

**ALIENATION, TRAINS AND THE JOURNEY OF LIFE
IN
FOUR MODERN JAPANESE NOVELS**

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the theme of alienation along with the train motif in the life journeys of the protagonists in four modern Japanese novels. Each chapter is devoted to an individual novel and explores its hero's feelings of socio-psychological estrangement on personal and interpersonal levels as well as the role of the train journey which serves to arouse, create or alleviate such feelings.

Chapter One deals with Sanshiro (Sanshiro, 1908) by Natsume Soseki and follows the hero on his long train journey from backward Kyushu to progressive Tokyo. The people he meets on the train foreshadow the feelings of uneasiness and estrangement he will encounter in the capital. For Sanshiro, the noisy, crowded streetcars initially represent the "real world," constantly reminding him of his alienation from it. Once over his culture shock the hero's sense of not belonging shifts to his relationships with his friends. Gradually he begins to feel more comfortable with himself and the world around him.

Chapter Two examines A Dark Night's Passing (An'ya Koro, 1921-37) by Shiga Naoya. In his search to resolve feelings of unacceptability arising from his childhood experiences, Kensaku takes a series of journeys, many by train, "backward" in time. The train thus serves as an agent which can transcend the barriers of both time and space, separating or reuniting people and creating or breaking down distances between places. It can arouse feelings of happiness, excitement, sadness or loneliness in its passengers or simply provide him with a place to relax and dream about a brighter future.

Chapter Three focuses on Snow Country (Yukiguni, 1934-1947) by Kawabata Yasunari. Shimamura's purpose in visiting the snow country is two-fold -- he both desires to escape from and needs to confront the reality of the wasted effort in his life

and resulting sense of alienation from humanity. The train complies. As it brings him into this region of Japan it completely loses any connection with reality, creating a void in which weirdly beautiful apparitions float up before our hero's very eyes. Once in this fantasy land our hero is taught to see his own coldness and how to become more human by two beautiful women. It is then left up to Shimamura to put what he has learned into action when he returns to Tokyo by the train which, heading away from the snow country, takes on very real qualities.

The final chapter examines The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji, 1956) by Mishima Yukio. This novel deals with Mizoguchi, a most frightening character whose mixed-up views of both himself and the world are but a thin disguise for insanity. The hero suffers terribly from the resulting feelings of not belonging as well as a great inferiority complex. The situation is complicated by his strange love-hate relationship with the Golden Temple to which he attributes human qualities. The train in this novel serves as the symbolic vehicle which transports the hero back and forth between the region of his birth and what he calls "the station of death" where he will eventually destroy both the temple and the hated half of his personality.

In the conclusion the relevance of alienation, trains and the journey of life in modern Japanese literature are discussed.

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Introduction

We in the West often speak of life as a journey, and indeed the metaphor is apt: "The life of man is naught but a long iorney, that beginneth when he is borne, and endeth when he dyeth" (Okutsu 131). However, this concept is not unique to us, for the Japanese also speak of yo no tabiji (世の旅路) or the journey of life. Accounts of journeys (michiyuki 道行) have been prominent in their literature since ancient times and the traveller has appeared in such classical works of great importance as The Manyoshu (Manvoshu 万葉集, mid seventh to mid eighth century), The Tosa Diary (Tosa Nikki 土佐日記, 935?) attributed to Ki no Tsurayuki and The Narrow Road to the Deep North (Oku no Hosomichi 奥の細道, 1702) by Matsuo Basho as well as in the Noh Drama.

The physical journey of yesteryear was not the safe, comfortable and short experience it is today, as the Japanese proverb tabi wa ui mono tsurai mono (旅は憂きもの 辛きもの) (Okutsu 13) stresses. It meant the sadness of often permanent separation, and if not the loneliness of being away from home for long periods of time. The traveller faced many hardships such as the danger of bad weather, sickness, robbery and even death. Such very real possibilities also served to emphasize the mutability and sadness of life, an extremely dominant theme in classical Japanese literature. The way in which life and the journey overlapped in that literature is clearly illustrated by Yuasa Nobuyuki in his introduction to the English translation of The Narrow Road to the Deep North which:

represented for Basho, all the mystery there was in the universe. In other words, The Narrow Road to the Deep North was life itself for Basho, and he travelled through it as anyone would travel through the short span of his life here -- seeking a vision of eternity in the things that are, by their very own nature, destined to perish. (37)

We must not forget, however, that the traveller of the past also had time to meditate upon life, observe nature and become familiar with his surroundings.

Between the old and the new Japan and their respective literatures stands an event which changed the course of Japanese history -- the Meiji Restoration of 1868. In a few short years Japan felt that she must not only "catch up" (oikakeru 追いかける) on, but also "outrun" (oikosu 追い越す) one hundred years of Western experience.

Industrialization was for Japan all it was for the West -- rapid change, mechanization, urbanization et cetera, but at an intensified pace. Although we shall not go into the details here, let it suffice to say that Japan's wholehearted embracing of this "new order" and the Western concepts behind it both in 1868 and after World War II left many of her people feeling that while they were not at home with all the change, neither were they any longer in touch with their cultural past. Japan became a nation of people not quite certain of their identity -- a very uncomfortable feeling.

Although the essential nature of the individual and human life does not change from nation to nation or generation to generation, his experiences are to a great extent shaped by the world around him. As we shall see, this includes not only relationships with the self and others, but also with nature, man-made articles and events.

In an attempt to shed some light on the "journey" in modern Japanese literature, this thesis shall deal with four representative novels. They are: Sanshiro (Sanshiro 三四郎, 1908) by Natsume Soseki (夏目漱石, 1867-1916), A Dark Night's Passing (An'ya Koro 暗夜行路, 1921-1937) by Shiga Naoya (志賀直哉, 1883-1971), Snow Country (Yukiguni 雪国, 1934-1947) by Kawabata Yasunari (川端康成, 1899-1972) and The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji, 金閣寺, 1956) by Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫, 1928-1970). These novels can be considered representative not only because they were written over a fifty year period, but also because the authors are among Japan's literary giants, highly acclaimed both at home and abroad.

We might next ask what the heroes of these four works have in common. The journey of life has already been discussed. Each of them, from the twenty-three year

old Sanshiro to the middle-aged Shimamura is at a particular critical stage of this individually unique journey. All four men are to a greater or lesser extent dissatisfied with their present lives. Such feelings as those of being different and being out of touch with oneself, one's family, friends, and society in general permeate the pages of these works. Each novel is the story of its protagonist's both conscious and subconscious struggles with and attempts to resolve his feelings of alienation. Although each character feels himself to be estranged from something different, they come up with both common as well as highly individual resolutions.

In this thesis the term "alienation" is used almost exclusively in the socio-psychological sense of personal and interpersonal estrangement. When used in any other sense, an explanation follows. In discussing this difficult to define term, the editors of Alienation in Contemporary Society have the following to say:

Alienation is often used on one of two levels as noted above, the sociological or the psychological, and sometimes may involve mixing: The first level of study often involves the study of social conditions and processes by which to explain group or individual manifestations of alienation; the second often means concern with behavior and perceptions of individuals as they are explainable by personal or interpersonal experiences. (Bryce-Laporte and Claudwell xviii).

The above method of analysis aptly describes that which I have employed in dealing with the four novels under examination.

It is inevitable that at some point or other the question of whether alienation is good or evil should arise. This, of course, depends upon the viewpoint of those concerned, as does the question of what they are alienated from. Durkheim, for example, saw primary alienation, which he equated with social solidarity, as good, for in order to become a part of the social fabric and contribute to society a man must alienate himself from his freedom and individuality. However, there are those who see this as a negative and destructive process (Meadows 15). Let us not argue with the theorists, but rather observe our heroes in their struggles with this condition in order

to discover how they feel about it in the context of being human and particularly Japanese.

Another common denominator in our four novels is the important role taken on by the train. Among the earlier Western innovations to be introduced was the railroad which began service between Yokohama and Kawasaki in September of 1870 (Harada 55-57). Despite various setbacks, it was not long before the railroad became a permanent feature of the Japanese landscape. By this time it had already become an accepted thing in Europe as well as European literature. Numerous examples exist, among the more famous, Dombey and Son (1848) by Dickens (1812-1870), Anna Karenina (1877) by Tolstoy (1883-1945) and La Bête Humaine (1889) by Emile Zola (1840-1902). As a motif, it was first employed extensively by Charles Dickens who often wrote of the changes wrought upon the physical landscape as well as society by the coming of the Industrial Age and its symbol, the train. Whereas no genre that could be called the "train novel" exists in Japan as it could be said to in the United States¹, so much has the train become a part of Japanese daily life that it is referred to in an astonishing number of novels and short stories.²

It is interesting to note that the predominant images to haunt the railroad in Western literature have always been those of death and the devil (Duff 448). This is certainly true of the three novels mentioned above. According to Duff, this theme was internalized and refined in the twentieth century so that in such works as A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) by Joyce (1882-1941), Farewell to Arms (1929) by Hemingway (1899-1961) and Of Time and the River (1935), by Wolfe (1900-1938) the train automatically arouses feelings associated with death and evil in the protagonist. Although associations are made between the train and death in our four novels, this is not exclusively the case. The train plays many other roles such as acting as a symbol for the journey of life, as we shall shortly discover.

Chapter One

Sanshiro

Sanshiro (Sanshiro 三四郎 , 1908), written by Natsume Soseki (夏目漱石 , 1867-1916), does not contain a lot of fast paced action. Rather, the novel moves almost imperceptibly forward as the protagonist, Ogawa Sanshiro, journeys from youth to the brink of adulthood. It is hoped that through an examination of the surroundings, circumstances, people and events that Soseki creates in Sanshiro and the protagonist's reactions to them, that the theme of alienation will come to light.

The novel opens with our hero aboard a Tokyo-bound train, unaware that he is about to have two very unsettling experiences. At Nagoya he encounters his first "femme fatale" who mistakes the homesickness she arouses in him for sexual interest and has him take her to an inn where he spends a sleepless, but inactive night. Next day he finds himself in the company of a strange man who shocks him with his unorthodox ideas and weird pronouncements.

Once in the capital, Sanshiro is extremely taken aback by all the noise and commotion around him. In the middle of all this is the university with its peaceful, green grounds to which our hero must often retreat in order to regain his composure. It is here that he meets the physicist, Nonomiya Sohachi as well as this man's sister, Yoshiko. Here too, Sanshiro's heart is captured by the bewitching and beautiful Mineko. When school begins he is befriended by a fellow student named Yojiro. This young man happens to live with none other than Professor Hirota -- the man on the train. Sanshiro's group of close Tokyo acquaintances is now complete.

Having fallen in love with Mineko, our hero finally gets the opportunity to be alone with her for a while when the group goes on an excursion to the chrysanthemum doll exhibition. Being another dangerously real woman, Mineko notices Sanshiro's

fascination with her and returns his interest. However, the youth once again shows that he cannot handle such a situation, ending any chance for a new relationship to blossom. Much like the Kyushu-colour woman calls him a coward, Mineko calls him a stray sheep. These words are to haunt him throughout the novel. As events surrounding Yojiro's movement to procure Hirota a university post come to the fore, Sanshiro's relationship with Mineko changes. They now only see each other on business or by coincidence. Despite this, our hero still hopes for some sign from this girl who, whatever she feels for him, is flattered enough by his interest in her to have the artist Haraguchi paint her portrait as Sanshiro first saw her. While he grows further and further from Mineko, Sanshiro grows closer and closer to Hirota. Yojiro's movement fails miserably and Mineko becomes engaged to another man. The story ends with a somewhat changed, but nevertheless confused Sanshiro staring at Mineko's portrait, repeating to himself those words: "stray sheep".

Throughout the novel Sanshiro is slowly moving from youth to adulthood. This life journey is aptly symbolized by his actual train trip to Tokyo and certain events associated with it. Keeping in mind that he is travelling from the backward countryside to the progressive city, there are a number of things we should note.

Initially, let us discuss the progression of the journey and the times. There are several things which indicate forward movement through both time and space as the train heads toward the capital. Most obviously, the simple mention of place names such as Hiroshima, Kyoto, Nagoya and Hamamatsu serves to effectively emphasize the progression of the journey itself. One of the first things we learn is that Kyushu women generally have dark complexions and that the further from Kyushu or closer to Tokyo the train gets, the lighter the local women's complexions become. It is as though the closer a city is to the capital, itself so influenced by white men and their civilization, the whiter and thus more modern its women.

Of course it is the people whom he meets on the train that make Sanshiro most aware of his forward movement through time and space. The appearance of the Kyushu-colour woman whom he naively imagines to be an "ally of the opposite sex" (3)³ well illustrates the fact that he is nearing the modern capital. Firstly, the woman is associated with various places en route such as Kyushu (because of her colour), Kyoto, and Nagoya. Secondly, the way in which she acts is totally alien to Sanshiro, as is Tokyo; thus the two are connected in his eyes: "What was this woman, really? Were there supposed to be women like her in the world?" (10). His next encounter, with a stranger who displays liberal, modern thinking in his opinions about Japan and the world, leaves Sanshiro equally baffled. This man's statement that Japan will perish causes the youth to suddenly realize that he is no longer in conservative Kyushu. The fact that he sees several superior looking foreigners at Hamamatsu Station indicates that city's proximity to the capital and its corresponding degree of westernization.

Besides indicating progression, the above situations have the additional function of bringing out Sanshiro's sense of unease and estrangement in relation to the real world. The fact that he is unaware of the Kyushu-colour woman's intentions, his shock upon realizing them, and his reactions or lack thereof to her advances all clearly bespeak his inexperience with and thus alienation from reality. Similarly, his shock at hearing the stranger's treasonous pronouncements shows his alienation from a world that permits such opinions. The fact that despite this man's friendliness, he never tells Sanshiro his name seems to foreshadow the necessary alienation among the inhabitants of a great metropolis like Tokyo. Our hero's reaction to the Westerners he sees at Hamamatsu Station is also very upsetting for he goes "so far as to imagine himself traveling to the West and feeling very insignificant among them" (14). As if to emphasize his estrangement from them, he cannot understand a word these god-like beings utter.

And what of the train itself? It is a moving limbo which, as it winds across the

countryside, through cities, towns and villages, completely cuts off its passengers from their surroundings both physically and psychologically. Its walls constitute a physical barrier and the speed at which it travels denies passengers the necessary time to become familiar with their surroundings. Schivelbusch makes the point that whatever the passengers' perception of the landscape might be, it is coloured by the train to the extent that the worlds within and without the train become totally distinct (33). One might even say that the outside world becomes unreal.

Let us also note that the passengers themselves are generally estranged from each other. This is again at least partially due to the train's speed denying them the time to become acquainted. Take for example, the Kyushu-colour woman talking with the old man. He shows no interest in her small talk until she mentions something relevant to him -- Port Arthur. Although this temporarily brings them together, the old man soon disembarks and the two are once again equally as estranged from each other as before. They will probably never meet again and in the end mean nothing to each other. The woman, having been abandoned by her husband, is clearly feeling lonely and alienated and is searching to alleviate this condition. This is obvious in that she pours out her sorrows concerning her husband to the old man and then sets her eyes upon Sanshiro. Although a connection with either of these men would only be temporary, it would provide her with some measure of relief. The fact that passengers on the train often cannot be bothered with each other and are thus estranged, is also shown when Sanshiro looks around the car and observes that none of the others on board are talking: "The only sound was the ongoing roar of the train" (5), which is only too reminiscent of the ongoing rush of modern society. Indeed, the train soon brings Sanshiro to the heart of this mad, moving world.

In the chapters immediately following his arrival in the capital Sanshiro reacts to his new surroundings with a full range of emotions. He is not only shocked, but also

frightened by the unfamiliar sights and sounds of the big city. They arouse in him feelings of great unease and estrangement which originate in the helplessness he senses at being unable to fulfill his desire to become a part of the real world around him:

The world was in an uproar; he watched it, but he could not join it. His own world and the real world were aligned on a single plane, but nowhere did they touch. The real world would move on in its uproar and leave him behind. The thought filled him with great unease. (18)

On a macrocosmic level the train is no less a symbol of Japan's abrupt emergence into the modern age than of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. On a microcosmic level it is symbolic of our hero's abrupt emergence into the reality of modern Tokyo. Thus it is not at all surprising that his sense of alienation is associated with trains and streetcars. We might note that Sanshiro is arriving in the capital only five years after the first electric streetcar which made its appearance in 1903 (Harada 142) and at a time when a vast network of rails was growing almost daily. In reference to streetcars we find the following reaction: "Sanshiro not only hated them, he felt as though they were roaring at him" (25). They seem to threaten the youth's very existence. In fact, he soon discovers a connection between these representatives of the modern, real world and death.

The train bursts into Sanshiro's world, momentarily bringing home to him the reality of life and death, when a young woman commits suicide by throwing herself beneath its wheels. The moving, throbbing life force of this iron monster rushing past our hero's window is replaced by a disturbing scene in which "the rails . . . were as still as death . . ." (42). The train seems to be telling him that when one deals with the real world and its alienation, one must also accept the ultimate form of that alienation -- death:

Sanshiro saw before him the face of the young woman, he remembered the impotent cry and thought of the relentless fate that must lurk within them both. Together they seemed to tell him that the roots of life, which appear to us so sturdy, work loose before we know it and float off into the dark void. Sanshiro was terrified. It had happened in that moment when the

train roared past. Until then she had been alive. (43)

Here too, a woman plays a role in bringing our hero face to face with reality.

Sanshiro's estrangement is also partially attributable to his circumstances. He is a freshman at Tokyo Imperial University. Coming from the countryside, he initially holds this great institution and its scholars in awe. He also sees it as a haven from the real world: "Any university that refused to have streetcars near it must be far removed from society" (21). All too soon, however, he becomes disillusioned with school. No one turns up for the first two days, and once lectures do begin he quickly loses interest in them, feeling that something is "missing." His reverence for the university is already beginning to fade because reality is seeping into his image of it. Thus, he ends up feeling isolated not only from the real world, but also that of academia. As we shall note later, he spends much of his time wavering between these two worlds.

When Sanshiro mentions his disillusionment to Yojiro, it is not surprising that his friend suggests he ride the streetcar of reality:

Get on the streetcar and ride around Tokyo ten or fifteen times. After a while it will just happen by itself -- you'll become satisfied

Why? Well, look at it this way. Your head is alive, but if you seal it up inside dead classes, you're lost. Take it outside and get the wind into it. Riding the streetcar is not the only way to get satisfaction, but it's the first step, and the easiest. (34)

It is as though Yojiro is telling Sanshiro that he needs to attain a balance between his two worlds in order to become satisfied. As long as he is feeling alienated from one, he will not be satisfied with the other.

Yet another world also exists for our hero. This is the world of the past, the countryside, home and mother: "He need only go. But he would not want to do that unless things got desperate. It was, after all, a place of retreat . . ." (63). Sanshiro does not flee home over his feelings of estrangement. It is rather to Mother Nature in the guise of the university pond that he consistently escapes in the early parts of the novel. However, even here he can be attacked by an overwhelming sense of uneasiness.

Returning to the pond from Nonomiya's laboratory, he experiences a very definite sense of alienation: "He had often felt the pleasure of forgetting about the world of men; but never before had he known this sense of isolation" (22). Industrialization and the influences of the new age are creeping into every corner of Tokyo life. Soon there will be no escape even in its parks and universities. The feelings aroused in our hero by all this change reflect to a large extent the uneasiness of an entire generation.

Sanshiro's feeling of isolation is followed almost immediately by a terrible feeling of contradiction upon seeing Mineko for the first time. Although he cannot comprehend just what this contradiction is, he thinks of several possibilities. One which stands out is that between "the girl and the atmosphere of the university" (23). This is not surprising, for the first "real" woman he meets also presents him with contradictions. Her Kyushu colour, which reminds him of home and makes him feel friendly toward her, is antithetical in his mind to her behaviour. Mineko is also a real woman, yet her initial natural surroundings lull Sanshiro into a similar false sense of comfort which helps him ignore his feelings of contradiction. Her connection with nature does not end here, but only intensifies. When Sanshiro sees her at the hospital the colour of her kimono is "like the shadowy reflection of evergreens in the university pond" (48). When they officially meet for the first time we find the following description: "The wind embraced the girl. The girl stood in the midst of autumn" (67).

Nonetheless, Mineko is a young woman who stands firmly in the world of reality. She is from the city. She has no parents to force old-fashioned ideas or ways upon her; she is free to act as she wishes. She is always calm, full of confidence and in control -- in many ways the exact opposite of Sanshiro who thus admires her. Mineko has several associations with the West -- she is a Christian, speaks English and apparently plays the violin. Her home is very western with big, overstuffed chairs and curtains hanging in the window. The list goes on. Sanshiro is searching to belong to

this modern, real world and in searching falls in love with its queen.

As our hero gradually becomes acclimatized to life in the big city, descriptions of roaring streetcars and crowded places begin to fade into the background. However, this is not to say that his sense of great unease and estrangement ceases to exist. Rather, it shifts from the general to the specific, from his circumstances and surroundings to his relationships with his friends.

Such feelings are perhaps most clearly illustrated in Chapter Five when Sanshiro goes to the chrysanthemum doll show with Hirota, Nonomiya, Mineko and Yoshiko. In this group our hero sees represented both the dark world of academia and the bright world of reality:

The two were in perfect harmony in Sanshiro's mind. And Sanshiro himself was being woven into the fabric almost before he knew it. But there was something unsettled about the design that made him feel anxious. (86)

There are two causes for this anxiety on Sanshiro's part. The more immediate cause, which he himself recognizes, is the unclear relationship between Mineko and Nonomiya. That morning he catches the tail end of a friendly conversation between the two and this bothers him because he does not know what it is about. This is not the only time our hero is given cause for suspicion. We may recall that the first time he meets Nonomiya the latter has in his pocket an envelope addressed in a woman's hand which our hero later identifies as belonging to Mineko. On the same day Nonomiya risks running between dangerous streetcars of reality to purchase a hair ribbon which Sanshiro later sees Mineko wearing: "In color and texture it was exactly like the one Nonomiya had bought at the Kaneyasu. His legs suddenly grew heavy" (50). Further on we find that "now and then, as his thoughts wandered, the ribbon came to mind. That bothered him, ruined his mood" (52). On moving day at Hirota's house "Sanshiro could not help observing Nonomiya and the direction of his gaze" (77) and later notices that Mineko runs after this man as he leaves. Such examples abound in the text, thus giving

our hero no relief from his suffering until near the end.

The other underlying cause of Sanshiro's anxiety at Dangozaka is that certain something upon which he cannot put his finger -- his alienation. He belongs to neither of the worlds represented here. As if to further exclude him, his companions are all joined by the fact that they are city dwellers. Our hero feels this keenly when he hears their comments on a beggar whom they pass along the way: "They were people of the city who lived beneath heavens that were broad enough to enable them to be true to themselves" (87). This implies that Sanshiro, with his narrow, rustic upbringing is tied to the past where custom dominates, and thus cannot be true to himself. If this is the case, then he must be alienated from, or out of touch with his true self. Being true to oneself or jiko hon-i (自己本位) was one of the author's rules by which to live (Yoshida 323). It is therefore not surprising that Soseki has created a character in search of this ideal.

All of us experience feelings of being out of touch with ourselves at various times in our lives. However, these feelings are all the more traumatic for Sanshiro because of his sudden emergence from 1868, or "Meiji Zero," as Yojiro puts it, into the modern Japan of 1908. Until coming to Tokyo our hero has known nothing but traditional society and its custom-dominated ways. One day he will discover that what he had thought was his true self was only a man molded and shaped by that society. Take away the influences of society and its culture and the person left -- the true self -- is a total stranger. When he meets the woman and Hirota on the train Sanshiro's narrow image of the world begins to collapse. Tokyo, the university and his friends do more to shatter his illusions. However, the person who really brings the fact of his self-alienation home to Sanshiro is Mineko when she calls him a "stray sheep."

Having had no success with him on her own ground, she leads him to his: a rustic spot with a thatch roofed house and a stream bearing his last name, "Ogawa" or small

river, running nearby. This peaceful scene immediately puts Sanshiro at ease. Despite Mineko's efforts, our hero clearly shows her that he is still a captive of traditional Japan and the dictates of its society when he allows the disapproving glare of a stranger to prevent him from confessing his true feelings (Rubin 238). Mineko realizes that this "stray sheep" is alienated from modern society, its free action and thought, and thus from his very self. He is not his own man and so cannot enter into any serious relationship with her.

It should be noted that our hero's realization of his alienation is much weaker than Mineko's: "It was then that Sanshiro knew somewhere deep inside: this girl was too much for him" (93). Because of his youth, naivete, and estrangement from his true self, he is not hit with the full impact of what has happened. In fact, he virtually denies this new situation, so much does he want to join the "real world." Thus it is no wonder that the meaning of the postcard he receives from Mineko goes right over his head, although its message is clear to the reader. From Mineko's portrayal of herself as a stray sheep alongside stray sheep Sanshiro, we realize that she too experiences feelings of loneliness and alienation. Of course this is only natural for a citizen of the "real world". Nonetheless, it makes us see her as the human being she is, rather than the goddess Sanshiro sees her as. Stray sheep cannot help each other, but need a shepherd.

Soseki has called Mineko an unconscious hypocrite or muishiki no gizenka (無意識の偽善家).⁴ In other words, although she likes Sanshiro and leads him on, she simultaneously treats the lovesick youth quite badly by turning cold toward him. Indeed, as Komiya points out, she unconsciously loves our hero, but because of his country smell and consequent alienation from reality, cannot help but treat him as she does (296). Mineko is consciously searching for a shepherd, as we know from her constant chasing after Nonomiya. Again, Komiya is of the opinion that although her

unconscious love for Sanshiro is pure, her love for Nonomiya amounts to little more than attraction to those things which would qualify him to be her shepherd -- his job, social position et cetera (296). This respect is evident in her defence of the scientist: "A man like Sohachi is beyond our understanding. He is so far above us, thinking about great things . . ." (117). However, Nonomiya is like a slightly older version of Sanshiro and belongs in academia. And so, we are not surprised by Mineko's subsequent engagement and marriage not to Nonomiya, but to a stranger who appears to be firmly rooted in the realm of reality.

In order to illustrate the growing estrangement between Sanshiro and Mineko the author begins to focus on events such as Yojiro's movement to secure Hirota a teaching position at the university. Here we see Sanshiro attending a student dinner as well as one for scholars and artists arranged by the scheming Yojiro. School life is mentioned little and it seems that Sanshiro is beginning to fit into the pattern of life in Tokyo.

Our hero's experience of alienation is now directly connected to his relationship with Mineko. In order to find a solution to this alienation he tries two different strategies. One is to continue pursuing Mineko, but in a far too passive way. At this point let us once more compare Sanshiro's experiences with the woman on the train and Mineko. As previously mentioned, the reasons he finds these women approachable are the former's superficial connection with Kyushu and the latter's with nature. Because the former takes control of the situation by asking him to accompany her to an inn, we suspect that Sanshiro now expects Mineko to take full control of their relationship. This is in fact illustrated when he sees an opportunity to settle the situation in Yojiro's arranging for him to borrow twenty yen from her:

If a solution was necessary for Sanshiro's peace of mind, it involved nothing more than seeing Mineko and giving himself a chance to make some kind of decision about her from the way she behaved toward him. Tomorrow's interview would supply him with indispensable data for that decision. (137) (emphasis added)

What Sanshiro still does not realize is that positive action on his part -- his demonstrating that he is in touch with his true self -- is the only solution. Just as he could have changed the course of events with the woman on the train by either firmly turning down or accepting her overtures, he could have changed the course of events with Mineko also. By this time, however it is far too late for such positive action. Nevertheless, we find that the youth is gradually beginning to come into closer touch with himself, or as Hiraoka puts it, that the process of civilization is at work in him (201), when he finally gets up the nerve to confess his feelings to Mineko. As they leave Haraguchi's studio together he says, "I came to see you," but Mineko gives no reply. "Sanshiro could endure it no longer. 'I came because I wanted to see you,' he said, searching for her eyes" (178-79). Mineko's lack of response and perhaps wistful sigh should tell him to give up. If they do not, the sudden appearance of her fiance does.

Our hero's final encounter with Mineko takes place as she comes out of church. Prodded on by rumours of her upcoming marriage, he once again tries to take matters into his own hands. By returning the twenty yen she has lent him, he attempts to cut off all bonds between them and symbolically end the relationship. As Komiya points out though, Sanshiro is not completely free until Mineko releases him (298). She accomplishes this with her confession cum apology from Psalm Fifty-one: "For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me" (209). She has realized her unconscious hypocrisy and is sorry for having treated Sanshiro so badly.

We know that Sanshiro has left a strong and lasting impression on Mineko because the handkerchief she is carrying is soaked in the perfume he once chose for her. Like her impression of our hero, this perfume's scent also seems to be strong and lasting. Of course, we cannot ignore the portrait she has had painted of herself. It "is her monument to that summer day when a handsome young student stared at her, transfixed,

as she walked by the university pond" (Rubin 245). By the end of the novel this fact has not yet hit the youth with its full force, for he stands before his lost love's portrait as confused as ever and still a "stray sheep". Thus Sanshiro's first way of seeking a solution to his alienation has not met with success. However, his experience with Mineko has not been in vain, but has taught him a lesson that will grow in significance and stand him in good stead for the future.

As previously stated, Sanshiro spends much of his time wavering between the worlds of reality and academia. Whereas he is initially drawn to reality through his love for Mineko, the more futile that love becomes, the more he is attracted to academia instead. It is in this world that he latterly seeks a solution to his alienation. His initial contact with academia is through the stranger (Hirota) he meets on the train. Interestingly, just as he finds contradictions between the Kyushu-colour woman's appearance and actions, so does he find similar contradictions in this man. In his kimono and blue socks Hirota resembles a middle school teacher of little importance. However, the words he speaks not only shock Sanshiro, but also cause him to have the following thought: "The man was almost not a Japanese" (15). Except for his strangely western nose, his facial features remind Sanshiro of a Shinto priest. In the end these and other contradictions seem so great that our hero does not know how to behave toward him, finally deciding that "there were bound to be men like this everywhere in Tokyo" (16).

In actual fact, these contradictions mesh well with the enigma that is Professor Hirota. He leads a quiet and scholarly life, both deliberately and comfortably estranged from the pursuits of the real world. This conscious alienation is obvious in his lack of any attempt to further himself in society. Although it is apparent that he could easily qualify for a position at the university, he writes no articles and is satisfied with things as they are. He enjoys his obscurity as the "Great Darkness". This is clear in his

reaction to Yojiro's article of that title:

But the day a man starts up a movement on my behalf without consulting me, it's the same as if he were toying with my existence. Think how much better off you'd be just having your existence ignored. At least your reputation wouldn't suffer! (191)

Rubin juxtaposes our hero's initial impression of this man looking like a Shinto priest with that of the university grounds looking like the precincts of a Shinto shrine, calling Hirota a Shinto priest of the academic world (225). If Mineko is the queen of reality, then Hirota is the priest in charge, or the king of academia.

When we find Sanshiro going to Hirota's "castle" in the early stages of the novel, he is always in the company of others. These visits are more like social gatherings than anything else. However, his later calls seem to have other purposes. On one particular evening we find this reasoning behind our hero's visit:

Lately Sanshiro had become the captive of a woman, he had surrendered himself. . . . He did not know if he was being loved or laughed at, whether he should be terrified or contemptuous, whether he should end it all or go ahead. He was angry and frustrated. There was no one better for him at such times than Hirota. Half an hour with the Professor and all his tensions were gone. To hell with women. It was mainly for this that Sanshiro had come here tonight. (121)

Because of this man's detachment from the world, our hero does not have to be reminded of Mineko or reality while with him. "Sanshiro suddenly felt very close to Hirota" (122) and at the same time is also being subtly drawn toward the uncomplicated world over which this man rules: "He thought to himself how good it would be to see things as the Professor saw them . . ." (120).

Not only does Hirota provide Sanshiro with a place of refuge, but also with what, beneath all the philosophizing, can be taken as a little fatherly advice. We may recall what he says on the train: "Don't surrender yourself -- not to Japan, not to anything" (15). This warning can be applied to hundreds of situations in a single lifetime, but at this juncture in Sanshiro's life it is Mineko to whom he has "surrendered" himself. The Professor's talk about the use of hypocrisy to practise roguery not only concerns

modern youth in general, but also has special significance for our hero, "for he could apply Hirota's theory immediately to the girl who filled his thoughts" (125).

Later the Professor attempts to "open" our hero's eyes to reality by telling him about his own girl in the forest or "very last idealized woman" (Rubin 245). Sanshiro's "Girl in the Forest" is, of course, Mineko whose portrait bears that title. In other words, Hirota is constantly giving Sanshiro the advice he unconsciously seeks, trying to help the youth see his predicament with Mineko clearly, but to little avail. Although Hirota does not have all the answers and Sanshiro does not yet feel the full impact of those he does, we can guess that when they do begin to have their effect, our hero will start to see women in a new light.

And what of Yojiro, Sanshiro's closest friend of the same age? This young man wanders through the novel in a carefree manner, and yet in many ways, it is he that holds it together. It is through Yojiro that our hero formally becomes acquainted with such important characters as Hirota and Mineko. Because of his immersion in the "world of electric lights, of silver spoons, of cheers and laughter, of glasses bubbling over with champagne" (63), this youth exerts quite a powerful influence over our hero who has "never considered himself a strong man" (163). Yet despite all his influence, Yojiro can never provide his friend with the comfort and understanding he gets from the Professor. He is not only far too attached to the real world, but also constantly reminds Sanshiro of his alienation from it with references to his rustic background. At several points in Sanshiro we find such comments as , "There's that farm smell again" (136) and "Only somebody who has just emerged from the wilds of Kyushu and doesn't know anything about the major literary trends would ask a question like that" (98). In the final analysis, despite their friendship, Yojiro and Sanshiro are inhabitants of two different worlds.

At this point, let us momentarily return to the character of Nonomiya Sohachi with

whom Mineko continues to toy throughout the novel. Two particular occasions stand out, neither of which goes unnoticed by Sanshiro. At the art gallery we come upon an interesting scene in which Mineko toys openly with Nonomiya. Her actions are those of a woman who knows full well that she has the upper hand with both men involved. These actions definitely have their impact upon Nonomiya who turns on his heels and basically ignores both Mineko and Sanshiro for the duration of their time together. When later confronted by Sanshiro, the girl initially denies toying with either man, though she soon enough confesses: "I just wanted to do it, I don't know why. I didn't mean any disrespect to Sohachi" (148). Although she would have it seem that she means no disrespect to the scientist, his reaction tells us otherwise. That is to say, her eyes which tell Sanshiro, "Don't you see? . . . I did it for you" (148) would probably have told Nonomiya the same thing had he confronted her. She is attracted to both men and the more influence she has over them, the more she enjoys their company. Perhaps it is specifically because she knows that nothing can come of a relationship with either of these men that she is able to toy with them so easily.

Another time Yoshiko delivers the blow for her friend in Sanshiro's presence. Mineko's message for Nonomiya, "Don't act so cool about it. I know how happy it makes you" (161), whatever it refers to, also has a definite influence upon the scientist whose "face took on an itchy look" (161). Sanshiro is obviously not the only one who has been led on by and caused to suffer over Mineko. But whatever their relationship has or might have been, Nonomiya also loses Mineko. At the beginning of the novel when there are still possibilities, he pulls a letter from her out of his coat pocket; at the end, when there are none, he pulls out an invitation to her wedding: "Nonomiya tore the invitation to shreds and threw it on the floor" (212).

Although obviously unabashed enough by the modern age and its women to arouse our hero's suspicion over his relationship with Mineko, Nonomiya does not belong in the

real world. In reference to his research we find that, "one thing was clear, . . . the scale in the telescope could move all it liked, and it would still have nothing to do with the real world" (21). From the beginning, one world with which Nonomiya has several connections is that of the past -- of traditional Japan. His initial tie is with Sanshiro's mother in Kyushu, for it is she who asks him to watch out for her son. The scientist's name, Nonomiya, actually means "shrine in the fields" and appropriately, his own parents live in the countryside. "Nonomiya seems to carry with him the dark shadows of old Japan" -- among other things, he lives under what is probably one of the few thatch roofs left in Tokyo (Rubin 243).

It is, however, to the world of academia -- Hirota's world -- that our hero assigns Nonomiya. In age, he is thirty which is about half way between the younger Sanshiro and the older Hirota. Is it possible to view each man as a younger version of the next? Nonomiya, a former student of the Professor, has followed his teacher into Academe and still associates with him regularly, as does our hero. While Hirota does no research, Nonomiya is very avid about his, and Sanshiro still dreams of future research. Whereas Hirota totally shuns the real world and will not enter the theatre which is a microcosm of that world (Rubin 225), Nonomiya participates in the real world to the extent that he is the time keeper at a track and field event and he attends the theatre. Sanshiro longs after this contact with the real world and the respect that Nonomiya receives from such real women as Mineko. At the same time our hero leaves both the track meet and the theatre and admires the other side of Nonomiya's life:

Perhaps Nonomiya hoped to avoid contact with the real world as long as he lived. One could come to feel that way quite naturally, it seemed, breathing this quiet atmosphere. And he, too, Sanshiro wondered, perhaps he too ought to lead a life like this, undistracted, unconnected with the living world. (21-22)

Lastly, Hirota is a "matrimonial cripple" and Nonomiya, having lost Mineko, has no obvious present prospects. Sanshiro, younger and still idealistic, finds comfort in the

following thought: "The best thing to do would be to bring his mother from the country, marry a beautiful woman and devote himself to learning" (64). Although there seems little chance of Hirota changing now, as Nonomiya says, "A man can do a lot in seven years" (26) and many possibilities lie in the futures of both him and Sanshiro. In the same breath, Nonomiya also warns that time flies and "Seven years is nothing" (26). Although Sanshiro's future may become the scientist's present and his future Hirota's present, "a human being has the ability and the right to do just the opposite of what circumstances dictate" (153). Therefore, within the context of the novel, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether or not Sanshiro will become another Nonomiya and finally Hirota.

If, despite his citizenship in Academe, Nonomiya has managed to accept the world of reality and live in harmony with it, then what of his younger sister, Yoshiko? Her name means "good child" and aptly reflects her personality: "They [she and Sanshiro] were old friends from the start. She smiled at him, moving the spare flesh of her cheeks and her pallor took on a reassuring warmth" (47). Although Sanshiro places Yoshiko in the real world, he does not experience the same fear with her as with both the woman on the train and Mineko. There is a definite gentleness and warmth associated with Yoshiko that the other women lack: "And so there was not the slightest discomfort in meeting her; the mood was always relaxed" (113). Indeed, her presence seems to brighten our hero's world. When he accompanies her to her brother's house, we find this reaction: "As he listened to the dialogue she carried on with her brother, he felt as though he had walked into a bright, sunlit field" (161). At times, Yoshiko makes Sanshiro feel so comfortable that he associates her with his mother: "The young man's feet brought him into the room, and through his mind flitted the shadow of his mother at home and far away" (47). Later, when Sanshiro is ill, Yoshiko takes on some very motherly qualities: "She brought to Sanshiro's sick bed a total

comfort in which he could place his trust" (206).

Although often described as childish, Yoshiko is true to herself and knows what she does and does not want to do. For example, she quickly turns down the marriage proposal her brother raises:

Don't you see how pointless it is? What can I say when you ask me if I'll marry a man I've never met? I don't love him, I don't hate him, there's not a thing I can say. That's why I don't want to hear about it. (163)

Yoshiko will choose her own husband. She is certainly no stray sheep. In fact, she is probably much more in control of herself (shikkari shite-iru しっかりしている) than Mineko who, in her search for a shepherd, falls short of being a totally "modern" woman by marrying a man who would have settled for either her or Yoshiko (Kataoka 135). In the end, would not Yoshiko's connection with reality and her motherly qualities well suit our hero? Both she and her brother seem to represent well-balanced ideals toward which Sanshiro may wish to strive. If he does not develop into another Hirota, but stops at the Nonomiya stage and follows his "plan" marrying someone like Yoshiko, our hero could become a very well-adjusted citizen of Tokyo, able to participate comfortably in all three of his worlds. This is not to say that such a solution would put a complete end to feelings of alienation, as our next protagonist discovers. However, the idea of balance is very important and although his "plan" is rather simple, our hero seems to be on the right track.

During the course of the novel Sanshiro both finds and loses his first love, gaining a life experience that is part of growing up and which will stand him in good stead for the future. He has begun to fit into the world around him and, although he will continue to have feelings of alienation and disillusionment, the first leg of the journey is over. At the end of the novel we can only hope that he will not remain a stray sheep much longer, but become a full-fledged citizen of the world, incorporating its many aspects into his life and attaining an acceptable balance.

In this novel a young man's feelings of uneasiness and alienation are reflected in the rush of the rapidly changing capital of a modernizing nation. Trains, the symbol of that modernization, help to create such feelings through the great distance they cover at high speed and in short periods of time, the passengers they carry and the noise they make. Although there also exists a connection between alienation and distance in the next three novels we shall deal with, Sanshiro emphasizes this relationship particularly clearly because of the era in which it is set. This is also true of the train's close connection with reality and modernization which will give way to its role as a co-creator in an unreal world of fantasy and illusion in a later work. Death -- a kind of final alienation -- as well as the journey of life leading to it are also associated with the train.

In conclusion, we have experienced with our hero his feelings of estrangement, loneliness and confusion and followed him in his search to resolve them by seeking comfort in nature, women and academia. In Sanshiro we find a pattern of individual alienation and attempted resolution which, in varying forms, is repeated in the next three novels we shall examine.

Chapter Two

A Dark Night's Passing

A Dark Night's Passing (An'ya Koro 暗夜行路 1921-1937), by Shiga Naoya

(志賀直哉, 1883-1971) deals with a protagonist slightly older than Sanshiro and who also feels that he does not belong. However, Tokito Kensaku's life experience has been quite different from the Kyushu youth's, and this is clearly reflected in the special nature of his search. Of course, when similarities do exist, they shall be drawn upon. This novel consists of a prologue written in the first person and four parts written in the third. In the prologue the hero, Tokito Kensaku, recounts various incidents from his childhood involving himself, his mother, father, grandfather and grandfather's mistress, Oei.

With the prologue as its background, Part One outlines Kensaku's present life in his native Tokyo and his increasing dissatisfaction with it. The reader follows him through a series of relationships with women, none of them either serious or lasting. Having been initially attracted to a geisha and next to a bar maid, Kensaku finally sinks into a life of debauchery, frequenting the brothels of the red light district. Not only lonely, but also sexually frustrated, Kensaku turns his desires to Oei who lives with him in a house-keeper type capacity. His lewd dreams involving this woman and his general dissatisfaction with life become so much for him that he decides to leave for the provincial town of Onomichi to be alone and to get some serious writing done.

Part Two covers his time in the provinces and his subsequent return to Tokyo. Things get off to a good start in Onomichi where Kensaku lives as a recluse, associating only with his immediate neighbours and occasionally, a local prostitute. Gradually, however, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to get much work done and his health begins to deteriorate. Soon the despondent young man starts to think of

marrying Oei, some twenty years his senior. As a result of this proposal, his elder brother is forced to disclose the dark circumstances of his birth to him: Kensaku is the son of his mother and the man he has always known as his paternal grandfather. Everything he has thought strange about his childhood now begins to fall into place. However, no matter how hard Kensaku tries to accept the facts rationally, from this point on he often suspects that he has been born under a curse or with some "dreadful congenital trait."

When forced to return to Tokyo because of an earache, he continues to live with Oei as if nothing has happened between them. Depression on his part soon causes them to move house. Before long, though, restless, inactive and lonely, Kensaku begins to visit brothels once again.

Part Three opens with a surprise -- Kensaku is now in Kyoto. Having arrived a month ago, he enjoys wandering around the temples, parks and museums of the ancient capital. At an inn near his he espies a pretty young woman to whom he is immediately drawn. Having found a way to make contact with her family, Kensaku receives help in getting the marriage negotiations under way. When the girl, Naoko, and her family consent, a date is set for the wedding. In the meanwhile, Oei leaves with her disreputable-looking cousin to set up a geisha business in Tientsin.

Once married, Kensaku and Naoko settle into a happy and uneventful life together. But all too soon this state of marital bliss is marred by the death of their first child. Kensaku feels as though he is the "victim of some evil force bent on hurting him" (312).⁵

In Part Four the hero goes off to Korea to fetch Oei whose business ventures there have failed. Upon his return, he senses that there is something wrong and is soon told by Naoko that she has been raped by her cousin. Although Kensaku professes to forgive her, his attitude and actions lead her to believe otherwise. Indeed, she

seems to be right, for her husband's frustration builds up to such an extent that after the birth of their second child, he goes so far as to push Naoko off a slowly moving train. Realizing that he has done something terrible and that the situation may get worse, he journeys alone to Mount Daisen where he plans to live in seclusion for several months and become a better man.

On the mountain Kensaku turns increasingly toward nature both for comfort and in order to discover himself. He is also greatly influenced by Oyoshi, the married daughter from the temple where he boards and by Take, a local woodcutter whose wife has a string of lovers. Having gained peace of mind, Kensaku writes to Naoko to comfort her. The novel comes to a close when, having attempted to climb to the summit, he falls ill and his life is left seemingly hanging in the balance. Naoko comes to his side and the two are at perfect peace with each other at last.

Takahashi Hideo, who sees Shiga's works as having mythological qualities, notes that A Dark Night's Passing is a novel of constant motion (258). This fits in well with our premise of life as a journey:

It seems unlikely that the story's progression will come to an end until Kensaku's journey through life and his physical journey from place to place reach the point where they merge into one. What is Tokito Kensaku? Why is he ceaselessly on the move and in transit? (Takahashi 264) (translation mine)

As Takahashi points out earlier, Kensaku is one who passes from place to place. He is a traveller (257). Like Sanshiro, Kensaku is on the journey of life. Let us turn first to the prologue which describes the initial stages of that journey. Entitled The Hero's Reminiscences or Shujinko no Tsuioku (主人公の追憶), it serves two important functions. The fact that it is written in the first person makes us feel as though we are reading the private childhood recollections of a real person. This intensely personal perspective is just enough to cause us to sympathize with Kensaku and to make him a familiar character whose story we are ready to follow with interest when it is told by a

third person narrator in the pursuing chapters. The prologue also clearly establishes the main cause of the malaise from which the protagonist suffers throughout most of the novel. This alienation and Kensaku's attempts to resolve it are major themes running through A Dark Night's Passing. Let us then discuss the ways in which Kensaku experiences alienation as a child and use them as a tool in understanding and analyzing his journey through the "dark night".

The occurrences described in the prologue, almost none of which are pleasant, form our hero's major memories of childhood. Up until the age of six, he lived with his parents. He seems always to have been alienated from his father who was distant and treated him coldly. His mother, too, showed him little love and invariably dealt with her son severely. This treatment shows the degree to which the young Kensaku felt emotionally estranged within his family from an early age. He wanted nothing more than to feel that he belonged. He craved the attention, love and acceptance that he was denied, as is obvious from the following quotation: "What I wanted was to cry my heart out, or to be shouted at, or to be beaten -- it didn't matter which, so long as something was done to soothe my nerves, to get rid of this terrible oppression" (18). However, Kensaku rarely got respite from this oppression, and only once received a sign of his mother's love, when, caught off her guard, she allowed her feelings to show: "It was her eyes, staring with a strange intentness into mine, that forced me to be still. . . . Whatever else, my mother at least loved me very deeply" (17). This one sign of love, comfort and acceptance soon becomes but a memory for Kensaku. However, as a memory of the unconditional love a child receives from his mother, it becomes something after which our hero longs and searches far into adulthood.

The physical and emotional separation from his adored mother caused by her death, and the subsequent physical and psychological separation from his family forced upon the child serve to reinforce the alienation which Kensaku has always known. Made to

live with an old man for whom he felt an intense dislike, the young boy seems to have had little salvation from his feelings of rejection, unacceptability and loneliness. When he did, it came in the form of his savouring memories of his dead mother and in his relationship with Oei. It is not surprising, then, that Kensaku grows up learning not to depend on others, especially men, and that this results in his developing a particularly strong ego.

Let us now look more closely at the issue of rejection. As we have noted, Kensaku is almost totally rejected by his father as a child. Early on in the novel we discover another case of rejection in which his suit for Aiko is turned down coldly. The girl's mother is the adopted daughter of his maternal grandparents and thus closely tied with his mother: "It was in Aiko's mother, then, that Kensaku sought and found reminders of his own dead mother" (55). The cold way in which this woman treats Kensaku after his proposal is a kind of final, cruel severing of the last link with an adored parent. The only remaining manifestation and proof of his mother's affection has been suddenly and unsympathetically wrenched from him. "But what puzzled him was that she had pushed him away as though no bond had ever existed between them" (62). It is this event and the way that his father deals with him during it that our hero blames for his increasing suspicion and mistrust of others.

Kensaku feels mistrust toward, and is suspicious of many people throughout the novel. In several instances these feelings even extend to those close to him. In extreme cases they are so great that they become nothing other than open rejection. Just as Kensaku has been rejected, he finds it easier to reject than to accept others. Some of those who receive this cold treatment from Kensaku include Sakaguchi and Mizutani as well as numerous strangers who appear briefly. Among them are a young salesman on the boat to Shikoku and a local priest on Mount Daisen.

Rather than go into any detail in describing the scenes in which these characters

appear, let us simply examine what it is about these people that causes the protagonist to reject them so adamantly. They are all friendly and, for the most part, try to help him in some way or other. At one point Sakaguchi recommends Kensaku's work to the publisher, Yamaguchi; Mizutani visits his home, admires his works and is very friendly; the young salesman suggests they go together to an inn that he recommends; and the priest wants Kensaku to attend a Zen seminar. But our hero has learned to be suspicious of good will and friendliness. We may recall an incident from his childhood when, with supposed benevolence, his usually cold father offers to wrestle with him. Kensaku's trust is betrayed as it becomes apparent that the father harbours the ulterior motive of belittling his son. We may also recall the sour side of Aiko's mother's affection. The lesson learned here is clear: trust others, accept their good will and you will be hurt. Whenever an offer of kindness turns sour, Kensaku uses that result to justify his initial dislike of the person involved. Mizutani's friend, who is also Naoko's cousin, rapes her; the inn that the salesman said would not accept a lone traveller does; and the priest asks Kensaku the favour of borrowing his room for a catechism.

In the same way as friendliness makes Kensaku suspicious, eagerness, forwardness and self-confidence irritate him intensely. The fact that his initial contact with these men is without exception initiated by them should also be kept in mind. One of the things that bothers Kensaku about Sakaguchi is the way he sits "smirking, flaunting his superiority" (27). Mizutani's lack of formal restraint, his clean-cut appearance, and overenthusiasm exasperate Kensaku no end: "His jokes, his facile remarks, were all together inappropriate for someone his age; in short, he was impertinent" (273). The priest's forwardness and his exuding "a curious mixture of exaggerated courtesy and expected intimacy" (388) have the same effect on Kensaku, for he is "determined not to invite any further familiarity from this vulgar person" (388).

Thus we have come upon the basic conflict at play within Kensaku. The circumstances of his childhood have not only led him to feel that there is something amiss with himself, but have also caused him to develop a big superficial front as a kind of protection against others. It seems that any male who offers him friendship as his father once did, and thus threatens him, is automatically rejected. Kensaku ends up alienating others because of the way he treats them, thereby becoming alienated and lonely himself.

Interestingly, it seems that Kensaku lacks many of the traits that these men possess. Rather than being cheerful, he tends to be glum. We do not often see him going out of his way to help others or do them favours. He also lacks the confidence that these characters display. The fact that he wants to be a different man and to possess such confidence and self-satisfaction is evident from thoughts he often has in this vein:

He must tread the ground firmly . . . and not shuffle along. He must look straight ahead with the eyes of a calm and controlled man and not look about him nervously as he was wont to do. . . . In his present state of mind, he indeed needed desperately to cling to some such ideal. (194)

It must be pointed out that Kensaku does not reject all the males with whom he comes into contact. There are indeed those with whom he gets along very well such as Nobuyuki, Ogata and Suematsu. Nobuyuki is his brother and Kensaku is "fonder of him than of any other man" (36-37). Our hero listens to Ogata with "sympathy" and "interest," and readily accepts the friendly advice he receives from Suematsu -- not the way he reacts to just anyone. What is it that is different about these men? None of them possess such qualities as aggressiveness, overconfidence or competitiveness which are all attributable to the male or paternal principle and which are found in the group Kensaku rejects. Perhaps this is precisely why he is able to accept them and their friendship.

If Kensaku is rejecting the male or paternal principle, then he is searching for the

female or maternal principle which he associates with a mother's unconditional love. This conflict between our hero's strong sense of self and his rejection of others, and his need to lose his sense of self and accept others forms the basis of both his alienation and his journey through the "dark night".

Like Kensaku's image of his mother and her love, women seem to exist to comfort the wounded ego, to provide a shelter of love and safety from the alienating world of men. As a child, Kensaku sought this comfort through memories of his deceased parent, Aiko's mother and in Oei's strong arms. Oei has been like a surrogate mother to Kensaku, although we are given no details as to the extent of her role as he grew up. As an adult, we find him seeking that comfort which his male companions cannot provide in the company of the geisha Tokiko. We realize that although there is no denying his sexual attraction to her, it is also the possibility of feminine acceptance and a relationship that will go deeper than friendship that Kensaku seeks. "Perhaps this new sense of comfort that he now enjoyed had come into being mostly because he had needed and sought after it" (54). When he realizes that his search has failed he is "left saddened by the knowledge . . . that he would never feel more than a mild fondness for her" (77).

At one point, we get a fairly good indication of what it is that Kensaku subconsciously believes he needs when his total attention is captured by a young woman on the streetcar. Although he is outwardly disgusted by the way the woman smothers her baby with kisses, there is also something there that is very appealing to his senses. Perhaps it is the mother's open display of affection for her son and his obvious basking in the pleasure -- an experience that Kensaku was most likely denied as an infant. As Sibley suggests, perhaps it is also the sensual pleasure which Kensaku derives from the scene (81). After all, "Somehow the whole scene looked to him like an unconscious reenactment of the love play that went on between her and her young husband" (68).

Regardless, the qualities in this mother and wife appeal to both the child and the man in Kensaku:

Tentatively, almost fearfully, he began to imagine himself having a wife like her. No doubt it was a happy thought; indeed, for a moment, he wondered if with such a wife he would want anything else. (69)

It is the mother-child relationship as well as a possible husband-wife relationship to which Kensaku is drawn here. Such a group would constitute a family -- a group to which to belong and in which to feel loved and safe. At one point later in the novel our hero's desire for a family is specifically voiced: "His father and his step-mother, his brother and his sisters -- he belonged to none of them. If only he had a family that he could call his own . . ." (139).

As we have noted, the above scene takes place on a streetcar, which, unlike its cousin the train, is designed for short distance travel within an area of limited size. Whereas the train, passing through vast areas between cities, emphasizes distance and the passage of time, the streetcar de-emphasizes these, for they are short and of little importance. The interval during which the passengers can neither board nor disembark is only a matter of minutes. It is so brief that one cannot be sure whether what one sees and hears is real or not, thus giving the ride a dream-like quality. It is in such a situation that Kensaku both observes and dreams about the young mother -- she is almost too good to be true! Indeed, before he knows it, they are at the next stop and the beautiful apparition disappears. The brevity of the ride when crowds of strangers are packed together only to get off and go their separate ways also stresses alienation. In the above scene, such alienation is illustrated by the impersonality of the little girl who stares at the baby "almost angrily" and the "obvious reluctance" of her maid to respond to the friendliness of the young mother. Kensaku's personal feelings of alienation are emphasized by the fact that his companion is snoozing and thus might as well not be present and by the fact that he does not have a "family" like the one he

observes. Only thirteen years after Sanshiro's publication, the streetcar has become an indispensable part of daily life and has lost enough of its "frightening" reality that it can be effective in a scene such as this one. However, it has not yet lost its connection with modernization and alienation, as we shall see.

Despite the effect the young woman on the streetcar has upon him, Kensaku has not yet arrived at the point where he believes that marriage is the cure for his ills. After flirting with the seductive bar maid, Okayo, he comes to an unpleasant realization:

The truth was he was drawn to almost every woman he saw And before he could stop himself he was asking himself the unwelcome question: "What is it that I want? He knew the answer, but it was so unpleasant, he wanted to hide from it. (81)

It is thus that Kensaku begins to frequent brothels. With the added complication of sex, his search for love and acceptance becomes confused with that for physical satisfaction. The results are very alienating, for although his physical desires are temporarily met, his emotional needs are never fulfilled. "Sometimes, when he thought such emotion was beyond him, he would begin to hate himself" (101).

Whereas Sanshiro never reached the stage of actually hating himself, both Kensaku and our next two heroes display this emotion to varying degrees. In his search to alleviate his self-hatred, which may be the result of an over-familiarity with, and fear of himself, Kensaku feels a keen desire to seek comfort from the mother figure. Since it is impossible for him to run to his real mother, he turns to his surrogate mother instead. However, here too, emotional and sexual fulfillment become confused in his desire for Oei. Suddenly the image of his mother -- of protection, comfort and love -- is juxtaposed with that of lover/prostitute -- of passion and sex. Although these are both images of women, they are also images which alienate each other. They also suggest the incestuous relationship between his own mother and grandfather of which he is to learn later. Were his fantasies to come true, our hero's alienation from the mother figure would be complete.

Thus far we have described Kensaku's feelings of alienation and confusion in terms of his relationships with others and his search for his mother's lost love. However, they are also well-illustrated by the chaotic city around him:

[O]ne streetcar after another coming from the north and south along Muromachidori would stop in front of Mitsukoshi, then as the conductor said his piece would move on again. Mingled with the rickshaws, automobiles, carts and bicycles were the pedestrians, hurriedly weaving through the traffic in all directions. Men rushed past him almost grazing the tip of his nose and leaving a cold draft in their wake. (105)

This scene seems to present alienation in its broader context as it affects all men, especially those denizens of the modern city. The description of the throngs of people and the streetcars coming and going is quite reminiscent of Sanshiro's reaction to Marunouchi, as detailed earlier. The impersonality of the streetcars as they spew out and suck in passengers, and the monotone, recording-like drones of the conductors are symbolic of the modern age, as is Tokyo itself. However, whereas Sanshiro has come to Tokyo from the "past" and is new to all this, Kensaku is a product of the city and needs to flee to the past. This past is initially Onomichi.

We may note that our hero hates trains (105), perhaps for a reason similar to Sanshiro's, and thus takes a more leisurely form of transportation, the ship, as far as Kobe. Despite his dislike of them, the fact that he takes a train on the last leg of his journey emphasizes the great "speed" with which he wants to begin a new life. We will later see the train in connection with speed again, as well as with alienating distance.

Although the ship is a slow, older type of transportation, Kensaku does not escape alienation aboard it. Here his feelings of being different are reflected by the presence of a fellow passenger -- a foreigner. Kensaku is already like an alien within his own family, and often feels like one in society as well. The fact that this "Japanese foreigner" shuns the friendly approaches of the Australian foreigner serves to further stress the extent to which our hero is alone and brings alienation upon himself.

However much he wants to "get away from my friends, from my family, from

everybody" (104), he is not prepared for the loneliness he faces in Onomichi. Kensaku does not yet realize how much he needs others. At first he feels regenerated by the relaxed mood of the town, the view of the sea and nature. However, he has not yet gone back far enough in time and soon the black clouds of alienation block his view. Behind these volumes of dark smoke is the Tokyo-bound train which he sees pass below him. He misses Tokyo and yet is not ready to return, for he has still to learn to accept others and find the love after which he longs. The fact that Tokyo is so near and yet so far away is illustrated by this train. The physical distance between Onomichi and his home is made to seem small because the train is a fast moving express which will reach Shimbashi Station by the next morning: "To a man leading such an inactive life, next morning does seem very soon" (126). On the other hand, the fact that from above the train resembles a caterpillar slowly moving around the mountainside stresses the great physical and psychological distance between Kensaku and Tokyo. That this caterpillar is using all its energy to round the bend emphasizes the great effort our hero will have to make in order to bridge the distance between himself and others. At the same time it also seems to foreshadow his climb up Mount Daisen.

We realize just how much frustration Kensaku is keeping stored up inside himself when on the boat to Shikoku, he imagines himself to be an elephant bent on destruction: "Before he knew it, Kensaku himself had become the elephant, excitedly preparing for his one-man war against the world at large" (133). This daydream illustrates his pent-up feelings of rejection toward others as well as his "one-man" way of facing his problems. But inside the elephantine ego is still the little boy in need of his mother's love. In a final desperate attempt to recapture that love and make it his own, the young man proposes to Oei. She is the one person he wants to see more than anyone else and the one to whom he feels closest (139).

The results of this action only serve to alienate Kensaku more than he previously

could have imagined. The incestuous circumstances of his birth are made clear, and he must now face the extremely alienating fact that he is not who he had thought he was: "The being that was himself, the person he had known until now as himself, seemed to be going farther and farther into the distance like a thinning mist" (146). On top of this, his relationship to the other members of his family has changed completely. His grandfather is really his father, his father is really his brother and his brother is both his brother and nephew. The only relationship that remains unchanged is that which he imagines himself to have with his mother. Our hero's estrangement from his family is both explained and heightened. With his new knowledge, he must now come to terms with both himself and the world around him.

When he wishes to return to Tokyo with the utmost speed, it is by train that he travels. As if to remind us of the "medieval" (Goossen 106) character of Onomichi, the express train does not stop there and Kensaku must take the local train as far as Himeji. The first leg of his journey is slow and he dozes off. Like Sanshiro, he awakes to observe his fellow passengers. It is just like watching a film -- where else can one so freely observe others for such a long period of time? Just as Sanshiro's fascination with a femme fatale foreshadows his search for salvation from another of her sex, although he exchanges not a word with them, Kensaku's observation of a family, and in particular the young wife and mother, predicts his seeking salvation in such a woman.

At Himeji our hero boards an express train which is symbolic of the fast pace of life in the capital and emphasizes the speed with which he now desires to get there. With the mention of place names, Shiga stresses the shrinking distance between Kensaku and his destination. We feel the same expectation and excitement that he experiences: "Oiso, Fujisawa, Ofuna -- these were now behind him. He was filled with such an overwhelming desire to see Tokyo that he could hardly sit still" (162). Thus we see the

train acting as the agent which breaks down the barriers of time and space by reuniting those who have been separated. Just as the train brought Sanshiro to the big city where he discovered disturbing feelings of estrangement, so it returns Kensaku to Tokyo where he will once again find life unsettling.

When he begins to visit brothels once again, Kensaku imagines the prostitute he will sleep with to be different from her sisters: "She was quiet, virtuous and not vulgar -- a sort of lady, in other words" (191). Of course, it turns out that she is just like all the others. But the important point to note is that, no matter how unrealistically, Kensaku is trying to climb out of the hole into which he has dug himself. He is consciously looking for someone to satisfy him on not just a physical, but also an emotional level. At this juncture, in fact, Kensaku is more like a babe in arms than a grown man: "Yet when he reached out and held her round, heavy breast he was filled with an indefinable sense of comfort and satisfaction" (197). As he holds this woman's breast, a symbol of motherhood, he seems to be psychologically back with the mother who once provided him with the only sense of total security and love he feels he has ever known:

There were no words to express the pleasure he experienced then. . . . It was for him somehow a symbol of all that was precious to him, of whatever it was that promised to fill the emptiness inside him. (197)

Nourished at the breast and ready to continue his journey through life, Kensaku can now travel to Kyoto in search of his idealized saviour. He first catches sight of Naoko as she looks after an old man:

As Kensaku wants to be 'nursed' in both senses of the word as well as sexually satisfied, the power of this initial impression of the robust young woman caring for the invalid (he thinks of himself as a recovering invalid) forms the basis of all that is to follow. (Goossen 117)

Let us note that Naoko's name is particularly relevant to the role for which Kensaku desires her. The first character in her name, nao (直) has the meaning of "straight" or "unbent" which to the Japanese mind indicates purity and naivete. It also has the

meaning of "to restore" or "to cure" as in the verb naosu (直す). Indeed, Kensaku believes that marriage will cure him and make him a different man:

Everything before had been truly shrouded in darkness Perhaps now it may all be brought out into the light and cleansed by the sun. The worms would die, the sores would heal; and at last a new life, a life that he had wanted would begin. (211)

As an additional point, it is interesting to note that the character nao also appears in the author's first name, Naoya (直哉). Does this have any significance? Considering that the story is said to be based loosely on Shiga's own life, one might suspect that it does. Perhaps Shiga is letting us know who is really in charge of Kensaku's fate.

A dream which our hero has seems to be warning him that, whether married or not, he is still the same person and that he cannot escape the alienating world of men or himself. The world of men is represented by caged miniature baboons in the dream. Just as these human-like creatures are confined to their cages, people are confined to the reality of this world. When Kensaku runs away in fear and tries to disguise himself, he is surrounded and caught by invisible detectives. It is feasible that these detectives are symbolic of what Kensaku thinks of as his dark fate which is actually the reality of who and what he is. It is constantly there, constantly closing in on him, yet he refuses to face it and keeps on attempting to escape. His change of identity from civilian to soldier in the dream implies a drastic change in role -- a change in one's way of life, one's way of thinking. This could well be symbolic of the role change which is involved in marriage. Kensaku will go from being a single young man to a husband, responsible for his wife as well as himself. If the marriage is to be successful, he will have to accept the other person completely which is something Kensaku is not used to doing. Just as the civilian who becomes a soldier is the same person despite the role change, so is Kensaku the same person both before and after his marriage. In his dream he cannot escape from the world and himself in the form of detectives, just as in reality he will not be able to turn his back on them. In this

sense, the comfort and escape he seeks from marriage will disappoint him.

Kensaku initially finds in marriage that after which he has sought: love, security and acceptance. All too soon, however, he also finds that from which he thinks he has escaped: relentless reality and alienation. Reality comes with the death of his first child and Naoko's being raped. Gradually the resulting estrangement between husband and wife begins to intensify: "[W]hile a new morbid physical attraction drew them together, there came between them an emptiness that prevented the union of their entire beings" (346). Kensaku does virtually nothing to comfort Naoko, but spends much of his time feeling sorry for himself. At such times his instinct is again to run to the mother figure:

Often Kensaku's despondency was such that he would want to rush into Oei's arms like a child. But, of course he could hardly do that. And when instead he sought solace from Naoko, he would suddenly find himself confronted by a steel wall, rudely awakened from his dream of comfort found. (347)

Kensaku has now succeeded in alienating the one person who is more important to him than anyone else. He has expected the impossible from Naoko: unconditional love. His illusions about her have been the same as those about his mother who, had she lived, might well not have provided him with that love after which he seeks in her memory. The fact that he received little comfort and love as a child was not his fault. When nothing was received, there was nothing to reciprocate. However, as an adult dealing with others who have no connection with his childhood experiences, he must learn to take responsibility for the success or failure of the resulting relationships squarely upon his own shoulders. Until he learns that he will never be loved and accepted as he wishes without being willing to reciprocate, the estrangement between himself and others, particularly Naoko, will only intensify.

The turning point in the couple's relationship as well as in the novel occurs when this estrangement comes to a peak. The scene begins off slowly, but picks up

momentum as an angry Kensaku rushes to board a train at Shichijo Station. The shouts of the station master and the sounds of whistles as the train engines start up seem to warn of an imminent crisis and heighten the suspense. Naoko's running alongside the slowly-moving carriage in an effort to board and join Kensaku is like a final, desperate attempt on her part to be accepted by him. However, just like a little boy having a temper tantrum, Kensaku pushes her back onto the platform, openly rejecting her. The growing distance between the train as it pulls out of the station and the platform aptly illustrates the widening emotional gulf between husband and wife. "He could still see the strange look in Naoko's eyes as she fell off the train. It was unbearable. Oh God, he thought, I've done something irreparable" (351). Indeed, the alienation between Kensaku and Naoko has now grown to such proportions that it will be truly irreparable without our hero's reexamination of both himself and the way he treats his wife.

Kensaku's journey in search of a resolution to the conflict between his strong sense of self and rejection of others, and his need to lose his sense of self and accept others has taken him from Tokyo to Onomichi and Kyoto. As we have noted, Tokyo symbolizes modern times and Onomichi, medieval times. Kyoto, with its rich history, represents Heian times and Mount Daisen, with its nature and isolation, pre-Heian or ancient times (Goossen 119-20). Thus this journey takes our hero backward through time to its very beginnings and inward to his very own beginnings.

Kensaku wishes to get to the mountain and achieve his goal as quickly as possible. Therefore, it is not surprising that he once again chooses the train as his mode of transportation. The great distance he must travel, passing through such places as Toyooka and staying in such places as Tottori, emphasizes not only the physical and temporal distance between Kyoto and Daisen, but also the tremendous effort that Kensaku is making to become a better man. At the same time as it cuts across the barriers of time and space, the train also plays an important role in the young man's

salvation, for it literally brings him right into nature: "The vitality of midsummer, or something like that, began to communicate itself to him, reviving in him a rare sense of well-being" (364). However, the train can only take him so far back in time. The fact that Kensaku must take a rickshaw and finally walk up Mount Daisen reinforces the ancientness and isolation of the mountain.

In his book Shiga Naoya no Bungaku, Sudo Matsuo has divided the first half (Parts One and Two) and the second half (Parts Three and Four) of A Dark Night's Passing into two categories. They are confrontation with nature or tairitsu-teki shizen kanren (対立的自然関連) and harmony with nature or chowa-teki shizen kanren (調和的自然関連) respectively. These categories are based on experiences the hero has with nature such as his fight to hold his own against it a deck the boat to Kobe and his total lack of resistance to it on Mount Daisen. Sudo also notes the relative lack of nature scenes in the novel's first half, and the abundance of them in the second. There is no denying that nature plays a vital role in this novel. However, because these nature scenes have been so thoroughly analyzed in other discussions, and because we are concentrating on Kensaku's human relationships, this thesis will not go into detail in that respect. Let it suffice to say that Kensaku's confrontational attitude toward nature parallels this same attitude toward his fellow man and that the same is true of his growing harmony with nature.

The Kensaku that we see leaving for Daisen is much more mature than he was in Onomichi. His seriousness of purpose is greater and he has much more to gain or lose from this journey. His resolution to change is obvious in the determination with which he embraces his surroundings and allows nature to begin its restorative process. The religious tinges of this section also show his firm intention to somehow find salvation and be reborn.

Let us now turn to Kensaku's human relationships on Mount Daisen, for without

them he would indeed be lonely and might only tire of nature's beauty, failing to achieve his purpose. Although our hero has contact with several people on the mountain, Oyoshi and Take are the ones with whom he associates most. Judging from their circumstances, neither of these two would appear to be of much importance. But, they are in fact examples of human virtue and may even be considered nature's helpers.

Take's very name implies his contact with nature, for it is written with the character for bamboo (竹). Because this plant grows straight and tall, the name also suggests an uprightness of character. Not only is Take a model husband, but also a model human being. Although, like the joints of a bamboo trunk, his life has been marred by such tragedies as his wife's open promiscuity, he has still managed to grow straight. Take puts Kensaku to shame, for compared to his wife's deliberate actions, Naoko's "mistake" seems pitifully trivial. For Kensaku, this man who is able to accept his wife just as she is, is somewhat of a god.

Take is busy repairing the roof of the purification fountain (mizuwa no yane 水屋の根) at Daisen Shrine. The water (mizu 水) in the fountain points toward both purification and rebirth (as does the water Kensaku later comes upon at the deserted temple Fujimon'in). These images of water, rebuilding and rebirth are very apt, as Take obviously has a hand in both reshaping and purifying Kensaku. We realize the influence Take is having over our hero when, having heard his story Kensaku is moved to write to Naoko and comfort her. Let us also note that it is Kensaku who takes a liking to and seeks out the company of Take. Yet, Take, who is easy-going and accepting of others, does not reject these friendly approaches. Here, too, he teaches Kensaku still another lesson on human relationships.

Like Take, Oyoshi also plays a passive but major role in our hero's rebirth. Being a young mother of only seventeen or eighteen, there is not much she can teach Kensaku about life. However, her youthful innocence, friendliness and willingness to accept him

without suspicion can teach him a lot about humanity. At one point she says, "I'm hardly more than a baby myself, and here I am, with another baby" (376). The reference is, of course, to her own child, but it is also true that she is to play a 'significant' role in the rebirth of the baby Kensaku. Even her name seems to support this point, for the character yoshi (由) literally means 'reason', 'cause', 'significance' and 'means'. Thus it would seem that she is one of the 'causes' of Kensaku's rebirth or 'means' by which he is reborn. She is, after all, a mother.

The impression that this mother makes upon our hero is strong, as we may note from a dream in which he sees her as a divine medium. Obviously her above mentioned qualities suit the role, for, "it never occurred to him that there was anything untoward in her being a divine medium. Indeed, as far as he was concerned, no one could have excelled her in the role" (378-79). Kensaku's suddenly having an "overwhelming desire to break free and rush up to her" (378) is reminiscent of his past yearning to rush into his mother's arms for love and comfort. The mystical ecstasy he experiences moments later when the medium's sleeve caresses his head reminds us of the sexual satisfaction after which he has searched so long. In fact, this entire dream seems to predict the fulfillment of our hero's need for both mother and physical satisfaction.

While Take is the model understanding and forgiving male, Oyoshi is the model innocent and benevolent female. Once these two have performed their healing functions and Kensaku has accepted the wisdom of their teachings, it only remains for him to accept the ultimate insignificance of both himself and the events he has allowed to rule his life. This process begins with his observation of various creatures and plants and their lives and deaths on the great mountain. We know that it is not yet complete when he has a run-in with a local priest. It ends when, insignificantly small compared to nature, he spends a night on the mountainside.

Here we come across a description of Kensaku having with nature the union which

increasing estrangement prevented him from having with Naoko:

He felt his exhaustion turn into a strange state of rapture. He could feel his mind and body gradually merging into this great nature that surrounded him. . . . It was like a limitless body of air that wrapped itself around him, this tiny creature no larger than a poppy seed. (400)

The image here is of sexual union and the creation of a new life. The seed which will become the reborn Kensaku lies implanted in the womb of the mountain. His sleeping there for several hours, awaiting this birth is rewarded by his coming into a new world with the dawn. At the same time, we find that our hero is also resting easily, enfolded in the bosom of "Mother Nature": "[A]nd contentedly, without a trace of the old uneasiness, he accepted nature's embrace" (401). Thus Kensaku has not only satisfied his sexual cravings, but also found mother at last.

Kensaku returns to his lodgings a different man. His greatly weakened physical state parallels his weakened ego, which having been accepted, is now humble enough to accept others. This point is extremely well-illustrated by the change in viewpoint at the end of the novel. His love and acceptance of Naoko not only show in his eyes, but also in his allowing her point of view to be adequately presented. She, for her part, realizes this and "[feels] herself becoming an inseparable part of him" (408).

Of course, Kensaku will never find a complete resolution to his feelings of alienation for he is a human being, as are we all. However, with his new understanding of the ultimate insignificance of both himself and the situations he has allowed to rule his life thus far, has come an ability to accept others. In the end, this means an acceptance of alienation as a given and learning to live with it in its proper place, not allowing it to come between oneself and others any more than it naturally has to. Like Sanshiro, he must find an acceptable balance.

Whereas the train in Sanshiro is tied almost entirely to images of alienation and death, it plays both a fortunate and unfortunate role in A Dark Night's Passing. Within the city, its crowded carriages and noisy whistles still represent modernization and its

problems, as well as reflect the alienation felt by the protagonist. Far away from home, it represents that home and plays upon one's emotions to return there. In travel between places, it breaks down the barriers of time and space or alternately creates them, depending on the relationship of the individual passenger to the destination. For the passenger it has provided a kind of moving screen of the outside world from which he is temporarily alienated, as well as a free movie portraying scenes involving others about which he can only dream in his own life. One thing with which the train has not been associated in this novel is death. However, this connection exists and shall be examined in the following chapters.

Chapter Three

Snow Country

Snow Country (Yukiguni 雪国, 1934-1947) by Kawabata Yasunari (川端康成, 1899-1972), being one of the three novels for which the author received the 1968 Nobel Prize in Literature, is the tale of another traveller through life. Like Kensaku, Shimamura is also a writer of sorts. However, whereas the former allows his problems with life to overshadow his work to the extent that it is rarely dealt with in the novel, the latter uses his work as a form of escape from his problems. When he needs to escape even from his job, our present hero travels to the snow country. Of all our protagonists, Shimamura is the only one who spends the entire duration of the novel "on holiday," so to speak. Consequently we shall place special emphasis upon the meaning and purpose of a holiday, relating them to our theme of alienation.

The novel consists of two parts and takes place over a period of about three years during which Shimamura, a dilettante from Tokyo who has inherited a fortune and can spend his time as he pleases, visits the snow country three times. His first visit, recounted in a flashback, is brief and follows seven days of mountain climbing and communing with spring in the Border Range. Coming to a resort inn, he asks for a geisha and thus meets the immaculate-looking Komako with whom he starts an affair.

Snow Country opens with our hero's second visit to the hot spring village one hundred and ninety-nine days later. Aboard a night train on his way to visit Komako, he finds himself captivated by the window reflection of the hauntingly beautiful Yoko as she tends the ailing Yukio. This interest continues throughout the novel, for Shimamura's premonition of a connection between Yukio, Yoko and Komako comes true.

The month is December and images of the penetrating cold dominate, countered only by the warmth and humanity of Komako in her love for Shimamura. It soon

becomes apparent that many of her activities -- keeping a diary, cataloguing books, becoming a geisha to pay her rumoured finance Yukio's medical bills -- make Komako a tragic figure in the hero's eyes. He feels her existence to be a "wasted effort," which is chiefly what draws him to her. At the same time, he feels he must be careful not to allow himself to be too attracted by it. In one scene he almost loses himself to her as her samisen performance puts him in a trance.

Part Two, which corresponds to our hero's final visit, takes place approximately one year later during the maple-viewing season. After the death of both Yukio and his mother with whom she had lived, Komako has moved and now has a real contract. As for the mysterious Yoko, she spends all her time at the graveyard. The hero's fascination with this girl gradually deepens and when Komako discovers this she has her deliver two messages to him. It is at this point that he has his first and last conversation with Yoko. In the meanwhile Komako's visits to Shimamura's room continue and her relationship with him is now an open secret.

Finally deciding that the time has come to leave both Komako and her hot spring resort forever, Shimamura takes a day trip to two nearby weaving centres as an incentive to break away. Upon his return he is greeted by Komako and together they rush to the scene of a fire. While the heroine worries about the reality of human lives at stake, Shimamura is enraptured by the beauty and sensuality of the Milky Way. He is brought out of his reverie to discover that Yoko's body has fallen through the flames, but as Komako rushes to Yoko's side, our hero is isolated from the women by the crowd only to have the Milky Way flow down inside him with a roar.

Before discussing the novel itself, we shall briefly consider the meaning of a holiday or vacation. A holiday is a period of rest spent away from labour. When one goes on holiday, the dominant image is that of getting away from one's everyday routine and responsibilities -- relaxing and enjoying oneself, passing the time in a

pleasurable manner. In other words, it is a kind of "escape" and "relief" from everyday reality. However, it is only temporary and one must, sooner or later, return to mundane existence. In general, the more time and money one has, the further from both home and reality one can go. Regardless of such circumstances, though, we all need time to relax, think, forget and fantasize. Many people talk of communing with nature and getting back "in touch" with something very basic in the self. This was certainly the case with Kensaku's journey to Mount Daisen where he experienced a symbolic rebirth after giving himself up to the forces of nature. Thus we see that a holiday can imply not only a temporary escape, but also a kind of search. Let us then explore the world of our present protagonist -- that from and that to which he is escaping, as well as that which he is seeking in his escape.

Only a very miniscule portion of the novel is devoted to Shimamura's everyday life in Tokyo. Nonetheless, it is important not to overlook such details, for they add up to become the impetus for his journeys into the snow country.

We may recall the unsettled feelings that the big city aroused in Sanshiro and the unpleasant associations it held for Kensaku. Komako's references to it indicate that it is no less an alienating and lonely place in Snow Country: "Tokyo people are complicated. They live in such noise and confusion that their feelings are broken to little bits." Shimamura is of the same opinion: "Everything is broken to little bits" (118).⁶

Although no more than a few lines focus on the hero's family, we learn that he is married and has an unspecified number of children. Judging from the only time she is given any say in the novel, Shimamura's wife is quite the opposite of her husband. She is the practical one in the family, the one who makes sure that the household and its members run smoothly, while he spends his time in a very different world. Obviously, our hero often needs to be told what to do, just like a child; or perhaps he is a

henpecked husband: "It was the egg laying season for moths, Shimamura's wife told him as he left Tokyo, and he was not to leave his clothes in the open" (89). We can easily imagine that whereas our hero's interest in moths is purely aesthetic -- he loses himself observing them in their struggles with death -- that Mrs. Shimamura's interest goes no further than seeing them as pests. If she were to come to the snow country which so enraptures her husband in order to escape the summer heat, she would in all likelihood find it quite dull and be in need of entertainment. "The woman, being fortunately an amateur, would be a good companion for his wife. He might even have his wife take dancing lessons to keep her from getting bored" (23). It is quite possible that his wife sheds the only rays of practical reality to be found in our hero's daily life.

Even less is divulged about their offspring. In fact, other people's children are more immediate to him -- the daughter of a blind masseuse, Kimi the innkeeper's daughter, "the image of Komako as the mother of another man's children" (154). So enwrapped does he become in his holiday surroundings that at times we might "wonder whether he has forgotten his own wife and children" (154). However, they do flit through his mind occasionally: "As he picked up a dead insect to throw it out, he sometimes thought for an instant of the children he had left in Tokyo" (132). The question of the relationship between dead insects and one's children immediately comes to mind. Our hero has earlier been watching moths lay eggs and then die, so it is quite likely a moth that he throws out. The action of laying eggs and then dying fits in well with his view of life as a "wasted effort" which we shall examine later. It seems to emphasize the transience of life which comes and goes with the seasons. Perhaps our hero feels that having had children has somehow been a wasted effort, or again that, like the moth, he has thrown them away, evading his responsibilities toward them. Either way, it is not a happy image and seems to contain a tinge of regret. Whereas Kensaku's problems and their solutions all focus around "families," for

Shimamura his family has little open connection with anything. As things stand, none of them have much immediate reality or meaning. Whatever his relationship with those closest to him, it will depend for its success upon his relationship with himself which, as we shall see, is in need of some work.

Shimamura's occupation epitomizes a similar lack of reality. Both his adamant refusal to see a Japanese ballet and the fact that he has never seen the dance performed by Westerners bespeak our hero's alienation from his subject. That the ballet itself is an occidental art lends it an additional air of unreality. Our hero himself recognizes these facts:

Nothing could be more comfortable than writing about the ballet from books. A ballet he had never seen was an art in another world. It was an unrivaled armchair reverie, a lyric from some paradise. He called his work research, but it was actually free, uncontrolled fantasy. (25)

As will be shown, this also ties in with his theory of wasted effort. Not only does his work have an air of unreality about it for its author, but it also has little value for those in the real world. This is made clear in reference to a luxury edition which he plans to publish at his own expense. "The book would in all likelihood contribute nothing to the Japanese dancing world" (131). Shimamura lives in a world both deliberately and utterly divorced from reality and what is more, from society and even, it would seem, his own family.

We have come across something very basic in our hero's personality. He is almost magnetically drawn to anything that seems to him to be unreal, for the unreal is unthreatening and allows him to ignore and escape the wasted effort in his own life. Being one with his imagination, it has no life of its own and can be shaped by Shimamura into whatever he wants it to be, as beautiful as he wants it to be. However, should it pound on the walls of his heart and insist on an existence of its own, should it become dangerously real and thus both threatening and uncontrollable, he is prepared to beat a quick retreat. This is demonstrated by his abrupt change in

interests as a young man. Having been fascinated by such art forms as traditional dance and drama, he got too close to his subject:

Just as he had arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing for it but to throw himself into the dance movement, and as he was being persuaded to do so by certain of the younger figures in the dance world, he abruptly switched to the occidental dance. He stopped seeing the Japanese dance. (24)

This fact is also noted by Ueda (78).

We might next ask whether or not Shimamura is happy with his life as it is. At two points in the novel reference is made to what can be called our hero's self-contempt:

But it was also true that Shimamura, with no real occupation, took some satisfaction from the fact that his occasional introductions to the occidental dance put him on the edge of the literary world -- even while he was laughing at himself and his work. (25)

He pampered himself with the somewhat whimsical pleasure of sneering at himself through his work, and it may have been from such a pleasure that his sad little dream world sprang. (131)

Indeed, Shimamura's everyday reality, in all its unreality, does seem to be rather pathetic and empty. Komako catches this when she says, "You're a simple, honest person at heart, aren't you? Something must be making you sad" (118).

Thus the question of why our hero goes to the snow country arises. In fact, there is no simple answer, for his purpose is two-fold, with complications to boot.

Furthermore, the two sides of his purpose stand in direct opposition to each other.

From our discussion thus far we can conclude that Shimamura needs to be surrounded by the unreal in order to feel secure -- safe from the jaws of reality. It is then not surprising that our hero tends to view the snow country as unreal, as a place of escape (as if his occupation is not already enough of an escape). Unfortunately for the dreamer in Shimamura, reality rears its ugly head in the form of a vague emptiness and sense of meaninglessness -- that is, the "wasted effort" of which he is so afraid. As we shall see, this is not to say that he minds impassively noting the waste in the lives

of others, as long as it does not reflect that in his own. Shimamura, the perfect observer, distances himself so far from the fearful reality of life that it has become impossible to participate in it and live "completely." At the same time, however, facing and dealing with that reality is a major part of being human and we find that such a desire, or even need, exists within our hero also. Although it remains an unconscious need for most of the novel, he does give voice to it once:

Shimamura, who lived a life of idleness, found that he tended to lose his honesty with himself and he frequently went out alone into the mountains to recover something of it. (17)

Here we find that even more basic than a feeling of alienation from his family, his work or society, is a sense of estrangement from the self. The above quotation reveals a desire to resolve his self-alienation and the following one a vague wish to resolve his social estrangement. He himself notes that, "I've had to come to the mountains to want to talk to people again" (22).

We might look at our hero's journey in the following way. Shimamura travels to what can be termed a "real" fantasy land. It is real because it exists in the outer world, but it is unreal because he can enter and leave it at will and because he has no connections there to make it real. The fact that the hot spring village is never given a name -- as though it might disappear from the map as our hero's train pulls out of the station -- only adds to its unreality. In this way he can taste of reality, all the while convincing himself of its unreality -- that is until Komako refuses to remain a figment of his imagination. As we shall discover later, Komako and Yoko represent these alternative purposes of our hero's sojourn in the snow country.

As is attested to by frequent, detailed descriptions of nature as seen through his eyes, Shimamura is in his element when surrounded by the beauty -- the sights, sounds and smells -- of the season. Engulfed by greater nature, he seems to be on the verge of finding the ultimate form of escape. Our present hero is not alone, for Sanshiro sought

comfort from reality in nature and Kensaku self re-discovery. Certainly the mountains hold a special magic for him, a magic that releases his spirit and makes him happy:

But at the door of the inn he was seduced by the mountain, strong with the smell of new leaves. He started climbing roughly up it.

He laughed on and on, not knowing himself what was funny.

When he was pleasantly tired, he turned sharply around and, tucking the skirts of his kimono into his obi, ran headlong back down the slope. (29)

At this point it is clear that he sees the snow country as a fantasy land where he can avoid all responsibility:

Though he was an idler who might as well spend his time in the mountains as anywhere, he looked upon mountain climbing as almost a model of wasted effort. For that very reason it pulled at him with the attraction of the unreal. (112)

Indeed, we sometimes expect him to wake up from his reverie and find himself back in Tokyo. Let us note that "his response to the mountains had extended itself" (19) to cover Komako, making her too "somehow unreal" (24). We find here reminders of the way in which the "real" Mineko's connection with nature lulled Sanshiro into a false sense of security. The facts that after his return to Tokyo Shimamura neither writes to Komako nor sends her the dance instructions he promised indicate her initial lack of both importance and reality in his mind. All this only serves to emphasize the unreality established at the outset of the novel.

Aboard what is later described as "some unreal conveyance" (86), Shimamura finds himself being subtly drawn into a sort of fantasy world. The train also serves the function of pulling the reader into the heart of the story. As in our previous two novels, the train provides the weary traveller with a human drama for entertainment. Despite their flesh and blood appearance before him, the fact that the other passengers are both unknown and unconnected to the observer makes them unreal and removes them once from his reality, as is the case with Kensaku. When the other passengers appear on a movie screen as do Yoko and Yukio, they become actors who are not only unreal, but also untouchable -- twice removed from reality. Not only are they totally

unaware of being watched, but because of the existence of a physical barrier -- the window -- between them and their audience, Shimamura cannot participate in their drama. Such a situation creates an alienating distance, both physically and emotionally:

For Shimamura there was none of the pain that the sight of something truly sad can bring. Rather, it was like watching a tableau in a dream -- and that was no doubt the working of his strange mirror. (9)

The above emotions experienced by our hero are created by travel, the movement of the train, the loss of firm ground beneath his feet and the resulting sense of unreality. Related to them are his intangible feelings for Komako who, "[t]he more he tried to call up a clear picture of her, the more his memory failed him, the farther she faded away, leaving him nothing to catch and hold" (7) -- almost as though she might fade with the evening landscape. Nonetheless, it is still Komako who, along with the mountains, draws Shimamura into the snow country just as she will later draw him to the fire scene:

In the midst of this uncertainty only the one hand, and in particular the forefinger, even now seemed damp with her touch, seemed to be pulling him back to her from afar. (7)

Indeed, the progression of images layered one upon the other in this scene reminds us of a dream, or the strange interplay of conscious and subconscious in the few moments between waking and sleeping. There anything is possible, even a solitary and beautiful eye hovering in the fading light of the day. We can well imagine that our hero is half dozing when he is startled by this apparition. "But he had been dreaming" (7) and he quickly realizes that it is but a reflection. The spell of the train which confuses the senses and causes one's perception of time and space to become less keen is, however, very powerful for Shimamura soon comes to "forget that it was a mirror he was looking at" (10). In other words, the dreamland in the mirror becomes real. Neither does its hold over the hero wane after his arrival at the hot spring. The transparency of Yoko's face in the evening window cum mirror is recalled by a later

scene in which he is momentarily "taken with the fancy that the light might pass through Komako, living in the silkworms' room . . ." (54). The similarity does not end here. When Shimamura visits Komako's room he is oppressed by "the uneasy feeling that he [is] suspended in a void" (54), something like the void created by the tirelessly moving train.

Yoko's transparency becomes cold with the creeping darkness. This is because the warmth of her ministrations exists on the other side of the cold screen which separates her from our hero and it is rapidly slipping into the night. Yet she does not lose her unreality. When she calls out to the station master at the lonely signal stop, "Shimamura perhaps saw her first of all as rather like a character out of an old romantic tale" (11). The train, which is "not from the same world as the trains on the main lines" (86), has done its job well. Just as women on trains predicted our past two heroes' seeking salvation in others of their sex, Yoko clearly represents the unreality and escape that our present hero seeks in his journey.

If the inside of the train is a void, as seems to be our hero's mind, then what of the outside scenery? As we have already noted in Sanshiro, the scenery passes by so quickly that the passenger has no chance to become acquainted with the towns and villages he passes, thereby becoming alienated from them and their inhabitants. When shrouded in the fading light of day, they might as well not even exist. They too are consigned to the unreal. Our hero wonders "whether the flowing landscape [is] not perhaps symbolic of the passage of time" (14). Indeed, time does seem to race by before our very eyes:

Like Shimamura, all men are passengers on a train, a train called Time, and are prone to be bored as they watch the monotonous landscape endlessly extending into the distance. They often lose sight of their destination, of a meaningful purpose in life. (Ueda, "Kawabata's Snow Country" 74)

The train's connection with our hero's philosophy of wasted time as well as his need to escape it is clear.

As in Sanshiro, here too we find a connection between the train and death. No suicide takes place and there are no really frightening images. Rather, the connection is subtle, appearing in the person of Yukio. This is not surprising when we consider the other-worldly qualities he and his companion Yoko evoke. Like apparitions they float up onto the window before our hero, suspended in some void, existing neither within nor without. To Shimamura, their figures, "transparent and intangible, and the background, dim in the gathering darkness melted together into a sort of symbolic world not of this world" (9). Oblivious to their surroundings, they seem destined for another dimension: "It was all completely natural, as if the two of them, quite insensitive to space, meant to go on forever, farther and farther into the distance" (9).

Yukio is quite clearly a very sick man, and we later learn that he is returning home to live out his last days. His name, which we are not immediately told, literally means go (Yuki 行く) man (o 男) or man who is going somewhere. The train is transporting him to his death and Yoko is his faithful attendant. Shimamura can watch Yukio and Yoko, but he cannot follow. Indeed, he later has several opportunities to see Yoko as she carries a chamber pot from the sickroom and a whole year later, as she spends her days at Yukio's grave, by which the train passes daily as if to remind us of its role. One critic goes so far as to call Yoko "the eternal death bride" (Liman 281). In his opinion it is this girl's mysterious affinity with death that draws our hero to her. However, we shall leave the question of their relationship for later.

Just as it is the function of the train to bring our hero into the snow country, so is it its function to take him home. We may then ask what differences exist between these two journeys. The most obvious distinction occurs in direction. As it moves toward the hot spring village and Komako the train breaks down barriers of distance between two places, two people. As for emotional distance, the fact of "positive" movement toward a goal causes our hero to try to conjure up a clear picture of the

heroine. However, this effort is countered by both the monotony of the journey, which dulls the senses, as well as by Shimamura's personality.

Conversely, as the train moves away from the snow country and the heroine it builds up a physical barrier of alienating distance, leaving us with two totally unrelated points: the hot spring village and Tokyo, as well as two totally unrelated people: Komako and Shimamura. Between these points and people is a growing void:

Shimamura abandoned himself to the fancy that he had stepped into some unreal conveyance, that he was being borne away in emptiness, cut off from time and place. (86)

This "negative" movement does not leave room for the hero to call up images of Komako on his own. He has to be reminded of her. "The monotonous sound of the wheels became the woman's voice" (86). The further the train moves from Komako, the more difficult it becomes for Shimamura to be reminded of her for, "listening was a trial" (86). This woman's influence upon our hero wanes as the physical gulf between them opens up, and we feel that soon enough she will be relegated not to memory, but to some dream world: "But to the Shimamura of that moment, moving away from the woman, the voice was already a distant one that could do no more than sharpen the poignancy of travel" (86). Thus, as in A Dark Night's Passing, we see that the train, depending on the individual passenger's destination, acts as an agent of union, breaking down the barriers of time and space, or alternatively as an agent of alienation, creating such barriers.

Whereas in the first train scene our hero's fellow passengers were initially real people who then became mere reflections, the reverse is true here. This time the other travellers start off as half-transparent figures who float up from the depths of the landscape, later becoming flesh and blood human beings acting out a drama to which our hero is able to react with a sense of reality. The older man and young woman apparently travelling together call up memories of Yukio and Yoko in the reader's mind.

Just as Yoko's intent ministrations give her a wifely air so that she and Yukio might be mistaken for a married couple, so does the way the girl in the latter scene leans intently forward to catch the man's every word give the impression that they are "[a] pair off on a long journey together" (87). Appearances are deceiving. The shock of discovering that the two are just chance travelling companions serves two purposes. Firstly, as Shimamura himself realizes, their parting reinforces the fact that he has left Komako. In fact, the two couples are not unlike, for Shimamura and Komako also meet by chance and are only temporary travelling companions through life. Perhaps they will meet again sometime, but it is far more likely that when they say good-bye the next time that their separation will be final: just like that of both the girl and the travelling salesman and Yukio and Yoko. Secondly, the sad reality with which the scene strikes Shimamura emphasizes that it is toward the world of reality that he is being carried. Whereas heading into the unreality of the snow country anything is possible so that our hero's premonition of a connection between Yukio, Yoko and Komako can come true, his imagination has no such power in the face of the reality toward which he is now moving.

At this point let us briefly examine the images of cleansing and purification associated with the snow country. The waters of the hot spring baths cleanse the bather not only physically, but also emotionally as their soothing warmth washes away the dirt of the city and the tensions that the hero has accumulated there. We often find Shimamura heading down to the baths, both with Komako and alone. The wildness of the region, still newborn when compared to the city also has its cleansing effects as we have seen from the protagonist's reaction to the mountains and nature. The air is pure, allowing both Yoko's voice and Komako's samisen to echo through it beautifully:

The air was different. There were no theater walls, there was no audience, there was none of the city dust. The notes went out crystalline into the clear winter morning, to sound on the far, snowy peaks. (72)

The pure mountain air also seems to be what gives Komako's skin its clean appearance for, "the polish of the city geisha had over it a layer of mountain color. . . . More than anything else, it was clean" (73).

Of course, we cannot ignore the snow -- white, pure, cold -- which perhaps comes to mind most readily. When Shimamura himself does not come to the snow country for his ritual purification, he sends his chijimi linen kimonos to be cleansed by the snow and bleached back to a cold, but brilliant white by the sun:

The thought of the white linen, spread out on the deep snow, the cloth and the snow glowing scarlet in the rising sun, was enough to make him feel that the dirt of the summer had been washed away, even that he himself had been bleached clean. (152)

In the above quotation we find that another ingredient, fire, in the form of the sun plays a cleansing role as it cooperates with the snow to create chijimi linen. However, at the same time, these two images of cold and heat, snow and fire also stand in direct opposition to each other.

Snow is linked with the desolation and loneliness of the long, snowbound winters of this region of Japan and thus also with the unreality Shimamura associates with the area. In contrast, the sun is linked with Komako's human warmth that penetrates the hero's cold exterior, bringing him closer to self-honesty and reality. Physically Komako's warmth is manifested by the reflection of her red cheeks against the white snow in the unreal morning mirror, her deep blushes and the warmth of her body. At one point our heroine's reality becomes so strong that Shimamura exclaims, "You're on fire" (123). As we shall see at the close of the novel, cold and heat, alienation and human warmth, unreality and reality are brought together one final time in the form of a conflagration in the snow.

Now we turn to our hero's time actually spent with Komako in the snow country. Two things about our heroine leave a deep impression upon him. Physically it is her cleanliness: "The impression the woman gave was a wonderfully clean and fresh one. It

seemed to Shimamura that she must be clean to the hollows under her toes" (18). Her skin is compared to a freshly peeled onion or lily bulb (73) and even her smile is "clean" (66). Emotionally it is the waste of effort he sees in her life that attracts Shimamura to Komako. Several times we find him wanting to stress this point emphatically. Not surprisingly, these two conditions are closely related, for the wasted effort our hero sees in Komako's way of life only makes her seem cleaner. It has the effect of "distilling" and "purifying" (42) her existence, as he puts it. It also helps keep her in the realm of unreality. None of this should be too surprising when we consider Shimamura's two-fold purpose in coming to the mountains: to escape into an unreal fantasy land, and at the same time to be cleansed of the dishonesty with himself that leads to self-alienation. However, our hero cannot have it both ways. As we have seen earlier, Shimamura is initially able to forget Komako's existence, that is, to keep her within the bounds of unreality, but if she is to help cleanse him, it is with reality.

We might ask how it is that Komako cleanses the hero when she is by profession a prostitute of sorts. Besides her clean appearance, her attitude toward life and the way she lives each day are pure in their intensity and sincerity. Indeed, Shimamura, who is totally unfamiliar with such an approach to life, is often taken aback by it. For example, Komako's reaction to his casual suggestion that she should have written to him while she was on the coast leaves him speechless:

'I couldn't possibly write the sort of letter your wife would see. I couldn't bring myself to. I don't tell lies just because people might be listening.' The words came to him in a sudden torrent. He only nodded. (100)

Her forthright attitude toward the reality of her occupation displays further earnestness and self-honesty:

'It makes no difference. My kind can find work anywhere.' . . . That straightforward manner, so replete with direct, immediate feeling, was quite foreign to Shimamura, the idler who had inherited his money. (130)

This also shows that Komako is familiar with a reality of which our hero cannot even

dream. Her earnestness is also displayed in her "great victory of will" (72) in mastering the samisen almost completely on her own.

And what of the so called wasted effort in her life? In reference to her careful and earnest cataloguing of what she has read, we find the following conversation:

'But what good does it do?'

'None at all.'

'A complete waste of effort.'

'A complete waste of effort,' she answered brightly, as though the admission meant little to her. (41)

Although she seems to realize the waste of effort entailed in this activity, it does not bother her as it does our hero. Perhaps this is because it only occupies a very small part of her life. Granted, keeping such records may be considered a sort of escapism, but it is not full blown in the way Shimamura's "research" is. Komako spends most of her time in the real world, whereas the opposite is true of our hero. Thus although he notes of the heroine's keeping a diary that, "his own distant fantasy on the occidental ballet, built up from words and photographs in foreign books, was not in its way dissimilar" (42), the two pastimes are most clearly "worlds" apart.

Perhaps it is in Komako's sincerity in her human relationships that our hero finds the greatest sense of wasted effort. He readily passes this judgement upon his discovery that she became a geisha to pay Yukio's medical bills. He feels the same way even after his realization that "he himself was the object of her love . . ." (127). Clearly our hero has no understanding of the fact that the effort is worthwhile specifically because of the feelings she has for the other person. He seems to have no personal frame of reference, not even where his family is concerned. Shimamura does not yet confront, or possibly cannot even see his own coldness. Nonetheless, Komako retains her quality until the very end of the novel.

Our heroine possesses the humanity, earnestness and self-honesty or majimesa (真面目) that Shimamura has lost or never even known. She is too earnest to "sneer"

at herself in the way Shimamura sneers at himself through his work. Komako is comfortable with who she is and although she may not always be happy, she has accepted her lot in life. Our hero, on the other hand, is not totally comfortable with the way he is, hence his search and the slow realization that something is lacking in him. Part of Shimamura's misfortune and feelings of self-alienation stem from the fact that he has been afforded the luxury to ponder life which Komako has not. In this sense his is the fate of modern man as he finds himself with more and more free time to spend as he pleases. Such a luxury, however, only makes our hero even more afraid of the truth -- that his life is the biggest waste of all, for there is no humanity in it:

She [Komako] did not seem to find herself especially sad, but in Shimamura's eyes there was something strangely touching about her. Were he to give himself quite up to that consciousness of wasted effort, Shimamura felt, he would be drawn into a remote emotionalism that would make his own life a waste. But before him was the quick, live face of the woman, ruddy from the mountain air. (43)

Our heroine's reality only grows as the novel progresses (Tsuruta 256) and eventually begins to pound on the walls of his heart before he has a chance to escape. Obviously it is in Komako that he finds the encounter with reality and encouragement to face the wasted effort in his life that he seeks and yet fears. In contrast to the sterile coldness of the snow country, discussed earlier, Komako's passionate warmth makes her overflow with life. At times this warmth, this purity of effort in giving her entire being practically overpowers our hero: "Like a warm light, Komako poured in on the empty wretchedness that had assailed Shimamura" (62). This is particularly true when she performs on her samisen for him:

Taken with a feeling almost of reverence, washed by waves of remorse, defenseless, quite deprived of strength -- there was nothing for him to do but give himself up to the current, to the pleasure of being swept wherever Komako would take him. (71)

However, for all the intensity of Komako's reality and love which our hero sees before him, he still allows his emotional emptiness toward reality and toward others to get the

better of him. Like the sound of her samisen that "opened a transparent emptiness deep in his entrails, and in that emptiness . . . reverberated" (71), Komako also seems doomed to be nothing more than an echo: "He heard in his chest, like snow piling up, the sound of Komako, an echo beating against empty walls" (155).

At the same time there are also indications that Shimamura is disturbed by the turn of events, for they point to failure in his search to fill the emptiness within him and regain his self-honesty. Upon reflection, he is shocked at his own inhumanity:

And the more continuous the assault became, the more he began to wonder what was lacking in him, what kept him from living so completely. He stood gazing at his own coldness, so to speak. He could not understand how she had so lost herself. All of Komako came to him, but it seemed that nothing went out from him to her. (155)

Shimamura's inability to understand how Komako has so lost herself over him clearly indicates a lack of familiarity with the emotions she is experiencing. Whether or not he shall ever learn to accept and reciprocate such emotions or ever find what he seeks will depend on our hero's ability to honestly face the waste of effort in his own life and accept it for what it is. In the final dramatic scene of the novel Komako will sacrifice her greatest effort that Shimamura might see the light of reality. Before we arrive at this scene, however, we must deal with one final character and her influence upon Shimamura.

Yoko's first appearance in the novel is such that she leaves a haunting impression upon hero and reader alike. Neither does she lose her apparition-like qualities as she suddenly materializes and vanishes time and again. As Ueda points out, Yoko's untouchable (and therefore unreal) quality is stressed by her sparsity of physical description. She possesses only a high resonant voice and coolly piercing eyes -- neither of which can be touched (Ueda 74). As we have already noted, she provides our hero with the unreality he seeks. Apart from her aesthetically appealing attributes, the only thing that impresses him about Yoko is her strange intentness. It is perhaps this

quality which, in the end, strikes the loudest chord in our hero's heart.

Initially he is drawn by this young woman's intent ministrations to the ailing Yukio as his comments to Komako reveal: "She was exactly like a mother. I was very much impressed" (52). She displays the same earnestness when she comes to call Komako to Yukio's bedside which only causes our hero's curiosity to peak further. Finally, her total absorption in daily tending his grave a whole year after his death reveals to our hero a great love and devotion of which he himself is incapable. Yoko's actions are particularly sad in their obvious hopelessness. They are what Shimamura would term "a wasted effort." Interestingly enough, however, he never accuses her of such. Perhaps this is because of her strong lack of reality in his eyes or the fact that, like Komako, he tends to see her as mad.

As does the heroine's, Yoko's earnestness purifies her already pure existence in the hero's mind:

Yoko stood rigid, gazing at Komako. Her face, like a mask, wore an expression of such earnestness that it was impossible to tell whether she was angry or surprised or grieved. It seemed an extraordinarily pure and simple face to Shimamura. (82)

Here, and again when they meet at the cemetery the girl's "face wore the usual solemn, mask-like expression" (119). It is behind this emotionless cover that the real Yoko of whom the hero is afraid lurks. For the real Yoko exists in the real world and can cause the fantasy half of his journey to crumble apart. Only when she is confronted by Shimamura concerning the touchy topic of Yukio and Komako does the mask begin to crack around the edges and reveal the real Yoko:

It seemed that the girl's whole body must soon be trembling. Shimamura looked away, fearful that a dangerous light would be breaking out on that too earnest face. (135)

She looked up at him with moist eyes -- a sign that perhaps her defenses were breaking down -- and he found in them an uncanny sort of beauty. (136)

However, just as Yukio's plight did not strike our hero as sad because of the unreality

of the train, neither does he let Yoko's plight truly affect him: her voice "struck emptily at the shell of Shimamura's heart and fell away in silence" (137). He is afraid to face her reality. Indeed, when he hears her singing cheerfully in the bath moments later, he comforts himself with the thought that he might "have seen the earlier Yoko in a dream" (139), thus forcing her back into unreality.

Despite Komako's threatening reality, she too wears a mask. Her geisha's makeup, however, is more flexible than Yoko's mask: "She started to smile through the thick, white geisha's powder" (15). It also has a transparent quality about it which allows her blushes to register faintly on the surface. On top of this, the heroine's mask can be easily removed: "Presently she brought herself up again and began cleaning away the thick powder with cold cream. The face underneath was a brilliant red" (63). However, it is not until the final scene that Komako's mask comes off completely:

In the faint light that left no shadows on the earth, Komako's face floated up like an old mask. It was strange that even in the mask there should be the scent of the woman. (168)

Up until this point, Komako and Yoko, through their sincerity toward life and devotion to others have demonstrated that such a way of living, far from being a waste of effort, gives life its meaning. Living only for oneself in some fantasy world as Shimamura does is the waste of effort, for in the end, it is meaningless. But Shimamura obviously needs a further demonstration. Thus it is that the battle between selflessness and selfishness, the real and the unreal, worth and meaninglessness ensues. As the heat of the fire melts the cold snow and refuses to give in completely to the firemen's hoses, we get the feeling that human warmth can penetrate a cold heart and turn it toward self-discovery, humanity and meaning. Ultimately, their roles are not unlike those of Oyoshi and Take in our last novel. In this final effort Komako and Yoko bear the punishment for being human and pay the sacrifice which makes it all worthwhile. They show our hero what it is to be selfless and sincerely devote oneself

to another's cause. From the moment the alarm sounds, we are struck by Komako's concern for the possible victims. Unlike Shimamura, she is not motivated by the excitement of the fire, but by a desire to help: "You don't need to go any farther. I ought to go on myself to see if anyone has been hurt" (164).

At the actual scene, it seems strange that Yoko should fall through the flames when everyone has apparently been evacuated. However, if we recall that earlier they were "[t]hrowing children over one after another from the balcony . . ." (164), then it is likely that Yoko has been involved in this selfless act. A very real act that, even should she not live cannot be said to be a "wasted effort" unless only self-gain is considered. Such selflessness is similarly displayed by Komako who instinctively runs forward to help Yoko. The metamorphosis that has come over Yoko is that she has finally broken through the unreality of Shimamura's train window and come crashing through the flames of reality. She has gone from being "a phantasm from an unreal world" (173) to being real. The light of reality which shone in her eye that winter's evening on the train has become the reality before him. "The years and months with Komako seemed to be lighted up in that instant; and there, he knew, was the anguish" (174).

As if sensing the encroaching reality, Shimamura has been looking to nature (recall that he sees the mountains as unreal) to save him. Having come this far, having actually felt his own coldness and having been shown the light by Komako and Yoko, Shimamura is still tempted to fall into the safety of beauty and unreality. He feels himself being drawn up into the Milky Way even as he moves closer to burning reality. But the fantasy is over. The fact that Komako and Yoko have succeeded seems to be indicated when the Milky Way and the entire scene it embraces flow down inside our hero to cleanse and renew him.

During the course of the novel we have watched our hero escape from not only

the reality of Tokyo, but also the reality of himself into the arms of the mountains and the geisha Komako. However, rather than finding comfort as he does in his escapist occupation he gradually finds himself having to face reality, for this coming to terms with himself is actually the less conscious but main purpose of his visit. Although the effort is weak and Shimamura is almost incapable of accomplishing it on his own, in the end he only has himself. Like Take and Oyoshi in our last novel, and even Hirota and Mineko in Sanshiro, Komako and Yoko are simply there to help. Shimamura now has no choice but to return to Tokyo and to its reality. Once there, it will be up to him to put the lessons he has learned into effect within his family, his job and society in general. He too must find an acceptable balance.

The train here travels between two distinct times and places. It moves backward in time to the past -- a sort of fantasy land; and forward in time to the present -- the world of reality. However, there is more. As it journeys away from the city, the train in Snow Country loses all connection with reality for the first time. Unlike the streetcar in our last novel which allowed Kensaku to daydream as he watched a young housewife, but then deposited him back into reality, this train allows Shimamura to dream while he is being transported into another world, another dimension. This effect is created not only by the fact that encroaching night creates a weirdly reflected, floating world in the window, but also by the monotony of the landscape beyond, of the long journey and our hero's perceptions of his destination.

The train's connection with death is not at all frightening as it is in Sanshiro. In fact, it is so subtle as to be very peaceful and natural as Yukio and Yoko give Shimamura the impression that they will go on journeying forever into the unknown. It is in our next novel, however, that the train's connection with death is just as overt as its connection with life, for our hero will struggle with these two opposing worlds between which the train runs.

Chapter Four

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion

Thus far we have dealt with three protagonists for whom alienation is a negative thing. In The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji 金閣寺, 1956) by Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫, 1925-1970), however, the protagonist views his alienation as both positive and negative, as we shall see. The novel, which follows the relationship of its narrator-hero to the Golden Temple over a period of about seven years, is based upon the 1950 destruction of that same temple by an unbalanced Zen acolyte, though Mishima "has employed the factual record merely as scaffolding" (Ross vii) for his own work.

From early youth Mizoguchi is obsessed with beauty in the form of the Golden Temple described to him by his Zen priest father. This beauty provides a startling contrast with his own ugliness and stutter which cause him to feel different from others and thereby become the source of both his pride and his shame. His years spent away from home at Middle School are punctuated by two distinct memories. One is of his witnessing his mother's adultery with a distant relative -- an event that turns him against both his parents. The other memory is of his first love, Uiko. His attempted rape of this local girl, known for her pride and beauty, and later her tragic death after having conceived the child of a naval deserter take on great meaning for the hero.

Following his disappointing first visit to the Golden Temple and his father's subsequent death, Mizoguchi becomes an acolyte there. Treated favourably by the Superior and befriended by the cheerful Tsurukawa things go well for our hero until he commits his first real act of cruelty by trampling upon the stomach of a prostitute at the command of her American lover, thereby causing her to have a miscarriage. When he involves the unsuspecting Superior by giving him his reward of foreign cigarettes, he finds the first of many groundless reasons to hate the man and thus alienate himself

from his affection.

As Tsurukawa and Mizoguchi start to grow apart, the hero begins to turn his attention to the clubfooted Kashiwagi to whom he looks for guidance in overcoming his many complexes and in approaching "life." For his part, Kashiwagi urges Mizoguchi on through his nihilistic philosophy and various sexual escapades which all end in failure when the image of the Golden Temple comes between our hero and the girl. This gives him cause to greatly resent the temple's existence.

After Tsurukawa's unfortunate death, Mizoguchi goes into a year-long period of isolation and mourning. Although he avoids Kashiwagi because Tsurukawa has disapproved of him, he is glad when their relationship is renewed. This gives him the opportunity to listen to his friend's opinions on beauty. During this period our hero makes several attempts to arouse the Superior's hatred. Finally, having had enough, Father Dosen makes it clear that he no longer entertains any of his former plans to make Mizoguchi his successor.

Financed by a loan from Kashiwagi, the youth flees to the Japan Sea coast where he reaches his decision to burn down the Golden Temple at all costs. It is around this time that he learns the truth about Tsurukawa's death -- suicide.

Given another chance by Father Dosen who entrusts him with his tuition fees, he squanders the money at a brothel in order to free himself of this man's affection once and for all. On the evening that he has decided to take action, our hero asks a visiting priest to understand him, and feeling utterly satisfied with the reply, proceeds to his deed. As the temple goes up in flames, his sudden decision to die becomes a desire to live and he flees to the mountainside above, a new man.

As each one of us knows, there is probably nothing so familiar and yet alien to an individual as the self. In The Temple of the Golden Pavilion the biggest problem facing the protagonist is the resolution of this self. Mizoguchi is obsessed with himself and it

is because of such a strong self-consciousness that all his other problems arise. From the beginning he creates two selves -- a hated self and a loved self, the self that he is and the self that he wants to become. This novel is the story of Mizoguchi's struggle with his present self to become the self of his dreams. Let us then examine the self with which our hero is only too familiar.

Born on a lonely sea cape, the only child of a poor Buddhist priest, the protagonist grows into a youth of Middle School age, physically weak, a "trifle uglier" than his peers and a hopeless stutterer. All this leads to a terrible inferiority complex and self-loathing. Because of his great self-hatred, the youth seems to expect the same emotion from other people.

Of course, self-hatred so great can only lead to self-destruction unless the individual creates some sort of defense mechanism. Mizoguchi does this by imagining himself to be a "secretly chosen being" (6).⁷ This implies not only differentness, but also specialness. Thus we find our hero making his alienation from others pleasurable. The fact that he loves being a secretly chosen being is reflected in one of the two power wishes of his childhood. His imagining himself as a "great artist, endowed with the clearest vision -- a veritable sovereign of the inner world" (6) expresses individuality.

However, there is also proof that Mizoguchi does not in the least enjoy his role as a secretly chosen being. At the same time as he prides himself on not being understood by others, he has yet another power wish which illustrates his anger at them for not accepting and understanding him. He imagines himself as a "stuttering taciturn tyrant" (6) who wreaks punishment on the teachers and peers who constantly torment him. This wish illustrates our hero's desire to be understood by others and thereby erase individuality. The conflict between these opposing wishes manifests itself in almost every relationship into which Mizoguchi enters. He wants to be loved, yet that love,

which is akin to understanding, would force him to remain his present self and forgo his attempts to become a new individual.

The origin of both these power wishes is his stutter. On the one hand it is his unique point, what makes him who he is. The barrier it creates between himself and others gives rise to a feeling of great pride: "the fact of my not being understood had become my only source of real pride" (9). On the other hand, it is also what alienates him from others:

It is the first sound that I have trouble in uttering. The first sound is like a key to the door that separates my inner world from the world outside, and I have never known the key to turn smoothly in its lock. (5)

Above all, to Mizoguchi, he and his stutter are inseparable. For this reason, his feeling of hatred for his stutter and his desire to free the self identified by that stutter consume him more and more. To this extent our hero and his stutter are one and the same. However, if we look more closely at the situation, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his stutter is the outer manifestation of his inner self-hatred (Kimball 83). On the surface it is his stutter that separates him from others, in reality it is himself. This fact is well-illustrated by the only name with which he is ever identified: Mizoguchi (溝口). Mizo (溝) means gutter, gulf or gap: that is, something which separates. Guchi or kuchi (口) means mouth. Our hero himself, "gap mouth" is the gulf which separates his inner world from the outer world, his present self from the self of his dreams. A description of that mouth from which his stutter emerges clearly shows the hero's self-hatred: "that silly little dark hole which was soiled like the nest of a small animal of the fields, and which . . . wriggled meaninglessly" (12).

Another way in which our hero seeks shelter from his hated, "ugly" self is in the image of the Golden Temple which to him initially represents beauty and all that he is not. The important role the temple plays is obvious not only from the title, but also

the fact that it appears in the very first line of the novel: "Ever since my childhood Father had often spoken to me about the Golden Temple" (3). If the young Mizoguchi cannot accept the love of others and for similar reasons is unable to give love, then besides finding comfort in his special identity, what better place to pin his hopes and even shower affection than on an object that cannot respond? "Though I occasionally saw the real Golden Temple in photographs or textbooks, it was the image of the Golden Temple as Father had described it to me that dominated my heart" (4). In its unreality, Mizoguchi's image of the Golden Temple is not unlike Shimamura's fantasy about the ballet. However, while Shimamura escapes into beauty, our present hero measures himself against it, as we shall soon see.

Yet even here in his love of the Golden Temple, we find contradictions:

It was no exaggeration to say that the first real problem I faced in my life was that of beauty. . . . At the thought that beauty should already have come into this world unknown to me, I could not help feeling a certain uneasiness and irritation. If beauty really did exist, it meant that my own existence was a thing estranged from beauty. (21)

Due to the fact that he has chosen himself as the object of contrast to beauty, he has created a situation in which he will never be able to attain that beauty as long as he hates himself: "For my attachment to the temple was rooted entirely in my own ugliness" (39). Just as his differentness due to his stutter is essential to Mizoguchi's present identity, so is his ugliness in contrast to beauty. If it is his stutter that represents Mizoguchi's self-hatred, then it is beauty and his alienation from that beauty that define it. He himself admits toward the end of the novel that "it might be my very conception of beauty that had given birth to my stuttering" (217). In other words, the beauty of the Golden Temple initially defines what Mizoguchi is not and at the same time, that after which he seeks. It is, of course, also essential that this beauty reject and deny him so that he can confirm his belief in his own ugliness.

When our hero sees this building for the first time, it does not correspond with

his vision of it and he is disappointed: "It was merely a small, dark, old, three-storied building. . . . Could beauty, I wondered, be as unbeautiful a thing as this?" (24-25). He has pinned all his hopes on his inner images of the temple and they have let him down. At this point Mizoguchi has the opportunity to resolve his inner conflicts by rejecting his image of the Golden Temple which has proven to be false. We may then wonder why, upon such disappointment, he bothers to rebuild the temple in his mind after his return home. However, this makes perfect sense if we recall that his present existence depends upon the Golden Temple and his alienation from beauty. If the temple is not beautiful, then there is no object with which to contrast his ugliness and thus define him.

Both life and a journey have starting and ending points. The point of departure in Mizoguchi's first train ride is the region of his birth on the Sea of Japan Coast. The point of arrival is Kyoto the "station of death," that is, where our hero's hated self will perish amid the flames of the burning temple. These two points also represent the two choices between which Mizoguchi must travel back and forth during his lifetime for, "I was squarely situated between the two worlds" (22) of death and life. These worlds are well symbolized by two of his fellow passengers -- his father, a dying Buddhist priest, rules over the world of death and an army officer, a healthy young man in touch with reality rules over the world of life. Mizoguchi sees his present existence as stifling and dark, something like death and the world he seeks as free and bright, something like life.

For the duration of the train journey the passenger is free to think or dream as he wishes. These dreams can be flavoured by the circumstances of the train ride, and vice versa. The fact that the war is in progress not only provides the contrast between Mizoguchi's two worlds, but also the solution to it: "When I was killed in the war, it would be clear that it had not made the slightest difference which path I had chosen of

the two that now lay before my eyes" (22-23).

The numerous stops along the way illustrate the many experiences Mizoguchi goes through on his journey of life and the tedium of the ride reflects his frustration at the great length of time it takes to reach his goal. The Hozu River which appears now and again below the train, turning "its dark-blue lathe round and round" (23), is symbolic of time and fate which rule the journey of life.

The journey and images associated with it are also used to foreshadow future events. The train, described as "ancient" and "sooty" against the backdrop of the war and a "leaden spring sky" (22) makes the scene morbid and lends credence to our hero's belief that its destination is indeed the station of death. His association of the smoke filled carriages as they pass through tunnels with a crematorium predicts two later events -- the death of his father and that of the Golden Temple along with the hated self.

When Mizoguchi first goes to live in Kyoto he feels secure and happy in his dream of being destroyed along with the temple in an air raid. Both his ugliness and beauty will be annihilated and his problems will be resolved. With the war's end, his hopes are dashed. He and the Golden Temple, ugliness and beauty are once again thrown into a relationship of estrangement. In order that this "condition that will never improve as long as this world endures" (64) be changed, Mizoguchi will have to end his alienation by destroying "this world," the world of his self-hatred and the Golden Temple's beauty which defines it. In actual fact, the hero will destroy this world by giving life to the image of the temple being burned down in an air raid. We might say that, despite its surviving the war, from this time on the Golden Temple is doomed to destruction.

If there is an antagonist in this novel, it is the Golden Temple. Although the real people in the story appear at times to be important, more often than not they have little bearing on the pathological course that our hero decides to follow. Indeed, with

the possible exception of Kashiwagi, none of these characters has an existence of his own. In the end, they are all seen through the eyes of a twisted mind and are thus kept at an "alienated" distance, for to really know them or be known by them would shatter Mizoguchi's illusions about himself and the world which he wants so desperately to destroy with his own hands. As we shall see later, this does not mean that he forgets his opposing wish to be understood.

Next we shall deal with the protagonist's parents. Along with the Golden Temple, his father is mentioned in the first sentence of the novel. It is this man who constantly tells his son of the temple's great beauty, for he is obviously enticed by it himself. In fact, he seems to be priming his son for the Superior's job. However, although his father may be the cause of our hero's obsession with the temple, Mizoguchi's resulting problems are entirely of his own making.

All this does not mean that the father has totally selfish purposes, for it is obvious that he loves his son. He makes sure that he will be well looked after when the time comes and protects him from being hurt by hiding the sight of his mother's adultery from him. Although Mizoguchi is at first dubious as to whether this action is "from love, or compassion or shame" (55), he later clearly states that it was from love:

Please remember that with his death I was freed from the fetters of his hands, and that by looking intently at his face, I was able to confirm my own existence. To this extent did I remember to wreak my proper revenge on those hands, that is, on what the people of this world would call love (56)

The father loves the son, but the son cannot accept that love, for it would make him normal. Thus, in his father's protecting action, Mizoguchi finds an excuse to hate him. In his staring unemotionally at this man's corpse a few years later, he takes revenge and frees himself of this love.

Similarly, he uses his memory of the same event as an excuse to hate his mother and alienate himself from her. Neither we nor the hero know whether or not this was

rape, nor does he seem to consider the possibility which gives him less real reason to hate her. Because his father is dead, Mizoguchi does not need to constantly reinforce his hatred as he does with the mother who is always reminding him of her love. The fact that he is uncomfortable being loved is shown when she visits him for the first time at the Golden Pavilion:

It would be an exaggeration to say that I did not want to see mother in the slightest. It was not that I had no feeling for her. The fact was probably that I disliked being confronted with the straightforward expression of love that one receives from one's blood relatives. (56-57)

Although he hates being loved, here he hints that he needs and could easily give in to love. This is hinted at again a few pages later when he is mean to his mother and obviously desires to be hated back, becoming annoyed when he is not. As long as his mother is reactionless to his open cruelty, there is the danger that he may succumb to her love -- love which is akin to understanding and which would force him to remain his present, hated self: "[W]hen I imagined the mere possibility that Mother might cross the threshold and penetrate my mind, I felt frightened" (59).

Thus it is that he makes every attempt to free himself from his mother's binding love. We often find that he creates hateful images of this woman, referring to her as "shabby" and "ugly" and having a "congealed"-looking face. When he talks about his "[d]rawn-out hatred over the fact that she should have given birth to me in the first place" (199), he is clearly illustrating not only hatred for his mother, but also for himself. Upon his return from the Japan Sea he feels that he has finally succeeded in casting off his mother and her love. "I do not know why, but I felt that Mother could never again threaten me" (199). Mizoguchi has "used" his mother's adultery as a reason to alienate himself from both his parents -- not because they have hated him or treated him the way Kensaku's parents treated their son, but because he hates his present self associated with their love, a self which he must destroy in order to be free.

Mizoguchi's mother exists in the world of reality with which she confronted her son

that summer night and which he is striving to possess. It is not surprising then, that "life" for our hero becomes equated with women and sex.

At several points during the novel our hero tries to participate in life by means of a woman. In this way he is no different from our other three heroes. His earliest attempt takes place when he is still a Middle School student in East Maizuru and involves Uiko who is at one point referred to as his "first experience of beauty" (75). One morning his desire for this girl, who fills his sexual fantasies, rises so high that he rushes out to detain her on her way to work:

I did not know myself what I was intending to do. I had, however, been living too much out of touch with the external world, and had as a result conceived the fancy that, once I leaped into the outer world, everything became easy, everything became possible. (11)

Mizoguchi not only attempts to rape Uiko, but also what he calls life. But Uiko, life, beauty, they all deny him because in the end he denies himself (Miyoshi 422). He believes that he is "not qualified to enter life through its bright surface" (123) and Uiko is bright, like the "color of dawn" (11). Our hero is stuck on words, words that do not flow easily from his mouth because of his self-loathing, because of his conception of beauty in opposition to that self. Mizoguchi's reaction to his being denied is to wish for Uiko's death -- the destruction of beauty. This is the only time that he comes into contact with Uiko personally. Even here she has no real existence of her own, but is used by our hero as a means to approach life. The reality of his relationship with her is alienation -- an alienation that, even after her death, Mizoguchi attempts to end. In his mind Uiko, like beauty, does not die, but lives on, appearing in several different forms.

When our hero first sets eyes upon the young woman at Nanzen-ji whom Tsuruta has appropriately named "Uiko Two" (Tsuruta):

I thought persistently of one thing during the remaining hours of that day and also the next day and the day after. I thought that this woman was none other than Uiko, who had been brought back to life. (52)

Let us note that besides being beautiful, this woman has something else in common with Uiko, and that is that she has conceived the child of a military man.

Not too much later, Mizoguchi has an opportunity to come face to face with another reincarnation of Uiko, this time in the form of a prostitute who caters to foreigners. Although he is careful to mention that she does not resemble Uiko at all, like Uiko and Uiko Two this woman has conceived the child of a military man. Of course Mizoguchi does not know that she is pregnant when he is commanded to step on her, but his enjoyment of this cruel action is so great that one suspects he is committing it for a specific purpose for, "The sense of discord that I had felt when I first stepped on her gave way to a sort of bubbling joy" (77). Is Mizoguchi trampling on the stomach of Uiko, who has betrayed him by giving herself to another? Is he attempting to destroy the child of that union? Here our hero is able to partake directly in his desire to punish Uiko for denying him. He causes the prostitute to have a miscarriage, and strangely enough, he later finds out that Uiko Two's child was stillborn. Whatever symbolic meaning this deed has, Mizoguchi himself claims: "I cannot pretend that it was sheer compulsion that had made me enjoy all these things. I still cannot forget the sweetness of that moment" (85). Having punished Uiko, our hero can now go on to seek union with her -- to end their alienation.

When Mizoguchi no longer feels that women will lead to life and is therefore able to happily head for the pleasure quarters in order to lose his virginity, it is to Uiko that he dreams of losing it: "In the place where my legs now led me, Uiko must be waiting" (224). However, she still frightens him: "Uiko was out. The fact of her being out put me at ease" (224). Half of him wants to maintain their alienated distance.

By her death -- that is by accepting her circumstances and doing what she must, Uiko provides a sort of model for Mizoguchi (Swann 403-04). She gives him strength. Just as his attraction to her spurs him on to the brink of action in his attempted rape,

so does his memory of her accepting life and its consequences strengthen him in his final action:

From the moment that I had left the temple, I had been overcome by the fancy that Uiko was still alive and that she was living in seclusion in this particular place. The fancy filled me with strength. (221-22)

Urged on by Kashiwagi, our hero tries several times to reach life through women and sex. Like Kensaku when he visits brothels, Mizoguchi believes that salvation can be found in sex. Two of these attempts are outlined in the novel. However, they both fail because "[b]etween the girl and myself, between life and myself, there invariably appeared the Golden Temple" (157). Just as with Uiko, our hero is stopped dead in his tracks. However, here too, what really stops him is his self-hatred defined by and hanging in balance with the beauty of the temple that "enwraps" and disempowers him. Rather than blame himself, it is once again very comforting and convenient to thrust his feelings upon an inanimate and unresponding object:

I think that it was about this time that a delicate change started in my feelings concerning the Golden Temple. It was not hatred, but a premonition that at some time or other a situation would inevitably arise in which the thing that was slowly germinating within me would be utterly incompatible with the Golden Temple. (130-31)

This thing which is germinating in our hero is the gradually strengthening desire to take positive action to end his alienation from the self he desires to become.

This increasing desire is shown clearly when the temple once again intervenes between our hero and a woman as Uiko Two offers him her breast and his anger flares up: "So once again I have been estranged from life! . . . Why does the Golden Temple try to protect me? Why does it try to separate me from life without my asking it" (153)? But Mizoguchi has forgotten that he has specifically asked the temple for protection (111). Thus the Golden Temple which originally symbolized only beauty has also taken on the identity of our hero's hated self. Mizoguchi himself admits as much when he spends a night in the temple: "[A] strange balance had come into being at

that moment, a balance which would allow me to be the Golden Temple, and the Golden Temple to be me" (131). And again: "[A]t those instants when life approached me I abandoned my eyes and made the eyes of the Golden Temple into mine" (158). This is not to say that beauty and the hated self become one. However, for Mizoguchi they do exist in that fragile balance we have already mentioned. In other words, one cannot exist without the other, so that it makes sense that they be embodied in the same structure. Now, more than ever, they become things to be destroyed.

Our hero's journey in search of life through women is illustrated by a short train trip with Kashiwagi and two young women. The brevity of the scene makes the conversation aboard seem unreal, giving Mizoguchi an excuse to ignore the truth about Uiko Two that his date reveals to him. The scenery that passes by the window is like a moving picture. As they pass by Narutaki Pond, he notices a "shiny young bamboo" among the older trees whose lower parts are "promiscuously entwined" (116). The description of the great trees with its erotic overtones predicts our hero's attempted sexual act at Kameyama Park. The young bamboo which is painfully bent represents Mizoguchi in his self-hatred while the fact that it is shiny connects with the brilliance of the Golden Temple as it comes between him and the girl.

Despite his searching for life, Mizoguchi is actually quite a passive character. Like Shimamura, rather than trying to make the effort to change for himself, he spends much of his time waiting for a "saviour" to prod him out of his self-hatred and into life. Thus, despite his loneliness and alienation from others, he is in fact quite dependent upon them. Besides women, those he looks to for this "prodding" or help include Tsurukawa, Kashiwagi, Father Dosen and Father Zenkai. In his wanting very badly the friendship and understanding of others and yet making no or little effort toward attaining them Mizoguchi is again torn between his two selves. In his relationships with these four men we see our hero move from one extreme to the other,

from making no effort whatsoever to be understood by others to asking them outright for their understanding. He moves from a state of self-satisfied alienation from the world to a state where his self-hatred has pushed him to a choice between either union with that world or with the dreamt-of self. Let us then examine our hero's relationships with the above-mentioned men.

The first friend that Mizoguchi makes after his move to Kyoto is his fellow acolyte at the Golden Temple, Tsurukawa. His initial reaction to this youth is one of abashment because "Tsurukawa talked smoothly in a splendid Tokyo accent" (38) and because of his bright cheerfulness. From the beginning a sharp contrast is drawn between the two boys, something to make our hero feel different and alienated.

Indeed, Mizoguchi clings to his hated, alienated self-identity throughout his relationship with Tsurukawa. This is obvious in his refusing to recognize that his friend must be able to understand him in order to "translate my words for me into the language of the real world" (57). One reason Mizoguchi feels so at ease with and unthreatened by Tsurukawa is that he does not believe that his friend can really understand him:

Sometimes I had suspected that Tsurukawa had actually experienced my own feelings, just because his brightness corresponded so accurately to my darkness, because the contrast between our feelings was so perfect. But it was not so! (128)

Although Tsurukawa teaches him that "even if stuttering were removed from my existence, I could still remain myself" (44), our hero does not learn his lesson and allows his stuttering to continue separating him from others. In the end, Mizoguchi's self-hatred, which makes him feel unqualified to attack life positively, is still too strong for Tsurukawa to have a lasting influence upon him, thereby bringing about their eventual estrangement.

It is the same self-hatred as well as his desire to be free of it that causes Mizoguchi to seek out Kashiwagi. This youth seems to have overcome his handicap and

thus promises to provide some sort of direction for Mizoguchi who himself admits that "I was earnestly looking to Kashiwagi for life" (106).

Although, as with Tsurukawa, Mizoguchi is still the dependent one, still the seeker, in approaching him he at least makes an effort to abandon the old self and reach out for the new. Kashiwagi, for his part, sees right through our hero: "You make too much of your stuttering don't you? As a result, you make too much of your stuttering as well as yourself" (93). This is basically what our hero has already learned from the bright Tsurukawa, but forgotten because he lets his pathological self-loathing interfere and dominate all else.

The model which Kashiwagi provides for Mizoguchi is one of dispassion and aloofness from the world upon which one takes out one's anger at it by contributing nothing positive, but rather destroying. For him "to live and to destroy were one and the same thing" (112). In Kashiwagi's world love is impossible: "I came to realize that my conviction -- the conviction that I could never be loved -- was itself the basic state of human existence" (102-03). In contrast to Kensaku, Mizoguchi, who seeks to escape the love of family and friends which binds him to his present hated self and robs him of his dream of reaching life, finds this way of thinking very appealing. He is willing to try anything. Thus it is that he attempts to participate in "life" through women and a sexual act that is emotionless, impersonal and cruel as well as through petty evils.

With his discussions on beauty centering around the koan Nansen Kills a Cat Kashiwagi basically tells our hero that beauty is an illusion: "One could say that in fact there was no such thing as beauty. What makes the illusion so strong, what imparts it with such a power of reality, is precisely knowledge" (217).

Kashiwagi tries to tell Mizoguchi that attempting to destroy beauty as Nansen did in killing the cat does not really solve the problem because beauty is illusory and takes

on many different forms. In this way it is very much like, if not the same as, Mizoguchi's illusion of Uiko. However, because Mizoguchi has his own special definition of beauty which Kashiwagi does not truly understand -- "I really must re-focus the lenses of my understanding" (217) -- our hero comes to the conclusion that "Beauty, beautiful things, . . . those are now my most deadly enemies" (217).

Even after becoming friends with Kashiwagi, Mizoguchi still clings to his inscrutable identity by often avoiding his friend and by never really telling him what is going on in his mind. Although he wants to be and is understood by Kashiwagi to a great extent, his fear of being seen through completely is very strong. This is shown after he hears his friend's first explanation of the koan:

This interpretation of Kashiwagi's was completely original, but I could not help wondering whether he himself, having seen into my inmost heart, was not being the satirist at my expense. For the first time I became really frightened of him. (144)

Mizoguchi listens to Kashiwagi's philosophy on life and beauty, his revelation about Tsurukawa's suicide, et cetera, but does not accept them totally. Rather, he accepts what he wants to and changes the rest to suit his fantasies, using them as a springboard to propel him further along his pathological course. If he were to follow Kashiwagi faithfully, this would mean being completely understood by his friend, but our hero is not yet ready to be so thoroughly exposed and to thereby cast off his hated self. For all that Mizoguchi gains from Kashiwagi he seems to have nothing to give in return, for he cannot give of himself and risk being understood. In the end, theirs is a relationship full of "gaps."

The one relationship that spans most of the novel is that between Mizoguchi and the Superior at the Golden Temple, Father Dosen. From the beginning Mizoguchi receives the "unswerving affection of the Superior" (81), so much so that he arouses jealousy in at least one other acolyte. But our hero, in his self-hatred, cannot accept the love of others and early on begins to do his best to alienate Father Dosen, using

similar tactics as with his mother. He does this initially through the images he associates with this man upon their first meeting. Particularly dominant are rough animalian images and those of ruddy health in the Superior's resembling a pink cake. Father Dosen's head has a "terrible animalian quality about it" (27) and when he is bowed in prayer "there was something ignoble about it [his figure], like the figure of a sleeping animal" (235-36). In order to make this man easier to detest, Mizoguchi begins to conjure up images which degrade him: "I imagined him in the process of defecating and also pictured him as he slept with the girl in the rust-vermilion coat" (165).

Besides needing reasons to hate an almost unhatable man, Mizoguchi also needs reasons to be hated by him. Thus his several misdeeds. There is the trampling incident and later his laughing at the Superior upon discovering him on a surreptitious outing and reinforcing this by delivering him a photo of his geisha escort. Even after Dosen has admonished him our hero needs to assure himself of this man's disfavour by running away. He must disassociate himself from the love which he identifies with his hated self if he is to become the self of his dreams.

The last train scene we come across takes place on the same line as the first. This time, however, our hero travels quickly backward in time toward the place of his birth, reminding us of Kensaku's journey to Mount Daisen and Shimamura's to the snow country. It is a journey of escape from a death-like existence:

I must leave -- leave my surroundings, leave my conception of beauty which so shackled me, leave the isolated obscurity in which I lived, leave my stuttering and all the other conditions of my existence. (181)

This journey is symbolic of Mizoguchi's attempt to flee the hated self and come into contact with life and a reborn self. The excitement he feels at the prospect of freedom is illustrated not only by his feelings of "departure and release" caused by the movement of the train, but also by the fresh colours in which the station appears. Indeed, bathed in light and warmth, the station of death has been transformed into the

station of birth:

The morning sun cut the great platform into sections. The sound of shoes running along the platform, the persistent, monotonous ringing of the station bell, the sound of a wooden clog splitting, the color of a tangerine that one of the platform vendors picked out of his basket and picked up --everything appeared to me as suggestions or portents of that vast thing to which I had now entrusted myself. (182)

This scene is very reminiscent of that in A Dark Night's Passing in which the sounds of the station along with Kensaku and Naoko's running feet lead to a dramatic situation. Here too, the station is the gateway to Mizoguchi's climatic decision to burn down the Golden Temple and the train is the vehicle that transports him to that decision: "I relied on the train" (182). The great speed at which it travels -- "we were now speeding along" (182) -- indicates the urgency of our hero's escape and his wish to arrive quickly at his destination.

As it travels into the hazy past, the train passes through a thick mist given off by the Hozu River, that symbol of relentless time and fate. Appropriately, the trees in the fields are not real trees, but like memories or "ghosts of trees" (183). At the same time our hero's mood is dampened by this mist from the past which calls up the spirits of Uiko, his father and Tsurukawa -- people who are easy to love precisely because they are dead and can pose no threat to his search for "life."

Mizoguchi is brought back to the present when he overhears a rather contrived conversation concerning the Golden and Silver Temples. This ruins the mood of his "journey into the past" as does the change that has come over Maizuru since the war. Thus is it that Mizoguchi must use, as did Kensaku, man's most basic form of transportation -- his own feet -- to travel further into his past and confront the sea and his origins at Yura. Mizoguchi's running away and squandering his money in the red light district are also very disparate attempts on his part to gain the Superior's attention and understanding. Through his actions our hero is saying, "Here I am! Recognize my existence." This desire to be acknowledged and understood is twice

illustrated by Mizoguchi's sudden and violent need to confess his misdeeds. Having delivered the photograph of the geisha, our hero anxiously awaits "the dramatic passion of the moment when two people come to understand each other " (168). But when his silent words fall on deaf ears, he loses his desire to be accepted and goes back to his characteristic pattern of misinterpreting others.

Once again "on the verge of succumbing to affection" (236) for and from another, Mizoguchi sums up the courage to press on and completely alienate himself from the Superior:

The Superior and I had become the inhabitants of two different worlds and no longer had any influence on each other. I was free of all trammels. Now I could carry out my decision how I liked and when I liked, without expecting anything from an outside power. (237)

Mizoguchi is now ready for Father Zenkai . . . and words.

The literal meaning of this man's name is Zen (zen 禅) sea (kai 海), implying that he is an ocean of knowledge and understanding -- exactly what our hero who has been struggling with his two selves wants him to impart. In fact, Father Zenkai has nothing new to say. He just happens to appear at a time when our hero wants to listen and to accept himself. When Mizoguchi inquires, "Which personality is really lasting? The one that I envisage myself or the one that other people believe I have?" (246), Zenkai reveals to him the simple truth that "Both will soon come to an end. However much you convince yourself that your personality is lasting, it is bound to cease sooner or later" (246). Mizoguchi has believed his hated self, like the Golden Temple, to be permanent and indestructible. However, with the knowledge that he is whoever he believes himself to be and that even this self will not last forever, his world changes -- just as Kashiwagi has claimed. Our hero is now able to verbally ask to be understood. Father Zenkai accepts him as he is and for the first time, he is able to accept and understand himself. This is not to say that others have not accepted him, but that the timing of their appearances has been wrong.

Having accepted himself, Mizoguchi goes on to accept beauty, realizing that it is a nihility which can be whatever the individual perceives it as, just like the self he has allowed it to define. This knowledge, coupled with a sudden fear of losing the self he has so struggled to be free of, almost keep our hero from his deed: "It is as if there is not the slightest connection between me and my action. Up to this point it has been I, from here on it is not. How can I dare to stop being myself?" (257). Suddenly, however, the same words that kept him from Uiko and that have always evaded him come bubbling forth to prod him into action. Futile or not, he must destroy the Golden Temple in order to become completely free, for he has decided that "I wanted to live" (262).

The relationship between the train, the journey of life and alienation comes full swing in The Temple of the Golden Pavilion. The train plays what is basically a symbolic role in transporting our hero through his life, stopping along the way to illustrate his various struggles in life, but ultimately heading for either the station of birth or death. In this context its connection with both life and death is very natural. Mizoguchi does not simply "use" the train, he "relies" on it to carry him into both the past and the future.

By destroying the beauty that he has allowed to define his self-hatred, our hero puts an end to his hated self, symbolically achieving his main goal. He ends the perceived alienation between who he is and who he wants to be. However, in the process, he manages to alienate his family and his friends. He has always desired the perfect balance -- to be alienated from neither the self nor others, but in his obsession he has had to choose the latter. Our hero's experience teaches us that it is impossible to attain the perfect balance.

Alienation, in varying forms, is a basic and inescapable part of the human experience. For the individual who aspires to an existence within the bounds of the

average, his identity depends upon being alienated to some extent from both himself and others. He is comfortable neither with the idea of totally understanding himself, nor with that of being totally understood. At the same time, he requires a certain level of understanding by both the self and others to feel acceptable. He may often be uncomfortable with all this, but he learns to accept it. There is a lot of room within the "average man" category for greater or lesser degrees of individuality. However, those who are unusually creative and daring, still being human, will likely experience a greater degree of alienation.

Mizoguchi himself is not average by any standards, but average is not an easy term to define. In the final analysis, wherever he stands on the continuum, Mizoguchi embodies a little bit of all our heroes and all of us -- the normal, the creative and the insane. This is perhaps what makes him not only the most real, but also the most frightening character we have encountered.

Conclusion

Life itself is a balancing act and feelings of alienation have a lot to do with this trick. When the scale tilts toward either extreme of being totally preoccupied with oneself or overly concerned with things unrelated to that self, the individual's feelings of being out of touch with one or the other arise. A man must spend much of his life trying to achieve a personally acceptable balance -- this is specifically what our heroes have been attempting to do in their struggles with the self and the world around them.

These four men have much in common. To begin with, they are all distanced from society by what we might call their occupations. They tend to fall into the former category of being preoccupied with themselves and their perceived problems to the extent that at least one of them has no choice but to flee into fantasy. They are all dreamers who initially seek salvation in female companionship and/or sex and nature. However, their dissatisfaction with themselves, feelings of inferiority, even varying degrees of self-hatred as well as their distance from others prevent their attempts from being successful. Through these failures they begin to learn that the secret to being accepted and accepting others lies in self-acceptance. This means coming to terms with the reality of the self, making decisions concerning that self, seeing others on a level with that self and then feeling comfortable with it all.

Man is a group-orientated creature. He does not like to be alone and often seeks companionship. He also seeks the approval and the acceptance of his fellow man. The Japanese are a particularly group-orientated people and we see this reflected in Sanshiro's search to belong in Tokyo, Kensaku's ardent desire to be reunited with Mother and to belong to a family, Shimamura's realization of the waste of effort in his work, and Mizoguchi's begging to be understood through his actions. We also see the Japanese concept of, soto (外) and uchi (内) or outside and inside in their frequent

unwillingness to let others (soto) in or to express what is inside them (uchi) to others. This concept works against our last three heroes in particular as they search to belong.

The fact that four men in novels by different authors experience similar feelings and attempt similar resolutions to their problems shows that alienation and its attempted resolution are not uncommon themes in modern Japanese literature. However, we all know that alienation is part of the human condition and frequently appears in other literatures as well. What then makes this theme of particular importance in Japanese literature? I believe that it is this: From Sanshiro in 1908 to Mizoguchi in 1956 our heroes all reflect a feeling experienced by the Japanese (uchi) in relation to the world (soto) and in particular the West.

The reclusiveness of their occupations -- student, author, researcher, and Buddhist monk -- and the resulting distance between them and the outside world are not unlike Japan's insularity and resulting attitude toward outsiders.

Sanshiro's discomfort at finding himself suddenly propelled into the Twentieth Century reflects the feelings of his countrymen as Japan emerged from three hundred years of isolation in 1868. By the time Kensaku discovers his true parentage, many Japanese had begun to realize that they had somehow lost touch with their mother or cultural past. At the same time they were feeling uncomfortable with the discovery that in the modern age their father was not pure Japanese, but a mixture of foreign ideas and innovations. The ensuing loss of identity crisis and search for their roots parallels Shimamura's discovery that he has lost his self-honesty and must regain it. Swings toward nationalism led to the war with China and then the United States. But just like Mizoguchi's attempt to destroy the world and become a different man, such actions would only alienate Japan from the world she so much desired to be a part of. We do not know what happens to our last hero after his destruction of the Golden Temple. However, we do know that he wanted to live. In the end, Japan too wanted

to live and had to rebuild. But the old sense of soto and uchi still existed and, like our heroes, she continued to search for an acceptable balance.

Has she found this? This is a question I leave to those who study the literature of recent novelists, for Japan's changing self-image and role in the world is surely reflected in the thoughts and feelings of today's characters. A study of both the works of female authors and the psychologies of female characters would also add new and interesting dimensions to the question of alienation in Japanese literature.

In the age of airplanes and rockets it may seem that the train is a thing of the past. However, it is clear from our observations that it has transported Japan on its journey into the modern world and provided the means for the heroes of its novels to travel both backward in time to their pasts as well as forward in time to their futures. Occasionally the train even carries them into a fantasy land where reality has no meaning. Its speed denies the passengers the time to become familiar with either their fellow travellers or the countryside through which they pass, reminding them of their alienation from both. The train plays an unfortunate role when it separates two people erecting between them the barriers of time and distance. However, it is always a comforting thought to know that a loved one is only a few hours' train ride away. And when that train ride becomes reality this vehicle plays a most happy role in reuniting those it has separated. Through a series of separations, reunions, confrontations with reality, escapes into fantasy as well as its connections with birth and death the train in modern Japanese literature transports its passengers on the journey of life.

Today the Narrow Road to the Deep North has become the route of the high speed Bullet Train and Basho's long journey is made in a matter of hours. The alien train brought to Japan by foreigners has itself become very Japanese. As the airplane transports thousands of Japanese citizens overseas every year, the distance between Japan and the West, soto and uchi is being broken down. Will the perfect balance be

achieved as Japanese travel abroad and foreigners visit Japan in increasing numbers?

This story will most likely be told by the heroes of present and future novels and I leave the answers to be discovered by those who will study them.

Notes

1. See Porcello's dissertation, The Railroad in American Literature: Poetry, Folk Songs and the Novel for a full discussion of this genre.
2. Among those modern short stories and novels containing train scenes are:
 "Mikan" ("The Oranges", 1920) by Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927).
Yama no Oto (The Sound of the Mountain, 1949) by Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972).
 "Kisha no Naka" ("In a Train", 1946) by Kojima Nobuo (1915-).
 "Manatsu no Shi" ("Death in Midsummer", 1952) by Mishima Yukio (1925-1970).
 "Densha no Mado" ("The Train Window", 1907) by Mori Ogai (1862-1922).
 "Hairo no Tsuki" ("The Ashen Moon", 1946) and "Abashiri Made" ("To Abashiri", 1910) by Shiga Naoya (1883-1971).
Kusamakura (The Three Cornered World, 1907) by Natsume Soseki (1867-1916).
 "Kyofu" ("Terror", 1913) by Tanizaki Jun'ichiro (1886-1965).
3. Translations of this and other excerpts from the novel are taken from Jay Rubin's Sanshiro. All quotations in Chapter One are taken from Sanshiro unless otherwise indicated.
4. Komiya notes (295) that Soseki based Mineko and several other of his female characters upon the "unconscious hypocrite" who is the heroine of Es war (1894) by Hermann Sudermann (1857-1918). Soseki read this novel in English translation as Undying Past.
5. Translations of this and other excerpts from the novel are taken from Edwin McClellan's A Dark Night's Passing. All quotations in Chapter Two are taken from A Dark Night's Passing unless otherwise indicated.
6. Translations of this and other excerpts from the novel are taken from Edward Seidensticker's Snow Country. All quotations in Chapter Five are taken from Snow Country unless otherwise indicated.
7. Translations of this and other excerpts from the novel are taken from Ivan Morris' The Temple of the Golden Pavilion. All quotations in Chapter Four are taken from The Temple of the Golden Pavilion unless otherwise indicated.

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