe the old man, half-buried under a heap of letter-paper inside the tea-house, and waiting for death, is materially linked with the death, earlier, of the young couple’s baby — a miscarriage, a death caused by a premature birth. The Japanese term, ‘*ryuzan*’ (literally, a flowed-out birth) for a miscarriage denotes a visual description of life aborted in water. The truth that water is the source of all things and that babies are formed in this life-water is doubly significant because the memorial service for an aborted child is called, by the Japanese, “*mizugo kuyo*” (literally, a memorial service for a water-child). Moreover, Eikichi, the young husband, describes in Chapter Four how the second lost baby was born “as transparent as the
water.” The journey motif takes on the spiritual significance of a pilgrimage: at the destination, Shimoda, they will commemorate the deceased baby’s soul.

The hot spring, a local lodging place for travelers, provides important dramatic space, and a focus for associative water imagery. In Chapter Two which finds the narrator more passionately involved in the traveling performers’ affairs, the protagonist reveals his emotional expectation and struggles for the young dancer. Kawabata purposefully uses the downpour as an opening sequence to portray the protagonist’s inner drama. More vigorous than the novel’s opening scene, nature manifests the full scale of its forcefulness, enclosing the distant mountains with the force of white rain.

A heavy rain began to fall about sunset. The mountains, gray and white, flattened to two dimensions, and the river grew yellower and muddier by the minute. (KYZ.302-303, TID.14)

Kawabata brings the reader’s attention to a nearby mud-pool caused by the rain. The imagery of the muddy water in the brook reflects the narrator’s emotional agitation. By contrast, in Chapter Three, the reader steps into the spring-like, sun-lit space as if emerging from the dark tunnel of the protagonist’s emotional incarceration. Caught between dream and actuality, the narrator feels the nocturnal frustration of the night before like a dream; evidence lies in the “river, high from the rain, ...warm in the sun.”(KYZ.304). The water, however, flows from one scene to another, connecting them with a contrasting effect called sotai, a renga linking term. All the anguish built up in his flight of fantasy issued from what an old tea-house proprietor had said earlier about the Dancer — “a grown woman.”

One small figure ran out into the sunlight and stopped for a moment at the edge of the platform calling something to us, arms raised as though for a plunge into the river. It was the little dancer. I looked at her, at the young legs at the sculptured white body, and suddenly a draught of fresh water seemed to wash over my heart. I laughed happily. She was a child, a mere child, a child who could run out naked into the sun and stand there

---

14 The description of the dead baby in Japanese (KYZ. Vpl.2.312) is not translated in Seidensticker’s English version. The imagery presented in Japanese reinforces the undercurrent of water imagery in the novel.

15 Contrast is a renga technique called sotai. Kawabata uses its essential function and expands it to work a dramatic solution to the protagonist’s emotional struggle.

16 The emphasis added to Seidensticker’s translation does not convey Kawabata’s intention; the analogy to “a young paulownian tree” significantly contributes to the symbolism of the Dancer in the novel. In this scene, especially, the young protagonist undergoes a baptismal experience in identifying the Dancer.
The scene represents an epiphany in terms of the protagonist’s experience of nature: the Dancer is a mere child, a synonym of both purity and beauty, of virginity for Kawabata. The analogy applied to the dancer’s young limbs, “a young paulownian tree”, in the original Japanese version, may suggest that the Dancer is a symbolical personification of nature. Significantly, this is the protagonist’s first taste of purification. His internal muddied waters are transformed into fresh water with the power to cleanse. The physical washing in the hot spring’s communal bath suggests another level of cleansing — a spiritual purification. As a result, the protagonist’s heart-felt kindness towards the Dancer and her companions, socially segregated outcasts, allows them to welcome him as a family member. Kawabata, in the original Japanese, uses another water analogy — “they felt my extraordinary kindness permeating their heart.” True communality is revealed here.

The protagonist’s renewal is crowned during the final journey through the mountains to Shimoda, the port regarded as a hometown amongst travelling performers. The water imagery continues as a stream of emotions flowing between the protagonist and the Dancer. While travelling through the forest, the Dancer and he are involved in an awkward exchange, until they arrive at the top of the hill, where he remains curiously silent. This drives toward the moment when he expresses a primeval desire for water to drink — “I’m thirsty.” It is the tone of a child demanding water from his mother. Now, the Dancer who served him tea at the tea-house, takes on the role of care-taker and runs, vainly, to look for a stream. Shortly after, the entire troupe has descended the hill, and the Dancer runs back to inform him that they have found a mountain stream.

Kawabata carefully reveals the youth’s urgent need for water. In this sequence, he connects the protagonist’s thirst-quenching experience at the bubbling spring among the rocks with another remarkable sequence which features an exchange between the Dancer and her older sister.

\[\textit{Kawabata carefully reveals the youth’s urgent need for water. In this sequence, he connects the protagonist’s thirst-quenching experience at the bubbling spring among the rocks with another remarkable sequence which features an exchange between the Dancer and her older sister,}\]

\[\textit{In other sections of the novel, the Dancer is described as a person with “unnaturally dark hair,” “large black eyes,” and “a flower’s laugh.”} \textit{KYZ 312.}\]
Chiyoko.

“He’s nice, isn’t he,” the girl’s voice came again
“He seems to be very nice.”
“He really is nice. I like having someone so nice.”
She had an open way of speaking, a youthful, honest way of saying
exactly what came to her, that made it possible for me to think of myself,
as, frankly, “nice.”...I had come at nineteen to think of myself as a misan-
thrope, a lonely misfit, and it was my depression at the thought that had
driven me to this Izu trip. And now I was able to look upon myself as
“a nice person”...I find no way to describe what his meant to me.
(KYZ.317-318,TTD.25)

The dancer’s guileless utterance captures the central meaning of the word, ‘ii hito’ (literally, ‘a
good/nice person’), as well as conveying its cleansing power.18 The kotodama belief held by the
ancient Japanese, supports this critical moment in which the protagonist is renewed from his
‘orphan warp.’ What Kawabata promotes in this key scene is roughly comparable to two
verses from the New Testament: the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples -- "Now ye are clean
through the word which I have spoken unto you.”(John 15:3); in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the
Ephesians he reminds believers of the Word’s sanctifying power -- "That he might sanctify and
cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ( 5:26).”19

The water imagery continues into the last scene at Shimoda, where the protagonist takes
leave to sail back to Tokyo. The narrator is reminded of his imminent departure from the Dancer
and the troupe as he approaches his destination. On the outskirts of each village he passes,
he cannot help but notice the sign --"Vagrant performers keep out.” (KYZ.318,TTD.26) The
reality of their low social status is an omen for the young narrator’s oncoming crisis when
he experiences, unexpectedly, a rejection from the surrogate-mother, the woman-in-her-forties.

The Dancer has repeatedly expressed her desire to go to see a “talkie” in Shimoda; and
the young protagonist, now redeemed from his personal struggle, too, has built up his expectation
in taking her to a movie. The woman-in-her-forties had not explained why the Dancer is not al-
lowed to go out, but her words are authoritatively final. The end of Chapter Six has a structure

18 In renga tradition, all dictions are to reflect this original, primary meaning of the word, called 'Hon'i'.
19 These Biblical references may serve as allusions; however, Kawabata takes the reader through the
protagonist’s renewal process in the context of animism and Shintoism: first, the innocent persona of the virgin
reveals her true nature to him; then, he drinks thirst-quenching clear water in the valley; now, the Dancer’s word,
"nice," empowers him to feel purified and healed from his internal filth.
which parallels the end of Chapter One when the narrator is about to travel through a dark tunnel dripping with water, to catch up with the travelling performers -- "I saw cold drops trickle down." (KYZ.299) At the end of Chapter Six, the narrator finds himself facing the dark unknown of cosmic space and "weeping for no good reason." (KYZ.320, TID. 27) Kawabata repeatedly describes, in his original Japanese, how water dripping and tear drops "come trickling down" -- ('pota-pota ochita'). Structurally, the narrative has come full circle, and, for the narrator, another journey is about to begin.

In contrast with their introductory meeting scene, the Dancer, at their leave-taking, remains silent. The narrator's physical return journey to Tokyo on the sea transforms itself into an allegorical process to become a part of Ocean water, dissolving himself into nature. The little episode involving an old woman returning to her hometown, Mito, has allegorical implications. The protagonist is asked to keep company with this woman who carries a nursing baby on her back, while holding the hands of two little girls. Just as the narrator was welcomed as a companion in the travelling troupe, the linkage, here explores the sentiment of a much-quoted cliche -- "In travelling, a companion -- in life, sympathy." However, a little background information concerning this old woman takes the reader from the cliche into a symbolical reading of the narrative. The place name, Mito, the old woman's hometown, for example, literally means 'Water Door'. Reiganto, the ferryboat's destination, literally signifies 'An Island of Spirit [-habiting] Shore.' Furthermore, the name of the temple, Rendaiji, in the vicinity of which lies the Silver Mine, her son's working place, is in itself significant -- 'A Temple of Lotus Mound.' The old woman carrying a nursing baby on her back juxtaposes two events in time. To live, that is, to grow old is to bear life. Here, Kawabata invites the reader to proceed on a spiritual journey in the allegorical format of this epilogue.

It seemed a long while before that I had said good-bye to the little dancer. 
...I lay down with my book sack for a pillow, my mind clear and empty. I was no longer conscious of the passage. I wept silently...
I saw no need to disguise the truth, and I was quite unashamed of my tears. I thought of nothing. It was as though I were slumbering in a sort of quiet fulfillment. ....
I floated in a beautiful emptiness, and it seemed natural that I should

20 The reader may recognize the impact of the author's own past experience: in place of the old woman, it was an old Grandfather who cared for young Kawabata and his sister.
As the protagonist leaves Shimoda for Tokyo, the boat carries him as a floating soul. His description traces a spatial progression moving from the port of Shimoda, to the boat, and then to the confined space of the cabin where he finds himself in a cozy enclosure next to a high school student. Kawabata takes up the imagery of dripping water used at the end of Chapter Six, describing the narrator’s teardrops trickling down (‘pota-pota’ in original Japanese). These teardrops are not simply evidences of a human sadness; rather, they are elements in the process which is transforming the narrator into water. Stylistically, by depicting in successive short sentences and a longer sentence in the italicized section, for example, Kawabata identifies the narrator’s complacency and reveals this process as an oceanic ebb-and-flow. Then, this process of ‘naturalization’ is further repeated swell-like until the narrator becomes fused with nature, an amalgamation of the cosmic ebb and flow. The last paragraph culminates in the unity between man and nature: the tactile sensations overflow and drown him in the underworld. The picture given is unlike the image of the drowned man presented in Chapter One.

The lights went out, the smell of the sea and of the fish in the hold grew stronger. In the darkness, warmed by the boy beside me, I gave myself up to my tears. It was as though my head had turned to clear water, it was falling pleasantly away drop by drop; soon nothing would remain.

In the darkness, the olfactory ambience of raw fish and sea water is overwhelming: the process is total submersion in the water -- a self-dissolving process. It results, not in drowning, but brings pleasant fulfillment in a womb-like, self-contained warm space. The protagonist’s journey through Izu Peninsula has gained him peace and provided harmonic interaction with nature. Like a satisfied baby he is fully nurtured, first, by his encounter with the Dancer, a manifestation of life force in nature, and then, by drinking the thirst-quenching clear water that nature offers. His ‘orphan warp’ is redeemed, finally, by the power of the Dancer’s word. Kawabata develops water imagery as an integrated whole throughout the novel. The rain, the hot spring, a mountain stream, tear drops and the ocean all merge into a single flow of cleansing water.

---

The lyricism of this novel does not originate in water imagery only, but in Kawabata's lyric application of unrelated sensory images. A closer examination of two relevant sequences reveals the poetic working in Kawabata's narratives. At the end of Chapter Two, Kawabata provides an extensive sequence to portray the young protagonist's emotional struggle against his overwhelming fear that the Dancer might lose her virginity in the course of the entertainment. Through the noise of the rain, the drum beat is heard suggesting the Dancer's performance and it drives the protagonist into fantasy. The author uses the action of opening the raindoor to reveal his psyche. A sequence of auditory impressions succeeds in conveying some of the psychological movement occurring in the narrator's internal space:

I closed my eyes and tried to concentrate on the drum.
Presently I heard a samisen...
now and then a woman's voice calling to someone,
a loud burst of laughter...
I could distinguish two or three women's voices and three
or four men's voices.
A shrill woman's voice came across the darkness like the crack of a whip...
For a time there was a confusion of footsteps...
And then complete silence. I glared into the darkness. (KYZ.303-304.TID.14-15)

The narrator's subsequent action in closing the raindoor prevents the reader from observing his emotional storm. At this point Kawabata shifts his deescription to the external landscape, barring direct access to the protagonist's raw emotion. He simply depicts the moon as it brightens the autumn night after the rain storm, much like a haiku: image. In renga practice, this shifting technique is called shin / so (close verse / distant verse).

I closed the shutters and got into bed. My chest was painfully tight.
I went down to the bath again and splashed about violently. The rain stopped, the moon came out; the autumn sky, washed by the rain, shone crystalline into the distance. (KYZ.303-304.TID.15)

The parts underlined show how Kawabata renders natural phenomena in a single rhythmic short compound sentence, and follows it with a long sentence. The temporal progression is clearly revealed as the poetic imagery of the brightened night under the autumnal moon points to the protagonist's moment of resignation and enlightenment. This is in stark contrast to his earlier emotional struggle with the fear of violation; yet it joins the end of Chapter Two with the beginning of Chapter Three.

Another lyric sequence is found in Chapter Five, as the narrator and the Dancer on their
way to Shimoda, halt for a rest at the summit of the mountain:

We came to the summit. Laying her drum on a bench among dead autumn weeds, she wiped her face with a handkerchief. After that she turned her attention to her feet, she changed her mind and bent down instead to dust off the skirt of my kimono. I drew back surprised, and she fell to one knee. When she had brushed me off front and back, bent low before me, she stood up to lower... I was breathing heavily. She invited me to sit down.

A flock of small birds flew up beside the bench. The dead leaves rustled as they landed, so quiet was the air. I tapped the drum a couple of times with my finger, and the birds started up in alarm.

“I’m thirsty.”

(KYZ.315, TID.23-24)

The verbal exchange is sporadic and awkward; Kawabata arranges the Dancer’s speech, however, to reflect her role as care-taker and, thereby, activates her search for a stream after the protagonist expresses a thirst. The narrator draws attention to the Dancer’s busy, motherly hands as she invites him to sit down — “Won’t you have a seat?” But he then shifts the weight of the subject to a flock of small birds landing on dry leaves and causing them to rustle. The scene is reminiscent of a certain type of Japanese painting. The stillness in the air corresponds to the space around the birds among dry brown leaves in an illustration. The effect that Kawabata creates builds a tension that is released only when the alarmed birds fly away. Here the narrator breaks his internal silence and speaks a primeval need — his thirst. The complexity of the narrator’s need in relation to the role of the Dancer requires a special narrative frame. In order to express the intensity of the drama, Kawabata creates a dramatic shift from human affairs to a micro-cosmic description of nature. This is the shin-so shift much exercised in the renga and haikai tradition.

Kawabata’s early works reflect, therefore, the fragments of a renga technique which he later confirmed as the aesthetic of his narrative configuration. In Jurokusai no Nikki, considered his debut work, the sense of temporal and spatial progression at work is evident. A narrative space is formed in which the reader is led to experience the protagonist’s (often the narrator and the protagonist are identical) interior landscape. Kawabata enlivens his material with a vision of death/life dualism emanating from one source. This is demonstrated in the young boy’s response to the old man’s urinating sound as a heavenly mountain stream. The protagonist’s journey takes on the form of the michiyuki convention originating in the Japanese mythology. It provides a
pattern to describe the temporal passage of death and life in terms of spatial perception. This upholds the narrative structure of *Izu no odoriko*. Kawabata’s lyrical novel creates the sensation of an ocean wave. The ebb-and-flow motion propels the reader along the *michiyuki* at the level of a spiritual pilgrimage into nature. As previously noted, the integrated use of water imagery interconnects the entire novel and brings the reader to the narrator’s baptismal experience in which he tastes a thirst-quenching mountain stream.

In his journal, *Jurokusai no nikki*, the young Kawabata, in awe of the power of language manifested in a local deity’s oracle, abjectly performs a Shamanistic purification rite. In *Izu no odoriko* the protagonist awakens to the healing power of the word uttered by the Dancer. Does Kawabata recognize *kotodama* belief as the dynamic behind *renga* communal poetic creation? The *renga* narrative device employed in his early works offer the major features of the technique such as progression by association, orchestration of imagery, and an aesthetic use of *shin-so* aesthetic principle in a limited application. He becomes more aware of the unique technical aspects of word power practiced in the *waka* *renga* tradition. *Yukiguni*, a masterpiece from Kawabata’s middle creative period, offers an even more complex example of the power of *renga* in shaping his craft.

---

CHAPTER III: THE MIDDLE PERIOD -- YUKIGUNI (SNOW COUNTRY)  
-- SNOW, WOMEN AND THE WORD --


First, I planned to write a short story of forty pages for the January issue of a magazine, *Bungeishinju*, and I thought I could exhaust the material I had in one story. But I could not finish it before the dead line. I ended up completing the remaining part and publishing it as a serial episode in a different magazine, *Kaizo*, whose dead line was few days later. The longer I spent time with the material, the more lingering sentiment I was left with. The finished narrative was a creative form totally different from my initial plan. There are many stories which were created in such a process.1

In the original Japanese, Kawabata uses the *renga* term, *yojo* (lingering sentiment), to explain that his narrative is composed of independent short story-like episodes. These are interconnected by means of *yojo* linkage to produce a new creative direction. Any attempt to read the finished story as a work of thematic development, however, will fail since the whole story proceeds like a Noh play. Shimamura, the narrator-traveller in the story is invited to visit "the graveyard" of his relationship with Komako, a hot-spring geisha girl and, ultimately, he experiences the detrimental consequences of *kotodama* belief. The poetics behind the narrative structure and, particularly, Kawabata’s method of applying *renga* linkage in this novel will, therefore, be examined. The following points will be discussed: the naming of characters and its significance in the narrative progression, the power of phrases and songs as an invocational feature of *kotodama* belief, the use of lyrical nature descriptions as a function of *makura kotoba* (pillow word or epithet) and allusions as a dynamic in the narrative process.

Seidensticker's English version of *Snow Country* is divided into two parts: Part I ends with Shimamamura returning to Tokyo; and Part II begins with his third visit to Snow Country. This, however, creates questions about the story's development. Why does an essay-like meditation on 'Chijimi' textile appear in the narrative while Shimamamura's relationship with Komako is coming to an end? How does the final fire scene fit the natural flow of previous scenes? From the dramatic-structural viewpoint, the entire narrative may be divided into five parts (or, in simpler terms, 'jo,' 'ha,' 'kyu' according to Zeami's dramatic aesthetics): the introductory part which focuses upon the character of Komako, the portrayal of a changed Komako, the interlude presenting Shimamamura's meditation on 'Chijimi' artifacts, and finally, the climax of the fire scene under the Milky Way sky. *Yukiguni*, the masterpiece of Kawabata's pre-war creative period, demands a very special reading.

The novel's opening sentence, short and cinematic, conveys movement and surprise -- "The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country." The original Japanese indicates that the tunnel divides two provinces and that Kawabata is describing an actual geographical setting. A traveller emerging from the tunnel into snow country is, in a sense, arriving in a foreign land. After the opening sentence, Shimamamura, a traveller, overhears Yoko, a young, virginal girl, in conversation with the station master. She is expressing to him a motherly concern for her younger brother who works at the snowy depot. This show of concern reminds Shimamamura of an earlier scene on the train. He had seen her, through a mirror-effect created by the train's window-pane, showing loving care for a sick man -- whose name is revealed later in the story. The shift from the present to the past is accomplished by an association describing Yoko's distinctive, care-giving nature.

The depiction of her outward demeanour is a *renga* 'nature descriptive mode,' known as *keikizuke*. Shimamamura's irritation with her endless nurturing reflects his own emotional need. The mirror device, which Kawabata describes at length, gradually takes him into a dream-world of illusion. In the wonder-world of the mirror, Shimamamura catches sight of "a weirdly beautiful bit of phosphorescence on the sea of evening mountains" *(KYZ*. Vol.10.13, SC. 10)

---

where a bonfire on the plain outside glows in the depths of Yoko’s eyes. Here, Kawabata captures the central motif of his narrative -- the inter-relationship between Yoko, the care-giver, and Komako, a hot-spring geisha, both residing in Snow Country.

Somewhere in his heart Shimamura saw a question, as clearly as if it were standing there before him: was there something, what would happen, between the woman his hand remembered and the woman in whose eye that mountain light had glowed? (KYZ.17,SC.14)

Shimamura, the traveller, who has wandered into this fantasy world, becomes fascinated with illusion. The mirror into which he is drawn has the magical power to disrupt his sense of actuality and fantasy. Through the mechanics of Shimamura’s perception Kawabata progressively shows one reflection after another of Snow Country.

One renga aesthetic principle at work here is the tension between ‘ji’ (ground) and ‘mon’ (design) verses. It is a term originally used in textile weaving. In this sense, the section on the ‘Chijimi’ artifacts produced in Snow Country is important to the novel. Kawabata intended this work to be a woven artifact with its ‘ground’ threading and ‘design’ weaving -- hence, the motif that is fashioned between Yoko and Komako against the background of Snow Country. In order to understand this ‘textile’ quality, one has to examine the linking devices Kawabata has learned to use and how he has applied them in the novel. Additionally, it is important to remember that renga originated in the creative dynamic of koodama belief. The origin of songs and poetry is believed to have come from a ‘katauta’ or a question and response between a god and a spirit -- like a god urging the spirit to respond. As noted in Chapter II of this thesis, Kawabata’s early works show, to some extent, his fearful awareness of kotodama power. Therefore, in the examination of his application of renga techniques, the kotodama concept inevitably forms an integral part of this discussion.

H. E. Plutschow, in his book titled Chaos and Cosmos explains that the ancient Japanese “identified names with the things they represented... not only in personal names but also in deity

---

names, place names, names of animals and plants.”

In accordance with Kotodama, the name of a person or deity could therefore be used for magical purposes. Through Kotodama, words acquire the same symbolic value as art objects representing deities and other powerful spiritual entities, encompassing or participating in their power.”

Plutschow further compares the magical power of names with that of the art object. Accordingly, the naming of characters in Yukiguni (Snow Country) provides a clue to understanding the novel’s charm.

The opening sequence introduces Yoko (a name meaning “a child of leaf”), whose attributes are in her care-giving ability, and in the quality of her ‘echoing’ voice. The Japanese term for “word” means “a speaking leaf.” In Yukiguni, Yoko is not characterized by the palpability of her person but is presented, rather, as an ethereal figure whose voice quality has an echo-like beauty. In the original Japanese, this “echo-like” voice quality is rendered by the Chinese character meaning ‘a tree-soul’ and it frequently is used to identify her.

Echo, according to Greek mythology, is believed to be a mountain nymph who “offended the goddess Hera by keeping her talking” and “in punishment, she was deprived of speech, except for the power to repeat the last words of another.” Yoko, accordingly, emerges as a very important character who continually influences Komako and Shimamura. It is noteworthy that Shimamura finds in her “a transparent coldness” which is contrary to her “warm ministration.”

In the course of the narrative, Yoko reveals herself as a good singer; her performance

7 ibid.
8 In the opening sequence, Yoko’s voice is described as “a beautiful voice that it struck one as sad” (SC. 12). When Shimamura sees Yoko at Komako’s residence, her voice is described as “that clear voice, so beautiful that it was almost sad” (51). And when Yoko comes to urge Komako to return to Yukio’s deathbed, Shimamura is impressed by its intensity -- “That voice, so beautiful it was almost lonely, lingered in Shimamura’s ears as if it were echoing back from somewhere in the snowy mountain” (72).
9 In Jojoka, a short story written prior to Yukiguni, Kawabata discloses his fascination for Greek mythology and its metamorphosis. KYZ. Vol.3. 335-359.347.
moves Shimamura, who becomes attracted to her ethereal, mountain nymphette beauty. There are two scenes which describe Yoko singing. During Shimamura’s third visit in the fall, he takes a morning stroll in the village after he has resumed a liaison with Komako and he sees Yoko pounding red beans and singing the following song:

“The butterfly, the dragonfly, the cricket.
The pine cricket, bell cricket, horse cricket
Are singing in the hills.” (KYZ.88,SC.110)

The song’s listing of insects in the hills may sound like jibberish, but it does have the effect of an incantation. A reference to “chirping crickets” echoes the scene in which “chirping horse crickets” were used as a background sound to depict Komako’s sexual aggression. In this song, the “cricket” refrain is an invocation anticipating her frequent visits with Shimamura. Yoko’s song marks the end of the Komako-Shimamura reunion scene and gives prophetic resonance to her increasing presence in the story. The significance of the butterfly is suggested in the cedar grove scene where Shimamura sees Komako during his first visit. While the butterfly belongs to spring and the dragonfly to autumn, yet in the course of the narrative, the butterfly is associated with the large-bodied, autumnal moth. Therefore, in the next section when Shimamura’s observation of the way dragonflies swim away contradicts what his nature guide book depicts, the restless dragonflies become an embodiment of Komako’s own struggle.

As the evening approaches, they (dragonflies) seemed to swim about faster, more restlessly.

But the dragonflies here before him seemed to be driven by something. It was as though they wanted desperately to avoid being pulled in with the cedar grove as it darkened before the sunset. (KYZ.88,SC.110)

Yoko’s song serves the function of a pillow word or makurakotoba, that is, an epithet used in the ‘waka’ (Japanese poetry) tradition to bring the description of dragonflies. Eventually it is a reflection of Komako. Nature-descriptions (to be examined later) reflect Komako’s struggle -- a mountain goddess who wants to possess Shimamura.

Then Shimamura goes to bathe in the public bath next door where Yoko is helping a little girl and speaks with a motherly, sweet voice. There, Yoko sings another song about hand-ball:

---

“See, out in back,  
Three pears, three cedars,  
Six trees in all.  
Crows nests below,  
Sparrow’s nests above.  
(The crickets chirping in the woods)12  
And what is it they’re singing?  
‘Hakamairi itcho, itcho, itcho ya.’” (KYZ. 112-113, SC.139)

Shimamura describes the animated quality of her song and how he is affected by feeling the resonance of its trailing, flute tone. Yoko’s song has such reality-invoking power that he feels as if awakened from a dream. It is rhythmic and enigmatic; the thread of its imagery points to “the cricket in the forest” -- echoing a previous song. This evocative song is like a variation of a Noh background chant. In the narrative, Kawabata actually has this music awaken Shimamura from a dream. Indeed, the morning after Shimamura experiences Komako’s rage for calling her “a good woman” (rather than a good person), he is described as awakening “to a voice reciting a Noh play” (KYZ. 121, SC.149).

Komako’s name signifies animistic nature in the two meanings of ‘koma’ -- a horse and a chessman. In the cedar-grove when Komako invites Shimamura to the Shinto shrine site, she sits next to the lion-like shrine guardian called “komainu.” The homonym of “koma” may indeed suggest the animism personified by Komako. The grove scene takes place, appropriately, in early spring and is recalled during Shimamura’s second visit. His initial reason for visiting the Snow Country mountains has to do with his search for self-renewal and recovery of life perspective. The green of early spring which he finds attractive is reminiscent of the tree branch analogy applied to the Izu dancer. It is associated with “a wonderfully clean fresh impression” Shimamura receives from Komako at their first meeting -- the same sort of quality which characterizes Yoko. Komako appears from behind a tree in the cedar-grove, bearing the aura of a tree-spirit, having seen all of Shimamura’s activity.13 He admits, after the grove meeting, that she appears beautiful and cool. Then follows Kawabata’s famous description of Komako in the portrait of her face:

12 This line is omitted in Seidensticker’s translation, partly because of the rhythm and flow of language.  
The high, thin nose was a little lonely, a little sad, but the bud of her lips opened and closed smoothly, like a beautiful little circle of leeches. Even when she was silent her lips seemed always to be moving. Had they had wrinkles or cracks, or had their color been less fresh, they would have struck me as unwholesome, but they were never anything but smooth and shining.  

(KYZ. 29-30, SC.32)

The analogy of leeches suggests the sexual potential in Komako. Kawabata uses this juxtaposition between swamp life and clean beauty to convey Komako's wholesomeness as well as the animism lurking beneath it. The juxtaposition, again, is similar to the one established by the author, as a sixteen-year-old, hearing the sound of his grandfather voiding in the chamber pot. In another scene -- the morning after Komako has had a liaison with Shimamura during his second visit -- she is described as “some restless night beast that fears the approach of the morning.” (KYZ.41, SC.47). The animal-like force within Komako moves one way and then abruptly changes direction. The naming indeed has power to animate. Komako’s charm lies in her unpredictable movements. Here’s the scene, for instance, in which she and Shimamura finally achieve their first liaison:

“Go on to sleep. Pay no attention to me, I tell you.”

Shimamura went back to bed. The woman sprawled over the table and took another drink of water.

“Get up, Get up when a person tells you to.”

“Which do you want me to do?”

“All right, go to sleep.”

“You are, not making sense, you know.” He pulled her into bed after him. Her face was turned half away, hidden from him, but after a time she thrust her lips violently toward him.  

(KYZ.32-33, SC.36-37)

Komako, who symbolizes this animal force, impresses Shimamura with her warmth. Yet her sudden rage when he calls her “a good woman” leaves him very cold. The scene draws attention to Kawabata’s understanding of the concept of ‘authorized naming’ found in kotodama belief. Komako has revealed a sensitivity to the power of words. She keeps a journal and even a record of what she has read -- the title of books, the author, the characters and their relationships; Shimamura sees all this as “a wasted effort.” Whether it is wasted or not her sensitivity to word-power becomes a driving force. In the end she reacts vehemently to Shimamura’s act of naming -- "You are a good woman."
Shimamura's words gradually coloured her whole body. (KYZ.35, SC.39.)

Again she lost herself in the talk, and again her words seemed to be warming her whole body. (KYZ.37-38, SC.43)

Komako, as a practitioner of the art of words, chooses a long epic (nagauta) called 'Kanjincho' (Seidensticker's English translation omits the title) when she plays 'samisen' for Shimamura. Something from within the piece, combined with the art of her performance, moves him and he is awe-struck.

A chill swept over Shimamura. The goose flesh seemed to rise to his cheeks. The first notes opened a transparent emptiness deep in his entrails, and in the emptiness the sound of the samisen reverberated. He was startled--or, better, he fell back as under a well-aimed blow. Taken with a feeling almost of reverence, washed by waves of remorse, defenseless, quite deprived of strength.... (KYZ.59, SC.71)

When Kawabata describes how Komako "purposely read the words in a monotone" he invokes the stirring power of the "Kanjincho" Kabuki epic, a story familiar to the Japanese. Benkei, a monk-subject, pretends to read a make-believe subscription book. He enunciates a list of contributors before the border-inspector, in order to protect young Shogunate Yoshitsune and his subjects who are crossing the border at Ataka. The highlight of the play occurs when Benkei persuades the officials by reading the non-existent list. The power which renders such utterances truthful could only issue from kotodama belief. Komako, the performer, appears to be overwhelmed by the spirit of the play, and gradually seems to "fall into a spell." (KYZ.59, SC.71). At the end of this scene, Komako demonstrates, with childish recall, how she had learned to hold the instrument and sing "ku ro ka mi no..." Her response to Shimamura's question as to whether 'Kurokami' is the first piece she learned as a child, is a denial. At this point, her recital of "ku ro ka mi no" possesses a special resonance that will be discussed later in terms of the creative, dynamic power of allusions.

Upon his third return to Snow Country in the fall, Shimamura cannot help but notice a change in Komako--greater maturity on one level, but more animated in her sexuality. The night he is invited to see Komako's new lodging place, she returns with him to his room. There, they
drink sake, and Shimamura relaxes in Komako’s motherly arms. Then, he complacently utters -- "What a good girl you are!", (a declaration remarkably similar to the Izu dancer’s -- "He is a good person.") But when Shimamura rephrases with the expression, "You are a good woman!", Komako is enraged to the point of tears. He attributes this sudden anger to a simple misunderstanding. According to kotodama’ belief, however, defining someone as “a good person” (as in Izu no odoriko -- The Izu Dancer) is a sanctioned act of naming, but the “unsanctioned, untimely or random use of names can bring harm to the human order.”

Though enflamed by the apparent offence, Komako soon assumes her child-like demeanor and invites him to take a bath with her.

The following morning, Shimamura wakes to Noh music with its background drumbeat. Kawabata’s original Japanese expression for this music is called “utai” a word which originally signified an invocation to a god. Just as the Noh music wakens Shimamura to a deceptively clean Komako indoors, and a nature outside newly disguised by snow, Kawabata wakes the reader to reflect upon another mirror. Cyclical nature changes its appearance with the first snowfall. Thus, kotodama belief is deeply affirmed by Kawabata by employing varied aspects of naming with its poetic power to create a basic ground for the woven textile, called Yukiguni.

In Izu no odoriko (The Izu Dancer), Kawabata’s early masterpiece, there is, with the exception of integrated water imagery and some open, hilly vistas, little nature-description. Yukiguni (Snow Country), the masterpiece from Kawabata’s middle period, in contrast, contains an enormous number. In the narrative, they are given a specific role, even a persona which moves Komako like a chess-piece. Nature-description, in the linguistic field of waka (Japanese classical poetry), is an essential mode by which the poet expresses a sentiment. In Yukiguni, as one episode evolves from another, nature-descriptions increase. Kawabata does not limit the descriptive mode to the background landscape but applies a more suggestive mode as if seeing a phantom darkly through a glass. In other words, the reflection is internally linked with the narrative intent. Let us examine some examples to see how Kawabata interweaves nature scenes throughout his story.

---

Kawabata assigns the following description when Komako appears to Shimamura from the behind the cedar tree after he has run down the mountain:

... (he) ran headlong back down the slope. Two yellow butterflies flew up at his feet.

The butterflies, weaving in and out, climbed higher than the line of the Border Range, their yellow turning to white in the distance.

"What happened?" The woman was standing in the shade of the cedar trees. (KYZ.27,SC.29)

It is obvious that Kawabata uses “two butterflies weaving in and out” to portray the imminent relationship between Shimamura and Komako. Yellowness indicates an immediate human quality while whiteness suggests distant purity as a design. The relationship between Shimamura and Komako rests on their sexuality; yet in the finished woven texture of the novel, they appear as white butterflies. The way Komako is described coming out of the cedar grove evokes a tree-spirit quality. Kawabata’s description of the decayed parts of the cedar grove implies a darker aspect within the enticing brightness of the new-leafed mountains.

... The dark needles blocked out the sky and stillness seemed to be singing quietly. The trunk against which Shimamura leaned was the oldest of all. For some reason all the branches on the north side had withered and, their tips broken and fallen, they looked like stakes driven into the trunk with their sharp ends out, to make a terrible weapon for some god. (KYZ.28,SC.30)

The night Shimamura is reunited with Komako upon his second visit to Snow Country, he yields to the remembrance of their first night together. When Komako forcefully opens the paper sliding-window to the outside, Shimamura observes a night landscape, peaceful and harmonious under a starry sky.

The sound of the freezing of snow over the land seemed to roar deep into the earth. There was no moon. The stars, almost too many... came forward so brightly that it was as if they were falling with the swiftness of the void. As the stars came nearer, the sky retreated deeper and deeper into the night color.... The whole of the night scene came together in a clear, tranquil harmony. (KYZ.38-39,SC.44)

One moment, he feels caught in the fathomless starry sky. He, himself, becomes a part of the harmony between sky and mountains. But in the next instant, Shimamura finds disharmony:

Black though the mountains were, they seemed at that moment brilliant with the colour of the snow. They seemed to him somehow transparent, somehow lonely.

The harmony between the sky and mountains was lost. (KYZ.39,SC.45)
These two nature-descriptions offer another picture of Komako’s forcefulness. Nature reflects the polarities within her persona. She is within nature, and yet nature is expressed through her. Kawabata opens the autumnal scene of Shimamura’s third visit to Snow Country with a prelude-like sequence. It presents a series of observations upon, first, the large-body of a moth and its mock-death, then, a Russian female peddler, and, finally, a lengthy reflection on autumnal nature. These contribute to a process of invocation which brings Komako into view. How the sequence is linked from a renga technical viewpoint will be discussed later. In order to understand the role of nature-description as a formal device, let us examine the following visualizations:

But the great strands he saw here seems quite different in nature from the grasses that had so moved him.

... Under the dim light in the dressing room, Shimamura could see that the large-bodied moth was laying eggs. Moths were beating at the lantern under the eaves. There was a steady humming of autumn insects, as there had been from before sundown.

Komako was a little late. (KYZ.74-75,SC.93)

The ‘Kaya’ autumnal grass, which overpoweringly conveys life-force and strength, replaces Shimamura’s romantic vision of white flowers in distance. The life-force manifested in this ‘Kaya’ grass is linked with the egg-laying moth. The grass, the egg-laying moth’s movements, “another moth beating around the under the eaves,” and autumn insects humming in the daylight are a chorus invoking Komako’s appearance. There is a resemblance here to a Noh chorus performance when the ‘shite’ (the main actor) appears onstage. Kawabata utilises much the same type of nature-description when Komako and Shimamura resume their sexual relationship.

... She brought her face gently toward his. It was a second-floor room, but it seemed to be surrounded by croaking toads. Two and three of them were moving from spot to spot, remarkably long-winded croakers.

Back from the bath, Komako began talking about herself. (KYZ.85,SC.105)

Between the first and the last description of Komako is the vignette of the croaking toads. Kin’ya
Tsuruta decodes this sequence and sees Komako transformed into a toad.\textsuperscript{17} Kawabata does not give detailed sexual descriptions, but his nature-description becomes a mirror device reflecting Komako’s identity and activity. She is a manifestation of animism in nature. It is her growing sexuality which Shimamura notices on his third visit that gives rise to the toad image.

In Japanese \textit{waka} and \textit{renga} tradition, an epithet called “\textit{makurakotoba}” (pillow word/phrase) is an established convention. Brower and Miner explain in the Glossary of \textit{Japanese Court Poetry}:

\begin{quote}
...it usually occupies a short, 5 syllable line and modifies a word, usually the first, in the next line. Some pillow-words are unclear in meaning; those whose meanings are known function rhetorically to raise the tone and to some degree also function as images. For example, \textit{shirotae no} (“white hampen,” “white linen”) is the conventional attribute for \textit{sode} (“sleeves”).\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Such power of language is considered a natural aspect of ‘\textit{kotodama}’. In \textit{Yukiguni}, Kawabata uses striking variations of the form in several places. The first examples occur following the scene of “the morning mirror” in which Shimamura is moved by the color contours drawn by the snow, the woman’s red cheeks and her black hair.

\begin{quote}
The white in the depths of the mirror was the snow, and floating in the middle of it were the woman’s bright red cheeks. There was an incredibly fresh beauty in the contrast.
...The brightness of the snow was more intense, it seemed to be burning icily. Against it, the woman’s hair became a clearer black, touched with a purple sheen.
\end{quote}

(KYZ.41-42,SC.48)

The “morning mirror” episode becomes the critical point at which, Komako, who has been referred to namelessly as “the woman,” is given a name. Her red cheeks signify, in the course of the narrative, her essential nature -- warmth and a fiery temper; and black hair (literally translated as ‘\textit{ku ro ka mi}’) also connotes her jealousy, an issue to be examined later in the context of allusion.

The scene is somewhat cinematic, the writing panning from snow melting around the hot spring, to local scenes, distant and near, and finally coming to rest upon Komako.

Probably to keep snow from piling up, the water from the baths was led around the walls of the inn by a makeshift ditch, and in front of the entrance it spread out like a shallow spring. A powerful black dog stood on the stones by the doorway lapping at the water...

\textsuperscript{17} Tsuruta. Kin’ya. "\textit{Yukiguni}.” Kawabata yasunari no geijutsu -- junsui to kyusai (Kawabata Yasunari’s Art--Purity and Salvation). Tokyo: Meijishoin, 1981. 49-104. Tsuruta decodes the passage to explain how effectively the imagery of a toad conveys Komako’s changed sexuality. 58-60.

and the faint smell of mildew was sweetened by the steam. The snow that had fallen from the cedar branches to the roof of the public bath was breaking down into something warm and shapeless. (KYZ.42,SC.48)

The linkage between the two passages is internal; the woman's red cheeks are associated with her physical warmth -- Komako has just told Shimamura, "I only have to get into bed and in a minute I'm warm as an oven." (KYZ.41,SC.48) This warmth, like a hot spring, affects the surrounding snow. The reference to a black Akita connects with the "black hair"; and the same dog is associated with "a shrine lion-like dog" ('koma-inu) in the cedar grove. A sensation of radiance overflows Kawabata's description, especially in the variety of expressions such as -- sweetened mildew smell in the hot spring steam, a lump of snow on the roof thawing "shapeless," "the soft flow of snow on the far border range." The sense of warmth, then, is carried by a succession of short descriptions involving children skiing in the distance, and the rain-like dripping sounds of melting icicles. Kawabata's camera continues to pan from near to far, from visual to auditory sensations. When the camera, after capturing icicles on the eaves, moves to the snow-plowing man on the roof the description of the weather-worn, dark surface takes the reader into the authentic atmosphere of Snow Country. The roof description communicates something human in "the low eaves hugging the ground...." This proceeds naturally to the scene of children. Observing a group of them throwing ice from a ditch, and the thickness of the broken pieces, Shimamura is cognizant of being placed in a wonderland named Snow Country. This sense of being wondrously located informs all the linkage in the narrative.

The scene moves from the landscape to the human dimension. The camera focuses on an adolescent girl-knitter whose bare feet reveal "her soles, red and cracked from the cold." (p.50) Kawabata's original Japanese diction, "akarande" (reddish), and "akagire" (raw cracks) carries the colour imagery reflected in "the morning mirror." Thus, the progression through these descriptions is rendered internally and linguistically; moving from near to distant or vice versa; scenes change from landscape to humanity. These are typical of renga technique. A shift from the adolescent girl to the two-year-old girl who holds a gray yarn pulls, literally, the thread of the sequence toward Komako.

A girl of perhaps two stood on a bundle of firewood beside her patiently holding a ball of yarn from the younger girl to the older seemed warmly aglow. (KYZ.43,SC.50)
Komako, warmth itself, then appears before the reader with a geisha-name and an identity. The preceding may hardly appear to qualify as a ‘makurakotoba’ (pillow word); however, the lengthy epithet retains the power to draw us to the person of Komako.

The sequence describing Shimamura’s third return to Snow Country offers another example. It opens with a microcosmic description of moths in the egg-laying season:

It was the egg-laying season for moths, Shimamura’s wife told him as he left Tokyo, and he was not to leave his clothes hanging in the open. There were indeed moths at the inn. Five or six large corn-colored moths clung to the decorative lantern under the eaves, and in the little dressing-room was a moth whose body was large out of all proportion to its wings. (KYZ. 72, SC. 89)

The moth with the enlarged body was in its egg-laying season as Shimamura’s wife has warned him before the trip. Spatially, the description moves from Tokyo to Snow Country, from outside the house to inside, and to the dress-hanger in the three-matt room. The warning in his wife’s voice lingers and is vividly materialized. Kawabata, then, pans to a particular moth quietly clinging to the screen. The stillness surrounding it suggests an air of death, an effect which Kawabata amplifies with a colour contrast:

The ranges of mountains beyond were already autumn-red in the evening sun. That one spot of pale green struck him as oddly like the color of death. (Ibid.)

With the autumn wind, Kawabata describes a movement of the pale green wings. Wondering if the moth is alive, Shimamura advances, flicking and striking at it, only to have it fly away.

He struck at it with his fist, and it fell like a leaf from a tree, floating lightly up midway to the ground.

In front of the cedar grove opposite, dragonflies were bobbing about in countless swarms, like dandelion floss in the wind.

The river seemed to flow from the tips of the cedar branches. (KYZ. 72-73, SC. 90)

The flight of the moth, as if wakened from death, mingles wonderfully with a swarm of dragonflies bobbing in the distance. The fluent movement of the dragonflies is seen as a river flowing toward a distant mountain. Kawabata initiates a series of similes -- a moth falling “like a leaf from a tree,” dragonflies bobbing “like dandelion floss in the wind” and the river “seemed to flow from the tips of the cedar branches.” The momentary illusion, a moth falling like a leaf,
reveals Komako being transfigured into Yoko. What, then, is Kawabata trying to achieve in this scene? The next line after the description cited above gives us a clue.

He thought he would never tire of looking at the autumn flowers that spread a blanket of silver up the side of the mountain. (Ibid.)

Shimamura is drawn into the beauty of the illusory world. Appearances charm his vision. Later, when he discovers that the distant flowers with the silvery hue are autumn “kaya” grass, he understands he has been caught in a romantic reverie. Kawabata has provided another clue from the previous sequence. Shimamura, emerging from the tunnel to Tokyo, observes, intently, the landscape outside the train, and sees a man and a young girl sitting together. Seidensticker’s English version clearly separates the two sequences as if unrelated; however, the scene in which Shimamura observes the couple displays Kawabata’s linking method. The linkage here internalizes (kokorozuke) the motif expressing the interplay of appearance and deception: the sequence, indeed, proceeds with a lingering sentiment, yojo. (or yosei)

A black shawl was thrown over the full flesh of her shoulders, and her cheeks were a wonderful, fiery red. She leaned slightly forward to catch every word the man said, and she answered him happily. A pair off on a long journey together, Shimamura concluded....

He had not considered the possibility that the two had simply met on the train. The man was perhaps a travelling salesman. (KYZ.71,SC.87)

Kawabata shifts from the human portrayal to the previous nature description of the moth and then shifts back to human view. The forty-year-old travelling Russian peddler whose “skin, where it showed at the full throat and beyond, was a pure, glowing white” (KYZ.73,SC.75) is a personage who extends the narrative thread through the “travelling salesman” passage to the moth with the large egg-laying body. Shimamura notices something impure in the peddler’s attire -- a Japanese kimono-like wrap skirt and a pair of shoes.

The episode then moves from the peddler to a large-bodied geisha who, Shimamura realizes, is “well along in years, plump and to all appearance good-natured.” (Ibid.) The image of her plumpness is carried on into the thick, oblong Japanese cakes (dumpling type), which are offered to him. When he bites into it, “the hard crust, a little sour, gave off a musty smell.” (KYZ.74,SC.79) The theme that draws all these entities together, natural or human, speaks of
Shimamura’s tactile experience. What change has taken place in Komako? There is a remarkable linkage between the musty smell and taste of Japanese cake and the beautiful persimmon.

Outside the window, the bright red of ripe persimmons was bathed in the evening sun. It seemed to send out a red glow even to the bamboo of the pothook over the hearth. (KYZ. 74, SC. 92)

The red, ripe persimmon clearly recreates Komako’s features: her cheeks are always burning red, and to Shimamura’s eyes, she looked like a strange wrapped-up fruit when he leaves her to return to Tokyo. The musty smell, the sign of a little old cake, is temporally visualized as ripened persimmon. The sequence turns again to nature: Shimamura discovers that the flowers which he thought white are actually robust autumn ‘Kaya’ grass. It proceeds to the moment when Komako appears before Shimamura’s eyes. Thus, Kawabata’s typical style is to create several sequences of *renge* association in order to establish Komako’s persona. Just as a moth is transformed from a beautiful pale green silk worm, she is going to shed her disguise.19

Shimamura is attracted not only to Komako but also to Yoko; and just as Kawabata has created an epithet-like sequence to concentrate on the person of Komako and her transformation, he provides a shorter, poetic description to display Yoko. The morning after Shimamura resumes a sexual liaison with Komako on his third visit to Snow Country, he takes a stroll in the village where he sees Yoko pounding red beans and singing. The sequence described has indeed the quality of an epithet, a *makurakotoba*, in three parts:

Before a white wall, shaded by eaves, a little girl in “mountain trousers” and an orange-red flannel kimono, clearly brand-new, was bouncing a rubber ball. For Shimamura, there was autumn in the little scene.

(KYZ. 87, SC. 109)

The colour contrast between the little girl’s red kimono and the white wall echoes the contrast projected on the “morning mirror”; Komako’s lingering shadow remains; autumnal sensibility is reflected in the beautiful picture of a “red, ripe persimmon in the evening sun.” The portrait of the girl calls forth Komako’s presence from which, in turn, Yoko’s emerges. Here is a reproduction of the vision Shimamura received from the illusion held in “the evening mirror.”

This depiction, then, moves to a sketch of village architecture:

---

19 The pictorial Chinese character for a moth is composed of a radical which signifies an insect and a part which signifies ‘self.’ The character, indeed, reflects a self-transformed moth. This imagery is appropriate for Komako’s transformation—a self-centered attitude.
The houses were built in the style of the old regime. No doubt they were there when provincial lords passed down this north-country road. The eaves and the verandas were deep, while the latticed, paper-covered windows on the second floor were long and low, no more than a foot or so high. There were reed blinds hanging from the eaves. (Ibid.) (The underline is my own.)

On the surface, the two passages do not appear to carry any linguistic interconnection. However, the reader may remember a similar architectural description of a North country roof, in the epithet-like sequence introducing Komako’s geisha name. Therefore, the linkage is allusive in order to maintain Komako’s presence in the background. In the original text, the English rendering of “reed blind” reads as ‘the blind made of ‘Kaya’ grass, which is yet another reference to Komako. Despite her abiding presence, successive descriptions of the old world -- deeply-set eaves, long and low style of lattice windows and the ‘Kaya’ grass blinds hanging -- all speak of delicate, old-fashioned reserve, namely, Yoko’s attributes. Kawabata develops these qualities of delicacy, and intensifies his imagery to invigorate Yoko’s narrative existence:

Slender autumn grasses grew along the top of an earthen wall. The apple-yellow plumes were at their most graceful, and below each plume narrow leaves spread out in a delicate fountain. Yoko knelt on a straw mat beside the road, flailing at beans spread out before her in the sunlight. The beans jumped from their dry pods like little drops of light.

(Ibid.)

Again, a progression of nature-description from the “slender autumn grass,” an echo from ‘Kaya’ grass, to a “delicate fountain” is used to develop the portrait of Yoko. Moreover, the movement established in the imagery -- the widening splash of the fountain and leaping rain drops -- enhances the effect of Yoko’s beautiful singing voice. She then appears, singing a song about crickets. The nature sequence, therefore, serves as an epithet to impart narrative design like a closely-woven fabric; the device Kawabata employs is renga linkage.

The allusive mode is another aspect of renga technique that Kawabata uses in Yukiguni. The “Kurokami” (Dark Hair) piece is performed in a relaxed, informal manner in order to demonstrate the way she first practiced it in her childhood. As previously noted, there is significance in Komako’s simple negative reply to the question as to whether “Kurokami” is a piece she learned in her childhood. At their first reunion, Komako’s dark hair arouses Shimamura’s sensibility -- “... because of the darkness of her hair, there was a certain warmth in it.” A
reference to its stiff, masculine quality and black stone weightiness draws attention to the qualities of the hair itself. The morning after, when Shimamura observes Komako’s flaming red cheeks against the morning snow reflected in the mirror, the hair’s lustrous tinge of purple becomes part of the vision—“Against it [the snow], the woman’s hair became a clearer black, touched with purple sheen.” (KYZ.32,SC.48)

“Kurokami” is a ‘nagauta’ (long epic piece), sung at the most moving part of the Kabuki performance. The play is about Itoh Sukechika’s daughter, the Princess Tatsu, and her unquenchable love-thirst for Minamoto Yoritomo. Her passion continues even after she has yielded to Hojo Masako for the sake of restoring the Genji leadership. The story tells how the Princess burns with jealousy after witnessing their wedding vows through the mirror. The ‘Kurokami’ piece is, therefore, sung as the actor combs his (her) dark hair.20

This dark hair symbolizes Komako’s emotional involvement and her own desire. It is revealed, when intoxicated, Komako comes into Shimamura’s room and asks for a glass of water:

The first visit: “Flailing with a drunken arm at everything that happened to be on it, she poured herself a glass of water and drank in great gulps.” (KYZ.30,SC.33)

“Give me water, I want water.” (KYZ.31,SC.34)

The second visit: “She already seemed a little drunk. When she came back from the party, she collapsed before the mirror, and drunkenness came out on her face. ....I want a drink. Give me water.” (KYZ.52,SC.63)

The third visit: “She got to her knees and took a drink of water great swallows.” (KYZ.99,SC.124)

“I want water. Give me water....” (KYZ.107,SC.134)

Purifying water has great thematic importance in Kawabata’s Izu no odoriko. In Yukiguni, snow, a form of water, lies latent in the background; Shimamura is mindful of the melting of the snow. Moreover, the element that refines and cleanses ‘Chijimi’ (crepe) cloth, at the same time could, in the form of an avalanche, destroy rabbits and pheasant. From the beginning, the novel makes reference to the two calamities — avalanche and fire: “The porter from the inn so well-

equipped for the cold that he suggested a fireman" (KYZ.15, SC.12). When Shimamura visits the Snow Country for a third time in late autumn, Komako describes in detail how her “Snow Country” people live intimately with the threat of avalanches.

The symbolical function of the three images reflected in the “morning mirror” -- dark hair, burning red cheeks, and bright snow -- in the context of the ‘Kurokami’ allusion, all occupy a role as the narrative moves to its conclusion. The cyclical aspect of nature, autumn, with its red foliage is appropriately chosen as a background for Shimamura’s third visit. The rekindled relationship proceeds quickly to a final burn-out. As nature’s cycle advances, Komako’s unquenchable passion for Shimamura intensifies: her visits to his room increase. Though retaining the image of cleanliness, she is ever associated with the imagery of fire. It is Komako who lights a match for Shimamura in the cedar grove. The flame-red cheek, seen in “the morning mirror” is the “very color that separates Shimamura from the reality.” The colour imagery of redness is carried into “red flannel,” “red persimmon,” a bon-fire burning at ”the bird-chasing festival” on the fourteenth of February,21 a red dragonfly, and so on. Then, Komako is described as laughing “like a glow that breaks into a flame.” (KYZ.91, SC.114)

On three occasions Komako alludes to her need to wash her dark hair, and have it prepared at the coiffure’s for the evening’s parties -- when she visits Shimamura early in the morning, when she symbolically crushes a chestnut to a pulp, and when Shimamura meets Yoko and Komako at Yukio’s grave. With a final reference to hairwashing, Komako leaves Shimamura, and when she revisits him, later at three in the morning, she is very drunk. He is surprised to feel Komako burning hot like fire.

“You’re on fire.”
“Oh? Fire for a pillow.
See that you don’t burn yourself.” (KYZ.99, SC.123)

Thus, redness as a fire symbol is intercut with references to Komako’s hair. Finally, when she asks Shimamura to cut away her artificial hair-piece, and then comb her natural hair, he perceives her obsessiveness. The more frequent her visits, the cooler and sadder Shimamura bec-

---

omes. Between parties, she visits him and tattles about Yoko’s ‘jealousy’ because a kind of animal instinct informs her that life with him is coming to an end. On the way home one night she confesses that she senses Yoko is going to be “a heavy load” and asks Shimamura to take Yoko back to Tokyo with him.

If she were to fall into the hands of someone like you, she might not go crazy after all. Why don’t you take my load for me?

.... You think I’m drunk and talking nonsense? I’m not. I would know she was being well taken care of and I could go pleasantly to seed here in the mountains. It would be a fine, quiet feeling.”

(KYZ. 115, SC.141-142)

Kawabata orchestrates the final movement against the echo of Noh theatre background music. On one of the dying days of the maple foliage season, Shimamura awakens to a Noh play recitation being performed down the hallway with a drum beating in the background. As noted earlier, Yoko’s ‘Hand ball song’ has set a tone and is now transformed into Noh music. Outside the window, it has begun snowing; now, the red foliage, the colour of reality is covered with new-fallen snow, and Shimamura is transported into another reality.

Prior to the final fire scene, he travels to the ‘Chijimi’-producing village to avoid Komako’s obsessive attentions; but the trip, he discovers, is futile. Structurally, Kawabata interweaves Shimamura’s thoughts on human relationships – their transiency as compared to the life of artifacts. This interlude allows ‘Noh actor’ Komako, a persona of nature, to move backstage in preparation for the final performance.

On returning from his trip, the intensity of Komako’s familiarity indicates she is out of control. When fire breaks out in the cocoon-warehouse, and they both struggle towards the conflagration, the heavenly Milky Way with its brightness, vastness and depth becomes magnified in Shimamura’s consciousness. The whole of space is transformed into a sea of stars held in an evocation of female sensuality.

...he felt himself floating into the Milky Way. Its radiance was so near that it seemed to take him up into it. Was this the bright vastness the poet Basho saw when he wrote of the Milky Way arched over a stormy sea? The Milky Way came down just over there, to wrap the night earth in its naked embrace. There was a terrible voluptuousness about it. Shimamura fancied that his own small shadow was being cast up against it from the earth. Each individual star stood apart from the rest, and even the particles of silver dust in the luminous clouds could be picked out, so clear was the night. The limitless depth of the Milky Way pulled his gaze up into it. (KYZ.132-133, SC.165)
Kawabata’s reference to Basho’s verse is from the *haiku* master’s travel journal, *Okuno hosomichi* (The Narrow Road to the Deep North): “Araumiya Sadoni yokotou Amanogawa” (The Great Milky Way / Spans in a single arch / The billow-crested sea, / Falling on Sado beyond.) In Basho’s sequence, nature as female eroticism is manifested in the image of the travelling whores at the inn of Ichifuri, who ask the travelling priest, Basho, to accompany them on the journey. The verse is often regarded as a love motif, *koi no za*, in the ‘*renku*’ sequence. Basho’s verse, therefore, does not describe “the bright vastness” of the Milky Way but communicates the imminent roar of nature luring the Poet. Basho’s verse celebrates the awesomeness of nature, while Kawabata focuses on nature’s seductive force manifested in the Milky Way. Shimamura’s response may not be readily comparable to Basho’s, but the allusion here is an echo from the literary past, amplifying the double-structure of the narrative. In the presence of this female voluptuousness, Komako’s identity is lost in her assumption of Noh-masked distance.

The shape of her slightly aquiline nose was not clear, and the color was gone from her small lips. Was it so dim, then, the light that cut across the sky and overflowed it? ... the Milky Way was brighter than the brightest full moon. In the faint light that lift no shadows on the earth, Komako’s face floated up like an old mask. It was strange that even in the mask there should be the scent of the woman. (*KYZ.* 135, *SC.* 167-168)

All the attributes which make Komako attractive—cleanliness, life-forcefulness, fiery temper, warmth and possessiveness—are lost in the overpowering feminine presence of the Milky Way. During their race towards the fire scene, Komako challenges Shimamura with a curious invitation—to come and experience the real Snow Country when “people have a real blizzard, and the snow drives along the ground all night long” (p.169) Komako, after all, belongs to the Snow Country, and Shimamura is a traveller from the outside. Her somewhat mocking invitation tempts him.

The Chinese character depicting the Milky Way conveys the image of river-flow. Kawabata, by using a linguistic association in the refrain, demonstrates that Shimamura is beneath the surface of the water.

“he felt himself floating into the Milky Way.

“The Milky Way flowed over them.

“And the Milky Way, like a great aurora, flowed through his body

“the Milky Way seemed to dip and flow in the opposite direction.
This heavenly reservoir of water is the place which receives the melting snow of the Snow Country and where Komako continually needs to drink. Now the water overflows Shimamura's senses. Though drowning, Shimamura is petrified by the grandure of the drama being enacted before him. The earthly fire and the heavenly Milky Way commune with each other to a point of climax. Yoko falls from the second floor balcony of the cocoon warehouse theatre before the eyes of Komako and Shimamura. For Shimamura, it is all like watching the fantasy of "the evening mirror." The difference is that the eyes of the unconscious Yoko are tightly closed. Shimamura struggles to understand the meaning of the vision concealed there — he sees Komako holding Yoko like a "sacrifice for her punishment."

Earlier in the novel, Kawabata describes how Shimamura had pursued his interest in Japanese dance and theatre in his youth, and how, suddenly and unaccountably, he redirects his interest to the Occidental ballet. Japanese dance and theatre is, at heart, born from a preoccupation with the world of nature. Komako, who is a Snow Country dancer and nature's feminine medium, approaches him now, as the embodiment of what his youth has rejected. This moment of epiphany is like the Milky Way flowing down through him: it is the moment in which he experiences the internal "avalanche."

Kawabata's poetics are fully at work in Yukiguni, his middle period masterpiece. Lyricalism overflows the narrative as a result of Kawabata's creative application of waka devices, renga linking technique, and an increased use of nature-descriptions. These not only provide the background scenario of Snow Country but also form an important part of narrative motifs. It is small wonder that the artist Kawabata became deeply interested in the kotodama concept, the source of all the poetic patterns found in the waka tradition, including the makurakotoba (pillow word) and kigo (seasonal word). At the beginning of the novel, Kawabata creates a mirror device through which Shimamura is invited to visit the Snow Country. In this white wonderland, the traveller, Shimamura, sees illusion, after illusion, activated by the two women and by nature herself. Kawabata carefully contrasts the two women who emerge from the same source. Komako conveys life-force, affecting Shimamura with her cleanliness; Yoko, on the other hand, remains reserved, cool and awkward, moving Shimamura with her beautifully piercing eyes and her song.
Kawabata’s poetics, propelled by the *kotodama* concept enlivens the narrative. Sequences of nature-description and song, for example, reflect a *makurakotoba* variation created to bring the motifs into the open space of the text. The long sequences of nature-description nurture the progression by association in a way which is characteristic of *renga* creation. The linkage moves inexorably between internal meanings. Scenes are joined by lingering sentiment and allusive mode. Yoko’s songs echo like a Noh chorus, augmenting every motif in the narrative.
CHAPTER IV: THE MID-PERIOD (POST WAR) -- YAMA NO OTO
(THE SOUND OF THE MOUNTAIN)

-- GYOKURO (TEA), WOMEN, AND THE WORD --

At the end of Kawabata’s pre-war opus, Yukiguni, the character Shimamura is swallowed up by the Milky Way, but the novel leaves the reader sensing that the author lacks a vision which establishes rapport with the persona of nature. His narrative technique in Yukiguni has revealed its roots in the kotodama belief feeding the renga (linked verse) literary tradition. In addition to linguistic association, the ritualistic use of the magical power of language found in the waka tradition is effectively applied. Nature-description is increased to the degree that it presents characters’ emotions, thoughts and actions transparently through the nature themes of Snow Country. When Japan lost the Pacific War, Kawabata expressed the ‘sadness’ that comes from knowing beauty and its evanescence, in his essay, “Utsukushii nihon no watakushi” (Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself) in 1968 when he attended the Nobel Prize winning reception.

In May of 1949, Kawabata wrote the first serial episode of Senbazuru (Thousand Cranes) for a magazine, and the first serial episode of another novel, Yama no oto (The Sound of the Mountain) in September of the same year. The magnitude of his creative dynamic is displayed in the fact that he wrote these separate episodes, one after another, in a parallel effort. Senbazuru has a sequel piece, called Namichidori (Sea Plovers), which Kawabata could not complete. Whatever the reason, the work indicates a visionary miscarriage. In Yama no oto, on the other hand, the first episode comes to a structural full circle with all the marks of resolution.

The novel is a simple story about human relationships -- an old married man, with two grown-up children and their difficult marriages, struggles to come to terms with life. Beneath the narrative, however, runs the author’s quest for visionary resolution -- in a journey between life

1 In contrast to Tanizaki Junichiro, who devoted his time to writing Sasameyuki (The Makioka Sisters), Kawabata devoted his to reading Genji monogatari (A Tale of Genji) and other classical works. Kawabata saw in the devastated waste land of post-war Tokyo, a parallel to the sights he witnessed after the Kanto Earthquake. He also witnessed the judgement of ‘death by hanging’ handed out to war criminals at the Tokyo War Criminal Trial (Tokyo Saiban) and wrote the article, “The Trial and the Aged men.” Kawabata Yasunari, Jitusroku (Documentation). Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbun Bunkabu, 1969.

and death, or between reality and dream, or sensation and meaning. Sukehiro Hirakawa calls Kawabata’s story line in *Yamano oto* a ‘fil conducteur’ that runs through the natural surroundings into human affairs and vice versa. The movement from one episode to another is through temporal and spatial arrangements. This movement of ‘fil conducteur’ is similar to the *renga* aesthetic principle of integration. Many scholars have approached this novel from various angles: an analysis of dream sequence, the role of the Lotus seed metaphor, the structural analysis of the novel, Kawabata’s overlaying technique, and so on. Each one upholds Kawabata’s novel as masterpiece of complexity.

This chapter examines Kawabata’s use of *renga* technique in *Yama no toto* as a narrative instrument. It will assess first, the narrative feature of the first episode; second, a sequence of garden descriptions in the novel; third, the progressive use of a dwarf maple tree as a stage prop. In the end all should reveal the integrity achieved by an ‘association of reverberation.’

Kawabata continued, as he did in *Yukiguni*, to use the magazine serial publication format, and he linked sixteen short episodes into a final integrated form. The title of each episode suggests a sequence of nature imagery to mark the author’s journey through the audible experience to the visual, into a dream (fantasy) world; and further, beyond the dream world, into a temporal miracle; then, from the audible experience to the spatial; and finally, the temporal progression into the ambience of nature’s cycle. Reiko Tsukimura, in her essay, “The Structure of the Novel *Yama no oto*,”4 applies a Noh theatrical structural principle, *jo*, (introduction) *ha*, (development) and *kyu*, (climax / resolution), and singles out the first episode, “The Sound of the Mountain,” as the introductory segment. The narrative structure of the first episode, therefore, needs closer examination as a movement found in *shoori* (the first folding of the paper used in recording linked verses). The opening sequence of the first section reveals the nature of *hokku* (an opening verse of *renga*). Though the novel is narrated through the eyes of sixty-two year old Ogata Shingo (with authorial intervention), the sequence gives a full view of Ogata Shingo’s facial expression -- “his brow slightly furrowed, his lips slightly parted, wore

---


an air of thought." But Shingo's son, Shuichi, knew exactly what was happening with his father -- "his father was trying to remember something" (KYZ. 243, TSTM. 3). His memory is hazy in recalling his maid's name but clear in recalling, auditorily, how she spoke about his boot-sore and how he understood the effect of what she said.

"Footsore," she said. I liked that. It had a gentle, old-fashioned ring to it. I liked it very much. But now that I think about it, I'm sure she said I had a boot sore."

"It had a very pleasant sound to it, very gentle and elegant,..."

The introduction presents a motif tracing the aberrant connection between appearance and truth by describing Shingo's sad face; then, the same motif expands spatially to his memory bank. Shingo's disappointment in realizing the truth not only adds a lingering tone of sadness but also reveals that he is easily pleased by words that create fantasy. In *Izu no odoriko*, the young protagonist was comforted by the dancer's calling him as 'a good person,' and his 'orphan warp' was even cleansed by the magic of the word. In *Yukiguni*, Shimamura offended Komako by calling her 'a good woman.' Shingo in *Yama no oto*, yearns to be comforted by words. It is, however, noteworthy that Shingo feels slightly disturbed because of his inability to remember the maid's name.

Section two introduces Shingo and his family, and supplies some personal detail: he and his wife, who is one year older than him, have a son, and a daughter who has two young girls. Two years previously, he had spat up blood. He did not have a medical examination, and the problem had gone away.

His skin had seemed finer since, and in the two weeks or so that he had been in bed the color of his eyes and lips had improved. Shingo had not detected symptoms of tuberculosis in himself, and to spit blood at his age gave him the darkest forebodings. Partly because of them he refused to be examined. (KYZ. 246, TSTM. 6)

It is obvious that the fear of memory loss revealed earlier indicates a more profound disturbance. The scene proceeds, rather unromantically, into the bedroom. A spatial progression expands...
from the interior of the house to the backyard and then, into the world of his own memory. Prior to the commencement of Shingo's spatial and temporal journey, Kawabata provides a simple key sentence: "there are some times when Shingo feels as if wakened to Yasuko's snoring during night." It suggests that Shingo is being caught up in a realm of waking-sleep. This offers insights into the centrality of Shingo's experience of hearing 'the sound of the mountain' from his backyard.

Tonight he was not in good spirits. Turning on the light, he looked at her profile and took her by the throat. She was a little sweaty. Only when she snored did he reach out to touch her. The fact seemed to him infinitely saddening. (KYZ.246-247.TSTM.6)

The description of him grabbing his wife by the throat indicates the degree to which he is "repelled by the sight of the aged flesh with which he had lived for so long." He yearns for beauty and to be comforted by it. The last two sentences imply that the aging protagonist craves intimacy and the warmth of physical contact. Against this desire, Shingo impulsively holds his wife's throat to stop her snoring. Why does the sound bother him so much? Snoring, after all, indicates human life. The tactility of a sweaty body is an unpleasantness that takes Shingo into the experience of another unwelcome sound.

He took up a magazine lying at his pillow. Then, the room being sultry, he got up, opened a shudder, and sat down beside it. The moon was bright. One of his daughter-in-law's dresses was hanging outside, unpleasantly gray. Perhaps she had forgotten to take in her laundry, or perhaps she had left a sweat-soaked garment to take the dew of night. A screeching of insects came from the garden. There were locusts on the trunk of the cherry tree to the left. He had not known that locusts could make such a rasping sound; but locusts indeed they were. He wondered if locusts might sometimes be troubled with nightmares. A locust flew in and lit on the skirt of the mosquito net. It made no sound as he picked it up. "A mute." It would not be one of the locusts he had heard at the tree. Lest it fly back in, attracted by the light, he threw it with all his strength toward the top of the tree. He felt nothing against his hand as he released it.

Gripping the shutter, he looked toward the tree. He could not tell whether the locust had lodged there or flown on. There was a vast depth to the moonlit night, stretching far on either side. (KYZ.247-248.TSTM.7)

---

6 The translation (my own) is intended to demonstrate Shingo's wakeful-sleep confusion. In my opinion, Seidensticker's translation --"Sometimes, in the middle of the night, Shingo would be tempted to blame her snoring for having awakened him."-- does not suggest this.
The bedroom and the garden are divided by a shutter (or raindoor). Shingo’s opening of the shutter is a narrative switch that sends the backyard space into focus. In the bedroom, the hero, filled with overwhelming self-pity, finds his life-long companion’s body ugly, and he grabs her by the neck to stop the snoring. Shingo’s three-step action takes the reader into another space, a dream-like zone -- “he got up, opened a shutter, and sat down beside it.” Movement from one space to another is thus achieved; yet, the two scenes are well-linked, internally, by Shingo’s displeasure. The moon, in the waka tradition, provides companionship to a lonely man. Here, however, the moonlight gives special illumination to the scene. The first thing Shingo notices outside the shutter is his daughter-in-law, Kikuko’s dress. Kawabata’s original Japanese description, with the one-piece loosely dangling and the colour “unpleasantly gray white,” conveys the hero’s ongoing experience of displeasure. This is further intensified when he hears a locust’s ghastly screeching. The identity of Kikuko is not yet introduced, however, her dangling dress not only suggests non-substance, namely, her non-physical presence in the story but also a prophetic predicament in the story line -- the reality of what Shingo fantasizes about Kikuko is like a dangling dress and has no substance. Whatever Kawabata’s deeper intention might be, the immediate visual sensations of unpleasantness is linked with the auditory experience of the nightmarish locust screeching from the cherry tree.

The tree is a stage prop which returns throughout the novel as a symbolical entity to represent Kikuko. Both cherry tree and locust which express evanescent beauty in Japanese poetics are well-established in the diction. What the invading locust signifies is ambiguous, since the auditory sensation creates a nightmarish fantasy. A silent locust indicates, biologically, a female, yet, Shingo’s rationality is seared by the ominous rasp of the locust. But this lack of rationality is in itself an attribute of a nightmare world. Furthermore, why does Shingo throw the locust back into the darkness “with all his strength”? Although the reason is given as “lest it fly back in, attracted by the light,” is it not simply enough to let the locust fly away? The aura of strangeness widens. The significance of Shingo’s motion -- throwing the locust -- is in the fact that he feels no response. This intensifies the description of the bottomless “depth of the moonlit night, stretching far on either side.” Literally, Shingo has crossed the threshold of a special space that lies beyond his bedroom. The sequence now acquires a new dimension. The linkage is
accomplished by the use of “a lingering tone” commonly applied in the *renga* tradition; in this instance, it is the trail of an unpleasant noise.

Though August had only begun, autumn insects were already singing.

He thought he could detect a dripping of dew from leaf to leaf.

It was a windless night. The moon was near full, but in the most, sultry air the fringe of trees that outlined the mountain was blurred. They were motionless, however.

Not a leaf on the fern by the veranda was stirring.

In these mountain recesses of Kamakura the sea could sometimes be heard at night. Shingo wondered if he might have heard the sound of the sea. But no -- it was the mountain.

It was like wind, far away, but with a depth like a rumbling of the earth. Thinking that it might be in himself, a ringing in his ears, Shingo shook his head.

The sound stopped, and he was suddenly afraid. A chill passed over him, as if he had been notified that death was approaching. He wanted to question himself, calmly and deliberately, to ask whether it had been the sound of the wind, the sound of the sea, or a sound in his ears. But he had heard no such sound, he was sure. He had heard the mountain.

It was as if a demon had passed, making the mountain sound out.

The steep slope, wrapped in the damp shades of night, was like a dark wall. So small a mound of a mountain, that it was all in Shingo's garden; it was like an egg cut in half.

(KYZ.247-248,TSTM.8)

The long quotation is necessary to understand the full impact of Shingo's dream-like experience, and to illustrate the *renga* aspects of the narrative structure. The description embodies the process of Shingo's auditory experience: the first is the cricket's chirping; then comes the dew-dripping sound from leaf to leaf; and finally, the sound of the mountain. Kawabata describes the first two sounds in the present tense. Beyond the ghastly locust screeches, Shingo immerses himself in the microcosmic finite world. In fact, the association of the dew falling from leaf to leaf comes from the allusion which Kawabata uses to integrate the dynamics of the novel; its significance will be discussed later. Then comes the inner cognition of his experience described in the perfect tense. This indicates a temporal lapse, and that Shingo has been awakened to the sound of the mountain. But is the sound real? And where does it come from? Shingo asserts that it is neither the sound of the wind nor the roar of the ocean; further, he denies the possibility of the sound within his ears. When the sound has stopped, Shingo is struck with fear as if "he had been
notified that death was approaching." The fact that Shingo has not gone to a physician after spitting up blood looms up to form his hidden fear of death. One must know the visionary mechanism of death and life in order to face the finality of one's life. Shingo is uncertain. Death is not abstract but it is a palpable termination; its unknown creates fear. By calling it "as if a demon had passed," Kawabata identifies death as a destructive force from a foreign realm. The realm, here, is repeatedly associated with the mountain, a small mound, "like an egg cut in half" in his backyard. In the Japanese native cult, a mountain is believed to be where the spirit of death resides. In ancient practice, the aged are taken to the mountain and left to wait for death; it is called a 'Ubaste yama' (Mountain Dump for the aged) custom. When an Emperor passes away, he is described as hiding in the mountain ('Yama ni okakureni naru'). In Japanese secular usage, when wives show their ill-temper, husbands express fear of the mountain goddess ('Yama no kami'). It is evident that Shingo has been visited by the spirit being ancient society named as 'mononoke' (the spirit of the deceased). Now that Shingo has determined the sound's origin, he looks beyond the trees on the mound and sees a starry sky. The same trees on the mound were earlier described as blurry --

... the fringe of trees that outlined mountain was blurred.

Stars were shining through the trees at its crest. (KYZ.248.TSTM.8)

A temporal progression is apparent. A shift from the auditory experience to the visual recognition of distant stars further leads Shingo into the depths of the night. The starry sky beyond the trees connects with the macrocosmic Galaxy into which Shimamura has fallen at the end of Yukiguni. The stars invite Shingo from another world.

The second sequence ends as Shingo closes the shutter. His simple action of opening and closing the shutter has revealed a peculiar awake-asleep fantasy world where the hero experiences sensation. The third sequence leads to another temporally and spatially removed world of Shingo's memory -- "As he closed the shutter, a strange memory came to him." What, then, links

7 Hidden allusion is suggested in the Old Testament story of the prophet Elijah who hears God's voice. "The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains...but the Lord was not in the wind;...and after the fire a still small voice." I Kings 19:11-12. Without this allusion, the first episode and the second episode may not appear related. The second episode describes the Ogata family and the typhoon. When Shingo hears the ocean roaring beyond the typhoon, the biblical allusion is obvious. Shingo's experience, however, is fearful, thinking that the sound he hears from the mountain is a passing demon.
Shingo’s “peculiar memory” and his previous auditory experience? In the sequence, Shingo relates what he heard from a geisha at a newly-built restaurant. Her intimate action of undoing his tie takes him into her interior and private world.

Some two months before, she said, she had been on the point of committing suicide with the carpenter who had built the restaurant. But as they had prepared to take poison, doubts had overtaken her. Were the portions in fact lethal?

“He said there was plenty. The doses were all measured out, his and mine, he said, and that proved it.”

But she could not believe him. Her doubts only grew.

There is a key in the doubts that overtake her at the brink of a double suicide. Shingo’s unspoken response to the episode is described as “A good yarn” according to Seidensticker’s translation. Kawabata’s original Japanese, ‘rakugo’ suggests a story with word play. The ‘rakugo,’ literally means “a fallen word.” Kawabata inserts two instances which work against kotodama belief. One is the geisha’s disbelief in her lover’s promise; the other, the failed power of the word as implied in the Japanese expression, “rakugo.” This doubt against the effect of the promised word links the two events under discussion. The doubts are the meaning of the sound which Shingo hears from the backyard mound. It should be noted that Shingo’s name signifies ‘Self-Trust.’ A picture of Shingo unable to share his fearful experience with his life-long companion, Yasuko, makes him doubly pitiful and desolate.

Section three carries this sentiment developing from Shingo’s inner need for a companion. The scene proceeds, geographically, from Shingo’s office in Tokyo to a fishmonger in Kamakura, and then, to his own home. Eiko, “the girl in the office,” is later introduced as one of Shingo’s memory-prompters; her dim presence, at this point, as a care-taker is carried over to two prostitutes who are buying herring at the fish mongers. The scene adds post-war social realism to the novel, especially when the fishmonger looks at them with a critical eye. In contrast, Kawabata conveys Shingo’s favorable understanding of the girls who express affection for their American boyfriends. He sees a care-taker quality in the prostitutes which he himself desperately needs. The three whelks Shingo purchases for the family of four serve as a prop and a symbol. The recurrent appearance of the number ‘three’ symbolism may cover multi-layers of meaning as
Tsuruta expands on the subject in his essay, "Two Journeys in The Sound of the Mountain"—three distinct spaces (Tokyo-Kamakura-Shinshu), three generations, three families, a triangle relationship, three temporal sequences of past, present, and future which correspond to Shingo's three worlds—the world of daily family life, the world of nature, and the world of fantasy where Yasuko's beautiful, deceased sister lives. In the present scene, the three whelks serve as a dramatic instrument to reveal Shingo's hidden desire to exclude his son, Shuichi, from the old man's relationship with Kikuko. Shingo's explanation for choosing three whelks, is self-explanatory—"He had simply deleted Shuichi."

In section four, Kikuko emerges as a palpable daughter-in-law and as Shingo's caretaker, bringing him a glass of water with a little sugar in it. However, there are some peculiarities within the scene. Kikuko jokes with Shingo, knowing of her husband's absence from the supper table—"No trace of a shadow passed over Kikuko's face, nor does she ask what might have happened to Shuichi." (KYZ.255.TSTM.15) Reiko Tsukimura points out that in a Japanese family, it is unrealistic to assume the son's new wife would serve only one whelk for the in-laws to share, retaining one for her husband and herself.  

Certainly Kawabata's intention is not to create social realism but to create a visionary world of beauty by assigning to Kikuko a special role in it. Kikuko's background suggests her role as a medium or spirit.

She was the youngest of eight children. The other seven were also married, and all had numerous progeny. Shingo sometimes thought of the fecundity she had inherited from her parents.

She had been born at a time when her mother no longer wanted children or thought herself capable of having them. Indeed, her mother had felt rather ashamed, at her age, and had considered abortion. It had been a difficult birth. Forceps had been applied to Kikuko's head.

Still, Kikuko had been reared as the pet of the family, it seemed. She was not spoiled, precisely, but she seemed to expect affection. And there was something a little weak about her.

When she had first come as a bride, Shingo had noted the slight but beautiful way she had of moving her shoulders. In it, for him, there was a bright, fresh coquetry.
Something about the delicate figure made him think of Yasuko's sister. (KYZ.256,TSTM.15-16) Kikuko, as the youngest of the eight siblings, is in the line of a prolific family; furthermore her birth is miraculous in itself -- her mother attempted abortion, but Kikuko was given life. As her name signifies, "child of chrysanthemum" she fits Kawabata's peculiar diction which uses biological terms denoting 'propagation.' Kikuko represents life, reproduction, and nature's renewal. Obviously, from day one, Kikuko has an affect upon Shingo; in his eyes, Kikuko "seemed to expect affection" and the "beautiful way she had of moving her shoulders" impressed him with "a bright, fresh coquetry." Her young physical presence provokes something within him. Kikuko raises the memory of his wife's dead sister.

Shingo's worshipful regard for this deceased person is introduced here. Throughout the novel, his memory of her, nameless and ageless, reappears as a form of theme and variation.

Shingo had as a boy been strongly attracted to the sister. After her death Yasuko had gone to take care of the children. Yasuko had quite immersed herself in the work, as if wishing to supplant her sister. It was true that she had been fond of the brother-in-law, a handsome man, but she had also been in love with her sister,.....To Yasuko her sister and brother-in-law had been like inhabitants of a dream world. (KYZ.256-257,TSTM.16) The sister's special beauty is not the subject of Shingo's own infatuation; curiously, it is shared by his wife, Yasuko. This makes the sister's beauty doubly special; her memory establishes a bond between Shingo and Yasuko -- "Yet the image of the sister remained with both of them." (p.17) That is why Shingo reasons --

There was nothing especially unhealthy about the fact that, after Kikuko came into the house, Shingo's memories were pierced by moments of brightness, like flashes of lightening. (KYZ.257,TSTM.17) In contrast to his own life, his son, Shuichi, "had already found another woman," after less than two years of marriage with Kikuko. Kawabata reveals the unhealthy triangle in the son's life. Shingo's own three-way fantasy remains in the background, even as he rationalizes the memory of his wife's deceased sister coming alive in Kikuko.

Section five begins with Shingo's dramatic confrontation with his son and his annoyance with the son's lack of moral commitment. At home, Shingo's inability to respond to Kikuko's call, concerns the two women. Shingo, then, shares with them his inner troubles -- his experience
of hearing the sound of the mountain -- only to find himself more troubled by a blank space in his memory of the deceased sister. Kikuko reminds Shingo how she heard that Yasuko's sister, too, had heard the same sound of the mountain just before her death. The topic within the sequence, however, is carried by Kawabata's linguistic pun in the Japanese. Shingo says to Shuichi, "Let me hear all about it sometime." In the Japanese, Shingo says, "......kikou," which echoes like 'Kikuko.' In this passage, Kikuko's personal name appears eleven times and the various verbal form of 'kiku' (to listen to) appears seven times. In the post-supper scene, Kikuko and Yasuko fuss over Shingo's deafness to Kikuko's calling. The word play of kikou and Kikuko appears later in the middle section of the novel, in the opening sequence of the episode entitled "The Voice in the Night," and it echoes like a bell in the distance, a reminder to listen to the sound channeled through the medium of Kikuko.

The first episode reveals the way Kawabata applies renga technique to his narrative sequence: the opening scene, much like hokku (the first verse), describes the actual locale of the hero, sixty-two-year-old Shingo -- his memory is lapsing even while he enjoys communing with things beautiful, particularly the flora-fauna of nature. The first episode, like the first eight verses on the first leaf ('omote') of shoori in renga practice, demonstrates the shape of the author's textual space: the narrative takes the reader through visual and auditory sensations to the dream-like world of fantasy. The process is an internal journey, a michiyuki, which Susumu Nakanishi, a scholar of Classical Japanese Literature, defines as a travel passage:

A michiyuki is a technique used to depict characters' movements typically their approach toward imminent death, by stringing together a series of place names.10

The hero of Yama no oto is, indeed, facing imminent death. His journey starts in his backyard mountain and he continues to visit two other special gardens, Atami and Tokyo, before reaching his hometown in Shinshu.

Throughout the novel, there are variations of garden scenes. In section three of the second

10 Nakanishi, Susumu."The Spacial Structure of Japanese Myth: the Contact Point between Life and Death," Principles of Classical Japanese Literature. Earl Miner. ed., Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985.117. Nakanishi elaborates on this to say that "it is a form of expression that has been derived from the narrative structure of mythology" (119) and that "the most widely known examples of this kind are the michiyuki in the joruri narratives by the Edo Period writer, Chikamatsu Monzaemon."(117)
episode entitled "The Wings of the Locust," Shingo observes butterflies flittering at the other side of the bushclover in his backyard:

The grass was rough and untended. On the far side was a clump of bush clover and pampas grass, so tall that it almost looked wild.

There were butterflies beyond. Shingo could see them flickering past gaps in the leaves, more than one butterfly, surely. He waited to see whether they would alight on the bush clover or come out from behind it. They went on fluttering through the leaves, however.

He began to feel that there was some sort of special little world apart over behind the shrubbery. The butterfly wings beyond the leaves of bush clover seemed to him extraordinarily beautiful.

(KYZ.269-270,TSTM.29)

This association connects with a previous description of the starry sky Shingo saw beyond the trees on the backyard mound during the night of the sound of the mountain: "He thought of the stars he had seen through the trees on the hilltop...." The natural order tells Shingo that there are butterflies flickering beyond the bushclover. Then, the physical realm, in Shingo's dimming eyesight appears to embody a special kind of cosmos. In contrast to the assertive verbal form in the first half, the last two sentences convey Shingo's feel for his own imaginativeness. Butterflies are categorized as an associative word connected with dreams in waka tradition. In actuality, the butterflies, coming out from the space beyond the bushclover, prompt Shingo to share two dreams with his wife, Yasuko.

Kin'ya Tsuruta, in his essays, comments extensively on the dream sequence seen against Shingo's aging life cycle: the hero regains his youth in the dream sequence, while the natural sixty-two-year-old Shingo, grows older and closer to death, to the termination of cyclical time. These dream cycles are well-discussed amongst other scholars. The reading of the dream sequence is not the intention of my thesis; however, the linkage between the dream world and the time-bound physical world needs to be examined. The first two dreams which Shingo shares partially with his wife reflect some elements from the first backyard experience of the sound of the mountain. Shingo relates to his wife how he was offered a feast of buckwheat noodles by his deceased friend, a cabinet-maker, and that he "slept with a girl in the dream," possibly one of this

---

cabinet-maker's six girls. A little later in his waking hours, Shingo dreams again -- of a long deceased friend, Aida, who comes to visit with him with a half-gallon bottle of sake. There is an indicator in Shingo's description of his sexual experience with the unknown girl:

...nothing definite of the dream remained. The figure had gone, and he could not bring it back; all that remained was a sense of physical disparity, a failure of physical contact. (the underlined part is mine.)

(KYZ.272.TSTM.32)

Kawabata's original Japanese (my emphasis) describes Shingo's unformed memory and his disappointment at the lack of a palpable response. One might recall Kikuko's loose-hanging dress lacking physical substance in Shingo's backyard, and his failure to gain a response when he thrusts the stray locust into the depths of the moonlit backyard. What does this 'no palpable response' signify? Kin'ya Tsuruta explains the descriptive details of the buckwheat noodle container --"laid on bamboo, in a frame lacquered black on the outside and red on the inside"--and of the half gallon sake bottle suggest sexuality in Shingo. Shingo's male sexuality is facing decline, a loss of life-function. His fear is partially rooted in his own closure. The noodle in Japanese culture symbolizes longevity. At the end of each year, Japanese ritually participate in noodle-eating as a prayer for long life, a kind of 'passover' ceremony. In Shinto tradition, people literally believe in extending longevity by eating noodles. The dream has several layers of significance. While sustaining the immediate motif in the narrative progression, Kawabata uses this dream to give birth to a vision of life-cycle. Shingo repeats that the deceased has appeared alive in this dream inviting him to participate in a form of communion -- eating and drinking together. Tactility and immediacy are the name of the woman Shingo has slept with in his first dream. In this context, the opening sentence of section four -- "Every night locusts would come flying in from the cherry tree."-- signifies that Shingo's sexuality and orgasmic life are invaded by symbolical locusts; locusts and a cherry tree serve as stage props. The rumbling from Shingo's backyard mound echos through the noise of locusts' wings. This is how Kawabata employs renga linkage. From one scene to another, the story proceeds by association based on word play (kotobazuke), internal meaning (kokoro-zuke), and reverberation (hibiki). Special spaces like the backyard

12 Ibid.
itself, memories, and dreams connect to form a spatial context for the novel.13

Let us go to another garden scene in section four of the episode entitled “The Cherry in the Winter,” and examine Shingo’s experience.

Shingo was in Atami. In the garden of the inn a cherry tree was in full bloom. It was January.

Winter cherries, he had been told, had been blooming from before the end of the year; but he felt as if he had come upon spring in a wholly different world.

He mistook the red plum blossoms for peaches, and wondered if the white might be apricots.

Attracted to the cherry blossoms as they were reflected by the pond, he went over to stand on the bank.....

Several ducks came running out from under the tree. In their yellow bills and the slightly deeper yellow of their feet he again felt spring. (KYZ.355,TSTM.107)

In contrast to the moonlit night examined earlier, Shingo visits the Arcadian garden at the Inn in Atami in daylight. In this other-worldly garden, a cherry tree already blossoming along with other flowers reveals eternal spring. Shingo’s sense of the immediate is affected by the eternal spring, by thinking “red plum blossoms for peaches.” He is even attracted to the cherry blossoms reflected in the pond; this reflection, the presence removed from the actuality, is enchanting to Shingo’s tactile sense. He is moved by a haiku-like scene of yellow-beaked ducks emerging from the red plum tree. Soon he is awakened from this reverie, when “heavy rain clouds were bearing down from Jikkoku Pass.” (TSTM.106) As he goes inside the room, this momentum separates two worlds -- the outside garden and the interior of the room, and what Shingo experiences inside the room contrasts with the spring garden. Heavy rain coming from Jikkoku Pass swallows his self-contained space. Due to a power blackout, he goes to bed early and is awakened by a barking dog:

He awoke to the howling of a dog in the garden, and the sound of wind and rain, like a raging sea.

There were drops of perspiration on his forehead. The room had a heaviness about it, like the beginning of a spring storm besides the sea. The air was tepid, and seemed to press down upon his chest. (KYZ.356,TSTM.107)

13 Susumu Nakanishi uses this phrase and explores some of the structural patterns in Japanese mythology in his paper, “The Spatial Structure of Japanese Myth: the Contact Point Between Life and Death.” The same terminology could be used to understand Kawabata’s narrative structure, particularly Yama no oto where the contact point between death and life, or dream and reality would be the key issue. Principles of Classical Japanese Literature. Earl Miner. ed., Princeton : Princeton UP, 1985.
There is a parallel between this description and his annoyance with Yasuko’s snoring in the first episode, prior to his hearing the sound of the mountain. A physical repulsion is common to both accounts and just as Shingo hears the sound of the mountain, so he, in this scene, hears a distant resonance:

The sound like a raging sea was a mountain downpour and above it the sharp rasp of the wind came nearer.
In the depths of the storm there was a roaring.
A train was passing through the Tamna Tunnel, he thought....
A whistle blew as the train emerged.
Shingo was suddenly afraid; he was now wide awake.
The roaring had gone on and on. ... His impression was that he had heard it entering the far mouth, beyond Kannami. But was it possible that....he could have heard it at such a distance?
He had somehow felt the presence of the train in the tunnel as if it were inside his head...

(KYZ.357.TSTM.108)

Through the layers of roaring sound -- a raging sea, a mountain storm and the sharp rasp of wind-driven rain, Shingo identifies the sound as the roaring of a train passing through the tunnel. The conceit of a tunnel connecting two worlds has been Kawabata’s favorite as seen in Izu no odoriko and Yukiguni. Here, Shingo conveys his curious perception of being a part of the train-ride in the tunnel. Though he claims he’s been wakened, Shingo is caught between sleep and wakefulness. Therefore, in the sequence, he hears Yasuko’s deceased sister calling him as if “half asleep and half awake.”

The only person who called with that particular lilt was Yasuko’s sister.
For Shingo it was a piercingly sweet awakening.
Shingo-o-oh! Shingo-o-oh! Shingo-o-oh!
The voice had stolen into the back garden and was calling from under the window.
Shingo was awake. The sound of the brook behind the inn had become a roar. There were children’s voices.
He got up and opened the back shutters.
The morning sun was bright. It had the warm brightness of a winter sun that was damp with the rain of spring.

(KYZ.357-358.TSTM.108)

There is significance in Shingo’s perception that the deceased has come to this side of the tunnel to call “Shingo-o-oh!” According to Japanese ancestor worship,14 the deceased soul returns to the

human world. This sequence, then, carries an overtone from Shingo’s first dream of the deceased returning to commune with him. What is the message from Yasuko’s deceased sister? By calling Shingo’s name, its meaning — “Believe-Me” — comes alive to him. The kotodama belief which Kawabata has presented in the works previously examined is restored: Yasuko’s deceased sister, admired by both Shingo and his wife and standing as a symbolical pronoun for beauty, wakes him to a sunny spring morning and regains for him a perspective on his life. The blooming wintry cherry tree in the garden of the Inn is an epiphany for him. The half-asleep and half-awake experience, which parallels his first backyard auditory experience, contains a new element. The dream-like quality continues, but his awakening is perceived as “piercingly sweet,” which is in contrast to his earlier experience. Structurally, Shingo’s initial backyard auditory experience continues to echo from the underworld where the reviving voice of the deceased is heard.

This episode is preceded by another, entitled “A Dream of Islands,” in which Shingo dreams the third dream about Matsushima, one of Japan’s scenic trio.

...... he was certain that the dream had been of Matsushima.

On a grassy meadow in the shade of the pines, he had a woman in his arms. They were hiding, in fear. ... The woman was very young, a mere girl. He did not know how old he himself was. He must have been young, however, to judge from the vigor with which they ran among the pines. He did not seem to feel a difference in their ages as he held her in his arms. He embraced her as a young man would....It was as if, at sixty-two, he were still in his twenties. In that fact lay the strangeness. (KYZ.325.TSTM.79-80)

The place name, Matsushima, has power to invoke in the Japanese mind, the penultimate natural scenic view. Basho, the haikai master of the Edo period, acknowledges that its beauty is beyond his description. In the waka tradition, Matsushima is established as utamakura, a place name by poetic association. Matsushima literally signifies a pine island -- a place of evergreens -- an insularity of eternity. This may explain why Shingo feels twenty years old, while remaining sixty-two. Why he hides, in fear, with the girl, speaks to a hidden allusion which will be examined a little later. Again in the dream, Shingo is embracing a young unknown girl. From this contact point, another phantom of a girl appears in the receding motor-boat.

15 Matsuo Basho in his pilgrimage journal, Okuno hosomichi, visits a famous poetic place (Utamakura) Matsushima, and compares it, figuratively, to a beautiful woman's visage. He does not create a haiku but exclaims the place name three times.
A woman stands in the boat, waving her handkerchief. The white handkerchief against the sea was vivid in his mind even after he woke. The two were left alone on the island,... Watching the while of the handkerchief, he woke.  

(KYZ.325,TSTM.80)

The impression of a white handkerchief is a stage prop recalling the Izu dancer waving something white at the young traveller in Shimoda: in *Izu no odoriko*, the protagonist goes to the port, leaving the girl behind. The white handkerchief, therefore, is a reminder of the protagonist’s prototypical experience of oneness with nature expressed in his early work. Now, in Kawabata’s own journey into life depths, the “once-upon-a-time” frame of experience appears in Shingo as a dream of Matsushima, and in fact, “the contradiction” (his acting young while remaining sixty-two) “was somehow a comfort to him.” The relief of knowing the timelessness of the dream world, on the contrary, reveals Shingo’s time-bound sensibility. He repeats an aphorism-like saying -- "I am an aged man, and I have not yet climbed Mount Fuji.” (KYZ.324,TSTM.79)

Does this signify Shingo’s unfulfilled desire? Let us wait to examine the allusion.

Shingo’s reverie on his Matsushima dream (note that the dream world is twice removed from the reader because it is recollected by Shingo ) ends with his friend, Mizuta’s knocking on the office door. Of course, Shingo’s musing upon the mysterious girl’s identity in his dream is the lingering overtone. In the next scene he is introduced to two Noh masks, one is ‘Jido’, a symbol for eternal youth; and the other, ‘Kasshiki,’ a boy before his coming of age. Out of the two, Shingo took a special note of the beauty in ‘Jido’ mask. When Eiko, the office clerk, puts on the mask, it comes to life. At home, he shows them to Yasuko and Kikuko; but Kikuko, curiously, does not come to examine the mask; Yasuko dismisses it as creepy. Shingo, on the contrary, is attracted to the ‘Jido’ mask, holding it closer above his eyes.

As he brought his face toward it from above, the skin, smooth and lustrous as that of a girl, softened in his aging eyes, and the mask came to life, warm and smiling.

He caught his breath. Three or four inches before his eyes, a live girl was smiling at him, cleanly, beautifully.

The eyes and the mouth were truly alive. In the empty sockets were black pupils. The red lips were sensuously moist. Holding his breath, he came so close as almost to touch his nose to that of the mask, and the blackish pupils came floating up at him, and the flesh of the lower lip swelled. He was on the point of kissing it. Heaving a sigh, he pulled away.  

(KYZ.333-334,TSTM.88)
Is this Shingo’s fantasy, or the secret power of love to enliven the mask, or both? The association between the Noh mask incident and the female presence in the Matsushima dream is accomplished by Kawabata’s hidden allusion (uzumi mode) to Basho’s Matsushima depiction in *Okuno hosomichii* (The Narrow Road to the Deep North). Basho’s analogy to the woman’s beautiful visage links Shingo’s Matsushima dream and the succeeding description of the beauty personified in the ‘Jido’ mask. Considering what he says about his dim eyesight—“You first start wearing them, and take up a bowl of rice like this, and the kernels all blur into one another,” his experience of the Noh mask coming to life may be an effect created by his reduced vision. Shingo wonders whether or not such a face before his aged eyes could be faintly softer.

In the ninth episode titled “The Bell in Spring,” the ‘Jido’ mask reappears, worn this time by Kikuko. Named as “Jido Kikuko,” she enacts the persona behind the mask. Kinya Tsuruta suggests an allusion to the “Kikujido,” Noh play, pointing out that ‘Jido’ mask is only used in the performance of the piece. This allusion being fixed, it should be noted that it is used as an integrating dynamic from the very first episode and throughout the novel. The play centers around the Chinese legend about the chrysanthemum nymphet punished by the King during the Shu Dynasty for stepping upon the King’s pillow, and then exiled to a ‘mum field’ for seven hundred years. Kikujido has been maintaining his youth by drinking the chrysanthemum dew-water. Seven hundred years later, the traveller sent from the King of Gi Dynasty discovers Kikujido hiding in the mountain. As he spills his secret of longevity to the traveller, spirit-being, Kikujido, withdraws into the deep of the mountain.

The immediate association drawn from the allusion is obvious in the novel. The episode,}

---

16 Matsuo Basho uses an analogy of a female countenance to depict the beauty of Matsushima. “Indeed, the beauty of the entire scene can only be compared to the most divinely endowed of feminine countenances, for who else could have created such beauty but the great god of nature himself? My pen strove in vain to equal this superb creation of divine artifice.” *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*. Penguin Paperback. tr. Nobuyuki Yuasa. London: Penguin Books,116.


"The Bell in Spring," begins with the seven hundredth anniversary of the construction of the Buddha statue in Kamakura. In the sequence, Yasuko asks what type of seven hundredth anniversary the celebration represents, and neither Shingo nor Kikuko know the answer. The unanswered question is significant to the narrative movement. A few episodes earlier, Shingo had begun drinking Gyokuro, a superior kind of green tea (literally translated as 'dew drops'); and this tea, as a souvenir item, acknowledges the obituary present received from the family of the deceased Mizuta. The name of the tea suggests chrysanthemum dew from the Kikujido allusion; at the same time, the refrain of the name in the sequence leads the reader to the obvious association with 'Jido' Noh mask, a keepsake from the deceased.

Kikuko, who is acting behind the 'Jido' mask, then, emerges as a spiritual entity. Her name is a nature association which translates as "a child of chrysanthemum." She is a more fully humanized version of Yoko in Yukiguni, and she communicates a familiarity with nature which Shingo aspires to. The dangling dress which he had seen outside the shutter in the opening episode is a symbol of form without substance. Without the spiritual substance of Kikuko, her garment stands in contrast to "the monk's dark cloak." (TSTM.156) Kikuko has an earth-bound role and the garment represents this human world. In Kawabata's narrative intention, she is, by taking the form of Shingo's daughter-in-law, the medium to help his inner search for unity. The incarnated medium experiences a human drama. As a newly-wed wife enduring her husband's affair with another woman, she had, by sacrificing her first child, regained her husband and marriage. This allusion links the present scene to the one previous when Shingo is about to hear the sound of the mountain beyond the microcosmic world -- "He thought he could detect a dripping of dew from leaf to leaf." (TSTM.8.) Indeed, one might sense Kikujido's celestial presence in the deep of Shingo's backyard in Kamakura. What is manifested to Shingo's eyes as an actual face is, indeed, a spiritual entity performing as Kikuko. Her words offer the understanding, comfort and love which Shingo secretly craves.

In the eighth episode, "The Voice in the Night," Kikuko's role is elevated to the most

---
19 Reiko Tsukimura proves this fact by finding the actual newspaper reference to the anniversary celebration in her article, "Yama no oto no sakuhin kozo" (The Narrative Structure of The Sound of the Mountain), Fuin no sokoku. Research series of Kawabata's works No.6. Tokyo: Kyoiku shuppan centre, 1979. 40.
revered object of worship  Here, again, is another of Shingo’s awake-asleep experiences. “Shingo woke to a sound like a man’s groaning,” and at first could not determine whether it was the groaning of a dog or a man. It sounded like “Let’s hear you! / Let’s listen to it!” (kikou in original Japanese); but soon, he heard it as a man calling “Kikuko.” The implied pun is obvious in this sequence since the original Noh allusion itself contains the word play.20 One might even call it a kotodama effect. Shingo identifies the voice with his drunken son, Shuich, and is moved to deep sadness.

Shuichi seemed to be calling out in heart-broken love and in sorrow. It was the voice of one for whom there is nothing else. The groaning was like a child calling out for its mother in a moment of pain and of mortal fear. And it seemed to come from depths of guilt. Shuich was calling out to Kikuko, seeking to endear himself to her, with a heart that lay cruelty naked.....And it was as if he were doing reverence to her.

(KYZ.377. TSTM. 125)

Here, Kikuko is elevated to a merciful mother figure who forgives a child. Shingo, who is not aware of Kikuko’s actor-persona, reveals his need for a mother-like caretaker capable of forgiving his egoistic act, and wonders whether there is a limit to her forgiveness.

In the narrative, Shingo’s awake-asleep experience of hearing a man’s voice leads to a fantasy which takes him further back into his dream before he wakes to Shuichi’s voice. The dream is Shingo’s sensation—both visual and auditory—of a pure love story. He compares the experience to the passive act of reading. He is totally involved in the dream-story as a spectator-reader, remembering only that the young girl of fourteen or fifteen who had an abortion “has become a holy child forever” (TSTM.130). Shingo interprets the dream as a distortion of the actual newspaper article, exalting the girl as a “holy child.” What is the thread linking the two spaces? In Shingo’s awake-asleep world, he hears his son calling for help and expects Kikuko to be the forgiving mother. The holy, mother-figure imagery is carried throughout the sequentially inverted dream scene and manifests an internal meaning: the young girl becomes beatified by aborting her child. In the course of the narrative, the dream proves to be prophetic—Kikuko

20 In the Noh play, the main actor, shite, and the supporting actor, waki, recite the Buddhist sutra—“Our Buddha is endowed with all the virtues and watches over us all with his loving eyes. His love is fathomless and deserves our reverend worshiping.” Then, the background chorus chants—“By writing the gift of words upon the leaf of chrysanthemum (Listen to this gift of words!), the dew drops start falling....” Izutsu and Kikujido: kanzeryu koe no hyakuban (Hundred Selected Records of Kanze School of Noh Plays), No. 58, Takahashi Seiichiro and Maruoka Akira. eds., Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1986. 11.
soon decides to have an abortion and by giving up the child, wins back Shuichi. One may sense a subtle, if misplaced, Biblical allusion -- "uzumiku" -- to God's holy plan: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John, 3:16)

In the fourth garden scene, in the episode entitled "A Garden in the Capital", Kikuko, as foreseen in Shingo's dream, aborts her child. She returns to her family home to rest, and the garden scene occurs in this context. Shingo receives a phone call from Eiko who wants to talk to him about a matter involving Kikuko and Shuichi, and perhaps Kinukuo, Shuichi's mistress. "The uneasiness increased. At about three he called Kikuko's family house" (TSM. 186). The telephone conversation links the two women; yet, it is noteworthy that Shingo desperately needs relief from the "bad news" implied in Eiko's call, and so, calls out to Kikuko. The background music that "came over the telephone as he waited for Kikuko" continues throughout their phone conversation. It catches Shingo's attention and draws him one step deeper into the fantasy world of the dream. The selection, introduced as Chopin's ballet "Les Sylphides," moves him to say "That's very good music." The music and Kikuko's voice are interwoven, seductively drawing him to the forth-coming rendez-vous in Shinjuku Garden. Shingo feels somewhat "disconcerted" by her proposition and laughs.

...."The green will bring you to life."
"The Shinjuku Garden? I've been there exactly once. For some reason or other I went to a dog show there."
"Come and let me show you myself instead." And after her laughter, Les Sylphides played on. (KYZ.445,TSTM.187)

Kikuko's suggestion, in the original Japanese, is rendered "pretending that I am a dog." The celestial being embodied in the allusion to Kikujido reflects her attributes. As the source of nature renewal and animism itself, Kikuko is, indeed, playing more than Shingo's daughter-in-law. The Shinjuku Garden is shown to be quite foreign to Shingo's expectations. There are many young couples in rendez-vous, including Americans; the garden appears wide and free-flowing, being designed in the English fashion with a 'vista' in perspective, though arranged with a Japanese-style pond and a stand of deodars and Japanese elms, keyaki. Shingo exclaims how free he feels, as if leaving Japan. The garden offers something foreign and new to Shingo compared to his previous experiences in the Kamakura backyard and the Atami inn garden. When
Shingo arrives in the garden, Kikuko has already been waiting for him. He immediately observes her bare arms and the dark green, short-sleeve sweater; then, he notices her moving her beautiful shoulders in a certain way; finally “a gentle scent came from her to surprise him.” Kikuko, sweater-clad in green, gradually takes on the role of tree nymphette as she moves away from the shade of the ginko tree — “The green of the giant trees, so rich as to be almost heavy, seemed to fall upon the slender neck of the retreating figure” (KYZ. 450.TSTM.189). The scene recalls Yukiguni, and Komako stepping out from behind the cedar tree in the shrine grove. Shingo is attracted to a number of trees in the garden. First, he is “deeply moved by the form the loquat tree has taken in free and natural growth.” Shingo reasons that a loquat spreads out just as it wants to because it has nothing to get in its way. He then considers the cherry tree in his backyard:

As he spoke......, he moved away from the loquat tree. “Let’s get rid of the yatsude at the foot of the cherry. (KYZ.449, TSTM.190)

This proceeds to another garden scene in the following episode which materializes as a significant family event. As the distant, backyard cherry tree fades away in Shingo’s mind, Kikuko, who has invited him to refresh himself in the garden, brings him to a strategic place where he can see the vista. In response to Shingo’s question about the meaning of the ‘vista,’ Kikuko simply answers that it is “a line of vision.” Shingo feels out-of-place — as if he has wandered into “an Eden for assignations,” but now, Kawabata places the hero at the point of receiving a vision of life. With a glance through the open space, Shingo is drawn to “one particularly high tree out on the lawn.”

As he approached, looking up at it, the dignity and the mass of the towering green came grandly down to him, to wash away his and Kikuko’s gloom. She had been right to think that the garden would bring him to life.

The tree was what is called in Japan a “lily tree.” Coming nearer, he saw that it was in fact three trees. ...... The broad-leafed branches spread out as if to enfold and hide the two of them. (KYZ.450.TSTM.192)

The tulip-shaped ‘lily tree’ attracts Shingo not only with its grandness but also because it originates in America, and because the seemingly single great tree is actually formed of three trees. Unlike the Japanese cherry tree and ginko in Shingo’s backyard, this foreign tree, with its towering presence, purifies him. The fact that it embodies a triune concept in its formation adds vision-
ary significance to the symbolical use of the number ‘three’ in the novel. Later in his recollection (“The Scar,” sc.4.), Shingo associates the bell which closes the garden with a Western church bell -- "He had felt as if he were making his way through some wooded park on his way to Western church...” (TSTM.211) The association with the church bell is doubly (spatially and temporally) removed from the actual narrative sequence because Kawabata’s cautious use of aesthetic distancing does not broadcast its significance. However, in an early short story, Seimei no ki (The Tree of Life) written in 1947, Kawabata refers to the tree of life mentioned as Christ in Revelation 22:2.21 It may be that he sees his vision paralleling the trinitarian concept of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Shinjuku Garden, therefore, provides Shingo a kunimi 22 experience, which depicts a specific life panorama.

A process description moving from the lily tree to the bench where Shingo and Kikuko sit reveals a central feature of Kawabata’s narrative technique. Shingo does not feel all that comfortable under the embrace of the lily tree; so he moves away, observing a bed of white flowers in the distance beyond the lawn. Crossing the open space of lawn towards the flowers, Shingo walks into his memory. The physical act of crossing the open space is transformed into a metaphysical journey through time into the past. When he recalls, at twenty years of age, the glorious reception held for a triumphant Japan-Russia War general in the same Garden, he relives the past moment and becomes twenty again. When the young Shingo sits down on the bench surrounded by flora; Kikuko naturally joins him. The rendez-vous scene is now complete, with overtones of fantasy. Perhaps, the recording of Les Sylphides still plays on. This conveys Kawabata’s narrative technique of linking disparate space and time by association-memory.

The Shinjuku Garden scene has a postscript in the backyard in Kamakura. In this episode, “The Scar,” one sees Shingo greatly inspired by his Shinjuku Garden experience. His family is working together to trim the Yatsude (Fatsia Japonica) overgrown around the cherry tree. The


22 H.E. Plutschow defines kunimi as a “ritual gazing upon the land carried out regularly by emperors, imperial representatives and peasants,” and argues that the Shinto ritual ‘mits’, found in hanami (cherry blossom viewing), and tsukimi (moon viewing) is considered to “renew something outside man but inside at the same time.” In the Shinjuku Garden scene, Shingo is certainly renewed by looking upon the vista. Chapter Eight: “Kunimi, or the ritual of gazing upon the land” Chaos and Cosmos: Ritual in Early and Medieval Japanese Literature. Leiden: E.J. Brill,1990. 106-117.
plant's name, 'Yatsude,' literally means 'Eight Hands.' With the alimony money ('tegire-kin' — literally, hands-off money) Shingo provides for Kinuko, Shuichi's mistress, Kawabata uses the pivot-word or pun in order to create a dramatic turn in the narrative. Whose hands are they? In the light of the Kikujido allusion, Kikuko, the daughter-in-law in Shingo's household, wears the mask of the 'Jido' and reveals her true identity as eternal youth. Kikuko is, therefore, surrounded by four people -- Shingo, Yasuko, Shuichi and Fusako. The family's joint effort to discard the overgrown Yatsude, therefore, becomes a symbolic act. Just as Shingo wishes for his cherry tree to grow in grandeur like the loquat tree in the Shinjuku Garden, the eternal youth, Jido, has to be released from the role of a suffering bride/daughter-in-law in his household. The same Shingo visits Kinuko, Shuichi's mistress, and gives her alimony money. By giving her this "Hand-off Money" (tegire-kin), Kinuko's attentions are removed from the marriage of Shuichi and Kikuko. Released from her role in the Ogata household, Kikuko appears to be a liberated woman, even grown physically bigger, and she supports Fusako's proposal to have her own small bar. Indeed when Kikuko is released from her role, changes take place. Curiously it is Yasuko who notices:

"...But it's lost most of its leaves. I wonder if something might be eating it. The summer crickets are still singing, and here it has lost most of its leaves."

Even as they talked, yellowish leaves came down, one after another. In the still air, they fell straight to the ground. (KYZ.513.TSTM.251)

Shingo, too, understanding the reality of his own fantasy, resumes his role as the head of the family.

In the final episode, he suggests that Kikuko should leave his household to be more independent with Shuichi. He even adopts the character of a fatherly priest in order to redeem Kikuko's relationship with his son. When Shingo fulfills his priestly task in communicating his son's intent,
he thinks he has heard “a sound from the heaven.” The scene turns to external phenomena;

Five or six pigeons cut a low diagonal across the garden.
Kikuko also heard them. She went to the edge of the veranda.

The dog Teru left the step to run off across the garden in pursuit of the wings. (KYZ.53, TSTM.273)

The sound Shingo hears is a variation on ‘the sound of the mountain’. In that it comes from heaven, it contrasts with the sound of the mountain which echoed from inside the backyard mound. Just as the butterflies had lured Shingo physically to the other side of external nature, pigeons direct Shingo and Kikuko’s level of vision to the heavens. Kawabata’s reluctance to use ‘sky’ in the diction, offers the possibility of a supernatural element.

Shingo’s journey had begun in his backyard in Kamakura with indescribable doubt and fear of approaching death. Visiting other garden spaces at a different time and place has placed him at different levels for a life vision. From the backyard in Kamakura to Atami, then to the Shinjuku Garden in Tokyo and, again, to the backyard in Kamakura, Shingo travels onward as if visiting ‘Utamakura,’ a place famed in the poetry of the waka tradition. Common to all these spaces is a quality of dream, fantasy or asleep-awake world. The sound of the mountain that Shingo has heard reappears as nature’s reminder throughout his journey -- the wings of the locust, the roaring train ride, Yasuko’s deceased sister’s calling, and the church bell in the distance. Through these auditory layers comes Kawabata’s effective use of word power, namely, kakekotoba (pivot-word) often exercised in waka and renga tradition -- ‘Kikuko’ and ‘kikou (Let’s listen),’ ‘Shingo’ as a personal name and its literal meaning, ”Believe Me,” and Yatsude shrub (Fatsia Japonica) and its literal meaning, “eight hands.” Interwoven through all of these is the allusion to Kikujido, the Noh play. Kikuko performs before Shingo’s eyes as a sweet daughter-in-law; in reality, her substance recalls the celestial being of eternal youth in the Kikujido legend. Throughout the narrative Kikuko is associated with the cherry tree in the backyard, so that the tree serves as a stage prop. When Shingo stands at the vision line or “the vista” of the Shinjuku Garden, he recognizes a grand tree whose origin is foreign. In contrast to the cherry tree which reveals the beauty of evanescence to a Japanese sensibility, the tree called ‘lily tree’ purifies Shingo’s internal gloom: this appealing tree of life takes root.

The various aspects of renga technique are not so transparent as in Kawabata’s earlier
works. One can find a good example of his use of one simple stage-prop item, “furoshiki” (a wrapping cloth) in this instance, to extract the truth of the past from the present. When Fusako returns with her two little girls (“The Wings of the Locust,” Sc.1), Shingo took note of a ‘furoshiki,’ (a wrapping cloth) which reminded him of something without specific identity from the past. Then, comes the blackout caused by a typhoon (A Blaze of Clouds, Sc.2). Outside, the storm is raging through the night; inside the blacked-out bedroom, Yasuko starts her stormy charge against Shingo’s past partiality towards Shuichi and Fusako. Then comes Shingo’s remembrance of the ‘furoshiki’ which Fusako has brought back:

"The kerchief she brought with her."
"The kerchief?"
"The kerchief. I’ve seen it before, but can’t remember where."
"Is it ours?"
"The big cotton one? She took her mirror in it when she got married. It was a very big mirror."

...That kerchief--I brought something wrapped in it when we were married.
"...It was my sister’s. When she died they sent it home with a dwarf tree tied up in it. A fine maple."

....His head was full of the red glow of that remarkable maple.

A piece of wrapping cloth takes the old couple through associative memory to the dwarfed maple tree. Yasuko’s father had loved growing and shaping bonsai trees, especially maples; Yasuko’s beautiful sister was his assistant. “Shingo could see her among the shelves of dwarf trees.” But “the maple that now filled Shingo’s head had been on the family altar.” (TSTM.47) Here, Kawabata suggests an ancestor-worship memorial service. Yasuko’s deceased sister and her beauty are remembered with a bonsai maple tree placed on the family altar. The linkage between the present and the past is made with a furoshiki, until Shingo’s focus moves beyond the autumnal dwarf maple.

The tree reappears as a shadow, whenever a similitude is encountered. In the scene outside the tobacco shop, for example, on the Seven Hundredth Commemoration Day of the Buddha statue’s construction. “Shingo’s eye was caught by a dwarf camellia before a tobacco shop.” Because of his appreciation, the shop owner takes him to the backyard to see more. The owner proudly goes on to comment -- "You get yourself a tree, and then you’re responsible for seeing that it doesn’t die or lose its shape.” This, of course, stirs up nostalgia for the dwarf maple tree.
on the family altar, and a concern for its care. Recounting to daughter Fusako, his memory of Yasuko’s deceased sister helping her grandfather to care for bonsai trees, Shingo is propelled into the immediacy of this nostalgia. Semblance to the bonsai art form links the present to the past. Yasuko’s deceased sister is recalled as a little girl with a Dutch-cut hair, wearing a red kimono and shoveling snow (“The Bell in Spring,” Sc.2).

....The old man was addicted to dwarf trees. Yasuko’s father. But you know how Yasuko is, and he preferred her sister. It was her sister he had help him with the trees. She was such a beauty that you’d never have dreamed she was Yasuko’s sister. I can see her now, dressed in a red kimono, bangs on her forehead, going down of a morning when snow was piled on the shelves to brush it away from the branchies. I can see it right here in front of me, all fresh and clean. Shinano is cold, and her breath was white. (KYZ.403-404,TSJM. 150)

The girl in a short-sleeved crimson kimono calls to mind, from Yukiguni, the short sleeve against the snowy background and Komako’s visage reflected in the morning mirror. Yasuko’s deceased sister’s memory, captured as a childhood image, is further distanced in the temporal sequence. In remembering her, Shingo communes with a temporal construct from the past, sensing the palpable fragrance of the girl’s white breath. Why is Shingo nostalgic for the dead? Kawabata, however, doesn’t dismiss Shingo’s weakness -- he’s insensitive enough to tell his own daughter about her mother’s plainness in contrast to her deceased sister’s beauty.

An overtone from Shingo’s reverie lingers into the third section of the same episode, and it demonstrates how the renga technique of association links one scene with another. The deceased sister’s childhood image is now transformed into Satoko. In this passage, Satoko, the introverted four-year-old, sees a group of long-sleeved kimono-clad ‘celestial children in a Buddhist procession,’ and, uncontrollably, loses her temper, demanding the same beautiful kimono for herself. Throughout the novel, Satoko is characterized as a girl of some complexity. Earlier in the novel, during the locusts’ season, Satoko is described as often asking the adults to cut the locust’s wings so she can play with it like a toy. In this scene of Shingo, Fusako and Satoko watching the anniversary procession (Sc.3), Satoko demands, first a drink of water, and then the kimono in such a way that Shingo himself wonders whether or not the cluster of little girls dressed for dancing have made her and even himself want water. This, however, is reminiscent of Komako’s thirst for water after she had had too much to drink.
Satoko not only reflects her mother, Fusako's hysteria but also serves as medium of Buddha. In the preceding scene at the tobacco shop, Satoko wanted to see the picture of the Buddha on a pack of matches designed especially for the anniversary occasion. Such a seemingly inconsequential description could be easily be passed over; however, this casts a shadow over the scene before the Buddha statue. Satoko's obsession with the beautiful kimono is such that she almost causes a young dancer in the procession to be killed by a car. The key to her behavior is found in Shingo's comment about the resident-poet, Yosano Akiko's misnaming in her 'tanka' poem — "Ah our place, Kamakura! a Buddha he may be, / But a handsome man he also is, Lord Sakyamuni." Shingo explains that Buddha is not Sakyamuni but Amitabha. He admits that calling Buddha, Sakyamuni, is wrong, though, rhythmically, Amitabha may not fit the aesthetic form. In a previous thesis chapter, Komako's eruptive rage was explained as a reaction from _kotodama_ belief — "Unsanctioned, untimely or random use of names could bring harm to the human order." The same applies to Satoko's temper-tantrum. She reacts in rage as a medium for the Buddha statue. Kawabata makes each scene a separate space internally connected by the hidden association called, in _renga_ terminology, _uzumiku_. Fusako's explanation for Satoko's irrational behaviour — that she never had a kimono of her own — implies that the grandparent is partial and this drives Shingo into self-remorse. Feeling inescapably guilty, he quotes passages from the Noh play, "Sotoba Komachi", identifying himself with the phantom of the deceased poet of fame and beauty, Onono Komachi, one of the Six Kasen (Poet Laureate of the Heian Period) — "...I have no parent to love...neither have I child to be loved by...I am born in a dream.....I have chanced to receive this human flesh, so difficult of receiving" (KYZ.409,TSTM. 156). Satoko's behaviour drives Shingo to examine his inner flaw to the point that he wants to cling to "a person long dead."

This was hardly a proper occasion to stir in him so intense a yearning for a person long dead that he wanted to rush into her arms. (Ibid.)

Kawabata's expression "a person long dead," is a little ambiguous inasmuch as the word,

---


25 Satoko is later described as wanting to see the Buddha more often, whenever the opportunity arises. She may be a manifestation of the Buddha's body.
‘mukashi’ conveys the ambience of the remote past rather than a thirty or forty-year period. What Kawabata intended to signify in Shingo’s innate flaw might refer to the fundamental depravity of human nature, even extending to the Biblical sense of original sin. The following line --“He was sixty-three, and the girl who had died in her twenties had been older than he” (Ibid.) -- seems to clarify a momentary ambiguity and to identify with Yasuko’s deceased sister. This “person long dead”, therefore, signifies a mother-like figure to whom he could cling, like a helpless child. Though Kawabata does not mention the ‘orphan warp’ expressed in Izu no odoriko in this sequence, the man’s deprivation is transparently conveyed.

In the narrative flow of the novel, Shingo’s visit to the Shinjuku Garden which regains him a visionary perspective, takes place in the two episodes after “The Bell in Spring.” Immediately afterwards, Yasuko’s deceased sister reappears in Shingo’s seventh dream in the episode, ”The Cluster of Mosquitos.” Simply, the dream depicts a young soldier’s brave journey of return to his ancestral home and something he discovers upon arriving. The discovery is unpleasantly conveyed by the juxtaposition of two conflicting images --Yasuko’s deceased beautiful sister and a bucket of dead mosquitos: it is a reflection of unpleasant truth.

Shingo has always associated the dwarf maple tree placed in the family altar with Yasuko’s beautiful deceased sister. The tree’s location is not known to Shingo; but the bonsai maple reappears in his memory in association with the beautiful person. In the second section of the last episode, “Fish in Autumn,” Kawabata performs a symphonic linkage involving a beautiful woman-passerby, the autumnal maple foliage, and the dwarf maple tree on the family altar.

The diamond earrings were no doubt imitation, but they had a good luster. The wide nose stood out on the firm, regular face, and mouth was full and well shaped. The thick eyebrows, with a tendency sweep upwards, had been clipped short. The line of the wide eyes was equally graceful....These various features added up to a face that was in its way beautiful.

............

The doorway was suddenly crowded. Shingo’s eyes and the girl’s were on it. Five or six men, apparently on their way home from an excursion, came abroad with large maple branches in their arms.

The dark red of the leaves suggested cold mountain country.

............

“The maples in Shinshu will be their best,” he said to Shuichi.

He was thinking less, however, of the wild maples in the mountains of his old home than of the large potted maple, its leaves crimson, among the memorial tablets when Yasuko’s sister had died.

(KYZ.524-525.TSTM.261-262)
In the first section of the same episode, Shingo is described as forgetting how to knot his necktie. Kikuko is inexperienced, so Yasuko manages to help him. When he touches Yasuko’s fingers, the sensation recalls how Yasuko’s beautiful deceased sister had helped him to arrange his first tie. The prototypic aspect of a beautiful woman, therefore, in section two, overshadows the beautiful female passenger in the train. It is another example of semblance association. The memory process, again takes Shingo to another place and another time— the funeral of Yasuko’s sister in Shinano. The beautiful maple bonsai tree is an objective reminder; nurturing the tree and forming it is something tangible that is left to perform. How, then, is the dwarf tree related to the grand ‘lily tree’ which Shingo noticed in the Garden? The family gathering in section five offers a key to understanding Kawabata’s harmonized vision.

The family supper scene pictures the cyclical nature of human routine. In the novel’s symphonic progression, it serves as an overture to the first episode in which Shingo, Yasuko and Kikuko, without Shuichi, share the welks. In this final scene, seven of the Ogata family members, three generations in all, gather together to eat three sweetfish called ‘Ayu.’ Kawabata’s use of sea produce both at the beginning and the end is a reverberation from Basho’s example in his journal, Okuno hosomichi. Curiously, Kikuko distributes three fish to Shingo, Shuichi and Satoko respectively; as Shingo suggests, her gesture may signify three households or three generations or it may even be a trinitarian representation— if one sees, in this instance, Satoko as the embodiment of the spirit. Kawabata’s reference to hidden layers of allusion plants a new seed in the ground of his syncretistic resolution. As they eat fish, Shingo presides over the dinner conversation by referring to the haiku seasonal diction on trout—”autumn trout,” “descending trout,” or “rousty trout”.

With his reference to Yasuko’s deceased sister, who had encouraged him to write haiku, Shingo establishes the line of ancestor worship. As the seasonal haiku diction called kigo is considered to be empowered with the kotodama concept, Shingo, Fusako and Yasuko meditate, communally, on how the trout, which reflects kigo, fulfills its life before death. They all identify

---

26 On his departure, Basho wrote a verse—"Yuku haruya / tori naki uo no / me wa namida (The passing spring / Birds mourn, Fishes weep / With tearful eyes." At the end of his journey at Oogaki, he wrote—"Hamaguri no / futamini wakare / yuku akizo" (As firmly cemented clam-shells / Fall apart in autumn, So I must take the road again, / Farewell, my friends).
with a different type of trout. Shingo identifies with the trout referred to in the old haiku --- "A trout in the autumn, abandoning itself to the water' or "Trout swimming down the shallows, not knowing they must die.” Immediately, Yasuko agrees with him and they continue to discuss individual lives in terms of the trout metaphor. By participating in this communal meditation, they inhabit the metaphor of nature’s life-cycle.

Takao Hagiwara sees an eucharistic element in this scene. Indeed, as Shingo eats trout and talks about it he is transubstantiated into a fish. Rebirth into nature is accomplished, yet by way of a mechanism different from the metaphorical journey described at the end of Izu no odoriko, but more natural than the process in Yukiguni. The Remembrance Service, suggested in the first two dreams, synchronizes ancestor-worship rites and the triune concept of a redeemer (God). In the act of remembering the death of “the person long dead” by viewing the bonsai maple, Shingo pacifies the ancestral spirit. That is why he suggests his family visit the autumnal maple foliage in Shinano. Though the bonsai maple exists only in Shingo’s memory, homage must be paid in viewing foliage, in the same way the Japanese observe the cyclical event called hanami, cherry-blossom viewing.

Aspects of renga technique in Yama no oto are inseparable from Kawabata’s syncretistic vision. Temporal and spatial association is often made by internal meaning (kokorozuke) and semblance (omokage); episodes are often closely linked with overtones (yojo); and throughout the novel, the kotodama belief is honoured. The renga dynamic, fed and nurtured by kotodama belief, not only underscores the progression of the novel’s sixteen episodes but also synthesizes visions (perhaps revisions) of the truth in Kawabata’s search—relief from man’s fear of words. Shimamura as the object of Komako’s sudden rage after his misplaced compliment, “Good woman,” in Yukiguni, arises from Kawabata’s own misgivings. An aging man’s fear of death is a well-chosen theme for Yama no Oto, and his internalized experience of hearing “the sound of the mountain” is a substantive evocation. The Japanese pun in “kiku” (to listen to, or to hear) and the name of Shingo’s daughter-in-law, “Kikuko,” reflects Kawabata’s double-

---

27 Hagiwara, Takao, “Futari no pureiboi aruiwa sukimono no koto” (Two Old Playboys or Dilettantes). Kawabata Yasunari Yamano oto kenkyu. Hirakawa and Tsuruta eds., Tokyo: Meijishoin, 1985. 190. According to the Roman Catholic rite of transubstantiation, the priest who presides over the service, by pronouncing the Latin formula over the bread and wine, supposedly changes the whole substance of the elements into the body and blood of Christ. Those who eat the eucharist are eating their god.
structuring of the novel: it takes the reader to the grand allusion in *Kikujido*, the Noh play of eternal youth (*honkadori* according to the *renga* linking style). To listen to the reverberation of the symbolic sound of the mountain is to participate in the day-to-day events of Shingo’s life which revolve around cyclical, natural change. Behind the grand allusion are buried multi-layered allusions (*uzumiku*). Shingo, a deprived man with a visceral sense of immediacy, commutes between dreams and reality so frequently that he cannot tell which is which. The human voices of Yasuko, who avidly reads him the newspaper in an effort to return his feet to the ground, of his children — Shuichi, son, and Fusako, daughter — constantly stir him into wakefulness. In the end, Shingo, now fully roused from an old man’s fantasy, wonders about the breach of trust uttered by Kinuko, Shuichi’s mistress who alone knows the identity of the child she is carrying. “I told Shuichi it was not his. It most definitely is not yours, I said. And with that we separated.” (*KYZ*.496, *TSTM*.234)
Kawabata wrote the novel *Nemureru bijo* (The House of the Sleeping Beauties) in 1960 and the short story, *Kataude* (One Arm) in 1963. In 1967, he joined both works with an earlier short piece, *Chirinuruo* (T’was Finished), written in 1933, and published the three as a Shincho paperback, entitled *Nemureru bijo*. The three, when read together, constitute an expression of Kawabata’s aesthetic manifesto. In this chapter, however, the *Nemureru bijo* story alone will be the subject of this thesis examination of *renga* technique.

*Yama no oto* ends with a description of Kikuko not responding to Shingo’s call because her hearing is affected by the running of the kitchen water faucet. The novel demonstrates a visionary integrity, thematic complexity, and a tone of resolution. There is, however, a lingering overtone from the final episode. Kikuko takes on a new role of liberated woman, and the marriage of Shuichi and Kikuko is left hanging upon ‘the breach of promise’ uttered by Kinuko. *Nemureru bijo*, then, offers an expansion of that lingering tone — the truth about the word incarnate or *kotodama*.

The novel describes the sixty-seven year-old hero, Eguchi’s five night-visits to an inn, “the house of the sleeping beauties” which he had heard about from his friend, Koga. The fictive and artificial setting of this “house” is reflected in the reproduction of Kawai Gyokudo’s autumnal painting. This is located on the wall of a room adjacent to a bedroom where old men spend the night with a young sleeping virgin. It is enclosed with a red velvet curtain, a special stage prop enhancing the virgin’s beautiful body under the dim light. When Eguchi enters the house he feels as if he has stepped into a phantom world. Outside, the ocean waves echo far and near, creating an effect as if the house were situated on the top of a cliff. The virgins, naked under the covers, are put into a deep sleep with a special pill.

The reality of these human bodies is not an issue in the story. Eguchi’s reference to the rosy colour, the body fragrance, and warmth are not enough to enact the authenticity of their lives; and Kawabata’s detailed description of the girl’s fingers, shoulders, neck and lips in the style of an autopsy examiner may, indeed, verge on the necrophilic. According to *renga* practice, however, the physical description of the locale is permitted in the first verse only, and all
subsequent verses proceed from there by association. The sequence moves through a fictional world.

The novel follows an arrangement of repetition found in the classical Japanese tradition. The pattern is established in three areas, in the opening dialogue between Eguchi and the middle-aged female Inn keeper, in the cross-examination of his own perceptions, and in his memories and dreams. Kawabata carefully varies the pattern, so that the progression proceeds to a final revelation of truth about life and death, and provides a key to the mystery of creation. There is no story line, but a series of refrains moving like ocean waves. As the protagonist enters the house, there is a sense of crossing the threshold from outer space into his inner fantasy. The spatial progression of moving into the house is reminiscent of Kawabata’s early work, Jurokusai no niki (The Sixteen-year-old’s Diary) -- the external world, inside the front door, and a quick progression to the bedroom where the youth’s dying grandfather is sleeping. Similarly, Kawabata creates three distinctive, structural areas in the novel -- outside the house, where the sound of the ocean reminds Eguchi of the reality of time, inside the house where Eguchi cross-examines both himself and the female Inn keeper, and the newly built secret bed-chamber where Eguchi spends nights with unspeaking “sleeping beauties.”

The novel opens with the Inn keeper’s lawful commandment:

He was not to do anything in bad taste, the woman of the inn warned old Eguchi. He was not to put his finger into the mouth of the sleeping girl, or try anything else of that sort.\(^1\)\(\text{KYZ.135.HSB.13}\)

The forbidding tone of her spoken words holds the hero spellbound. They challenge and tempt

\(^1\)\(\text{Makoto Ueda explains this structural form in his essay “The Taxonomy of Sequence: Basic Patterns of Structure in Premodern Japanese Literature.” “...a single theme is restated in each of the parts that constitute the poem. Images, metaphors, and wording differ from part to part, but all the parts reiterate the same point. It is the simplest and one of the oldest of structural method.” Principles of Classical Japanese Literature. Earl Miner ed. Princeton: UP, 1985. 63-105. 65.}\)


and move human nature towards depravity, which Kawabata repeatedly identifies as falling into "makai" (a devil’s territory). Her commandment suggests the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. The comforting and redeeming power of spoken words which Kawabata’s young protagonist discovered in *Izu no odoriko* is not present. In fact, the “sleeping beauties” are stripped of the power to communicate except for their occasional sleep-talk. This causes unbearable loneliness and a sense of existential alienation when he views the sleeping girl.

A moment had come in which the old man could not bear the fact that the girl was sleeping, that she did not speak, that she did not know his face and his voice; that she knew nothing of what was happening, that she did not know the man Eguchi who was with her. Not the smallest part of his existence reached her.

(KYZ.144, HSB.21-22)

Eguchi is sixty-seven years old, and not far from losing his sexual powers. Indeed, he is at a threshold, passing from one cycle to another, since his name literally signifies “the mouth of the ocean.” His name carries this allusive significance throughout the novel. Kawabata’s hometown is believed to be in the vicinity of Eguchi, Ibaragi in the present Osaka region. The locale inherited the legend of the prostitute which is reported to have inspired Zeami’s Noh play, *Eguchi.*

The play is about the prostitute Princess Eguchi who was a manifestation of the mercy mother, Bodhishiva. The literal as well as allusive meaning of Eguchi, therefore, brings the hero to the psycho-physical setting of a river-mouth emptying into oceanic revelation.

The unknown procedure which makes them “sleeping beauties” feeds Eguchi’s anxiety and he sees only a dark manifestation:

...he wondered whether the girl asleep -- no, put to sleep -- in the next room might be like a corpse from a drowning; and he felt some hesitation about going in to her. He had not heard how the girl had been put to sleep. She would in any case be in an unnatural stupor,

---

4 One of the photographs compiled by Hatori Tetsuya in his *Sakka kawabata no kitei* (The foundation of the novelist Kawabata) is an old picture depicting boatmen carrying the ferry along the Den river in Kawabata’s hometown. The picture’s locale is identified as Kema, and this place name links to the particular literary *renku* -like sequence, *Shunpubatei no kyoku,* composed by Buson, which describes the young girl’s michiyuki to her mother’s place. Kema, is known as Buson’s hometown. Reading *Nemureru bijo* in the light of the allusion to Buson’s *renku* will reveal the contrasting nature of mother imagery in Kawabata; however, the study needs another occasion. In his annotation, Hatori explains that the ferry goes up the river to Eguchi and speculates that Kawabata could have learned the legend of the prostitute born of the particular locale and that the legend possibly inspired him to write *Nemureru bijo.* Tokyo: Kyoiku shuppan Center, 1979. 362-363.
not conscious of events around her, and so she might have the muddy, leaden skin of one racked by drugs. There might be dark circles under her eyes, her ribs might show through a dry, shriveled skin. Or she might be cold, bloated, puffy. She might be snoring lightly, her lips parted to show purplish gums.

(KYZ.139, HSB.16-17)

This description is reminiscent of the old man whom the young protagonist encounters after entering the private quarters of the tea house in the opening sequence of Izu no odoriko. Contrary to the picture imagined by his doubts, the girl sleeping in the evocative, scarlet, velvet chamber stirs Eguchi with her warm beauty and youth. Beauty, therefore, is an essential part of the mechanism in Kawabata, and this particular beauty arouses sensations of tactility within the beholder. The sound of the ocean outside, the reflection of dim light through the scarlet velvet, and the girl's beauty, partially visualized -- fingers, earlobes, neck and shoulders -- are all overlaid to stimulate Eguchi and to create the world of illusion. When Eguchi submerges his consciousness in sensation by closing his eyes, he begins a journey of rememberance. The catalyst is, oddly enough, the evocative, warm, bodily fragrance of "the sleeping beauties." The olfactory function awakens a primeval human instinct for life. "The scent of a baby came to him in the girl's scent. It was the milky scent of a nursing baby, and richer than that of the girl" (KYZ. 143, HSB.21). Eguchi begins, in this way, his michiyuki journey of five visits to discover the meaning of this sensation.

Let us now examine briefly the associative structure of Eguchi's memories, which show a variation of the renga technique. The scent that invokes images of the breast-fed infant reveals the catalytic function of the "sleeping beauties". Why the scent? In the evolution of renga creation, linkage by internal meaning, kokorozuke, was highly honoured as nioizuke (association by fragrance) among haikai poets during the Edo Period. The imagery of the infant is an appropriate reflector to convey Kawabata's desire to be a "new-born," to be caressed, and to be comforted by his mother. Before Eguchi's journey reaches his mother's house, his memories visit the various places the women of his past have taken him. During the first night visit, Eguchi indulges himself in a sequence of memories awakened by the scent of "the sleeping beauties." He recalls the girl with whom he had his first passionate relationship. Their flight, as lovers, to Kyoto returns him to a place of prototypic significance.

Early in the morning after they got to Kyoto, Eguchi and the girl walked through a bamboo grove. The bamboo shimmered silver in
the morning light. In Eguchi’s memory the leaves were fine and soft, of pure silver, and the bamboo stalks were of silver too. On the path that skirted the grove, thistles and dew-flowers were in bloom. Such was the path that floated up in his memory. There would seem to be some confusion about the season. Beyond the path they climbed a blue stream, where a waterfall roared down, its spray catching the sunlight. In the spray the girl stood naked. The facts were different, but in the course of time Eguchi’s mind had made them so. (KYZ. 153. HSB. 31)

Eguchi’s memory of this young pre-marriage lover summons another woman from the past, who exists, perhaps, outside the boundaries of his own life-time. The act of remembrance alters and embellishes the event. The shimmering silver of bamboo foliage is a beautiful effect belonging to the world of dreams.

In the original Japanese, Kawabata creates a verbal convention, or dictionary form, to invoke the prototypic existence of the beautiful waterfall girl of memory (see italicized portion). She first appears in the memorable scene from Izu no odoriko in which the dancer emerges naked from the hot spring. This becomes a moment of epiphany for the young protagonist who feels “cleansed” from his inner darkness. Secondly, behind this dancer, appears another image of a girl of shining beauty found in the forest by the bamboo cutter in Taketori monogatari (A Tale of the Bamboo Cutter). Here, the allusion is obvious, as the silvery bamboo foliage reflects an underlying modality. Thirdly, the picture of a woman standing in the waterfall recalls the animist persona from Izumi Kyoka’s well-known Koya hijiri (A Priest from Mt. Koya). The layers of allusion, therefore, form the prototype of the beautiful girl. Fantasy created by association produces such a beauty, which Eguchi admits is far from reality — “The facts were different, but in the course of time Eguchi’s mind had made them so.”

The two nightmares that follow when Eguchi takes a sleeping pill are linked with the preceding portrayal of the visionary prototype. The envisioned woman of beauty is interposed over the actual sleeping beauty, and the two images are fused into the woman in Eguchi’s dream so that he is embraced by a woman with four legs — “The four legs were entwined about him.” At the same time, the dream is prophetic of the fifth night when Eguchi is to sleep between two girls. That dreams are the reflection of subconscious fears is evident in his second dream. But

whose fear? Eguchi dreams that one of his daughters has borne a horribly deformed child.

The baby was immediately taken from the mother. It was behind a white curtain in the maternity room, and she went over and commenced hacking it to pieces, getting it ready to throw away. The doctor, a friend of Eguchi’s, was standing beside her in white. Eguchi too was beside her.

(KYZ. 154,HSB.32)

The horror of this dream lies in the fact that the mother discards the baby by hacking it into pieces. Another significant point of this dream is to declare the truism that beauty is the object of creation and so, deformed life is not allowed to survive. Eguchi’s daughter is his own self, and Kawabata reveals the ethos underlying his own literary creativity; he discloses a deep fear that his own life as an artist-creator is, like the deformed baby, unworthy. The “deformed” entity has to be aborted. Dreams do not explain everything but they do perform the anxiety of the subconscious.

Eguchi’s waking experience, because it is placed at the beginning of chapter two, is effectively distanced from the narrative dream sequence. In contrast to the dark vision of the nightmare, the waking moment “was a sweet, childlike awakening, in her young warmth and soft scent” (KYZ.157, HSB.35). Temporarily, the nightmares give birth to Eguchi’s deep desire to be “born”; hence, he is described as a newborn baby searching his mother’s breast for milk.

He had forgotten the nightmare, and as affection for the girl poured through him, there came over him too a childlike feeling that he was loved by the girl. He felt for a breast, and held it softly in his hand. There was in the touch a strange flicker of something, as if this were the breast of Eguchi’s own mother before she had him inside her.

(KYZ.158,HSB.36)

A strange tactile urge brings Eguchi back to the nurturing space controlled by the Inn keeper. Thus, the mother-infant imagery inspired by the power of “the sleeping beauties” recurs in Eguchi’s memories. The second “sleeping beauty” when she calls for her Mother in her sleep causes him to feel like a parent. Naturally, the mother-infant imagery associates with Eguchi’s own fatherly love for the girl. When the scent of the second “sleeping beauty,” conjures phantoms of flowers they elicit an association with his own daughters. “The ‘petal-dropping’ camellia, filling the garden of the Camellia Temple in Kyoto” brings the memory of the youngest daughter who lost her virginity during the competitive courting of two young men. Before her marriage, Eguchi had taken a trip with her to the Camellia Temple; together, they had watched a four-hundred-year old camellia tree which bloomed in five different colours and whose double blos-
soms were known for falling “petal by petal.” Eguchi recalls witnessing the beauty of the camellia by watching the massing of flowers in the sunlight behind the tree. He was totally captivated by that particular beauty. He remembers how marriage and child-bearing made his youngest daughter beautiful like a fully-blossoming flower. Kawabata interposes over this remembrance the imagery of Eguchi’s passionate lover who had fled with him to Kyoto, but who later married another man and bore a baby girl. The mother-infant images running through Eguchi’s memories linger from the first night into the second.

The third night visit takes place only eight days after the second. This indicates a quickening tempo in Eguchi’s search for the truth. The young “sleeping beauty” stirs in him a desire to sleep “a death-like sleep.” These words, “a death-like sleep,” remind him of a particularly immoral memory, an affair he had had with a married woman from Kobe. Their correspondence had continued for a while and then stopped, suddenly. Eguchi attributes it to a pregnancy from her husband. Here, the significance of child-conception emerges as a part of redeeming grace. As he journeys deeper into the past immoral relationship, Eguchi becomes tempted to violate the Inn Keeper’s forbidding words and to rationalize that his human sense of evil has gone “numb.” He shows himself unable to confess past evils while embracing the body of “the sleeping beauty”; it is as if she were a manifestation of the legendary mercy Buddha, Bodhidishiva. Instead, “the sleeping beauty” stimulates unceasing memories of the women who have responded to Eguchi’s passionate love-making. In this, he greatly delights and craves the same deep sleep as the girl of the house.

On the fourth visit, “the sleeping beauty”’s strong body scent is, again, a sharp reminder of the milk-fed infant’s smell. Eguchi reassures himself by thinking that this scent is the most primeval indication of human identity. At the same time, he grows irritable with the unknown sleep-inducing procedure of “the house of the sleeping beauties.” He hears nothing but his own doubts, finding himself carrying on an internal dialogue and concludes that “it was the body of woman that invited man into the lower circles of hell.” (KYZ.201.HSB.76) Then, unexpectedly, he sees a dark vision by listening to the faint sound of sleet falling outside.

---

6 Noh play, “Eguchi,” dramatizes the ancient legend of Bodhidishiva manifesting herself as a prostitute in a depraved world. As noted earlier, Eguchi is the name of a locale near Osaka, where Kawabata spent his early childhood before being orphaned.
Old Eguchi could see the great, dark sea, on which the sleet fell and melted. A wild bird like a great eagle flew skimming the waves, something in its mouth dripping blood. Was it not a human infant? It could not be. Perhaps it was the specter of human iniquity. He shook his head gently on the pillow and the specter went away.

(KYZ.201, HSB.76-77)

There is an echo from Eguchi’s nightmare during the first night’s sleep. Having seen a mother chop up her new-born, deformed baby; in this dark hallucination, the events carry an apocalyptic air. The identity of the wild bird is not clear except for the realistic design of the bird on the Inn keeper’s obi (kimono sash) described on the first visit. The blood-dripping human infant may be a sacrifice, or a victim of depravity. Eguchi’s cross-examination is not over yet and he has another vision of the butterfly-phantom scene cited earlier. His memories are, accordingly, a recapitulation of the phantom-like experience. During his fourth visit, Eguchi is to experience a full revelation of the reality-illusion mechanism:

Two butterflies were sporting in low shrubbery along the stepping stones of a garden. They disappeared in the shrubbery, they brushed against it, they seemed to be enjoying themselves. They flew slightly higher and danced lightly in and out, and another butterfly appeared from the leaves, and another. Two sets of mates, he thought -- and then there were five, all whirling about together. Was it a fight? But butterflies appeared one after another from the shrubbery, and the garden was a dancing swarm of white butterflies, close to the ground. The down-swept branches of a maple waved in a wind that did not seem to exist. The twigs were delicate and, because the leaves were large, sensitive to the wind. The swarm of butterflies had so grown that it was like a field of white flowers.

(KYZ.203-204, HSB.78-79)

One may recall the two butterflies soaring high in the sky at the cedar-grove in Yukiguni; as well as the scene of the butterflies flickering behind the bush in Shingo’s backyard in Yama no oto. Through these protagonists, Kawabata journeys between reality and dream; what he thought he has seen becomes a phantom-illusion; what surrounds him is nothing but layers of reflection. Eguchi calls attention to the actual maple leaves outside the Inn which have all curled before maturity; they are far from the beautifully formed maple foliage in his illusion. This suggests that the reality of snowfall which Eguchi had seen outside the Inn upon his arrival has provided the original material for the grand ‘butterfly’ illusion.

Eguchi hears from his old friend Kiga the truth about Fukura’s sudden death: there was the appearance of a happy death, but perhaps there are indications of a “euthanasia” at “the house
of the sleeping beauties." Therefore, upon his arrival for the fifth visit, Eguchi initiates a cross-examination of the Inn-keeper, who skillfully dodges him and informs him about the two girls sleeping in the secret chamber. One is a dark-skinned wild-looking girl whose nails, forehead and well-shaped lips he examines ritualistically. The desire to violate the Inn-keeper's command grows stronger, and he is tempted to take the girl's virginity, thinking that this would be the last woman of his sixty-seven year life. The words, "the last woman," take him to a contrasting association, "the first woman." The flashing revelation that the first woman is his own mother comes as a shocking truth. As Eguchi has taken the pills he's been given, his thoughts gradually become entangled in memories of his dying mother. Eguchi's consciousness moves in and out of hallucination and actuality as he lies between the two girls.

First comes his memory of his mother's death from tuberculosis when he was seventeen. Her firm grip and the sensation of cold fingers remain with him. In her last gasping effort to call his name, she had spat a quantity of blood. Everywhere was blood-stained red. Within the scarlet velvety curtain, he touches the two girls on the breast. The tactility does not revive the sensation of the dying mother's breast, but, reminds him of that first infant days: "What he remembered was grooping for them and going to sleep, one day when he was still an infant." (KYZ.224,HSB.96). Eguchi's true inner desire for infancy is obvious; its ultimate pleasure is revealed here in the moment of groping for a breast and going to sleep.

Lying between the fair-skinned girl and the dark-skinned wild one, Eguchi falls asleep to a succession of nightmares: the last of the sequence is unforgettable:

In the last of them he came home from his honeymoon to find flowers like red dahlia blooming and waving in such profusion that they almost buried the house. Wondering whether it was the right house, he hesitated to go inside.

"Welcome home. Why are you standing there?" It was his dead mother who greeted them. . .

"But the flowers, Mother?"

. . .

"I thought we had come to the wrong house. . . But what flowers!"

Ceremonial food had been laid out for them. . . He smelled sea bream. He went out to look at the flowers. His bride went with him.

"Aren't they beautiful," she said.

"Yes." Not wishing to frighten her, he did not add that they had not been there before.

He gazed at a particularly large one among them. A red drop oozed from one of the petals. (KYZ.225,HSB. 96-97)
The home-coming takes on a special meaning when the newly-weds return to find the deceased mother welcoming them. The revival of the deceased is an important motif in *Yama no oto*, for example. The undercurrent of ancestral worship is what binds the protagonist to an unceasing love for Yasuko's deceased sister. In *Yama no oto*, Shingo had a similar dream returning to the hometown where the deceased sister welcomes him; yet in the dream, the beautiful deceased persona exists side by side with something unpleasant, a bucketful of dead mosquitos. Similarly, in *Nemureru bijo*, the protagonist meets the deceased mother alive in his own home. The memory of his infant days, groping for his mother's milk-filled breast, which he has arrived at before falling asleep, obviously transforms the last dream he dreams.

Ancestral worship is an obvious conceptual groundwork here; but, at the same time, it is more clearly developed as *botaikaiki* (a regression to the womb). In the dream, the actuality of the scarlet velvet curtain enclosure around the bed transforms itself into a massive flower bed of red, dahlia-like flowers. The sensation created by the picture of the red flower-bed is enhanced by the aroma from the bream that Eguchi's mother is broiling for the ceremonial event. But his anxiety increases until he sees a red drop oozing from a big petal. The imagery of a red drop creates ambiguity. It is not the same dew drop Shingo had heard in his backyard; it is a drop of blood. The imagery of a big petal shedding a drop of blood reveals Kawabata's desperate attempt at visionary resolution.

In *Jojoka*, Kawabata's early lyrical piece, written in 1932, the writer clearly reveals his belief in *rin'ne*, Buddhist re-incarnation. The novel's heroine declares how believable it is to think of the deceased alive in natural forms, such as trees, plants and flowers. In *Yama no oto*, Kawabata looked for a resolution involving cleansing by a triune concept of the tree of life, and a synthesis with the transubstantiating power of nature. In *Nemureru bijo* Kawabata envisions a gruesome picture of a red flower shedding a drop of its water. It is the best imagery he can produce to represent the blood-spitting death of Eguchi's mother. Whether or not "the shedding..."
of blood” of the flower can save Eguchi from his unceasing mutterings is found in the cold lifeless body of the dark-skinned girl. The Inn-keeper’s refusal to reveal the truth about the girl’s death leaves Eguchi cold, diverting his attention to the other sleeping phantom of shining beauty. His incessant internal voices echo the hollowness of “the house of the sleeping beauties” where no peace is found. The artificial, womb-like, self-contained room, then, confirms the reality that it is the female Inn-keeper who holds the keys to meaning. The ocean waves have receded, and they no longer stir old Eguchi’s remembrances. Apocalypse is withheld, and he continues to dream of “the visions and revisions.”

8 The New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews (9:22) declares “...and without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin].
CONCLUSION

In the Japanese literary tradition, the novel form is said to have originated in Murasaki Shikibu’s *Genji monogatari*, and, perhaps even earlier in *Taketori monogatari* (A Tale of A Bamboo Cutter). Kawabata Yasunari, who raised himself in classical literature during his early orphanhood, was one modern Japanese writer who received Western influences with his own literary tradition. Kawabata discovered a prototypic structure of narrative elements in *Taketori monogatari*, as well as brisk descriptions, humour, pathos and an everlasting quality of symbolical beauty.1 Much later, at a public lecture in Hawaii in 1969, he disclosed his first impression of this beauty with the opening description of the Bamboo Cutter’s discovery of a radiant infant. The lecture reveals how fascinated he was, in his boyhood, with certain elements in the work, such as virgin worship, and the praise of eternal womanhood.2 The qualities of virginity and purity, therefore, became synonymous with beauty in Kawabata’s creative development.

While nurtured and comforted by the classical tradition in Japanese literature, Kawabata’s creative curiosity allowed him to learn from the Western novelists. The references to James Joyce and the stream-of-consciousness technique found in his essays suggest that Kawabata counted himself amongst those not satisfied with the ordinary Western concept of the novel. He understood that stream-of-consciousness was a subversive effort in the evolution of the narrative form in modern Western literary history.

Progression-by-association, in the Japanese tradition, on the other hand, was a distinct phenomenon found early, as in the Imperial Books of Poetry, *Kokinshu* and *Shinkokinshu*. More distinctly during the Muromachi period, the creation of renga sequences became an art form among poets. This technique of association continued to influence poets of the Edo period. Basho and Buson admired Sogi’s renga creation and developed their rinku styles. Basho’s *Okuno hosomichi*, for example, demonstrates the poet’s interest in creating a new poetic form --


a combination of prose and haiku in the renga manner. Buson’s “Shunpu batei no kyoku ,” also shows his yearning for a new poetic form -- a combination of Chinese verse and hokkus (the first verse of renku) in the style of michiyuki (journey).

Renga evolved throughout Japanese literary history until the pre-modern period. As the literature of the novel was introduced and spoken language became part of written style, the creation of renga sequences was not widely appreciated amongst poets. It is ironic that Kawabata, a novelist, became fascinated with the renga dynamic. The truth is that Japan’s long literary tradition had offered him a new narrative potential. The associations which he admired as a driving, expressive force in Seishonagon’s Makura no soshi he now identified as examples of renga method.

Renga is said to have originated in the Kotodama belief held by the Ancient Japanese. The Kotodama cult, it should be noted, is deeply rooted in native Shinto animism. Therefore, the examination of Kawabata’s renga technique involves not only an analysis of the nature of associations but also of his experiences with kotodama belief in the power of the language in his visionary quest for existential meaning.

Kawabata’s early work, Jurokusai no nikki, reveals unrefined, narrative elements which were to be transformed by a so-called renga device. According to the existing May 3rd entry of his journal, young Kawabata had intended to depict his Grandfather’s last days for his creative purposes -- "I have no doubt I can make a good story out of Grandfather’s life..." In the journal one will find several narrative features. First, there is a pattern of progression from the external space to the interior of the house where he observes his grandfather, his last family member, approaching death. This pattern recurrss in his later novels in his search for a vision reconciling life and death; in Nemureru bijo, the pattern of progression is disguised under the refrain-mode of the narrative, and the protagonist journeys into the deepest interior space of the house to search for the meaning of the sensations created by words. Second, Jurokusai no nikki also reveals the youth’s fear for the oracle given by the local fox-worshipping cult. This clearly

---


indicates his awareness of the power of language emanating from the supernatural realm. The third element is Kawabata’s sensibility reflected in the juxtaposition of contradictory images -- the auditory experience of his Grandfather’s urination into the chamber pot and its association with the refreshing mountain stream. For Kawabata, water, whether it is in the form of urine or in a mountain stream, belongs to the cycle of nature. It is this sense of wholeness arising from animist perception that affects his narrative style. Whether this is an acquired sensibility or inborn remains uncertain; however, it is noteworthy that it is a quality rooted in sources from his early life. It conditions his aesthetic consciousness in the application of a *renga* dynamic, and transforms the narrative into a poetic creation. A short story, *Shokonsai ikkei* reveals how this animistic force is awakened inside the protagonist and how she eventually loses the ability to balance reality and illusion. This explains Kawabata’s subsequent and continuous effort to pursue harmony.

*Izu no odoriko* not only reflects Kawabata’s lyrical style but also his perception of animism as personification. A young traveller meeting a dancer in the troupe provides a natural framework for the story’s progression. The scene moves spatially from the outer landscape of the Amagi Pass to a private room inside the tea house. This progression to interiors is an echo from *Jurokusai no Nikki*. It is a convention useful for looking within the protagonist’s psyche. His experience of seeing a dying old man inside the tea-house is reminiscent of Kawabata’s visit with his dying Grandfather. The internal search for meaning finds its structure in the travel scene at the other end of the tunnel. Kawabata, literally, links outer space with the interior of the house, and then the protagonist moves through the tunnel of his internal quest. The novel, in this way, is formed to embody a prototypic experience.

The beautiful young dancer manifests a natural, spiritual force; she is, for the traveller, a mothering care-giver and comforter. Seeing her child-like innocence as she stands naked in the open public bath, the protagonist feels cleansed from his long-held “orphan warp.” When his cleansing experience is confirmed by receiving from the dancer an appellation, “a good person,” the purification rite becomes an experience of *kotodama*. The novel moves in flashback-like
waves through a sequence of actions linking the present with the past. Water imagery is central to unifying the entire story, and in creating lyricism. Unlike *Jojoka* (A Lyrical Song), a shorter story written in 1937, *Izu no odoriko* does not demonstrate a clear application of the renga technique of association, except for occasional haiku-like descriptions, and a correlative presentation of imagery which conveys the protagonist’s sensibility. However, the protagonist’s search for meaning in death touches the power of the language uttered by the young Dancer’s animist persona. The texture of the novel, consisting of the kotodama concept and animism, is further amplified to create a fantasy, a poetic world of snow country.

In *Jojoka*, written between *Izu no odoriko* and *Yukiguni*, Kawabata demonstrates a freer use of renga technique. In this lyrical piece, the protagonist proceeds between memories of the deceased and a desire to be re-incarnated as plant-life. The narrative moves as the lyrical cry of the protagonist. Such inklings of renga dynamic in the narrative sequences of *Jojoka* are the foundation for the creation of *Yukiguni*. Kawabata is increasingly conscious of the renga aesthetic. The kotodama concept, rooted in Shinto animism, is a source of the Japanese poetic tradition. Kotodama orders words in an incantational pattern to work a particular effect upon individuals. Makurakotoba (pillow word), kakarikotoba (pivot word) and kigo (seasonal word) are some of the poetic practices that have developed from kotodama belief. It is believed among the ancient people that the incantationary power of the pillow word makes the spirit active and evocative. Kawabata artistically applies this poetic practice of makurakotoba in his narrative description.

There are often lengthy nature descriptions whenever Komako and Yoko appear. In *Yukiguni* they represent the persona of Snow Country who draw the interest of Shimamura, the Tokyo traveller. Yoko, a virgin care-giver, attracts him with piercing eyes and echoing voice, while Komako approaches him with her unpredictable, animist life-force. Both Yoko, nature’s nymphette, a reminder of Izu Dancer’s prototypic image, and Komako, an attractive, animistic presence, belong to the world in which polarities such as death and life, dream and reality, fire and snow, consumation and regeneration have one face.

*Yukiguni* is such a space where the protagonist encounters and is surrounded by a collage of illusions. There is no story to follow, only layers of pattern to be uncovered. The narrative is built around Shimamura’s three visits to Snow Country. Consequently, there is no special plot to
contain the characters' actions. One has to realize Kawabata created a textual, poetic space or a theatrical space under the disguise of linked episodes. *Yojo* (lingering tone), a *renga* term, is the linking style between scenes. A poetic practice in *waka* tradition called *makurakotoba* is applied to project the persona of the novel as a design function. His trust in the power of the word, however, faced an unexpected feature of *kotodama* complexity. Komako's misunderstanding Shimamura's "Good woman" comment reflects the implied connotations of the word. The *renga* dynamic is, indeed, applied to the narrative style and has produced the fantasy of Snow Country. As the protagonist experiences the hidden face of *kotodama*, the animist source of this *kotodama* dynamic overpowers the protagonist's psyche. Kawabata's vision is impaired and Izu Dancer becomes a composite of two women -- Komako who carries the unconscious Yoko.

*Yama no oto* demonstrates a similar narrative synthesis which links a number of short episodes into a novel form. Compared to *Sembazuru*, written during the same creative period, the novel elements stand on their own. The story is a believable day-to-day portrayal of human life -- an aging man and the affairs of his family. His fear of approaching death and the effort to come to terms with his life, has a surface ordinariness; however, as he searches for hope beyond death, he involves himself, as the head of the family, in his son and daughter's flawed marriages. Within this parameter, the old protagonist's mysterious experience of hearing the sound of the mountain in his backyard opens a way into a special realm. Here, Kawabata interweaves the textual spaces with geographical places like Tokyo, Kamakura and Shinshu, and a sequence of dreams that interfere with the old man's sleep. The sound he hears transforms itself into a myriad of illusions which reverberate throughout the novel. This reverberation -- from the hiddenness of these allusions -- links scene after scene in each episode. Domestic scenes, the protagonist's private dream scenes, his waking-dream sensations and the fantasy involving his daughter-in-law are all interconnected and overlaid upon each other. The linkage is made possible, again, by reverberation, *hibiki*, in *renku* term or a hidden allusion, *uzumiku*, in the *renga* sense. Allusions hidden in *Yama no oto* are many and they provide a lingering note. They play a significant role in the fabrication of the text and in the synthesis of the vision. Allusions to the Noh play, *Kikujido*, to the Biblical triune concept of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the ancestor worship of the beautiful female persona are some notable examples; they all interact by connect-
ing each narrative scene to produce a progression towards a visionary exit. Kawabata, in one of the protagonist’s dreams, depicts a man, in America, who has grown a phenomemal beard of all different styles. The man with the multi-styled beard of different colours is described as appointed to being the ‘ten’nen kinenbutsu’ or the National Monument. Such is the achievement of Kawabata’s ren ga application in *Yama no oto*.6

Of course, there is an undercurrent that adds a minor note to the novel. In the first episode titled “*Yama no oto,*” ‘breach of promise’ and human doubt are thematically displayed through the confession of a geisha who survives a double suicide attempt. The failure of word power suggested in this scene is a reoccurrence underscoring the protagonist’s negative experience of the kotodama spirit in Yukiguni. In *Yama no oto,* this hidden theme is fabricated in the sub-plot involving Kinuko who denies that Shuichi is the father of the child she is carrying. The power of her words are ironically empowered by the sacrificial act of Kikuko, Shuichi’s young wife. She aborts her child in order to regain her husband. As the name signifies, Kinuko (Child of Silk) becomes an extension of Komako, who is described as living in the silkworm room in Yukiguni. Kikuko (Child of Chrysanthemum), who acts as a manifestation of eternal youth in the *Kikujido* allusion, emerges as a more palpable persona than Yoko. Thus, Kawabata envisions a remedy beyond Kikuko and Kinuko to pacify the provoked animist force. The novel ends with a resolution, but the resonance of the mountain is still audible.

Kawabata’s vision of beauty is only existentially possible, like a glimpse of stars through the tree tops on the backyard mountain, or butterflies hovering beyond the bushclover. *Nemureru bijo* (The House of Sleeping Beauties) from his later period sums up his creative approach to beauty, the power of the word, which lies in the tension between sensation and meaning. Unlike *Yama no oto,* *Nemureru bijo* takes the reader to an extraordinary fictive place called “the house of the sleeping beauties.” The story is framed in the old protagonist’s five night-visits to lie next to virgins who have been artificially put to sleep in the womb-like chamber. The five nights and six

---

6 In the narrative sequence, of course, the man with beard may be a mythological allusion as recounted in Kojiki. Nakanishi refers to Prince Susano’s having his beard shortened as punishment for his misdeed and explains that growing a beard is a sign of life-force in Japanese mythology. The man in the dream, in *Yama no oto,* suggests a syncretistic presence in the life vision. “Mizu to kotoba to cosmology,” *Mugendai.* No.92. (1992, December). 43.
virgins are arranged in such a way that the reader experiences the waves of the protagonist’s conscious thought patterns, and the memories hidden in his subconscious. Kawabata hides the protagonist’s desire to ‘know’ the sleeping beauties. “The sleeping beauty” is a metaphor for the kotodama that communicates, provokes, reveals vices, cleanses, comforts and evokes the past. To embark on the textual journey is to proceed through the protagonist’s hidden desire and to return to prototypic womanhood. The protagonist associates scene after scene with memories of women -- memories of his first love, of affairs with women, and of his daughters. Memories, then, are shadows of the substance reflecting the woman prototype. The linking style is the mode of reminiscence, omkagezuke in renku term. The visit from memory to memory is a poet’s journey from one utamakura (a poetic place of fame) to another. On the fifth night, remembering his mother’s blood-spurting death, the protagonist returns, in dream, to his mother’s house. The deceased mother’s welcome among the red dahlia-like flowers recovers Kawabata’s vision, in Jojoka, of reincarnation in the vegetation -- a spiritual homage to nature. Wakened from the dream, however, the protagonist finds himself next to a lifeless body. The woman innkeeper who denies the reality of death, diverts the protagonist’s attention to another sleeping beauty, an illusion of life.

The religious effect of animism, and the kotodama belief held among people from antiquity is what makes the Japanese literary tradition distinctly Japanese. Kotodama is the source of the waka poetry tradition, and the practice of renga is deeply indebted to this genre. Kawabata, from early childhood, had been stimulated by animism and kotodama culture partly because of his discovery of the animist presence within himself. Kawabata is, moreover, well aware of T.S. Eliot’s exhortation to poets in his essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” to cultivate a historical sense, “which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal, and of the timeless and of the temporal together.” 7 Kawabata employed renga association to harvest the tension between sensation and meaning,8 and to recreate with great charm his own distinctive narrative form. Since the renga dynamic is an aesthetic centered in the classical Japanese tradition, Kawabata has obeyed the voices which spoke to him from the classic works of his youth.

8 This theme is developed in Eliot’s poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”
Main Text:


General Works Cited or Consulted:


Kawabata Yasunari’s Critical Works Cited or Consulted:


