

IMAGE OF MOTHER
IN
JUN'ICHIRO TANIZAKI'S HAHAKOI STORIES

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to reveal the transformation that takes place in Jun'ichoro Tanizaki's aestheticism by examining the maternal images in his *hahakoi* novels: "Longing for Mother" (Haha o kouru ki), "Captain Shigemoto's Mother" (Shosho Shigemoto no haha), and "The Bridge of Dreams" (Yume no ukihashi). The link between the maternal images and Tanizaki's aestheticism can be found in his artistic manifesto "In Praise of Shadows" (In'ei raisan). The aesthetic ideals and prerequisites set out in "Praise" are the very qualities possessed by Tanizaki's mother characters. The common qualities among these mothers do not constitute the main purpose of the thesis. Rather, it is in their differences, which are instrumental in demonstrating the process of evolution occurring in the author's aesthetic beliefs and principles, that my purpose is to be found. In order to discover these differences, the relationship between the protagonist and his mother and the protagonist's view of his mother, rather than the image of the mother in isolation, are explored.

It is postulated that Tanizaki endeavoured throughout his career to establish a relationship between his art of fictional narrative and life/reality in a fashion that will satisfy him both as an artist and a man. This effort is vividly displayed in the confrontation between the protagonist's split selves: reason (reality) and instinct (fantasy). Tanizaki begins with the question of morality in art and focuses on the controversial issue of the incest taboo. In the early stage of his career, Tanizaki proclaimed the extreme aesthetic doctrines such as "art for art's sake" and "art instead of life."

In order to realize this belief in its full force, Tanizaki subverts and revises his own aesthetic ideals. Finally in "Bridge," he successfully actualizes his fantasy, the unlimited expansion of imagination, and the protagonist obtains a complete freedom from moral bounds, but not without dreadful consequences. Unsatisfied with the result of the realized fantasy, Tanizaki undertakes another re-evaluation of his aestheticism and accepts both fantasy and reality as vital and legitimate realms or spheres for his art. He comes to a revelation that the mission of the writer is not to choose one over the other, but to embrace both realms and stimulate the interplay between them. Perhaps, his aesthetic belief then is not so much "art for art's sake", but "both art and life."

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Introduction

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1886-1965) began writing very early in his life, and by 1910 he had established himself as one of the most promising writers of the day with his debut story "The Tattooer" (Shisei, 1910; tr., 1963). Although his corpus would come to include a variety of genres, such as travel writing, essays, diaries, and plays, he was most gifted in the art of fictional narrative. In the contemporary literary milieu of naturalism and the dominance of the I-novel (*watakushi shosetsu*), tied closely to the quotidian round of their authors' lives, being a self-proclaimed creator of fictions would have in itself distinguished Tanizaki from the majority of other writers.

Tanizaki seems firmly to have believed that fantasies, dreams, and all the other products of the imagination, which he proudly called *uso* (literally, lies), were the most intuitive and effective means to express the essence of humanity. Doing this by means of *uso* may sound paradoxical. However, it makes perfect sense when we consider the nature of his *uso* or the themes of his fantasies: fetishism, sadism/masochism, senility and madness. Are these really *uso*? He is not dealing with the unreal and the untruthful, but with aspects of nature which our civilization has shunned, denied, repressed, and marginalized.

There is no doubt that Tanizaki knew what he was doing when he called these features *uso*; and his confidence in insisting on writing nothing but *uso* indicates that there is something more there than simple self-justification or stubbornness for its own sake. He seems to be warning against a lopsided emphasis on rationalized social norms and mores, as well as expressing cynicism at our delusion that civilization advances on rational foundations. By promoting rationality so strongly, we push the irrational or "non-rational" side of nature, which does not fit into the categories of our

norms, deeper into our subconscious, thereby creating fantasies and dreams that can neither be accepted nor expressed.

Tanizaki believed that naming such fantasies *uso* would provide them with a sanctioned outlet. Such an outlet seems only necessary and natural because fantasies are an essential part of human reality and civilization. I believe that Tanizaki, throughout his career, endeavored not only to provide a voice for *uso*, but also to establish a certain relationship between art and life (or fantasy and reality). This relationship seems to have been aimed not at a utilitarian purpose for art in life, but in the direction of a linkage that gave his aesthetic pursuit a legitimate place: not what fantasy can do to solve human problems, but what it means to life and how it stands in relation to life. The same idea, I believe, can be applied to his *hahakoi* (nostalgic of mother) stories, and it forms one of the hypotheses put forth in this thesis.

The present work examines the images of mothers in three *hahakoi* stories by Tanizaki: "Longing for Mother" (*Haha o kouru ki*, 1919; tr., 1980), "Captain Shigemoto's Mother" (*Shosho Shigemoto no haha*, 1950; tr., 1994), and "The Bridge of Dreams" (*Yume no ukihashi*, 1959; tr., 1963). Tanizaki certainly wrote more *hahakoi* stories than these three: to name only a few, there are "The Sorrows of a Heretic" (*Itansha no kanashimi*, 1917), "Arrowroot" (*Yoshino kuzu*, 1931; tr., 1982), and "The Reed Cutter" (*Ashikari*, 1932; tr., 1994). Even in many of the works which do not deal directly with the *hahakoi* theme, we find the same images and characteristics still present in less prominent parts of the narrative. This phenomenon had stimulated a great deal of curiosity among critics and readers, and Tanizaki soon acquired a reputation of being an author obsessed with "mother."

However, we must not mistake the nostalgia felt by Tanizaki's protagonists for *hahakoi* sentiment as conventionally understood by Japanese.

The feelings described by Tanizaki are seldom directed towards the protagonist's biological mother. Instead, they are directed to a maternal character who is abstract, mystical, and artistically inclined. This unreal mother appears to embody most of Tanizaki's essential aesthetic prerequisites as set out in his manifesto *In Praise of Shadows* (In'ei raisan, 1933; tr., 1977). We can thus put forward another hypothesis: for Tanizaki, there is an inseparable connection between the image of mother and his aestheticism.

The aim of this thesis is not, however, to discuss the attributes or characteristics common to these mothers. Rather, it is to distinguish their differences and thereby reveal the transformation of his maternal image. The choice of these three works has been made in the belief that each of them stands at an important juncture in the process of transformation. Considering the close link between the image of mother and Tanizaki's aestheticism, we can safely say that her transformation invariably signals a corresponding change in Tanizaki's aesthetic views.

No matter what changes take place in his aesthetic views, his quest for the "right" relationship between fantasy and reality remains constant. One minor exception is that in the *hahakoi* stories, the conflict between fantasy and reality turns into a more specific desire/morality confrontation. Consequently, his quest is now for the "right" relationship between instinct (desire) and reason. Here we observe that Tanizaki is associating instincts and desires with fantasy, and morality with reality. With morality comes the image of mother as a virtuous goddess, the depiction which Tanizaki adopts in "Longing for Mother."

Chapter One of the thesis focuses on "Longing for Mother" which was published shortly after the death of Tanizaki's own mother. As if the absence of his real mother had liberated his imagination from the restraints of reality,

there was a sudden transfiguration in his mother character from the realistic mother of "A Story of an Unfortunate Mother" (Fukona haha no hanashi, 1921) to an image of a divine mother who resembles nothing and no-one real. This chapter first examines the attributes and qualities possessed by this omniscient mother, comparing them with Tanizaki's aesthetic ideals as presented in *In Praise of Shadows*. A link is established between the enigma of the inconsolable sorrow felt by both mother and son and the unlimited expansion of imagination and its resultant emotions, which goes to the core of Tanizaki's aesthetic.

Another point we discuss here is the irony of the goddess mother, who grants her protagonist son absolute freedom of imagination, but at the same time demands strict observance of moral obligations. Here Tanizaki as an artist faces an inevitable question: is art morally responsible for its manifestations? In "Longing," however, he skillfully evades a direct answer by integrating morality into his aestheticism. This integration gives a superficial impression that the boundary of art has expanded to the point where it encompasses morality. However, readers also sense the hero's unmistakable frustration in that his imagination is no longer boundless, but in fact circumscribed and controlled by his ideals. This frustration eventually leads Tanizaki to the subversion of his own ideals, which is the process that is discussed in the following two chapters.

In Chapter Two, which centers on "Captain Shigemoto's Mother," it is suggested that Tanizaki intended the story to convey a double message. On the one hand, its maternal ideals do not seem very different from "Longing." Shigemoto, the protagonist, does grow up to be a middle-aged man, unlike the boy in "Longing." However, the inaccessibility of the mother, dictated by morality, remains unchanged. As Shigemoto matures, the mother moves

further and further away from him and finally takes Buddhist orders, which require the severance of all ties with the secular world. Nevertheless, a mother encapsulated by a religious shroud would defeat Tanizaki's purpose of locating the "right" place for art in relation to life — a life that we must live in this world.

The other possible interpretation of the text suggests that the frustration felt by the boy in "Longing" has intensified into something akin to contempt for the artist whose imagination is hopelessly restricted and whose growth is stunted by his own ideals. By introducing a narrator who casts his observant, yet indifferent eyes on the characters, especially Shigemoto, Tanizaki signals his intention to re-evaluate and revise his aesthetic ideals and principles. The result of this aesthetic self-subversion is vividly displayed in "The Bridge of Dreams."

"The Bridge of Dreams" is the focus of Chapter Three. In order to break away from moral restrictions, Tanizaki transforms the image of mother into that of a seductress who displays no hesitation in encouraging the free expression of uninhibited instincts and desires. However, placing the artist/protagonist in the realm of pure instinct does not bring Tanizaki any closer to his desired goal of establishing a relationship between art and life than situating him in a realm of divine morality had done. An artistic belief in fiction and fantasy, as products of the unlimited imagination, turns out to be acceptable only in the personal, private sphere. In reality, the meaning of art lies in sharing its manifestations and effects with others. Art needs the appreciative eyes of an audience. In return, the community demands conformity with established rules and institutions, and the promotion of rationality. Tanizaki eventually realizes that this confrontation between artistic and social demands is not to be deplored but rather to be celebrated as

indispensable for not only human survival but the appreciation of fantasy as well.

Tanizaki's mother exists either as a divine form or as pure instinct. Regardless of the form, however, she is beyond the reach of moral dictates. As a goddess, she is above suffering, or even acknowledging the demands of morality; in the form of unchecked instincts, she is again beyond the control of reason and even ignorant of its existence. The common ground these two images share is their immunity from morality. In a certain sense, these fantastic realms are mirror images of each other, and they in turn mirror our aspiration to both free ourselves from the tyranny of reason and regain what is sacrificed to it. Just as the Ten Commandments testify to the existence of sin, fantasy is an affirmation of our repressed nature. The mission of art is not to sacrifice one realm for the sake of the other; it is to keep reminding the reader of the existence of, and the *raison d'être* for, these two realms, especially fantasy, which requires a proportionally greater attention in our increasingly rationalized world. This is the meaning of the protagonist's coming of age and victory over his mother obsession, the essential concern of Tanizaki's *hahakoi* narratives, and the reason why the image of mother carries more significance than that of any other woman to Tanizaki in his aesthetic pursuit.

Chapter 1

The "Mother" of "Longing for Mother"

One of the crucial differences between Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's early story "Longing for Mother" and two other *hahakoi* narratives that will be discussed in the following chapters is that the story "Longing" is set in a dream world, where the concepts of time and space are not expected to be the same as those in reality. Perhaps due to this lack of expectation, narratives set in the dream world are often the best place for a reader to view the writer's idealized framework of time and space.

Focusing on the short story "Longing for Mother," this chapter will examine the images of mothers and their surroundings from the perspective of time and space. Our findings will be further discussed in the light of Tanizaki's artistic manifesto, *In Praise of Shadows*, written fourteen years after "Longing." Our chief aim here is to shed new light on the central enigma of the story, the sorrow felt by the boy and his mother and the boy's initial inability to cry. No satisfactory interpretation has ever been offered for this puzzle, and I will argue that without close study of Tanizaki's aesthetic, it will remain all but incomprehensible.

The protagonist of "Longing for Mother" is a 33 year-old man. The story tells of a dream he is experiencing, in which he is reunited with his deceased mother. In the dream, he is six or seven years old, trotting down an endless stretch of single-lane road at night. He does not know why, but he is feeling a boundless sorrow. After a long while, he finds an arc lamp, whose light leads him to a small peasant house by the edge of a huge swampy pond filled with withered lotuses. He expects to find his parents there, but instead discovers an ill-tempered old woman who is waiting for her adult son, not for a child like himself. She is preparing dinner for her son, and refuses to

share any of it with the boy, who feels an intense hunger when he smells the familiar food that his mother used to make. All the same, he has no other choice but to continue his journey, hoping to find his real mother.

After a fear-filled passage through a tunnel-like forest canopy in complete darkness, he finally arrives at the seashore, which is flooded by the light of an extremely bright, silvery moon. There he encounters a beautiful young Shinnai balladeer, whose skin is so extraordinarily white that it makes him wonder whether a fox-spirit is playing a trick on him. As he draws closer, the figure appears to be a painting, no more than a surface with nothing inside. Finally, she identifies herself as the boy's mother. His journey ends in a deluge of tears shed by both as they embrace and he smells once more the warm, sweet breasts of Mother. The narrator wakes up from his dream crying, and as memories of his deceased mother return, he feels fresh tears welling up.

Tanizaki wrote "Longing for Mother" in 1919, two years after the death of his mother Seki. Edward Fowler and many other critics have argued for a close connection between life and art in "Longing for Mother." They point to Tanizaki's happy childhood with his pampering nurse and beautiful mother, which suddenly ended when he was six or seven years old due to the bankruptcy of his family, and point to a frequently quoted passage from Tanizaki's "A Preface to 'The Sorrows of a Heretic'" (*Itansha no kanashimi hashigaki*, 1917) where he describes his mother's deathbed:

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

graced the local posters and caused not a few to mistake
her for my sister, was now as pure and clear as porcelain.¹

Many go on to argue that the death of his mother was the impetus for Tanizaki to embark on a series of works on the theme of *hahakoi*, from "Longing for Mother" to "The Bridge of Dreams" (Yume no ukihashi, 1959; tr., 1963). As Tamura Rie has pointed out in her critique, "An Aspect of Tanizaki in the Taisho Period" (Taisho-ki no Tanizaki no ichi shokumen 58), the mothers in these works are uniformly depicted as beautiful young women who dwell in a fantasy world divorced from quotidian realities.

As these critics contend, "Longing for Mother" may well ultimately derive from the author's personal history, with his own sentiments transmuted into "an artistically valid statement through his skillfully conceived dream sequence" (Fowler 482). However, the focus of the story is not the "womb-return" or "childhood-return" journey which terminates at reunion with a young and beautiful mother. Rather, as is clear from the beginning, it is the "boundless" and "unfathomable" sorrow which the boy can neither understand nor relieve through tears. This sadness is shared by the mother after their reunion, but it does not dissipate: rather, the mother suggests that sorrow will continue and tears are to be enjoyed: "Now let's cry together, shall we? We'll walk down this road as we cry, for as long as the moon is out. . . . Your crying will sadden me terribly, but I like being sad."²

The cause of the sadness remains concealed, if we discount the mother's sentimental, yet enigmatic, attribution of it to the beauty of the moon. In *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro: the Structure of His Fiction* (Tanizaki Jun'ichiro: *shosetsu no kozo*, 1987), Endo Yu identifies the feelings of the boy and his mother in "Longing for Mother" as "the sorrow of existence" (*sonzai no kanashimi*), sadness as an inevitable correlate of existence (314-15), an existence

which can be compared to the "Via Dolorosa" or "Via Crucis" that Jesus followed carrying His cross to Golgotha. Endo emphasizes that the boy himself tries to find the reason for his sadness, and supplies a number of possible answers, such as the decline of his family finances, the ensuing poverty and hardship, and his separation from his wet-nurse (to whom he was very attached) and close friends. However, the boy himself knows that these events cannot be the reason for such an intense and inconsolable sorrow. Thus, Endo concludes that the reason must be internal, not external; and being internal, it must be because "no more nor less than the existence of 'myself' . . . is sadness" ("*Watashi*" *no sonzai so no mono ga kanashimi ni hoka naranu* . . . 316).

Endo's analysis is comprehensive and well-crafted, but it fails to engage the content of Tanizaki's story in one critical area: the way in which the suffering is actually "suffered." Rather than bringing unmitigated misery, it is embraced with something close to jubilation, which makes altogether inappropriate any comparison to a "Via Crucis" or the Buddhist belief in life as a boundless sea of bitterness. Endo implies that happiness, or at least non-sadness, is to be found in non-existence; but for the protagonists, happiness is found in shared tears. For them, sadness is not something to be endured as an obstacle on the way to a goal like salvation or nirvana — they are not moving through it on the way to something else. Sadness *is* their goal, their openly preferred state: "I like being sad."

Endo and other critics have likewise neglected Tanizaki's intense aestheticism. The story is set in an unworldly and surrealistic dream world. Even the boy, though he remains ignorant of the fact that he is dreaming, is aware that his impressions are unreal and fictionalized. Nevertheless, this

does not deter him: he accepts the fiction as long as it contributes to the gratification of his aesthetic needs. Beauty does not have to be truth:

No wonder her skin is so white. Her face and neck are caked with powder. And yet this fact detracts nothing from her beauty. . . . Such surely would not be the case in the daytime or in harsh, artificial light; but in the moonlight her heavily painted face has an unworldly charm. It is enchanting and mysterious. (HKK 214: LM 476)

Consciousness of artificiality does not automatically cancel pleasure in what the artificial may have to offer. Once again, Tanizaki is describing a state, not a movement towards a goal: a lingering on the surface of beauty, free of any restless desire to uncover the skull beneath the skin.

However, one should note that it is only in the moonlight, not in the artificial light, that the fictitious comes alive with its unworldly charm. It is not necessarily because Tanizaki is aesthetically more inclined to nature than to civilization. Rather, it is the thousand-year old human fantasy which associates the moon with magical power, a power that can raise the dead and cause mysterious and bizarre events.

In Praise of Shadows dwells at length on the mystery and profundity of the murky, bottomless emptiness that fills the alcove of the traditional Japanese house: a space the sun is powerless to illuminate, protected by deep eaves, long narrow corridors, and the translucent rice-paper of *shoji* windows. This dim vacuity, which rejects and overwhelms the faint white-ness of the paper of a scroll hanging in the alcove, fertilizes Tanizaki's imagination, engendering an infinite number of forms and shapes.³ It is this fecundity, the awesome potential of darkness and absence, that moves him most. He poses a question:

Have you never felt a sort of fear in the face of the ageless,
a fear that in that room you might lose all consciousness
of the passage of time, that untold years might pass and
upon emerging you should find you had grown old and
gray? (IR 538; IPS 35-6)

The essence of his aestheticism is conveyed by the modifiers he chooses for "shadow," words like mysterious, profound, awe-inspiring, timeless, lifeless, shapeless, infinite, and unworldly. All these words point to a single quality that for him formed the ultimate value of shadows and the shadowy: the power of imagination and the emotions it could inspire. The traditional sensibility, which appreciated the play of imagination provoked by shadows and darkness, is "forgotten to the man of today" (IR 551; IPS 51), a truth seeker who has to subject every aspect of life to scientific scrutiny, and perhaps note it all down in minute and realistic detail, after the manner of Tanizaki's contemporary rivals in the naturalist movement. Thus, at the heart of Tanizaki's "return to Japan" is the desire to reclaim and restore the neglected and forgotten power of imagination.

The effort to reclaim the power of imagination has gone on in Western thought from the beginning of its philosophical and literary traditions. One of the more recent examples is found in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) by Herbert Marcuse. In the book, Marcuse deplores the repression of sensuousness that has gone hand in hand with the advance of civilization, by which rational cognition (which promotes efficiency) has been privileged over sensory cognition (which seeks to satisfy our desire for pleasure). In particular, he focuses on Kantian efforts to absorb aesthetics into logic and metaphysics: "Sensuousness, as the 'lower' and even 'lowest' faculty, furnished at best the mere stuff, the raw material, for cognition, to be organized by the higher

faculties of the intellect" (180).⁴ Marcuse argues that Kant and his followers might salvage "a measure of philosophical dignity" from sensuousness, "those of its processes that did not fit into the rationalistic epistemology" had to be abandoned. The most important of these abandoned values were those of imagination: "free, creative, or reproductive intuition of objects which are not directly 'given' — the faculty to represent objects without their being 'present'" (181). One of the products of our imagination is, of course, fictional narrative.

In the end, Marcuse decides in favor of Schiller's positing imagination (phantasy) as a mediator between reason and the senses which can "de-sublime" reason and "sublime" the senses, erasing the relationship of domination without creating another one (185-96).⁵ His ideas thus form an interesting parallel to those of Tanizaki: both men share the same concern that our faculties of sense have been unwisely sacrificed by the over-emphasis on reason, and both agree that imagination is the essential link between reason and the senses.

Unlike Marcuse, however, Tanizaki does not advocate the equal footing for both reason and the senses. If Kant believed that it is in the end with the help of our reason that we come to know of the sublime, Tanizaki contends that it is through our senses that we are able to feel the presence of the supreme being, the ultimate unknowable, infinity, or whatever it might be called. In Tanizaki's aesthetics as represented in "Longing" and *Praise*, the senses dominate reason. Two essential elements of his aesthetics are timelessness (eternity, non-linear time) and formlessness (infinity, unknowability, fictionality). In particular, the time element is vital to an aesthete like Tanizaki. Marcuse also states that the "fatal enemy of lasting gratification is *time*, the inner finiteness, the brevity of all conditions" (191). In

order to arrest the passage of time, Tanizaki elevates the image of Mother to the level of the divine and eternal.

Mother - the temporal infinity

Standing on the beach illuminated by the cold bright moonlight, the child protagonist in "Longing" feels mysteriousness, timelessness, and lifelessness. These are the same words with which Tanizaki describes in *Praise* his feelings about the shadowy Japanese room dimly lit by a candle or the dark, empty space in the alcove (IR 550-1; IPS 51). The moon possesses a magical power to stimulate our imagination: it turns the entire landscape into a gigantic, shadowy alcove-space. In this magical space, in this site of unlimited potentiality, Tanizaki exercises his aesthetic beliefs and skills, tampering with the concepts of time we know from reality. As if omnipotent, he recreates (without reviving) the image of his mother by eliminating the linearity or sequentiality of time.

"Longing for Mother" belongs in a category labeled "illusion-breaking" by Hugh Caviola (*In the Zone*, 1991). The author uses the protagonist's feelings to convey to the reader the knowledge that the setting is unreal: "the whitish glow" in the air is "the glow of an alien, infinite realm, far, far, away from the land of the living" (HKK 193; LM 467). Such narratives, Caviola argues, tend to be "self-referential by foregrounding [their] own fictionality" (1). Warned beforehand of the unreality of the action, and thus fully cognizant of the fictionality of the fiction, the reader experiences an effect akin to "the awareness of dreaming in the midst of the dream" (1). On the surface, this admission of fictionality "gives everything away," but on a deeper level, it reinforces identification and empathy.

How can the admission of fiction make a situation more empathic? As Caviola points out, this structure situates the reader between "two different frames of reference": the temporal "continuum of the real world" and the "linearity of the fictional narrative" (5). At this point, for the reader, "time seems arrested, creating through this elimination of linearity a pure and abstract form of 'space: a spatialization of time'" (5). At the same time, the disoriented and confused reader loses his identity and is drawn into "a secret communication with the author who created this world" (3). This is called "the experience of betweenness" (1). Reader and protagonist alike are brought into the same mental space, that of the lucid dream: they share the experience of realistic immersion in the unreal. The culmination of this effect in "Longing" comes on the fantasy seashore under the light of the moon, where Tanizaki both suspends the flow of time and breaks down the conventions of spatiality.

There are, in fact, two different temporalities encapsulated within the narrative linearity of "Longing for Mother," an arrested time in the real mother's space and a 'progressive' time in that of the false mother. This establishes a further set of boundaries to reinforce the sense of "betweenness": an outer level that opposes the continuum of the real world to the linearity of the narrative "Longing," and another, one layer further in, that confronts the linear time of the false mother's realm with the timelessness or non-linear time associated with the real mother. A state versus a movement: once more we come up against this basic opposition, and once more there is little doubt where Tanizaki's sympathies lie.

The world of linear time is a fearful and deceptive place. On the way to the false mother's home, the boy is assailed by the ominous mysterious rustling of "a vast, flat expanse...an inky, pitch-black sea, dotted with pale

objects which flutter momentarily and then disappear" (HKK 195; LM 468). A little later, he realizes that it is "a large pond overgrown with withered lotuses," their "paper-dry leaves" exposing "their white undersides and rustling noisily with each gust of wind" (HKK 198; LM 469). A real enough scene, but as terrifying as any nightmare, with the added burden of its "reality". The boy's fear is not of darkness per se, but of the unknown, and by extension, of death.⁶

Time is inexorably advancing in this part of the story, despite the 33 year-old protagonist's dream of being a child again. The story takes pains to underline that the boy's encounter with the peasant woman is an event at a fixed point of time, as represented by the finite number "seventy," the number of the telegraph poles on the road that the boy counts as he passes until he meets her. The delineation of the past from the future by a fixed point of time validates the sequentiality of time. The bitter old woman (the false mother) testifies to the weary and erosive flow of time. Her gray hair and wrinkled face signify the time passed, while her expectation of seeing her mature son clearly signals the future. She has "waited an age" for her son who "should be coming very soon now down the road" (HKK 200; LM 470-1). She *has waited* and *will be waiting* for an indefinite, but endlessly unfolding, future.

Why then does one detect a hint of wishful thinking in her stubbornness? Perhaps the bitterness with which she rejects the protagonist can offer some clue. Juxtaposed with her hope to see her adult son and her obsession with time, there is an uneasy undertone, an uncertainty about the future — a fear that her wish may never come true, and that time is marching ever closer to the day of her own death. Here, the visit of the young protagonist is both a disappointment and a mockery: a reminder of how

much time has passed since her own beloved son was young, a hint that time will sweep her away without ever satisfying her longings. She watches the flow of time in much the same way as the boy watches the outer darkness, seeing there the "goblin's sinister grin, the white fangs gleaming" (HKK 195; LM 468), but never able to renounce stealing glances at it despite his intense fear.

Departure from the false mother's world and entry to the world of timelessness is marked by what appears to be a symbolic womb-passage, a journey through a dark forest tunnel towards the invisible sea with the guidance of the roaring sound of the surf, fighting off panic of losing the way. As soon as this is past, the protagonist sees in the clear nocturnal sky the beautiful, silky, full moon and, underneath it, the sea. In a significant contrast, the boy again finds himself counting, but this time he counts not telegraph poles but "shadows cast by the pine trees" (HKK 207; LM 473), and his counting, rather than terminating with a fixed number, merges with the never-ending ebb and flow of the surf.

The boy's linear temporality is numbed by the endless circular motion of the surf. The monotonous rhythm of the sea is a slower and gentler variant of the drum beat, whose mesmerizing effect is utilized in all societies to actualize and make concrete the endlessly repeating rhythms of some permanent and ultimately unknowable realm.

When the brightly illuminated seashore comes into view, the boy is engulfed in an instinctive recognition of "eternity." He is convinced that the sight before him is one that he saw before he was born: his "dormant memories of a previous world have now been revived" (HKK 206; LM 473). Lured by the plaintive notes of samisen music that seem to express his own sorrow, he sets out to locate the musician, who is not yet visible. As he

approaches the source of the music, the boy feels that he is "no longer a living person, but one who has embarked on the endless journey everyone makes when one dies" (HKK 210; LM 474). At this point, the previous life, the present and the time of after-death are synchronized into one timeless space. This space is inundated with floating fragments of images from the boy's past, present, and future life. Time is spatialized and a multitude of images are now at the protagonist/Tanizaki's command to select and collage according to his own aesthetic needs.

Viewed from this perspective, the dark forest canopy that the boy passes does not symbolize the experience of being unborn as is often the case in many modern Japanese womb-return narratives. Instead, it signifies something akin to the concept of time warp. In devising this time distortion, Tanizaki gives an outstanding demonstration of his creative genius. One of the boy's childhood memories was of the Shinnai balladeer's mournful samisen notes, which seemed as if they said "Tempura kuitai, tempura kuitai" (Literally, I want to eat tempura). The sound of the notes would be very clear at first. However, as the balladeer walked away from his house and he drifted into sleep while groping for his nurse's breast, they became fainter and fainter, "Tempura . . . tempura kuitai . . . kuitai tempura . . . tempura . . . tem . . . kui . . ." (HKK 208-9; LM 474). "It was as if I were looking down a very long tunnel at a tiny speck of light and watching it shrink slowly to nothing" (HKK 209; LM 474). When the boy hears the samisen music from the young balladeer by the seashore, this sequence is inverted:

"At first I can hear only tempura . . . tempura As I walk on, however, the kuitai portion comes through loud and clear. . . . I don't know how much time has passed . . . Tempura kuitai, tempura kuitai . . . The tune is clear and

distinct now, and played by an inspired hand. (HKK 209-10; LM 474-75)

The tunnel that he imagined before he fell asleep is superimposed on the tunnel-like canopy that he has just passed through. It is as if he was not just watching the speck of light, but actually following it through the tunnel to the dream world as he fell asleep. The time between the moment he fell asleep in his nurse's arms on that wintry night and the present has been telescoped: he reaches the destination of his journey through the tunnel — a journey he started almost three decades ago. A non-linear time has been created, within which a dream of 'I' as a boy is nested within another dream of 'I' as an adult. At the same time, fragments of images such as the Shinnai balladeer, the wet nurse, and a kabuki actress are placed together and form an image of a beautiful mother who remains eternally immune to the passage of time.

Mother as void

Tanizaki uses motifs in such a way that a motif in the false mother's realm almost always has its counterpart in the real mother's realm. For example, motifs such as number counting, onomatopoeic elements, and olfactory and tactile sensations appear in both realms. Evidently, Tanizaki is implementing his well-known "contrast and emphasize" technique by setting contrasting images side by side. The motifs of light and shadows are a good example here. Although both kinds of light have the same function, illuminating objects in darkness, Tanizaki stresses their differences, for example, the ubiquitous moon versus the lamp fixed on a telegraph pole, and their different effects on the boy and the mother.

Before the boy reaches the farmhouse, he finds an arc lamp with its dazzling light illuminating the ground right below the pole, only a few yards'

radius. When he finally steps into this light from the long walk in the dark, he stares a moment at his own shadow, "etched razor-sharp on the ground" (HKK 197; LM 469).

Had I not come across this lamp I might even have forgotten what I myself looked like. . . . Perhaps in the darkness my body was transformed entirely into spirit, and now that I have at last reached light, the flesh has returned. (HKK 197; LM 469).

The light and the razor-sharp shadow provide him with the evidence of his physical existence, a fixed shape, and a specific identity. In addition, the lamplight brings the green colour of life back to the leaves of the trees; and ironically, another lamp in the farmhouse reveals the gray colour of time in the false mother's hair. With life as well comes the fear of life's eventuality, limitations, and obsessions.

In contrast, the space occupied by the real mother is devoid of life: "Moonlight blankets the earth, rendering lifeless all that it touches" (HKK 206; LM 473). At the same time, the thought of death is not fear-inducing, but rather has a seductive power: "anyone witnessing the scenery . . . would surely think death inviting" (HKK 206; LM 473). The lifelessness is underlined by the cold, pale moonlight that seems to deprive the landscape of "the complexion of life" and reduces it to a "two-dimensional image of an old motion picture stopped at midframe" (HKK 207; LM 473), with its color faded, its contours blurred, and — most significantly — its "time" brought to a halt. It is not only the beach and the moon that have been deprived of depth, but also the face of the balladeer, his mother — a mere painting without depth (HKK 213; LM 476).

The feeling of lifelessness depicted in this scene does not stand for death per se, but the non-real realm of paintings and by extension, the realm

of imagination and fiction. The linkage between lifelessness and fictionality is reiterated in *Praise* through the flickering and shimmering images of specters with their "ashen" complexion deep in the "visible darkness" of a spacious old Japanese room dimly lit by a single candle (IR 550-1; IPS 51). The balladeer, under the intense moonlight that melts away the shapes of objects it touches (HKK 207; LM 473), is not a being born into and dying in reality; she is a figure who was born into, and remains part of, the lifeless world of fiction.

Paradoxically in this life-taking moonlight shadows come alive, shadows which are "far more vivid" than the objects themselves (HKK 207; LM 473). The vitality of the shadows places an end to the master-slave relationship between the boy and his shadow; his shadow now seems to say, "I'm your companion, not your servant" (HKK 207; LM 473), and adds that it is the moon which has made it come out. In sharp contrast with the boy's shadow under the arc lamp that emphasizes the constraints of life, the shadows under the moon become unleashed from the tyranny of material reality. By losing the one-to-one relationship with the objects to which they used to belong, shadows become non-identity. Moreover, in contrast to the fixed shadows cast by the arc lamp, his shadow in the moonlight has flexibility, stretching in length (HKK 212; LM 475-6).

The specific identities of objects are no longer valid in their shadows. This is Tanizaki's interpretation of formlessness: an infinite number of shapes appearing in and disappearing into the shadowy emptiness. This paradoxical concept of both multitude and nothingness is vividly demonstrated in the ethereal image of the balladeer mother who blends into the landscape.

The construction and deconstruction of her image take place simultaneously. The introduction of her in the story begins with a deliberate

and elaborate allusion to her inseparable relationship with the landscape. Her meeting with the boy is preceded by a spectacular metaphoric birth of an eternal being from the swollen waves and the full moon. The boy's attention is drawn to one glistening spot in the center of the swirling ocean currents that swells up toward the moon and catches the moonlight, sending it "radiating in all directions" like "countless fish scales of light," as if to describe a halo around the one who is being born (HKK 205; LM 472).

The figure of the balladeer is so constructed that her theatricality and fictionality is transparent to the boy and readers alike. She is adorned with an "elegant, silk-crepe kimono, the kind worn by lovers on the stage" (HKK 211; LM 475-6) and wears very heavy make-up. She is also described as having the image of a balladeer, the traditional strolling musicians who circulate around New Year's day: she is wearing the "old-fashioned hat made of plaited straw" (HKK 211; LM 475-6) that Shinnai musicians used to wear. She never stops playing the samisen throughout their meeting, as if it were background music in a play, and even her voice is given the same tonal quality as the samisen music.

As in the scene of her birth, the description of her image is always accompanied by her linkage with nature: her fine, high, elegant nose becomes visible "just as a promontory which one sees from a train window comes into view" (HKK 212; LM 476), her tear-stained cheeks are "like the moon" (HKK 217; LM 478) radiating a "silvery light, like the waters glistening offshore, her tears are like large dewdrops sliding off a lotus leaf" (HKK 213; LM 477; the contrast with the dead lotuses in the first part of the story should be noted). Even her music is accompanied "by the whisper of surf washing the sandy beach, it flows like spring water, rings out like a silver bell" (HKK 210; LM 475). Most of all, her white skin seems non-human, having "an animal's soft,

cattail-like sheen — surely the fox's coat" (HKK 210; LM 475). This elaborate simile demonstrates not only her mutability, but also Tanizaki's desire to integrate her into the landscape.

This highly dynamic reciprocal transformability between art, the landscape, and the mother, enables readers to integrate the mother into the scene and the scene into the eternal present of a moon-lit seashore lined with pine trees. She dissolves into her own shadow, which itself merges with a two-dimensional land of shadows.

The two-dimensional perspective of the landscape, shown as if frozen in a frame of an old film, is reminiscent of some paintings by Salvador Dali where objects are made to appear flat and two-dimensional, draped or hung over their surroundings. Just as is the case in such paintings, Tanizaki's "flattened" images of the mother, the landscape, and the omnipresent shadows seem to express a search for the forgotten, unconscious, non-logical aspects of human existence. In both cases, what is unreal on the mundane plane is used as a bridge to a higher, more inclusive, but normally repressed "reality."

By employing the art of collage and placing together incongruous images of refracted, distorted, shattered and dissected visions of reality, modern painters have attempted to reveal these more basic images that lurk in the human unconsciousness. As we have stated of both Marcuse and Tanizaki, surrealist aesthetics attempts to synthesize the unconscious and the conscious; it advocates freeing imagination from the restrictive control of conscious and extols the erotic and irrational. However, in one respect Tanizaki is distinctively different from an ultra-realistic painter like Dali: he fades the colors and contours of reality, removing detail as well as flattening

perspective, rather than indulging in a distorted version of photographic realism.

By erasing the lines of reality, Tanizaki is deconstructing the established boundaries and expectations of life. However, Tanizaki's world of imagination allows for neither the direct transplantation of specific reality nor the deliberate collage of incongruous forms. The blurring of boundaries and contours is used to free us from specific realities and lead our imagination to archetypes and ideals. In "Longing," we note in particular that the boy cannot recognize the Shinnai balladeer as his mother; she must first identify herself. To make her more specifically "his mother," to abandon the play of light and dark that stimulates without regulating our imagination, would also have entailed distancing the "non-him" reader, not to mention ignoring his aesthetic needs. By making her non-specific, but paradoxically instantly recognizable, she is transformed from "mother" to "Mother," stimulating our imaginations and awakening our minds to a wider range of existential potentialities.

The origin of the sorrow

There are only two brief dialogue scenes in the story: one with the peasant woman in the farmhouse and the other with the balladeer on the beach. The rest of the story is filled with the boy's perception of sensory images and his spontaneous reactions to them. More information passes between the boy and the mothers by visual, tactile, olfactory, onomatopoeic means than by spoken language. One might also argue that the messages delivered by means of the senses have a much more immediate impact on the emotions, especially in the original Japanese. Tanizaki supports this view

by demonstrating in the dialogue scenes the inefficiency of human language in communicating emotions.

Drawn to the peasant's place by the warmth of home and the smell of familiar food, the boy expects to be spoken to by the woman in the language of mother's unconditional love. However, the conversation with her resembles an interrogation devoted to the rational evaluation of data. Her remarks are made for the sole purpose of revealing the boy's identity. The data such as the number of years elapsed since her separation from her son and the fact that the names of the boy and her son do not match are processed through the system of deductive logic. Finally, she concludes that the boy is not her son and refuses to share the food that she prepares only for *her son* with the boy who is *someone else's* son. As poignant as her desire to meet her son again may be, her blind insistence on rational identification of the boy does not allow for any room to understand the boy's (her own son's) wish to go back in time.

On the contrary, in the dialogue with the balladeer, the barrier to communication is the boy's rationality. The boy is led by a variety of sensory clues out of the peasant's and into the balladeer's world. From the beginning, he smells salt in the air and realizes that the sea is near. Then comes the distant roaring of the surf and finally the plaintive notes of the samisen music which seems to respond to his incomprehensible sorrow. Although he intuitively follows all these sensory clues, there still remains within him a certain degree of rationality that hinders his understanding of the balladeer's remarks during their conversation.

Part of the problem is a question of ownership or perspective: rational according to whose reasons? From this perspective, we can see that the "rationalistic" doubts of the boy have shaky foundations, even when directed at the most superficially dubious of the balladeer's statements. Is it the moon

and not she who is crying, for instance? From the boy's initial perspective, the moon crying is absurd; he judges it a lie and demands the truth. However, from another angle, the musician is one with the moon/nature. There can be no subject/object dichotomy between them, and so, from her viewpoint, the "I" of "I am crying" cannot exist.

At this point, the boy's commitment to reason is already reduced and he is more susceptible to the irrational. In fact, he is not questioning the possibility of the moon crying, but only wants to know why the moon's tears are falling only on the musician's face, not on his own. His question conceals more frustration at his inability to cry than a rationalistic calling to accounts. Realizing this, she proffers a more "rational" and "causal" answer: her tears are because of the beautiful moon, at the same time reassuring him that there is nothing strange or wrong about feeling sad and shedding tears on this account. Anyone under the spell of the moon would have the same emotional response. The boy now realizes that he has been holding back his tears and that the emotion felt by the crying musician is not pain or anguish but something more positive, pleasurable, and even celebratory (HKK 217; LM 477) .

The questions Tanizaki is least interested in answering are those such as "who is really crying?" or "what exactly does the moon signify?" What is important to him is how the moon affects us, not what it is. The reality of our emotions is the same whether they are inspired by something true to reality or imaginary. We all respond to the feeling of infinity when such a feeling is stimulated by something larger than life, for example, when watching the enchanting moon, the boundless blue sky, and the limitless expanse of the sea. In the face of infinity, we come to a realization of our smallness and weakness. It is sad to learn that we are separated from it, but it is also happy,

because we know that we still have our faculties of imagination and that through imagination, we can enjoy over and over again the sensation of being reunited with it. Here lies the secret pleasure of pursuing the unknowable and unattainable and of indulging in the intense emotions inspired by it.

The balladeer uses the boy's language to tell him that his inability to cry is no more than the repression of his own natural response to emotion. By demonstrating her free emotional expression, she teaches the value and satisfaction of being true to oneself.

Mother as a goddess of sensuality

Just as the Judeo-Christian tradition created a saintly mother by eliminating sexuality from her through immaculate conception,⁷ Tanizaki crafts a divine or saintly mother in order to endow her with eternity and unattainability. However, Tanizaki's mother goddess is overflowing with sensuality, and it is this unattainable sensual beauty to which the protagonist submits himself. In "Longing," Tanizaki faces a difficulty: the protagonist has pursued her into her realm of infinite potentiality. However, his proximity to her jeopardizes the sustainability of the elaborate construction of her image, as an unattainable goddess. Consequently, it becomes inevitable that the hero remain in his eternal childhood, thereby making her sexually inaccessible.

Before the boy meets the balladeer/mother, he undergoes a gradual process of becoming one of the fictional characters in the fictional realm. He becomes "soaked in moonlight, drenched in the roar of surf" (HKK 207; LM 474) and "no longer a living person" (HKK 210; LM 474), despite his initial fear of being "turned to stone . . . drenched in cold moonlight year after year, a

fossil on the strand" (HKK 206; LM 473). In the end, his "own voice astonishes him" "with its melodious ring," (HKK 217; LM 477-8) just like the balladeer's.

As his reasoning capacity diminishes, his awareness of the balladeer's sensuality on the contrary becomes heightened, almost to the extent of an adult's. He notices the astonishingly smooth and white skin around her neck and wrists, the flowing kimono hanging precariously on the sloping narrow shoulders, the thickly rouged lips, and so on. He feels tempted to lick the white soles of her bare feet (HKK 211; LM 475-6). His shadow, as if reflecting his desire, slowly climbs over hers, now touching her heels, now reaching her hips, sash, then her back (HKK 212; LM 475). It appears that he is growing taller when "for every foot" he walks his "shadow gains two" (HKK 211; LM 475).

However, just before his shadow completely overlaps hers, "he steps resolutely to one side" so that his shadow and hers now are parallel to each other (HKK 212; LM 475). Their embrace comes after a dialogue in which the balladeer first reassures the boy that she shares his aesthetic ideals and values. Then, in return for the reassurance, she demands that the boy acknowledges her as his mother. It is at this point in their dialogue that readers sense in the boy a certain degree of confusion and frustration. Despite his keen awareness of her sensual appeal, he reminds himself, "I'm still a small child" (HKK 219; LM 478). Only after her son's reconfirmation of his being only a child does the mother allow an embrace with him: "'Well, Jun'ichi, do you recognize me now?' she says, her voice trembling with joy. 'Have you finally recognized me?'" (HKK 219; LM 478). At last comes the most powerful language and reward the Mother can offer: the smell of her warm, sweet breasts.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the object of searching in Tanizaki's aestheticism for the origin of the sorrow felt by the boy and the artist mother. As the first step towards this goal, we reviewed his aesthetic arguments as discussed in *In Praise of Shadows* and derived from these arguments three of the ideals of beauty, which Tanizaki cherished the most: the sensations of timelessness, formlessness, and lifelessness. These sensations stimulate his imagination and in turn, his imagination is the author of his emotional responses. The next step was to examine the image of the mother from the temporal and spatial perspectives, in order to compare and contrast the qualities and attributes of the mother with the aforementioned ideals.

There are two mother figures in the story: the peasant false mother and the balladeer real mother. In fact, for Tanizaki, these two mothers represent different aspects of motherhood: the false mother is a nurturer resembling an ordinary mother we usually see in life and the real mother a provider of his aesthetic needs. The protagonist/Tanizaki's preference is obviously for the aesthetic mother, as seen in the direction of the boy's journey and the degree of his satisfaction. Tanizaki, comparing attributes of the peasant mother with those of the musician mother, provides a number of reasons for his predilections. The passage of time versus agelessness, specificity versus archetype, life versus lifeless fictionality — these are the main points of comparison. The musician mother is a perfect example of Tanizaki's construction of a character according to his belief in the power of the infinitely expanded imagination and his aesthetic ideals as emphasized in *Praise*.

Tanizaki shares with Marcuse the aesthetic belief that imagination is the linkage between the senses and reason. However, Tanizaki does not agree

with Marcuse's contention that the senses and reason should be equally valid and necessary contributors to the enrichment of human life. At least in "Longing," Tanizaki insists on a relationship of domination: the domination of the sensuous and sensual over reason. Underlying this insistence is his deepest concern that the powers of reason constantly limit and control our imagination.

In order to free the imagination from the tyranny of reason, Tanizaki stages the play of light and darkness on the seashore (a metaphoric alcove in nature) under the magic of the moon (which stimulates the imagination). The shadows (fictive manifestations of imagination) come alive while the shapes of real objects melt away in the moonlight that blurs the contours of reality. The shadows are of infinite potentiality with their non-identity, non-specificity, and "a-temporality." To this landscape of omnipotence is born the image of a mother with little resemblance to reality as an ageless goddess of sensual beauty. Her beauty is only to be admired and worshiped and never to be attained. Therefore, not only the protagonist's reason but also his sensual desire and sexual needs must be repressed. One way of accomplishing this is to keep him in a perpetual childhood.

The boy's desire to eliminate the distance that separates him from Mother and become one with her is satisfied in their aesthetic and emotional bond. Through the experience of losing himself in a whole, in the realm of Mother, the protagonist attains glimpses of infinity, which in turn brings to his eyes sad and happy tears of longing and jubilation.

However, "Longing" ends with one important issue unresolved: the protagonist's repressed sexuality contradicts the purpose of his journey, freeing the faculties of imagination by completely eliminating reason. After all, he is not a child but an adult. Keeping him in a perpetual childhood is in

itself a rationalized resolution, for the sake of preserving the ideals. Moreover, preventing him from growing up is a restraint, if not of reality, of his rigidly maintained ideals and fantasy. I believe that this is the reason for the frustration that readers sense in the boy's conversation with the musician. This frustration, whether an oversight or a contradiction planned by the author, appears again in his later works in a more intensified fashion. "Captain Shigemoto's Mother," which will be discussed in the next chapter, is the most representative of these works.

Notes

¹ Edward Fowler, "Tanizaki's Sentimental Education," *Monumenta Nipponica* 35 (1980): 479-83; translated and quoted by Edward Fowler from "Itansha no kanashimi," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*, Vol. 23 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966-70) 24.

² Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "Haha o kouru ki," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966-70) 217; hereafter, abbreviation HKK is used to refer to this work.

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "Longing for Mother," Trans. Edward Fowler, *Monumenta Nipponica* 35 (1980): 477-8; hereafter, abbreviation LM is used to refer to this work.

³ Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "In'ei raisan," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*, Vol. 20 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966-70) 533-8; hereafter, abbreviation IR is used to refer to this work.

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, *In Praise of Shadows*, Trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker, 1977 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991) 29-36; hereafter, abbreviation IPS is used to refer to this work.

⁴ Marcuse is quoting from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. J. H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1892), Introduction IX, p. 40-44.

⁵ Marcuse is referring to Schiller's *The Aesthetic Letters, Essays, and the Philosophical Letters*, Trans. J. Weiss (Boston: Little, Brown, 1845).

⁶ The pond is described as a "sea of iridescent phosphor" — an expression often used to describe graveyards and ghosts hovering over tombs in old Japanese folktales. Also, the pond is filled with dried lotuses which may very well symbolize death, considering the traditional mystical association of lotuses with the quality of "life-giving."

⁷ For detailed discussion, see *Hail Mary?: the Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism* by Maurice Hamington, published in 1995.

Chapter 2

The "Mother" of "Captain Shigemoto's Mother"

Tanizaki's half-century of literary production saw at least two transitions radical enough to engage the attention of nearly every student of his work. The first of these occurred on the death of his mother, which is seen as the impetus for a series of *hahakoi* novels, including several which are discussed in this thesis. The other came with his move to the Kansai from Tokyo, from the modern to the traditional, and his marriage there with his third wife, Matsuko. The physical and mental realignment connected with this inspired a number of pieces of historical fiction, from "A Blind Man's Tale" (Momoku monogatari, 1931; tr., 1963) to "Captain Shigemoto's Mother" (Shosho Shigemoto no haha, 1950; tr, 1994), where Matsuko throughout provides the archetype for the heroines. It is my hypothesis here that there was yet another turning point in Tanizaki's work, one which came at the end of this series of novels, a turning point which led directly to the resolution of the mother obsession that had haunted him for most of his previous career.

It can hardly be denied that "Shigemoto" marks a passage of some kind in the overall development of Tanizaki's writing. To begin with, it is the last of the historical novels: after "Shigemoto," the setting returns to modern Japan. On a deeper level, there is a steady release and liberation of sexual energy in the works that follow "Shigemoto," such as *The Key* (Kagi, 1956; tr., 1960), "The Bridge of Dreams" (Yume no ukihashi, 1959; tr., 1965), and *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (Futen rojin nikki, 1962; tr., 1965). His heroes, which up to this time have been either children or adults infantilized by reunion with their mothers, turn decisively towards personal maturity — albeit a maturity which is often highly idiosyncratic. This is why "Shigemoto" and the immediately following story, "The Bridge of Dreams," are so crucial to the

understanding of Tanizaki's development. It is here that we must look for the motives behind the transformation that comes to his "*hahakoi* protagonists."

In this chapter, we will examine some of the elements in "Shigemoto" that foreshadow and facilitate the progress towards maturity which becomes more evident in "The Bridge of Dreams." In the next and final chapter, we will build on this to show how "Bridge" resolves Tanizaki's mother obsession through an imaginative confrontation between the ideals of fantasy and the uncomfortable details of reality.

The sharp difference between the protagonists of "Longing for Mother" and "The Bridge of Dreams" might be taken to imply a sudden change in Tanizaki's aesthetic ideals. The suddenness, though not the change, is illusory; it is the natural development of a forty-year struggle to negotiate some sort of maturity for those creatures of his fiction that stand closest to him in their needs and obsessions.

This change had to go far beyond a simple coming of age. It entailed a fundamental revision of Tanizaki's aesthetic ideals. The maturing of the protagonist requires the passage of time, which in turn demands that the mother age, which again demands the renunciation of her hitherto invariable trademarks — eternity, purity, and divinity. Before "Shigemoto," Tanizaki was not able to let go of the ideal of an ever-young and beautiful mother (who is sometimes younger than her sons). Instead, he exercised his ingenuity to defeat the passage of time and the coming of age, bringing a young mother together with an adult son through the medium of a story told by the ghost in "The Reed Cutter" — the ghost vanishes when asked the

mother's real age — and vicarious satisfaction through a meeting with the mother's young female relatives, as in "Arrowroot."

Anthony Chambers and many other critics have agreed that in Tanizaki's *hahakoi* novels, a half-hidden sexual attraction for the image of the mothers is cloaked by the child's limitations and naiveté. This repressed sexual energy finds its first resolution and closure in "Bridge," allowing a certain degree of growth in the protagonist; and the mother (no longer timeless) must face ordinary human realities such as birth, aging, sickness, sin, and death. Since both of these developments require the betrayal of Tanizaki's cherished *hahakoi* ideals, we must examine what it is in "Shigemoto" that foreshadows and facilitates this metamorphosis.

Self-subversion

I would like to argue that Tanizaki's primary strategy in effecting change to his *hahakoi* ideals was self-subversion: a conscious undercutting and undermining, in which he is both aware and unaware of what he is doing and what the likely results will be. His chosen method is what might be called a "double-text" technique: much of what he writes can be taken two ways, one of which is conventional and continues in the line of his earlier ideals, and the other of which violates them.

In this case, the first would be the conventional reading of "Shigemoto" as simply another of Tanizaki's stock *hahakoi* novels. As an example, we might cite Anthony Chambers' "A Study of Tanizaki's Shosho Shigemoto no haha." The author of this piece declares that "I can think of no work prior to *Shigemoto* in which the bereaved child is allowed such a satisfying reunion with his mother" (368). Echoing Edward Seidensticker, he terms the protagonist, Shigemoto, as "the best example" of "the Eternal Child

in pursuit of Eternal Mother" (357), and labels Shigemoto's mother "Tanizaki's most successful evocation of the 'eternal woman'," who is "cruelly aloof and inaccessible" (365). So much for the surface meaning: for the rest of this chapter, I will be attempting to uncover the other side of the story, the hidden text that forms the instrument of Tanizaki's strategy of self-subversion.

As we have already noted, after his move to the Kansai, Tanizaki produced a series of "historical" works which are built around pseudo-historical documentation: *A Portrait of Shunkin* (Shunkinsho, 1933; tr., 1963), *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi* (Bushuko hiwa, 1935; tr., 1982), and *Captain Shigemoto's Mother* are only three of the better-known examples. Throughout, he manipulates the boundary between fiction and reality to the point where his pseudo-realism is transformed into a parody of both the realism it imitates and the nativist themes it invokes. The heroic figures of the past are "realistically" revealed as having entertained a whole series of dubious lusts and shady fetishes, and we find ourselves making far more trips to the toilet than any decorous writer could have been comfortable with. Nevertheless, the whole is wrapped in such a seductive cloak of "realism" that the only result could have been to awaken doubts in the minds of the readers: brave warriors and famous beauties, is this what they really are?

Tanizaki's parody undoubtedly stems from his uneasiness concerning "historical and cultural authenticity," and his opinion that it was little more than an illusion, a fictional memory of the past. And why privilege one illusion over another? — surely coprology might be granted equal rights with chivalry? He seems to have come to an intuitive understanding of the point of view outlined much later in Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983):

It is clear that plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups — not least in nationalism — were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity either by semi-fiction . . . or by forgery It is also clear that entirely new symbols and devices came into existence...such as the national anthem . . . the national flag . . . or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image. (7)

For Tanizaki, the primordial "national myths" seem to have been reduced to the status of building blocks in a "national fiction"; and he reserved the right to supplement or replace them with other blocks of his own design if and when he saw fit. In so doing, he individualized his culture without denying it.

"Shigemoto" is a particularly good illustration of this process. Here, he cites over twenty different sources, collections of tales and poetry as well as historical documentation. His extensive and meticulous usage of facts, phrases, and poems from these texts lends an air of reality to the whole, concealing the liberties that Tanizaki took with the documents, as well as his outright forgery of the source entitled "Shigemoto's Diary." He did his work so well that, according to Chambers, one Japanese scholar of classical literature applied to Tanizaki for permission to examine the manuscript of that particular work (374). Nevertheless, his unsuspecting victim here was different in degree, not in kind, from human beings in general. We work on the assumption that reality and fiction will be clearly discernible and directly opposed, which is the very illusion that Tanizaki's "fictional realism" is meant to exploit, reveal, and dispel.

Tanizaki thus uses "Shigemoto" to show how much human beings have lost by favoring one side of this duality while marginalizing or denying the other. The chief object of this critique, I would contend, is himself: more specifically, his own lopsided, two-dimensional characterization of what had been his greatest ideal, the protagonists of his *hahakoi* stories.

The image of Shigemoto's mother

— through the eyes of the male characters —

Despite her being the title character, Shigemoto's mother is almost invisible throughout the story. Readers see her almost entirely through the eyes of the four chief male characters: the two chief amorists, Shihei and Heiju; Shigemoto's father, Kunitsune; and Shigemoto himself. As we might expect, each of these men portrays her in accord with the pattern of his own fantasies.

Shihei

Shihei is the Minister of the Right, young and powerful, while Heiju, much lower in rank, is his servant. Shihei dashes "decisively and ruthlessly toward his objective" (Chambers 378) and seeks to obtain it by any means possible, with no thought for the cruelty and inhumanity he displays in his quest to achieve his goals. He abducts the twenty-year-old wife of his uncle, Kunitsune, who is seventy-seven years old but junior to him in rank. There is nothing of the amorous or the seductive in the abduction, which Heiju calls an act of "naked vulgarity."¹ Heiju, in contrast to Shihei, believes that the art of the amorist is subtle, even elegant; certainly not something that should be used to bring serious harm to others. Chambers draws a significant comparison between Heiju's hesitant and respectful approaches towards Jiju

(a lady in Shihei's service) with "Shihei's daring acquisition of Shigemoto's mother" (378). Heiju even feels a certain amount of sympathy towards Kunitsune, even though at the same time he is having a secret affair with his wife (one might doubt the depth of his sympathy, though, as the narrator himself terms it "uncharacteristic").

The narrator, for his part, has more sympathy for Shihei than Heiju. He states that Shihei might not have been as much a villain as people were prone to consider him: their sympathy for Michizane (Shihei's political rival, who falls victim to Shihei's conspiracy and dies in exile) leads them to view Shihei as "a stereotypical wicked, treacherous nobleman" (SSH 158; CSM 64). The narrator even introduces an anecdote to display Shihei's "guileless, sunny, broad-minded" side, and demonstrate how he was prone to loud and uncontrollable laughter at the slightest provocation (SSH 159; CSM 64).

It would seem that the superficial cruelty of Shihei is being set against an inner "true man" who is quite different. As opposed to his "vulgar" behaviour of kidnapping his uncle's wife, the narrator emphatically states that Shihei dearly loved this new wife (Shigemoto's mother) and has a son with her. In addition, there is an incident that reveals yet another aspect of his personality. His death is attributed to the effects of a curse cast by the dead Michizane, a curse that eventually affects most of Shihei's descendants. Although the lightning that kills Shihei is said to be a manifestation of the furious and resentful Michizane, the real killer of Shihei seems to be his own guilt. This is vividly demonstrated in the description of his death: a green dragon spitting flames from its mouth emerges from nowhere other than Shihei's own ears. Even the spells and incantations of the highly respected Buddhist priest Jozo cannot reverse the effects of Shihei's self-punishment (SSH 227-8; CSM 127-8).

Shihei's outward mercilessness and cruelty is thus seen to be little more than an inverse reflection of what is taking place within him. However, his contemporaries at court and their descendants took his punishment as being entirely deserved (SSH 228; CSM 128). Whether by conscious choice or unconscious inclination, they refused to see the other side of Shihei. In other words, they could not see, or refused to see, that the punishment had been carried out by the perpetrator himself — that both good and bad shared a single origin. Their approving reaction stemmed from their hatred for a destroyer of harmony and the general consensus that harmony must be maintained by isolating and ostracizing offenders. In so doing, the division between good and bad was deepened rather than being resolved. The very need for this rigid division attests their affirmation of the destructive side of human nature and their collective promise, once more, to repress it in themselves to sustain harmony in their community.

One of the chief lessons that Shihei teaches us is that there is a covert element in any account of experience. There is no way of knowing the whole truth; and a dualistic view always makes judgments about what to repress, to distort, and what to exclude from interpretation and articulation. The only way to approach our lived experiences in a holistic way is to subvert the traditional one-sided interpretations of history and examine what has been untold, unrecorded, or uninterpreted. As we have said above, this seems to be one of Tanizaki's chief aims here and elsewhere in his later stories: to unleash what has been repressed in his protagonists.

Tanizaki adds another layer of shadow to his portrait of Shihei by introducing a document called the "Summary of the Ten Precepts" which tells Heiju and Jiju's story differently:

Shihei had a relationship with Jiju early on, and Heiju, wittingly or not, had entered into a love triangle. The chamber pot and other pranks that Jiju plays on Heiju, may have been suggested by Shihei, manipulating her from the background. Then it was Shihei who killed Heiju. (SSH 224; CSM 123)

At first sight, it is puzzling why Tanizaki would reverse his attitude, putting forward material that tends to blacken Shihei's character after having taken such pains to win the reader's sympathy for him. However, the force of the accusations is blunted by the multiple layers the story has acquired. Instead of revulsion towards Shihei, the reader's perception of both him and the story within which he is set begins to shift. Shihei has become a complex, multi-faceted character: a combination of a vulgar, ruthless villain, a paranoid coward, a guileless, sunny fellow, and a clever schemer who sees through the delicate and elegant arts of an amorist like Heiju. And even with all these contradictions, the readers remain free from confusion; instead of losing focus, Shihei's character comes alive as a realistic figure with depth and the story opens to an intriguing variety of interpretations.

How does surface incoherence translate into depth and life in the mind of readers? The question is not easy to answer with any authority, but one explanation could be that our nature contains a host of unrecognized, unrevealed, and unexplored possibilities, and in the process of reading an intricate character like Shihei, we recognize these forgotten facets of our being as the story evokes them in ourselves. Perhaps Tanizaki had come to realize that the characterization of his *hahakoi* protagonists had been decidedly lopsided, and in response, had resolved to liberate them from their repression, especially sexual repression, so that he would be able to create multi-faceted heroes and thereby enrich the story as a whole.

Heiju

At first glance, Heiju appears to live by the philosophy of the true amorist: "A wife deceives her husband, a husband deceives his wife, the lovers make unwise plans, cross dangerous straits, and savor a poignant, clandestine tryst — therein lay the fascination of love for Heiju" (SSH 214; CSM 112). He despises Shihei for ignoring "the code of those who followed the way of love" and "exploiting rank and authority to seize a man's possession" (SSH 214; CSM 112).

Ironically, however, Heiju becomes as much his own victim as Shihei, with the damage being done as a direct result of his own amorist principles. It is the thrill of clandestine trysts that he enjoys; he loses interests as soon as the novelty is exhausted. He is quick to forget the names and faces of the women with whom he has become involved. Underneath this drastic oscillation between the presence and absence of intense thrill lies a perverse enjoyment in the knowledge that the deceived remain ignorant. The excitement of deception becomes strongest when the deceived person begins to suspect, and ends when the secret is divulged. Therefore, Heiju's sympathy for the doddering old Kunitsune while at the same time having a secret love affair with his wife can be interpreted as originating partly from Kunitsune's good-natured, unsuspecting personality. The mere knowledge that the deception will never be discovered reduces the degree of excitement it can generate. Tanizaki could not resist the temptation to supplement Heiju's affair with Kunitsune's wife with his own suspicion that Heiju might have informed Kunitsune of the affair through a subtle hint, his present of chrysanthemums: Heiju himself has already plucked Kunitsune's cherished flower (SSH 180; CSM 83). What this attitude means is that Heiju's

enjoyment of his affairs derives largely from his knowledge they will eventually come to an end.

Heiju not only relishes the ignorance of the deceived, but also that of himself. The narrator tells us that Heiju's passion fastens upon Kunitsune's wife after her abduction by Shihei because he knows now that she has become "a flower on a mountain peak" (SSH 216; CSM 115), an unattainable goal. Heiju himself also admits that his irresistible attraction to and passion for Jiju is due to her being unknown to him (SSH 178-9; CSM 82). However, is Jiju really as unknowable as Heiju would have it? In fact, the attributes of her character are clearly known to readers (whether or not she is being manipulated by Shihei). She is a very clever woman, strongly possessive and obsessive. Her pranks and cruel insults have one purpose only: keeping Heiju all to herself. She leads him on and on, until he feels he is just about to attain his goal; and then slips away, leaving him swinging in the breeze.

The only way to possess a man like Heiju, whose desire is so closely linked with the excitement of the unknowable, is to remain unknowable forever. It is not clear whether Jiju really loves him and wants to keep him with her forever by remaining his unattainable object, or whether she is simply turning Heiju's amorist tricks against him, to punish a shameless cuckold. Whichever is correct, Jiju is like a mirror, which reflects what is in Heiju himself; she has the image of an unknown woman, but it is an image that has been projected onto her by Heiju. If he idealizes a woman whose "feces" are fragrant and sweet-tasting, she will let him have his own way in the matter, regardless of how strange or perverse it might seem.

This self-delusion, or more accurately narcissism, a falling in love with the reflection of one's own ideals, is no more than a game played between Heiju (the projector) and Jiju (the reflector), something that both are very

aware of. However, perhaps the most vital rule of a game is that it not be confused with reality, but be confined to a temporally bound shared illusion. In spite of this, the game played by Heiju and Jiju does not end by mutual consent; instead, it culminates in Heiju's death. If we consider Jiju a puppet controlled by Shihei, she could not have stopped the game even if she had wanted to; and even if she is not a puppet, she has become obsessed with the game, allowing it to drift nearer and nearer to reality. Jiju concentrates on reflecting Heiju's ideals; Heiju, for his part, is a slave to his own aesthetic principle: only those unattainable and unknowable are beautiful and attractive. The ideal beauty and the follower of that ideal thus become permanent captives to their own realities, endlessly and perfectly reflecting each other. Jiju, who enjoys little free will however we construct her, either does not suffer the consequences of her actions, or is numb to her own suffering, leaving Heiju the most vulnerable to destruction. Soon comes the death of the creator of the game, the end of free imagination, the end of fictionality, and perhaps, for Tanizaki himself, the end of fiction writing. A writer who has lost control over his own ideals will be controlled by them and will eventually sterilize himself with his rigid rules and principles.

Kunitsune

Chambers points out the similarities between Kunitsune and the child Shigemoto, and refers to a similar situation in "Bridge," in which the father and his son, Chambers believes, are one and the same identity and to *The Key* in which "an elderly dying man" yields "his wife to a young man . . . but not necessarily, his son" (363). He goes on to say that Tanizaki and Matsuko's relationship at the time of writing "Shigemoto" was akin to that of Kunitsune with his young wife. In fact, Tanizaki did feel sorry for Matsuko,

who was much younger than he, and stated that he would not object if she had an affair with another man (Chambers 364).²

However, there are a number of differences between Kunitsune and his son Shigemoto in their attitudes toward sexual desire and in their nostalgic behaviour. Tanizaki contrasts the seventy-six- or seventy-seven-year-old Kunitsune with his twenty-year-old wife and the young, handsome Shihei. The narrator describes a scene in which "his gnarled, trembling fingers fondle her hair and stroke her cheek" (SSH 183; CSM 87), and we are told of Shihei's ridicule of Kunitsune's nose, with a drop of mucus hanging at its tip (SSH 180; CSM 84). However, the reason why Kunitsune cherishes his wife as a treasure more valuable than his life is not that he enjoys the contrast between his old age and her youthful beauty. It is rather his fervent wish to participate in and identify himself with youth. He enters a state of bliss while sleeping with her, "intertwining his arms and legs with his wife's" (SSH 182; CSM 86), gripping her tenaciously without an inch between their bodies. At these moments, overwhelmed by her youth, he forgets his age. In an animistic sense, he can vicariously share her overflowing youth and energy.

Chambers argues that Kunitsune is a child to his wife, rather than a husband, supporting himself with an apt quotation from the story after Kunitsune has realized his wife is gone: "The eighty-year-old Major Counselor wanted to wail, like a child calling for his mother" (SSH 213; CSM 111). However, it is difficult to agree that Kunitsune's bedroom behaviour stems from his psychological attachment to his wife as a mother figure. His inability to attain penetration does not mean that he cannot enjoy sexual pleasure: there are other means. Kunitsune is utilizing all of his sensory capacities in order to achieve sexual satisfaction. His habit of lighting the

bedroom brightly so that he can admire her beauty (SSH 182; CSM 86) is one good example. Kunitsune did not and could not repress his sexuality.

Viewed in this light, it is only natural that Kunitsune fails at his attempt to conquer his attachment to his wife's image by means of the Buddhist "Contemplation of Impurity." This practice is the diametric opposite of everything Kunitsune actually believes in. First and foremost, he holds that life and youth are more precious and enjoyable because they do not last. He thinks that because "a woman's youth and beauty" are "finite," he has to "let his young wife go" as early as possible (SSH 210; CSM 109). His attitude is not at all the same as Japanese traditional sensibilities, *sabi* and *wabi*, which express the sad beauty of the impermanence of things. It springs directly from his passion for youthful beauty and life energy. Therefore, a Buddhist teaching that is aimed at renouncing the impermanent, dream-like world and aspiring to a pure and permanent state of enlightenment has no chance of alleviating his sufferings.

Second, for Kunitsune, fantasy and imagination in life enable him to escape the harshness of his reality, old and close to death. Even if it is an illusion, he can always imagine that he has become youthful again with the help of his wife's abundant life force. It is the dream-like, untrue world (that the Buddhists decry) that supplies the energy he needs to cope with the relentless passage of time. Thus it is only to be expected that contemplating the rotting corpse of a woman will be the reverse of consoling: it forces him to face the ugly facts of his case, and destroys the fantasies that have kept him alive to the present.

Finally, Kunitsune sends his wife away to give her life, to avoid having "her young flesh to decay along with his" (SSH 185; CSM 88). Kunitsune weeps when he is in bed with his wife, because he cannot help but be torn two

ways (SSH 185; CSM 88). On the one hand, he wants to satisfy his selfish desire to keep her. On the other, he knows that sending her away will rescue her from the pitiful situation that she presently experiences. Eventually, his unselfish mind wins and he lets her go. However, his unselfishness is not without a certain self-serving tinge, since as he confesses, he does not want to go on living with her, resented and cursed by her, his beloved (SSH 211; CSM 110). Moreover, he wants to be remembered and loved by her as a selfless ex-husband. He enjoys the thought that she will shed tears of gratitude and respect for him (SSH 211; CSM 109). As long as she keeps a favorable memory of him in her heart, he can console himself with the idea that they are mentally connected; and this mental connection in turn enables him to share her life in a fashion that can triumph over physical distance and even death.

For these reasons, Kunitsune convinces himself that by letting her go, both of them will be given life. Soon, he regrets it and admits that it was a serious mistake, saying that a young person like Shihei does not need her — it is he who needs her most (SSH 212; CSM 111). Nevertheless, despite his regret, his decision was not made for Shihei's sake, but for his wife and himself. How could he possibly attain consolation by contemplating death after he has sent his wife away to give them both life? He never ceases his efforts to regain sexual energy and by extension, life force, even if it is only possible through fantasy and imagination. Thus, his attitudes towards sexual desire are on an entirely different plane than those of a child, such as the young Shigemoto. His impotence is only similar in the most superficial way to Shigemoto's "a-sexuality" or to Captain Shigemoto's self-repressed sexual desires.

Kunitsune and Shigemoto are dissimilar in still other ways. Although Chambers argues that "Psychologically Kunitsune and Shigemoto are one and

the same character: the Eternal Child longing for the Eternal Mother" (379), there is a great deal of difference in their nostalgia for the mother/wife. This was a deliberate move on Tanizaki's part, I believe, so that he might contrast his conventional *hahakoi* aesthetic, as represented by Shigemoto, with that of Kunitsune. Shigemoto's *hahakoi* behaviour centers around his ideal of a divine, pure, eternal and therefore inaccessible Mother. Shigemoto is not suffering from the inaccessibility of Mother: he revels in it. Just as Heiju's amorist art is based on the beauty of the unknown and unreachable, Shigemoto's *hahakoi* is utterly dependent on a separation from Mother.

Kunitsune could not be more different here: he suffers greatly from the unattainability of his former wife. It was a grave error on his part to have sent her away without looking into his heart and learning what and who he was. He is not like Shigemoto who can enjoy the suffering of separation. He is closer to Shihei in this regard, in that both must absolutely have the woman they want at their side. Shihei, for instance, cannot love a woman who is unknowable. He has to ensure that he is taking exactly what he wants: before he makes his first move towards Kunitsune's wife, he asks over and over if she is really as beautiful as he hears. There is no room for him to enjoy the beauty of the unknown or the idealized. Kunitsune, likewise, has a vivid, concrete image of a particular woman in his heart (a woman whom he was accustomed to admire in bright lamplight) and he needs her with him. It is her inaccessibility which eventually leads him to his death.

Shigemoto

Although Chambers believes that "the incestuous impulse" is "only faintly present" in Shigemoto's *hahakoi* (363), Shigemoto's image of his mother is grounded on an accumulation of repressed sexual energy.

Although, as a child, he could not have felt the same sexual attraction as an adult would, the fact that "Shigemoto's Diary" is a story written by Shigemoto as a full-grown man looking back at his childhood allows readers to view how the feelings the child had for his mother are seen by the adult Shigemoto. They appear as a sensual attraction, and he represses them as such.

Shigemoto's memory of his mother begins from when he was four years old, after she had been taken away by Shihei. Shigemoto visits his mother's place, Hon'in Mansion, led by the hand of his mother's attendant. His image of his mother in a dark room deep inside the mansion stands in sharp contrast to Kunitsune's clear image of her under the bright lamplight in the bedchamber. Shigemoto recollects that looking at her was "like peering reverently at an image of the Buddha, ensconced deep in a shrine" (SSH 238; CSM 139). "He never had a full satisfying look" (SSH 238; CSM 139). His mother hardly spoke to him, except for a few gentle words. He recollects:

It felt good, that was all, to be held silently in his mother's firm embrace, because her robes were scented with an especially sweet incense. . . . the fragrance would cling to his cheeks, to the palms . . . making him feel as though his mother were there, pressing against his body. (SSH 238; CSM 139)

From early on, the image of his mother is associated not with the clear, vivid image of her appearance, but with the smell of the incense which makes him feel her presence and embrace. His understanding of Mother begins to form in his young mind without the aid of any particular, concrete image of her, but he has a sense of her presence despite the distance between them.

Another striking experience in his early youth sears into his mind the image of Mother as a woman in love. Heiju and Shigemoto's mother secretly

exchanges love poems behind Shihei's back. They use the four-year-old Shigemoto as a go-between, and the poems are delivered written with a brush on his arm. "The sensual feeling of a brush caressing his arm" (SSH 274; CSM 172) is combined with the "imploring, love-stricken attitude" of Heiju which "could not help but arouse the sympathy even of a child" (SSH 240; CSM 141). His impression is further deepened by the sight of his mother's face (which he can see better now because she opens the curtain to read the poem) "gazing into the darkness, her eyes full of tears" (SSH 242; CSM 142) and the sensation of her hand reluctantly rubbing off each love-laden character with water. The beauty of her face at that instant is "burned into his mind, never to fade for the rest of his life" (SSH 242; CSM 142).

Thus, Shigemoto as a child develops the image of his mother as someone who is deeply in love, rather than a mother or a nurturer. With whom she has fallen in love is of no concern to Shigemoto. Despite the fact that she is in love with Heiju, Shigemoto, to whom their love is literally a physical presence, something inscribed on his body, feels that he is also one of the lovers partaking in this affair. In his heart of hearts, this sensual memory and image of her is exactly what Captain Shigemoto is afraid of losing or tarnishing when he fails to visit her for forty years, despite having a variety of opportunities (SSH 274; CSM 172).

Paradoxically, when he is finally ready to meet her, her sensual image has already metamorphosed into something else. The often-cited last scene of the story describes the intense emotion of joy that Captain Shigemoto feels upon the meeting with his mother.

Then, as if a dam had burst, he suddenly cried, "Mother!" The nun staggered as the bulky man rushed up and threw his arms around her. With some difficulty she sat down on a rock at the

side of the path. "Mother," said Shigemoto again. Kneeling on the ground, he looked up at his mother and rested his head on her lap. Under the white hood her face was blurred by the light of the moon filtering through the cherry blossoms; sweet and small, it looked as though it were framed by a halo. The memory of that spring day forty years before . . . came vividly to life, and in an instant he felt as though he had become a child of five or six. In a reverie, he . . . pressed his face close to hers. The fragrance of incense . . . recalled him that lingering scent of long ago, and like a child secure in his mother's love, he wiped his tears again and again with her sleeve. (SSH 281-2; CSM 179-8)

Strangely, however, there is no response from the mother-turned nun, neither word nor gesture. She simply sits there, as if she were an inanimate stone statue or an image of a bodhisattva devoid of emotions or even thoughts. All that readers can see is a middle-aged man pathetically shedding tears of joy, throwing himself on a stone statue which is passively, even coldly reflecting the very same idealized image that the man himself has projected onto it.

What process or experience has transformed this lover into a cold stone image? Tanizaki, via the narrator, confesses that it is none other than the creator of the image, that is, Shigemoto, who resembles Tanizaki himself. Shihei predeceased Shigemoto's mother at the age of twenty-four or -five. The narrator suspects that, given her earlier history, she might have "at least exchanged sweet whispers with someone discreetly" (SSH 271; CSM 169), but Shigemoto resolutely turns his face away from this possibility. Even if she had had other involvements, the narrator continues, Shigemoto, who loved

his mother single-mindedly, "would scarcely have recorded unsavory rumors about his mother in any case" (SSH 271-2; CSM 170).

Another and perhaps a better explanation is offered by Shigemoto himself. He confesses that, for "forty years, memory and awareness were cherished, gradually beautified into an ideal, and purified, until they had become something vastly different from the reality" (SSH 244; CSM 144). Through this forty-year-long purification process, he suppressed the sensual memory of her as an amorous woman with tremendous life energy, bearing children and indulging in love affairs. As a child, he hated his father for practicing the Contemplation of Impurity, wanting to scream at him, "Please don't make Mother into something dirty" (SSH 268; CSM 166). Ironically, without realizing it, he has gone on to effect much the same transformation in himself:

Shigemoto's father began . . . an explanation of the Contemplation of Impurity. . . . he wanted somehow to forget his bitterness and longing for one who had abandoned him, to erase her lovely image from the depths of his heart, and sever himself from earthly passions. (SSH 266; CSM 165)

According to the narrator's rather sarcastic summing-up, Kunitsune "died unredeemed — defeated by the beautiful phantasm of his beloved and clinging to Eternal Illusion" (SSH 270; CSM 168). However, Shigemoto the character, and Tanizaki the author, have cherished her image, divine, eternal, pure, ideal, and most importantly lifeless. The old father who died unredeemed kept a picture of his young wife as someone who could offer an abundance of life, while his young son, repressing his desire for life, has buried her image dead in his ideals — somewhere in the more lifeless reaches of Buddhism, severed from this world.

Paradoxically, this cold, pure mother is situated in an environment that is inundated with life-force and sensual connotations. It is as if the repressed sexual desire has been translated and redirected over the landscape within which the mother is situated. She lives in a mountain villa after she takes Buddhist vows, and Shigemoto's eventual visit is on a spring night. The nocturnal landscape is full of life, "bewitching and demonic beauty," "fragrant flowers," "phantasmic beams of light" from "the evening cherry" (SSH 278-9; CSM 176-7), and the "luscious moon" (SSH 276; CSM 174). "The murmur of a brook" is "mingled with the cries of an owl," "maples and pines spread their interlacing branches over the falls" (SSH 277; CSM 175) knit as tightly together as Kunitsune and his wife used to be in bed, and the fairy-like mother appears as if from within a cherry tree that is likened to a brocade worn at night (SSH 278, 280; CSM 176, 178). A poem inscribed on a boulder by a waterfall reads:

In the cascade he sends down, drawing from the quiet Otowa,
The heart of the man is revealed. (SSH 275; CSM 173)

And the mother picks a branch of kerria flower by the waterfall (SSH 280; CSM 179) — perhaps sent down by the man? It is in this setting, permeated with sensuality, that Shigemoto ironically finds the morally-purified mother.

Conclusion

The four men in "Shigemoto" share certain traits, but not to a degree that prevents them from being entirely separate, distinctive characters. Shigemoto's mother, who like Jiju is almost always sensed rather than seen, serves as the hub which connects them all, providing structural stability for the entire plot.

Chambers has underlined the significance of a key technique that Tanizaki has borrowed from *The Tale of Genji* — the use of contrast and similarity in key scenes in order to highlight chosen themes. These "contrasts and similarities" establish "a series of echoes, one scene recalling and reinforcing another" (378). With Shihei and Heiju, and with Kunitsune and Shigemoto, the preferred mode is contrast; while it leans more towards comparison with Shihei and Kunitsune (passionate and expressive), Heiju and Shigemoto (idealist and purist), and Shigemoto's mother and Jiju (a puppet and reflector of ideals).

At least two readings of the story are possible, as we have mentioned, depending on which of the four male characters is assumed to best reflect Tanizaki's sympathies and inclinations. Nevertheless, I believe that it is not the author's intention to force a clear choice; there is no one "right" answer. Rather, he seems to be focusing on a limited number of aspects and characteristics, regardless of which of the characters embody them best. My aim here is not so much to contradict Chambers' reading as it is to expand it by demonstrating that other, mutually supportive interpretations may be equally valid.

Anyone who reads this story will notice in Shihei and Kunitsune the ancestors of Utsugi in *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, the professor in *The Key*, and the father in "The Bridge of Dreams," with their free expression of sexual desire, their passion for life, and even in the comical cowardice and foolishness some of them display.

In Heiju and Shigemoto, readers find the prototype of Tanizaki's *hahakoi* protagonists up until "Shigemoto." It is not difficult to see that Tanizaki has identified himself with these protagonists, and shared with

them his aesthetic ideals and the ways of celebrating the image of deified, virgin Mother.

Now, Tanizaki's sympathy moves from Shigemoto to Kunitsune and from Heiju to Shihei. What draws Tanizaki's interest to Shihei and Kunitsune is not simply the way in which they express their sexuality. He has also come to appreciate the advantage of creating fully developed, complex and intriguing characters. As we have shown above, Shihei's multi-faceted character, full of flaws and self-contradictions, comes alive vividly and realistically, providing extra dimensions to other characters and enriching the entire narrative.

At this point in his career, Tanizaki seems to have realized that the stone idol of puppet/mother manipulated by an underdeveloped and restrained character like Shigemoto would no longer be sufficient to create the artistic effects he sought. Moreover, in Heiju he saw the end to which perpetuated and self-contained fantasy, fictionality, and self-development might lead — a character frozen and destroyed by his own artistic principles. He needed to explore his potential as an author more fully by freeing himself from his own rigid aesthetic views and ideals.

In common with all of us, fictional and real, the male protagonists are victims of the rigid and restraining ideals and principles that they themselves have created. The Heian court, famed for its "woman worship," was in fact based on patriarchal ideals projected onto women, something Tanizaki illustrates perfectly in the attitudes of all four male characters towards women. In the end, women exist to satisfy male egos and self-centered idealistic pursuits.

However, Tanizaki is not rejecting the pursuit of ideals in and of itself. Instead, he has chosen to expand his aesthetic horizons by freeing himself

from his older rigid image of Mother as a divine, pure, and ageless being. Shigemoto's mother and Jiju have functioned as silent mirrors in which Tanizaki could re-examine his ideals. The result of this authorial subversion of Tanizaki's own ideals, which have been tenaciously maintained up to this point, is the emergence of the much more holistic, alive, free, and sexually expressive protagonists of the works that followed "Shigemoto."

The aging Tanizaki, who believed the fantastic and the fictional are a part of life that can help us cope with life's difficulties, needed to create protagonists such as the professor in *The Key* and Utsugi in *Diary*, who could more closely reflect his own reality and accommodate the literary themes and motifs that were developing within and around him. At the age of sixty-four, Tanizaki was brave enough to place himself under a cruel self-scrutiny in an attempt to grow and explore new territory. Works such as *The Key*, "The Bridge of Dreams," and *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, are some indication of how well he succeeded in his self-subverted aesthetic re-examination.

Notes

¹ Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "Shosho Shigemoto no haha," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*, Vol. 16 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966-70) 214; hereafter, abbreviation SSH is used to refer to this work.

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "Captain Shigemoto's Mother," *The Reed Cutter and Captain Shigemoto's Mother*, Trans. Anthony H. Chambers (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1994) 112; hereafter, abbreviation CSM is used to refer to this work.

² Chambers is referring to Tanizaki's wife Matsuko's remarks in her *Ishoan no yume* (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1967) 212-3.

Chapter 3 The "Mother" of "The Bridge of Dreams"

— maternal climax and resolution —

"The Bridge of Dreams" forms the climax of Tanizaki's *hahakoi* narratives in that "mother" and her realm are transported from the divine to the human sphere, bound by the constraints of ordinary time and space. As we pointed out in the previous chapter, this shift to the mundane was the result of Tanizaki's decision that his *hahakoi* protagonists should experience sexual maturity. But to transfer his ideals to this new and superficially less promising environment, Tanizaki had to accept some modifications to the aesthetic values that the divinity of "mother" demanded, such as timelessness, purity, and formlessness, modifications which brought latent tensions in the model to the surface. When, by the end of the story, "mother" has returned to the transcendent realm, both she and her son are different creatures than they have ever been before, and Tanizaki's struggle with the mother image has reached a resolution of sorts.

In this chapter, we will examine how "The Bridge of Dreams" first secularizes the divine mother, recreates fantasy within everyday life by the use of two diametrically opposed but symbiotically related mother images, and merges the two, only to finally re-dismiss this merged figure and restore an image of motherhood confined to the realm of the abstract when it becomes clear that this is the only place it can safely exist. By so doing, we can better understand how Tanizaki's redefinition and modification of his aesthetic ideals assist his protagonist in overcoming his mother obsession and becoming a person in his own right. "The Bridge of Dreams" marks the culmination of Tanizaki's long quest, where he finally works out its full consequences and grows beyond it. We can almost hear his sigh of relief at

finally coming to the end of his decades of obsession with the inaccessible goddess of sensuality who had alienated him from both mother and lover.

Japanese critics have been sharply divided on the interpretation of "The Bridge of Dreams." Takehiko Noguchi has read the incest in "Bridge" as "the protagonist's male desire directed towards motherhood through an experience with a whore" (*Dansei no yokubo wa iwaba chobu o keiyushite bousei so no mono o taisho to suru koto ni mukatte iru . . .* 289). He thus concludes that for Tanizaki, the theme of *hahakoi* is "a process of regaining the once lost sexual union with the mother" (*so no bousei shibo no shudai ga hahaoya to no ushinawareta seiteki ketsuko o torimotoshite yuku katei de atta. . . .* 289). On the other hand, in "The Hidden Wife" (*Kakusareta tsuma*) Tomomi Kuribayashi points out that erotic links between the protagonists and their young and beautiful mothers are found in all of the major *hahakoi* novels written by Tanizaki. However, this eroticism is never developed beyond the limits of a child's cognitive capacity (*haha ni erosu o kanjiru koto wa . . . kesshite shogateki erosu no eki o denai no de aru . . .* 49). Tanizaki's perception of mother thus remains that of a mother on a divine level, one who is forever removed from the possibility of becoming a sexual partner of her offspring (49).

If a "mother" in Tanizaki is barred by her divinity from engagement in incest, the sexual relationship between the protagonist and his stepmother in "Bridge" cannot be between mother and son. It must be between man and wife. Then why mask the wife with the image of the mother? Kuribayashi refers back to Ohisa in *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tade kuu mushi*, 1928; tr., 1955), quoting a remark made by Kaname, the novel's protagonist: "a woman is either a goddess or a plaything." Thus, it appears that Tanizaki's goal throughout his *hahakoi* novels has been an ideal partner or wife who

combines the qualities of both goddess and plaything. This impossible fusion was not even imaginable without a woman who was "more Ohisa-like than Ohisa," a puppet devoid of personality or will — like Tsuneko of "Bridge." Tsuneko is a perfect example of an ideal wife shrouded in a mystical aura. To create this aura, Tanizaki overlaid her with the image of mother: if she had been allowed to remain no more than Tsuneko, the relationship would have been nothing more than vulgar adultery. Kuribayashi thus concludes that Tanizaki's *hahakoi* is no more than a device through which the protagonist can access his ideal wife, who is adorned with a veil of mysticism (54).

Despite their disagreement on the interpretation of the mother image, Noguchi and Kuribayashi join in invoking the traditional aesthetic concept called "*kasane*" (literally overlap, layer, or pile) — in this case, the layering of maternal and sexual attributes. Nevertheless, layering is not merging, and so it seems best to begin by examining the two mothers as separate, even antithetical identities. This is in accordance with Tanizaki's favorite "contrast and emphasize" technique: in this case, the contrast between the two mothers. To aid in our analysis, we must take into consideration yet another traditional aesthetic value, that of "asymmetry."

Aesthetics of asymmetry

In *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, Donald Keene remarks that the Japanese have always considered asymmetry one of the most valuable components of their aesthetic (32). Perhaps the best explanation of this fascination with asymmetry can be found in D. P. Clifford's *A History of Garden Design* (1963), in a passage describing the asymmetry of the sand and stone garden in the Ryoanji:

It is the logical conclusion of the refinement of the senses, the precipitous world of the abstract painter, a world in which the stains on the cover of a book can absorb one more utterly than the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; it is the narrow knife edge of art, overthrowing and discarding all that man has ever been and achieved in favour of some mystic contemplative ecstasy, a sort of suspended explosion of the mind, the dissolution of identity. You really cannot go much further than this unless you sit on a cushion like Oscar Wilde and contemplate the symmetry of an orange. (33-4)

Clifford thus finds the beauty of asymmetry to lie in its ability to subvert and destroy human stability and continuity: normally, desired goals, but all too easily turned to the service of servility, both mental and physical. If this is true, we can see the attraction of asymmetry in Japanese society, and also how it might go further and assist us to discard our reasoning powers and identities in the search for union with something "mystic," a goal which Tanizaki explores in the story in the form of "pristine human reality."

The water mortar found in Japanese gardens, with its regular motion mediated by an off-center pivot, might be considered a perfect substantiation of the interplay between symmetry and asymmetry in the traditional context. It can hardly be an accident that this device forms one of the chief motifs of "The Bridge of Dreams." Moreover, as the water mortar itself might indicate, symmetry and asymmetry define an energy-charged dialectic in Tanizaki's aesthetic. Tanizaki believed that tension existed even in a symmetrical state: civilization favors reason over emotion, nurture over nature, but the prejudice towards one side has evoked a correspondingly intense longing for the other. The apparent equilibrium is charged with tension: oppressive

reason against resistive instincts. What is more, each member of the symmetry/asymmetry dyad depends on the other for its definition and indeed its very existence. One could not be understood or conceived of without the other; and so excluding one would have the inevitable result of rendering aesthetic judgment impossible. With a final resolution towards one side or the other ruled out, the focus shifts to their interplay, their waxing and waning relative to each other.

Architectural analysis

- elements of balance and imbalance -

The setting for "Bridge" is a quiet villa called Heron's Nest, part of a neighbourhood in the woods below Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto. The story begins with a physical description of Heron's Nest by the narrator/protagonist, Tadasu, as if he were narrating a tour of the place that was moving from the entrance inwards. As we follow Tadasu deeper and deeper, we gradually come to understand what sets Heron's Nest apart from the rest of the world. Multiple clues are offered in the form of poems, garden decorations, and the structure of the buildings.

The first of these characteristics is purity. The Shallow Stream that flows under the bridge at the entrance divides Heron's Nest from the rest of the community. The peculiar attribute of this stream is its purity, which is so well known that people bathe in it during the ceremony of purification.¹ It had even been mentioned by the poet Chomei in one of his verses:

The stony Shallow Stream —

So pure that even the moon

Seeks it out to dwell in it. (YU 149; TBD 98)

The link between the moon and the purity of the stream should be noted: Tanizaki consistently uses the moon as a symbol of imagination, magic, and fantasy, and so purity and fantasy will go hand in hand during the story that follows.

The second characteristic of Heron's Nest is its seclusiveness. Once more the story quotes a poem:

Alas, I am ashamed to cross it

Though only a shallow stream

It would mirror my wrinkled age. (YU 152; TBD 101-2)

This is said to have been written by Ishikawa, a famous Edo poet, after his retirement, when he had withdrawn to live in seclusion. Its immediate motive was to decline an invitation to service from the emperor. Tanizaki picks up the theme of retirement and enlarges on it, taking it beyond relief from work to an entire renunciation of the obligations and inhibitions of the world. The seclusive tone is underlined by the family's quiet life: they have hardly any visitors and the father refuses to engage in any social activities. He is happy only within his private space, Heron's Nest, next to his loving wife. Nevertheless, despite the silence the story maintains about the world outside Heron's Nest, it can never be completely banished. Its chief messenger and herald is Tadasu's nurse Okane, who passes on the remarks and suspicions current on the other side of the Shallow Stream, usually while walking through the forest surrounding the Shimogamo Shrine.

Just as Tadasu's cosmos is divided into two realms, Heron's Nest and the world, Heron's Nest itself is partitioned into outer and inner gardens. The inner garden is again divided into two halves by a pond, with the living quarters on one side and the accessory buildings, such as the teahouse and the Silk Tree pavilion on the other. The two parts of the inner garden are

connected by a bridge, which repeats and evokes the bridge at the gates of Heron's Nest, the entrance to the outside world; and the two bridges are further linked by the waters they cross, which flows out from the depths of the wood, into the pond, and then onwards to the Shallow Stream. The streams and pools, carriers and conduits of the water which symbolizes purity, run through the setting of the story like veins through a living body.

At the far side of the bridge in the inner garden, in the deepest heart of Heron's Nest, stand the teahouse and pavilion. They had once witnessed the refined bustle of high culture during the time of Tadasu's grandfather, who entertained there and practiced the tea ceremony. On his death, though, the buildings had fallen into neglect, becoming nothing more than a playground for Tadasu: tea implements for children's toys. In a further sign of decay, the buildings have become infested with centipedes. Nature is gradually taking back the space which had once been claimed as a centre of public attention and high culture.

Near these buildings stood a half-dozen stone figures of Buddhist saints with ugly, grotesque faces (YU 154; TBD 103-4). "Some of them had hideous distorted noses" and "seemed to be staring at you out of the corners of their eyes;" others seemed "on the verge of sly, malicious laughs" (YU 154; TBD 104). The situation of these figures, at the decaying heart of the garden, indicates that they represent yet another aspect of the "pure" — the untamed expression of instinct, untamed, raw, dangerous, but free from inhibition. It will be here, in the inner pavilion, that the incestuous liaison between Tadasu and his stepmother will commence.

The statues which decorate this inner realm of "pure" instinct form a sharp and deliberate contrast with the outer garden. Here, we find a pair of stone figures standing face to face on either side of the walk leading to the

entrance hall of the living quarters. These are representations of Korean officials, from the Yi Dynasty, when Confucian ritual was obeyed with the strictness of law, especially by court functionaries and scholars.

The central part of Heron's Nest, the middle ground between Nature and Law, contains the living quarters. As its placement might indicate, it is balanced between the two poles, a dynamic tension that is articulated by a piece of calligraphy that decorates the transom of the main entrance hall:

The hawk soars, the fish dives. (YU 150; TBD 99)

One soars upwards, the other dives downwards; and the residents of Heron's Nest feel the pull of both. Superficially their central positioning evokes the place of Man in traditional Chinese cosmology, the medium and mediator between Heaven and Earth, but the divergent paths of hawk and fish hint that the balance is not stable. It is in ever-increasing danger of collapse, as the divergence between the two realms grows greater; and since the "fantasy" of the garden essentially denies this movement, the underlying tension is aggravated. Nevertheless, however ominous from a fully traditional standpoint, we should note that this collapse is an aesthetic necessity for Tanizaki. As with the water mortar, which fills, overbalances, "collapses," and spills fresh water into the pond in a never-ending cycle, the inevitable rupture between Law and Nature will restore the purity of the human realm.

Chinu the first: the real mother

The image of Tadasu's biological mother, Chinu, is filled with life-force, reminiscent of Chinu Bay (after which she was named), a sheltered body of water which embraces and protects every living creature in it. In Tadasu's mind, the most prominent aspects of this force are sensuality, stability, and harmony.

Tadasu's childhood memories of his mother have strong sensual overtones: the resilient touch of her full thighs as she holds him snugly in her embrace (YU 154; TBD 104), his unconscious wish to be transformed into the fish and glide playfully around her small, white feet dangling in the pond (YU 154; TBD 105), her "seductive" voice singing lullabies to him at bedtime, the detailed description of him as a child suckling at and playing with her breasts (YU 156; TBD 106) — all of this is quite innocent on the surface, but not far below there is a disturbing resemblance to the intimacy between a man and a woman.

This sensual overtone has probably been added by the mature Tadasu, reinterpreting childhood memories with an adult's cognitive capability as well as an adult male's bias. To balance the intensity of her sensuality, there is the power she possesses to create harmony and balance between people. As Tadasu remembers it, this is expressed not only by her easy-going personality but also through her extremely protective behaviour towards him.

There is a six-foot deep pit in the bed of the fish-pond to give the fish a chance to survive should the rest of the water dry up (YU 153; TBD 103). Tadasu devotes more than a page to describing his mother's anxiety over this hole: "It would be dreadful if you fell in there. . . . Even a *grown-up* couldn't get out" (YU 153; TBD 103; my emphasis). Okane, the wet-nurse, always watches him closely, but his mother never lowers her guard, and often scolds the nurse for real or imagined lapses: "Do be careful, Okane!" (102). The mother knows only too well the dual nature of the hole: life-giving but also life-threatening. She understands both the demands of society and the formidable intensity of instinctive desires, whose dreadful consequences even a "grown-up" is hard put to avoid.

The balance between peril and attraction is underlined by the description of how his mother would restrain the baby Tadasu, who had a habit of running to the edge of the pond to watch the fish: "Mother or Okane would hurry after me in alarm and seize me by the back of my sash. Squirring forward while one of them held fast to me, I would peer down into the stream" (YU 152; TBD 102). The larger equilibrium is recreated and symbolized by the tense stretch of the sash, the link between the mother's worried hand and the boy's fearless curiosity: diving fish and soaring hawk.

The fish and hawk calligraphy is mounted on the transom in the main entrance hall of the living quarters, the only exit to the outer garden guarded by the stone Confucian officials and beyond that to the demanding and inhibiting forces of the outside world. Mother represents balance — placed strategically between the outer garden (or society) and the inner garden (the instinctive). On the one hand is her sensuality; on the other, her awareness of social constraints. This combination of sensuality and stability is even found in her "Konoe" style calligraphy, which combines a thick, fleshy line with a heavy sprinkling of Chinese characters (YU 148; TBD 97).

Does this mean that she has sacrificed fantasy to buy peace and order? Not at all. Rather, she has managed to embrace both. This is demonstrated by the scene in which she claps her hand, summoning the fish for feeding and simultaneously invoking fantasy. She is not only protecting Tadasu from the danger of unrestrained instincts but also reminding him of their existence and availability when summoned. This is her stand in life, in perfect harmony with her dwelling place: on the edge of a precarious balance between fantasy and reality. The balance comes naturally to her, and she can harmonize it with time and change, such as the growth of her son; but with her passing, this ability will also be lost to Heron's Nest.

Chinu the second: the stepmother

Tsuneko, the young stepmother, assumes the name Chinu along with everything else of Tadasu's biological mother when she comes to fill the place of the first Chinu at Heron's Nest. Tadasu's father commands her to precisely imitate her predecessor in behaviour, speech, and even the subjects of her conversation. For more than ten years, she does such a good job of replacing Tadasu's mother that he cannot tell which childhood memory derives from which mother. However, when Tadasu is about eighteen, she undergoes a metamorphosis from mother to seductress. It is never made clear exactly why this happens: Tadasu guesses that it might have been on the initiative of his father, who had learned around this time that he was dying of an incurable illness. On the other hand, there are also hints that the pubescent Tadasu might have initiated the affair himself after discovering details about the stepmother's past as a dancer in the Gion gay quarters and a previous marriage.

Another possible trigger for the seduction is the birth of a baby boy, who is swiftly put up for adoption. On the one hand, this means that Tsuneko's ability to nurse is now capable of fully satisfying Tadasu's nostalgia for the "sweet, dimly-white dream world" which he used to enjoy at his mother's breasts. We might also remark that it is an assertion of reality over fantasy and the adult over the child: the childish sexuality of Tadasu's dreams would never involve such consequences. It is probably for this reason that the baby is so quickly disposed of, banished to a village deep in the mountains. If he stayed, the baby would shatter the closed world of Heron's Nest, perhaps less by the demands of his nurture than by his swift growth and development. He represents the passage of time, and the negation of fantasy. As

Nietzsche once remarked, a child is a "yes" to life, and the artificially maintained balance of Heron's Nest after the death of the real mother can survive neither affirmation nor denial.

Even though the baby is sent off, his arrival seems to precipitate a sudden change in the balance between nature and social convention: the tipping of the water mortar, to evoke that metaphor. Nature begins a march towards dominance. The onset of the stepmother's transformation is vividly signaled by her action of positioning herself in the middle of untamed nature: after having sent away the new baby, she moves from the bridge to the other side of the pond, going directly to the side of one of the stone figures that represent the force of untamed nature:

She was in the middle of the bridge....When she saw me,
she went over to the other side of the pond, sat down on a
celadon porcelain drum beside one of those sinister-looking
stone saints, and beckoned me to come and sit on the other
drum, facing her. (YU 178; TBD 126)

Soon afterwards, in the pavilion, the sexual liaison takes place: the final triumph of nature, the victory of uninhibited sexuality over conventional strictures.

Tadasu is surprised when the stepmother offers him her nipple, saying "your mother nursed you till you were four, I think" (YU 185; TBD 133) — less perhaps at the sexual gesture than at the unexpected affirmation of the difference between herself and the real mother (YU 185; TBD 133).

Nevertheless, the distinction has been clear in his mind ever since he uncovered his stepmother's past: "learning about his stepmother's background aroused strong curiosity in him, along with all sorts of other feelings" (YU 175; TBD 123). Since that discovery at the age of thirteen, he has

been continuously made aware of the falsehood of her life in Heron's Nest. On the one hand, he admits that "exposing the stepmother's earlier life has frustrated all of the father's effort to mold her in the image of his real mother" (YU 176; TBD 124), but at the same time, he also feels deep gratitude to his father and respect for his stepmother (YU 176; TBD 124). His filial gratitude and duty are the forces which have maintained a balance between his natural instincts and the social values he has acquired.

Until Tadasu discovered her past, his relationship with his stepmother had been that of a normal mother and son. Afterwards, their bond came to seem false, at least for Tadasu, who now knew that she could have been playing a role all these years; and the artificiality undermined the strength of all the roles and values attached to the relationship. Thus, when his stepmother herself openly affirms she is not his real mother, and his father allows and even encourages a sexual relationship to develop between them, all the bonds that had restrained Tadasu's sexual impulse are removed. There is now nothing standing in the way of his sexual drive, an instinct much stronger than his "shame" (YU 186; TBD 134). He does not have the will power to resist (YU 186; TBD 135).

Once the incestuous affair begins, the natural environment of Heron's Nest rapidly changes. When Tadasu's real mother was alive, the centipedes were found only on one side of the pond and they were no threat to anyone. However, as the affair with the stepmother develops, the teahouse and pavilion begin to swarm with centipedes, and in the end, the main house, once the center of the balance created and maintained by the true mother, is also infested. The inner collapse is matched by outer tension: those within Heron's Nest also find themselves increasingly at odds with the community around them, as the behavior of its residents attracts criticism from neighbors

and relatives. When Tsuneko refuses her false role as pseudo-mother and takes on a new one as Tadasu's lover, she also leaves behind the key attributes of the real mother: harmony, stability, and balance. With their loss, sensuality is set free to feed on itself like a spreading fire, until it can finally burn itself out.

Maintaining the fantasy

— what did father mean anyway? —

Chambers is only one of a host of critics who maintain that Tadasu is his father's double. According to this view, the father wishes to maintain the Heron's Nest fantasy world beyond his own death. Through his son, the father can realize what these critics assume to be his dearest wish: he can go on living with Tsuneko vicariously. He thus arranges for his son to take his place not only as head of the family, but as husband to his wife.

Since Tadasu does become sexually involved with Tsuneko, and the father at the same time "conveniently" loses his sexual capacity, this equation is superficially convincing. Nevertheless, we are inclined to reject it. The most important reason is perhaps that the father's aim throughout has been to craft a perfect replica of his former wife, and Tsuneko has been no more than the raw material for this process. Here, her transformation is symbolized by the difference between the plain koto she plays in her visit to Heron's Nest before the marriage and the elaborately decorated one she is given later. She is nothing more than a temporary medium through whom he can continue to live with and love his first wife. On his deathbed, he confesses that he is happy to be going to meet his former wife again in the other world (YU 195; TBD 144). His attachment to Tsuneko in and of herself is weak, if it exists at all. Tadasu realizes that "the love he lavished on his stepmother and himself

only strengthens his father's love for his real mother all the more" (YU 176; TBD 124). The father simply does not have a strong enough bond with Tsuneko to make the latter's involvement with Tadasu credible as a realization of the father's own vicarious desires. Are we to suppose him enjoying himself both in this world and the next at the same time? It seems improbable.

If we discard the idea that the father is trying to live on through his son, at least two other possibilities remain. Which of these we favor depends largely on how much perception we are willing to grant the dying father. The first, and I believe on the whole the most likely, is that he has made his arrangements with Tadasu rather than Tsuneko in mind, and that he wishes to maintain the hermetically-sealed fantasy world of Heron's Nest beyond his death by creating new and even stronger bonds between his two survivors. If we follow this view, we must conclude that his plans eventually failed and that his son gained independence by defying them. The second, which credits him with perhaps more subtlety than he would have possessed, is that all the events that took place after his death did no more than follow a script he had devised before his passing, and that his foresight was so perfect he was able to predict and control his son and his second wife throughout. In this view, we would have to see the whole series of events as a planned development intended to set his son on the road to personal and sexual maturity.

In the next two sections, I will consider these two alternatives, beginning with the second. By contrasting them, I hope to make clear how drastically previous criticism has misinterpreted "The Bridge of Dreams," and to articulate a new reading that takes the conclusion of the story into account, rather than being hypnotized by the lurid gleam of incest it contains.

Omnipotent direction

— does father know best? —

The primary prerequisite for a successful director is the ability to control the development of the situation, and this in turn requires that he be self-consciously aware of its fictional component. His ultimate aim is to present a show for others, but he cannot allow himself to fall under its spell. He must maintain a double consciousness: the picture behind the scenes for himself, and the show as it appears on the stage for his audience.

According to this reading, the father's attitude towards the play he has been directing becomes clear when he faces his death. This is the point at which he manipulates Tsuneko and Okane in such a way that Tadasu can no longer consider his stepmother as his real mother reincarnate, and they consequently fall into an incestuous relationship. The father states in his will that this is to ensure Tsuneko's well-being after his death: since Tadasu looks exactly like him, he states, she will feel as if he is still alive (YU 196; TBD 144). Although the father does not say so in so many words, he clearly intends that Tadasu takes Tsuneko as his wife in every sense of the word. Thus, to keep the peace with his relatives and neighbours, Tadasu maintains a conventional facade by a sham marriage with Sawako, the daughter of the family's gardener.

Could the father have really been that concerned with the possibility that Tsuneko might be lonely after his death? It seems improbable. After all, she has been chosen and trained as the perfect puppet: impersonal and indifferent towards life. She is not affected at all by events that for almost anyone would be exceptionally traumatic: giving up her own two-day old baby for adoption, committing incest, suffering criticism and ostracism from relatives and neighbours, and experiencing the death of her husband. Tadasu

respects her willpower, but even he has doubts: "What seems strange was that, as far as I could tell, Mother showed no sign of gloom or depression....It should have been contrary to her nature to display her emotions plainly — but was there even a shadow of secret grief across that bland, lovely face?" (YU 194; TBD 142) Is the father's concern not instead a species of bait, a playing on the bonds of filial piety to involve his son all the more deeply in one final production?

If the father indeed enjoyed a perfect understanding of the roles in his play and the actors he has selected for the cast, he would not spend much time worrying about a loneliness that he knew she would not and could not feel. Then why did he decide to change the role of Tsuneko from mother to seductress? If we allow ourselves to consider him all but omniscient, the answer might be that this is the only way he can envisage to force an eventual closure to the situation, and ensure Tadasu's sexual maturation. He has, after all, arranged the identification of his second wife with his first for his own, arguably selfish, motives — to assuage the grief of the first wife's loss. By leaving her in a "maternal" position, he would condemn his son to a virtually limitless childhood under the spell of a mother who was scarcely older than her "son." Instead, we might postulate, he arranges a process in several steps that is designed to unfold itself even after his own death, a process that will culminate in Tadasu reaching independence.

One problem with this interpretation is that at first glance, nothing of the sort seems to have occurred; rather, we are presented with a reversion to early childhood on the part of Tadasu. In suckling at the breasts of his young stepmother, the eighteen year-old boy enjoys a return to the "sweet, dimly-white dream world" of his infancy, and he enjoys this immensely. However, he is by now no longer an infant, and it is difficult to imagine that the

relationship remained frozen at the infantile stage — although nothing is said openly, the narrative clearly hints that Tadasu became fully sexually involved with his stepmother:

Of course, all that I record here is true: I do not allow myself the slightest falsehood or distortion. But there are limits even to telling the truth; there is a line one ought not to cross. And so, although I certainly never write anything untrue, neither do I write the whole of the truth. Perhaps I leave part of it unwritten out of consideration for my father, for my mother, for myself. (YU 192; TBD 140)

Since Tadasu has already given a full description of how he repeatedly suckled at his stepmother's breasts, this sudden attack of reticence makes no sense unless it is meant to hint at the occurrence of something still more outrageous according to conventional mores, such as intercourse. And if Tadasu's father was at all surprised by this outcome, he must have been unusually stupid.

Since this line of argument is based on the assumption that Tadasu's father was *not* stupid, but consciously controlling the development of events, we must then ask why he would arrange for his son and his wife to go to bed with each other. We have suggested above that his aim was to facilitate the maturation of his son, but how could incest have been of any help towards that goal?

For Tadasu to grow up, he must leave his mother and the "dream world" he finds at her breasts. He will not leave such a comfortable realm voluntarily; he must be pushed. The incest, and the taboo it carries with it, might be seen as the first of a series of pushes that Tadasu's father has planned. Tadasu's activities are accompanied by relentless attacks of guilt,

shame, and agony, quite unlike his memories of infantile sexuality. He struggles against these feelings, and temporarily masters them with the help of the curiously lucid reflection that his father has arranged the whole thing anyway; only to be chilled once again by the news his relatives all suspected him of the very thing that he was probably engaged in, news delivered by the faithful old nurse Okane, once again playing the role of a messenger or chorus.

Thus, the first stage of the father's plan for his son's liberation would have been to change his conception of his stepmother, from maternal image to sexual partner. Nevertheless, if the ultimate aim was a stable maturity for Tadasu, the process could not stop there: despite the similarity in their ages, society will not allow Tadasu and his stepmother to live together in peace as sexual partners. Here is where we have to assume a truly heroic amount of foresight on the part of Tadasu's father if we are to maintain our belief he was consciously in control of events: we must believe he not only set up a match between Tadasu and his stepmother, but also arranged for its dissolution by the introduction of Sawako, the gardener's daughter, Tadasu's pseudo-wife, and — it is suggested — Tsuneko's assassin.

Of all the major characters in "The Bridge of Dreams," Sawako is the easiest to neglect. On the surface, she exists merely to cover up the incestuous relationship between Tadasu and his mother, and her inner life remains almost completely undeveloped. The only motivation suggested for her actions is greed, the desire to get her hands on the property her father has tended; for the rest, she remains a closed book, described from the outside and always in negative terms. Some of these descriptions are drawn from Tanizaki's most personal store of imagery, such as her refusal to expose her

"ugly" feet (YU 201; TBD 150), which underlines his intention to make of her a unsympathetic figure.

Nevertheless, Sawako is indispensable to Tadasu's development and the final closure of the fantasy, as the death of the real mother was necessary to bring about the rupture of balance and the beginning of fantasy. She is a negative, destructive character because negation and destruction are necessary at this point. Once we accept this, we can begin to appreciate the art with which Tanizaki has invested her person with symbolic weight and meaning.

To begin with, there is her origin, which seems clearly to hint at her eventual function. We have described the rise of the relationship between Tadasu and his stepmother as a triumph of the natural over the restraints of polite society, most vividly symbolized by the steady advance of the centipedes further and further onward from the dark heart of the garden. Sawako, in contrast, is the daughter of the gardener. She thus represents order rather than chaos, the artificial rather than the natural; and even the imposition of order on the natural by artificial means. Moreover, she is by her nature a temporary visitor, not a permanent resident. Like her father, she will accomplish her task of taming the untamed, and then she will withdraw without lingering to enjoy the fruits.

Sawako herself is a conspicuously "well-cultivated" person — she is a high-school graduate (not all that common for a woman of her station and time) who received excellent marks, she has continued to improve herself after graduation by taking a variety of courses, and she wears heavy makeup to conceal a few freckles, a minor "natural" defect. Nevertheless, her "order" makes her a misfit from the start in Heron's Nest. Her dress and actions are consistently formal: she refuses to drink, or, as has been mentioned, to cool her feet in the water, and her general stiffness has Tadasu wondering about

her adequacy as a wife even before their marriage. Her only talent is for massage, and for a while she uses it to please Tadasu's mother; but he soon manages to learn the skill from her, and usurps her place as masseur at every occasion (YU 201-2; TBD 150-151). Her response is to become still more formal and "ordered": she changes her heretofore invariably western hairstyles for traditional Japanese ones (YU 202; TBD 151).

The climax of Sawako's brief intrusion into Tadasu's family comes when she presides over the death of Tadasu's mother. The instrument is a centipede, one of the insects that signifies the malignant side of natural luxuriance. The chaos of unrestrained nature has turned to self-destruction, a resolution that has been eerily foreshadowed by the mother's own poem:

Today when the summer thrush

Comes to sing at Heron's Nest

I crossed the Bridge of Dreams. (YU 147; TBD 95)

In the *Tale of Genji*, Prince Genji refers to life as "a bridge linking dream with dream," and so "crossing the Bridge of Dreams" can also be interpreted as death, a final passage from one state to another. As the poem indicates, the mother dies at the height of summer; later, her son completes his account of the affair at exactly the same time, on the anniversary of his mother's death, signaling a "crossing" of a different sort but equally decisive in its way.

The "official" story is that the centipede bite is accidental, inflicted by an insect which crawled onto the mother's breast at night when she was being massaged by Sawako, but Tadasu expresses his doubt of this at length. He is, in fact, tempted to believe that Sawako has deliberately engineered the bite, whether or not she intended its ultimate consequences; and this belief leads to their divorce shortly after his mother's death. All the same, his suspicions are strangely forced. There is after all no real motive for Sawako to harm his

mother: they get along well enough on the surface, and if she has her eyes on the property, removing her mother-in-law can bring her no closer to that goal. It seems rather a rationalization for his general revulsion towards the marriage his father forced on him, brought to a head by the disappearance of his father's motive for that marriage, the happiness of his mother. At any rate, he proceeds to remove Sawako — at the price of considerable trouble and cost — and reconstitutes his "family," for the first time free of both Heron's Nest and his father's direction.

We can thus see that if the father had planned the entire series of events between his own death and Tadasu's final maturation, he would have had to have deliberately introduced Sawako as a disruptive element, foreseeing that she would bring the relationship between Tadasu and his mother to an end. This stretches credibility to an uncomfortable extent, despite all the signs and symbols with which Sawako has been invested. The most "natural" outcome of disruptive behavior on her part would not be the end of the relationship between Tadasu and his mother, but the termination of the marriage between Sawako and Tadasu. The relationship with the mother is in fact terminated by unnatural death — whether murder or accident, unnatural and unpredictable all the same — and so it would not be susceptible to planning by any mortal, no matter how perceptive.

This leaves the second alternative, that the father did not see perfectly clearly into the future. However, we can hardly go to the opposite extreme of assuming his dispositions were made at random. If instead we ask what were the credible limits of his foresight, this will lead to an interpretation which is much more believable, and which also leads smoothly up to the final resolution: Tadasu's independence, from *both* his father and his mother.

The family renewed
— putting mother in her place —

The neglected key to "The Bridge of Dreams" is Tadasu's family situation at its conclusion. Japanese critics, by and large, have been obsessed with Tanizaki's mother obsession to the extent that they have been blind to his attempts to transcend it. Nevertheless, by the end of "Bridge," his chief character has won through to freedom from both paternal and maternal domination, whether divine or human, and has reconstituted a family unit in conscious opposition to the tyranny of that ideal.

After his divorce from Sawako, Tadasu cuts his links to the past by selling Heron's Nest and building himself a new house. There, he re-adopts his abandoned baby brother and forces his re-integration into his family, in the face of strong initial opposition from both the child and the family that have been tending him. To complete his new family circle, he invites his old nurse, who is an old woman by this time, to help him raise the child; and the nurse, faithful as always, responds to his call. By the close of the story, he has succeeded in winning over his brother and re-establishing their family bond; but he has also explicitly renounced any further contact with women. There will be no more marriages, he states: this male family, whose sole feminine content is a single old lady, is his attained ideal.

Has he consummated the goal that his father-as-director had planned? In a certain sense, he has. Tadasu states that the chief reason for his devotion to his baby brother is that he perfectly resembles their dead mother, and in this sense, he remains in thrall to the image of the mother, if not to the reality. Moreover, his decision never to marry again does ensure his compliance with another of his father's directives, that which forbids him to have any children. However, this should not obscure the fact that in another

way he has decisively broken with his father's plan. His brother, after all, was not to be part of the family, a decision which he bitterly opposed at the time it was made. Now he has defied his father and brought his brother home, a defiance that perhaps shields itself under the banner of a last devotion to his mother — or to her image as embodied in the young boy — but which is defiance all the same.

What then was the father planning on his deathbed? If he could not see as far as the death of Tadasu's mother, then it is most natural to assume that he hoped all three of the people who survived him, Sawako, Tadasu, and the mother, would continue to live in an eternal present, cocooned in a fantasy world independent of outside reality. It seems that the critics were almost right after all: Tadasu's father sees Tadasu as identical to himself, not in the sense that Tadasu can live his father's fantasy for him, but in the sense that his father has assumed that Tadasu's desires and fantasies are identical to his. There is thus no contradiction in his mating his second wife to his son, and at the same time looking forward to going to the next world to rejoin his first wife. What he has enjoyed, he automatically assumes his son will enjoy.

The trouble with this is that Tadasu is not his father, and in certain key respects he cannot accept his father's arrangements. His ultimate rejection is underlined by the last lines of his account, which again have been given too little weight by critics. After announcing the reconstitution of his family, Tadasu concludes as follows:

Because my real mother died when I was a child, and my father and stepmother when I was some years older, I want to live for Takeshi until he is grown. I want to spare him the loneliness I knew. (YU 211; TBD 159)

This is very odd when one thinks about it carefully. For one thing, the death of his real mother should not have affected Tadasu that much, since he has stated that he can scarcely distinguish his memories of her from the substitute for her that his father brought in. More important still, he was already a grown man when his father and second mother died: in fact, he is only writing three years after the latter event. In the story up to now, there has not been the smallest hint that he was in any way "lonely" during his admittedly rather solitary existence at Heron's Nest; instead, he has seemed quite satisfied with his lack of company. Why does he suddenly present himself as some sort of orphan?

The only emotion akin to "loneliness" which Tadasu suffered from during his time at Heron's Nest was his feeling of loss when his brother was sent away. His brother's disappearance was also the only event at which he felt a conscious resistance to his father's manipulations, and made some feeble attempt to frustrate them. By admitting this loneliness, which he has kept largely concealed up to this point, Tadasu is affirming his attachment to a real family that grows and changes, rather than a frozen fantasy world. Instead of trying to persist eternally at the breast of his mother, whether as child or lover, he is willing to find the object of his maternal devotion in its reflection in the next generation. By so doing, he has finally found a safe place for his maternal devotion: his own transformation into a parent. The extremes of nature (stepmother) and nurture (Sawako) have both been dismissed, and he has found balance (real mother) again.

The contrast between Tadasu and his father can be taken one step further. Is it not true that what Tadasu has become is what his father should have been all along? The decisive point in the rejection of reality was when the baby was put out for adoption: from this followed not only Tadasu's first

serious dissatisfaction with his situation, but also the incestuous relationship between him and his mother. Once the mother is removed — an action which is accidental but inevitable, given that the surge in sensuality must come to some sort of closure — the fantasy universe that she presides over dissolves and Tadasu is left to pick up the pieces, not only of his own life but of his father's. He rejoins time, and the tempting illusion of a realized ideal is dismissed, with its only earthly residue the devotion to the mother in the mother's child. By affirming where his father denied — by saying "yes" to the life that his brother represents — Tadasu may have sacrificed some of the comforts of fantasy, but at least neither he nor his brother will be alone.

What does this signify for Tanizaki's long quest? Simply that he has now taken it to the end, and found the end dissatisfying. The ideal mother, pursued through so many fantasies, has at last been made real; and her realization has underlined that she belongs in the realm of fantasy. In a sense, Tanizaki as well has crossed "The Bridge of Dreams" and has come out on the other side with a clearer conception of the place and limitations of fantasy. Fantasy, by its very nature, is not real: it is frozen and changeless. When the timeless is given mortal form, it becomes futile, if not squalid, a force to be resisted if one wishes to live in the real world. This, in the end, is the lesson of "The Bridge of Dreams."

Conclusion

The relationship between the stepmother and Sawako shows that instinct and reason make uneasy bedfellows. At times, what is at best no more than an awkward *détente* can escalate into deadly confrontation, as demonstrated by the death of the stepmother and the role that Sawako is suspected of playing in that death. Here, Tanizaki and Marcuse part company:

Marcuse insists on equality between reason and instinct, and calls on us to draw on both to solve the problems caused by an overemphasis on reason. Tanizaki has no such solution — if he thought of it at all, he could not have found it convincing. For him, it would seem, the contention between reason and Eros could never be reconciled in an entirely stable and complimentary relationship. Rather than seeking such a final, absolute, and ultimately rather trite and empty solution, he appears to have adopted a more workable, human, and aesthetically satisfying arrangement: not only to accept the value and genuineness of both reason and instinct, but also their confrontational relationship.

Of course, Tanizaki could not have come to this resolution if he had not broken the fetters of sexual abstinence and pursued the instinctual realm to its ultimate ends. The stepmother and Sawako, representing the polar opposites of pure instinct and pure reason, are instrumental in Tadasu's growth and artistic maturity; and the father also functions as a catalyst for Tadasu's venture into the realm of pure instinct. However, when Tadasu becomes a full-fledged writer, he can no longer allow himself to linger in a permanent childhood. His final destination is of course his real mother, Chinu, and this is where Tanizaki's aesthetic principles of fictional narrative finally crystallize after the agonies of his self-criticism.

The motif of the water mortar, with its off-centered pivot, is the key image of the biological mother Chinu. Acting on this "off-centeredness," she turns the division between reason and instinct to her aesthetic advantage. Instead of privileging one, she encompasses both by remaining "centerless," and maintains her balance by constantly oscillating between rational reality and the instinctual, fantastic realm. The driving force for this back and forth movement is inherent in the qualities that differentiate reason from instinct.

The domination of instinct by reason inevitably creates tension, and this tension needs to be released periodically. When the water mortar tips and spills its load, it replenishes the otherwise stagnant pond; likewise, when the reason/instinct balance tips, one gains a fresh supply of pleasure in life by the experience of being made whole again through contact with a forgotten reality.

It is here in the realm of uninhibited instincts and imagination that one gains artistic inspiration and ingenuity. However, a prolonged stay within the realm of instinct is not helpful either: one needs distance from the ecstatic experience in order to express it in an artistic form, which is exactly what Tadasu does when he looks back and writes about the events that have happened to him "in the form of a novel" (TBD 140; YU 192). Moreover, pleasure can be experienced only when the balance between reason and instinct collapses and the divisional boundary is crossed. This is why the division and confrontation between reason and instinct must be restored after disruption: its maintenance is not only artistically valid but also vitally important to further creative growth. This is how Chinu/Tadasu/Tanizaki view and utilize this division, and why they choose to remain "centerless."

Tadasu can go on producing artistic works because his internal oscillation is perpetuated by the acceptance of both the division between reason and emotion and their constant interaction. The example of his real mother in his childhood, which seemed no more than to indicate the existence of both realms, at last comes home to Tadasu: it is their dialectic interplay that enriches our life and help us cope with life's hardships, limitations, and inevitabilities. A fiction writer, like Tadasu and Tanizaki himself, is the one who can initiate and maintain this dialectic interplay. Tadasu is determined to remain centerless and ride with this rhythm — the

"pulse of art" symbolized by the mortar. It is the heart of his artistic self, and like a heart, its beat will continue as long as his art has life as its partner.

Notes

¹ Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "Yume no ukihashi," *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro zenshu*, Vol. 18 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966-70) 149; hereafter, abbreviation YU is used to refer to this work.

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "The Bridge of Dreams," *Seven Japanese Tales*, Trans. Howard Hibbett (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1963) 98; hereafter, abbreviation TBD is used to refer to this work.

Conclusion

We have examined images of mothers and Mother in three of Tanizaki's major *hahakoi* novels, in chronological order of their publication: "Longing for Mother," "Captain Shigemoto's Mother," and "The Bridge of Dreams." We have observed how the maternal character is transformed from a divine being to a cold stone statue, and finally to a nurturer-cum-seductress. Admittedly, some attributes remain constant throughout: all are the epitome of sensual beauty; dwell in unreal isolation; and possess in varying degrees the qualities of insentient puppets lacking all will of their own. This makes it easy to understand why many critics have been convinced that Tanizaki's image of the maternal remains unchanged throughout. However, this argument is based largely on a consideration of the maternal figure in isolation from the rest of the text. By examining Mother in context, we have been able to go beyond these surface similarities, particularly when it came to her relationship to her protagonist sons and to Tanizaki as story-teller and aesthete. Only in this way was it possible to see how the image of Mother has been transformed in the relationship between mother, son, and the author's aesthetic principles.

As we have noted, all three works deal with two types of mother: one firmly rooted in reality, the other just as deeply a creature of fantasy. This duality appears to stem from Tanizaki's struggle to establish a relationship between life and the art of fictional narrative in a way that made sense to him. His aesthetic philosophy was still in its nebular stage in "Longing," even though that story provides an impressive demonstration of his artistic skill. The most prominent maternal attributes in this story in addition to sensuality are "timelessness," "lifelessness," and "formlessness," themes

which reappear in *In Praise of Shadows*. In order to safeguard these divine or super-real ideals, Tanizaki had no alternative but to bestow another on the musician/mother: moral purity. This addition conveys the impression that the goddess created in "Longing" is closer to the conventional view of the Virgin Mary than to that of bodhisattva, whose countless manifestations do include such an "immoral" form as a prostitute.

Unlike the eternally-young artist mother, the more realistic peasant mother who makes a brief appearance in the earlier part of "Longing" keeps reminding the protagonist of the progression of time and his consequent maturity. This voice from a reality which hinders his artistic pursuit drives the hero away from the peasant woman and towards his unreal, yet aesthetically satisfying mother. Here we see how Tanizaki was willing to sacrifice reality to the demands of art.

Nevertheless, many readers sense a certain tension in the dialogue between the boy and the musician/mother, which takes place shortly before the tearful celebration of their reunion. As the boy gradually loses his rationality, the musician seems almost to demand the boy's acknowledgment that she is his mother. In other words, she, the embodiment of Tanizaki's aesthetic ideals, commands the protagonist to regress to childhood and remain a-sexual indefinitely. This apparent prohibition of sexual availability seems to signal an oversight or what appears to me to be a contradiction in Tanizaki's narrative.

On the surface, he creates a paradoxical combination of the most irresistible sensual beauty and rigid morality; but underneath, he allows neither reason nor the senses to obtain full gratification. The purpose of the boy's journey - to experience an unlimited expansion of imagination and uninhibited expression of the senses - remains in the end only partially

fulfilled. The realm of his ideals, the destination of the journey, is reached only by discarding rationality, but ironically the fragile existence of this realm cannot be sustained without taking advantage of the powers of reason, as illustrated by the demand of the moral purity.

In "Shigemoto," Tanizaki seems to have abandoned his aesthetic guidelines of timelessness, lifelessness, and purity, at least at the beginning. The story has a realistic setting; and both mother and son are subject to the passage of time, as evidenced by the final scene when the middle-aged son and the mother, over sixty years old, meet. But this on no account means that Tanizaki has revised his artistic view. Despite the son's maturity and the passage of forty years, the mother mysteriously appears as young as ever.

In order to realize an idealized mother within the bounds of reality, Tanizaki draws heavily upon historical documents, weaves a mystical shroud of religious sentiment, and powerfully evokes the customs and socio-cultural practices of the long-past Heian period. Despite the subversive undertones implicit in his parody of historical records and documents, Tanizaki's effective use of these materials mesmerizes readers, who lose sight of the fact that they are being drawn into a fictional world. While constructing a realistic facade, the author meticulously justifies and mystifies this apparent breach of his aesthetic principles: timelessness, formlessness, and moral purity.

We see this through his interpretation of the banal truism that history speaks of bygone times. When an author sets his story at a particular moment in history, time is no longer linear. The time segment between that particular moment in history and the authorial vantage point becomes linked in a circle, from the present back to the past and from that point in the past forwards again. In a sense, this temporality is as "unreal" as that in fantasy; and the more distant from the present the story's setting is, the more unreal it

becomes. Thus, Tanizaki succeeds in creating an ostensibly realistic space where time in fact is neither linear nor real.

In addition, Tanizaki positions the mother within a small group of privileged people in high society who were insulated from the prevailing code of conduct, and enjoyed the utmost freedom to pursue their own subculture of aestheticism. By doing so, he makes moral judgment irrelevant. This is reminiscent of the image of the mother as bodhisattva, certain manifestations of which involve the "immoral" aspects of human life.

Finally, Tanizaki manages to keep the image of the mother ambiguous and shadowy by taking advantage of the Heian custom of secluding women in high society within the dark inner chambers of their houses, hidden from the full view of even closest family members. This is one means that Tanizaki adopts to preserve the ideal of lifelessness. In addition, by making Shigemoto's mother a nun, Tanizaki makes an allusion to a lady of royal lineage, Fujitsubo, in the last chapter "The Floating Bridge of Dreams" (*Yume no ukihashi*) of *The Tale of Genji*. In it, this princess-turned-nun refuses to go back to her previous life and sends a message that she wants the outside world to consider her "dead." Here, the end of secular life is equated with death; and when Tanizaki makes Shigemoto's mother a nun, he may be suggesting something similar: a woman existing outside this world, and therefore at once lifeless and unattainable.

Is Shigemoto's mother then basically the same as the musician/mother in "Longing"? There is one element in "Shigemoto" that cannot be found in "Longing": the cool, unresponsive attitudes of Shigemoto's mother in the final scene. A better interpretation of this statue-like mother may be possible if we approach her image from the narrator's standpoint rather than Shigemoto's. Some critics may argue that Shigemoto and the narrator are

basically one and the same. However, there are occasions where the narrator's impartial and even indifferent evaluative eyes are unmistakably cast on Shigemoto, which demonstrates a gulf between narrator and protagonist that is absent in the other two stories under discussion.

The first such occasion is when the narrator reveals his suspicion both of the mother's sexually liberal behaviour after her second husband's death and of Shigemoto's deliberate omission of the subject in his diary. The narrator speculates that the omission is due to the fact that her amorous behaviour is in conflict with Shigemoto's idealized image of mother. After having taken pains to justify the mother's image and behaviour, Tanizaki suddenly confesses, via the narrator, that Shigemoto is not at all convinced of this justification. This is not likely to have happened unless Shigemoto and the narrator were meant to be separate identities, and unless there had arisen some discrepancies between Tanizaki's previous artistic self and the present one.

The intention behind this confusion becomes clearer on the second occasion, in the final mother-son reunion, where the narrator abruptly discontinues his intimate and persistent probing into Shigemoto's conscious and unconscious mind. The reunion is described from the viewpoint of an indifferent, unsympathetic bystander. Readers hear no more of what takes place in the protagonist's inner self. He does state that Shigemoto at that moment feels as if he has become a six-year-old child again, but this is not much of an insight; anyone could have guessed the same at witnessing a grown-up man finally meeting his mother after a separation of forty years, and throwing himself at her, crying like a baby.

Even with his heretofore omniscient knowledge of the inner lives of the characters (with the exception of the mothers' inner feelings, which are

never discussed in any of the three works), the narrator at this point offers no further explanation. He knows only too well why Shigemoto has refused to see his aging mother for over forty years; to what end he has kept his mother's image young and pure; why he does not dare to question the mother's frozen attitudes towards him; whose ideals the mother is reflecting; and who in fact projects them onto her. However, he remains silent, distant, and unfeeling. Could it be that he/Tanizaki has begun to disapprove of the inanimate statue-mother whose life-force has been drained by Shigemoto's unflinching aesthetic demands, as Heiju in the same story has been killed by the blind pursuit of his own ideals?

This discrepancy between the narrator and Shigemoto, the two most likely spokesmen for Tanizaki's artistic standpoint at that time, provided the distance Tanizaki needed to evaluate his own aestheticism from a critical perspective. In the second chapter, I suggested that the author/narrator's preference for Shihei and Kunitsune (emotional, undisciplined, yet with life-force at the centre of their aestheticism) over Heiju and Shigemoto (strictly principle-bound and with lifelessness and unattainability as their most cherished ideal) is evidence of a self-critical attitude on Tanizaki's part. Perhaps the subtle shift of his preference does not seem to be readily recognizable at first reading. It is because the most effective clues of the unequivocal aesthetic views of Shigemoto and the narrator are offered only in the final scene of reunion. This may be another device contrived by Tanizaki in order to encourage readers to reread and obtain a new interpretation of the story.

In "Bridge," Tanizaki finally casts aside his long-professed ideals. The story is set in reality, in the midst of life. As if to deal once and for all with the nagging issue of sexual abstinence on the part of the protagonists and to re-

establish its significance and relevance in his art, he has Tadasu confront one of the most controversial ethical issues: incest — an issue which has the potential to overturn the altar of reason upon which human civilization has been built. Tanizaki's revelation comes only after having pushed the limits of reason and morality, and having stepped unreservedly into the dangerous yet exciting realm of unchecked and untamed instincts: the realm of instinct and fantasy is also a realm of purity in its own right; and he needs to redefine the notion of purity that he presented in "Longing."

It is not only purity, but also such fundamental concepts as reality and fantasy which must be reinterpreted as well. The fantasy that takes place in Heron's Nest after the death of the real mother comes to a closure with the death of the stepmother. Tanizaki, using the vehicle of Tadasu's suspicion, leaves readers with a disturbing question: was the stepmother's death an accident or murder? However, in truth this issue seems to be drawing readers' attention away from a more important development: Tanizaki the author feels the need to end the fantasy and restore balance. The degree of his discontent with fantasy is vividly expressed via Tadasu's bitter determination that he will never again be separated from his brother and will never let his brother suffer loneliness.

Tadasu finally comes to face the inevitable reality that human beings are meant to live in communities, and isolation leads only to self-annihilation. In return for the survival of the whole, individual desires and instinctive needs have to be compromised. In "Shigemoto," Tanizaki's tone tends to take exception to the community's one-sided criticism of Shihei, who has transgressed social conventions in order to realize his own fantasies and desires. However, in "Bridge," there is an apparent revelation that even though the rational world we live in may be a restricting and exacting place

with its conventions and institutions, it provides us with a sanctuary from the dangers of rampant, uncontrolled individual desires. Laws, ethics, morals, and the like may be abstract, illusory, and fictional compared to concrete instincts, but they do offer an opportunity to escape from utter loneliness and self-destruction. The *rational* world is, in effect, a group *fantasy* created by our own survival *instincts*. Hence, for Tanizaki, fiction and reality may be interchangeable.

However, these two realms cannot be confused, particularly since Tanizaki's aesthetic viewpoint makes their distinction a prerequisite for artistic appreciation. Tanizaki no longer insists on the fixed direction of the boy's journey in "Longing" — a search for an ultimate beauty, an origin or centre with which our aesthetic cognition aspires and yearns to reunite, a realm beyond the phenomenal world where the imagination can expand infinitely. The aestheticism that culminates in "Bridge" is founded on the conceptualization of a constant two-way interchange between the two realms, reality and unreality. With respect to the oversight or contradiction that I posited earlier, we may have to reconsider Tanizaki's failure to completely eliminate reason (moral purity) from the realm of art in "Longing" and "Shigemoto." It may signal the presence of a natural but, at the time of these earlier works, unconscious inclination towards something that would embrace both reason and instinct.

The mission of the writer now takes a clear image in Tanizaki's mind: to embrace both fantasy and reality, and at the same time, safeguard the distinction between them. After all, this is the lesson that Tadasu has learned from his real mother. The art of creative writing should build "bridges of dreams," across which readers might pass; clap hands to call and feed the fish of fantasy; start a new cycle with a fresh-cut bamboo water mortar; and finally

bring readers back across the bridge. Therefore, Tadasu's maturity goes beyond the mere sexual experience; it means he as an artist has finally found for the art of fiction and fantastic narrative the right place in life: juxtaposed and in a constant push and pull with realities.

Tadasu's thus realized coming of age bears little resemblance to that of the heroes of western *bildungsroman*, who pass through hardships and adversities and finally reach maturity as individuals strong enough to confront reality. Unlike these heroes, Tadasu's eyes are never fixed on one side of the bridge, be it reality or fantasy — they are always directed to the sanctuary on the other side. This might be seen as escapist, but when confronted by inevitabilities such as aging, illness, and death (as Tanizaki was at the time of writing "Bridge"), we learn to appreciate not only fantasy but also reality, no matter how hopeless it seems and how difficult it is to endure, this reality without which we cannot enjoy the pleasure of fantasy and fantasy which, though hidden and repressed, is yet our deeply cherished reality.

Now we turn to raise the most crucial question related to the theme developed in this thesis, "the image of mother in Tanizaki's *hahakoi* novels." What role does Mother play in the course of Tanizaki's struggle to lay a new foundation for his art? Perhaps an appropriate explanation can be found in one of the attributes common to all of the mothers: the air of being insentient, thoughtless puppets, empty shells. In my opinion, this puppet-like mother serves a double function: she is both a mirror reflecting Tanizaki's aesthetic ideals and a laboratory vessel in which Tanizaki experiments with various combinations of images.

We see more vividly demonstrated in "Shigemoto" than any of the other works the image of Mother used as a mirror in which the author sees the reflected images of his ideals. Tanizaki places the intermediary called

Mother between himself and his aestheticism in order to gain a critical perspective. Some critics may view this as being egotistical and self-serving, in that the mirror-mother has no voice of her own. However, we cannot forget that there is no sharper, more cruel, and more articulate critic than an impassive mirror which allows no room for self-delusion, self-denial, or wishful thinking. Probably this is why not many of us wish to face ourselves exactly as mirrored, especially when we are lacking confidence or finding our philosophical foundation shaky and unstable.

The second function of the puppet-mother is that of a vessel for Tanizaki's artistic experimentation. From the perspective of the tradition of Greek tragedy, Tanizaki's characterization of mother figures as hollow beings with no personalities of their own may seem to have strayed far off the Aristotelian mandate, the rule of probability. Perhaps Tanizaki's insistence on writing nothing but *uso* (lies), as discussed in the Introduction, has something to do with his creation of "hollow mothers."

In order to experiment with the aspects of humanity, which go beyond what is probable, expected, and acceptable, Tanizaki needed to cast a non-volitional being, who can neither be responsible for her acts nor resist the author's experimental concoctions made of various kinds of human attributes, which are not sanctioned by society. Had he not constructed these maternal figures as he did, Tanizaki could not have carried through the highly controversial venture of amalgamating the diametrically opposed images, mother and seductress.

In our summing-up, we will attempt to answer a question that may occur most naturally to the readers of this thesis: why then mother? Tanizaki could have created an image of some other women if all he wanted was to let his hero kneel at the feet of an ideal beauty — the geisha in "The Tattooer"

(Shisei 1919; tr., 1963), for instance. Perhaps he used the image of mother in order to appeal universally to readers. However, the image of mother in most minds is that of a nurturer, a giver of unconditional love, which is far from the image of Tanizaki's artistic and aloof Mother. If Tanizaki is indeed trying to appeal to a wider readership, it must be through a symbolic meaning, other than that of a nurturer, shared by all the readers. Perhaps this is the innocence of our childhood, an innocence that the mere mention of mother readily invokes in our minds. Furthermore, childhood innocence is inseparably linked to boundless imagination and infinite potentiality: the essence of Tanizaki's aestheticism.

It is uncanny that as for Tanizaki, the innocence of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* also connotes the unlimited expansion of imagination. The infinite potentiality in innocence, which can ever so nonchalantly tip the balance of symmetry and realize fantasies and dreams, is viewed by Blake as the only undrying spring of pleasure in life. His *Songs of Experience* laments in such anguished a voice the loss of innocence. However, he, like Tanizaki, also comes to a resolution: a dialectic of contrary states, innocence and experience, and their mutually referential relationship, without which Blake's "echo of green," the continuous enjoyment of innocence, will be no more.¹

Why then dismiss the symbol of innocence back to the realm of fantasy? Perhaps it is Tanizaki's way of admitting, as Blake has done in *The Book of Thel*, that he has failed to establish an icon which can at the same time represent two irreconcilable aspects of life: innocence (unlimited imagination/instinct) and experience (maturity through reason/imagination stifled).² In "Longing" and "Shigemoto," the protagonists' innocence does not correspond exactly with their unlimited imagination, as we pointed out

above. Rather, theirs is a rationally controlled imagination and a calculated innocence, which prevents the protagonists from maturing both as artists and as men.

Tadasu in "Bridge" finally succeeds in realizing his fantasy and experiences tremendous pleasure through a fusion, not of innocence (instincts) and experience (reason), but of child's innocence and adult's instincts. In other words, he has been able to completely eliminate reason from not only his fantasy but reality as well. However, it is not without a dreadful consequence: he is left in the utter loneliness that the actualized fantasy brings with it. Eventually, he redismises child's innocence and adult's uninhibited instincts back to where they belong and brings reason back to reality. With this ability to separate fantasy from reality comes the protagonist/Tanizaki's liberation from Mother who has symbolized the brief fantasy brought into reality.³

Now his fantasy is freed from the demands of reason and can infinitely expand as in childhood innocence in its truest sense. Fantasy is now outside the boundary of reality (reason) and reality, as fantasy's faithful partner, always ensures the eventual closure of fantasy lest fantasy should prolong and become reality. Could it also be, I wonder, a form of *amae*?⁴ As the baby Tadasu's fearless curiosity over the fish in the pond can be satisfied because the mother's steady hand checks and balances his fall, fantasy can be fully enjoyed because reality always counterbalances it.

Notes

¹ William Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, Ed. David Punter (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). *Songs of Innocence* (p. 50-68), *Songs of Experience* (p. 123-35) and *The Book of Thel* (p.69-74) are collected in this book. "The Echoing Green" is a poem under the title *Songs of Innocence* (p. 56). A useful commentary can be found in the second volume of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, (New York: Norton, 1979):

In Blake's later writings, the "contrary states" become a dialectic of contraries, according to which naive innocence must necessarily pass through and assimilate the opposing state of experience if it is to move on, by an act of imagination, to the third state, comprehending but transcending both the others, which he called "organized innocence." (48)

² We can find an uncanny parallel to Tanizaki's failure in William Blake's *The Book of Thel* which reveals Blake's failure to bring innocence into experience. For a more detailed discussion, see Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969).

³ The subheading for the last section of this chapter is "The family renewed - putting mother in her place." I deliberately avoided specifying which mother it was. In fact, I wonder whether that specification is essential here. The most important point to be made to the readers is that the line between fantasy and reality is restored. Because of this division, the real mother, who disappears when the fantasy is realized (or when the boundary between fantasy and reality is erased), comes back to her original place: balanced between the two realms while embracing both. The stepmother,

who functions as a vessel in which the protagonist attempts to combine the nurturer and the seductress mother, is put back in the realm of fantasy.

⁴ *Amae* is a traditional sensibility of unconditional love of a mother for her child. However, I used it here as the child's absolute trust in its mother.

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