

The Aesthetics of Distance and Jun'ichiro Tanizaki

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for 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

April 1997

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Date April 16, 1997

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the transformation and development of Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's "Aesthetics of distance" in male-female relationship as well as in the main characters' perception of reality, through his three major works: *Chijin no ai* (Naomi), *Shunkinsho* (The Story of Shunkin), and *Futen rojin nikki* (A Diary of a Mad Old Man).

For Tanizaki, distance, whether in a spiritual, spatial, or social dimension, functions as a mechanism through which characters and readers perceive as well as measure reality. Furthermore, for him, beauty is measured by remoteness (distance) from man's existence. The alien, the unattainable, the elusive, all of which characterize his female characters, are also manifestations of or embodiments of distance. To attain, to possess the highly desired beauty (found in women), not only detracts but actually destroys the pleasure in distance. *Chijin no ai* shows how male-protagonist Joji destroys the pleasure of distance.

Tanizaki develops his aesthetics of distance in a more sophisticated manner in *Shunkinsho*. In this work, he links his concept of distance to the aesthetics of shadow. By employing a historical setting, particular narrative strategies (ambiguous description and multiple narrators), and by utilizing a blind heroine, he successfully creates a distant world in faint outline, as he calls it, "the world of shadows" which evokes reader's imagination.

Imagination forms a vital link to the elaboration of the aesthetics of distance in *Futen rojin nikki*. Utsugi, an ailing old man, experiences pleasure in both limitation and prohibition. In living his life as "theater" (between the real and the unreal), he is able to discover an even higher form of pleasure: the pleasure of imagination. The ultimate achievement in this work is that he is able to depict "death" as something between the

real and the unreal, the attainable and the unattainable, resulting, once again, in a sublime imaginative experience. In the literary portrayal of "death", Tanizaki finally and completely fulfills his aesthetics of distance.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 <i>Chijin no ai</i> (Naomi): Distance and Control	5
1. Transformation of Naomi: Seen Then Possessed	6
2. Distance and Control: Naomi and the Manipulation of Distance	11
3. Reality and Fantasy: Distance and Balance	14
4. Conclusion	23
Chapter 2 <i>Shunkinsho</i> (The Story of Shunkin): The Aesthetics of Shadow	25
1. Distance between Shunkin and Sasuke	28
2. Shunkin's Beauty as a Blind	30
3. Distance and the Reader	32
4. Sasuke as a Manipulation of Distance as an Aesthetic Object	36
5. Conclusion	37
Chapter 3 <i>Futen rojin nikki</i> (A Diary of a Mad Old Man): Pleasure of Distance	39
1. Distance between Utsugi and Satsuko	40
2. Distance from Reality: Life as Theater	45
3. Satsuko	50
4. Death: The World of Imagination	54
5. Conclusion	55
Conclusion	57
Works Cited	61
Bibliography	63

Acknowledgment

I wish to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Kinya Tsuruta, without whose constant advice this thesis could never have been completed.

My gratitude must also go to Mr. Tim Firth, Ms. Miseli Jeon and Ms. Susan Fisher, who edited my thesis with so much care and encouragement.

Introduction

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1886-1965) is first and foremost among modern and contemporary Japanese writers. Sei Ito remarks: " If we removed this writer from our contemporary literature, it would surely create a huge emptiness."¹ However, he does not belong to the "naturalist" main stream literary circle of his day. As distinct from naturalism, especially "I-novel" (*watakushi shosetsu*), which are confessions of authors' experiences, Tanizaki shows his talent in creating a fictional world.

He was born in Tokyo, in the old downtown merchant quarter which still retained the atmosphere of Edo period. His father failed at one enterprise after another, and it was his grandfather and mother who influenced and cultivated him. His grandfather was a successful merchant who -uncommonly for the time- lavished care and attention for his female children. While the rest of the family prayed to the Buddha, Tanizaki's grandfather kneeled before St. Maria. In his retrospective essay, *Yoshojidai* (Childhood Years, 1955-56) Tanizaki confessed that his worship of the West and women was influenced by his grandfather. His mother was a strong-willed and beautiful woman, who loved the Kabuki theater. She had been portrayed in woodcut prints that haunted his imagination.

He started his career as a writer in 1910 when he was a student at Tokyo University. His debut work *Shisei* (The Tattoer), an elegantly sadomasochistic fable, was warmly received by the critics. His promising future as a writer was assured by Kafu Nagai's (1879-1959) critique *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro shi no sakuhin* (Mr. Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's works, 1911). Nagai, a leader of the anti-naturalists, and whom Tanizaki worshipped, was

¹Ito, Sei. "Tanizaki Jun'ichiro." *Ito Sei zenshu*. Vol.20.p.8. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1973. Translation is taken from Thien Truong Pham's *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro and the Art of Storytelling*. p.1. Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia, 1985. (An unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to The University of British Columbia, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Department of Asian Studies)

among the first to recognize his talent. Nagai pointed out that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Tanizaki's writing was that "he has a mysterious quality (*shinpi yugen*) produced by carnal fear (*nikutaiteki kyofu*)".² As Nagai commented, Tanizaki produced a series of works either of exotic setting or describing strange feelings or phenomenon, which earned the epithets of "estheticism", "decadence" or "diabolism". These early works showed an influence of Poe, Baudelaire, and Wilde. In the early 1920's, he lived in Yokohama's foreign quarter, and produced a certain number of dramas and screen plays, most of which reveal his adoration of the West. After the great earthquake of 1923, however, he moved to the Kansai region and began to cultivate a taste for Japanese tradition. *Chijin no ai* (Naomi, 1925) summed up his infatuation with the Westernized atmosphere of Yokohama. His move to Kansai and his third marriage brought about a turning point in his career. He divorced his first wife in 1930, and a brief second marriage was followed in 1935 by his enduring marriage to Matsuko Nezu, a rich merchant's former wife. His third wife became a rich resource of literary stimulation for him.

Most of Tanizaki's fiction of the 1930's has a serene classical tone; much of it is set in the past, ranging as far back as medieval times. Among those, *Shunkinsho* (The Story of Shunkin, 1933), an unusual love story between a blind mistress and devoted servant, was one of the most warmly welcomed of all his works by critics such as Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata among the others. Kawabata remarked: "This is a great masterpiece, and I do not have even a word to comment on it." (109) During wartime, Tanizaki devoted himself to write his most ambitious novel, *Sasameyuki* (The Makioka Sisters, published in 1946), a leisurely chronicle of upper-class Osaka life with its central character modeled on his wife Matsuko. Though the publication of this novel (in serialized form) was prohibited by government censors during the war, he did not stop

²Nagai, Kafu. "Tanizaki Jun'ichiro shi no sakuhin." *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro*. Gunzo. Nihon no sakka. Vol.8. p.92-98. Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1991. Translation is taken from Edward G. Seidensticker's "Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, 1886-1965," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 21 (1966):253.

working on it. In 1949, after its completion, he received the Imperial Cultural Decoration, the highest honor for a Japanese writer. In his later period, his thematic concerns inclined to death and sex. In 1956, he startled the literary world with *Kagi* (The Key), combining diary entries from both a middle-aged man and his sexually demanding wife, causing a storm of controversy: is this art or pornography? His last novel, *Futen rojin nikki* (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1961) is a tragicomedy of an ailing old man obsessed with erotic fantasies. Tanizaki died in 1965, at the age of seventy nine.

Despite his variety of writing styles, he is well known for his consistency of themes. Edward G. Seidensticker states: "The most remarkable thing about Tanizaki's writing is his steadfastness to a single theme through all the decades of change..."(253). Donald Keene holds a similar view: "The writings of Tanizaki Jun'ichiro are apt to surprise equally by their exceptional diversity of subject and manner and by their equally exceptional consistency of themes"(171).

Along with the themes of masochism, foot-fetishism and nostalgia for mother that Tanizaki pursued throughout his career is men's obsession with women. The concept of "distance" plays an important role in these male-female relationships. Any reader familiar with his works can hardly overlook the fact that there is always a certain distance between his male and female characters. Tanizaki's female characters are almost without exception characterized by their unattainability and unpossessability, whether socially, culturally, psychologically, physically, spatially, or temporally. It is this very unattainability and unpossessability that appeals to Tanizaki's heroes.

Takehiko Noguchi, in his *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro ron*, points out the importance of "distance" in portrayals of male-female relationships: "There should be 'distance' between Tanizaki's men and women, whether spiritually, spatially or socially. ...For Tanizaki, women must be always 'unearthly'". (*seishinteki de are kukanteki de are aruiwa mata mibunteki de are soko ni wa kare ware o oshihedateru "kyori" ga nanika no katachi de hitsuyo to sareru....Tanizaki ni totte onna to wa tsuneni "ningenbanare" shita sonzai de*

nakute wa naranakatta no de aru ...171). Inspired by Noguchi, Ken Ito develops his argument on Tanizaki's "aesthetics of distance, where a man measures beauty by its remoteness from his own existence".(89) : "Tanizaki's men stubbornly insist on finding beauty in what is most alien to themselves".(89)

While the concept of distance has been established with respect to male-female relationships, it has not been fully examined within the scope of an overall view of Tanizaki's works. We also find the concept in the perception of reality by Tanizaki's characters. In most of his works, his main characters try to set their life as "the other world", detached from reality. By keeping a certain distance, they attempt to create their own fantasy. Distance is a significant factor to balance the two worlds (reality and fantasy).

Though distance persistently appears in Tanizaki's works, he illustrates its different aspects as he moves through different stages in his career. The aim of this thesis is to examine the transformation and development of his "aesthetics of distance" in male-female relationships as well as in the main characters' perceptions of reality, through Tanizaki's three major works in chronological order. Each chapter will focus on one work which is the most representative piece in each period. Chapter one deals with *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*, 1924), illustrative of the early period which is characterized by Tanizaki's worship of the West and of diabolism. Chapter two focuses on *Shunkinsho* (*The Story of Shunkin*, 1933) from the middle period where Tanizaki indulges himself in appreciation of Japanese traditional beauty. Finally, chapter three focuses on *Futen rojin nikki* (*A Diary of a Mad Old Man*, 1962) which represents his later period, and at the same time, is his last great major work.

Our overall objective is to establish how distance works in each novel and to compare its different dimensions among these three works. The ultimate goal is to discover why Tanizaki consistently and incessantly needs distance throughout the course of his long writing career.

Chapter 1

Chijin no ai (Naomi): Distance and Control

Chijin no ai (literally "a fool's love") was first serialized in the Osaka *Asahi* newspaper from March to June 1924, and after a five-month interruption it was continued in the magazine *Josei* from November till July 1925. The interruption was due to the pressure from government censors and conservative readers who regarded this novel as immoral. This novel, however, caused a sensation among young progressive readers who coined the term "Naomism" to convey the image of a modern woman freed from convention.

Chijin no ai is narrated by its male protagonist, Kawai Joji. It is his confession of the events of the past eight years of his life with his wife Naomi. Joji is "an exemplary office worker"(NM.5, TJZ.5)¹ among his colleagues. At twenty-eight, he met the fifteen-year-old Naomi, a cafe hostess from a poor family. He adopts Naomi to raise her as "a fine, respectable woman"(NM.40, TJZ.48) with a good education and make her "beautiful both spiritually and physically"(NM.49, TJZ.59). They set up house in a suburb of Tokyo and live an unconventional, relaxed life there. After one year, they marry. Naomi grows to become a beautiful woman, but does not live up to Joji's spiritual expectations. Voluptuous and free, her immoral behavior disappoints and angers Joji. He is besotted by her physical beauty, and eventually falls into complete slavery to her every whim.

The main thrust of the plot is the changing nature of the relationship between Joji and Naomi. The story starts with Joji in complete control of Naomi, and as it proceeds, a shift in power takes place ending with Naomi's domination of Joji.² Control and distance

¹ All quotations are taken from *Naomi* (NM) translated by Anthony H. Chambers. Page numbers of original text are taken from *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu* (TJZ).

²The term "control" is used only in relation to the concept of the aesthetics of distance and is not directly concerned with issues such as power, gender and domination in their own right.

are intimately related: Joji's failure to maintain control over Naomi stems from his inability to manipulate the distance between them, a key feature in influencing the balance of power. At the beginning of the story, Joji successfully maintains the distance between himself and Naomi with his social and financial superiority and seniority, but gradually he succumbs to the temptation of narrowing this distance, trying to possess and even absorb her. On the other hand, Naomi, who is initially merely a passive object to be controlled, gradually begins to manipulate him so as to broaden the distance between them, thereby creating her own image as a remote and unattainable woman. In addition, Joji fails to balance his public and private lives. At first, the two dimensions are in balance: public and private; reality and fantasy; his inner and outer worlds. The distinctions gradually blur as his obsession with Naomi develops, and when fantasy wins its final victory over reality, he yields full control to the Naomi he had already created as a heroine in his fantasy world.

In this chapter, we will examine the process of the reversal of control between Joji and Naomi and its relation to distance in the following three ways. In the first section, we will examine the transformation of Naomi's persona from Joji's point of view. The second section will discuss how Naomi takes control by manipulating her distance from him; and the third section will discuss how Joji is frustrated in his efforts to maintain self-control by his inability to successfully manage the distance between reality and fantasy.

1. Transformation of Naomi: Seen Then Possessed

Like many of Tanizaki's heroes, Joji is attracted to a woman who is alien to him in many ways, notably her Western appearance and name, social class background, and age.

At the very beginning, as Joji later confesses, he is attracted by her Eurasian looks and Western-sounding name, "Naomi", both of which were quite rare in those days in Japan:

... at first I was probably attracted by her name. Everyone called her "Nao-chan." When I asked about it one day, I learned that her real name was Naomi, written with three Chinese characters. The name excited my curiosity. A splendid name, I thought: written in Roman letters, it could be a Western name. I began to pay special attention to her. Strangely enough, once I knew that she had such a sophisticated name, she began to take on an intelligent, Western look. ... In fact, Naomi resembled the motion-picture actress Mary Pickford: there was definitely something Western about her appearance. (NM.4, TJZ.4)

With her looks and name, Naomi has an exotic, unattainable appeal for Joji. Her image stimulates Joji's desire to "live in the West and marry a Western woman" (NM.67, TJZ.82), and as the next best thing, he adopts Naomi in order to realize his fantasies.

In addition, the gap in their status is one more important factor in making possible the creation and manipulation of distance between them. For Joji, who is the eldest son of a rich farmer, and university educated with a degree in engineering, lower-class Naomi appears strange and unworthy. Unlike the detailed description of Joji's family life, the description of Naomi's is decidedly brief. She is secretive about her family and where she lives. Tanizaki suggests her background unambiguously:

... anyone will be able to guess what sort of family hers was, if he considers that her home was in Senzoku, that she was sent out to be a cafe hostess at the age of fifteen, and that she didn't want anyone to see where she lived. (NM.14, TJZ.17)

Her secret background intensifies the air of mystery about her. Joji takes advantage of his social superiority to exercise control over Naomi through his financial support: social and financial superiority allow him to adopt Naomi and give her opportunities and stability which would otherwise be unobtainable. Because of this inferiority, Naomi, as the following passage indicates, becomes an object to be bought by Joji, his attitude toward her being not unlike that of consumers toward products:

I longed for a little color and warmth in my life. ... I'd decorate the rooms, plant flowers, hang out a birdcage on the sunny veranda, and hire a maid to do the cooking and scrubbing. And if Naomi agreed to come, she'd take the place of both the maid and the bird ...This is roughly what I had in mind.(NM.6, TJZ.6-7)

The best approach would be to bring a girl like Naomi into my home and patiently watch her grow. Later, *if I liked what I saw, I could take her for my wife.*(NM.7, TJZ.8) (Emphasis is mine.)

The third and most important distinguishing factor is thirteen year difference in their age. Naomi is "a quiet, gloomy child"(NM.4, TJZ.5) who " tends to hide in a corner as she [does] her work silently and nervously"(NM.5, TJZ.5). For Joji, Naomi is only a girl, passive and innocent, with no mental maturity. Joji again takes advantage of their difference in age in two ways. Naomi appeals to him because of her apparent unattainability. He repeatedly recalls how elusive she seemed:" I can't speak with any assurance about her disposition in the days when she was working in the cafe; only a parent or sister can understand the feeling of a fifteen-or sixteen- year-old girl"(NM.4, TJZ.4);"[S]he hardly said a word; she usually had such a sullen look that I couldn't tell whether she was happy or bored"(NM.8, TJZ.9). Joji utilizes her youthful innocence and passivity in order to control and shape her into his ideal woman. For this plan to succeed, Naomi must be nothing but a passive object, a beautiful sight for the eye. Joji's objectification of Naomi is represented by the metaphors he uses to describe her: variously as a bird, an animal, a flower, a jewel or a doll. For his entertainment, he views her in various outfits as if he were viewing a flower in a vase:

Wrapped in gauzy, translucent clothing of white, rose, or pale lavender, she was like a beautiful large blossom in a vase. "Try it this way; now this way," I'd say. Picking her up, laying her down, telling her to be seated or to walk, I gazed at her by the hour.(NM.38, TJZ.45-46)

Further, Joji's desire to keep Naomi thus is seen by his habit of calling her "Baby".

The three aspects of the distance between the two give Joji both pleasure and advantage. However, bored with her life with him, she tries to have more contact with society and begins to play around with other men. Realizing that Naomi is getting beyond his control, Joji tries to keep her within his grasp, to possess and absorb her.

This desire is perhaps best embodied through food metaphors. Such metaphors first appear just after Joji discovers that Naomi is flirting with other men. He "[takes] away her wallet and all of her clothes"(NM.152, TJZ.197) so that she can not go out. He gazes at her body while she is sleeping and describes her arms and legs as "like stems in a pot of boiled cabbage, claw[ing] seductively at my heart"(NM.157, TJZ.203). It is worth noting that this link with food first appears when Joji has confined Naomi to the house after his discovery. As Ken Ito points out, "the ultimate form of possession is consumption"(100), and this food metaphor conveys Joji's desire to utterly possess Naomi. At another point, he compares Naomi to alcohol when she leaves home after a quarrel over her affair with Hamada, one of her boyfriends: "It was as though Naomi were a strong wine. I knew it'd be bad for me to drink too much, but I was shown the brimming, richly fragrant cups every day and I couldn't help myself."(NM.172-173, TJZ.221) When Joji and Kumagai, another boyfriend, discuss Naomi, they use her name as their side-dish for liquor, a secondary intoxicant:

Naomi, Naomi -- I don't know how many times the name was repeated between us. It was the appetizer that accompanied our sake. We relished its smooth sound, licked it with our saliva, and raised it to our lips, as though it were a delicacy even tastier than beef. (NM.198-199, TJZ.254)

The transformation of Naomi from an object to be seen to an object to be possessed and consumed reveals the shift in Joji's attitude toward her. In the beginning, he took pleasure in viewing Naomi, but after his discovery of her affair, he feels the desire to possess and even incorporate her. As his desire changes, so does the distance between the

two: viewing demands separation, and is, both more possible and pleasant from a certain distance, but for consumption, the closer the better.

In *The Structure of Iki*, Shuzo Kuki analyzes the form and essence of "Iki", an aesthetic unique to Japan, an aesthetics based on or concerned with distance. According to Kuki, distance plays a key role in male-female relationships: each maintains the possibility of their "identification" with the other instead of actualizing it. The preservation of this possibility, he concludes, is "consequently the secret of the success of 'Pleasure'"(8)³. The concept of distance features prominently in theory and practice in a wide variety of disciplines and cultures. Commentators in many fields have made points very similar to Kuki's. Edward Bullough in *"Physical Distance" as a Factor in Arts and an Aesthetic Principle* maintains, for example, that "the ideal experience of the art work takes place when the viewer has the least amount of distance without losing it,...": artistic experience requires "the utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance".⁴ There are enough points for discussion here to simply note them at present. We will say more about this later.

Now, we have already seen that Joji's attitude toward Naomi is contrary to this "iki" aesthetic with its inherent demand for a maintained distance. In trying to reduce the distance between himself and Naomi, he loses the pleasure of distance as well as his control over her. She, on the contrary, grows into a woman who can skillfully manipulate distance and give Joji what might be called the *pleasure of possibility* which (to refer to the Bullough quote above) means increasingly reducing distance just up to the point

³*Iki*, in the dictionary, is translated as stylish, smart, chic or fashionable. Kuki claims that the concept of *iki* is constructed from three essential components, that is "coquetry"(*bitai*), "chic"(*ikuji*) and "resignation"(*akirame*). He defines *iki* as amorousness (coquetry) which has pluck (brave composure) and is urbane (resignation).(13)

⁴For Bullough's argument, see Daphna Ben Chain's *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetics of Audience Response* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984) p.6.

before it disappears entirely. In the next section, we will discuss how Naomi wrests control from Joji.

2. Distance and Control: Naomi and the Manipulation of Distance

As Joji's command over distance falters, wilting in the heat of his desire to possess Naomi, she is growing into a woman who can make distance work for her. She uses it to recreate the image of unattainability (lost in his attempt to possess her). In particular, her reappearance in full western dress after a brief separation creates a psychological gulf that Joji cannot bridge. Naomi's performance is doubly impressive because of the sharp contrast to a previous scene, in which she had been clad in a dirty silk kimono: "She was wearing a common silk garment I'd never seen before, and apparently she'd been wearing it for days, because the collar was dirty and the knees protruded"(NM.205, TJZ.261). The next time they meet, Joji does not even recognize her at first:

Whipping off a black garment and tossing it aside, an unfamiliar young Western woman stood there in a pale blue French crepe dress. The exposed arms and shoulders were as white as a fox. Around her fleshy nape, she wore a crystal necklace that glowed like a rainbow; and beneath a black velvet hat pulled low over her eyes, the tips of her nose and chin were visible, terrifyingly, miraculously white. The raw vermilion of her lips stood out in contrast. "Good evening," she said. When she took off her hat, the first glimmer of recognition flashed across my mind. As I studied the face, I finally realized that it was Naomi. I know it sounds strange, but that's how much Naomi's appearance had changed.(NM.207, TJZ.263-264)

Awestruck by her Westernized beauty, he describes his feeling as follows:

To what could I compare this feeling, so that my readers will understand? For example, a man comes to Tokyo from the countryside and, on the street, chances upon his daughter, who had run away from home when she was very young. The daughter, now a fine city woman, doesn't recognize the seedy farmer from the countryside as her father, although he recognizes her. But their social stations are so vastly different now that he can't go up to her. Astonished and overcome with embarrassment, he steals

away. Consider the mixture of loneliness and gratitude that he experiences at that moment. Or, a man who's been rejected by his fiancée is standing on the wharf at Yokohama five or ten years later, when an ocean liner docks and the returning passengers disembark. Unexpectedly, he sees her among them, apparently back from a trip overseas. But he lacks the courage to approach her--he's still a poor scholar, whereas she has lost all trace of her uncultured youth. She's become a fashionable lady accustomed to Parisian life and the luxuries of New York, and there's a gap of a thousand miles between them. Consider the self-scorn that the rejected scholar feels at that moment, mingled with the gratification he feels at her unexpected success. (NM.210-211, TJZ.268)

Naomi's vivid transformation intensifies her unattainability all the more, so that she undergoes a further metamorphosis: no longer an item of food, but "a precious object of yearning and adoration." (NM.210, TJZ.267)

Naomi further underlines her unattainability by increasing her physical distance from Joji. Saying "We're just friends" (NM.218, TJZ.278), Naomi forbids him any physical contact while tantalizing him with her body. For example, she deliberately changes clothes in front of him to let him see part of her skin, but never allows him to touch her:

She deliberately changed clothes in my presence; while she was changing she'd let her under-robe slip with an "Oh!" and, putting her hands on her shoulders to cover herself, run into the next room. Or, returning from the bath, she'd sit in front of the mirror and begin to expose herself. Then, as if she'd just noticed me, she'd say, "Oh, Joji! You shouldn't be here! Go away." (NM.217, TJZ.276)

In this manner, with endless tantalizing variations to the distance between them, never allowing Joji to penetrate the "final barrier" (NM.218, TJZ.278), Naomi gradually stokes the flame of his desire. In the same way, she forbids him to kiss her: instead, he is given "a friends' kiss" (NM.218, TJZ.278) in which he has to "settle for her breath instead of her lips" (NM.219, TJZ.279). She lets him shave her face, neck, shoulders and even under her arms, but he is not allowed to touch her skin. These endless prohibitions give Joji not

only frustration but also erotic pleasure. As Georges Bataille argues in his *Erotism*, there is an inevitable connection between prohibition (taboo) and eroticism:

... the essence of eroticism is to be found in the inextricable confusion of sexual pleasure and taboo. In human terms the taboo never makes an appearance without suggesting sexual pleasure, nor does the pleasure without evoking taboo.(108)

Tantalized by her actions, Joji gradually comes under Naomi's control. He is tormented by visions of Naomi's body and by "frenzied attacks of what might be called male hysteria"(NM.220, TJZ.281). Finally he declares himself her slave: "Naomi! Naomi! Don't tease me any more! I'll do anything you tell me!"(NM.229-230, TJZ.229-230)

In the final scene, the layout of their new house in Yokohama provides a vivid map of both the distance and the power relationship between them:

It was Naomi's idea to sleep in separate rooms. A lady's boudoir is sacred, she said: even a husband mustn't invade it without permission. She took the biggest room for herself and assigned me the small room next to it. Actually, the two rooms don't adjoin directly. Between them are a lady's bath and toilet, through which one has to pass to go from one room to the other.(NM.235, TJZ.299-300)

The separation of their rooms signals not only physical but also psychological distance, and the difference in the size of rooms reflects their power relationship. This is in vivid contrast to their previous home in Omori, where their rooms were separated by a wall thin enough to talk through and where Naomi had slept on thin, hard bedding suitable for a maid, and in a smaller room than Joji's.

Naomi's mastery of distance on both psychological and physical levels eventually and inevitably gives her the dominant position in her relationship with Joji. She is more patient in working towards what she wants and needs, and despite her youth, she has better control of her desires, which allows her to lead Joji by his lust from his initial position as her master to his final fate as her self-confessed slave.

3.Reality and Fantasy: Distance and Balance

Distance is also an important factor in keeping the balance between fantasy and reality. Joji fails to keep a balance between them; in fact, his actions break down the boundary between the two. Having failed in construction of his own reality, he naturally becomes no more than a puppet in Naomi's reality.

In the beginning, when Joji is in full control over Naomi, he successfully balances reality and fantasy. For Joji, reality is his public life in his office and in his home town. He successfully plays the role of "kunshi", gentleman, in his office, and in his home town, he is a good son who lives up to his mother's expectations. His fantasy world is his house in Tokyo, where he enjoys his private life with Naomi. His name for the house, a "fairy-tale house" (NM.19, TJZ.21) reveals his desire to set this space apart from reality. As he himself admits, his life is "sharply divided between home and office" (NM.113, TJZ.144). Under the cover of his public respectability, he enjoys a perverted love for Naomi in his fantasy world.

Compared to the other characters in Tanizaki's earlier works such as the maniac hero, Okamoto in *Konjiki no shi* (*The Golden Death*, 1914), who creates an earthly paradise filled with beautiful naked women and statues of centaurs and animals, or Jotaro in *Jotaro* (1914) who enjoys a distinctly masochistic pleasure, Joji appears rather conventional because of his public mask of ordinariness and normality. However, when we penetrate the public layer, Joji is in love with a woman who is no more than a child, and his desire for her is more than a little necrophilic, as we shall see.

Naomi, as a child, also whets his erotic desire because their relationship violates a taboo, and as we have seen, Georges Bataille suggests that a taboo is a sign of eroticism. When they call each other "Papa" and "Baby", they evoke a father-daughter relationship, and in so doing, Joji adds to his pleasures the erotic titillation of the incest taboo. The

necrophilic component of his desire for Naomi is evident in scenes like the following, where he speaks of his special attraction to her face when she is sleeping, describing it as the face of a dead woman:

As I sat gazing, her breast, in the shadow thrown by the lampshade, loomed vividly, like an object lying in the depths of pellucid water. Her face, too, radiant and kaleidoscopic by day, now wore a mysterious cast, a melancholy frown, like that of one who's just swallowed bitter medicine, or of one who's been strangled. I loved her sleeping face. "You look like a different person when you're sleeping, "I often told her, "as though you're having a terrible dream." "Her death-face would be beautiful, too," I often told myself. (NM.121, TJZ.155)

Joji also is attracted to particular aspects of Naomi's body. He maintains a photograph album called "Naomi Grows Up," and records in detail how her limbs are changing every day:

... there were more photographs of every description. Gradually they came to dwell on minute details, and there were enlargements of certain parts: the shape of her nose: the shape of her eyes; the shape of her lips; the shape of a finger; the curve of her arm, her shoulder, her back, or her leg; her wrist; ankle; elbow; knee; even the sole of her foot ...(NM.176, TJZ.225)

His photo collection of Naomi's anatomy indicates his subconscious desire to dismember her. As Ken Ito observes, photography reveals Joji's objectification, violation and dehumanization of Naomi.(98-99)

Joji's attraction to Naomi as a child and subconscious necrophilic desire remind contemporary Japanese readers of a murder case that actually happened in 1989: Tsutomu Miyazaki, a 26-year-old printer, murdered young girls and chopped their bodies into pieces. Police discovered over 6,000 videotapes in his home, some of which were of his victims. Joji, of course does not go as far as Miyazaki did, but we can not deny some similarities. What differentiates Joji from Miyazaki and keeps him "normal" is his attachment to reality: he maintains a balance between his fantasy and reality whereas

Miyazaki lived his fantasy. When undergoing psychological tests, Miyazaki confessed that he committed the murders not deliberately "but as if he were in a dream"⁵.

Takeo Doi, in his *Anatomy of self*, insists that in order to maintain psychic balance, we need to hold on to two aspects of the self: *tatemae* (public statement) and *honne* (private views); *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside); *omote* (society) and *ura* (individual). He states: "The dual structure constituted by *tatemae* and *honne* fulfills a major role in maintaining psychic balance. We could even describe it as the sense of balance itself." (45) Doi also points out the significance of secrets as a key to maintaining psychic balance:

...schizophrenics develop delusions-- which themselves can be interpreted as the forms taken by a schizophrenic's secrets that he or she is unable to hold inside--precisely because they are unable to distinguish between *omote* and *ura*, or to make proper use of *honne* and *tatemae*. (17)

Joji, at least at the beginning, maintains the balance by keeping his private life secret. As the balance slips away, his ability to distinguish between the two worlds fades with it.

The diminishing of the distance between reality and fantasy progresses through two stages. In the first stage, reality has the stronger hold over Joji, leading to an inevitable degradation of both his fantasy and Naomi. In the second stage, fantasy eclipses reality, which leads Joji to become the "*Chijin*" (fool) of the novel's title, who loses psychic balance and yields control to Naomi.

⁵For the sources of quotes and background information concerning the Miyazaki case, see "Police Find a Severed Head in Okutama, Say Suspect Admits Killing 5-year-old Child," *Japan Times*, Aug. 11, 1989, p.1; "Police Take Miyazaki to Koto Ward and Charge Him with Girl's Slaying," *Japan Times*, Aug. 12, 1989, p.2; "Horror Video May Have Led to Murder of 5-year-old girl," *Japan Times*, Aug. 15, 1989, p.2; "Murder Suspect Reportedly Blames His Actions on Necrophilic Desire," *Japan Times*, Aug. 20, 1989, p.2; "Copier and Word Processor Seized in Second Search of Miyazaki Home," *Japan Times*, Aug. 22, 1989, p.2; and "Miyazaki Says He Videotaped Ayako after Abducting Her," *Japan Times*, Aug. 23, 1989, p.2.

The process begins when Joji brings Naomi into the open. In doing so, Joji loses the pleasure of secrecy. Doi has pointed out the significance of secrets in adding color to monotonous ordinary life: "...people will go to extreme length to create secrets when they can no longer sense an air of secrecy in their surroundings. Without secrets, life is dull."(125-126) At the beginning, Joji conceals his life with Naomi and believes that none of his co-workers knows of their relationship:

I thought it unlikely that anyone at work knew of my dissipation. My life was sharply divided between home and office. It's true that Naomi's image hovered in my mind while I was working, but not enough to interfere with my performance, let alone attract attention. I was sure that my colleagues still saw me as a gentleman.(NM.113, TJZ.144)

One day, however, he is asked by his colleagues about Naomi and his relationship with her, and told that "she's been playing fast and free with some Keio students"(NM.115, TJZ.147). He is shocked not only by the rumors about Naomi but also by the exposure of his secret.

Exposing Naomi to the light also degrades the quality of Joji's fantasy. Naomi can function as an ideal beauty for Joji only in his fantasy world, in his fairy-tale house. She is actually no more than a substitute for a Western woman, movie actress or lady. Earlier, Joji's ultimate ideal had been to live in the West and marry a Western woman. Financial limitations and an inferiority complex about his looks forced him to give up his dream, and instead, he tries to make a copy of the West and of a Western lady or actress, in the form of his fairy-tale house and Naomi. Unfortunately, this means that once she is exposed to reality and compared to the real thing, her deficiencies become obvious and her value is lessened. When Joji meets Shlemskaya, a Russian countess and his dance teacher, for example, he realizes that there is an unbridgeable gap between them, a gap that only proclaims Naomi's inferiority to a real Westerner;

When Madame Shlemskaya presented her white hand, my heart skipped a beat and hesitated, uncertain whether it was all right to take it. Naomi's

hands were elegant, too--graceful and sleek, with long, slender fingers. But the countess's white hand was both sturdy and lovely: the palm was thick and fleshy, not fragile like Naomi's; and the fingers, while long and supple, didn't give the impression of being weak and thin. ... What set her apart from Naomi most of all was the extraordinary whiteness of her skin. Her pale lavender veins, faintly visible beneath the white surface like speckles on marble, were weirdly beautiful. I'd often complimented Naomi on her hands as I toyed with them. "What exquisite hands you have. As white as a Westerner's." But now, to my regret, I could see that there was a difference. Naomi's hands weren't a vivid white--indeed, seen after the countess's hand, her skin looked murky...(NM.68, TJZ.83-84)

Naomi's inferiority can also be seen vividly in the comparison with Kirako, an actress of the Imperial Theater, When Joji meets and dances with Kirako, he is eventually led to compare her elegance with Naomi's coarseness:

Her movements, as one would expect of an actress, had none of Naomi's roughness. Naomi exceeded the bounds of mere liveliness: she was too rough in everything she did. Her speech, supercilious and lacking in feminine gentleness, was often vulgar. In short, she was a wild animal, whereas Kirako was refined in every way... Neither the smoothness of her skin nor the warmth of her complexion were inferior to Naomi, and I don't know how many times my eyes moved back and forth between the two pairs of hands resting on the table. But their faces are very different--if Naomi was Mary Pickford, a *Yankee girl*, then the other was a subtle beauty from Italy or France, graceful and vaguely flirtatious. If they'd been flowers, Naomi would have bloomed in a field, Kirako indoors.(NM.92, TJZ.117)

Similarly, in the train, Joji is struck by the difference between those who belong to the higher classes of society and Naomi's lower class origins:

The train was full of women and girls headed for Zushi and Kamakura, sitting in resplendent rows. In their midst, Naomi's outfit, to me at least, looked wretched. As it was summer, of course the women couldn't have been particularly dressed up. But when I compared them to Naomi, I sensed an unmistakable difference in refinement between those who are born to the higher classes of society and those who aren't. Though Naomi seemed to have become a different person from the cafe girl she'd been, there's no concealing bad birth and breeding.(NM.26, TJZ.31)

The blurring of the distinction between the two worlds can also be seen in the sharp contrast between Joji's two different opinions about marriage. When he starts his life with Naomi, he holds "rather advanced, sophisticated ideas about marriage"

(NM.6,TJZ.7):

...to make friends with a young girl and observe her development, day by day while we lived a cheerful, playful life in our house--that, it seemed to me, would have a special appeal, quite different from that of setting up a proper household. In short, Naomi and I would play house, like children. It would be a relaxed, simple life, not the tiresome existence associated with "maintaining a household." This was my desire. The "household" in modern Japan requires that every cabinet, brazier, and cushion be in its proper place; the chores of husband, wife, and maid are fastidiously distinguished; hard-to-please neighbors and relatives must be humored. None of this is pleasant or beneficial to a young office worker, ... (NM.7-8, TJZ.8)

Avoiding the conventional way of maintaining a household, Joji aims at setting his life with Naomi apart from boring, mundane reality. After he finds out that she is free with other men, however, he tries to remake their life as a conventional, ordinary one: first, he asks Naomi to have a child, and then tries to move out of their "fairy-tale house":

If Naomi wouldn't agree to have a child, I had another resource. We'd move out of the "fairy-tale house" at Omori and set up a more sedate, sensible household. I'd lived in our strange, impractical artist's atelier because I was drawn to it by the alluring idea of the *simple life*; but there was no doubt that the house had contributed to making our lives disorderly. It was inevitable that a young couple living without a maid in such a house would get selfish, abandon the simple life, and fall into careless ways. To keep an eye on Naomi while I was out, I'd hire a maid and a cook. No more "Culture Homes"--we'd move to a pure, Japanese-style house, suitable for a middle-class gentleman and just large enough for a husband, wife, and two servants. I'd sell the Western furniture we'd been using and buy Japanese-style furniture instead. (NM.166, TJZ.213)

His new idea about marriage is quite the opposite of his previous opinion: it is what he had called and avoided as "the tiresome existence associated with maintaining a household". "Fairy-tale house", simple life, Western furniture are all signs of his fantasy, and

now he tries to give them up. Abandoning his fantasy, he tries to reconstruct his life as a more conventional one, one more attached to reality. He gives up trying to maintain two worlds: instead he decides to live in the one--reality.

While reality is still stronger than fantasy, Joji is able to maintain psychological balance even though he is disillusioned. When fantasy triumphs over reality, he loses his grip.

The process by which fantasy comes to win out over reality can also be seen in the context of another set of worlds: those of Joji's mother and Naomi. In the same way that Joji separates his public (office) self from his private (fairy-tale house) self, he also separates himself as his mother's son from his life obsessed with Naomi. His mother's world represents reality, and Naomi's, fantasy. While he is able to keep these two worlds separate, Joji maintains some sort of balance between reality and fantasy.

The two worlds are geographically distant: his home town is Utsunomiya, Tochigi prefecture, in the countryside of Japan, while his fairy-tale house is located in Tokyo. More than this, however, separates the two worlds. The mother's world is virtue, morality, tradition and spirituality; Naomi's vice, immorality, modernity and physicality. Though Joji's mother does not make a first-person appearance in the text, her presence is overwhelming and all the more so for the sharp contrast between her and Naomi. She functions as a restraint preventing Joji from becoming lost in his fantasy, reminding him of morality and attaching him to reality. When he asks for support from his mother because of Naomi's extravagance, for example, he feels guilt and gratitude:

I wrote for the first time to ask my mother for money. I remember writing, "...the rise in prices over the past two or three years has been astonishing, and though we are by no means extravagant, we are pressed by our monthly expenses. City life is not easy..." It frightened me that I'd grown reckless enough to lie so skillfully to my own mother. But Mother not only trusted me; she showed her affection for Naomi, too, in the reply that came two or three days later. "Buy a kimono for Naomi," she wrote, enclosing a draft that was for one hundred yen more than I'd requested.(NM.78-79, TJZ.98-99)

Joji's sense of guilt toward his mother grows when he is disappointed by Naomi's vulgar behavior at a dance party, an event for which he has to ask for money from his mother to buy her clothes. "Did I deceive my mother, fight with my wife, and wear myself out crying and laughing just for this stupid dance party?"; " ...It's my mother's punishment, I thought. No good comes of cheating your mother to have fun."(NM.101,103, TJZ.129,131)

Joji's combined gratitude and guilt toward his mother culminate in her passing away. It is worth noting that her death coincides with his separation from Naomi: his grief at the former is superimposed on the loneliness and disappointment of the latter. Left all alone, he feels a strong affection and psychological attachment for his mother:

Since I'd lost my father when I was very young and been raised single-handedly by my mother, this was the first time I experienced the sadness of losing a parent. It was all the worse because my mother and I had been closer than most. I couldn't recall ever having disobeyed my mother or having been scolded by her. I suppose that this was because I respected her; but more important is that she was exceptionally thoughtful and kind. It often happens that when a son grows up, leaves home, and goes to the city, his parents worry about him and question his behavior. Sometimes the separation leads to estrangement. But even after I'd gone to Tokyo, my mother continued to trust me, understand my feelings, and wish me well. I had only two sisters. It must have made Mother lonely to let her only son go, but she prayed for my advancement and success without a single complaint. As a result, I felt her depth of kindness more strongly away from her than I had at her knee. She'd always listened cheerfully to my selfish requests, especially when I'd married Naomi; and each time she had, I'd thought tearfully of her warmheartedness.(NM.201-202, TJZ.256-257)

Her virtue and spiritual value is intensified by her death, which consequently leads him to examine just how he has come to be divided between her world and Naomi's world:

Until yesterday, I'd been crazed, body and soul, with Naomi's charms. Today I was kneeling before the deceased and offering incense. There seemed to be no connection between these two worlds of mine. "Which is the real I?" asked the voice that I heard when I examined myself, lost in tears of grief, sadness, and surprise. (NM.202, TJZ.257)

His great sorrow at his mother's death drives him back towards reality and away from his fantasy: "This great sadness cleansed me of the foul elements that had accumulated in my heart and body. Without it, I would probably still have been suffering the pain of lost love, unable to forget that loathsome slut."(NM.202, TJZ.257) He makes a decision to leave Tokyo and go back to his hometown. Nevertheless, it is at that very moment that the transformed Naomi reappears before him.

Her Westernized beauty shocks Joji, and he falls under her spell again. Hikaru Hosoe has pointed out that Naomi's image at her reappearance is reminiscent of the image of the mother in Tanizaki's earlier work *Haha o kouru ki* (*Longing for Mother*, 1919), which leads him to see Naomi as a reincarnation of Joji's dead mother. The following is the scene from *Haha o kouru ki* in which Hosoe finds a similarity to the image of Naomi:

She wears an old-fashioned hat made of plaited straw, the two sides sloping sharply down from a long-ridged peak, like the strolling musicians used to wear at New Year. She walks with her head lowered, exposing an astonishing white neck--the work of the moonlight overhead, perhaps; but only a young woman could have a neck this white. The wrist of her right hand, which slips out of her sleeve from time to time to grip the tuning pegs, is just as white. More than a hundred yards still separate us and I cannot even make out the pattern of her kimono; yet her wrist and neck stand out from this distance as prominently as the moonlit water glistening offshore. "Ah ha!" I say to myself. "Why, she's not human at all, but a fox that's turned itself into a woman!"(475)

As Hosoe points out, there is certainly some similarity between this scene and Naomi's reappearance: the astonishing whiteness of their skin, the way the two women wear hats, and the links with the fox. We should not forget, however, the sharp contrast between Naomi and Joji's mother, and Joji's division of self between Naomi's world and Mother's world. They are not identical. Therefore, the near-simultaneous occurrence of his mother's death and her reappearance indicates his final alienation from reality and devotion to fantasy. His mother's death has deprived him of the chance to go back to Mother's world

(reality), and the only way left for him is to remain in Naomi's world (fantasy). Naomi now has full control, and he has no option left but to obey her.

It is worth noting that at the end of the story, Naomi reinstates the distance between reality and fantasy. By making him do his business in Tokyo, Naomi restores public and private dimensions to Joji's life:

As I'd planned, I resigned from the company in Oimachi, disposed of my property in the country, and, with several former class mates, formed a limited partnership for the manufacture and sale of electrical machinery. I don't need to go to the office every day; my friends do most of the actual work, in return for my having made the biggest investment. But for some reason, Naomi doesn't like to have me in the house all the time, and consequently I make the rounds reluctantly once a day. I leave Yokohama for Tokyo at around eleven o'clock in the morning, show my face for two or three hours at the office in Kyobashi, and return home at about four o'clock. (NM.234-235, TJZ.299)

While Joji has a public and a private life again, their boundaries like everything else are controlled by Naomi and accord with her convenience. On these terms, tantamount to unconditional surrender on Joji's part, the balance between reality and fantasy is restored.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen, distance and control are intimately related throughout Joji and Naomi's relationship. The one who has the initiative in manipulating distance becomes the controller and the one who fails to maintain it is the controlled. The pleasure of distance in a relationship lies in its constant change within limits. Joji destroys this aesthetic of distance, whereas Naomi eventually masters it. *Chijin no ai* is a story of reversal of control in a male-female relationship, and at the same time, it reveals the dynamic aspects of an aesthetic of distance.

Is the reversal of control complete? Though Naomi transforms herself into an unattainable woman from Joji's standpoint, it is undeniable that she still conveys to readers the impression of being sleazy and vulgar, someone who can be bought for a

modest price. Naomi, while being unattainable for Joji, is at the same time no more than "a plaything" shared by several men. Hamada, one of her boyfriends tells Joji:

"...the truth is that no one takes her seriously any more. According to Kumagai, they all treat her as a plaything, and they've given her an unspeakable nickname. There's no telling how often you've been disgraced behind your back."(NM.193, TJZ.246)

She lacks all traces of a noble and sublime beauty, retaining a whorish tinge, even though she leads the sort of extravagant life that only upper class people would have been able to afford at that time. Besides, her social and financial status still depends on Joji. Without his support, Naomi can hardly hope to maintain her free-spending and free-loving lifestyle.

Because of this ultimate insecurity, Naomi's unattainability and her position as a controller can never be completely secure. This is the point that differentiates Naomi from Tanizaki's heroines in the works of his middle period. After *Chijin no ai*, Tanizaki's heroines are upper middle class or high society women, and he slowly shifts to more historical settings and classical writing styles (characterized by ambiguous description). With these he is able to create an absolute unattainable beauty out of reach of male protagonists as well as readers. In the next chapter, we will examine one of the most representative of those works, *Shunkinsho*.

Chapter 2

Shunkinsho (The Story of Shunkin): The Aesthetics of Shadows

Chijin no ai is often considered a turning point: many critics point out that it is the last work where Tanizaki displays his admiration of the West. After this novel, his thematic concerns gradually undergo a "Return to Tradition" (*koten kaiki*).

Tanizaki's appreciation of Japanese traditional beauty is best described in his essay *In'ei raisan (In Praise of Shadows)*, written in 1933, in which he insists that the highest form of beauty in Japanese culture lies in shadow and darkness. In this essay, he expresses his admiration for such beauty in Japanese traditional culture whether expressed in architecture, clothing, food, tableware, jewelry, theatrical arts, or in traditional views of female beauty:

...we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the pattern of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates. A phosphorescent jewel gives off its glow and color in the dark and loses its beauty in the light of day. Were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty. Our ancestors made of woman an object inseparable from darkness, like lacquerware decorated in gold or mother-of-pearl. They hid as much of her as they could in shadows, concealing her arms and legs in the folds of long sleeves and skirts, so that one part and one only stood out--her face.(IPS.30, TJZ.546)¹

Darkness is an indispensable element of the beauty of lacquerware. ... Its florid patterns recede into darkness, conjuring in their stead an inexpressible aura of depth and mystery, of overtones but partly suggested.(IPS.13-14, TJZ.529-530)

What he ultimately finds in this beauty of shadows is its mysterious power of suggestion which stimulates the viewers' imagination. This aesthetics of shadow is another

¹Quatations are taken from *In Praise of Shadows* (IPS) translated by Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker. Page numbers of original text are taken from *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu* (TJZ).

manifestation of Tanizaki's aesthetic of distance, for in shadow or darkness there is a distance in which the viewer (or reader) perceives beauty.

The essay ends with Tanizaki's declaration that he would like to summon once again, through the art of fiction, the world of shadows that was rapidly disappearing with the modernization of Japan:

I would call back at least for literature this world of shadows we are losing. In the mansion called literature I would have the eaves deep and the walls dark, I would push back into the shadows the things that come forward too clearly, I would strip away the useless decoration(IPS.42, TJZ.557).

Tanizaki did what he declared in this partial last passage from the essay. *Shunkinsho*, published in the same year as *In'ei raisan*, is one of the most masterful works where he applies this aesthetic of shadows.

Shunkinsho is told by a first-person narrator (researcher) who happened to acquire a document called "A Biography of Shunkin". Based on this biography and other resources, the narrator tells us the story of Shunkin, a beautiful and arrogant blind music master, and her relation to Sasuke, her servant and student, as well as lover, who adores her beauty and talent, and devotes his life to serve her.

Shunkin, or Mozuya Koto, is the daughter of a wealthy merchant family in Osaka. She is a beautiful girl and a gifted musician. When she is nine, she becomes blind. Sasuke, later known as Kengyo (music master), is apprenticed to Mozuya at age thirteen, just after she loses her sight. At the age of fourteen, he is given the task of guiding her to music school. She treats him in an arrogant and selfish manner, but he always serves her with loyalty and devotion. Shunkin soon begins to teach koto and samisen to Sasuke, who gradually had developed an interest in music while guiding her to music school. She is strict with Sasuke to the point that her manner is sometimes sadistic, but Sasuke, who worships her beauty and talent, is patient and obedient. Given the difficulty of finding a husband of the right social standing, Shunkin's parents regard Sasuke as the best possible

choice. When they broach the subject, however, proud Shunkin flatly refuses. One year later, her mother finds out that Shunkin is pregnant. Although they both deny it, the father of the baby is, evidently by its features, Sasuke. Shunkin shows no affection for the baby and it is adopted out. Though their relationship becomes an open secret, they still protest their innocence whenever her parents try to unite them. At age twenty, at her parents' suggestion, Shunkin leaves her family home, accompanied by Sasuke, in order to open a private music school of her own. They are now living together, but her treatment of Sasuke remains unchanged. They still maintain their relationship as mistress-servant and teacher-student. When Shunkin is thirty seven, an intruder pours boiling water in her face, causing a severe injury. Understanding Shunkin's dread of being seen disfigured, Sasuke blinds himself with a needle so that he can keep her command never to look at her face. Even afterward, Sasuke serves and looks after Shunkin, until her death at age fifty-seven. After her death, Sasuke lives with the memory of Shunkin without remarrying, until he dies at age eighty three.

Shunkinsho was published eight years after *Chijin no ai*. As we have seen in the first chapter, distance in *Chijin no ai* is dynamic: the distance between male and female protagonist increases and decreases. What differentiates *Shunkinsho* from *Chijin no ai* is that, in this later work, distance is static. Tanizaki makes his heroine Shunkin a completely unattainable beauty, a condition which Naomi failed to achieve. Between Shunkin and Sasuke, there always lies an unbridgeable distance. Furthermore, the historical setting Tanizaki employs in this work is another dimension of his aesthetic of distance: it creates temporal distance between text and readers, and consequently removes them from their own realities. He also employs his aesthetic of distance as a narrative strategy. By providing his readers with limited information, he leaves room for imagination.

In this chapter, we will discuss how Tanizaki applies his aesthetics of shadows in *Shunkinsho*. First, we will examine the distance between Shunkin and Sasuke. Shunkin's

blindness (a significant element in creating her peculiar, distant charm) will also be discussed. Next, we will show how Tanizaki applies his aesthetic of distance in relation to his readers by employing a historical setting and particular narrative strategies. Finally, we will focus on Sasuke's action of making himself blind which accomplishes an eternal preservation of distance between him and Shunkin.

1. Distance between Shunkin and Sasuke

There are several factors which separate Shunkin from Sasuke: her social status, their relationship as teacher-pupil, her refusal to become wife/mother, and her blindness. Like most of Tanizaki's heroines in his middle period, Shunkin is an upper class woman: she is the daughter of a wealthy, long-established merchant family. For Sasuke, she is "the daughter of the house which had been served by his family since the time of his grandfather"(TSS.87, TJZ.504)². Their relationship as mistress and servant is unbreakable because it is based on this generations-old connection, and because in earlier days social class was strictly demarcated by the feudal system. Shunkin appeals to Sasuke when they meet for the first time:

As for the daughters of wealthy merchants at the end of Tokugawa Era, girls who were brought up in the seclusion of inner rooms and never exposed themselves to the rays of the sun--how much more remarkable were the transparent whiteness and the subtle tints of their skin! And marvelous and ravishing their complexions appeared in the eyes of a country boy like Sasuke! ... to the boy fresh from the country, they all had a loveliness which was not to be met with in the provinces. But most of all it was the unearthly beauty of blind Shunkin that so captivated him. It seemed to him that Shunkin's veiled eyelids had more charm and grace than the open eyes of her sisters, ...(TSS.86, TJZ.504-505)

²All quotations are taken from *The Story of Shunkin* (TSS) translated by Roy Humpherson and Hajime Okita. Page number of original text are taken from *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu* (TJZ).

Later on, when she volunteers to teach him the samisen, they establish a new relationship as teacher and pupil which further confirms the distance between them.

By Shunkin's refusal to admit Sasuke as her husband, the distance between them is maintained. When her mother finds out that she is pregnant and asks if the father of her child is Sasuke, Shunkin stubbornly denies it: "No, no! An apprentice like that!" she retorted scornfully. "(TSS.112, TJZ.520); "...such a man as Sasuke is utterly out of the question....blind though I may be, I have no wish to submit to the humiliation of having an apprentice for a husband--sorry as I am for the father of the child in my womb"(TSS.114, TJZ.521). Despite the fact that her baby's face and that of Sasuke are "as like as two peas" (TSS.114, TJZ.522), she never changes her attitude and even scolds him: "Is it possible that you have said anything to rouse my parents' suspicions, Sasuke--don't I greatly fear you have. If you know any way to do so, be good enough to convince them of your innocence beyond all shadow of doubt."(TSS.115, TJZ.522) In response, Sasuke also denies their relationship: "How could I think of such a thing? I--who owe you nothing but gratitude since the time of my boyhood--how could I dream of such a betrayal?"(TSS.115, TJZ.522)

Not only does Shunkin deny her relationship with Sasuke, she also says of the baby: " 'Give it to anyone you like, ... As I intend to live a single life, it will only be a nuisance to me.' "(TSS.115, TJZ.522) These refusals preserve the distance between them: their relationship as mistress and servant, and as teacher and pupil remains unchanged. If they became husband and wife, the distance between them would be reduced: their relationship would be no more than that of an ordinary couple. Their behavior also preserves their detachment from mundane reality.

Their relationship as mistress-servant, teacher-student is continued even after their death. The story starts with the narrator's visit to their tombs, and in the size and position of their tombstones, he sees an unaltered relationship between them:

Measuring the stones by eye, I estimated that Shunkin's was about six feet high, and that of the *Kengyo* [Sasuke] less than four. They stood side by side on stone plinths, and a pine tree planted to the right of Koto [Shunkin]'s grave stretched its green leaves to form a canopy above her tomb. Two or three feet to the left, where the branches failed to reach, was the *Kengyo*'s stone, as though in humble attendance on hers. (TSS.74-75, TJZ.497)

The last and perhaps the most important factor which distances Shunkin from Sasuke as well as from the reader is her blindness, which will be the focus of the next section.

2. Shunkin' s Beauty as a Blind Woman

Shunkin's blindness does not detract from her beauty; rather it reinforces it: "[Sasuke] could not perceive the slightest blemish in her features; from the very first they seemed flawless and harmonious." (TSS.85, TJZ.504) How, then, does her blindness function as an aspect of her beauty? Donald Keene, in his *in Appreciation of Japanese Culture*, points out that one of the important elements of Japanese aesthetics is suggestion: the implied or the unspoken are sources of literary beauty. In order to support his argument, Keene provides an example from a famous passage in *Essays in Idleness* by Kenko (1283-1350):

Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring--these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration (17).

Keene then compares a Western aesthetic of perfection to the Japanese aesthetic of imperfection:

A more common Western conception is that of the climax, the terrible moment when Laocoon and his sons are caught in the serpent's embrace, or the ecstatic moment when the soprano hits high C; but for Kenko the climax is less interesting than the beginnings and ends, for it left nothing

to be imagined. The full moon or the cherry blossoms at their peak do not suggest the crescent or the buds, though the crescent and buds (or the waning moon and the strewn flowers) do suggest the full moon and full flowering. Perfection, like some inviolable sphere, repels the imagination, allowing it no room to penetrate. Basho's only poem about Mount Fuji describes a day when fog prevented him from seeing the peak. Beginnings that suggest what is to come, or ends that suggest what has been, allow the imagination room to expand beyond the literal facts to the limits of the capacities of the reader of a poem, the spectator at a No play, or the connoisseur of a monochrome painting (17).

Keene's argument on the Japanese aesthetic of suggestion seems to provide us with part of the explanation as to why Shunkin's blindness enhances her beauty. By making her blind, Tanizaki creates in her an imperfect beauty so that he can leave room for the reader's imagination.

Furthermore, her blindness provides her with two contradictory images, the religious and the erotic. First, Tanizaki compares her to Buddha:

We who are familiar with the half-closed eyes of Buddha, which are believed to gaze with mercy on all men, are apt to find more pity and benevolence in closed eyes than in open ones; sometimes they even strike us with awe. And so it may be that we find something akin to mercy in Shunkin's sealed eyelids--especially as her looks were exceedingly gentle--such as we feel when we worship a picture of the Goddess of Mercy, painted in olden times (TSS.78, TJZ.499).

With a divine beauty provided by Tanizaki, Shunkin becomes sacred and inviolable. Paradoxically, her blindness also stimulates erotic curiosity. She is presented as an alien to ordinary people and her mysterious life style excites the curiosity both of people around her and of readers. By describing others' voyeuristic interest in Shunkin, Tanizaki stimulates the reader's erotic fantasy as well: "The Mozuya employees are said often to have whispered amongst themselves: 'How does proud Koisan make love to Sasuke-don? How we should like to overhear her in secret!' " (TSS.117-118, TJZ.524) Similarly, Tanizaki directly stimulates the reader's voyeurism:

Readers, how do you imagine the blind man washed the blind woman?... This world in which the sightless man and woman moved and loved, finding their pleasure in the sense of touch, is beyond the power of our imagination.(TSS.161,TJZ.551)

3. Distance and the Reader

We also can see Tanizaki's aesthetics of distance in his rhetorical strategies: historical setting, multiple narrators, and ambiguous description. The historical setting creates temporal distance while multiple narrators and ambiguous description create a psychological distance which stimulates the reader's imagination. All of these rhetorical devices make readers feel as if they are viewing this fictional world through a gauzy mist, at a distance.

Shunkinsho starts with the narrator's visit to the tombs of Shunkin and Sasuke in Osaka. Standing on the hill where their tombs are located, the narrator looks down on Osaka and compares it with the city of the past:

...I looked down on the great city of Osaka which spread below my feet. Facing west, the hill extends some distance towards Tennoji; no doubt the configuration of this high ground has changed but little since Osaka was known by its ancient name of Naniwazu. Today, the foliage of the trees and the leaves of the grasses are smirched with soot and smoke, and present no lively colors; the great trees, withered and laden with dust, are robbed of all their beauty. But when these stones were first set up, this must have been a scene of verdant loveliness; even now it is the most tranquil burial ground in the city, besides commanding a wonderful view. Teacher and Pupil, who were under the influence of such a strange destiny, sleep on here forever in the evening mist, high above the chief industrial city of the Orient, with its innumerable clusters of tall buildings. Vast changes have overtaken Osaka since the *Kengyo's* day, but these two lonely stones still seem to stand as mute witnesses of the deep intimacy in which the teacher and pupil passed their lives (TSS.74, TJZ.496).

The tranquil beauty and eternity of the past is intensified by its contrast with present-day Osaka, changed and damaged by modernization. By contrasting past and present,

Tanizaki increases the readers' awareness of the distance in time between them and the story; this distance makes Tanizaki's fictional world somehow exotic, and remote from their reality.

This introductory part of the story ends with a sunset scene and the narration smoothly moves on to "*A Biography of Shunkin*": "I made obeisance on my knees at the tomb of Shunkin, and then, stroking the top of the *Kengyo's* [Sasuke's] stone with my hand, I wandered about on the hill until the sun sank out of sight over beyond the great city"(TSS.75, TJZ.497). The dim light of the dusk is used to great effect here. With the gradual darkening, one feels as if one is in a theatre as the lights go down; this feeling intensifies the sense of remoteness from ordinary reality. In the original text, the last sentence of this introductory part ends without a period, naturally leading the readers into the fictional world.

The use of multiple narrators is another strategy for creating distance between text and readers. There is basically one narrator of the story, but his narration is based on other resources, that is, "*A Biography of Shunkin*" composed by Sasuke; an interview with Teru Shigezawa; and interviews with the other students of Sasuke. In employing this multilayered discourse, Tanizaki deliberately creates ambiguity in the story. The narrator differentiates his standpoint from that of the "*Biography*" and shows his suspicions about its credibility: "...to what extent were they embellished by [Sasuke]?"(TSS.81, TJZ.501); "These words of Sasuke's can hardly be accepted as they stand, for it was his habit to praise her to skies [sic] and humble himself in the dust"(TSS.92, TJZ.508). Furthermore, the narrator's statements are often embedded with ambiguous expression such as; "...*to omowareru*"(It seems that...), "...*daroo*"(It is probably that...), and "...*kamoshirenai*"(It might be...). By employing this narrative style, Tanizaki avoids a definite statement; instead, he aims at creating vagueness, which, as we have said, does so much for the reader's imagination.

Tanizaki's aesthetics of distance is apparent, too, in his description of Shunkin's face. The features of her face are deliberately blurred. Her face, although exquisitely beautiful, is without individuality or any definite appeal:

Looking at a photograph of her which is said to have been taken when she was thirty-seven, and has been preserved to this day, I see an oval face, with a "melon-seed" contour, and tender little eyes and nose that seem to have been modelled by fairy fingers, and might vanish away at any moment. But the photograph was taken in the early years of Meiji or in Keio, so that here and there it is flecked with brown stains, and growing faint and vague, like a memory of long ago. This may partly account for the impression it made on me. Judging from the photograph alone, I found only that air of breeding which is usual amongst the women folk of wealthy Osaka merchants. It is a beautiful face, but there is no trace of a vivid personality, and the general effect it produces is very slight. As for her age, when I am told that she was thirty-seven I am quite prepared to believe it; on the other hand she might equally well have been twenty-seven or twenty-eight.(TSS.77, TJZ.498)

The description of Shunkin's face contrasts sharply with that of Naomi, in which Tanizaki is concerned with every aspect of her features. Naomi's face is compared to Mary Pickford and the features of her face and body are described in detail:

...a striking characteristic of Naomi's frame was that her trunk was short and her legs long, so that from a distance she looked much taller than she was. Her short trunk tapered to a wonderfully slim waist, then swelled into richly feminine hips. ... As she stood with her thighs together, her legs, so straight there was no space between them, formed a long triangle from her hips to her ankles.... Another distinctive feature of her body was the line from her neck to her shoulders. ...Normally person like Naomi. with sloping shoulders and a thin neck, is rather thin; but she had surprisingly full shoulders and a thick chest that suggested strong lungs.(NM.29, TJZ.34-36).

The fearfully long slits of her eyes; the nose, as prominent as a splendid building; the two lines rising sharply between her nose and mouth; and beneath the lines, the richly, deeply chiseled, red lips. This was the miraculous matter known as "Naomi's face," the matter that was the cause of my lust (NM.228, TJZ.291).

By providing a detailed description of her face and body, Tanizaki gives readers a vivid image of Naomi: we are easily able to picture her face and figure. By contrast, the limited description of Shunkin's face gives us an ambiguous image which once again acts forcefully on the imagination. After describing Shunkin's face, Tanizaki poses a question to his readers:

...what kind of vision has taken shape in my readers' minds? Perhaps a dim and inadequate one. But even if they were to examine the photograph with their own eyes I doubt whether it would be any clearer; indeed, the photograph itself might actually be vaguer than the picture in their minds (TSS.78, TJZ.499).

If Naomi is "an object to be seen and possessed", Shunkin is "an object to be imagined".

Jean-Paul Sartre in *The Psychology of Imagination* draws the distinction between imagining and perceiving in relation to the concept of distance:

...we are aesthetically distanced when we are imaginatively experiencing the image as opposed to when we are perceiving the real. ...the aesthetic experience occurs only when perception ceases, when the viewer shifts from the perceptual attitude of consciousness to the imaginative.³

Shunkin is a rich resource for the imagination; an "aesthetic experience". As "an object to be imagined", she is consequently, an aesthetic object.

In all of this, Tanizaki creates a distant world in faint outline, or, as he calls it, the "world of shadows" (IPS.42, TJZ.557). This fictional world conveys a drowsy, dream-like state as if the distinction between reality and illusion was unclear. This is quite similar to the sensation that we have when we are looking at or listening to Impressionist artists such as Monet, Pissarro or Debussy. In fact, Tanizaki's world shares some essential aspects with that of the impressionists. By employing the effect of light and shade, they aim at "suggesting reality", as Tanizaki does. In *Literary Impressionism*, Maria Elisabeth

³For Sartre's argument, see Daphna Ben Chain's *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetics of Audience Response* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984) p.14-15.

Kronegger quotes Mallarme's famous statement: " To name an object is to sacrifice three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which comes from the guessing bit by bit. To suggest it, that is our dream." (70). With the power of suggestion, Impressionist artists create a new vision of reality.

The beauty Tanizaki finds in shadows is the power of suggestion which stimulates viewer's (reader's) imaginations, consequently leading to multiple interpretations of the world and reality, according to their individual sensations and emotions. His appreciation of shadows (the aesthetic of distance) is, to put it another way, his affirmation of the human power of imagination.

4. Sasuke as a Manipulator of Distance: Shunkin as an Aesthetic Object

As we have observed, Shunkin is depicted as a distant and unattainable beauty for both Sasuke and readers. What does this say about her as a manipulator of distance? Though, as an arrogant and proud mistress/teacher, she tries to keep a certain distance from Sasuke, her unattainability is mainly due to factors not of her making -- social status, blindness, and Sasuke's action to preserve distance between them. In fact, Sasuke is the one who controls distance. In his action of blinding himself, we can acutely see the strength of his position, for this act preserves forever the distance between the two. His action freezes in time Shunkin's beauty as well as the past (their relationship as mistress-servant, teacher-pupil). After he becomes blind, he says to Shunkin:

"Teacher, teacher, I cannot see your changed face. All I see is the dear face whose every feature has been pictured in my heart for the past thirty years. Unfortunately, as I have become blind so suddenly, I cannot move about as I could wish, and in waiting on you I may be slow and unsteady. But I don't want to borrow the hands of strangers, at least not for services about your person." (TSS.158, TJZ.549)

He does not marry her. This time, it is not because of her pride, but due to his will:

Shunkin now bore herself with an unwonted meekness; but he for his part was grieved to see her brought so low. He could not conceive of her as an unhappy creature, or a woman to be pitied. In a word, blind Sasuke turned his back on reality, and abandoned himself to the world of the spirit where change is unknown and values are constant. All that remained to him now was the memory of the past. If Shunkin's character had been changed by her misfortune, she would not have been the woman he knew. In his mind there always dwelt the arrogant Shunkin of old; bereft of her arrogance, her beauty for him would have faded. Thus to Sasuke himself, rather than Shunkin, may be ascribed the fact that no marriage took place. (TSS.162-163, TJZ.552)

By depriving himself of sight, he remakes Shunkin from an object to be seen to an object to be imagined. She is now "the woman of his imagination" (TSS.163, TJZ.552) where she appears in the form of Buddha:

With his failing sight, he could not clearly distinguish the appearance of the room or the figure of Shunkin; only her face, swathed in bandages, was reflected as something white and vague on the retina of his eyes. But to him they did not appear to be bandages. As a sphere of dull light, like the form of Buddha welcoming the souls of the dying, there loomed before his eyes, harmonious and subtle, the white face of the teacher that he had gazed on with adoration until two months ago. (TSS.157, TJZ.548)

As we saw in the previous section, in Sartre's view, the aesthetic experience "involves a radical shift from perceiving to imaging" (15). Shunkin, as purely a product of Sasuke's imagination (devoid of perception), is now elevated to a high level of aesthetic experience for him.

5. Conclusion

We have discussed how Tanizaki applies his aesthetic of shadows (distance) in *Shunkinsho* from four perspectives: distance between Shunkin and Sasuke; Shunkin's blindness; distance and the readers; and Sasuke as a manipulator of distance. With her social and cultural superiority, Shunkin is a distant and unattainable beauty. In particular, her blindness provides her with a peculiar charm not only for Sasuke but also for readers,

for it engages the viewer's imagination. Tanizaki also applies his aesthetic of distance in his rhetorical strategies (historical setting, multiple narrators and ambiguous description). With these devices, he successfully creates the world of shadows, distanced from readers, and stimulating them further. What Tanizaki finds in the beauty of shadows and distance is the power of imagination. Shunkin, as an object to be imagined, embodies his aesthetic of distance. However, within the text, she does not appear as one who controls distance; it is, in fact, Sasuke who succeeds in controlling distance between them. His action of blinding himself fixes an eternal distance.

Through the fictional world of *Shunkinsho* and in the creation of Shunkin, Tanizaki accomplishes his aesthetic of distance. He is not content to stop at this, however. He sets himself another task, that is, to exercise his aesthetic of distance in a contemporary setting and in the form of a woman from the lower class. Here he abandons the power of historical setting and social status. In the next chapter, we will see this enthusiastically pursued, in *Futen rojin nikki*, his last and most ambitious experiment.

Chapter 3

Futen rojin nikki (A Diary of a Mad Old Man): Pleasure of Distance

Futen rojin nikki (1961), Tanizaki's last masterpiece, is a work which is distinct in its features from *Shunkinsho*. As we have discussed in the second chapter, his middle period works are characterized by his appreciation of beauty in shadow that he finds in Japanese traditional culture. By borrowing historical setting and providing his heroines with social status, as we have seen in *Shunkinsho*, he exercises his aesthetics of distance in his total fictional worlds as well as in the description of women. *Futen rojin nikki*, with its contemporary setting, is different from these works. It shows unmistakable similarities to *Chijin no ai* (1924), in setting, motif and characterization.

Futen rojin nikki is, as the title indicates, a diary written by an ailing old man of seventy-seven, Utsugi Tokusuke. The bulk of the novel is composed of his diary, with the addition of three extracts from his nurse's report, his doctor's record, and his daughter's notes. It starts with an entry dated 16 June 1960 and breaks off with one on November 18th of the same year. He is living with his wife and his son's family in Azabu, an affluent district in Tokyo. The Utsugi family leads a luxurious life mainly derived from his income from real estate and stock dividends. He is physically very sick, besieged with high blood pressure, neuralgia, trouble walking, and impotence. Despite it all, however, he still "cannot help feeling attracted to the opposite sex" (DMOM.18, TJZ.17)¹, and looks for "sexual stimulation in all kinds of distorted, indirect ways" (DMOM.18, TJZ.18). He is attracted to his daughter-in-law Satsuko (a former chorus girl), who is "a bit spiteful", "a bit sarcastic" and "a bit of liar" (DMOM.28, TJZ.26-27). He cannot stop enjoying "erotic thriller" with her (where he is allowed to touch and kiss certain parts of

¹All quotations are taken from *Diary of Mad Old Man* (DMOM) translated by Howard Hibbett. Page numbers of original text are taken from *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*.

her body) even at the risk of soaring blood pressure and resulting pain in his arm. His erotic obsession with her is such that he does not hesitate to buy a three million yen cat's-eye in return for getting permission to kiss her neck. Moreover, he intends to have his tombstone carved with a Buddha's Footprint modeled on her feet so that he "can sleep eternally under the image of [his] Satsuko Bodhisattva"(DMOM.147,TJZ.147). He goes to great length to make a print of her feet. After achieving the task, however, his diary breaks off due to his worsening health and the tombstone dream is unfulfilled.

In this chapter, we will examine how Tanizaki realizes his aesthetics of distance in this final masterpiece. First, we will examine distance between Utsugi and Satsuko. Second, we will discuss how Utsugi maintains distance between his private life and reality. Then we will focus on Satsuko's role as a manipulator of distance as well as supporter for and actor in Utsugi's fantasy. Finally, we will focus on Utsugi's perception of life and death as it relates to the overriding theme of the aesthetics of distance. In order to observe how Tanizaki fully develops his aesthetics of distance, comparison to *Chijin no ai* will be occasionally necessary.

1. Distance between Utsugi and Satsuko

There are several factors which separate Utsugi and Satsuko: their relationship as father-in-law and daughter-in-law, their ages, and Utsugi's sexual dysfunction. All of these factors create both physical and psychological distance between them. Utsugi is well aware of this and takes advantage of them in order to exercise the pleasure of distance.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, George Bataille points out that taboo is a source of erotic pleasure.(108) Satsuko, as his son's wife, is the object of his incestuous desire and consequently, the most suitable target to provide him erotic pleasure. Moreover, he tries to create more distance in the form of another layer of taboo

(voyeuristic pleasure) by encouraging Satsuko to have an affair with her husband's cousin Haruhisa:

"Even supposing--just supposing, mind you--that there was something between you and Haruhisa, I wouldn't be inclined to notice it." Satsuko gave me a dubious look, but didn't answer. "I wouldn't breathe a word of it to my wife or Jokichi. I'd keep your secret to myself." "Father, are you telling me to go ahead?" "Maybe I am." "You're out of your mind." "Maybe. Is this the first time you've realized how I feel, a bright girl like you?" "But where do you get such ideas?" "Now that I can't enjoy the thrill myself any more, I can at least have the pleasure of watching some one else risk a love affair. It's a pitiful thing when a man sinks that low." "So you get a little desperate, because you've lost all hope for yourself?" "And jealous too! You ought to feel sorry for me." "You're clever all right. I don't mind feeling sorry for you, but I refuse to be sacrificed for your pleasure!" "It's not much of a sacrifice-- won't you be getting your own pleasure out of it? And won't yours far exceed mine? A man in my condition is really to be pitied!" "Careful, or you get another slap!" "Let's not try to deceive each other. Of course it doesn't have to be Haruhisa. Amari or anyone would do." (DMOM. 58-59, TJZ.58-59)

Utsugi's attitude contrasts with that of Joji. Unlike Joji, who is tortured by jealousy with Naomi's love affairs, Utsugi utilizes it for his own pleasure. While Joji tries to possess Naomi, Utsugi increases the distance by pushing Satsuko onto someone else with a resulting intensification of his erotic pleasure.

The difference in age is another important factor in distancing Utsugi and Satsuko just as it was for Joji and Naomi. Compared to the latter couple in which the gap is thirteen years, the difference in the former is much larger and unbridgeable: Utsugi is seventy-seven and Satsuko is in her early thirties. More than forty years difference engenders contrast between them: the beauty and the ugliness; and life and death. Utsugi knows his ugliness and takes advantage of it rather than lamenting it:

I know very well that I am an ugly, wrinkled old man. When I look in the mirror at bedtime after taking out my false teeth, the face I see is really weird. I don't have a tooth of my own in either jaw. I hardly even have gums. If I clamp my mouth shut, my lips flatten together and my nose hangs down to my chin. It astonishes me to think that this is my own face.

Not even monkeys have such hideous faces. How could anyone with a face like this ever hope to appeal to a woman? Still, there is a certain advantage in the fact that it puts people off guard, convinces them that you are an old man who knows he can't claim that sort of favor. (DMOM.18,TJZ.18)

He takes advantage of this because it enhances Satsuko's beauty and unattainability. He even degrades himself in order to enjoy the distance between them:

Satsuko kept her eyes fixed steadily on that grotesque spectacle. "Your face doesn't bother me in the least!" she said, taking a mirror out of the night-table drawer. "But have you ever had a good look at yourself? Let me show you...See!" She held the mirror up to my face. "Well? What do you think?" "It's incredibly ugly." After looking at myself in the mirror, I looked at Satsuko. I could not believe that we were creatures of the same species. The uglier the face in the mirror, the more extraordinarily beautiful Satsuko seemed. If that ugly face were only uglier, I thought regretfully, Satsuko would look even more beautiful.(DMOM. 100-101, TJZ.101-102)

His self-degradation is also indicated in his desire to eat Satsuko's left overs:

"Father, would you like to finish this?" Satsuko's *hamo* was almost untouched. She had eaten only a slice or two of it, meaning to give the rest to me. To be honest, perhaps I went there last night with the expectation--or was it the object?--of getting her leftovers. "That's fine, but I gobbled mine up so fast they've already taken away my plum sauce." "I have some of that left too." Satsuko handed the sauce dish over to me along with the eel. "Or shall I order another one for you?" "Never mind. This will do." In spite of showing so little interest in the *hamo* Satsuko had smeared her plum sauce around untidily--not a very ladylike way of eating. Maybe she did it on purpose.(DMOM.10, TJZ.10-11)

He takes pleasure in eating her messy remains, reducing himself to animal level.

Age and infirmity allows him to take advantage of physical distance from Satsuko. Makoto Ueda points out that Utsugi's "eyesight and other faculties are considerably weaker than an average person's"(67) due to his age, and because of that, he cannot clearly perceive Satsuko thereby adding further distance between them. Furthermore, as we have said, he has difficulty in walking and cannot go to the second floor where his son and Satsuko's bedroom is located. Therefore, her private life is partly

concealed to him. This provides enjoyment rather than irritation. When he finds out that Satsuko stays with Haruhisa upstairs, for instance, he entertains himself by imagining their affair:

Both of them were "cooling off" upstairs--whether or not he took his shower alone. Since his clothes were lying in the dressing area, he must have changed into a bath kimono. We have a guest room on the second floor, of course, but I wondered where they were. It was natural enough to lend him a kimono; still, with my wife away and three downstairs rooms empty, it hardly seemed necessary to take him up there.(DMOM.56, TJZ.55)

The last and the most important physical condition caused by his age is perhaps his sexual inability which fixes an unbridgeable physical distance between them. He again takes full advantage of this condition instead of regretting it. He assumes that even an impotent old man has "a kind of sex life"(DMOM.5, TJZ.5): "I am sure I'll be like this until the moment of my death....I'm already completely impotent. Even so, I can enjoy sexual stimulation in all kinds of distorted, indirect ways."(DMOM.18, TJZ.18) Among Tanizaki's heroes, Utsugi is the only man depicted as impotent, and as a result, physical relationship between him and Satsuko can never be actualized. He is, however, ambitious and creative enough to give himself sexual pleasure. By encouraging Satsuko to have affairs with other men, he aims at creating voyeuristic pleasure, pleasure "at" a distance. "Erotic thriller", too, is a variation of pleasure of distance: he is allowed to touch and kiss only specific parts of Satsuko's body such as her neck, legs or feet. This reminds us of the scene in *Chijin no ai* in which Naomi tantalizes Joji by prohibiting him from kissing and touching her body. The difference between Joji and Utsugi, however, is that the former suffers from this tantalization whereas the latter tries to fully maximize every given opportunity. Joji, as a man with sexual ability, desires sexual gratification with Naomi, while impotent Utsugi takes pleasure in limitation. Consequently, Utsugi's impotence gives him the advantage of experiencing pleasure of distance.

The contrast between Satsuko and Utsugi also symbolizes life and death. Her youth and beauty are his life force. As he declares, he is "living for [sexual] pleasure, and for the pleasure of eating." (DMOM.18, TJZ.18) Satsuko, as the main source of his eroticism, gives him pleasure to life's fullest measure. Paradoxically, however, her sexual appeal brings him close to death. The more he is stimulated by her attraction, the higher his blood pressure becomes, leading to a life threatening condition. When he experiences "erotic thriller" with her, kissing and sucking her leg and foot, he feels that he is on the brink of death:

I dare say it was when I crammed her toes into my mouth that my blood pressure reached its height. Certainly my face burned and the blood rushed to my head, as if I might die of apoplexy that very instant. Dying! Long as I had been prepared for death, the thought of "dying" frightened me. I told myself that I *had* to calm down, that I mustn't let myself be excited, and yet I went on blindly sucking at her feet. I could not stop. No, the more I tried to stop, the more insanely I suckled--and all the while thought I was dying. Waves of terror, excitement, pleasure surged within me; pains as violent as a heart attack gripped my chest....That must have been more than two hours earlier, but my blood pressure had evidently remained high. (DMOM. 68, TJZ.67-68)

This is the very moment that he is conscious about the unbridgeable distance between them. Satsuko, as a symbol of life and eros, brings him life's risk. The more lively and erotic she is, the closer he gets to death. For Utsugi, life and death are intimately related. Of the precise nature of the link, we shall say more later.

Utsugi takes pleasure in the distance between himself and Satsuko, which contrasts with Joji's attitude toward Naomi. Similarly, unlike Joji, who fails to set his fantasy world apart from reality, Utsugi successfully detaches his private life from reality. In the next section, we will examine how he manages that.

2. Distance from Reality: Life as Theater

The other world motif (in which the character's private world is set apart from reality) is one of the important motifs that Tanizaki pursues, and among his many heroes and heroines, Utsugi is most successfully able to set his private life apart from reality. His ability to insulate his life from bothersome social and political reality is mainly due to his financial affluence. Real estate and stock dividends allow him to have limited contact with society.

With his wealth, he is, unlike most Japanese of the time, also able to alter his personal space to maximize privacy and enjoy his fantasy. He has his bedroom, bath, and lavatory remodeled to suit his physical condition and convenience. He describes the rooms in detail:

Until last summer my wife and I slept side by side in a Japanese-style room, but last year we replaced the mats with a wood floor and put in two beds. One is mine, and the other has become Nurse Sasaki's. Even before that my wife used to sleep alone in the sitting room now and then, and since remodeling we have regularly slept apart. I get up early and go to bed early, but my wife sleeps late and likes to stay up late at night too. Although I prefer a Western style toilet, she says that she has trouble unless it's the low Japanese style. And there were various other reasons to remodel, such as the convenience of the doctor and nurse. So our lavatory, the next room down the corridor to the right, was fitted with a chair-type water closet and reserved for my own use, and we cut a door in the wall between it and my bedroom. We also made substantial changes in the bath, which is on the other side of the bedroom: the new one was fully tiled, including the tub, and we even installed a shower. This was at Satsuko's request. We put in a door between the bath and the bedroom too, but if necessary you can lock the bathroom from inside. (DMOM.36-37, TJZ.35)

The arrangement of the rooms allows him to keep his privacy from the others in order to enjoy "erotic thriller" with Satsuko in the bath room. Moreover, he has another plan to build a new wing for himself and his wife for the express purpose of creating a perfect stage to enjoy "erotic thriller" with Satsuko:

Even without an addition our house is large enough to accommodate the whole family, but it is inconvenient for carrying out certain schemes of mine. In building a new wing for us, I planned to separate my bedroom and study as far as possible from my wife's bedroom and provide her with an adjoining lavatory. She was to have her own bathroom too, "for her convenience," a purely Japanese one with a wooden tub. My bath would be tiled and include a shower. ...My aim was to see that my wife stayed in her own room as much as possible, instead of wandering all around the house. (DMOM.75, TJZ.74-75)

His dream of constructing a new wing is not realized because he gives three million yen that he had set aside for building it to Satsuko with which she buys a cat's-eye. This episode, however, is convincing enough to prove that his financial situation allows him to create a perfect space to enjoy his fantasy and avoid all nuisance or distraction.

Furthermore, he shows disinterest in politics. There is a scene where he asks his driver to avoid encountering the demonstrations against the renewal of the United States-Japan Security Treaty, which is called "Japan's most serious postwar political crisis" (Ito 243):

"Nomura, do you think we can avoid the demonstration on the way?" "I think so, sir." According to our chauffeur, one faction of the Students' Federation was out today: it seems they had planned to gather at Hibiya Park at two o'clock and march toward the Diet Headquarters. We'd be all right if we stayed away from that part of town, he said. (DMOM.8, TJZ.8)

This conversation takes place in the car on his way from Kabuki theater to Hamasaku, a famous Japanese restaurant in Ginza. He does not want political events to intrude into his life. For him, life consists only of pleasant things.

The desire for distancing his private life from reality can also be seen in his fascination with Kabuki performance.² His fondness for the form and attraction to *oyama*

²Tanizaki himself is known as a kabuki fancier. Kafu Nagai in suggests influence of kabuki on his works. See "Tanizaki Jun'ichiro shi no sakuhin." *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro*. Gunzo. Nihon no sakka. Vol.8. (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1991) p.93-94.

(Kabuki actors of female roles) reveals his world view: he perceives life as theater which is set apart from reality.

His diary opens at a theatrical performance: he describes two occasions on which he goes to see the Kabuki theater. His main purpose is to see beautiful *oyama* Tossho playing Agemaki on the first occasion, and Koharu on the second. He apparently shows preference for the former. Though he does not describe in detail the story of the performances or characterization of the roles, his preference for Agemaki to Koharu reveals the essence of his aesthetics. Both Agemaki and Koharu are famous and popular characters in Kabuki stories. Although both of them are prostitutes in the pleasure district in Edo period, they are totally different in ranking; the former is *tayu*, the highest class of prostitute (highly respected and worshipped as an unattainable beauty); the latter is of the lower class (and finally commits suicide with her lover). Junko Saeki points out the significant difference between the high ranking prostitute and the lower one in relation to *iki* aesthetics.(126-129) The difference is in their understanding of it: high class prostitutes understand the significance of maintaining distance from men whereas lower class prostitutes do not. The pleasure district is set apart or detached from the real world, and the high class prostitutes working there are often worshipped as Kannon (the Goddess of Mercy) or Bodhisattva, and protected by a long-established code and set of behaviors. The enjoyment lies in the whole process of trying to achieve penetration of the sanctuary and its rules and customs which protect (and distance) the unattainable beauty, which the clients seek to acquire and possess. The highest ranking prostitutes are just like well trained actors who play roles of Kannon or Bodhisattva and give men pleasure as they strive to reach them. It is almost always the lower class prostitutes who commit suicide (in a lover's pact with a customer). This is prohibited by *iki* aesthetics, because the dual suicide is an attempt to have a complete identification with their lover for all time. In *iki* aesthetics, developed in the pleasure districts, this love suicide is considered as *yabo* (uncouth, rustic). Utsugi's preference for Agemaki to Koharu also shows his appreciation

of this aesthetics, and his fascination with the former is identical to his attraction to Satsuko, who, like *tayu*, lets him experience pleasure in his effort to attain the unattainable.

Furthermore, in his captivation by *oyama*, we can see his appreciation of and preference for the artistic form and technique over reality. As he watches kabuki performance, he remembers his experience of sleeping with *oyama* when he was young. Young Utsugi had been captivated by a certain beautiful young *oyama*, and with the aid of a teahouse mistress, he realized his dream to "ask him out some evening, dressed just as he was for the stage", and to "see what he was like in bed"(DMOM.4, TJZ.4):

Everything went perfectly. Sleeping with him was exactly like sleeping with geisha in the usual way. In short, he was a woman to the very last, he never let his partner think of him as a man. He came to bed in a gaudy silk undergarment, and still wearing his elaborate wig lay there in the darkened room with his head on a high wooden pillow. It was a really strange experience, he had an extraordinary skillful technique. Yet the fact is that he was no hermaphrodite, but a splendidly equipped male. Only, his technique made you forget it. (DMOM.4-5, TJZ.4-5)

His fascination with the actor's "technique" reveals his rejection of reality in favor of unreality, and his admiration for *oyama* is again identical with that for Satsuko. The reason why he is attracted to her is this acting technique--the ability to disguise herself: she understands his taste and aesthetics very well and is able to adjust herself to his favor. As he knows, she is "good at heart"(DMOM.28-29, TJZ.27). But aware of his masochism, she plays up to him:

She is a bit spiteful. A bit sarcastic. And she is a bit of a liar. She doesn't get along very well with her mother-in-law or sisters-in-law. She's cold toward her child. When she was a young bride she didn't seem so malicious, but the difference in the last three or four years has been striking. Perhaps to some degree it is because I have deliberately egged her on. She wasn't always like that. Even now I suppose she is good at heart, but she has come to pride herself on being bad. No doubt that is because she realizes how much her behavior pleases me. (DMOM.28-29, TJZ.26-27)

With Satsuko's acting technique, Utsugi is able to theatricalize his life. They deliberately change their ways of speaking and manners when they are alone:

When my wife isn't around I tend to speak to Satsuko in a more intimate way than usual. Often I do it consciously, though it seems natural enough when we are alone. Satsuko herself, if there are only the two of us, talks to me in a curiously impudent manner. She is quiet aware of how to please me.(DMOM.39-40, TJZ.38)

There is also a scene where Utsugi acts like a mischievous spoiled child:

"Satsu, Satsu! It hurts!" Now I was whining like a spoiled child. I didn't mean to, my voice naturally took on that tone. "Satsu, Satsu, *Satsu!*" As I called her name over and over, I burst out crying. Tears streamed down my cheeks, the snivel ran from my nose, saliva dribbled from my mouth. I really howled--it wasn't an act, the instant I screamed "Satsu" I had become a naughty, unruly child again. I howled and wept uncontrollably, by that time I couldn't suppress it if I tried. Ah, perhaps I actually had gone mad! Perhaps this was how it felt. I howled on and on. I don't care if I *am* mad, it doesn't matter what becomes of me--such were my thoughts, but then, worse yet, they gave way to a sudden panicky fear of madness. After that it clearly became an act: I began trying to imitate a spoiled child. (DMOM.112-113, TJZ.113-114. Translator's italics.)

At this moment, he is between reality and unreality, which is, as Chikamatsu remarks, the essential state of theater: "Art is something between the real and the unreal.... The theatre is unreal , and yet not unreal, real and yet not real. Entertainment lies between the two."³ Sartre holds a similar vision on theater. The concept of distance is illustrated in discussing perception and imagination:

The most pleasant aspects...involves neither imaging nor perceiving but a "hybrid condition", which seems to be essentially a tension between what is seen [the real] and what is imagined [the unreal].⁴

³For Chikamatsu's argument, see Donald Keene's *Appreciation of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo:Kodansha International, 1990) p.63.

⁴For Sartre's argument, see Daphna Ben Chaim's *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetic*

Between them there is "an aesthetic distance". What Utsugi aims at is to perceive his life as theatre with this "hybrid condition"--half perception half imagination; half real half unreal. Satsuko, who is able to present herself not as real, is the perfect partner for him to enjoy this theatricality. Without her, he cannot realize his fantasy. In the next section, we will see how Satsuko performs this role.

3. Satsuko

Her acting technique is best displayed in "erotic thriller" scenes which take place four times. In these scenes, she plays the role of a sadistic woman who adjusts to Utsugi's tastes while skillfully manipulating distance. The "act" is initiated by Satsuko. One day, she looks in on him from the adjoining bathroom while taking a shower: "Only her head-- I couldn't see the rest of her." She appears to suggest an invitation by saying "Even when I'm in the shower I never lock this door! It can be opened any time!"(DMOM.42, TJZ.41) Her words excite him and lead him to speculate:

Did she say that because I invariably take my own bath in the evening, or because she trusts me? Or was she saying "Come on in and look, if you want!"" Or: "A silly old man doesn't bother me in the least"? I have no idea why she made a point of saying such a thing.(DMOM,42 TJZ.41)

Two days later, he tries the door when she is taking a shower, and at her invitation, he enters. This is the first "erotic thriller" scene:

Sure enough, the catch had been left open. I could hear the sound of the water. "Do you want something?" I had only touched the door, barely enough to move it, but she seemed to notice instantly. I was taken aback. However, after a moment I mustered up my courage. "You said you never lock the door, so I tried it to see." As I spoke, I peered into the bathroom. Satsuko was standing under the shower, but her whole body was concealed by striped green and white shower curtains. "Now do you believe me?" "I believe you." "What are you doing out there? Come on in!" "Is it all right?" "You want to, don't you?" "I have no special reason, I'm afraid."

"Now, now! Keep calm! If you get excited you'll slip and fall."...Now and then, between the shower curtains, she let me see a flicker of a shoulder, a knee, the tip of a foot. "Maybe I'd better give you a reason!" The shower stopped. Turning her back toward me, she exposed the upper part of her body between the curtains. "Take that towel and wipe my back, will you? Be careful, my head's dripping!" As she pulled off her vinyl cap a few drops of water splashed on me.... "Don't be so timid, put some energy into it! Oh, I forgot, your left hand's no good. Well, rub as hard as you can with your right." Suddenly I grasped her shoulder, I got a stinging slap on my cheek. "Fresh, aren't you, for an old man?" (DMOM. 48, TJZ.45-47)

In the second, a few days later, he is allowed to kiss her below the knee, without using his tongue:

"Come on in--I've been waiting for you!" Satsuko said. "I'm sorry about the other day." "That's more like it." "When you're old you can get away with a lot." "After taking that slap, I think I deserve some kind of compensation." "It isn't funny. Promise you'll never do a thing like that again!" "Still, you ought to be willing to let me kiss you on the neck." "I don't like to be kissed on the neck." "Where *would* you like it?" "I won't stand for it anywhere. It made me feel queasy the rest of the day, as if I'd been licked by a garden slug." I swallowed hard, and said; "I wonder how you'd feel if Haruhisa did it." "I'll hit you again! I mean it! Last time you only got a little tap." "You needn't be so restrained." "My hand can sting! If I really hit you, you'll see stars!" "But that's what I'd like." "You're impossible! A second-childhood terror!" "I'm asking you again: If you won't have it on your neck, where *will* you have it?" "You can do it once if it's below the knee--only once, mind you! And just your lips, don't touch me with your tongue!" She was completely hidden behind the shower curtains, except for one of her legs below the knee." You look as if you're going to be examined by a gynecologist." "Silly!" "You're being very unreasonable, telling me to kiss you without using my tongue." "I'm *not* telling you to kiss me--I'm just letting you touch me with your lips! That's enough for an old man like you." "You might at least turn off the shower." "Certainly not. It'll make my skin crawl unless I wash off immediately." It tastes like a drink of water instead of a kiss." (DMOM.49-51, TJZ.48-50.Translator's italics)

In the third "erotic thriller" scene, Satsuko stops the shower and allows him to kiss her legs with his tongue:.

"Today you can kiss me." The shower stopped. A leg appeared between the curtains. "You look as if you're going to be examined again!" "That's

right, nothing above the knee. But didn't I stop the shower for you?" "As a reward? Isn't it that a little stingy?" "If you don't like it, go away. I'm not forcing you." Then she added: "Today I'll let you use your tongue too." I crouched over just as I had on the twenty-eighth of July, glued my lips to the same place on her calf, and slowly savored her flesh with my tongue. It tasted like a real kiss. My mouth kept slipping lower and lower, down toward her heel. To my surprise she didn't say a word. She let me do as I pleased. My tongue came to her instep, then to the tip of her big toe. Kneeling, I crammed her first three toes into my mouth. I pressed my lips to the wet sole of her foot, a foot that seemed as alluringly expressive as a face. "That's enough." Suddenly the shower came on: water streamed over my head, face, that lovely foot....(DMOM.66,TJZ.65-66.Translator's ellipsis)

Finally, in the forth "erotic thriller", he gets her permission to kiss her neck, for which he is later asked to buy her a cat's-eye:

Another erotic thriller. But it was a little different from the earlier ones. Today she came in wearing high-heeled sandals, and kept them on while she took her shower. "Why are you wearing those things?" "At any nude show the girls come out in sandals like these. Doesn't it appeal to you, since you're so crazy about my feet? There's practically nothing to them." That was well enough, but then something else happened. "Shall I let you do some necking today, Father?" "What's 'necking'?" "Don't you know? That's what you were doing the other day." "Kissing on the neck?" "Of course! It's a kind of petting!" "You'll have to explain that too." "Old people are a real nuisance! It means to caress and pet someone all over. And then there's 'heavy petting'!--I can see I have a lot to teach you." "So you'll let me kiss your neck?" "As long as you're properly grateful." "I couldn't be more grateful...." (DMOM.71,TJZ.70-71)

As we see, Satsuko is the one who always takes initiative in manipulating distance between them by setting prohibitions and giving permission. In each scene, Satsuko does not neglect to provide him with a certain prohibition. Also, she never exposes her whole body. With these prohibitions and the concealment of her body, she creates distance between them, and she understands that this excites him. These remind us of the scene where Naomi tantalizes Joji with a "friend's kiss". Both Satsuko and Naomi manipulate distance with the power of prohibition, which tantalizes and excites Utsugi and Joji. What differentiates Satsuko from Naomi, however, is that the former consciously and artfully

plays this game with an awareness of Utsugi's masochistic tendencies, and with his pleasure and well-being in mind whereas Naomi is not acting, simply presenting her real self, Naomi as Naomi, as characterized by Joji as a "born prostitute" (NM.217, TJZ.276).

Furthermore, while both of them try to get something in return for this tantalization, they are different in their purpose. Naomi has to rely totally on Joji's finances: she cannot survive without him. Satsuko, on the other hand, only wishes for extra luxuries from Utsugi, and her financial stability does not depend on him. As Ken Ito observes:

She is not a Naomi, who remains fundamentally a pariah despite her metamorphosis. A thoroughly competent woman, Satsuko has established herself so securely as the "young mistress" that she has taken control of the family accounts away from Utsugi's wife. (263)

Satsuko shares similar background with Naomi: she used to be a chorus girl in the Nichigeki Music Hall, and Utsugi has the impression that she worked "in a night club somewhere, perhaps in the Asakusa district"(from whence Naomi hails). (DMOM.19, TJZ.19) However, as Ito points out, no traces remain of Satsuko's origins whereas Naomi's linger on.

Her adaptations to suit Utsugi's tastes, skillful manipulation of distance, and financial independence, secure her position as a controller. She does not need to rely on Utsugi for anything but he must rely on her for the realization of his fantasy. Among Tanizaki's heroines, she is the most artistically skillful manipulator of distance, and at the same time, the most independent and powerful woman. She has her own will and is free from men's control. Under these conditions, Utsugi is thus able to theatricalize his life, and extend his dream to the realm beyond the grave.

4. Death: The World of Imagination

For Utsugi, imagining what will be left of him after death is a life giving force. He often entertains himself by dreaming about death, and maintaining his relationship with Satsuko forever after. He is determined to realize this ultimate dream in the form of a tombstone: he plans to have her footprints carved in stone in the manner of those of the Buddha. He has a lively imagination :

Although it stands to reason that the will dies with the body, there may be exceptions. For example, say that part of my will survives within her will. When she treads on my grave and feels as if she's trampling on that doting old's man's bones, my spirit will still be alive, feeling the whole weight of her body, feeling pain, feeling the fine-grained velvety smoothness of the soles of her feet. Even after I'm dead I'll be aware of that. I can't believe I won't. In the same way, Satsuko will be aware of the presence of my spirit, joyfully enduring her weight. Perhaps she may even hear my charred bones rattling together, chuckling, moaning, creaking. And that would by no means occur only when she was actually stepping on my grave. At the very thought of those Buddha's Footprints modeled after her own feet she would hear my bones wailing under the stone. Between sobs I would scream: "It hurts! It hurts!...Even though it hurts, I'm happy--I've never been more happy, I'm much, much happier than when I was alive!...Trample harder! Harder!" (DMOM.154-155, TJZ.155-156)

The heightened moment of erotic thrillers is captured and frozen for all time in stone. Satsuko is placed over Utsugi, both illustrating and realizing his desire for fixation of their "sdomasochistic" relationship in a static condition. In order to realize his dream, he enthusiastically sets about making a print of her feet:

The lines between the ball of her foot and the underarch gave me a good deal of trouble. I was especially clumsy because of the difficulty with my left hand. Although I had said the ink wouldn't get on her clothes, only the soles of her feet, I often bungled and smeared the top of her foot or the skirt of her negligee. But I was also delighted to keep wiping off and re-inking her feet. I felt tense and elated. I started over and over again with undiminished enthusiasm. At last I finished inking both feet to my satisfaction. Then I lifted each foot up a little, one at a time, and pressed a sheet of the square paper against it from below to make an impression of the sole. But something always went wrong, I couldn't produce the kind of rubbing I wanted. All twenty squares of paper were wasted. I telephoned

the stationer's and had him send over another forty squares immediately. This time I changed my method. I washed the ink off her feet completely, even between her toes, and had her sit in a chair while I lay on my back in a cramped position and dabbed the soles of her feet. Then I had her make the impression by stepping down on the paper... (DMOM.156-157, TJZ.157-158. Translator's ellipsis)

The completion of this tombstone project is his reason for living. The laborious process just described illustrates the strength of his imaginative power, a power which gives him the energy to realize this dream. As we have said, however, it is not completed.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, distance plays an important role in Utsugi's life. He takes full advantage of distance between him and Satsuko--the difference in age, their relation as father-in-law and daughter-in-law, and his sexual dysfunction (although all to his seeming disadvantage) in order to enjoy erotic and voyeuristic pleasure. With his financial wealth and Satsuko's aid, he is able to maintain distance between his private life and reality. With her "acting" technique and skillful manipulation of distance, he experiences theatricalization of his life, in which he lives between the real and the unreal. He tries to bring this theatricality into the world of death by eternalizing his sadomasochistic relationship with Satsuko in the form of a tombstone. Paradoxically, his dream of death reveals his strong attachment to life, because he perceives death as a continuation of life: he does not separate death from life; instead he wishes his will and spirit to be alive forever. Besides, death, as the world of unreality, stimulates his imagination, giving him life force. We have already seen how lively his imagination is when he dreams of his tombstone. For him, life and death are intimately related. In fact, he is living between life and death--between the real and the unreal.

In this final masterpiece, Tanizaki fulfills his aesthetics of distance, both in terms of the relationship between Utsugi and Satsuko, and in Utsugi's perception of

reality/unreality and life/death. Tanizaki successfully creates a vivid hero and heroine, both masters of understanding and practicing the pleasure of distance. Satsuko, as we have seen, is the most skillful manipulator of distance as well as powerful controller among Tanizaki's many heroines. Utsugi is the most energetically positive hero with a strong imaginative power and enthusiastic desire for life. In the end, Tanizaki depicts Utsugi "Por[ing] over the dozen-odd rubbings [of Satsuko's feet] and pick[ing] out several of the better ones, which he spent hours gazing at, one by one, as if completely enthralled".(DMOM.177, TJZ.174.) Utsugi's imagination never dies. As he declares earlier, he is living for sexual pleasure and the pleasure of eating. But there is one more factor to give him this life-force, that is, the pleasure of imagination, and this is probably the last and the most important driving force in his life.

Conclusion

We have examined three of Tanizaki's major works in the light of the concept of distance. All three works deal with pursuit of an unattainable, elusive, and distant beauty of women, but in a different way. By examining different aspects of distance, we have seen how Tanizaki develops his aesthetics of distance.

Why is Tanizaki so singularly preoccupied with "distance" in these works? In its application in whatever form (whether in a spiritual, spatial, or social dimension) it functions as a mechanism through which characters and readers perceive as well as measure reality. If one perceives only the real as real, no distance is present. When one perceives the real not as real, there is distance. Distance arises "between" reality and unreality. It is in the distance between them that any place for aesthetics can be found.

Beauty, as we have seen, is measured by remoteness (distance) from man's existence. The alien, the unattainable, the elusive, are all, too, manifestations of or embodiments of distance. To attain, to possess the highly desired beauty (found in women), to in fact consume it, not only detracts from but actually destroys the pleasure in distance. The *iki* aesthetic makes it clear that it is the "possibility" rather than the "actualization" that is the purpose of pleasure; maximization of pleasure is obtained when distance is narrowed almost to the point at which it disappears. Clearly, a loss of distance is directly related to a loss of pleasure and a loss of control. Control is important because these works are concerned with male-female relationships and the shifts that take place within them.

Shifts in the fortunes of the characters in these works are seen in graphic form; the balance shifts from one to another. Throughout, however, much is made of prohibition of breaking the "final barrier" and eliminating distance completely. From several sources we see that this is "taboo". Naomi holds Joji at a distance, under her control, providing both

pleasure (for Joji) and power (for herself). Here there is a considerable relationship between prohibition, frustration, and erotic pleasure.

Distance is prominently featured not only between characters but also between fantasy and reality, between public and private selves. The struggle to achieve harmony, what we have called "psychic balance", is also a reflection of the pleasure and importance of this concept (distance). We see even in superficially mundane but nonetheless profound descriptive passages how, for example, secrecy is also a "form" of a distance.

As characters play out their roles, the distinction between fantasy and reality becomes increasingly large in importance for the writer. There is a distance, for example, between the real thing and a mere substitute (Naomi in comparison with western women, actress, and high-class woman). When she is within reach, she loses her value and the male's fantasy is diminished or imperiled.

In a very strong sense, "distance" also serves to attach characters to reality (Joji's mother's death, for example, brings him, at one point, back towards reality and away from fantasy). There is nothing stronger, however, than impending death as a means of showing the real, concrete, fact of distance--life or death. However, we know well from chapter three that it is not just life or death. We will say more about this presently.

Neither this nor that, neither real nor not real, neither unreal nor not unreal: there is a vital "betweenness" that emerges as a crucial component in Tanizaki's aesthetics of distance. There is a distance between shadow and darkness. There is aesthetic value in what is partly suggested, partly hidden. There is suggestion in shadow, leading to stimulation of the imagination, in turn leading to various interpretations of reality. We saw how shadow and Shunkin's blindness were linked and we discovered that Sasuke had blinded himself to preserve distance (eternally) between them. We saw this despite the author having presented the reader with limited information. It became a case of more imagination being utilized in a situation where there is more distance between text and reader. This also applies to historical setting and narrative style.

Tanizaki's use of temporal distance (in contrasting past and present) furthers his purpose of creating a more exotic, more remote from reality (and more distant), sensation which works strong magic on the reader, deepening the understanding of this aesthetics of distance.

The importance of imagination to a full understanding of Tanizaki's aesthetics cannot be overstated. Sartre's encapsulation of the relationship between imagination, perception and aesthetic distance (in which imaginative experience of the image-- as opposed to the perception of the real--occurs only when one shifts from a perceptual to an imaginative state) makes it clear. We see, then, that Shunkin, for example, as an object to be imagined is therefore also an aesthetic object (in which light and shade suggest reality and suggestion creates a new reality).

Imagination forms a vital link to the elaboration of the aesthetics of distance. The relationship between Utsugi and Satsuko and the relationship between life and death are brilliantly fused. Utsugi's imagination, perception, as well as theatricalization of his life, help us further grasp the overall significance of the concept of distance in the writer's plan. In the "erotic thriller" scenes, we see pleasure at a distance, pleasure in limitations, pleasure in prohibition, and pleasure in living life as theater (between the real and the unreal). Enjoyment lies in trying to obtain the unattainable. Somewhere between attaining and not attaining is the art, the aesthetics, the meaning and purpose to life. This "betweenness" may also be described, as Chikamatsu and Sartre have done, as a "hybrid" of real and unreal, perception and imagination, in which the "aesthetic distance" lies.

Real and not real, unreal and not unreal. What significance can be ascribed to life and death here? Utsugi uses his imagination to "construct" a tombstone, an "aesthetic" or "imagined" construction (not realized in his life), a plan that gives him life. In his dream of death, his attachment to life is revealed. Death, as the world of unreality, as the world of imagination, is the ultimate form of the "unattainable". At the same time, death is also an unshakable and concrete reality which nobody can avoid. Death is indeed a hybrid of

reality and unreality, of the attainable and the unattainable, and therefore brings him aesthetic experience and finally fulfills Tanizaki's aesthetics of distance.

Some might argue that Tanizaki's attitude toward life is similar to that of an escapist: he does not face reality directly but always at a distance. As we have seen through his works, however, what he longs for is not complete detachment or escape from reality but balance between reality and unreality. Utsugi's act which transforms death (reality) into fantasy (unreality) with his imaginative power is artistic and sublime, and at the same time, a brave act when confronted with every human's destiny. Distance, for Tanizaki, is not a device for escaping but rather a means for giving color and meaning to monotonous mundane reality and for enjoying life artistically and aesthetically. All the themes that he pursued through his career can be interpreted from the perspective of his aesthetics of distance. For example, his worship of the west can be understood as that since the west is culturally distanced from him, it evokes his imagination, and similarly, Japanese tradition appeals to him because of its temporal distance. It is this concept of distance which ultimately distinguishes him from naturalist writers: while the latter depict reality just as reality, Tanizaki presents reality as being different from reality, perceiving it with and from a certain distance. Distance provides Tanizaki with the necessary vehicle to allow imagination to flower, to fashion his fictional world. Thirty years after his death, this world continues to assure for him a preeminent place in Japanese literature and will do so for the distant future.

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