KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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THE FEMALE CHARACTER IN SELECTED WORKS OF KAWABATA YASUNARI

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Declaration

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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Dedication

For Father and Mother – Joseph Maritim Soo and Mary Soo - who of this life they bore should not have been in vain.

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The Japan Culture Institute at Japan Embassy, Nairobi, gave me access to the vital resources in their Library, and am particularly grateful to David, the Librarian in charge, for the help he extended to me during the research.

Operational Definition of Terms

Enigmatic – refers to that which is charmingly hard to grasp or comprehend. The term is used interchangeably with its stylistic variants as "puzzling," "problematic," and "perplexing."

Haiku – a seventeen-syllable genre of Japanese poetry in three lines, each of 5, 7 and 5 syllables; it is referred to here in its traditional sense in which it mainly has its content being the season(s) of the year, time of day and salient features of the landscape.

Heian Period – a time in Japanese history, between 794 – 1185. It is widely considered instrumental in the development of a distinctively Japanese culture. Literary output from this period, mainly by women, has been significantly influential in the Japanese literary landscape.

Meiji Period – a time in Japanese history, between 1868 – 1912. During this period, Japan entered the path of modernization associated with its contact with the West. The modern Japanese novel was also established at this time literally as a respected genre. Western aesthetic influences of romanticism, symbolism and naturalism were also felt during this period.

Mono no aware (also **Aware**) – a kind of sympathetic perception of things in nature, usually accompanied by bitter-sweet sadness; a cosmic impression of things, especially evanescent, and as such poignantly charming.

New Sense School – this was avant-garde literary elite in the 1920s Japan, coalescing around the literary journal *Literary Age,* (*Bungei Jidai*).

Abstract

This study undertook to examine the enigmatic female characters in four works by Kawabata Yasunari: two novels, *Snow Country* and *The Old Capital*, and two short stories, 'The Izu Dancer' and 'One Arm.' The ultimate concern was on the social significance deriving from Kawabata's textual presentation of these characters in the selected works. The study was geared towards this end, with the socio-cultural context of the texts forming the point of departure.

The premises of the research were that the characters projected have socio-cultural and literary sources, and are used by the writer to make a statement. Within these premises, the study objectives were to examine the pre-textual socio-cultural and literary contexts of the selected texts, outline the forms of the female characters, and ultimately to determine their significance as presented in the texts.

The research process, including the analysis of the research texts and deliberation on the significance of the perplexing nature of the characters, was projected from Wolfgang Iser's theory of aesthetic response. This theoretical base was complemented with stylistic theory, especially in the analysis of the textual strategies constituting the forms of the characters.

The research was qualitative in nature. Examination of the diverse critical views was conducted, and the selected research texts subjected to a critical analysis, with the cultural milieu in consideration. In addition to consideration of the socio-cultural milieu, stylistic examination of the textual strategies in the selected texts was also carried out. This enabled the validation of the attempt to draw the social significance of Kawabata's presentation of the problematic female figures in the texts.

After the texts were subjected to the stated theoretical and methodological procedures, the female characters were found to be enigmatic and that behind this nature is a nuanced traditional Japanese aesthetic, which the female characters embody.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Kawabata Yasunari: His Profile and his Works[1]

Kawabata Yasunari was born in 1899 in Osaka, Japan, to a physician father. By the age of two, both of his parents had died and he was then raised by his paternal grandparents. His only sibling was an older sister who at the demise of the parents was taken up by an aunt. Kawabata knew and met his sister only once in his lifetime at the age of ten. The paternal grandparents died not long afterwards – the grandmother died when he was seven, and the grandfather when he was fifteen. Thereafter he went under the care of his maternal grandparents, but shortly moved into a boarding house from where he attended a junior high school. Upon completion of his high school studies, he joined the Tokyo Imperial University's Faculty of Humanities as an English Major. However, he subsequently switched to studying Japanese literature. All this was between 1920 and 1924.

After completing University studies in 1924, he started the literary magazine *Literary Age*, together with Kataoka Tepei, Yokomitsu Riichi and others. This magazine was the New Sense School's medium for charting out a new literary front in Japan. In 1926, Kawabata made his literary debut with 'The Izu Dancer.' From then on, he continued to publish more extended works the major of which are:[2] 'The Izu Dancer,' (1926), *Scarlet*

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[1]This profile and description of works was prepared with major reference to two sources: The Nobel Foundation, *Nobel Lectures in Literature 1968-1980*, ed. Sture Allen (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 1993) *http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prize/literature/laureates/1968/kawabata-bio.html* retrieved 21/07/2008, 1100hrs; and Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia, *Yasunari Kawabata,* (2008) *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/yasunari_kawabata* accessed July 21 2008, 1000hrs.

[2]The year(s) in parentheses refer to the time period when the texts were originally (serially) published. These are also the works which to date have been translated to English at various times.

Gang of Asakusa (1930), *Snow Country* (1934-1947), *Thousand Cranes* (1949-1952), *The Sound of the Mountain* (1949-1954), *The Master of Go* (1951-1954), *The Lake* (1954), *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* (1961), *The Old Capital* (1962), *Beauty and Sadness* (1964), 'One Arm' (1964) and *Palm-of-the Hand Stories*, which is a collection of short stories.

In 1968, Kawabata was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature 'for his narrative mastery, which with great sensibility expresses the essence of Japanese mind.'[3] Shortly afterwards, Kawabata committed suicide on 16th April 1972. However, there have been theories regarding his death, including those which hold that the death was an accident.

1.2. Background to the problem

The development of the 'modern' Japanese novel, also known as *shosetsu*, dates back to the last decades of the nineteenth century,[4] with the dramatic increase in the cultural trafficking between Japan and the West. Prior to this, the novel in Japan was predominantly romantic and/or assumed the traditional Japanese tale form.[5] In the two

[3]See The Nobel Foundation, *Nobel Lectures in Literature*, ed. Sture Allen (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 1994) http://nobelprize.org/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/WSC/lit-68-80.html retrieved 21/07/2008, 11:00hrs.

[4]This has specifically been put at the time when the feudalistic system came to an end in 1868, with the restoration of the Meiji imperial rule. This therefore marked the start of the Meiji period, followed by Taisho period, then the Showa period. The custom underlying this periodization in Japan is that, every new emperor delineates a new era. Markedly, as well, there are distinctive qualities of literary output in each period. See Hisaaki Yamanouchi, *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Literature* (London: Cambridge UP, 1978), 1-5; Shuichi Kato, *A History of Japanese Literature, vol. 3: The Modern Years* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), chapter 2; Mitsuhiro Mizutani, 'The Edo Foundations of Modern Japan' in *Japan Echo,* vol. 34, no. 5, Oct. 2007: 60.

[5]See Joseph K. Yamakiwa, 'Literature and Japanese Culture' In *Twelve Doors to Japan* (Macgraw-Hill, 1965), 247; J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Tradition: An Introduction* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 62-81. Rimer's examination of antecedents of Japanese fiction is more extended.

periods, Meiji and Taisho, the novel was essentially naturalistic.[6] At the advent of Showa era, however, the quest for art or fiction set in with the inception of the literary movement, the New Sense School made up of members of diverse ideas.[7] The principal members of the school were Yokomitsu Riichi and the writer whose works were the subject of this study, Kawabata Yasunari[8]

As a key member of the avant-garde New Sense School, he re-visioned the traditional Japanese literary aesthetic. The group particularly viewed with discontent the highly theorized basis of the Marxist and naturalist literature and favoured the emotional base of the art. This basis was such that the artist was to nurture an outlook in which the emotional constitution sympathetically co-operated with day-to-day experience to produce an ideal aesthetic expression.[9] The catastrophic defeat, and subsequent occupation, of Japan by the Allied Forces in 1945 was also instrumental in Kawabata's renewed effort in re-search of Japanese literary idiom. At this time he wrote:

> I have the strong unavoidable feeling that my life is already at an end. For me there is only the solitary return to the mountains and rivers of the past. From this point on, as one already dead, I intend to write only of the poor beauty of Japan, not a line else.[10]

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[6]The Japanese naturalism during this time is markedly different from the European form of it. Whereas the latter is underlain by the emphasis that fiction must strive to *mirror* life, the Japanese version stipulated a kind of writing 'about life as it is.' In other words, fiction was out of question. Essentially, the writer wrote his/her own life; writing was an autobiographical exercise. This is the basis of the Japanese 'I-novel'. See: Murakami Hyoe in Japan Culture Institute's *An Introduction to Japan's Literature* (Tokyo: Japan Culture Institute, 1974), 35; Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), xii, 72-73; Rimer, 13.

[7]Various commentators have translated the original name, *Shin Kankaku Ha*, as Neo-Sensualist school, New Sensibility School, Neo-Perceptionist, or New Perception School. It will be found that, as we have already stated, the group was not homogenous in terms of ideas. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, Kawabata's idea was taken as representative.

[8] Japanese names as were used throughout the study, except those of editors, translators, editors and critics, were in the Japanese order; that is, surname then given name.

[9]Paul H. Varley, *Japanese Culture: A Short Introduction* (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 210; see also *http://www.washburn.edu/reference/bridge24/kawabata.html*, accessed 21st Oct 2008, 09.50hrs.

[10]Quoted in John Nathan's *Mishima: A Biography* (Da Caprio Press, 2000), 83.

Perhaps a major impetus in Kawabata's recourse to traditional emotionally sensitive narrative was Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian literary artist and first Asian Nobel Laureate of literature. In 1916, the formative years of Kawabata's career, Tagore visited and lectured in Japan. Among the critical issues he touched on was the onus on a people to articulate their cultural being on the global arena:

> It is the responsibility which every nation has to reveal itself before the world. Obscurity should be considered almost as a national crime, it is worse than death and is never forgiven by the history of man. The people must bring out the best in them which belong to the magnanimity of their soul which is their wealth that exceeds their immediate and exclusive needs and recognizes its responsibility to send cultural and spiritual invitation to the rest of the world.[11]

There is no doubt that Tagore's message, and his established literary figure, overawed Kawabata, judging from his reminiscence about his first impression of Tagore in the media and in person.[12]

Kawabata's own idea in the New Sense School was that the new literary art was supposed to 'reflect immediately the inchoate state of a man's thoughts, feelings and sensory experience.'[13] In such literature, for example, the perceiving character was not to stand relative to the perceived as other. The character, or narrator for that matter, as Miyoshi puts it, is not yet separate from the seen, the speaker from the spoken.[14]

On the score of Kawabata's idea in the school, it was imperative that the study benefited from the wider aesthetic canvas which informed his ideas on literary art. In *Zen and*

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[11]Quoted in Kawabata's *The Existence and Discovery of Beauty*, trans V. H. Viglielmo. Tokyo: Mainichi, 1969), 53-54.
[12]See Ibid., 55-58.
[13]Miyoshi, 97.
[14]Ibid.

Japanese Culture, Daisetz T. Suzuki puts forward a case that a sensible critique of a product of Japanese culture necessarily has to take in the Buddhist, predominantly Zen, aesthetic,[15] to which Kawabata generally subscribed. This aesthetic, Suzuki writes, is so pervasive as to condition the creative faculty of the Japanese, most notably the *haiku* master. He gives a general sketch of the relationship between Zen and art thus:

> The idea that the ultimate truth of life and of things generally is to be intuitively grasped, and that this *intuitive prehension* is the foundation not only of philosophy but of all other cultural activities, is what Zen Buddhism has contributed to the cultivation of artistic appreciation among the Japanese people.
> It is here then that the spiritual relationship between Zen and the Japanese conception of art is established.[16]

One essential trait of Zen, which was relevant as a background to the study, is the preference given to the expression of a sense of mystery,[17] the enhancement of it, and the strive to arrive at a state of oneness with the cosmos by intuitive prehension, but yet remain conscious of one's being in the context of the entirety of the Cosmos. This recalls Kawabata's idea in the New Sense School that the characters in the kind of literary art they ventured to engage in, were supposed to be in a state of non-differentiation: the perceived is undifferentiated from the perceiver.

The argument was that Kawabata, in his works, exhibited the influence of Zen aesthetics, whose poetic means of expression is *haiku*. This was to suggest that his literary art had

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[15](New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1959), 217-218. See, especially, 'Zen and Haiku' which was particularly essential to the study. Kawabata expresses his bent for the Buddhist aesthetic in his Nobel address, 'Japan, the Beautiful and Myself.' English text trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tokyo, New York and San Francisco: Kodansha, 1981), 56-49; this is a bilingual edition and the English text is reversely paginated.

[16]Suzuki, 219. (my emphasis)

[17] Ibid. 220-221. This sense of mystery suggests a primordial apprehension of being. In Zen, this state of apprehension is arrived at through *satori.*

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the character of *haiku*. Edward G. Seidensticker, the main English translator of Kawabata, in writing an introduction to the translation *Snow Country*, has this to say:

> Kawabata has been put, I think rightly, in a literary line that can be traced back to the seventeenth century *haiku* masters.
> ....
> The *haiku* manner presents a great challenge to the novelist. The manner is noted for its terseness and austerity, so that his novel must rather be like a series of flashes in a void. In *Snow Country* Kawabata has chosen a theme [the elusive consummation of love between man and woman] that makes a meeting between *haiku* and the novel possible.[18]

The terseness, austerity and series of flashes in the void referred to by Seidensticker echo the sense of 'ungraspableness' and sense of mystery associated with Zen and in turn, exhibited in Japanese literary art. Tantamount as this might have been to saying Kawabata was a *haiku* master, it nonetheless stresses the point that his prose possess strong filiations of *haiku*.

The pervasiveness of the influence of Zen Buddhist aesthetic on Kawabata was not to be seen to constrict the interpretive possibilities of the research texts, but that having had it as the bedrock of the study enhanced it as a denominator from which other interpretive possibilities were drawn or contrasted.

Suzuki, however, is conscious of the risk of over-emphasis on a one-on-one progenitorial relationship between Zen and Japanese cultural output, aesthetic outlets included.[19] The artist exists in a milieu of cultural interaction, Japanese and Western, religio-philosophical and secular space. As an artist, Kawabata is no exception and the works

[18](New York: Vintage Int., 1984), vii-viii.
[19]Op. Cit. 345.

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studied here were treated as *his* art but with the far-reaching, though not over-significant, background of Zen aesthetic.

The mention of the author's cultural milieu, especially considering the interaction between Japan and the West, prefigured the problem which motivated the study. At the advent of the Meiji Period, Kawabata's society found itself at a socio-ideological crossroad, symptom of which could be seen in the activities of the New Sense School. Despite laying emphasis on the significance of the text-reader interaction, the theorist Wolfgang Iser does not deny that the literary text is an apt ground for the author's presentation of his vision about society.[20] This background enables the study to proceed from the premise that though he did not remain strictly committed to the ideals of the New Sense School, Kawabata set out to propagate a socio-cultural consciousness in the face of the encroaching culture of the West.

Marjorie Boulton contends that:

> The first and most necessary and unbreakable convention of every art is that the artist chooses those aspects of the subject he wishes to treat in detail, ignores or almost ignores everything else, and suits the details of the treatment to the chosen matter.[21]

In the light of Boulton's argument, Kawabata's paradoxical presentation of the female characters in the four works is deliberate and motivated.[22] The belief was that the treatment Kawabata gave to the feminine characters in the selected texts served to

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[20] *The Act of Reading* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 35.
[21] See *The Anatomy of Prose* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 109.
[22] See also Emmanuel Ngara, *Stylistic Criticism of the African Novel* (Ibadan, London and Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 16. Ngara also contend that distinct character presentations are well calculated.

communicate his social outlook. This invitation to the reader in the form of characterisation made E. M. Forster to pose: 'may the writer take the reader into his confidence about his characters? ... [B]etter not.'[23] At the base of Forster's argument is that once a writer straightforwardly presents the characters, there would be little left for the reader to perform during and after the reading process. This is to imply that a writer's over-revelation of a character's attributes would compromise his art. As Boulton has already argued, characters present an opportunity to the writer to register their views about society. Whereas Forster sees character presentation as a means to enriching the literary art, Boulton sees it as an opportunity to address an extra-literary concern. Both views underlay our study. Kawabata thus purposefully engages the reader by textually presenting perplexing female characters through what Iser describes as strategies.[24]

Many a critic has noted this problematic nature of the female character in Kawabata's works. Shuichi Kato for example acknowledges that 'women in Kawabata stories are faint and insubstantial as people,' and are intentionally projected as such.[25]

1.3. Statement of the Problem

In many works of Kawabata, there predominates the female character as a literary focal point. The literature to be subsequently reviewed alludes to their enigmatic nature in the two novels, *Snow Country* and *The Old Capital*; and the two short stories, 'The Izu Dancer' and 'One Arm.' The characters are described as ungraspable, insubstantial or

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[23] *Aspects of the Novel* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1955), 81-82.
[24] Op. Cit. 87.
[25] Op. Cit., 244. See also Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Tradition,* 168, 170; Yamanouchi, 124; and Miyoshi, 107.

disembodied. However these reviewed positions do not give substantial focus on the sources, the exact nature and the implication of these female characters. The impetus of the study was: what is the provenance of the forms of these characters, what are their configurations in the respective texts, and what ends do they serve?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To provide a critical appraisal of the female characters in the selected Kawabata's works against the socio-cultural and specific literary contexts informing the nature of the female characters.
2. To provide a textual analysis of how Kawabata strives to reconcile the real and the ideal, the symbolic and the referential female figures in the selected works.
3. To extract Kawabata's ultimate statement embedded in the paradoxical textual presentation of the female figures in the selected works.

1.5. Research Premises

The research conducted on the basis of three premises:

1. That there exists a relationship between the nature of the female characters in the selected texts and the socio-cultural norms and past literary traditions of Japan.
2. The nature of the female characters in the texts is as a result of a network of textual strategies.
3. Kawabata's presentation of the nature of the female figures in the selected works is not accidental but an attempt to orient the reader towards his (Kawabata's) social outlook.

1.6. Research Questions

a) Which are the specific socio-cultural and literary influences on Kawabata, and how are they impressed on the nature of the female characters in the selected texts?

b) What textual strategies in the selected works are responsible for the nature of the female characters presented?

c) What is the nature of the social vision or ultimate statement that Kawabata attempts to propagate, in the form of the female figures, in the selected texts?

1.7. Justification and Significance of the Study

Japanese literature remains at the periphery as a field of study in Kenya, yet it has characteristics distinct from the Western and African literary forms. The study was expected to help in opening up the field for further critical study and general appreciation. Kawabata Yasunari as a writer strategically enabled us to explore the texts selected for the study, as characteristically Japanese. The writer is noted for being distinctively Japanese in his works, despite Western literary influences.[26]

The stance which was taken in the study was that it was necessary to comprehensively substantiate, by textual analysis, any claim of Kawabata's social vision in the selected works. Similarly, the nature of the female characters in the research texts had not received sufficient attention, and was attributed to the gap pointed out above. An

[26] See for instance Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction*, 162-165; and Miyoshi, 99-100.

understanding of them was in turn to enhance the understanding of the writer, within the confines of the stated research objectives.

The justification for selection of the research texts was based on two premises. Firstly, 'The Izu Dancer' was the first major work to earn Kawabata notice in the literary circle, followed with *Snow Country*. He wrote *The Old Capital* towards the end of his literary career, and had generally received little critical attention. This consideration gave the advantage of a linear examination of the subject characters, and how they were represented from Kawabata's literary debut, towards the time he published *The Old Capital*. Secondly, on the strength of the first criteria, the presumption was that the research objectives could best be addressed by these texts, since they were the most significant in the Kawabata canon. The researcher was thus placed to see how the selected texts best treated the characters.

1.8. Scope and Delimitation

In focus were four works of Kawabata Yasunari: two novels, *Snow Country* and *The Old Capital*; two short stories, 'The Izu Dancer' and 'One Arm.' Though an argument may arise that the Japanese socio-cultural and historical milieu is a common background shared by other Japanese novelists, the study was not a comparative examination of the Japanese novelists' presentation of the female figures.

However, to fulfill the proposed study objectives, a relevant overview of Japanese literary landmarks against which the research texts could be viewed, was conducted. Alongside

this, the cultural context was examined as informing the characters in the texts. Both the cultural and literary contexts were viewed as sources of materials for the worlds constructed by the texts, which were viewed not as copies of their literary and cultural contexts, but as simply sourcing their materials from the contexts and using them to construct their peculiar world. This survey of contexts was done specifically with the nature of the female figures in focus.

The research focused only on the four works, the consideration having been that this was an in-depth study rather than a survey of Kawabata's works. Key was the attention to the problematic feminine characters and others insomuch as they were significant in comprehending the nature of the female characters.

1.9. Literature Review

Makoto Ueda has aptly noted that Kawabata Yasunari has a propensity for depicting maidens. To Kawabata, Ueda writes, 'virginal beauty seemed to represent all that is precious on earth.'[27] He cites the example of 'The Izu Dancer,' in which the heroine turns out, after all, to be an innocent young girl.

But Ueda contends that, as well, the young woman, especially the maiden, has more of the potential of being the unrequited seeker. He touches, *en passant,* on *one* strategy that Kawabata uses to realize the 'pure life': 'striving after an ideal.'[28] In the course of the

[27] *The Mother of Dreams and Other Short Stories* (Tokyo, New York and San Francisco: Kodansha Int., 2004), 8.

[28] *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature*, 176-177. Henceforth simply referred to as *Modern Japanese Writers*.

quest for the ideal, life smolders purely and the more beautifully. Still, one would ask: what are the sources of this sensibility of unattainability? Further, it was felt that Ueda did not comprehensively provide an analysis of these problematic characters. By a comprehensive examination, the study sought to explore this question.

In the synoptic analysis that Ueda undertakes of Kawabata's major works as *Thousand Cranes, The Sound of the Mountain, House of the Sleeping Beauties, Beauty and Sadness, The Old Capital* and *Snow Country*, he comes to settle on the conclusion that Kawabata employed the figure of a maiden to embody the ideal love; unconsummatable and therefore infested with longing.[29] This longing, Ueda suggests, constitutes the essence of Kawabata's ideal and therefore pure love.

Ueda's focus is on the female character in search of the male counterpart. However, it is apparent that because of Kawabata's handling of the situation, an ultimate consummation of the search is unreachable. We can deduce that for Ueda, a transparent screen in the form of textual strategies engaged by Kawabata is set before the questing female figure. But as per the study, the same invisible and semi-permeable screen was instead taken as set before the questing male character, or fellow female character in some instances.

Another critic, Shuichi Kato, makes an essential statement about women characters created by Kawabata: 'The women in Kawabata stories are *faint* and *insubstantial* as people; they are described as one element of a scene which is a record of sensual

[29]Ibid. 181.

impressions.'[30] 'Faint' and 'insubstantial' as used by Kato hint at a character perceived impressionistically, rather than as a poorly created, ill-formed character. 'As one element of a scene' echoes an apt phrase by J. Thomas Rimer, which relates to how the female protagonist in Kawabata has the power to blend with geographical setting: 'the poetry of place.'[31] He notices this problematic nature of the female characters, but he *only* goes to that extent. This study undertook an in-depth examination of this faintness and insubstantiality of the figures, as part of the wider scheme of understanding them, their extra-textual background and Kawabata's scheme behind them which Kato does not provide us with.

In *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature,*[32] Rimer gives a snapshot of *Snow Country.* As the title of the book suggests, it is at best a guide and does not permit a sustained study of *Snow Country.* He synoptically relates to us the plot of the novel, in the course of which he briefly mentions the disjunction in the perception of Komako (the female protagonist) by Shimamura (the male protagonist):

> While traveling in this remote spots [the snow country], Shimamura meets Komako, a young geisha of great beauty, to whom he is inordinately attracted. Shimamura forms an *aesthetic vision* of her, yet Komako's real life is more difficult and complex than he is prepared to believe or understand.[33]

Elsewhere,[34] Rimer transiently records the strangeness of Komako by claiming that Shimamura encounters an inexplicable woman,[35] both to him and in extension, to the

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[30] *A History of Japanese Literature,* vol. 3, 244. Emphasis is mine.
[31] 'Protagonist' is used here with particular caution, for as will be seen in Chapter Three, 'protagonist' is virtually non-existent in Kawabata's narratives. The usage here simply implies the 'lead character.'
[32] (Tokyo, New York and London: Kodansha, 1999)
[33] Ibid. 155 (my emphasis)
[34] *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions*, 168, 170.

reader. Implicit in this statement is a Komako, impenetrable both to Shimamura and the reader who has to heavily rely on Shimamura's point of view.

Retrospectively, at least with regard to what we have so far said about poetry of place, it was incumbent upon the study to focus on how Shimamura, a Tokyo resident, is deceived of the nature of Komako, by virtue of being found in 'remote spots,' at any rate exotic to his urban environment. Rimer comments that '[l]ooking at her again, early in the morning, Shimamura cannot separate his vision of her from his vision of nature.'[36] In the terms of Rimer's assertion, different views of Komako indeed yield diverse impression of her, which are necessarily conflictive.[37] We have already noted Rimer's points about Kawabata's characteristic blend of characters with their geographical context. This is also evident in *The Old Capital*, but apparently the scope available to Rimer in 'Kawabata Yasunari: Eastern Approaches, *Snow Country*' is delimiting. Nonetheless, he paved way for further interest in the study. A comprehensive study of the literary blending of character and setting was attempted through examination of the informing socio-cultural background.

Hisaaki Yamanouchi gives another dimension in the reading of the two lead female characters in *Snow Country*. Yamanouchi writes that Shimamura is attracted to two types of women.[38] Yoko is the 'intangible or inaccessible [yet indeed possibly accessible] to Shimamura.' This 'type' of woman Yamanouchi compares to Kaoru, the little Izu dancer

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[35] Ibid. Even though Rimer makes his point in the light of his relation of *Snow Country* to Natsume Soseki's (Kawabata's compatriot novelist's) *The Three Cornered World*, the point can still be vouched for independently.

[36] *Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, 168, 170. Rimer is referring to a passage early one morning when Shimamura is with Komako. See Kawabata Y., *Snow Country*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Vintage Int., 1996), 47-48; this is the edition to which subsequent references will be made.

[37] Ibid.

[38] *The Search for Authenticity in Modern Japanese Novel*, 124.

in 'The Izu Dancer.' The contrast is Komako who 'willingly gives herself to Shimamura,' and so, further argues Yamanouchi, Shimamura is caught up in an unresolved tension arising from the encounter with 'the tangible, fully bodied Komako and intangible, ethereal and, as it were, disembodied Yoko.'[39]

Miyoshi makes an instructive point though, about the metaphor of the sound of the bell transforming itself into Komako's steps in *Snow Country*: 'The real and the fantasied are so closely woven that we realize with a start that Komako's appearance is only in Shimamura's consciousness.'[40] Even though Miyoshi does not develop the argument substantially to meet our objectives, he nonetheless creates an apt departure point in our analysis of *The Old Capital* and 'One Arm,' the least studied of Kawabata's works.

But a recall of Rimer's comment on Shimamura's vision of Komako makes a revealing contradiction: Shimamura cannot separate his vision of her from his vision of nature. It is apparent from these contradictory perspectives that Komako, though supposed to be 'tangible,' is as inscrutable a character as Yoko, 'intangible' yet also tangible. Miyoshi is of one mind with Yamanouchi as he has a similar reading of the two characters. To Miyoshi, Komako is boldly tactile and Yoko is ethereal and hence intangible.[41] He further relates:

> Yoko, the disembodied, is the other half of a woman, the spirit or soul of a woman, always eluding men's reaching hands, always fragile and mysterious.... She is a fairy-tale figure, a symbolic marker, living not by her own will and desire but at the beck and call of the heroine – that is, to fulfill the logic of the drama.[42]

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[39]Ibid.
[40]Ibid. 112.
[41]Op. Cit. 107.
[42]Ibid.

We unreservedly concur with Miyoshi that Yoko is Kawabata's technical accessory, existing courtesy of (and for) Komako. This argument, if supplemented with concrete textual evidence, could lead one to an understanding of Kawabata's ultimate assertion. This constituted the motive of the research, since the three critics have not made explicit this social ideal.

Yamanouchi also offers a reading of the fire scene in the same novel, which, on the strength of Kawabata's literary ideals, made it essential for the study to attempt a reading that would less literally conform to the ideals. Yamanouchi rightly, to some extent, gathers that 'the vision of beauty borders on death, as is illustrated by Yukio's [Yoko's fiancé's] death.' This is generally in concurrence with Mishima's position:

> Paradoxically, a beautiful corpse, from which the last traces of spirit have gone, gives rise to the strongest feelings of life. From the reflection of these violent feelings of the one who loves, the corpse sends forth the strongest radiance of life.[43]

In principle, both interpretations are in tandem with Kawabata's concept of 'beauty' or 'vitality of life.' Mishima's 'strongest radiance of life' corresponds to Kawabata's 'vitality of life.' But Yamanouchi's reading of Yoko's burning might turn out to be too literal:

> the vision of beauty borders on death, as is illustrated by Yoko's *probable death in a fire.* The fire which in the opening chapter is associated with beauty mirror image of Yoko thus *becomes the fire that brings death.*[44]

This study examined a subtler significance of the metaphor.

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[43] See his 'Introduction' to Kawabata Yasunari's *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, trans. Edward Seidensticker. (London: Quadriga Press, 1969).

[44] Op. Cit., p. 125. Emphasis is mine.

The multifacedness of the figures also characterizes 'The Izu Dancer.' The young student-narrator appears to have misperceived the little dancer. An argument can be put up along Rimer's statement that Shimamura in *Snow Country* could not distinguish his vision of Komako from that of nature. Is the 'I' in 'The Izu Dancer,' as well, a victim of poetry of place? Thomas E. Swann would rather say that the narrator 'discovers rustic beauty of the countryside along his way.'[45] In principle, Swann and Rimer seem to share the same point. About 'The Izu Dancer,' the former arrives at a conclusion whose tenor is: the narrator's desire to realize the ethereal beauty is realized in the form of the little dancer, Kaoru. It could actually be demonstrated that the perceiving narrator, rather than 'realizing' his desire, is left with a sense of the 'Kawabatan' vitality of life and is ironically so distant from her. Swann then sets out on a reductionist interpretation of the temporal end-section of the story as interplay of polarities: life and death, happiness and sadness, youth and agedness. His reading of 'The Izu Dancer' thus shifts away from the significance of the little dancer.

Even so, Swann's endnote belies his claim that the narrator discovers beauty and realizes his desire. He notes:

> It should be emphasized that the naïve student narrator's impressions are not to be trusted in the main: he did not imagine Eikichi [the troupe leader] to be an actor with the troupe, instead taking him for educated hanger-on from Nagaoka due to the jacket he wore, nor did he realize that Eikichi was married to Chiyoko; he believed most of the troupe came from Oshima while they were really from Kofu, and he never considered Kaoru's drum heavy, though it was.[46]

The moot point was: what is the role of the stunningly beautiful little-dancer-then-child in the mix-up? Swann sheds not much light on the question and the study set out to tackle it.

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[45] In Thomas E. Swann and Kinya Tsuruta, eds. *Approaches to Modern Japanese Short Story* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1982), 106.

[46] Ibid.

Yet Miyoshi offers an interpretation which yields an Izu dancer who is perceived with more 'involvement' and subsequently with 'less involvement.'[47] The 'I' is attracted to her. Miyoshi does not make clear whether this attraction is because of poetry of place, or because the narrator's senses are fallible as Swann hints at, or because of the characteristic problem infesting the female character. In prefatory remark, Miyoshi notes that the student-narrator's voice is lyrical all through and that there is no implication of irony and chronological disjunction between the narration and the events related in the narrative.[48]

Miyoshi's statement may sound cautious enough, even outside the comparative context. He makes reference to a continuum of involvement. The epiphanic realization of beauty in the little dancer by the narrator is more convincingly as sudden as his discovery of her rather plain earthliness, and a continuum is not after all apparent. So even though there might be no evidence of 'manipulation of time between the events and the telling,'[49] there is no gainsaying the mediation of irony: the 'I' who had hitherto espied a beautiful maiden, discovers he had got deceived and that he had only been seeing 'a child, a mere child who could run out naked into the sun and stand there on her tiptoes in her delight at seeing a friend.'[50]

Ultimately, it was clear that Miyoshi, as Swann, invested much of his analytical interest on the male character's experience and little on the nature of the young protagonist, the

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[47]Op. Cit., 100-101. Like Rimer above, Miyoshi is engaging in comparative reading of Soseki's *Pillow of Grass* in which the poet-painter narrator visits the countryside, himself an urbanite. Miyoshi thus draws a parallel between the student-narrator in 'The Izu Dancer' whose 'experience is set in the fresh provincial scene.'

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid. 100.

[50]*The Izu Dancer and Other Stories* (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1974), 16.

little and enigmatic maiden-turned-child, who perplexes the narrator. Again this study committed itself towards exhaustively reading the significant role of the little dancer.

1.10. Theoretical Framework

In his treatise on aesthetic response to a literary text, influenced by the phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser holds that the ultimate intent of the text is communication, meant to impact on the pre-existing social structures.[51] This treatise, he calls it the theory of aesthetic response.[52] His argument, comprehensively expounded in *The Act of Reading*, is that the pre-existing social dispositions are subtly targeted by the text, through its constituent repertoire[53] and the organising strategies.[54]

The theory essentially postulates that a literary text is a schemata or set of instructions which requires the reader's 'imaginative and perceptive faculties'[55] so that an unformulated text lying behind the formulated can be realised.[56] The process of this realisation is mutually determined by the text and the reader. Iser sees the text as constituted of strategies, composed of the author's panoply of narrative techniques[57] and the repertoire corresponding to those elements familiar to the reader and are imported by the texts.[58] The familiar territory suggests the socio-cultural and historical milieu of the

[51]Op. Cit. ix.
[52]Ibid. x.
[53]Ibid.
[54]Ibid. 86.
[55]Ibid. x.
[56]Ibid. 225-226. See also his 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach' in *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. David Lodge, revised and expanded by Nigel Wood (New York: Pearson Education, 2002), 199.
[57]*The Act of Reading,* 87.
[58]Ibid. 69

text, including other familiar literary precedents. The theorist holds that this familiar territory forms the horizon of the reader, and the strategies are its organising principles.

A strand in the reception school of literary criticism, Iser's perspective emphasises the reading process as a 'consciousness raising activity'[59] enhanced through the indeterminate nature of the text. This indeterminacy he attributes to the gaps in the text, arising from the features of the textual schemata: blanks and negations. Contradictions, inconsistencies and disconnections characterising the textual structure constitute these two features. Essential, therefore, in understanding the perplexing female characters in the selected texts, was this concept of blanks which imply a vacancy within the text, inviting the reader to fill in.[60] The concept underlay the viewing of the characters as textual cues to the reader to constitute what is implicitly given.[61]

Complementing the blanks, Iser's theory postulates paradigmatic forms of blanks which he calls negations which arise from inconsistencies or contradictions emerging from the repertoire of the text.[62] Thus the blanks on the syntagmatic axis complement the negations on the paradigmatic the paradigmatic plane.

The gaps are the governing instructions goading the reader's gestalt production of a whole. Iser describes these gaps as response-inviting structures, and are aspects of the implied reader's role embedded in the text.[63] So, given the negations, the reader's gestalt

[59]Ibid. 188.
[60]Ibid. 182.
[61]Ibid. 182-183
[62]Ibid. 212-213.
[63]Ibid. 34-35.

points him or her to what the text alludes to in response to a social concern.[64] These two concepts, blanks and negations, were thus instrumental in the understanding and explication of the puzzling characters in the four works selected for the study.

Another relevant postulation of Iser's theoretical stand is the concept of wandering viewpoint, which refers to the dynamic vantage perspectives in the text as it unfolds during the reading process.[65] These shifting vantage points along the syntagmatic plane enable the reader retrogressively and progressively construct a whole, since 'the whole text can never be perceived at any one time.'[66] Robert Holub captures the essence of this wandering viewpoint thus:

> The wandering viewpoint partakes in various overlapping procedures essentially for the comprehension of the work of art. The first is the dialectic of 'protension' and 'retention.' ... in confronting a text we continually project expectations which may be fulfilled or disappointed.[67]

This notion of the wandering viewpoint indicated itself as being invaluable in the deliberation on the puzzling feminine characters in the plots of the research texts.

Stylistic theory was also used to supplement Iser's aesthetic response theory. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren describe the purpose of stylistic theory as the investigation of those devices in the text geared to some specific expressive end.[68] An essential stylistic outlook was offered to the study by Roger Fowler. His concept of mind style enabled constitution of Kawabata's social outlook. Mind style conceptually stipulates that the

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[64]Ibid.
[65]Ibid.108-109.
[66]Ibid.
[67] 'Reception Theory: School of Constance' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 8*: *From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 332.
[68]*Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), 178.

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stylistic constitution of the novel totals up in a manner to characterize the novel as a schematic representation of the author's opinions.[69] In Fowler's own words:

> Cumulatively, consistent structural options agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of world view....[70]

Stylistics thus provided a means of examining 'the basic operative units of the texts'[71] surrounding the enigmatic characters and from which relevant inferences were made. Emmanuel Ngara has described these basic operative units as linguistic format and dichotomises it into two: linguistic features proper and para-linguistic affective devices.[72] The latter category, which was essential in the analysis of the texts, refers to those features 'which are not analysable in terms of normal linguistic description' examples of which are symbolism, allusion, myth and allegory.[73]

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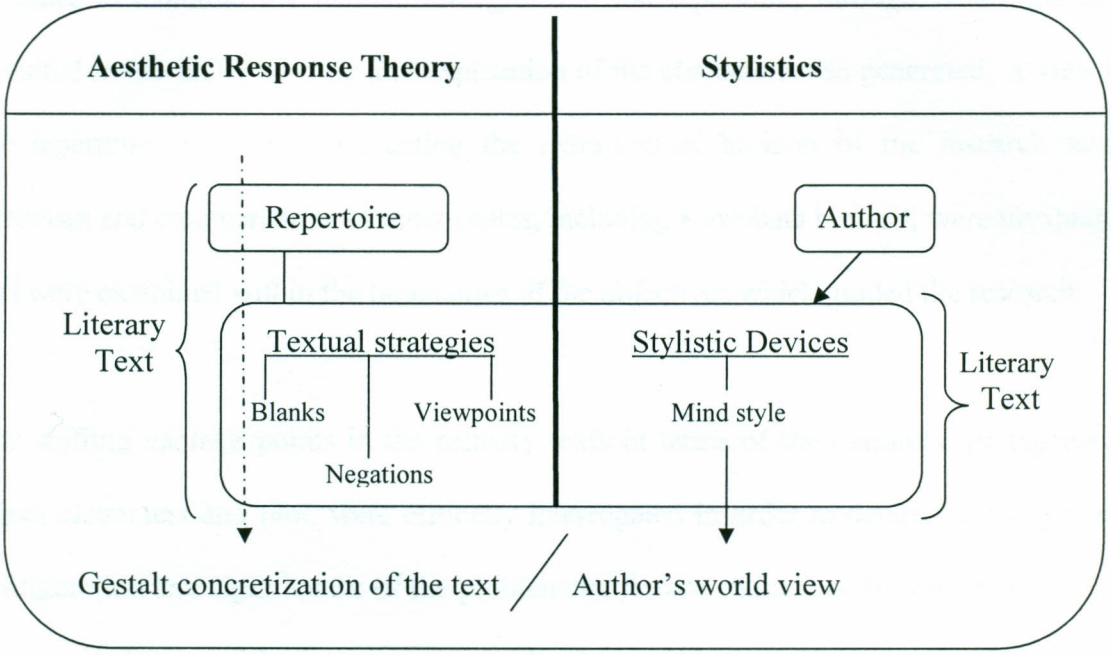
[69]Richard Bradford, *Stylistics* (London and New York, 1997), 65.
[70] Quoted in Bradford, 65; and Geoffrey N. Leech, and Michael H. Short's *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (Essex: Longman Group, 1981), 188. See also Roger Fowler's *Linguistic Criticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 150ff.
[71]Bradford, 197.
[72]Op. Cit. 17.
[73]Ibid.

1.11. Schematized Application of Aesthetic Response Theory and Stylistics



The dotted line represents the implied reader embedded in the repertoire and the text, while the thick vertical line implies the distinguishing tenets of the two theories. Whereas aesthetic response theory emphasizes the relationship between the text and the reader, it does not obliterate the author in the production of the text. The theory's basic concern is the gestalt concretization of the underlying motive of the text. Stylistics on the other hand is more specific about the nature of this concretization. That is, the concretized text is actually the author's world view. In this manner, stylistics presupposes an author who impresses an idiosyncratic outlook into the text. The forward slash separating the two theories' ultimate conceptualization of the literary text suggests the interchangeability of these ultimate conceptualizations.

1.12. Methodology

The study was qualitative in nature. Critical analysis of the research texts was conducted in order to examine the textual strategies and the repertoire, through which the data essential in the understanding and explication of the characters was generated. A view of the repertoire was vital in creating the extra-textual horizon of the research texts. Criticism and commentaries of other critics, including Kawabata himself, were invaluable and were examined within the boundaries of the objectives which guided the research.

The shifting vantage points in the primary texts in terms of the narrators, protagonists, minor characters and plot, were critically interrogated in order to determine the general configuration and significance of the problematic female characters. In this critical focus, attempt at closure of the inherent gaps in the form of blanks and negations attending the subject feminine characters in the plot was made, by which means the study's second hypothesis was addressed. Ultimately, by closing the gaps, the unformulated text, or negativity, was constituted.

Stylistic features, subsumed by Iser under strategies, were critically analyzed in the texts, in which manner, utterances as a mode of interrelation between the problematic feminine characters and others were subjected to stylistic analysis as a way of testing hypothesis two of the study. This enabled the researcher to relate context to the meaning and deductive significance of the verbal interrelationship. Situational contexts of the characters were also examined with the aid of stylistics. A similar analysis was done of

tropes, figures of speech and other para-linguistic affective devices relevant to the deliberation on the enigmatic nature of the feminine characters.

Libraries - private, institutional, and public – and resource persons and materials at the Japan Information and Culture Centre at the Japan Embassy in Nairobi formed the backbone of data collection. The latter was especially important because cultural issues were germane to the research process, as our research texts have Japanese background.

This chapter delineated the research problem and mapped out the course of the research. The first objective is to highlight the extra-textual horizon of the four works of Kawabata. The next chapter embarks on addressing this objective.

CHAPTER TWO: THE REPERTOIRE

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, focus will be on the pre-textual significance of the repertoire of the four texts. The significance of these 'raw materials' in the configuration of the female characters will be underscored. This survey ranged from a focus on the relevant classical Japanese literary texts – prose, poetry and theatre arts - to folkloristic materials put to use by the writer.[1]

2.2. Zen and *Haiku* Technique

The Zen aesthetics finds their way into Kawabata's literary aesthetic.[2] The definition of Zen already adopted here puts at the center the attribute of non-intellectuality, by no means a one-touch definition of Zen. But indisputably and quite generally, Zen is the state of being, the state of mind and no-mind. Blyth has listed (and discussed) thirteen aspects of the Zen state, especially in relation to *haiku*.[3] Apart from non-intellectuality of a Zen state, there are the attributes of contradictoriness and the uniquely conceived loneliness (***sabi***). This kind of loneliness suggests not absence of 'gay' communion among persons (or objects), but may be present in, though not limited, to gaiety. It is

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[1]For convenience, in view of the prevalence of Japanese words in this Chapter, titles of written texts will simply be italicized, emphasis of words or phrases will be indicated by quoted italics and Japanese words, except *haiku* and proper nouns, will be bolded italics. However, this italicization is less obstructive in other Chapters.

[2]'Aesthetic of Kawabata' is apt in view of his distinct exposition on the concept of beauty in his *The Existence and Discovery of Beauty*; see also Ueda's *Modern Japanese Writers,* 173-178. Ueda also catalogues Kawabata's press reviews of literary works favoured by his aesthetic gauge.

[3] See his *Haiku Vol.1: Eastern Culture* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1981), 153-238. In *A History of Haiku, Vol.1: From Beginnings to Issa* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1963), 4-5, and 8, he conveniently condenses the essence of Zen and *Haiku*; that is, in Zen the doer (or subject) is the deed itself (and therefore object), and in haiku the doer is the sensation itself.

given impression in numerous shades that infest the 'fleshliness' of *haiku*. In the words of Basho, the renowned of haiku poets and the champion of the aesthetic:

> Sabi is the colour of a poem. It does not necessarily refer to the poem that describes a lonely scene. If a man goes to war wearing a stout amour or to a party dressed up in gay clothes, and if this man happens to be an old man, there is something lonely about him. Sabi is something like that. It is in the poem regardless of the scene it describes – whether it is lonely or gay.[4]

Even from Basho's elucidation of ***sabi*** in haiku, apparent contradictoriness is inherent. It should be recalled however that Zen, and Buddhism in general, tries to overcome vulgar dualism of consciousness in preference for wholeness.[5] As an important ingredient of haiku, ***sabi*** inheres in time and timelessness, finiteness and infinity, not as binary opposites, but that there is time in timelessness and vice versa; as well, there is infinity in the finite. Blyth phrases it thus: 'The real ***sabi*** is the timeless which does not disdain to use time.'[6]

Implications of time in Basho, as represented above, lie in his conditional clause. The qualification of 'man' in the clause immediately draws in the implication of time passage. In this particular case, Basho is only attempting to conceptualize ***sabi*** rather than exactly colour his words with it. Were it in a typical haiku, the expectation would have been that eternity attending, and thus constituting, ***sabi*** in it would be evoked by an element paralleling 'an old man.' But even this is implicit: the old man is eventually to meet mortality in the war.

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[4]Quoted in Nobuyuki Yuasa's 'Introduction' to Basho's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and other travel sketches* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), 42. *Sabi* is particularly given distinction in later Basho.

[5] See for example Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 304; and Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1985), 164 -165.

[6]*A History of Haiku, Vol. 2,* vii-viii.

Since haiku is experience itself, the haiku poet is the experience of the haiku moment. The object coming within frame of the haiku experience attains a will-and-no-will to their own destiny, in the infinite cosmos made possible by non-duality of the *haiku* moment. Everything and no-thing in it is 'fulfilling its own destiny' as Ueda phrases it,[7] in the infinite-finite cosmos. The feeling evoked by this fulfillment of destiny, within the cosmic experience in the haiku, underlies ***sabi***. This understanding of *haiku* is particularly important in reading *Snow Country*. The technique and aesthetic sensibility in *haiku* is inflected in the novel and an analysis of the following two *haiku* will illustrate these two aspects of this poetic genre.

2.3. Two Style-of-Basho *Haiku*

The beginnings of ***haikai*** were marked with the quest less for creativity than recreation.[8] The culmination of its development, and the peak of its aesthetic constitution, is the period when Basho injects ***sabi*** into his later *haiku* and which was to be perpetuated by his disciples after him. The *haiku* in this phase of Basho's life:

> ... centers on the merging of the temporal into the eternal, of the mutable into the indestructible, of the tiny and finite into the vast and infinite, out of which emerges a primeval lonely feeling shared by all things in this world.[9]

Kawabata himself, in *The Existence and Discovery of Beauty,* reveals that he partly grew up on Basho. Though the sense of loneliness and the general quality of *haiku* in *Snow Country* is partly anticipated here, Kawabata lends these his own literary tinge. But it ought to be recalled that the 'lonely feeling' exists in *haiku* as its colour, arising from

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[7] *Matsuo Basho,* 52.

[8] For historical development of haikai, see Keene's *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600 – 1867* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 11-145, 337-369; and Ueda's *Matsuo Basho*, 36 – 68. ***Haikai*** is the Japanese name usually encompassing haiku and *renga*. Originally it tended to imply the comic-recreational verse.

[9] Ueda, Ibid. 52.

mutual interplay of the apparent contradictory elements, in other words, the overcoming of duality. ***Sabi*** is starkly implied rather than weakly expressed. The two *haiku* to be examined, both by Basho, in the style that was to typify *haiku*, are here titled according to their first lines.[10]

The ancient pond –
A frog jumps in,
The sound of water.

In this *haiku*, the objects in it, 'pond,' 'frog' and 'water,' seem to bear no relationship, least of all symbolic; neither is it true that they necessarily have no relationship at all. What is to be recalled is Ueda's earlier assertion that each element in *haiku* is fulfilling its own destiny, with-and-without regard to the other, and that the timeless is suggested in terms of the mutable and the immutable. The pond antedates time and the fact, the timelessness of the ancient pond, is attested to both by the fleeting jump of the frog (into the pond?) and also by the pond itself being alongside time - it has been for lapse of ages - though ageless. The pond, the frog and the sound (splash?) of water, all in lying outside time, lie within time. The timeless and eternal is subtly understood in terms of the fleeting.

There is yet another side of this *haiku*, a more direct implication of *sabi*: the play of sound and silence. The sound of water (in the ancient pond?) accentuates the profound serenity of the ancient pond, in the same manner as the ancient serenity of the pond marks the silence of the sound of water. Infinite silence of the pond is, so to speak, made loud by the finite sound of water, apparently not bearing any relationship with the

[10]The first haiku, 'The Ancient Pond,' is Keene's translation in *World Within Walls*, 88; this particular haiku has been described by many a critic as Basho's masterpiece, and thus a typical haiku. The second haiku, 'The Rough Sea,' is Ueda's translation in *Matsuo Basho*, 30. My analyses are informed by those of Keene, Ibid., 89-90; Ueda, Ibid., 53; and Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 228-229. Compare this analysis of 'The Ancient Pond' with Blyth's in *A History of Haiku, Vol. 1,* 16.

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'jumping in' of the frog. This play of sound and silence is taken further in 'The Rough Sea':

> The rough sea –
> Extending towards Sado Isle,
> The Milky Way.

The rough sea, suggesting chaos and motion (extends '*towards*') is harmonized by the tranquil and withdrawn Sado Isle just visible across the waters. As well, the raging sea is complemented by the infinite heavenly tranquility implicit in the immutable Milky Way. But as a note of caution, the ambiguity apparent in the particulateness of wholeness, and vice versa, can be seen in the reading that either the sea or the Milky Way extends towards Sado Isle, or indeed that the rough sea *is* the Milky Way, and the Milky Way the rough sea, as one-and-two extending towards the isle.

The Isle is encircled by the relatively vast rough sea; the isle is over-arched and thus enwrapped by the serenely impersonal heavenly Milky Way. To the extent that the raging sea encircles the small Sado Isle, and as well by the infinite and impersonal tranquility of the Milky Way up the infinite expanse, there is raging within tranquility, tranquility within raging, in other words there is dissolution of the sense of duality.

It is noteworthy that in this particular *haiku*, as in 'The Ancient Pond,' there is no subject-object differentiation. The *haiku* poet is effaced but implied, and the 'sea,' 'Sado Isle' and the 'Milky Way'; the 'pond,' the 'frog' and the 'sound of water' have no explicit relationship though there inheres a relationship. Both *haikus*, differentiated-yet-undifferentiated as they are, are with what Ueda above terms primeval lonely feeling

infesting the sentient and insentient beings alike. It can indeed be said that these *haiku* are each *a* primeval lonely feeling, the very raw flesh of the *haiku* moment experience.

In the light of Kawabata's 'One Arm,' it is worthwhile to mention what Ueda refers to while analyzing a ***renga*** jointly composed by Basho and five of his disciples. Ueda observes that:

> It has been a common idea in Japanese romance that a lovelorn soul leaves its body and goes to meet the sweetheart when two lovers are forced to live apart.[11]

He is specifically referring to the following verse, a 7-7 couplet succeeded by 5-7-5 triplet, each contributed by two different poets:

> Not knowing what to do
> He pulls the sash of her nightwear.
> The lovelorn soul
> Flying into the shade of the blossoms
> It has been pining for.

The first couplet, though anticipative, does not need to consider what is to be contained in the triplet. The poet contributor of the triplet merely ingeniously appropriates the content of the couplet: the implicit amour between a man and a woman. The dimension given by the appropriation is that two lovers are kept apart and one has been longing for the other. The blossoms, to take Ueda's reading, represent the beautiful woman to whom the lovelorn man's soul departs.

2.4. *The Tale of Genji* and the Female Mystique

In the Japanese cultural history, probably no period has ever been as significant, especially in literature, as when it had its capital at ***Heian-kyo***, the present time Kyoto

[11]Ibid., 85-86.

and the backdrop for *The Old Capital*. The cultural vibrancy of the period, it has been argued, has had none surpassing it.[12] As one among the threads that run through *Genji*, Morris details what he terms as the cult of beauty in the Heian court.[13] There is no doubt from the description that femininity, as an attribute of the female, at least as captured by Murasaki, was among the prized subjects of this beauty cult.

What is presently important is the presentation of the ladies and the maidens within the precincts of the Heian court, and those without it, though with some claim to it. This category of female characters in *Genji* can be described as too charmingly compulsive phenomena to be merely a presentation of human figures. The focus here is on two general aspects of these feminine phenomena, namely, charm on the verge and the transmigrative female figure. This focus will be helpful in understanding certain aspects of the four texts in the following ways. Firstly, it is important to note that *Genji* is constructed on the basis of the Heian aesthetic of emotional sensitivity to things (***mono no aware***) whose motific elements inform Kawabata's idiosyncratic literary aesthetic. This affirmative aesthetic underpins his aesthetic in which the vagaries of nature and human existence are affirmed – the reality of impossible love, demise and separation. In other words, elements that would pass as aversion, hovering in the horizon, imbue the female character with a charming quality. Kaoru-Ukifune relation particularly avails an apt vehicle for the aesthetic. Secondly the Ukifune question revolves around longing and

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[12] See for example Edward Seidensticker in his 'Introduction' to Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Edward Seidensticker. Everyman's Library Collection. (London: David Campbell, 1992), v. This is the edition to which subsequent references will be made, henceforth simply referred to as *Genji*. Kawabata also makes a similar claim in *The Existence and Discovery of Beauty*, 40-44. The Japanologist, Ivan Morris, attempted an important reconstruction of the Heian society, especially the court life, from this monumental prose narrative; his focus in *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan,* is the sphere of the Heian elite, to which cycle Murasaki was confined, as one of ladies-in-waiting to Empress Akiko (988-1074)

[13] Ibid., 183-210.

copy-images, among other things, as is the case in *The Old Capital*, which involves twin sisters and longing.

2.5. Charm on the Verge

Aestheticism in the Heian court overrode other considerations, ethical and intellectual.[14] The significance of the ability to sense and eke out the experience of the beautiful takes much of *Genji* and as a necessary ingredient of the beautiful, is the accompanying sense of sadness (***mono no aware***), a tinge of the quality also woven into the plots of Kawabata's narratives. At every ultimate point of reflection on beauty and the beautiful, there emerges a distinct sense of sadness and a keen attention to its perishability. From *Genji*, it can be deduced that beauty itself is necessarily fragile, fleeting, faint and perhaps withdrawn, remote or far. For example, it is revealed that the protagonist, Prince Genji:

> … had grown into a lad of such beauty that he hardly seemed meant for this world – and indeed one almost feared that he might only be briefly a part of it.[15]

Even though he lives to be a grandfather, and the protagonist of the first forty-one chapters of the fifty-four-chapter novel, the point is registered that the beautiful exist at a critical point of cosmic dynamism. Murasaki, Prince Genji's official concubine pointed out as a feminine ideal, inspires the awe of the narrator who reflects that she had 'been a remote and lofty symbol of all that was admirable.'[16] The general tenor of the observation suggests that this is actually the observation of Yugiri, her stepson who is enraptured by her. On her deathbed, her beauty and charm burns even brighter, beyond description:

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[14] Ibid., 207.
[15] *Genji*, 17.
[16] Ibid., 640.

> Though very thin, she was more beautiful than ever – one would not have thought it possible. *The fresh, vivacious beauty of other years had asked to be likened to the flowers of this earth, but now there was a delicate serenity that seemed to go beyond such similes.*[17]

The kind of dazzling charm described compares with that of Kaguya-hime in *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, which will subsequently come to focus. It is exactly this kind of charm that consumes Yugiri and compels him, in the presence of his father, Prince Genji, to lift the curtains off Murasaki's dead face in the dimness of the morning light:

> He lifted the curtains from Murasaki's face, making it seem that Genji had summoned him. In the dim morning twilight Genji had brought a lamp near Murasaki's dead face. He knew Yugiri was beside him, but somehow felt that to screen this beauty from his son's gaze would only add to the anguish.[18]

The sudden glare of female beauty at the point when it recedes from reach drives Genji to ignore the bar to his son, regarding his concubine's compellingly charming visage. But it strikes one that Murasaki is accorded the heroine status more by her being the ideal wife/woman than by being a beauty as such, though that she is charming is undeniable.[19] Genji's main concern is to have his son witness the brightly burning beauty of Murasaki, rather than to have him witness her death. It is no surprise one should read that Yugiri rates her above his principal wife, Kumoinokari, whom he describes as 'rather ordinary'

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[17] Ibid., 768. Emphasis is mine.

[18] Ibid., 770.This episode perhaps derives its significance from Buddhist tradition of staring at the corpse.

[19] This can possibly be attributed to the fact that Murasaki Shikibu names the heroine after herself and therefore could be argued that she, the author, attempted to embody in Murasaki, the character, her own ideal of the Heian wife/woman beyond beauty and charm. The ideals among others include woman's capacity to contain jealousy , artistic/poetic refinement and motherly/wifely obedience and loyalty, essentially a Confucian ethic. Even so, the description of these qualities do little to make Murasaki the character mundane and cosmically stable:

> Murasaki was now busy being grandmother to the royal children. She did nothing that might have left her open to charges of bad judgment. Hers was a perfection, indeed, that was somehow ominous. It aroused forebodings. The evidence is that such people are not meant to have long lives. Genji had known many women and had known what a rarity she was.

Ibid., 644-645. For more on the Heian feminine ideal, see Morris, 295.

even though she is certainly pretty and pleasing enough.[20] Just as Genji is Murasaki Shikibu's embodiment of the masculine ideal, Murasaki the heroine encapsulates the Heian ideal of the feminine, and all the more to make her superfeminine. Ironically, she is the comforter when she needs to be comforted. At the time when she is lying in bed, ill, agonized and short of breath, she strives to sooth Genji: 'She would have no regrets if she were to die, but she did not want it seem that she did not care.'[21] But it is also at such times that her beauty flashes powerfully:

> Since she was in bed with her hair spread about her, it was not quick to dry. It was smooth and without a suggestion of a tangle to the furthest ends. Her skin was so lovely, so white that it almost seemed iridescent, as if a light were shining through. She was very beautiful and as fragile as the shell of a locust.[22]

This same treatment can also be seen with the Uji Princesses thriving away from the capital. This peripheral setting, injecting an arcadian, though melancholy air, to the end-piece of *Genji,* provides another opportunity of charm at the edge, and as such, poignantly sharpened and enhanced. Arguably, the Uji chapters revolve around the gloomy precipice of life itself. Charm, as a potent spell, intermingles with the tragedy that hangs over these episodes.

The beautiful daughters of the Eighth Prince, Genji's brother, except Nakanokimi to some extent, are trapped in the precipice. Oigimi, the eldest and later parent figure to Nakanokimi, imbues Kaoru, Genji's son, with adoration. Partly, it is her strife to make Nakanokimi a substitute for herself and object of Kaoru's obsessive love that edges her towards her death. She is described as a 'fragile figure.'[23] For the same reason, she is

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[20]Ibid., 615.
[21]Ibid., 660.
[22]Ibid., 661.
[23]Ibid., 934.

quintessentially charming and this is even starkly accentuated on her deathbed, by which side Kaoru was rooted for his love for her. As she fades away, Kaoru cannot help but merely regard Oigimi's beauty slipping out of his fingers:

> She became the more sadly beautiful the longer he gazed at her, and the more difficult to relinquish. Though her hands and arms were as thin as shadows, the fair skin was still smooth. The bedclothes had been pushed aside. In soft white robes, she was so fragile a figure that one might have taken her for a doll whose voluminous clothes hid the absence of a body. Her hair not so thick as to be nuisance, flowed down over her pillow, the luster as it had always been. Must such beauty pass, quite leave this world? The thought was not to be endured. She had not taken care of herself in her long illness, and yet she was far more beautiful than the sort of maiden who, not for a moment unaware that someone might be looking at her, she is for ever primping and preening. The longer he looked at her, the greater was the anguish.[24]

In the same manner as his father, Genji, did before him with the dying Murasaki, Kaoru witnesses beauty in the form of Oigimi literally 'fading away like a flower':

> Turning up the light, he brought it to the dead lady's face. She lay as if sleeping, her face still hidden by a sleeve, as beautiful as ever. If only he could go on gazing at her as the shell of a locust.[25]

This episode whets Kaoru's love for her other sisters, most notably Ukifune, the unrecognized daughter of the Eighth Prince. Of the three sisters, indeed in the whole of *Genji*, there is no character whose being is so enigmatic as Ukifune's. First, as an offspring of the Eighth Prince, the latter does not own her. Her mother is married to a country person, the governor of Hitachi, who, however, never took up paternal obligations to her. She is the two Princesses' look-alike, and this more so considering that she appears at the point when Oigimi had just died; she appears as an opportune incarnation of Oigimi's spirit. Nakanokimi observes that she was the 'very image' of her as to be the artist's exact reproduction.[26]

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[24]Ibid., 935.
[25]Ibid., 936.
[26]Ibid., 990-991.

This theme of charm and the brink is an aesthetic stand that runs through the works of Kawabata. There is the charming, delicate female figure in 'One Arm,' the fragile child figure in 'The Izu Dancer' and the susceptible Komako and Yoko in *Snow Country*. The motif of a sibling in the provincial periphery is also explicit in *The Old Capital*, as can be seen in the cases of Uji Princesses.

2.6. The Transmigrative Female Figure

Ukifune's life, as an elusive replica of the Uji Princesses, mainly Oigimi, pervades more than half of the Uji chapters. Kaoru hears of her and at once he is a 'helpless captive of yearning,'[27] and hopes that in her he would repossess the image of Oigimi. It comes almost as a wish fulfilled when Nakanokimi confirms the possibility of the fulfillment. Kaoru whispers: 'If I could just have a statue or a picture of her, and set out offerings before it.'[28] Nakanokimi's reply comes more as a wish-fulfilling quassi-magical pronouncement, than a revelation of a sister secreted away in the provinces:

> She at length took pity on him, convinced that he had indeed been unable to forget [about Oigimi], and came a little nearer.
> 'This image you speak of reminds me of something. Something very strange.'[29]

Perhaps another tenable argument is that Murasaki Shikibu probably deferred the appearance of Ukifune during the lifetime of Oigimi in the *Genji* for the purpose of protracting and enhancing the drama of the narrative. The general effect is that Ukifune strikes one as a shadow than as an independent being; an incarnate image filling in the gap created, and left, by Oigimi. This slicing of the character runs parallel to Komako-

[27] Ibid., 992.
[28] Ibid., 989.
[29] Ibid., 990.

Yoko scenario in *Snow Country,* and so the argument holding that Ukifune stands as a shadow concurs with Miyoshi's on Komako-Yoko literary relationship.[30]

Kaoru prefers to comprehend Ukifune's present being as a confirmation of a bond between her and him in a previous existence. He tells the nun at Uji: 'Tell her, if you will, please, that there must be a bond between us. How else are we to account for this meeting?'[31] To him, Ukifune can be said to be significant in two major ways. One, that their present meeting is a matter of affinity nurtured in a previous form of existence, and that it is being confirmed by the meeting. Second, not only is the bond confirmed, but also that Ukifune seems to be Murasaki Shikibu's coincidental surrogate for Oigimi in Kaoru's eyes. But in as much as the beautiful Oigimi eluded his grasp, Ukifune is as well an elusive embodiment of the former. That Kaoru is conscious of the illusion of Ukifune is evident. As he is about to be shown Ukifune, he is all anxious to see the memory of his first love and just then a poem springs up in his mind:

> 'The permanent loan, if you please, of useful image,
> A handy memento, to take away the gloom'
>
> 'To float away downstream afresh at each atonement
> And yet to have [the memento] for ever at your side?[32]

This significance of Ukifune can also be deduced from the words of Nakanokimi, who as well perceives her as a statue of Oigimi and ponders to herself: 'She would like to have him [Kaoru] see *this* image.'[33] As a memento, Ukifune would have to remain as such, only serving to prod on the spirit of Oigimi in Kaoru's mind.

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[30]See Literature Review in Chapter One, 17.
[31]Ibid., 1012.
[32] Ibid.,1029.
[33]Ibid., 1028. Emphasis is in the original.

Ukifune becomes further problematic when one day she mysteriously disappears. To some, like Ukifune's maidservant, she had departed for the land of the dead. The same impression is also given by Kaoru, though he would rather not believe she was dead.[34] There are those, like her mother, who habour the speculation that she had been spirited away by a mischievous fox spirit or some other force.[35] Trying to trace his relation and tribulation with the Uji sisters, Kaoru gravitates towards the original figure animating the other sisters:

> Always he came to the same conclusion: Oigimi would have had the whole of his affection. He would not have taken a royal Princess [his principal wife is a Princess] for his bride. Indeed, if the emperor had heard of the events at Uji [his association with countrified Uji sisters] he would probably not have wanted him for a son-in-law. She was the source of all his sorrow, the lady at the bridge [Oigimi].
> His thoughts jumped to Nakanokimi, and presently the jumble of longing and resentment and frustration began to seem ridiculous even to him; and so he moved on to the third Uji sister, who had died such a terrible death.[36]

If Oigimi, as a charming lady, is elusive to Kaoru because of her own scheme to evade him, then Ukifune is as elusive to him because of the mystery in which her being is steeped. Arguably then, Ukifune is a dramatized metaphor of the elusiveness of Oigimi. This is the significant understanding he comes to:

> So his thoughts always returned to the same family. As he sank deeper in memories of Uji, of his strange, cruel ties with the Uji family, drake flies than which no creatures are more fragile and *insubstantial*, were flitting back and forth in the evening light
> 'I see the drake fly, take it up in my hand.
> Ah, here it is, I say – and it is gone.'
> And he added softly, as always: *Here, and perhaps not here at all*'[37]

Kaoru's musing on the female enigma portrays him as now a seasoned man, equipped with the maxim that a search for an ideal woman may be an endless endeavour, if not

[34]Ibid., 1106, 1114 –1115.
[35]Ibid., 1100-1101.
[36]Ibid., 1122.
[37]Ibid., 1130. Emphasis is mine.

futile. This maxim is confirmed in the last chapters succeeding this enlightenment, when Ukifune takes a step towards becoming a nun, effectively barring Kaoru (and Prince Niou, the other contender for her love) from her. This eternal unattainability is registered in terms of religious convention: by becoming a nun she effectively retreats from the worldly affairs.

2.7. Traditional Japanese Theatre Arts

There are predominantly three forms of theatre arts in Japan: ***Noh***, ***Kabuki***, and ***Bunraku***. ***Kabuki*** and ***Bunraku*** took distinct shapes in the 15th century out of the emerging population of the merchant townsmen.[38] Owing to this origin, as a form of entertainment for the Edo commoners, ***Kabuki*** is characteristically *'extravagant'* and '*unrestrained*,' and as such was denied the nobility's seal of taste. For this reason, at least up to the Second World War, it never was reputable as compared to ***Noh***, which had largely encapsulated the Japanese art of understatement and suggestion.[39] Earle Ernst notes the trait of versatility in ***Kabuki*** and in this, he finds a reason why ***Kabuki*** has never attained the status of ideal medium for 'Japanese cultural expression':

> But this requisite pattern for survival [versatility] also made the Kabuki *a theatre lacking precise dramatic form*, embodying various styles of acting, irregular, racy, violent, and, at times, sensational and cheap. The Kabuki does not represent the purest form of Japanese cultural expression.[40]

Tracing the sources of Japanese prose fiction, in *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Tradition*, Rimer altogether ignores the significance of ***Kabuki*** and ***Bunraku*** but

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[38] Then the Japanese society was stratified as: the aristocratic nobility at the apex, the military class (*samurai*), the merchant townsmen (***chonin***), and farmers at the lowest level.

[39] See Masakasu Gunji's *Kabuki* (Tokyo, New York and London: Kodansha International, 1985), 13.

[40] *The Kabuki Theatre* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1974), 2. Other critics have also noted that ***kabuki*** and ***Bunraku*** are essentially arts of spectacle with little literary merits. See for example Keene in his 'Introduction' to Masakasu Gunji's work, Op. Cit., 10; Ernst, 1; and Toita, 80.

extendedly examines the place of ***Noh***. This tacit statement of limited influence of the former two stage arts is tenable. Even were what might be thought relevant here – the idealized female role, ***onnagata*** – to be taken, a contradiction would have to be incurred. This kind of idealized female is too bold and ornate to be likened to Kawabata's female figures, which the preceding chapter noted as being faint and insubstantial. Extravagance and lack of restraint characterizing the two theatre forms counters the overriding Japanese preference for the faint and fragile – the suggested – and accounts for their little influence on modern Japanese prose fiction. The qualities of extravagance and restraint in stage arts were strongly advocated for by the renowned 14th/15th century ***Noh*** artist, Zeami Motokiyo, who stressed that:

> In representing the mysterious (***yugen***) he [the actor] must not forget the principle of energy. When the body is in violent action, the hands and feet must move as though by stealth. When the feet are in lively motion, the body must be held in quietness.[41]

2.8. The *Noh* Theatre

Genji runs on the Heian ***mono no aware*** aesthetic in the court. With time, significance of other aesthetic pursuits became popular as well. This is demonstrated by the emergence of the ***Noh*** theatre, the classical progenitor of the other forms of Japanese theatre arts.[42] As the Heian artistic expression drew on ***mono no aware***, ***Noh*** was and still is largely underpinned by three aesthetic components: ***yugen***, ***monomane*** and audience manipulation.[43] The first two are relevant to this chapter and an extended examination of

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[41] Arthur Waley's paraphrase in his *The No*[*h*] *Plays of Japan* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1998). Evidently, the paradox in Zeami's advise is clearly reminiscent of Zen advocacy of (un)differentiation.

[42] This does not mean that ***Noh*** itself came into being without precedents. For the forerunners of ***Noh***, see for example Toyoichiro Nogami, *Zeami and his Theories on Noh,* trans Ryozo Matsumoto (Tokyo: Tsunetaro, Hinoki Shoten, 1955), 1-11.

[43] ***Monomane*** is generally translated as the art of imitation, whereas ***yugen*** generally implies a mystery that is 'indistinct' but is conspicuously perceptible. Matsumoto translates it as the 'technique of imitation.' Since this translation derives from Zeami's actual work ('Chapter II: Items [matters] Concerning

them is important in understanding *The Old Capital*. It is essential here to preface the relevance of ***Noh*** theatre, with a general description of these two components as a way of shedding light on their influence on the four texts by Kawabata.

2.9. *Yugen*

Yugen is the Kamakura period's counterpart of Heian ***mono no aware***. Its epitome is the *Noh* theatre, which arrived at its aesthetic pinnacle in the Muromachi period, in the hands of Kanami and Zeami Motokiyo, father and son respectively.[44] ***Yugen*** has a range of implications rather than one, all pointing towards a mystery that is perceptible but indefinable.[45] Arthur Waley describes it as ''what lies beneath the surface'; the subtle as opposed to the obvious; the hint as opposed to statement.'[46] Ryozo Matsumoto translates it as transcendental phantasm. It is ***yugen*** on which typical *Noh* thrives and absence of it hollows the performance. How is ***yugen*** realized in ***Noh***? The answer to this is as good as the meaning of ***yugen*** itself. Since it can only be evoked through the general effect of a range of implications, its realization is also necessarily pegged to a conglomeration of *Noh* formal aspects. Tyler puts it thus: '***Yugen*** arises, when it does, like the scent of a flower: from the *harmony of countless perfectly realized, cellular forms.'* [47] Effectively, ***yugen*** is the '*life*' or *'soul'* of ***Noh***; Zeami metaphorically describes it as the skin of ***Noh***. As it will be shown shortly, there are some of the formal aspects of ***Noh*** which prevail

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Imitation' of *The Instructions on Flower*) - which, Matsumoto notes, is constantly described as the 'Bible of No[h]'; See Ibid., 36 and the translator's note - this translation of the term shall be appropriated.

[44]The orthographical variations of the names of these artists are, Kwanami, Kan'ami for Kanami also known as Kiyotsugu Yusaki; and Seami, Ze'ami for Zeami, also known as Fujiwaka. The role of the latter is perhaps of greater significance. Zeami, with the influence of his father, wrote extensively on *Noh*, stipulating the essence of ideal *Noh* and *Noh* artistry. Toyoichiro Nogami, Op. Cit., 31-34, has catalogued 24 of Zeami's works; Nogami paraphrase Zeami's ideas on *Noh*.

[45]Tyler, 18-19; Waley, 22; and Nogami, 53-54.

[46] Ibid., 22.

[47]Ibid., 18. Emphasis is mine.

upon Kawabata's art and which partly problematize his female characters. Form in ***Noh*** is of primary significance and meaning is subservient to it.[48] Even so, these formal aspects are not important in themselves, but are inevitable communicational odds and ends subserving the invoking of ***yugen***.[49]

2.10. *Monomane*

Invariably, Japanese ***Noh*** scholars and specialists in Japanese culture alike, translate ***monomane*** as 'imitation.'[50] It does not merely entail representation of stereotype, but a combination of basic stock subjects suggested by the specific ***Noh*** mask, and the actor's 'in-born talent' rather than whimsical imagination.[51]

There are five stock subjects of *Noh* by which its categories are derived: god, man, woman, lunatic (mad-woman) and demon. Zeami pays particular attention to the category of woman ***Noh***, also known as wig plays. He taxes the actor with the most need for ***yugen***. Nogami phrases his words thus:

> As the real characters in the second act are women [in the case of a two-act No], the presentation in the first act should be natural. And in practically all of these wig-dramas the woman appears first disguised as a lowly country woman who meets a priest or other wayfarers. In spite of the humble condition of these country folks, the first act performers are required to reflect the dignity worthy of their birth that is to be revealed in the second act. The kinds of women which the second-act-players represent are varied; they may be broadly classified into such people as empress, princess, court lady, and such a rather lowly stationed person as the dancing-maid.[52]

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[48]Ibid., 17-19; in other words, as Tyler puts it, meaning is not an issue, but the creation of a profound sense of mystery. It will be recalled that Buddhism, at least of Zeami's time, is generally averse to intellection which would have to be entailed in comprehension of meanings.

[49]Ibid., 18.

[50]See note 43 above.

[51] Nogami, 39, 60. From Zeami, Nogami, for example, records that an old man should not be represented 'merely with bent back and knees or shrunken frame, he [the actor] is simply reducing him [the old man] to an ugly being deficient in grace ...,' Ibid.

[52]Ibid., 43-44.

With this in mind, it is clear that ***Noh*** has some correspondence with the characterization in *The Old Capital*, especially as relates to the roles of Chieko and Naeko. But the interest underlying this focus on ***Noh*** need not be limited to wig-plays, but also on form within ***Noh*** theatre, including, to a limited extent, the spectacular aspects of the performance.

2.11. Roles in *Noh*

Noh mainly has three roles: the ***shite***, ***waki*** and the musicians (or chorus). ***Shite*** is the principle role and focal point on the ***Noh*** stage, usually masked. In a two-part play, ***shite*** usually assume two faces: in the first part s/he appears as real human, then known as ***maeshite***; the role in part two, then known as ***nochijite***, becomes an incarnation of an apparition.[53] This must especially be remembered in relation to *The Old Capital*. Most commonly the ***nochijite*** is the apparition of ***maeshite***. ***Waki*** takes up the assistantship of the ***shite***, a function which ranges from being a witness, to being a stage narrator regaling the audience with the ***shite's*** situation leading up to his or her appearance on stage.

2.12. Two *Noh* Plays

i) *Sought- for Tomb*[54]: Love Dilemma and Ghost Image

This play is set in Ikuta, a wooded country. Two young men, Sasada-Onoko and Chino-no-Masurao, contest for Unai-Otome's love.[55] Torn between the two men, her dilemma

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[53]Waley, 25. *Shite* and *waki* may have companions, rather than assistants, when they appear on stage. *Shite's* companions, are known as ***tsure***, while those of ***waki*** are the ***wakizure***.

[54]A translation of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Scientific Research, *Japanese Noh Drama: Ten Plays, Vol. II* (Tokyo: the Japan Society for the Promotion of Scientific Research, 1959), 73-85; henceforth this corporate author will simply referred to as JSPSR. It appears here as Appendix 1.

[55]This recalls Chieko's/Naeko's and the two lovers in *The Old Capital*; Ukifune and her two lovers, Kaoru and Prince Niou, in *Genji*.

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was to be decided in a shooting contest in which a 'mandarin duck' was the target. The contest yields no decisive outcome as the two young men hit the same duck, which subsequently dies. Sad that the duck had left behind lonesome its partner – and therefore a sin – Unai-Otome eventually drowns herself.[56] To compound this sin, each of her two lovers each stabs himself to death over her grave. Her sin does not, however, end with her death since she would always have to undergo the perpetual retributive cycle of birth and rebirth. To assuage this, her ghost prevails upon the monk (*waki*) to pacify her 'wandering soul … that the spirit gain enlightenment, released from chains of life and death …'[57]

Shite of the play is an incarnation of Unai-Otome. As ***maeshite***, Unai-Otome is disguised as a rustic and hardy Village Maiden, picking herbs together with other village girls (***tsure***).[58] At this juncture the monk, together with his assistants (***wakizure***), happens to be passing by on their way to the capital. After a while of interaction, Unai-Otome reveals her true identity and just then, she vanishes. The genesis of her woes in death is the tragic quest for her love by Sasada-Onoko and Chinu-no-Masurao. But Unai-Otome can not be said to be insensitive, as such, to the two's heartfelt love, but that her choice of one would inevitably bring heartbreak to the other:

> Unai thought that if she should give her heart to the one, the other would be embittered, so she would yield neither to one nor the other.[59]

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[56]The mandarin ducks are ubiquitously paired and so strongly suggests love and marriage; see footnote 1 in JSPSR, Ibid., 80. It will be remembered that Ukifune also supposedly drowns herself.

[57]Ibid., 81.

[58]Naeko in *The Old Capital* is as well a countrified girl, living in the mountain woods and engaged in rustic daily pursuits.

[59]This same element hovers over Ukifune-Kaoru-Niou web of relationship in *Genji*. A variation in *The Old Capital* found in Chieko's attempt to placate Hideo's love for her (Chieko) with her twin sister.

The express narrative in the play dwells on Unai-Otome's restless death and her ghost's quest for karmic release. But what must be emphasized here is the deceptive mirror image of her. The anthropomorphic presentation as ***maeshite*** does not ultimately conceal the fact that she is essentially a ghost, which is confirmed, ironically, by the truly named apparition: Unai-Otome (the ***nochijite***). Unai-Otome is no more an apparition than the Village Maiden.

ii) *Ikuta*[60]: Foundling Theme and Quest for Family Member

Ikuta has the same setting as *Sought-for Tomb*: the woods of Ikuta. In the priest's (***waki's***), exposition it is revealed that the ten-year old boy (***shite***), was actually a foundling:

> … and as for this child here; - once when Honen was on a visit to the Temple of Kamo he saw a box lying under a trailing fir-tree; and when he raised the lid, what should he find but a lovely man-child one year old. It did not seem to be more than a common foundling, but my master [Honen] in his compassion took the infant home with him.[61]

As an abandoned orphan, the boy knew neither his father nor mother, but the latter is finally found. His father, Taira-no-Atsumori, it is established had died in a battle in the past. The boy sets out in quest of the father even if it were just in a dream.[62] This quest begins with daily visits for a week, to Kamo Shrine, where the Priest asks him to perform a ritual prayer in order that he may see his father:

> **Boy**:
> ….
> And the God's kindness deep
> As its unfathomed waters. Show to me,

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[60]This is Arthur Waley's translation in *The No*[h] *Plays of Japan,* 45-50. It is reproduced here as Appendix 2.

[61] Ibid.,45. Chieko in *The Old Capital* thinks herself to have been a foundling.

[62]Waley, Ibid., 45.

Though were [it] but in a dream,
My fathers face and form.[63]

In the course of the prayer, the boy has a dream in which a voice instructs him thus: 'If you are wanting, though it were but in a dream, to see your father's face, go down from here to Ikuta in the country of Settsu.'[64]

In the specified location, the questing boy's wish is fulfilled. Atsumori is found inside a hut (though but as an incarnation, if not in a dream). Whether the father's form appears as an incarnation or in a dream is the moot question: Ikuta is a corporeal setting, but the expectation is that a dream would most likely set itself in an ethereal one. But the latter cannot be easily dismissed since the boy was in no uncertain terms about how he wanted to see the form of his beloved father: in a dream.

The play ends with the fading away of the form of Atsumori, subsequently vanishing:

Chorus:
....
And weeping, weeping,
Dropped dropped the child's hand.
He has faded; he dwindles
Like the dew from rush-leaves
Of hazy meadows.
His form has vanished.[65]

This ***Noh*** background is significant in two ways. In *The Old Capital* the process of the search for a family member is an incidental part of the narrative scheme, as with *Ikuta*.

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[63] Ibid., 46. Chieko's quest for her sibling begins with prayer visits to Otabisho, though she says her intention in the visits was to pray for her adoptive parent's welfare. It is by these visits that Naeko literally materializes.

[64] Ibid., 46.

[65] Ibid., 50. Naeko at the end of *The Old Capital*, after paying visit to Chieko's foster parents, 'fades away' much in a similar manner.

The ***Noh*** roles of ***maeshite*** and **nochijite** have parallels in the forms of Chieko and Naeko respectively in the same novel.

2.13. The Polymorphous Character of the Female Figure in Japanese Folklore

Kawabata translated *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*[66] from classic to modern Japanese. Even though he was not often radically overt on his interest on Japanese folklore, it is presumed here that the particular attention he had on *Bamboo Cutter* reflects a continuum on the nature of the tale and that of his works. But even so, Kawabata exhibits, as already indicated above, a revision of Japanese aesthetic outlets in *The Old Capital*, which came much later in his literary career.

2.14. *Bamboo Cutter* and Ethereality of Female Charm

The 11th century *Genji* refers to *Bamboo Cutter*, implying that the latter must have been already current among the Heian literati. The tale also runs on the foundling motif. Kaguya-hime, the putative daughter of the bamboo cutter, Sanuki-no-Miyatsuko, has descended from her ethereal home in the City of the Moon, and lodged in the hollow of a bamboo stalk thriving in the mountains, whence she is retrieved by Miyatsuko. With time:

> The child [Kaguya-hime] shot up under their [bamboo cutter and his old wife's] loving care. Before three months had passed she stood tall as a grown woman, and her parents decided to celebrate her coming of age .... The child had a purity of features quite without equal anywhere in the world, and the house was filled with a light that left no corner dark. If ever the old man was in poor spirits or was in pain, just to look at the child would make them stop. All anger too would melt away.[67]

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[66]Trans. Donald Keene (Tokyo, New York and London: Kodansha International, 1998), hereafter *Bamboo Cutter*. Incontrovertible authorship of the tale has not been found.

[67] *Bamboo Cutter*, 13, 17. In classical Japanese tales and mythology, it is hard to separate (divine) beauty and vibrant light: the shining Prince Genji, the iridescent Murasaki, the dazzling Amaterasu, etc.

Having grown up to a marriageable age, Kaguya-hime becomes a highly sought-after treasure among men, low rank and high rank alike. To help the suitors wade their way through to her, she devises a scheme where each of the five determined suitors was to set out in search of the object she herself determines. From the very outset, she does not acknowledge her divine descent. Arguably, her initial evasiveness on this question inevitably leads her to demand objects supposedly ordinary.[68] The special items are meant to be symbols of the depth and sincerity of each of the suitors' love for her. In the earthly realm, at any rate, the objects she requires of the suitors are either mythical or paradoxical impossibilities, though the suitors do not seem to take this into consideration, but only that the requirements were 'difficult':

> Kaguya-hime declared: 'I should like Prince Ishizukuri to obtain for me from India the stone begging-bowl of Buddha. Prince Kuromachi is to go to the Eastern Sea called Horai and fetch me a branch of the tree that grows there, with roots of silver and trunk of gold, whose fruits are pearls. The next gentleman is to bring me a roe made of the fur of Chinese fire-rats. I ask Otomo, the Grand Counselor, please to fetch me the jewel that shines five colors, found in a dragon's neck. And Isonokami, the Middle Counselor, should present me with the swallow's easy delivery charm.[69]

The rest of the tale relates what each of the suitors do in search of the item each is required of. Prince Ishizukuri, Prince Kuromachi and Minister of the Right, all bring imitations and thus lose their suits. The other two ultimately find themselves in ridiculous situations, and Kaguya-hime, in this sense, turns out as their *femme fatale*. As her adoptive father observes, Kaguya-hime is a divinity in the form of a woman and the charming beauty that she possesses, at least as *is* attributed to her, is necessarily ethereal.

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[68]Ibid., 25.
[69]Ibid., 25, 30.

Being ethereal, it – and therefore she – cannot be sullied nor savoured by the earthly, the opposite polarity.

These two polarities, earthly and ethereal, in one way are in are in a continuum, and in another are distinctly unbridgeable polarities. Kaguya-hime descends from the moon as a child, is raised by a couple, and lives among men, limitedly as a woman (who is partly conscious of the Confucian obligation to 'her' father) subject to the vagaries of love and life without parental assurance.[70]

Even so, that there is an unbridgeable chasm between Kaguya-hime and the world (read her suitors) cannot be gainsaid. The fact that the items she devises are practically unobtainable (unless the men had similar claim to the same ethereal world as herself) is confirmation of this great divide, unbeknown to the suitors. The requisite impossibilities are each a metaphor for the unattainability of Kaguya-hime, the beautiful maiden, occularly known only to her supposed parents. Taking into consideration that the things she deems ordinary but special, are – as they stand – mythical-cum-paradoxical impracticalities, Kaguya-hime is as well an impossibility, and so largely a figment of each of the suitor's imagination. After all, none of them except the Emperor has ever actually seen her, apart from what they gather from the general verbal circulation.[71] When the Emperor espies her, she struck him as being 'so lovely she shed radiance around her,' true to the characteristic nature of traditional Japanese divine beauty.[72] But try as he can to grab and force her to the palace, she literally transforms herself into a

[70]See Ibid., 23.
[71]See Ibid., 21. An exception to this is the suitor Emperor who actually sets his eyes on her.
[72]Ibid., 109.

shadow. Subsequently, after a ridiculous show of resistance by the earthly, is spirited away by the men from the moon, presumably to the City of the Moon.

What is to be underscored here is the veneer of charm that mediates the paradoxical distance placed between Kaguya-hime and the men in quest of her, the conventions of achieving the end notwithstanding. As observed, Kaguya-hime is largely a figment of her suitors' imaginations. In this nature she is as much unattainable as the fantastic female figure is unattainable in 'One Arm.' Naeko in *The Old Capital* is also such an ideal incarnation, just as much as Yoko is in *Snow Country*.

2.15. The Legend of a Dancing-Girl

Lafcadio Hearn, the early interpreter of Japan to the English-speaking world, adept at old Japanese legends and folklore, albeit with romantic inflection, recorded towards the end of the 19th century a tale about a pre-geisha dancing-girl.[73] This tale involves a young dancing-girl and a young art student who is journeying on foot through wooded mountains. The art student, alone and unfamiliar with the route to his destination, loses his way as dusk is drawing in. After a while of desperation in the wilderness, his eyes chance upon a light and he makes his way towards it. The light comes from a simple hut within which dwells a strange young woman, from whom the student hopes to find lodging assistance.

In her hospitality, the young woman first welcomes him with water to wash his feet and a towel to dry them, after which '[a] cotton ***zabuton*** was laid for him to kneel upon, and a

[73]See his *Glimpses of the Unfamiliar Japan* (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle, 1976), 534-552.

brazier set before him.'[74] As the student settles down, he begins to note the essence of her striking charm: a little older than him, though yet glowing with charming beauty of youth. It occurs to him that she is just a girl, though apparently not a peasant. The girl gives up her bed for him and though soon asleep, is awakened by the enchanting lone-dancing of the powerfully beautiful girl. This dancing, deep in the night, infuses an ethereal quality in the figure of the girl: 'her beauty in that lonely time and place appeared almost supernatural. … [A]nd the more he watched, the more the witchery of her grace grew upon him.'[75] Eventually, she relates the story of her life to him and he finds out that she was a renowned beautiful dancer in the capital, where she mysteriously disappeared, having ran away with her lover. The latter died before long, leaving her lonely and desolate in the mountains. Her dancing, initially meant to entertain him in his life, is now a commemorative act to please his soul.

The following morning as he prepares to depart, he tries in vain to repay the young woman's kindness to him.[76] After a lapse of years, both the young woman and the student grow old and the former resurfaces at the residence of the old man, now a famous painter in the City of the Emperors. His servants however impede her from seeing him though they subsequently let her to him. She relates to him the harder times she had come through and fame that no longer attended her in the City of the Emperors. She has sought the old painter in order to have him paint a portrait of herself as a dancer in her youth, to remain as a keepsake for her dead lover. There is a motif of relapse of youth that echoes

[74]Ibid., 537. Henceforth, the tale teems with the archetypal elements as in 'The Izu Dancer.'
[75]Ibid., 541.
[76]The student-narrator in 'The Izu Dancer' attempts in a similar manner to repay the woman who helped him with lodging.

the versatile female character in 'The Izu Dancer.' The aged woman is said to have besought the old painter to revive her youth:

> 'Then indeed all that I hoped and prayed for [to have her youth and beauty immortalized for the sake of her dead lover's soul] may be done! Since he [the old painter] remembers my poor youth, I beseech my lord to paint me, not as I am now, but as he saw me when I was not old and, as it has pleased him generously to say, not uncomely. O *Master make me young again!* Make me young that I may seem beautiful to the soul of him for whose sake I, the unworthy, beseech this! He will see the Master's work: he will forgive me that I can no longer dance.'[77]

The next day the old woman came to collect herself in youth, the old painter's servants were instructed to surreptitiously trail her in order to find her dwelling. The painter later finds her dead in her humble dwelling.

The archetypal motifs in this tale related by Hearn comprise three elements, among others: the dancing-girl figure in a geographical peripheral area, the relapse of the dancer's youth, and charm attending the dancing-girl, all which 'The Izu Dancer' consists in. But there is also a reality lying behind 'The Izu Dancer.' If the art student in the tale related by Hearn encounters the dancing-girl in the course of his travel, Kawabata conceived 'The Izu Dancer' in the form of the actual person of a young girl, part of an entertainment troupe that he met while traveling through the Izu peninsula during his time in high school.[78]

2.16. Conclusion

The preceding survey of the basic literary materials constituting the four selected texts by Kawabata, considered both those which largely inhere in Kawabata's formal aspects, and

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[77]Ibid., 548. Quotations are in the original.
[78]See Nobel Foundation, 73; and Ueda's *Modern Japanese Writers*, 185.

to a limited extent, those which are appropriated as part of the content. *Snow Country*, *The Old Capital*, 'The Izu Dancer' and 'One Arm' all exhibit indebtedness to these Japanese literary traditions, including Japanese folklore which, over time, have infiltrated the modern Japanese literary art.

What was revealed, as the essential strands in this relationship, especially as they inform the female characters in the four works of Kawabata, is that the techniques, conventions and roles in the repertoire possess their own significances, not necessarily imported by Kawabata, wholesale from the sources.

From the very outset, the technique of non-defined relationship of phenomena intervening during the *haiku* moment was examined, with an analysis of two *haiku*. Also, the technique attending select feminine figures in *Genji* is reflected in the four works of Kawabata; that is, the placement of paradoxical distance between the figures and the masculine figures in pursuit of them. Most important was the use of distance and proximity in the relationship involving these female and male characters. The chapter also looked at the ***Noh*** conventions, involving the use of apparitions and foundling motif, as is especially echoed in *The Old Capital*.

Essentially, the chapter set out on a familiarization course on the selected texts' repertoire. The next chapter closely examines the strategic layout of this repertoire.

CHAPTER THREE: CONFIGURATIONS OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER

3.1. Introduction

This chapter centres on the form, layout and outline of the female characters in the four texts. The argument starts with a look at the settings of these characters in the respective texts – nature and other attributes in it - as materials informative of the forms of the characters. The chapter endeavours to outline the rarefied and ethereal worlds of the characters, including appeal to fairy forms.

3.2. The Female Character and Nature

'The Izu Dancer' shares some similarities with the legend of the dancing-girl. The protagonist viewpoint in the short story is a student just as that in the legend. The charming dancer in the legend also performs kindly acts to the student in a similar manner as the dancing girl of Izu does to the student-narrator.

In part two of 'The Izu Dancer', the dichotomy of worlds persists, with the narrator's on one side and the dancer's running distantly parallel despite physical closeness. But unlike in part one, the impalpable and largely synthesized figure of the dancer gradually becomes allied to actuality. The narrative thus tends closer to the informative circumstances described in the previous chapter: a poverty-stricken dance troupe with a child in their midst. The childly naivety of the dancer is further evident in her own words, while walking behind the narrator:

> "Students come to Oshima to swim, you know," the girl remarked to the young woman beside her.
> "In the summer, I suppose." I looked back
> She was flustered. "In the winter too," she answered in an almost inaudible little voice.
> "Even in winter?" I asked again.
> She flushed and nodded slightly, a serious expression on her face.
> "The child is crazy," the older woman laughed.[1]

Clearly, the dancer is inexperienced regarding swimming and season. Only summer as the more mature narrator understands augurs well with swimming, contrasting with the innocent position of the dancer, that winter as well is suitable for swimming. That she is also shy and prone to faulty observation is indicative of her being a child. The qualification 'little,' which is constantly used in reference to her does little, however, to project her as a child. It will be remembered that in *Genji*, beauty has a quality of vulnerableness or fragility and 'little' carries with it this kind of fragility. To be little implies a susceptibility to the larger, quashing forces implicit in the setting of the story, the vast and impersonal universe. Consider for example the mighty streak of lightning, the towering mountains, almost bottomless valleys and vast forests. 'Inaudible little voice,' a mark of coyness, augments the dancer's essential charm much less her child-likeness, for also in *Genji* coyness stands as an attribute of the beautiful.

The little dancer again resumes her performance of impersonal and benevolent acts as bringing tea in front of the narrator. Tea consumption is deceptively given a cursory treatment, being momentarily appropriated as a medium to elicit the dancer's kindly acts:

> As she came to me the teacup clattered in its saucer. She set it down sharply in an effort to save herself, but she succeeded only in spilling it.
> I was hardly prepared for confusion so extreme.[2]

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[1] Op Cit., 12-13.
[2] Ibid., 13.

Tea consumption is then relegated to the background and instead, the confusion occasioned by the tea context becomes the focal point. The hitherto unbridgeable chasm between the narrator's and the impalpable dancer's worlds is virtually diminished, as apparent affinity develops between them. The girl, described as such by the narrator, is again emerging as mature and capable of subtle communication with the narrator. Her strong, womanly consciousness of the narrator's presence explains her spilling tea. Herefrom, if the narrator had long developed an excitement about the girl, as he admits,[3] then the girl as well has sympathetic excitement in front of the narrator. Perhaps guilty of having betrayed her feelings towards him, in her anxiety as she brings tea, she 'wiped tensely at the tea.'[4] At this point, the initial scenery recurs though somewhat grimmer, with almost total effacement of the dancer's self, albeit substituted with a drum:

> Then, distant in the rain, I heard the slow beating of a drum. I tore open the shutters as if to wrench them from their grooves and leaned out of the window. *The drum beat seem to be coming nearer.... I closed my eyes and tried to concentrate on the drum, on where it might be, whether it could be coming this way.*[5]

Association of the dancer with the drum is initially established in part two.[6] Not only does the latter function of the drum polymorphically recall her, but also helps build up the atmosphere within which the dancer is to be independently perceived. Successively, from a single, slow sound of the drum, is heard the *samisen*, a woman's voice, then a loud

[3] See ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 14. Emphasis is mine.
[6] She is mentioned as the troupe's drum carrier. See Ibid., 12.

laughter, and in crescendo all momentarily drive up to a deafening and indulgent din.[7] The gay rowdiness, infested with human voices and instruments, is snapped and in the ensuing gap 'a shrill woman's voice came across the darkness like a crack of the whip.'[8]

The tension gripping the narrator as a result of the sudden silence is alleviated by the reassuring determination of the drum:

> At each drum beat I felt a surge of relief. "Ah, *she's still there.* Still there and playing the drum." And each time the beating stopped the silence seemed intolerable. It was as though I were being born under by the driving rain.[9]

The silence of the drum is as intolerable as the mutedness of the Izu dancer first encountered.[10] Equally, the presence of the drum beat is as good an assurance as the presence of the palpable Izu dancer. As a musical instrument, the drum helps build up the atmosphere and doubles up as an object filling in the outlined form of the dancer. At the close of this episode, the drum lapses into complete silence and so the dancer's (surrogate) figure vanishes, leaving the narrator in a state of emptiness; arguably, the frame of reference is drastically enlarged, within which she is swallowed up once again by the vastness of the impersonal universe:

> The rain stopped, the moon came out; the autumn sky, washed by the rain, shone crystalline into the distance. I thought for a moment of running out barefoot to look for her.[11]

She then becomes the 'little' dancer to be sought out in the vast universe.

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[7] Psychoanalysis might have its own reading of the narrator's compulsive fetishisation of the drum being worked up to climactic rowdiness, within the rainy and chaotic darkness.
[8] Ibid., 14.
[9] Ibid., 14-15.
[10] See Ibid., 9.
[11] Ibid., 15.

The succeeding episode unveils a more concrete Izu dancer, though briefly accompanied by the image-evoking drum which is not further developed. Her earlier driving presence is significantly blunted as the narration becomes more or less statement of observational fact. She is purged of her charming power, mainly by virtue of the apparent discovery of her undeniable childhood that instills a flat happiness in the narrator. This undeniable childhood conflictingly relates to the viewpoints of the old woman and tea-house keeper, who hint at a more mature person than 'a mere child.' Notably, it is only the narrator, out of all other characters, who equivocally perceives a manifestly enchanting maiden and a plain child, proceeding to detect his own observational error. On the strength of this admission, even his ultimate discovery of a child is guaranteed no sensorial integrity by the two women's observation about the girl, their overstatement taken into consideration. When the dancer spills tea, the old woman cries out in alarm: "Dear me. The child's come to a dangerous age…."[12] The 'dangerous age' strongly suggests that the dancer has come of age, a comment which strikes a chord in the narrator: 'The remark somehow startled me. I felt the excitement aroused by the old woman at the tea house begin to mount.'[13] By the end of the episode, the Izu dancer has assumed an even more definite form: a girl with a name – Kaoru - and tutelary restrictions, and unsuitably involved in the entertainment business.[14]

Despite the apparent baring of the Izu dancer, the image projected in episode five, in which there is a deliberate structural tendency to romance, is far-reaching. The dancer,

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[12] Ibid., 13
[13] Ibid.
[14] At least in the view of Eikichi, her elder brother, perhaps because of her youthful chronological age of thirteen.

forbidden the narrator's company perhaps because of the 'dangerous age,' is under the chaperonage of the old woman, but from which she more than once escapes. The first case of such escape is when she ostensibly goes to invite the narrator to a bath in which Chiyoko, her sister-in-law, is to wash his back. The spuriousness of this express motive is attested to by the narrative voice:

> Instead she stayed with me, and the two of us played checkers .... A model of propriety at first, sitting bolt upright and stretching out her hand to make play, she soon forgot herself and was leaning intently over the board. Her hair, so rich it seemed unreal, almost brushed against my chest. Suddenly she flushed crimson.[15]

That Chiyoko was to wash the narrator's back appears to be the dancer's prodder, an invitation in which the two enjoy a mutually understood clandestine romance. The romantic theme is carried on with the introduction of the *samisen* played by the coy dancer.[16] The theme is subsequently intensified in several other ways. First, the dancer persuades the narrator to read her a story (which is never actually read) but in the course of which a romantic description of her intervenes:

> I took up the book happily, a certain hope in my mind. Her head was almost at my shoulder as I started to read, and she looked up at me with a serious, intent expression, her eyes bright and unblinking. Her large eyes, almost black, were easily her best feature. The lines of the heavy lids were indescribably graceful. And her laugh was like a flower's laugh. A flower's laugh – the expression does not seem strained when I think of her.[17]

In the context, expectation of a story from the book is met with the charming description of the dancer herself. Therefore *no* story is ultimately known other than that which syntagmatically substitutes it: the story of the dancer, complementing the classical look

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[15] Ibid., 19-20.
[16] *Koto* and *Samisen* playing in *Genji*, apart from constituting artistic refinement, is invariably an instrument in whose sound romantic sentiment is conveyed or elicited in a lover.
[17] Ibid., 20-21.

appealed to at the beginning of the story. Her person and physical attributes again harden onto the conceived page of a story book supposedly read by the narrator; her materiality sets into a romantic narrative. When she resurfaces, full-bodied, she again performs the kindly acts and engages the prodder hints which have come to define their mutually understood clandestine romance:

> … and the little dancer turned my sandals so that I could step into them without twisting. She leaned out and gazed up at the clear sky. "*Ah, the moon is up*. And tomorrow we'll be in Shimoda. I *love* Shimoda. We'll say prayers for the baby, and mother will buy me *the comb* she promised, and *there are all sorts of things we can do after that. Will you take me to a movie?* [18]

The little dancer's utterances actually come during a moonlit midnight,[19] romantically apt, and when she could as well show her maidenly love to the narrator, as would be in a romantic movie. Suffice to say that both characters are communing in romantic intimacy, paradoxically in the company of the rest of the dance troupe.

These suggestive devices, together with the dancer's benignant acts run through episode five, by the end of which an affective bond between the dancer's and the narrator's worlds is strengthened. The precipitate appearance of the drum at the end, however, signals a final cleavage of the two worlds, the dancer and her world receding into impersonality and speechlessness:

> As we came to the pier I saw with a quick jump of the heart that the little dancer was sitting at the water's edge. She did not move as we came up, only nodded a silent greeting.[20]

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[18]Emphasis is mine. In Japanese romance, including *Genji*, a comb is invariably a lover's keepsake, perhaps a fetish recalling, through association, the beautiful woman's hair, the defining feature of Japanese feminine beauty.

[19] See Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 28.

In brief, it can be said that 'The Izu Dancer' presents a child character which asks to be interpreted as an infantilized adult. It remains incomprehensible purely in terms of the child figure which she cuts. The child form orients us to the 'artlessness' Kawabata preferentially treats in a number of his other works.[21] This hybrid child-adult is deliberately employed and the motive underlying it will be the subject of the next chapter.

In *The Old Capital*, setting is carefully chosen and two parallel worlds, whose attributes are represented in the two main characters, are projected. In the novel, Kyoto, a major capital since the Heian period, teems with folk performances that are given a view which will be dealt with in the next chapter. *Snow Country*, *The Old Capital* and 'The Izu Dancer' are informed by the reality of active scenery, from which fantastic or idealistic pictures flash forth or are superimposed. The plots of the three texts invest extensively on geographical scenery unlike 'One Arm' in which setting is largely fantastic-cum-idealistic which, however, appeals to reality. The world of the narrator tilts significantly to fantasy, though the unusual acts possible in this surreal world, such as lending one's arm for a night, are unthinkable in the wider world he inhabits. This latter mundane world is marked by grim, foggy streets and the narrator's fear of his own loneliness.

But reality gradually mutates into surreality as the night intensifies:

> The fog yet thicker, the night threatening rain, and wet my uncovered hair. I could hear a radio speaking from the back of the room of a closed pharmacy. It announced that three planes unable to land in the fog had been circling the airport for half an hour. It went to draw the attention of listeners to the fact that on damp nights clocks were likely

[21] See Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers,* 203-214.

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"Change colour?" I muttered. "Turn pink or purple?"[26] The soliloquy elicits no response from the supposedly sentient arm, because its realm of activity is limited to the fantastically perceived void of the narrator, who is not unaware of the real worldly fact: 'It seemed no one else in the world would be up. To be up was terror.' This reveals that his room was engulfed in 'dank solitude.'[27] The argument that the narrator is trapped in total solitude, without even the company of the arm, is corroborated by the guilty and resentful ending of the story:

> The long narrow, delicate nail [of the tenuous feminine] scratched gently at the palm of my hand, and the slight touch made my sleep deeper. I disappeared.
> I awoke screaming. I almost fell out of bed, and staggered three or four steps.
> I had awoken to the touch of something repulsive. It was my right arm.
> ....
> I knelt by the bed, my chest against it [the arm], and rubbed at my *insane heart* with my restored hand. As the beating [of the heart] slowed down a sadness welled up from deeper than inside me.[28]

The 'deeper sleep' and 'disappearance' mark a point of departure from the world of nothingness into reality, with sleep assuming the role of an anaesthetic device for disappearance and subsequent threshold appearance in the reality (of selfhood and otherhood).

In other words, 'One Arm' is situated in the region straddling the verge between fantasy and reality, as opposed to that of life and death in which Ukifune is situated in *Genji*. At this location it was seen that Ukifune's being obtained a charming irresistibility unattainable to Kaoru. Within this ontological verge, the synechdochic arm simultaneously exudes charming femininity that appropriates real feminine qualities.

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[26] Ibid., 277.
[27] See Ibid., 277-283.
[28] Ibid., 283. Emphasis is mine.

The lender of the arm (the girl at the beginning of the story), the delicate-fingered woman described, the little twin occidental girls remembered behind the glass window, and the narrator's past lover, are all real people save their indeterminacy. The dismembered arm as a distillation of feminine qualities of these real figures is conceived within dualistic/non-dualistic verge; within darkness with no undue perceptual distraction by what daylight reveals.

3.3. The Anthropomorphic Synecdoche

The arm, as a character, attains its individuality at the expense of that which it is a means to. Paradoxically, the arm as well loses its reality for the sake of what it ideally signifies. First it is an ideal feminine: a virgin girl of divine beauty. 'Her' sublime beauty, as delicate and radiant as Murasaki in *Genji*, is an amalgamation of ideal essences of the four real feminine figures brought into focus in the plot. These real figures, relegated to the narrative background, are disrobed of their qualities and amalgamated in the 'person' of the arm.

The full-bodied feminine figure presented in the form of the arm combines oriental and, deceptively, occidental features. This feminine presence become determinate in three distinct ways: aurally, visually and by tactile appeal. Aurally, the arm gives rise to a shy girl, whose speech is sparsely delicate, hence charming, owing a great deal in its tone to its owner. She actually touches the arm to life after handing it to the narrator:

> "I'll see you [the arm] again," she said, touching the right arm with her left hand, as if to infuse it with a spirit of its own. "You're his, but just for the night."[29]

Thereafter, the arm remains mute for long, until the narrator arrived in his dreary room, the latter's loneliest abode. Its first supposed utterance is mere eloquent muteness: "Are you afraid of something?" *the arm seemed to say.* "Is something here?"[30] Subsequently, it actually speaks: "Let me turn on the light," an offer which the narrator finds as 'a strange remark.'[31] His detecting strangeness is vindicated by the arm's subsequent instructive remark: 'I'll be beside you and not beside you,' which, however, makes her more than human and as such nothing substantially human would see her other than a disembodied self.[32] Logically, therefore, the narrator would be purged of his bodied self as a precondition to experiencing the 'unseeable' woman.[33]

Her valued vulnerable quality immediately concretizes into the narrator's past lover: 'I remembered. It was like the voice of a woman who had decided to give herself to me .... "Please," she had said gazing at me.... "I bleed easily at the slightest touch."'[34] This admission of fragility further lends a faint quality to her tone which the narrative perspective provides no least modification. But by virtue of the narrator's lover's antecedent proximity, her faint submissiveness is transplanted onto the arm's voice. As the plot progresses, the feminine faintness of tone, increasingly assume the tone of a

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[29] Ibid., 268.
[30] Ibid., 271. Emphasis is mine.
[31] Ibid., 272.
[32] See Ibid., 273.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 275.

teasing spirit, this especially preceding the 'disappearance' of the narrator – or paradoxically, her disappearance as a presence:

> "A peep show?" asked the arm. "And what do you see?"
> "My dusky old room. Its five lights." Before I had finished the sentence I was almost shouting. "No, no! I see it!"
> "And what do you see?"
> "It's gone."
> "And what did you see?"
> "A color. A blur of purple. And inside it little circles, little beads of red and gold, whirling around."
> "You're tired." The girl's arm put down my right arm, and her fingers gently stroked my eyelids.[35]

The tactile and visual form does little to reveal the female voice heard and whose words are not accompanied by any of the narrative viewpoint modifications hinting at her personality, as is evident in the above context. The form first seen comprises the ideal attributes of the arm's lender, through which the tactile form is experienced. The plumpness of the arm quickly enlarges into the roundness of the whole person, spreading into the soft roundness of breasts and a glowing woman on her feet:

> It [the arm] was plump and round – was it at the top of the arm or at the beginning of the shoulders? .... It was in the girl herself, a clean, elegant roundness, like a sphere glowing with a faint, fresh light .... Something that lasted for a brief moment in the life of a beautiful girl, the roundness of the arm made me feel the roundness of her body. Her breast would not be large. Shy, only large enough to cup in the hands, they would have clinging softness and strength. And in the roundness of the arm I could feel her legs as she walked along. She would carry them lightly, like a small bird, or butterfly moving from flower to flower. There would be the same subtle melody in the tip of her tongue when she kissed.[36]

This is the only extended physical and tactile rendition of the presence. It is this image which prevails through out the story except for yet another allusive description of the

[35] Ibid., 281.
[36] Ibid., 268.

woman with delicate fingers, if only to complete the picture of an ideally charming presence. The finger nails of the arm itself conjure a fragile super-feminine:

> A shell luminous from the pattern inside it, a petal bathed in dew.... More translucent than a delicate shell, than a thin petal, they seem to hold a dew of tragedy.[37]

The refining quality of fragility etherealizes the reconstituted figure so formed, largely through prehension, by which means it is understood albeit as an ungraspable illusion, a virtual feminine figure purely made up of the ideal qualities of the feminine. This recalls the essence of female charm in *Genji* previously seen. Vulnerability and the brink of death in the horizon constituted the striking beauty of Murasaki and the Uji Princesses. As a pre-condition for their charm they are registered as fragile, not so much for dramatic affirmation of tragedy, than for the appreciation of the precariousness of human existence. It was in this appreciation that underlay *mono no aware*.

3.4. The Virtual Female Figure in 'One Arm'

The full-bodied figure infesting the arm, as demonstrated, has an ungraspable nature: aurally perceived but largely indeterminate. Her being stands solid through prehension, as paralleled by Zen's intuitive prehension. But deceptively full-bodied as she is felt by the narrator, she is in essence an illusion. Her charming beauty is an ethereal pastiche of the earthly feminine, and can only thrive within the verge of the narrator's real self and the fantasy world. This interstitial setting is supposed to be habited only by disembodied selves sympathetic to each other.[38]

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[37] Ibid., 272. In *Genji*, the (locust) shell and the dew are constantly used as symbols of fragility, at the same time signifying the sublime essences of the charmingly beautiful.

[38] This immediately recalls Ueda's reference to a soul leaving the body in search of its lover.

The temporality of her being owes significantly to the lonesome night-time setting perceived, coupled with the narrator's fertile sense of emptiness within which the presence can be felt. In many instances does the arm become synonymous with objectified emptiness: "Was it because I went around carrying girl's arm that I felt so unnerved by emptiness."[39] At this stage, the arm would then be an *object* accentuating the sense of emptiness and when it comes to activity, this is no less true for solitude is seen in her form:

> Not being left-handed, I had difficulty unlocking the door. The harder I tried the more my hand trembled – as if in terror after a crime. *Something* would be waiting for me inside the room, a room where I lived in solitude; and was not *the solitude a presence*? With the girl's arm I was no longer alone. And so perhaps *my own solitude* waited there to intimidate me.[40]

The narrator first seen in this context is a lone figure, guilty of himself and anticipating a habitual phenomenon: a palpable solitude in his room; a room imbued with the lonely spirit of his self, which is then to become the presence. Paradoxically, the arm, now being a second party, would dispel solitude and thus no fear of its intimidation. Possibility of intimidation implies a disjunction in the narrator's self: the embodied and the disembodied selves. To this extent, being too obscure, fragile and refined to survive in actuality other than within the mundane-fantasy verge, the formal substance of this female figure is limited. As she confirms it herself, "I'll be beside you and not beside you." Continuing the projection of the tenuousness of the figure, the narrative perspective provides a description which enigmatizes her:

> The nails, carefully polished, were a faint pink ....

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[39] Ibid., 270. The arm referred to is the literal arm.
[40] Ibid., 271.

> With such fingertips, a woman perhaps transcended mere humanity. Or did she pursue womanhood itself? A shell luminous from the pattern inside it, a petal bathed in dew – I thought of the obvious likenesses. Yet I could think of no shell or petal whose color and shape resembled them. *More translucent than a delicate shell, than a thin petal, they seemed to hold a dew of tragedy.... Perhaps my yearning, my solitude, transformed them into dew.*[41]

Dew and petals are used constantly in reference to the indescribable charm of the personate arm, much in a similar fashion as in *Genji*. They aptly evoke the form of this tenuous character: they do not survive the stark sobriety of daytime and their evanescent nature represents the virtual nature of the arm-person. The vitality of the presence does not transcend its setting but derives from its wider temporal setting. Indeed, her virtual form is confirmed by the narrator, more or less conscious of reality:

> ... I had before me less a person at dinner than an inviting music of hands and face and throat. The light of her smile flowed across the skin of her arm.

The narrator's attempt to savour this virtual charm, by substituting his own right arm with the character-arm, only sharpens this faintness. It only affords him a short-lived bliss. When the arm is conjoined to him, he lapses into a profound sleep from where nevertheless he is able to report:

> I floated on a great wave. It was the encompassing fog turned a faint purple, and there were pale green ripples at the spot where I floated on the great wave, and there alone. The dank solitude of my room was gone.[42]

This is the sleep in which he 'disappeared' and woke up into reality, screaming and beset with sadness: "As the beating [of the heart] slowed down a sadness welled up from

[41] Ibid., 272. Emphasis is mine.
[42] Ibid., 283.

deeper inside me."[43] A final affirmation of this reality, in which the arm recedes into inanimateness rings in the narrator's rhetorical questions: "Where is *her* arm?" the arm is distanced from intimacy and becomes an insentient object, a mere appendage and by default, the disincarnate feminine presence vanishes.

Snow Country is set in the place of the title's description. The emergence of the train from the tunnel into this setting, as marked by the very first sentence of the novel, gives the impression that a journey into a sort of a world had been on-going, and has presently come to an end: 'The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.'[44] Settings in both *Snow Country* and 'One Arm' bear a relationship in that they are both animated by fantasy. The time of this arrival is night-time when the 'white of the snow fell away into the darkness.' What is revealed bespeak profound loneliness which the frozen mountain landscape itself reinforce: 'Low, barracklike buildings that might have been railway dormitories were scattered here and there up the frozen slope of the mountain.'[45] The macrocosmic significance of this setting is amplified towards the end of part one of the novel, where it is known that the railway station environs was situated in 'a narrow little valley … crowded in among the snowy mountains…. [and engulfed] in the loneliness of the sheltered mountain pocket.'[46]

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[43] Ibid.
[44] *Snow Country*, 3.
[45] Ibid., 4.
[46] Ibid., 80. The train window scene can be considered its microcosmic version.

Seidensticker aptly notes that the choice of setting, snow country, evokes a frozen time within which is a thriving life.[47] Withdrawn from strict temporality, snow country thus provides a rich arena, symbolic and actual, for the nature of the strategies and the characterization in the novel. Divorced from life, as Seidensticker observes, the setting provides vast possibilities for presentation of real and ethereal worlds without undue constraint on plausibility of character treatments salient in the novel. With these possibilities, the drama of reality and ethereality thrives in interplay where symbols are freely transformed into active referents and referents are as freely frozen into images and symbols, much in the same way as reality is elevated to ethereality and vice versa.

This tendency to commingle opposites was seen in the preceding chapter, as a characteristic of *sabi*-impregnated haiku. In much the same way *sabi* exists as an impression in haiku, the plot and female figures in *Snow Country* are also impressed with tenuousness which can partly be attributed to the montage plot construction, their form and literary interrelationship. The lack of Aristotelian plot logic yields a diffuse narrative which is a free flow in time, as Miyoshi puts it thus:

> The 'shape' of the novel is thus not architectural or sculptural, with the totality subsuming the parts, but musical in the sense of a continual movement generated by surprise and juxtaposition, intensification and relaxation, and the use of various rhythms and tempos.[48]

This loosely constructed plot results in ingenuously fragmented characters in *Snow Country.*[49]

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[47] See his introduction to the novel, vi.
[48] *Accomplices of Silence,* 104.
[49] For unique publication history of the novel, which partly explains the nature of the plot, see Ibid., 102-104.

In the previous chapter, it was observed that in haiku, 'the doer is the sensation' and that in the overriding spirit of non-intellectuality, the subject is effaced though implicit. *Snow Country* is supposed to be first-person narrative from Shimamura's perspective, but running incognito on the omniscient voice.[50] Arguably, his narrative role is scaled down to that of an experiencing subject, much as in the haiku moment, in which the reader's own empathetic participation in the experience is invited. His speech is significantly limited compared to the heroine's effusively enigmatic presence, as though he was a medium through which she is known. Once, it is revealed that he was 'suspended in a void' in which the drama of the novel momentarily flashes forth.[51] The feminine infestation of this infinite void is reiterated and within it, is then seen emerging the figure of Komako also 'suspended there in the void … broadcasting to the four directions.'[52]

The void appropriated affords a unique perception of Komako, including her largely ethereal counterpart (Yoko) which comes to life chiefly in the medium of the train window. Komako's disembodied voice, as 'naked heart of a woman calling to her man' is heard, and is subsequently physically comprehended in a fusion of senses (tactile sense and sense of taste): 'The delicious swelling [of her breast] under Shimamura's hand grew warmer.'[53] The consequence of his discovery of her pointless diary-keeping has a far-reaching effect on him. The perceived void enwrapping him comes to life and the ungraspable and indefinable form of Komako envelops him in an oxymoronic ambience. Sound and silence, animate and inanimate, are fused through her medium: 'But drawn to

[50] See Ibid., 107.
[51] *Snow Country*, 54.
[52] Ibid., 56.
[53] Ibid., 34, 35.

her at that moment, he felt a quiet like the voice of the rain flow over him.'[54] Her voice is taken up by the inanimate and impersonal rain, yet the same voice is also a quietness generally experienced as a blissfully enwrapping flow of water.

Free relationship in the world of *Snow Country* is characterized in the direct reference to style-of-Basho haiku.[55] The corporeal bit of Yoko, intermingled with her ethereality, emits charming distillations which reverberates in the cosmic void:

> Her laugh, like her voice, was so high and clear that it was almost lonely. There was not a suggestion in it of the dull or the simple-minded; but it struck emptily at the shell of Shimamura's heart, and fell away in silence.[56]

The evident play of sound and silence runs parallel to that in 'The Ancient Pond.' Yoko's voice and laugh detaches from herself and are lone entities in the impersonal universe, in which Shimamura's heart exists. The lone entities are therefore in free co-existence with Shimamura's heart of fantasy.

Inherent in Yoko's voice and laughter is paradox, an ideal embodiment of Kawabata's version of *sabi*, resoundingly ringing with a distilled quality, which in the cosmic void smacks of loneliness: a single, perhaps wandering voice with a selfhood in the infinite cosmic void. But the same voice and laughter are emptiness and silence in themselves, for if they are to 'emptily' bounce off Shimamura's heart they must necessarily be emptiness of sorts. For them to fall away in silence after freely bouncing off the same

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[54] Ibid., 41-42.

[55] The reference reminisce Basho's haiku, 'The Rough Sea,' examined in the last chapter. The reference in *Snow Country* runs thus: 'Was this the bright vastness the poet Basho saw when he wrote of the Milky Way arched over the stormy sea?' Ibid., 165.

[56] Ibid.

heart, contrary to their existence as sounds, they must necessarily be silence themselves. Yoko, so to speak, is stripped to the bare entities unopposingly flitting hither and thither in the void.

A similar treatment is given to Komako as Shimamura's departure for Tokyo is heralded. Her form, prehensively presented, is perceived in her totality rather as schematic sketch of herself – voice, physical appearance and her actions. She is perceived not as a voice but as a general sound, a nutshell of all herself:

> All of Komako came to him, but it seemed that nothing went out from him to her. He heard in his chest, like snow piling up, *the sound of Komako, an echo beating against empty walls*.[57]

The free-floating Komako, as a free sound, has its own will-and-no-will to its destiny, to appropriate Ueda's words, within the walls which are no walls. 'Empty walls' which in their own being in the cosmic void are walls, but as much as they are empty, are no-walls since they are not limiting forms of existence. The cosmic walls and the cosmic Komako are liberally co-existent. Shortly afterwards, this liberated sound entity, as Komako, recondenses and is polymorphically exuded as a vision of Komako, from the bell, which acts as a kind of departure signal for Shimamura:

> The Innkeeper had lent him a Kyoto teakettle, skillfully inlaid in silver with flowers and birds, and from it came the sound of wind in the pines. He could make out two pine breezes, as a matter of fact, a near one and a far one. Just beyond the far breeze he heard faintly the tinkling of a bell. He put his ear to the kettle and listened. Far away where the bell tinkled on, he suddenly saw Komako's feet, tipping in time with the bell. He drew back. The time had come to leave.[58]

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[57] Ibid., 155. Emphasis is mine.
[58] Ibid.

There is no doubt that *Noh* theatre roles are evident in the characterization in *Snow Country*, with Shimamura's being the equivalent of *waki*, Komako's of *shite* and Yoko's perhaps that of *tsure*.[59] If the division of the novel into two more or less equal parts is to be taken as structural appropriation of two-part *Noh* play, then it would be quite natural to conclude that the *shite* equivalent takes an apparitive form in either of the two divisions. This apparition thesis, as the essence of the enigmatic nature of Yoko and Komako, would not be pursued without the necessity of a strained polemic insomuch as the forms of these two characters more or less remain homogeneously puzzling throughout the two parts of the novel. It would thus be hard to comprehend one part in terms of the other. Tenability of the argument placing haiku aesthetic allusion at the centre of *Snow Country*, as demonstrated above, lies principally in two facets of the narrative. One, in its dissolution of binary opposition and reinstatement of cosmic wholeness within which Yoko and Komako freely trans-mutate. Two, in its enhancing the ethereal/real setting, in which the two dynamic characters appear within frozen time.

3.5. Inter-Appropriations of Two Relatives in *Snow Country*

In asserting the haiku style in *Snow Country*, symbolism is incidentally disavowed for haiku do not thrive on figurative language. It will be remembered, however, that the literary art, with Kawabata's modern Japanese novel in mind, looks at its preceding traditions without it necessarily suffering the traditional restrictions. Kawabata is not afraid to appropriate haiku technique within which lies symbolism and even duality.

[59] See also Nakamura, M., 82

a) Symbol and its Temporalization

Snow country symbolically suggests the other-worldliness of the entire setting, and the train window microcosmically performs similar symbolic function. What it frames gets distilled into the ideal-cum-symbolic plane which is to become a constant reference point throughout the novel, especially as the charm of its referent become compulsive. Its superimposed two-dimensional nature, though with the sense of depth, is elaborated in the three-dimensional description given of snow country:

> In the depths of the mirror the evening landscape moved by, the mirror and the reflected figures like motion pictures superimposed one on the other. The figures and the background were unrelated, and yet the figures, transparent and intangible, and the background, dim in the gathering darkness, melted together into a sort of symbolic world not of this world. Particularly when a light out in the mountains shone in the center of the girl's face, Shimamura felt his chest rise at the inexpressible beauty of it.
>
> ... since there was no glare, Shimamura came to forget that it was a mirror he was looking at. The girl's face seemed to be out in the flow of the evening mountains.
> It was then that a light shone in the face .... As it sent its small ray through the pupil of the girl's eye, as the eye and the light were superimposed one on the other, the eye became weirdly beautiful bit of phosphorescence on the sea of evening mountains.[60]

Yoko's figure, among others, exists not against the background but co-exists harmonically with the background, even possibly melting *into* one another. There is a mutual charm between Yoko and constituents of the scenery, in which each does not distract from the other. In this way, her symbolic status is reinforced. That is, her consubstantiality with mountain background is an attribute that Komako also exhibits in relation to snow country, and Yoko herself. But Komako is also once perceived by Shimamura in a later imagined train window, the symbolic microcosm, in which her 'red

[60] Ibid., 9-10. This superimposed scene recalls the character of cosmos at the haiku moment. This appears as a vulgar visual statement of the free non-relatedness of elements in the haiku experience.

cheeks floated' in it replacing Yoko figure.[61] Before it, there is Komako, consubstantial with snow country, the macrocosm, reflected in the mirror in front of her:

> The white in the depths of the mirror was the snow, and *floating* in the middle of it were the woman's bright red cheeks. There was an indescribably fresh beauty in the contrast.[62]

With the established horizon of Yoko's floating image co-existent with the scenery, Komako's own figure floating in the mirror is perceptibly co-existent with the snow background. Even without scenery, Komako is easily called into being from a mélange of objects in snow country, strongly in mind being the case of her synecdochic feet freely conceived in co-existence with the tinkling bell. A range of apparently non-orchestrated elements lead up to her being perceived: the brazier, snowy season, a teakettle, an outdoor atmosphere evoked by two sounds of pine breezes, then a tinkling bell beside which she comes into being.

Yoko's symbolic status also resides in her nursing Yukio, her fiancé and terminal patient. Technically the effort of tending a dying man, with all devotion will ultimately be fruitless, synonymous with Komako's efforts to win Shimamura's love. Like Yoko's earnest ministration to the terminally-ill Yukio, Komako's love overtures to Shimamura are a waste of effort, known as such to both: to Komako, Shimamura is a passer-by with no guarantee of commitment, and on the other hand, Shimamura refrains from opening up to her.

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[61] See Ibid., 57.
[62] Ibid., 48. Emphasis is mine.

Komako's waste of effort is not confined to her striving for Shimamura's love alone for she also has a compulsion for diary keeping which does not serve her in any way other in *wastefully* expending her dilettante literary energies and does not hide her shame about it.[63] Her diary is not a record of literary critiques, but simply a catalogue of novels and short stories she has read, with no systematic critical motive:

> "You write down your literary criticisms, do you?"
>
> "I could never do anything like that. I just write down the author and the characters and how they are related to each other. *That is about all.*"
>
> "But what good does it do?"
>
> "None at all."
>
> "A waste of effort."
>
> "A complete waste of effort," she answered brightly as though the admission meant little to her.[64]

Komako's effort in diary keeping and in making undaunted love overtures to Shimamura is akin to a charming light burning for no other end other than the charm of it.[65] That she is undauntedly in love with him and expending her energy on diary-keeping as a waste of effort endears her even more to Shimamura, for which reason she would rather keep on 'glowing,' so to speak, rather than consummate the love.[66] A logical view from this is that Yoko's symbolic status is affirmed in the fire scene: the glowing Yoko (the symbol)

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[63] See Ibid., 40.

[64] Ibid., 41. Emphasis mine. But there is a glimmer that Komako's diary may actually be helping her in reminiscence of places memorable to her: 'I write in my diary when I'm home from a party and ready for bed, and when I read it over I can see places where I've gone to sleep writing....' Ibid. Ellipsis in the original.

[65] After all a glow, dazzling or dim, constitutes most of what is charming in traditional Japanese aesthetic. In *Snow Country*, as also in 'One Arm.' Interplay of light and darkness is associated in many ways with the charming.

[66] At the very moment of learning that Komako's diary-keeping is a waste of effort, Shimamura's entrancement with her is revitalized: '... drawn to her at that moment, he felt a quiet like the voice of rain flow over him.' Ibid., 41-42.

burns out, as Komako is expected to 'go pleasantly to seed in the mountains.'[67] Her charm would by itself culminate in a pure and clean end, without the impurifying consummation.

Yoko, as a symbol, possesses unique potentials. She is human with a reality of her own just like Komako, and even their realities intersect at a number of points outside the symbolic plane. As a human being, she can be disrobed of her symbol status and can take up plot temporal functions. This seems to underlie her deceptive nature. If her waste of effort, of which she is not conscious as such, is to be considered as a coincidental parallel of Komako's waste of effort, she is a minor character with her own life and sentiments: tending her ailing Yukio suffering from intestinal TB, and having to contend for lovers with Komako, and is disconsolately attached to the cemetery in which Yukio's grave lie. By a coincidence, the two, Komako and Yoko, converge at the cemetery and the strained relationship between them is evident. Out of guilt, perhaps of having ceded Yukio to Yoko, or because of not having been 'honest' with the late Yukio, Komako is at pains to justify her presence beside the latter's grave.[68] Her initial reaction to the encounter is out of place: "Aren't you early, though, Yoko? I thought of going to the hairdresser's ...." The strain in the relationship between them is implicitly conveyed by the narrative viewpoint: 'As Komako spoke, a black squall came upon them and threatened to sweep them from their feet.'[69] Indeed this Komako-Yoko relationship, with the latter liberated from symbol status, is virtually the only dramatic conflict in the entire novel, in which the stand-off threatens to deteriorate into actual physical confrontation:

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[67] Ibid., 142.
[68] See Ibid., 118-1220.
[69] Ibid., 119.

> "I didn't come to see Yukio's grave." [said Komako].
> Yoko nodded. She seemed to hesitated a moment, then knelt down before the grave.
> Komako watched stiffly.
> Shimamura looked away, towards the Jizo. It had three long faces, and, besides the hand clasped at its breast, a pair each to the left and the right.
> "I am going to wash my hair," Komako said to Yoko. She turned and started back along a ridge between paddies.[70]

There is an immanent tension uncomfortable to Shimamura, and it appears that Yoko would defend her ground against Komako who would easily yield in the confrontation. But even this confrontational mood is sustained as later when Yoko appears in front of Shimamura in the inn-room to convey a note from Komako who shortly shows up. The reality of the other jealousy-tainted relationship becomes even more intricate with Yoko's imploration to him, twice made, 'to [b]e good to Komako,' yet another waste of effort on her part, since his invariable reply is: 'But I can do nothing for her.'[71] The implication of this is that the relationship ceases from being a matter of actual jealousy between the two women, but that Yoko assumes the role of a benign fairy tale figure interceding for Komako.[72] It also affords an opportunity to express an idiosyncratic aesthetic, the subject of the next chapter.

But a fairy tale figure does not inhabit the real world, and this can be seen as constituting Yoko's characteristic back-and-forth transmutation, from reality to ethereality. So her

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[70] Ibid., 120.
[71] Ibid., 134, 139.
[72] 'Fairy tale figure,' is Miyoshi's phrase attempting to put in a nutshell the perplexity of Yoko. Op Cit., 107.

fluidity extends to shuttling between the real world in which her life is rooted, and the ethereal one set in the snow country, interpolated with the sense of cosmic void.[73]

b) Interplay of Reality and Ethereality

The ambience of 'One Arm' significantly constitutes its setting, as the scenery does for 'The Izu Dancer.' The basic setting of *Snow Country* is the frozen landscape, which as mentioned above permits a loosened sense of temporality. Within it Kawabata even expands the expressive possibilities by opening various panes through which even more distilled ethereality is invoked. These panes include a train window, an inn-room window, a railway waiting room window and a mirror.[74] In *Snow Country*, liberty in the projection of the female personage is taken, more so in the meta-etherealistic panes, with little encumbrance of reality. The two heroines transmigratively inhabit the two worlds, the real and the ethereal, except as in the mundane relationship examined above. Being inhabitants of the two worlds, their perception transcends conventional senses. Even the conventional sensorial reports do not guarantee a reality purged of ethereality: at one time the character is prehended in gustatory terms, the identity of the character assuming a general enwrapping feeling, and at another by intuitive prehension in which her inscrutable being thrive on equal terms with their surroundings. In these figures' universe, intuitively perceived, they are projected as being in harmony with their scene,

[73] Miyoshi would rather describe this snow country-cosmic void setting as 'a somehow lasting extended stasis.' Ibid., 106.

[74] In Japanese mythology, the mirror has divine background, being one of the three imperial regalia - the sword, the jewel and the mirror itself.

but as independent existences alongside it. In such a setting, 'nature is neither adversary nor merely the setting for an unrelated drama.'[75]

The opening scene starts with a recognizable Yoko talking to the station master through the train window, but the familiarity and synchronic order is checked by a communicational distantiation in the conversation between the two:

> "You are on your way home now, are you?" [asked Yoko]
> "I had a little accident. I've been going to the doctor."[76]

The consistency of Yoko's person is called to question with the revelation that her *beautiful* voice was *sad* and that it sounded like an echo in the frozen night.[77] She is the more interesting to Shimamura simply because her brother works at a signal stop *threatened* by falling snow, attracting curiosity in its incongruence as a reason enhancing the charm of Yoko. Subsequently, it is revealed that Shimamura is going to see an unnamed woman, recalled through the medium of his fore-finger and whose significance and identity is deferred for a long while.

In the meantime, he wipes the misty train window and as if in a magical manner a woman of great charm is conjured up in it. Aptly, Kawabata opens a window to a refined ethereality projected from reality for the figure in the window is a reflection of Yoko tending to Yukio though the latter does not sharply comes to focus.[78] The source reality is Yoko's – and of course Shimamura's proclivity to fantasy – unbeknown to her just as

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[75] Howard Hibbet, 'Tradition and Trauma in the Contemporary Japanese Novel,' in *Fiction in Several Languages*, ed. Henri Peyre (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 43.
[76] Ibid., 5.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Yoko figure in the train window is henceforth simply referred to as Yoko-figure.

they seem to be physically worlds apart from each other. Similarly, the ethereal world revealed in the window thrives far away from her own conscious reality, much less as a symbol than as an actual person, beset with the reality of a dying loved one and an unreachable sole next of kin, Saichiro, of whom she can only hear from the stationmaster. But the ethereality which cleaves away from this reality is infested with a tenuous feminine figure whose form is not in conflict with her background, nor the background with her form.[79] As the narrative viewpoint returns to reality, it is implied that the real Yoko has a connection with the yet anonymous 'woman.' By the introduction of this connection, 'the tall figure of the [anonymous] woman, her skirts trailing coldly off across the dark floor,' is eased in. The preceding fluid and ethereal Yoko-figure carries over into the image of the 'tall figure' the more curious in how she is introduced: without name, but as a 'form' with some physical attributes and stunning charm that Shimamura is spellbound.[80]

Interest about the woman is built up in a series of rhetorical questions in which the mirror world is invoked:

> … was there something … between the woman his hand remembered and the woman in whose eye that mountain light had glowed? Or had he not yet shaken off the spell of evening landscape in the mirror? He wondered whether the flowing landscape was not perhaps symbolic of the passage of time.[81]

There is a continuum of Yoko-figure in the woman, an incarnate counterpart of the former's insubstantial and impersonal form in the window-mirror landscape:

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[79] The detailed quotation of the scene is already given above. 'Conflict as hear used has the same connotation as Hibbet's idea that such a background 'is neither adversary nor merely the setting for an unrelated drama,' that is, they are co-existent.

[80] See Ibid., 14-15. Henceforth 'woman' refers to the unnamed feminine figure, unless otherwise named.

[81] Ibid., 14.

> He started back as he saw the long skirts – had she finally become a geisha? She did not come towards him, she did not bend in the slightest movement of recognition. From the distance he caught something intent and serious in the still form.[82]

In a flashback it is recounted that Shimamura's response to the mountains had extended itself' to include the woman (as in the superimposed passivity of the train window-mirror scene?)[83]

The task here is to constitute the exact nature of the woman who is supposed to be perceived prehensively, by means of a forefinger which does not immediately yield a distinct form, a visualizable human figure other than as a quaint 'still form.' The intangibleness of Yoko-figure comes to characterize the woman and her relation with Shimamura, with a tendency towards a somaesthetic experience of her: 'an affection of a quiet new sort *flowed* between them'; 'something from that cool figure had swept through him after she called to him from under the cedars'; … drawn to her at that moment, he felt a quite like the voice of rain flow over him.'[84] Succeeding this is the first detailed visualization of the real though idealized woman, a significant ground animating subsequent appearances of this character throughout the narrative; indeed the ideal form projected, together with Yoko-figure in the horizon, provides apt premises for subsequent departures to her ethereal intangible nature:

> The high, thin nose was a little lonely, a little sad, but the bud of her lips opened and closed smoothly, like a beautiful circle of leeches. Even when she was silent her lips seemed always to be moving. Had they had wrinkles or cracks, or had there color been less fresh, they would have struck one as unwholesome, but they were never anything

[82] Ibid., 14-15.
[83] See Ibid., 19. After all, he is predisposed to perceiving nature and humans in it, the feminine in particular, as consubstantial whole: 'Shimamura had an instinctive feeling for the spirit of places he visited …' Ibid' 27.
[84] Ibid., 32, 41-42.

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> but smooth and shining. The line of her eyelids neither rose nor fell. As if for some special reason, it drew its way across her face. There was something faintly comical about the effect, but the short, thick hair of her eyebrows sloped gently down to enfold the line discreetly. There was nothing remarkable about the outlines of her round, slightly aquiline face. With her skin like white porcelain coated over a faint pink, and her throat still girlish, not yet filled out, the impression she gave was above all one of cleanness, not quite one of real beauty.
>
> Her breasts were rather full for a woman used to the high, binding *obi* of the geisha.[85]

The ideal form, comprehended by the distilling overwroughtness, of the woman gradually rises up to ethereality in the inn-window, on the sill of which the woman sits.[86]

The panoramic frame of the inn-window teem with elements of the ethereal train-window mirror scene, with everything in 'a clear tranquil harmony' but the Border Range mountains being as transparent and passive as those in the train-window scene. This train-window scene is blank, so to speak, lacking the Yoko-figure, though relegated to the horizon, is filled in by the mediatory ideal figure of the 'substantial' woman. Her persistent high-strung reality proceeds to distil her out of the reality in the medium of the mirror in front of which she kneels.[87] Arguably, she is elevated into the same plane as Yoko-figure as a thinly veiled woman:

> She knelt at the mirror by the bed.
> ...
> Shimamura glanced up at her, and immediately lowered his head. The white in the depths of the mirror was the snow, and floating in the middle of it were the woman's bright red cheeks. There was an indescribably fresh beauty in the contrast.

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[85] Ibid., 32-33.

[86] In this sense, the woman is distilled into ethereality by the fact of her overwroughtness. It is debatable whether the woman is conscious, or otherwise, of her acts leading to her being idealized/etherealized. She for example seem to deliberately place herself within the frame of the inn-window for the benefit of Shimamura: 'Roughly throwing open a paper-paneled door and the window behind it, she sat down on the sill with her body thrown back against the railing.' Ibid., 44, see also 99.

[87] Kawabata's aesthetic of beauty in overwroughtness is undoubtably in play here.

> .... The brightness of the snow was more intense, it seemed to be burning icily. Against it, the woman's hair became clearer black, touched with a purple sheen.[88]

Since her skin is 'like white porcelain' the mirror shows her dissolved into the white snow background and the bright red cheeks dismembered from herself, which then turns the mirror into a medium of consubstantiation. The woman assumes the nature of the white snow, as much a symbol of purity and cleanness, the attributes marking her ideal version. She is capable of assuming the character of light freely invading Shimamura's interior,[89] or can even suffuse herself into the sound of train wheels: 'The monotonous sound of train wheels became the woman's voice.'[90]

It ought to be remembered that just like Yoko, the woman, now named Komako, attains her charming nature partly through her overwroughtness which at the point just before she is heard as the sound of the train wheels, threatens to precipitate a fight (for Shimamura) with Yoko.[91] It is this incident which aesthetically threatens Komako's image though not for long. Shimamura experiences disgust for her, while instilling contrary effect on Yoko:

> That voice [Yoko's urgently calling Komako], so beautiful it was almost lonely, lingered in Shimamura's ears as if it were echoing back from somewhere in the snowy mountains.[92]

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[88] Ibid., 48. This is the second most significant pane in the novel after the train-window mirror.
[89] See Ibid., 62.
[90] Ibid., 86.
[91] When Yoko comes to inform Komako of Yukio's final fade-away, Komako 'pushed Yoko roughly away from him.' Ibid., 82. Yoko yields in this confrontation.
[92] Ibid., 83.

The snowy mountains conjure up the train window through which Yoko-figure appeared, and so the echo of her voice is somewhat of an emanation from the pre-established ethereal and disembodied figure.

In the second part of the narrative the sense of chasm relating to the two characters and Shimamura becomes markedly palpable. How this happens is found in the textual hints as tendencies to traditional Japanese art of suggestion, as well as in literary significances with which the characters are imbued as earlier examined.[93] Depth of ambience, or sense of void, reverberates with fading echoes, physical and aural, freely identified as Yoko or Komako:

> The field of red flowers on red stems was quietness itself.
> ...
> They seemed still to hear Yoko's voice, and not the dying rumble of the freight train. It seemed to come back like an echo of distilled love.[94]

The sole sound of the train passing through the cemetery is heard as transformed into Yoko's voice, then as love in the palpable quietness.

Even within the actual voice of Komako there reverberates an echo of the ideal/ethereal form constitutive of her: 'But he caught an echo of the woman underneath the surface nonchalance.'[95] It will be remembered, however, that this component of her is

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[93] Hints of distance in character interrelation are suggested through evocation of distant mountain scenery, etherealness and circumstantial pointers to symbolism. The last half of *Snow Country* can be seen as a retrospective treatment of the professed authorial concerns. Retrospectiveness of the part, though, is strung together by the fading echoes of part one in a manner that tends to paradoxically obliterate this distinction. Extended description of Chijimi linen-making allegorically points to the intensive investment of effort (in love and care); the significance of the course and (literal) rounding up with fire is much a restatement of a symbolism already laid bare.

[94] Ibid., 120.

[95] Ibid., 130.

perceivable in her own terms, as in the case when she concretizes, so to speak, from within the sound of the bell.

It is not an overstated truth that the second part of *Snow Country* owes its intricacy to particular investment in haiku accent in which the echoes referred to are possible and also by which the simple inscrutableness of Yoko and Komako is asserted. Indeed, the earlier claim that the two feminine figures are more or less presented as objective prehensional data, or as raw sensory details, cannot be asserted in any other way than in the haiku aesthetic. They are 'uninterpreted,' as Mishima is wont to say. Two distinct and parallel instances of such uninterpreted scenes stand out. Their wide contextual nature warrants a lengthy quotation and in both cases, Komako and Yoko are being met for the first time by Shimamura in his third and last visit to the snow country:

> Outside the window, the bright red of ripe persimmons was bathed in the evening sun. It seemed to send out a red glow even to the bamboo of the pothook over the hearth.
>
> "See how long they are," Shimamura looked out in astonishment at the steep path, down which old women were trudging with bundles of autumn grass on their backs. The grass looked to be twice the height of the women, and the tassels were long and powerful.
>
> "It's *kaya* grass."
> "*Kaya*, is it?"
> "The government railways built a sort of restroom, I suppose you would call it, for their hotspring exhibit, and they thatched the teahouse with *kaya* from the mountains. Someone in Tokyo bought it exactly as it was."
>
> .... Ah, I am here, something in Shimamura called out as he looked up at it.
>
> But the great strands he saw here seemed quite different in nature from the grasses that had so moved him. The large bundles hid the women carrying them, and rustled against the rocks that flanked the path. And the plumes were long and powerful.
>
> Under the dim light in the dressing room, Shimamura could see that the large-bodied moth was laying eggs along the black lacquer of the clothes frame. Moths were beating at the lantern under the eaves.

> There was a steady humming of autumn insects, as there had been from since sundown.
>
> Komako was a little late.
>
> She gazed in from the hall.[96]

Shimamura is talking with the inn-keeper's wife. Apart from the haiku-like presentation of elements in the passage, inflected is the characteristic exclamative haiku effect; 'Ah, I am here, something in Shimamura called out as he looked at it.'

Arguably, the *Kaya* grass take up the protagonist role in the scene viewed from the window: a breathtaking outdoor scene in which nature, as a whole and elementally (the women, persimmons, the sun, the *Kaya* grass, the large-bodied moth and other insects) is content, even happy, with itself. *Kaya* freely cedes its protagonist position to Komako figure.[97] Her appearance and presence in the scene seem to be a foregone conclusion – naturally as such or particularly to Shimamura, for there is no note of surprise in the narrative process.[98]

This is how Yoko - the symbol and referent - co-exist with the scene:

> Shimamura went for a walk in the village when Komako had left.
>
> Before a white wall, shaded by eaves, a little girl in "mountain trousers" and an orange- red flannel kimono, clearly brand-new, was bouncing a rubber ball. For Shimamura, there was autumn in the little scene

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[96] Ibid., 92-93.

[97] As will also be observed in the following scene, this note enables an argument that any feature which finds its way into Kawabata's narrative, including the context itself , possesses the potential of being the protagonist, and none of being the otherwise.

[98] Shimamura has been away for a significant length of time; he was in fact supposed to have come back from Tokyo to meet her on 'fourteenth of February,' which he reneges on.

> The houses were built in the style of the old regime. No doubt they were there when provincial lords passed down this north-country road. The eaves and the verandas were deep, while the latticed, paper-covered windows on the second floor were long and low, no more than a foot or so high. There were reed blinds hanging from the eaves.
>
> Slender autumn grasses grew along the top of an earthen wall. The pale-yellow plumes were at their most graceful, and bellow each plume narrow leaves spread out in a delicate fountain.
>
> Yoko knelt on a straw mat beside the road, flailing at beans spread out before her in the sunlight.
>
> The beans jumped from their pods like little drops of light.
>
> Perhaps she could not see him because of the scarf around her head, she knelt, flailing away at the beans, her knees spread apart in their "mountain trousers," and she sang in that voice that seemed to be echoing back from somewhere
>
> *"The butterfly, the dragonfly, the cricket.*
> *The pine cricket, bell cricket, horse cricket*
> *Are singing in the hills."*
>
> How large the crow is, starting up from the cedar in the evening breeze – so says the poet. Again there were swarms of dragonflies by the cedar grove Shimamura could see from his window. As the evening approached, there seemed to swim about faster, more restlessly.[99]

Yoko's figure is registered as a mutually indestructible constituent of the 'little scene' alongside grasses, old-regime houses, beans, perhaps a large crow, and swarms of dragonflies by the cedar grove. This figure is vibrantly mute and in tacit agreement with the equally mute co-constituents. There is no further comment on Yoko, neither does she 'purposely' lend herself to interpretation by self-assertion, through speech or through any other form of body language.

It is after a significant span of narrative time that she returns articulately heard (and so ripe for interpretation), though even then, her voice is disembodied.[100] In a significant

[99] Ibid., 109-110. Italics in the original.
[100] See Ibid., 120.

way, Komako in the earlier autumn scene is as mute as the latter Yoko in the little autumn scene. As a momentary stranger, she lacks authorial introduction, and permeates the scene of her own accord. It would have been less effective, however, to abandon her in the same manner as happens with Yoko, taking into account her principal narrative position.

The foregoing analysis looks at the charming figures of Yoko and Komako, as products of principal narrative viewpoints. Their charming versions spring from their social condition and scenery interplay. Suffice it to say that their presence enlivens the contexts, as their contexts are significant in equal measure. Tsuruta Kinya, in examining the narrative processes of *Snow Country* posits that Komako is a mirror and as such, is self denying.[101] That is, she denies her self in order to bring to focus images of others: in this case Yoko and even the context. She is an ideal mirror on which the charm in nature is realized. She is the prism through which the colours of nature are projected and appreciated. Asserting this is as though nature was an end and Komako a means to it; or that since Yoko is a subsidiary symbol, then Komako is the ultimate. The mirror itself does not completely banish its selfhood in favour of other images but enriches them without diminishing itself. In other words, Komako and Yoko are enchanting because of their social situations and nature contexts, if the latter is not considered as necessarily distilled from reality; the reverse is also equally true.

[101] 'The Flow Dynamics in Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country*. *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 26, No 3/4 (1971), 253. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2383648 Accessed 25th Nov. 2008, 06:04hrs.

3.6. Processes of Entrenchment of Apparition in *The Old Capital*

The Old Capital opens with a scene in which Chieko is trapped in an emotional mood largely inspired by the poignant images of transience and fragility in front of her. In the garden of her home is a maple tree which is contrasted with her:

> The maple was rather large for such a small garden in the city; the trunk was larger around than Chieko's waist. But the ancient tree with its coarse moss-covered bark was not the sort of thing one should compare with a girl's innocent body.[102]

The agedness of the maple is indicated by the moss which over time has grown on it. But most significantly are the violets which grow on two hollows on the tree's trunk, an upper hollow and a lower hollow:

> The upper violet and lower violet were separated by about a foot. "Do the upper and lower violets ever meet? Do they know each other?" Chieko mused. What could it mean to say that the violets "meet" or "know" one another?[103]

First, the seasonal violets sharply contrast with the ageless maple tree, the former fragile and transient, the latter hardy and perennial, even incomparable to as fragile and mortal a girl as Chieko. Between the flowers and Chieko intimacy gradually develops as she gets absorbed in them. Further musing, Chieko takes it that the violets bloomed for her sake and thus hints that they not only serve as literary images, but also as Chieko's private intimates marking her life: '"You've bloomed again for me this year," Chieko wanted to whisper.'[104]

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[102] Op. Cit., 1.
[103] Ibid., 1-2.
[104] Ibid., 2.

The short-lived and fragile females, as beautiful beings, are constantly evoked by the flowers.[105] It can thus be asserted that Chieko has a personal affinity to the violets and the same can also be said in literary terms, that she has a relationship with the flowers in the text's literary scheme. In her own loneliness she endeavours to transform the twin flowers into meaningful, perhaps personal, images:

> … but why had the violets come to live in such a cramped spot? The violets bloomed, and this year too the crickets would hatch and begin their chirping.
> "A natural life…"
> A gentle breeze teased at Chieko's hair, so she tucked the hair behind her ear. She thought of herself in comparison to the violets and the bell crickets.
> "And me…"
> Chieko was the solitary observer of the tiny violets on the spring day, a day that swelled with vitality of nature.[106]

That she thinks of the violets in terms of herself means that she is as well bound to ask of herself: 'How did I come to live with the Sadas [her adoptive parents]?' As an 'only' child of the Sadas, she has known loneliness much as the chirping crickets imply the loneliness of the violets. The distinction of the violets in two hollows means that the significance of their parallel existence extends to Chieko's life. Indeed she later says '"I am more like the violets growing in the hollows of the tree …."'[107] Her consciousness is much pre-occupied with the meaning of the violets:

> There were no flowers on them now, but the two small violets in the upper and lower hollows – were they Chieko and Naeko? It looked as though the violets could never meet, but had they met tonight? Looking at the violets in the dim lights, chieko was again moved to tears.[108]

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[105] For example Chieko's childhood friend, Shin'ichi, observes during an outing with her that the flowers of the red weeping cherries were feminine. Ibid., 9.
[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Ibid., 71.
[108] Ibid., 96.

Thus if she is the violet in one of the hollows, then there has to be an identical counterpart in actual life to correspond to the violets in the other hollow. If the two violets would never meet then logically, both are in a state of loneliness *on* the time-cloaked maple tree.

In other words, Chieko's question as to why the violets were lodged in the hollows is largely an autobiographical matter from which point the rest of the narrative proceeds. The questions 'Do the upper and lower violets ever meet?' and 'Do they know each other?' both presuppose the potential of the 'violets to 'meet.' Going per the rooted nature of the violets, the answers to the questions are most likely to be in the negative than otherwise. The twin flowers, therefore, forewarn that Chieko-Naeko interaction in the narrative is highly hypothetical in nature. Insomuch as re-union of the violets is impossible, Chieko and her perceived twin sister are not re-unitable in real sense, but all the same the text puts forward a likely nature of the 'meeting.' How this meeting comes to pass is the subject of the next focus.

In the previous chapter, it was noted that a better understanding of *The Old Capital*, in terms of character roles, may be possible with good background of the *Noh* theatre. Zeami Motokiyo's word that the *maeshite* should be natural and that *nochijite* is an incarnation of an apparition will be recalled here.[109] However, with Zeami's *Noh* the *maeshite* should be in the guise of 'a lowly country woman,' and the *nochijite* is an appropriately dignified role, as per the real character's station in life. In *The Old Capital*, this arrangement, in limited sense, is inverted. Chieko, the urbanized lady, precedes

[109] See Chapter Two, 44.

Naeko, her phenomenological variant, who is a country girl.[110] It remains that Naeko's role is kindred to the apparitional forms in *Noh* theatre and Chieko, the actual person from whom the former is projected.

Naeko's image is realized after a lengthy ritual invocation during the Gion Festivals, just as the boy in the *Noh* play *Ikuta* exemplifies. He commits himself to a seven-day prayer at Kamo Shrine in order to see his father's form, as an apparition or in a dream. Likewise, Chieko (and – coincidentally? – Naeko) perform the seven-turn worship at Otabisho where the god of Yasaka is enshrined.[111] There is the possibility that their re-union is due to their biological father's spirit prevailing upon them, just as the mysterious voice instructs the boy in *Ikuta* to seek his father in the Ikuta woods. It should be remembered that Naeko lives within the Kitayama cedar mountain forest and their re-union occurs halfway through the narrative, effectively demarcating it to two describable sections.

The implication is that Naeko is invisible save to Chieko, Masako and Hideo. Their meeting apparently takes place at a realm where it could only be witnessed by the god of Gion shrine.[112] Masako could see her because of her special role in terms of the general framework of *Noh*. Her *waki*-like role enables her to objectively conduct Chieko to her copy-image during an excursion in the Kitayama Mountains. After initiating this meeting, Masako's role is wound up and is shortly effaced. On the other hand, Hideo has an

[110] The apparent reason behind this adjustment will be the subject of the next chapter.
[111] See Op. Cit., 85-86, 87. Chieko says she prayed for the health and happiness of her parents.
[112] See Ibid., 88.

enigmatic priestly comportment.[113] His mysterious and monkish nature accords him the privilege of seeing, even meeting and conversing with Naeko.

Other narrative viewpoints which would give further clues on Naeko's nature are not of much help. Other than the report that Chieko's adoptive parent 'were so astounded by the two girls' resemblance that they could not speak,' there is no other clearer narrative report of the parents' viewpoints.[114] Even when Chieko's mother looks into the room where Naeko and Chieko slept, there is not any kind of report of what she exactly sees in the room.

Even so, some narrative viewpoints acknowledge Chieko's propensity to self delusion. Shin'ichi states that "... an only daughter is a slave to her delusions" as if it were naturally true as such. Furthermore, Naeko seems to hint at her own puzzling form when she tells Chieko that Hideo, who mistakenly took her for Chieko, found an illusion in her (Naeko) of Chieko.[115] Therefore, she would be admitting that she is illusive. There is even a tinge of teasing in Naeko's explanation of what she meant by referring to herself as an illusion:

> "…. But a formless illusion does exist, doesn't it?" Naeko replied. "It may exist in a man's heart or mind or somewhere else – who can tell?"
>
> "Even when I'm an old woman of sixty, won't the Chieko of his illusion still be as young as you are now?"
>
> Chieko did not expect such talk. "You've thought about it that much?"

[113]For instance, Takichiro slaps him, he does not duck to avoid the blow nor does he flinch. Instead, he ironically 'bowed low and apologized, without bothering to nurse the reddening cheek.' In fact he makes a light moment of it. Sada Takichiro says: "…. My hand hurts from hitting you." and Hideo's reply is: "I should have lent you my own. The skin of the weaver's hand is tough." Ibid., 47.
[114]Ibid., 178. Parents will henceforth be used to refer to the adoptive parents unless otherwise stated.
[115]Ibid., 167, 169 and 170.

> "The time never comes when a beautiful illusion turns ugly."
> "That's not necessarily true," Chieko finally said.
> "You can't kick or tread on an illusion that you harbor. All you can do is overturn yourself."
> "I see." Chieko could recognize envy even in Naeko. "Are there really such things as illusions?"
> "In here." Naeko touched Chieko's chest.
> "I'm no illusion. I'm your twin."
> Naeko did not speak.
> "Then will you be a sister to my ghost?"
> "No, I want to be the sister of Chieko before me. But, then … at least for Hideo's sake …"[116]

It is as if Naeko, the apparition is teasingly addressing the body in which it is supposed to reside. A little later, when the weather turns inclement, she commands Chieko to hurry home or else she turned "… into one cold illusion."[117] In one of her shows of benignity, when it appears as if she is threatening Chieko's happiness by revisiting the sad circumstances surrounding her childhood, she threatens to 'disappear completely' – as an apparition.[118] As if a last reminder of illusion in the whole narrative, she warns Chieko, who wanted to open the shutters and look outside in the rain, not to open them.[119]

3.7. The Benignant Fairy

The foregoing examination of Naeko's nature has shown that she is perplexingly knowing and philosophical than Chieko especially as relates to her last views on illusion and herself. Understanding Chieko's emotional fragility is relatively easy as opposed to Naeko's inexplicably enduring and complex philosophical orientation. The former, by her own admission, is highly doted on by her parents.[120] But nothing is known of the upbringing of Naeko. Not even much of her adoptive parents, except a revelation that it is

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[116] Ibid., 171.
[117] Ibid., 173.
[118] Ibid., 180. It is apparent that of the two, the young Chieko was the one abandoned by their parents.
[119] Ibid.
[120] See Ibid., 15.

a landholding family, more well-to-do as compared to such wholesalers as Chieko's parents.[121] The little inferable about them is that they may not be as close to her as Chieko's case. When Chieko next visits her, Naeko reveals that she had 'no one to turn to' and as such was lonely. Her apparent hardiness and philosophical bearing thus adds to her mysterious constitution.

Yoko in *Snow Country* was earlier described as a fairy figure, not only in terms of her literary role but also in terms of her own actions, for example on behalf of her supposed rival, Komako. Naeko cuts an image of a fairy that Yoko does in *Snow Country*.

Partly to enhance the plausibility of the narrative, this fairy figure is introduced within the context of Gion Festivals in which one's wishes, as for example in the seven-turn worship, are fulfilled. Therefore, after the ritual prayer, Naeko emerges in front of Chieko, a meeting only witnessed by the god of Gion Shrine. Her emergence is not without puzzling acts, mostly fairy in nature.

Naeko's fairy acts are largely benefactory, beginning in a very disarming manner, by revealing to Chieko that she was her twin sister.[122] This would lull Chieko's emotional restlessness about the mystery surrounding her childhood as well as enabling her piece together her instinctive regard of the twin violets. Henceforth, Chieko's emotional fix significantly abates through the remaining half of the novel. Naeko's peculiarity is also

[121]See Ibid., 140.
[122]See Ibid., 86ff.

evident in the course of this first ever meeting: she plunges into tears and as quickly gets over it in time to soothe Chieko:

> "I was a twin, but I don't know if I'm older or younger." [Said Naeko.]
> "It's just a chance resemblance, don't you think?"
> The girl nodded, but tears ran down her cheeks. Taking out a handkerchief and wiping her face, she asked, "Miss, where were you born?"
> ...
> .... Chieko's eyes began to turn dark.
> The mountain girl put her hand on Chieko's shoulder and wiped Chieko's forehead with the handkerchief.
> "Thank you." Chieko wiped her own face with the handkerchief and put it on her own pocket. She did not realize what she had done.[123]

Soon afterwards this 'meekly joyous' girl is announcing her intention to leave, to the dismay of Chieko who hasn't sufficiently recovered from the encounter:

> As Chieko puzzled over what to do, the mountain girl put out her hand.
> "Miss," she said. Chieko took it. The skin was rough and chapped, unlike Chieko's soft hand but the mountain girl glasped Chieko's hand, seemingly unconcerned about the difference.
> "Good-bye, Miss."
> "What?"[124]

Naeko's benevolent acts overawe Chieko to the point she tacitly acknowledges the impossibility of her ever being like her. In Naeko, despite the chapped and rough skin, she sees vibrant and soothing beauty that she would never measure up to: 'It was impossible for Chieko to be as meekly joyous as the Kitayama girl. A tinge of sorrow deepened in Chieko's eyes.'[125] She even comes close to stating her relative inferiority when she enviously apostrophizes of Naeko: "Your heart is pure than mine. You work hard, and your body is strong," Chieko whispered.[126] The bodily strength referred to

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[123] Ibid., 87.
[124] Ibid., 88.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 93.

partially constitutes the charming beauty she cherishes in her and which curiously "seemed to be the only thing that supported Chieko,"[127]

In their subsequent rendezvous, Naeko performs perhaps the most significant custodial fairy act. She appropriates her work apron as a mat on which they would both sit in the Kitayama woods. A storm takes them by surprise and as Chieko is immensely shaken, Naeko is collectedly decisive: '"Miss, please bend your knees and crouch into a ball," Naeko said, leaning over Chieko and completely covering her sister with her body.'[128] The intense and furious storm is just over the girls' heads:

> Each lightning illuminated the earth and glared off the trees around the girls. In that moment the beautiful straight trunks of the trees in the grove appeared uncanny and ominous.
>
> Then the thunder crashed.
> "Naeko we are going to be struck!" Chieko huddled smaller.
> *"It might strike the ground, but it won't hit us," Naeko said firmly.*
> *"Why would you think lightning would strike you?"*
>
> Then she clung to Chieko even more completely.
> "Miss, your hair got wet," Naeko wiped the back of Chieko's head with her towel. Then, folding the towel, she put it on Chieko's head.
> *"A few raindrops may fall, but lightning would never strike anywhere near you."*
> Chieko calmed at hearing Naeko's kind voice. "Thank you. Thank you so much," Chieko said.[129]

It is remarkable that Naeko should be able to shelter Chieko from the rain, and much so from lightning, without betraying any sense of vulnerability nor agony in the form of fright or cold. Ironically, Chieko's chilled hands are thawed by the warmth from Naeko who is soaking wet from the storm.[130] There is also a point of speculation whether Naeko, by way of fairy trick or other magical device, has a hand in warding off lightning

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[127] Ibid., 88.
[128] Ibid., 116.
[129] Ibid., 116-117. Emphasis is mine.
[130] See Ibid., 117.

from striking Chieko, for she wouldn't have to be certain that lightning would never harm Chieko. Indeed there is a trace of wonder in her question 'Why would you think that lightning would strike you?' This is to imply that it is not only unthinkable that the lightning could strike but that such a strike is impossible as long as the latter is in her fairy custody. Otherwise Naeko is also ready to change places with Chieko in the event that the latter was in danger or any trouble.[131] In further implying her extra-human nature, she effaces herself in referring to mankind, for whom she does not hesitate to avow her benefactory love:

> "Were there no such thing as man, there would be nothing like Kyoto either. It would all be natural woods and fields of grasses. This land would belong to the deer and wild boar, wouldn't it? Why did man come to this world? It is frightening … mankind."
> …
> "Do you dislike people," Naeko answered. "I like nothing as much as people, but how would it be if there were no people on earth. Things like that come to my mind after napping in the mountains."[132]

Her benignant bearing could be extended to general humanity and nature as a whole. In a sense, she loves mankind to the degree that nature is allowed to thrive, and not mankind at the expense of it.[133]

The last of Naeko's fairy acts comes when she pays a visit to Chieko's adoptive home. Apart from insisting that she prepares Chieko's bed she also goes ahead to first warm it

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[131] See ibid., 118, 119.
[132] Ibid., 115-116.
[133] Overtones of resentment abound in her view about the cutting of cedars:
> "These are man-made trees," Naeko said.
> "What?"
> "They are about forty years old. They'll be cut and used for pillars or the like. Left alone, they'd probably grow for a thousand years … wide and tall. I think about that occasionally. I like virgin forests the best, but in this village it's as though we're growing flowers for cutting.

Ibid., 115. In this case she could not only be said to be fairy guardian of Chieko, but also of the wider nature.

before inviting her to sleep on it: 'Naeko whispered in Chieko's ear, "Your bed is warm now, so I'll move over to the other one."'[134] This is the apex of their happiness, ironically observed by Naeko during the rainy night at the end of the novel: "Happiness. This is happiness." Naeko was listening to a sound coming from the roof. Within the same stride she reminds Chieko of the illusion already examined above.

3.8. Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to outline the form of the enigmatic female figures in the four selected texts. The analysis shows that their problematic forms generally owe to strategies ranging from fantasy to appeal to reality. Traditional aesthetic sensibilities were also found to be instrumental in constituting the nature of these characters. During the focus, it also emerged that the feminine figures possess an enhancing psychological constitution and social contexts. In the next chapter, it is presumed that the female characters serve the setting, aesthetic medium in which they are projected, and the settings of the texts.

[134] Ibid., 181.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER

4.1. Introduction

There is little doubt that Kawabata is in tune with the aesthetic constitution of the repertoire he brings to play in the texts studied in the foregoing chapters. Next is an examination of the relationship between settings of the works and authorial aesthetic principle as relates to the examined characters. The argument first explores the author's concept of charm as relates to the characters. Thereafter, the forms of the characters will linked with the wider settings of the texts.

4.2. Aesthetic Strategies and Contexts of the Female Characters

a) Socio-Psychological Conditions of the Female Characters

This look at the socio-psychological status of the characters is intended as a definition of the essence of Kawabata's conception of what constitutes charm in the characters. Thereafter, the contextual functions of the characters will be deliberated on.

The child form in 'The Izu Dancer,' as already mentioned, presents an artless life through which non-connivance is affirmed. The innocent, infantile figure does not engage in attempting to alter the condition of her life, more so because she is non-conscious of it. The artlessness can be seen in her verbal interaction with the narrator: her reminiscence is unpremeditated, unconstructed detailing of her life, an effusion of her innocence, just as her childly generosities of attending to the narrator's needs.[1] In her infantility, 'she had an

[1] Op. Cit., 24.

open way of speaking, a youthful, honest way of saying exactly what came to her.' She is a non-suspecting susceptibility bared to nature.

The context she is placed in includes her socio-economic lot whose indigence is hinted at. All her vulnerability is entrusted to her elder brother, Eikichi, a man battling penury and wretchedness which he cannot help but accept.[2] Her custodian, though he lacks her kind of innocence, faces the unrelenting hard life with non-regretfulness, though not without traces of sadness. This general whiff of sadness enveloping the narrative is detectable in Eikichi's interaction with the narrator. It is related that he 'became very sentimental. He gazed down at the river, and for a time I thought he was about to weep.'[3]

The dancer in her first uninhibited conversation with the narrator engages images of fragility and evanescence:

> "I've been in Tokyo. I went there once to dance, *when the cherries were in bloom. I was very little,* though and I don't remember anything about it."
> "Are your parents living?" she would take up again .... She talked of the dead baby.[4]

Through subtle images bringing death and evanescence into the horizon, transience and possible death of the fragile little dancer is implied. The little dancer and the narrator are both mutual accomplices in the subtle suggestion. Her complicity in emotional painting of her context chimes in with the general sadness wafting through the narrative. Her utterances do not, however, project her sadness for they are non-contrived effusion of artless simplicity. Even her laughter is non-contrived outflow, akin to a freely-blooming,

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[2] Ibid., 18.
[3] Ibid., 19.
[4] Ibid., 23.

vulnerable flower: 'And her laugh was like a flower's laugh. A flower's laugh – the expression does not seem strained when I think of her.'[5]

The sad lot of the troupe has another dimension in the understood social context. The performers are described as 'low order,' rejected and unwelcome vagrants: the old tea-house keeper does not hide her contempt for them. Inviting them for meals is a waste of good food; signs prohibiting them access are erected in one village and have to be content with cheap inns.[6] Despite this social rejection, the entire group is non-complaining; the little dancer is non-deterred and freely continues her benign acts of concern for the narrator, and bestowing generosities on the inn children.

In *Snow Country*, Yoko's aptness as an ideal figure, symbolically and referentially, resides in the web of her social and psychological condition. Her only family affiliate is Saichiro, whose image is never seen, save the mention of his activities in the cold desolation of snow country, and his subliminal voice that is heard. Her parents are entirely absent and she is alone with the world and all offered in it. In other words, her life is an affirmation of all that the world offers: Yukio is facing death, and herself a loss; she is undauntedly devoted to Yukio and is expected that she would 'accept' his inevitable demise.[7] All her acts ring of unresisting acceptance of the course of fate, and lie at the centre of her charm. The entirety of her condition, the basic principle of non-resistance, non-protest and non-regret is the essential motif characterizing the four texts.

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[5] Ibid., 21.
[6] Ibid., 11, 13 and 26.
[7] Reiko Tsukimura, 'A Thematic Study of the Works of Kawabata Yasunari.' The Journal-Newsletter of the Association of Teachers of Japanese, Vol. 5, No. 2, (1968), 23. *http://www.jstor.org/stable/488804*

Whereas Yoko's figure underscores passive acceptance of the ultimately weightier forces [the necessity of affirming death and love], that which Komako points at are largely interpersonal, though nonetheless fundamental. This distinction can be seen in the drama in which these roles cross at Shimamura's second departure for Tokyo. Distraught Yoko timely arrives with news of deteriorating health of her lover and high-strung Komako is facing the possibility of Shimamura not returning to her: 'it's not right to leave. How do you know you'll come again?[8] To assert that Yoko's condition represents yielding acceptance of the ultimate does not pre-empt interpersonal affirmation of love in vain, for in bringing the news of Yukio's deterioration, she exhibits traces of affinity to Shimamura much to the chagrin of Komako: 'Yoko clutched his arm so tightly that his fingers were numbed.' Her clinging to him is tantamount to physical declaration of her love, and provokes Komako to attempt wrenching him from her, with the effect that he 'felt something very near to physical revulsion.' This revulsion arises from the threatened principle of non- resistance and non-regret in the momentary Komako-Yoko confrontations, which however, is a short -lived in the narrative trend.

If Yoko's sublime charm partly owes to her passivity in the face of ultimate circumstances informing her life, then she is much fit as a symbol accentuating Komako's role. The latter's wholehearted submission to the affirmed life of impossible love, is the constituent condition underpinning her charming 'cleanness' and 'purity.' However, in her love for Shimamura, she tacitly keeps all facets of love within view: love and rejection; possibility and impossibility of it. In other words, she lives the poignant life of acknowledging and affirming the facets, in the same manner as Yoko does of life

[8] *Snow Country*, 85.

and love. Needful to say that she is actually in love with Shimamura and not merely acknowledging it's nature; she does love 'hopelessly' and does not have to take unnecessary stand to love or not to.[9] In love is implied rejection, and in rejection is implied love; both constitute love as a condition in which she is found. This state of her life, the explicitness to Shimamura, constituently imbues her with charm:

> He was conscious of an emptiness that made him see Komako's life as beautiful but wasted, even though he himself was the object of her love; and yet the woman's existence, her straining to live, came touching him like naked skin.[10]

Since the pre-established waste of effort is charming in itself, Komako as wasted life is the more enchanting in the same sense. It is against this background of Komako's hopeless love and Yoko's hopeless life, in conjunction with the setting that their distilled ethereality springs to life.

As with the other texts, 'One Arm' revolves around vulnerably denuded female essence; who is in the process of its being availed to the elements, not perceived as distinct forces seen in action in *Snow Country*. In 'One Arm,' the girl-donor of the arm freely and sympathetically yields her own arm, to the admiring narrator, without selfish consideration of her vulnerability. The selfless sympathy and 'trustingness' of the little Izu dancer, invariable markers of fragility in Kawabata, are even further distilled in the arm-character. She is a child figure by virtue of maternal shield introduced by the 'keepsake' ring. The poignancy of possible tragedy that might befall her is most stark in

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[9] 'Hopelessly' is preferably used for its effect rather than for its negative connotations, for she is made to embrace this condition. She is borne by this current of her love condition to whose effect she freely yields after which she intends to remain in the mountain and 'go pleasantly to seed' there. Ibid., 142.

[10] Ibid., 127-128.

the setting itself fraught with series of danger signifiers: beast roaring fiercely, the inclement darkness and the uncertain fate of planes circling the skies because their landing is made impossible by fog. There is also the possibility of falling into the anguish immanent in the relationship with other people, especially the masculine, considering that she is inexperienced with them. The girl unreservedly submits her own arm to the narrator, tragedy notwithstanding.[11] This trusting submissiveness and the vulnerability running with it as valued qualities of charm also colour her yielding to the narrator:

> "You ask if I'm having fun. You realize that I have permission to change you for my own arm?"
> "I do."
> "Somehow I am afraid to."
> "Oh?"
> "May I?"
> "Please."
> I heard the permission granted, and wondered whether I could accept.
> "Say it again. Say 'Please.'
> "Please, please."[12]

But the narrator does not selfishly seize advantage of her being trustingly submissive. He must cultivate and eke out the quality, but not necessarily guard it:

> The arm lay peacefully trusting me; and the girl would be sleeping in the same peaceful confidence? Would there not be harshness, a nightmare? Had she not seemed to be fighting back tears when she parted with it? The arm was now in my room, which the girl herself had not visited.[13]

That the girl fought back tears suggests not the need for consolation on her parting from her arm (and mother). Instead, her fragile psychological disposition, all else considered, adds to her charming quality. There is hope, however, that the valued example of her

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[11] She seems conscious of the dangers she (or her arm) is exposed to. Her pivot utterance 'It's beautiful' refers to two possible subjects – the preceding innocent and trusting children dangerously pounding the glass of the window on the ninth floor, and the succeeding reference to the window curtain. Even though this ambiguity by allusion, it bears a relationship with pivot words common in *renku*, which work exactly as the name suggests.

[12] Op. Cit., 275.

[13] Ibid., 273-274.

selfless and trusting submissiveness is guarded by angels and ghosts infesting the setting.[14]

Next is a trace of how these socio-psychological conditions are combined with the settings not only to yield the characters' ethereal charm, but also to foreground their contexts and attributes within their contexts.

b) Contexts and the Female Characters

It was seen above how the valued acceptance among the female characters and setting interfeed in *Snow Country* to defeat duality in favour of a concordant whole. 'One Arm' is set in the verge heavily impressed with the sense of dissolved duality as already examined in Chapter Three. In the non-dualistic void, 'illusion' is questioned. Distinctness is assaulted and repaired with wholeness. Duality weaves in the female form, perceived visually, aurally and by tactile appeal, from which she can concretize. The charm of the heroines in *Snow Country*, 'The Izu Dancer' and *The Old Capital*, is realized against the scenery and historical backgrounds. The void acts as the backdrop of 'One Arm' which provides a free space for fantasy play.[15]

The void affords a context for an idiosyncratic aesthetic, in which medium the female figure is projected. An awareness of this fact is implied in the utterance of the anthropomorphic presence, at the point when she sounds like a personage with a mission. She teasingly engages the narrator as he looks through the window made with her fingers:

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[14] See 270-271.
[15] This fantasy element will be examined subsequently

> "A peep show? asked the arm. "And what do you see?"
> "My dusky old room. Its five lights." Before I had finished the sentence I was almost shouting. No, no! I see it!"
> "And what do you see?"
> "It's gone."
> "And what did you see?"
> "A color. A blur of purple. And inside it little circles, little beads of red and gold, whirling around and around."[16]

For a moment, things with distinct forms are first presented: the dusky old room, five lights – the entirety of the narrator's room. They are put on the table, so to speak, for questioning and within a brief span of time, the form of the room dissolves into the phenomenon of purple blur, flecked with beads of red and gold in dynamic motion. The fact that they are in motion so much de-emphasizes the staticity of form. These rich colours spinning round are also not significant in themselves, but as medium within which the ungraspable female presence is suspended.

Spatial distinction and substantiality outside the narrator's room are eschewed in favour of virtual fusion. No terrain is visible, save an atmosphere which enshrouds it; there is no sky and the distance is limitless. The impression given then is of a primordial mass 'sucked up in the fog.'[17] In the void, even 'self' is questioned: "Self? What is that? Where is it?"[18] After a while, the narrator enquires: "Was it an illusion you wanted to show me?" to which she replies: "No. I came to erase it."[19] The illusion understood here is that of duality.

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[16] Ibid., 281.
[17] Fictional description of this universe is extensively given in page 269 and 274 of the text.
[18] Ibid., 273.
[19] Ibid., 282.

But, as mentioned earlier, even this profound void has within it implication of danger in the form of some incomprehensible threat: 'The thickness of the fog seemed infinite, and beyond it something fearsome writhed and coiled.'[20] It is then in this particular context and atmosphere that the fragile female figure is to be perceived. She can transfuse herself into fetishistic forms, as the arm. It can also become continuous with the narrator, as when the arm becomes continuous with the narrator's body, at which point he experiences feminine blood running in him: 'The clean blood of the girl was now, this very moment, flowing through me.'[21]

The spatial treatment in *Snow Country* exhibits an evolutional complexity derivative of that in 'The Izu Dancer.' Whereas the former uses an array of rhythmic dynamics, ranging between the subjective and the objective, 'The Izu dancer' flows in the expansion and contraction of space. Expanse alternates with close-up. The wide nature, seen from aloft, sprawls in a non-adversarial harmony. Note this in how the forest relates with the shower of rain: 'A shower swept up … touching the cedar forest white ….' The rain touches the forest rather than fall on it, suggesting a harmonious mutual relationship; indeed the rain makes the cedar forest white, a colour implying purity, so that arguably, the rain possesses purifying effect even in its inclemency.

The affective description of the entirety of the scenery leaves no doubt about the narrator's regard for it. It is a pleasant harmonious whole, a fact which belies his initial

[20] Ibid., 277.
[21] Ibid., 282.

denial of it as being instrumental in his view of the little dancer.[22] The expanse of 'mountains rising one on another, open forests, deep valleys'[23] bequeath a pleasurable feeling to the narrator, soon after which it drastically contracts into the kindly form of the little dancer, the drum, the *samisen*, or the tea ceremony. Later, he 'came to see' that the charm he has associated with the troupe's lifestyle (with the little dancer in the fore) essentially owes much to the 'scent of meadows and mountains' and their social conditions.[24] From then on, he tends to consciously appreciate the role of the scenery, though in unspoken terms:

> From Yagano we entered the mountains again. We looked out over the sea at the morning sun, warming our mountain valley. At the mouth of the river a beach opened wide and white.
> "That's Oshima."
> "So big! You really will come, won't you? the dancer said.
> For some reason – was it the clearness of the autumn sky that made it seem so? – the sea where the sun rose over it was veiled in a spring like mist. It was some ten miles to Shimoda. For a time the mountain hit the sea. Chiyoko hummed a song, softly, lazily.[25]

The wideness of nature, seen from an elevation is pleasant, more so because of the dancer and also because of its being charmingly inscrutable, as subtly underscored by the veil of mist that prevent the knowledge of beyond.[26] But the charming mystery of here-and-beyond can be understood in what is proximal: the same impersonal mystery of impersonal nature. There is a parallel, therefore, in the charming mystery of artless, infantile 'flow' through life's natural course. Essential import of the little dancer as a character is artlessness of life, as nature is also 'artless' and non-meddling, represented by the parallel flow of water: 'The water bubbled clear and clean from shady rocks. The

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[22] See Ibid., 9.
[23] Ibid., 9.
[24] See 21-22.
[25] Ibid., 22-23.
[26] Donald Keen, *Appreciations of Japanese Culture*. (New York and London: Kodansha, 2002), 13, 15 and 16.

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women were standing around it.'[27] The artlessness of the dancer thus complements, rather than supplements, the artlessness of nature itself. Artificiality of one dampens the artistic import of the other. Plain-child form of the Izu dancer obdurately holds on for the reason that she is seen in an artificial setting, the constructed public bath. Even so, the public bath is foregrounded by the new form of the dancer.[28]

It is already noted that from the very outset, Yoko in *Snow Country* is charming, in which fact is understood sadness, even before it is understood what the nature of the sadness is: 'It was such beautiful voice that it struck one as sad. In all its high resonance, it seemed to come echoing back from the snowy night.'[29] Her loneliness and sadness is immediately associated with her being separated from her family and more so by tending to a dying loved one with non-aversion.

Inside the train there is a dim light, as there is gathering darkness without, obfuscating the distinctness of things. The mountain landscape beyond, as seen through the window cleared of mist, lack the distinct contours 'having lost its last traces of color.'[30] This indistinctness is the essence of nature's springing to life, actively flowing 'along in a wide, unformed emotion.' The living nature is projected as having unformed emotion, that is, it harbours no adversarial relationship with that which comes before or against it: ideally it is the epitome of passivity. It will be recalled that within this window through

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[27] Ibid., 24. There can be felt the haiku character in this instance characterizing the mood of the entire setting.

[28] It is also as true that her charming nature is toned down by bared youth, which generally goes counter to the aesthetic principle of subtle statement and impressionistic presentation.

[29] Ibid., 5.

[30] Ibid., 5; Keen, 2002. 15-16.

which the landscape attains active being, is also seen floating the tenuous Yoko-figure, all yielding an intangible, superimposed tableau, dreamlike in its indescribable charm. The description immediately preceding this heightened dreamlike tableau, indicates Yoko performing kindly acts of compassion for the ailing Yukio. Aversion to her wretched condition is negated and instead her sad condition is made as elevating her into the charming figure she is in the train window scene. To Shimamura there is no need whatsoever to read pain and suffering in her condition, but the charm emanating from her being: 'For Shimamura there was none of the pain that the sight of something truly sad can bring. Rather, it was as if he were watching a tableau in dream – and that was no doubt the working of this strange mirror.'[31]

Thus, the passivity of setting comes together with the compassionate passivity of Yoko's life to constitute the charm in the window, as a whole rather than as discontinuous elements. But what happens when the dark landscape background is blotted out in the window mirror?:

> The window was dark by the time they came to the signal stop. The charm of the mirror faded with fading landscape. Yoko's face was still there, but for all the warmth of her ministrations, Shimamura had found in her a transparent coldness. He did not clear the window as it clouded over again.[32]

The barely visible landscape is lost, and the compelling charm is lost too, the persistence of Yoko-figure notwithstanding, neither does the landscape, or scenery, obtain charm itself, independently from the female presence. Each detailed scenery description has the

[31] Ibid., 9.
[32] Ibid., 11.

information of either of the two characters.[33] Snow country allures not only because of hot springs, but also because of the lives of Komako and Yoko; the pure white snow in the mirror contributes to a charming whole because there is Komako. Musical voices of the two characters variously waft through empty space of the country, as echoes, or naked voices emanating from a source as wasted life, or wasted effort. Komako's waste of effort in diary-keeping thus instills sublime pleasure in snow country.[34] As she is about to be left in a state of unrequieted love and loneliness, she becomes a kindly and compassionate sound to Shimamura who knows her as being 'hopelessly' in love with him. After a time when she is particularly high-strung, at which point she has a bout of sleepless nights, her figure in the mirror, with snow background, instills overpowering feeling to Shimamura.[35] She blends with the white snow to create a stunning picture.[36]

Even a passing train adds a quality to the entire mix, itself standing for poignant passage of time and parting in the lonely snow country. This poignancy of time passage and parting, an essential component of the sense of sadness, is superimposed on the already grim cemetery by which the train passes. The sound of the train becomes one with the sad voice of Yoko, all condensing into the charming poignancy of the fact of her life.[37]

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[33] If this attention on Yoko is unduly extended, it is not only to confirm the greatness of her charm, insofar as her life is devoted to the dying, but also to capitalize on her symbolic status underscoring Komako's role. As earlier suggested Yoko's role equally claims parallel reality; she extends Kawabata's scope of 'beautiful' or 'pure' life. It is not only restricted to interpersonal relationship, but also extended to ultimate relationship involving life and death.

[34] See Ibid., 41-42.

[35] See Ibid., 46-48.

[36] When Shimamura turns his eyes at the mirror, literally and metaphorically, he could not bear the burning picturesqueness of it: 'Shimamura glanced up at her, and immediately lowered his head.' Ibid., 48.

[37] See Ibid., 120.

It is worth noting that even the ideal physical form of Komako is flatly rendered and lacks the brightness of her own counterpart in the mirror, and much less that of Yoko-figure, whose physical attributes, in the first place, is given little attention

Earlier, there was reference to Tsuruta Kenya's examination of flow dynamics in *Snow Country*, the employment of various rhythms in the narrative progression. The powerful glow of Yoko in the train window mirror and that of Komako in the mirror, are heightened tensions alternating with the objective *tableaux vivants* in which the two are projected in passive contextual harmonies.[38] They are devices of narrative pressure and release, fantastic aestheticism and objective observation. In this rhythmic flow, constituent elements, including the female characters, do not distract from one another, but each contributes in the orchestral whole.

4.3. Contextual Import of the Female Character

From the foregoing, it can be said that the puzzling characters in the four texts are *charming*, at least along the line of Kawabata's aesthetic principle. At this point, will be traced these strategic treatments in the narrative current, with the aim of establishing their import in the contexts. The treatments are such that there are points in the narrative flow where the ebb of their charm is least felt and those at which it is engagingly powerful, if not possessing. In other words, the enigmatic and transformational nature of the characters, within the respective textual schemes, stands as narrative measures of tension and relaxation.

[38] Howard Hibbet, Op. Cit., 43.

It should be asserted here that the virtual presence in 'One Arm' is an enriched version of Yoko, Komako, the little Izu dancer, and to some extent, Naeko and Chieko. In the text, the forces of adversity enhance the fragility and vulnerability of the female figure. That is to say these forces contribute to her charming nature. The dangers are represented as sourceless, perhaps insurmountable natural forces that would threaten the vulnerable and the fragile. What becomes the focal point in the story is the essential import of the delicate, and as such charming, nature of the female character, rather than geographical and socio-cultural contexts as in the other three texts. But even within these geographical and socio-cultural contexts, threat factors are implied. There are the ravages of unconsummated love between Shimamura and Komako in *Snow Country*. In 'The Izu Dancer,' there is the vulnerable child figure in whose world intersects with the hard adult life fraught with the challenges of making a living. Environmental forces and family severance in *The Old Capital* are represented as such threat factors. The contextual atmosphere of 'One Arm,' as already seen, is filled with potential dangers, appreciated as such, that even demons would not withstand them: '... the dampness will make even demons cough.'[39] Thus if the demons would be non-resistant to these adverse factors, then much less so the charming female figure projected.

Even though there is no explicit geographical and historical setting in 'One Arm,' the essential import of the character lies in the aesthetic *weltanschauung* behind its nature. There is a conspicuously repressed reference to Western images, though only limited to hard physical attributes, such as roundness of shoulders. But another allusion, almost subliminal reference to Western figures, involves the two Occidental twin girls. Their

[39]'One Arm,' 280.

acts have been introduced to underscore the essential point in the story. The mute world enacted behind the glass window is brought in to illustrate an aesthetic contrast. The Western woman, perhaps mother to the twins, is oblivious of the danger they live with. The little girls dangerously play behind the window:

> They pounded at the glass, pushing it with their shoulders and shoving at each other. Their mother knitted, her back to the window. If the large pane were to have broken or come loose, they would have fallen from the ninth floor. It was only I who thought them in danger. Their mother was quite unconcerned. The glass was in fact so solid that there was no danger.[40]

The aesthetic contrast which the characters – the Western woman, the children and arm-character - serve to underscore dwells in their divergent portrayals. Whereas the charming arm-character exists in the light of affirmed tragedy, the Western woman and the children exist in a world in which danger seems to be kept at bay. This window snapshot thus addresses the ulterior purpose of the text. Consequently, it can be asserted that 'One Arm' gets aesthetically closer to the ideals of the Kawabata of the New Sense School.

'One Arm' therefore propounds and develops an aesthetic principle which is appropriated in the three other texts with a view to foregrounding the contexts of the female figures and other strategic socio-cultural attributes. Unlike 'One Arm,' 'The Izu Dancer' does not make a direct reference to a cultural context other than the affirmation of the context itself. The literary philosophy of Kawabata in 'The Izu Dancer' is quite seminal, in relation to the other three texts. Even so, in the short story there is an unconscious tilt towards what was to become the primary motive in later texts.

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[40]Ibid., 274.

Seidensticker's observation pointed out in Chapter One - that Kawabata's literary art bears ancestral relationship with the 17th century haiku master - comes to mind. Influential among these poets is Basho, a perpetual traveler – poets, in whose works nature and seasonal cycle are extensively impressed. Basho is a prototype of the student-narrator in 'The Izu Dancer' in appreciating nature in travel:

> The autumn scenery was pleasant enough, mountains rising one on another, open forest, deep valleys, but I was excited less by the scenery than by a certain hope.
> ....
> I looked back and looked back again, congratulating myself that here finally I had the flavour of travel[41]

Coming at the beginning of the narrative makes this utterance instrumental in comprehending the Izu dancer. That is to say, there exists a relationship between the charming dancer and the geographical-cum-cultural context.

She is an enchanting figure because of her childliness. In turn, her compelling nature is appropriated in romanticization of the mountains through rhythmic tension and relaxation. The socio-geographical context becomes significant first before or soon after an episode of her charm. Even before she ever appears at the beginning of the narrative, the narrator's 'certain hope' – certainly the hope of seeing the dancer – informs the agreeable perception of nature. His denial of beauty of scenery, *per se*, strategically enables the introduction of the dancer.

Social set-up, especially the traditional family ties are also foregrounded through the medium of the dancer. In Kawabata's conception of pure beauty, the charming dancer and her family are bound together despite their actual unimpressive lives. The young

[41]Op. Cit., 9, 10.

dancer and her family unquestioningly accept their lives - at least in Kawabata's fictional version – however harsh in reality it might be. The narrator almost plainly reveals these foregrounded values as if they were lessons he derived from his travel and from being in the company of the dancer:

> I came to see that the life of a traveling performer was not the forbidding one I had imagined. Rather it was easy going, relaxed, carrying with it the scent of meadows and mountains. Then too this troupe was held together by close family affection.[42]

The narrator, whose family background is effaced, sees an ideal traditional family structure in which ties are enhance by conditions, and circumstances of particular family units. This is to say that the narrator finds an ideal surrogate family in the absence of his own, which is not represented.

In 'The Izu Dancer' and *Snow Country*, as also in *The Old Capital*, the principal narrative viewpoints set out to regain something. Shimamura has an alienated, fantastic longing for ballet, a fact he is fully conscious of. Having grown up in Tokyo, as he had initially taken to traditional Japanese performing arts, but finding monotony in the 'slumbering old tradition,' he gives it up for the Western version.[43] Ironically, it is these supposedly slumbering old traditions in the form of the traditional aesthetic underlying *Snow Country*, which confronts him as feature of essential charm. The Western ballet pursuits mentioned as Shimamura's favourites are not developed, but are instead relegate to oblivion almost immediately.[44] The Western ballet also suggestively acts as contrasting cultural signifier that is to be narratively disadvantaged by relegation to oblivion in

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[42] Ibid., 22.
[43] Ibid., 24.
[44] Quite clearly also, Kawabata uses the Western ballet to underscore his aesthetic principle of unattainment.

favour of revitalized form of the 'slumbering old tradition.' In effect, therefore, Shimamura is in the ethereal snow country as a typically 'jaded modern intellectual' on a self-healing mission. His other purpose in the snow country, the visit to hot spring, is literal as well as symbolic.

Yoko-figure is undoubtedly a powerful figure right from the beginning of *Snow Country*. As seen in the previous chapter, Kawabata ensures that she is sufficiently dazzling and engaging before the geisha is introduced. This stage is set courtesy of the culturally renascent vision of Shimamura. Kawabata allows some time lapse during which ground is prepared well, by means of Yoko-symbol which takes up a large part of the initial episodes of the novel. Soon after enough of this ground building, the grand and stately image of a woman is sighted.[45] The woman is more significant as the signifier in the instance, in lacking a name that would make her merely human. Her signifier status is also accentuated by her being resplendent in typifying trailing, long skirts. The figure is in a full geisha pose:

> She did not bend in the slightest movement of recognition. From the distance he caught something intent and serious in the still form … she started to smile through the thick geisha powder.[46]

Snow Country, as a narrative, could as well be related from the first person point of view, though there is also implicit perspective which questions Shimamura's stated tendency to western culture. If through his vision is realized the charming female figures, then it is not because of the Western aesthetic outlook but because of the traditional poetic

[45] '… the tall figure of the woman, her skirts trailing coldly off the dark floor.'
[46] *Snow Country*, 15.

weltanschauung. In this kind of outlook, in which Yoko's and Komako's tendency to consubstantiate, or coexist with nature, the traditional art of the geisha, the aesthetic regard of nature - all come together in a symphonic glow, with the two acting as tradition co-ordinates. A perfect example is the opening train-window scene and the others as examined in the previous chapter. Whereas 'One Arm' illustrates an idiosyncratic aesthetic principle, *Snow Country* highlights a traditional aesthetic which has a bearing on the perception of the cosmos, as a way of life.

The Old Capital is one of the last two novels Kawabata wrote towards the end of his life. Exhibited in it is full tradition awareness overtly articulated unlike in the other three texts which point at cultural attributes rather suggestively. The choice of ground for the world projected in the narrative is highly calculated. Kyoto, the old capital, has a long history dating back to the Heian period. As a setting, it acts as signifier in itself, standing as the epitome of the essential, old traditions of Japan. In the novel a great deal of these folk traditions which have characterized Kyoto over the ages are staged with modern socio-economic environment in mind. Due to the historical significance, the folk traditions have characterized the entire Japanese history. The traditional and modern, the new and the old, are represented as forces acting on one another.

The argument in the last chapter was that Chieko is the fragile and vulnerable of the twins, Naeko being tough-skinned, hardy, and socially independent. There is a wide difference in their upbringing, so much so that their lives are governed by their respective background: Chieko is brought up according to modern socio-economic set-up with

school system, whereas Naeko is brought up in a traditional manner in which apprenticeship constitutes the mode of education.[47]

Beyond this Naeko is an embodiment of the respective merits of the old tradition. She represents the traditional Japanese tendency to self-sufficiency and contentment, the presence of which salves the modernized but tradition-conscious persons, as Chieko, questing for the rustic elegance of the old-cum-traditional.[48] In fact the traditional and the old are perceived favourably at the expense of the new and the foreign, which are handled with hesitation and suspicion. Even Western industrial goods are ideally produced in Japan for foreign markets just to acquire 'foreign currency.'[49] The two heroines in *The Old Capital* also have a function in the narrative flow, which involves foregrounding signifiers in the setting. They become vehicles by which the reader is taken round on tour of the historical sites of the old capital. An exemplary instance is when the fairy figure of Naeko stands waiting for Hideo at Hamaguri Gate. This episode is strategically cut off, and the narrative deviates to a catalogue of famous personalities and customs defining Japanese history since the establishment of Kyoto as a capital. These personalities, among others, include Murasaki Shikibu, and Sei Shonagon, of *Genji* and *Pillow Book* fame respectively. There is also a strategic thrust in the presentation of Chieko. It is already noted that she is vulnerable and fragile, and therefore in need of protection, just as the violets have the protection of the hollows on the maple tree. There is therefore a justification for the custodial, fairy figure of Naeko, the embodiment of simple-natured traditional being. Though Chieko is not as alienated as Shimamura in *Snow Country*, she

[47] The Old Capital, 61 and 99.
[48] See Ibid., 148.
[49] See Ibid., 130, 131 and 132.

shows some effort in the quest for reconnection with the distinctly traditional. These traditional attributes put themselves forward as pacifying and fulfilling, assuring and emotionally lulling in the face of significant socio-economic change and cultural intricacy accruing from it.

4.4. Role of Fantasy

It is undeniable that the four texts have an inflection of fantasy that is tinged with *mono no aware* and Zen aesthetics noted in chapter one. Shimamura in *Snow Country* has detached himself from the monotonous intellectual life in Tokyo and gone to the snow country resort where he could recoup his temperamental vitality in fantasy. Not only is snow country a literal resort, but also a symbolic resort for him, as a blandly modernized man, to fantastically revitalize himself with the resurgent traditional aesthetic sensibility. *The Old Capital*, 'One Arm' and 'The Izu Dancer' all involve protagonists whose economic, social or psychological bearing are radically improved by their encounter with respective enigmatic forms of the female figures. As the ultimate point following his encounter with the Izu dancer, the young narrator attains a dispositional purity, revealing at the very end of the narrative that it was as though his 'head had turned to clear water, it was falling pleasantly away drop by drop.'[50] This is as good as suggesting that his soul had been 'rinsed' clean by his experience with the dance troupe. Ultimately, he lapses into a beautiful 'emptiness' in which he floats blissfully. The narrator under the spell of the feminine presence in 'One Arm,' also has his experience culminating in profound

[50] 'The Izu Dancer,' 29.

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bliss obtained from the narrative-long fantasy. At the end, he floats in a great wave directly resultant from the fantastic interaction with the arm-character.

If Naeko's word that she is an illusion is to be taken for it, then she is Chieko's fantastic incarnation of traditionally ideal equivalent of herself, which she, and Hideo, proceed to pay tribute to. The consequence of this tribute is their boundless sense of fulfillment and happiness. Hideo weaves Naeko's *obi* with great dedication and joy which 'swelled warm within him.'[51] Chieko, on the other hand, gets a psychological respite after realizing the fantastic fairy figure of Naeko, which, as an embodiment of the old, rustic way of life, is henceforth a solace and stabilizing force in her life.

4.5. Conclusion

From this Chapter, we can draw the following fundamental conclusions. Firstly, that the female characters in the four texts are enigmatic and have been appropriated to project an idiosyncratic aesthetic, informed by a background of an established Japanese aesthetic. Secondly, the aesthetic projected, favours an outlook which through the mediation of fantasy, is propounded as a source of social and psychological relief, insofar as it is established as a stable traditional outlook.

[51] *The Old Capital*, 144.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study held within horizon the 'modern' context of the texts studied in the attempt to derive ultimate point which they put forward in the medium of the female characters. 'Modern' was used to describe the period in Japanese history roughly starting from the Meiji Period to the time of the construction of the texts the study covered. From this period onwards there was extensive cultural and ideological contact with the world outside Japan, mainly with the Western world.

In Chapter Two, there was found a relationship between the four texts and their contexts – socio-cultural and literary. The contexts were seen to provide the materials constituting the formal aspects of the female characters examined, as well as the general aesthetic tone running through the texts. The nature of the characters described in Chapter Three was attributed to the aesthetic outlook, authorial and traditional, in inter-play with fantasy and in actual life as represented in the texts. In the Chapter Four, it was arrived at that the forms of the characters, through the author's own aesthetic perspective, were used to foreground a traditional aesthetic *weltanschauung* and other traditionally grounded socio-economic habits.

Findings of the Study

From the foregoing, the following observations can be made. The earlier claims of enigma relating to the female characters in *Snow Country*, *The Old Capital*, 'One Arm' and 'The Izu Dancer' are now substantially corroborated. It should also be noted that in their enigmatic nature is charm. The charmingly enigmatic female figures are projected

through the lenses of an idiosyncratic aesthetic medium which is a nuanced traditional *mono no aware* and *haiku* aesthetics. In the enigmatic forms of these characters, these aesthetic *weltanschauung* do not only form the aesthetic substratum, but are themselves foregrounded. The nature of the characters and the aesthetic sensibility behind them, reinforce what the New Sense School termed emotional sensibility as the preferred essence of modern Japanese literary expression.

Suffice to also observe that in all the four texts studied, the protagonists ultimately arrive at a point of relief from tension after a metaphorical narrative-long expedition. The tension experienced by the narrators emanate from their break from the old (culture and tradition) and in being immersed in the new (urban) ways of life. This relief comes in the form of fantasy as well as in the actual life experience. Such function of fantasy explicitly runs through 'One Arm' and 'The Izu Dancer' and remotely evoked in *Snow Country* and *The Old Capital*. In the latter two, however, relief of tension is directly experienced in the characters' real life rather than in the realm of fantasy.

Conclusion

There are three fundamental conclusions which can be drawn from the above. Firstly, in the enigmatic nature of the female characters, the writer propounds an aesthetic which is a revision of the distinctively Japanese *mono no aware* and *haiku* aesthetics. Above these two traditional aesthetic sensibilities, he constructs an idiosyncratic aesthetic superstructure, which to a limited extent is a fusion of the two. Secondly, the characters have been used as tradition embodiments as well as agents foregrounding such

embodiments. Thirdly, the view implied is that traditions and its embodiments have fetishistic effectiveness in regaining an individual's dispositional order and stability, socially and psychologically. This is less so in fantasy than in actual historical moment of economic and sociological change. Recoup of these traditions and their embodiments has a cathartic effect in the human psyche during the process of such change.

Suggestion for Further Research

The theoretical angle from which this study was projected, limited the analysis to para-linguistic affective devices which are not necessarily bound by linguistic code. Considering that texts covered by the study were in translation, linguistic features proper were not considered. A further study of the texts, incorporating these linguistic features proper could enrich the findings of this study

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MOTOME-ZUKA

Persons

Buddhist Monk from the Westland	*Waki*
Attendants	*Waki-zure*
Village Girls	*Tsure*
Village Maiden	*Shite* in Part One
Man of the Place	*Kyōgen*
Ghost of Unai-Otome	*Shite* in Part Two

Place

Ikuta Field, Settsu Province

Season

Early spring

PART ONE

Stage-attendants bring in a framework mound and place it in front of the Orchestra.

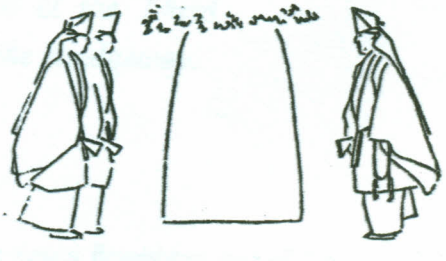
1

While the entrance music shidai *is being played, a* Buddhist Monk *from the Westland, wearing a pointed hood, plain kimono and broad-sleeved robe, appears, crosses the Bridgeway and enters the stage, followed by his two* Attendants *similarly dressed.*

Monk and Attendants

shidai

Long we travel through the country,
Long we travel through the country,



Hastening to Miyako.

CHORUS Long we travel through the country,

jidori Hastening to Miyako.

MONK I am a monk from the Westland. I journey to Miyako which I have never seen.

MONK and ATTENDANTS

michiyuki In traveller's garb
We trace the coast of the eightfold sea,
We trace the coast of the eightfold sea.
Across the foaming tide we sail,
Along the mountain-road we toil.
Watching the rising and the setting of the sun
We come at last to the land of Tsu,
Where lies the far-famed field of Ikuta,[1]
Where lies the far-famed field of Ikuta.

MONK Often have I heard of it. There many people are coming to gather herbs. I will wait and ask them about the noted places here.

The MONK *and* ATTENDANTS *sit down at the* Waki *Seat.*

ATTENDANTS It will be well you do.

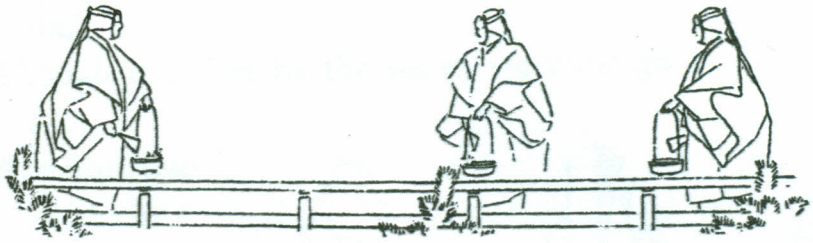
2

While the entrance music issei *is being played,* the VILLAGE MAIDEN, *wearing a 'young woman' mask, wig, painted gold-patterned under-kimono, broad-sleeved robe, outer-kimono in* koshimaki *style, appears and advances on the Bridgeway, preceded by three* GIRLS, *wearing* tsure *masks, and otherwise similarly dressed. The* VILLAGE MAIDEN *stops at the Third Pine, while the* GIRLS *stop in a row on the Bridgeway.*

MAIDEN and GIRLS

issei On the field of Ikuta

[1] Noted in classical poetry for young-herb gathering. It is now a flourishing part of Kobe.



Where spring green herbs the young girls gather
The morning breezes turn their sleeves,
And bring once more the wintry frost.

GIRLS — Though buds bloom big on trees,
Light snow is fluttering down[1]

MAIDEN and GIRLS — And grass in the woods lies cold.

MAIDEN — " When snow is still upon the pines
sashi — In mountain-depths,
Young spring herbs are gathered
In Miyako's neighbouring fields."[2]

MAIDEN and GIRLS — The season there has come again—
Ah! To think of it is sweet.

MAIDEN — Remote is our village,

MAIDEN and GIRLS — And we the country-folk—
Ah! life's bitterness
Torments our tender frames.
Yet we must live: such is our burden.
When spring is barely come,

sage-uta — " Many must be the herb-gatherers,
For the snow is blurred with tracks."[3]

[1] An echo of Ki-no-Tsurayuki's poem in the *Kokinshū*:

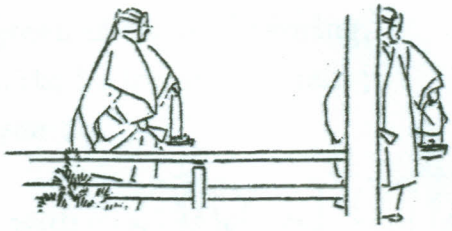
In early spring
When haze prevails and buds wax,
If snow falls, it falls like petals
Even in flowerless lands.

[2] Anonymous poem in the *Kokinshū*.

[3] Poem by Fujiwara-no-Tamesada in the *Fūgashū* compiled in 1346.

age-uta

Though trackless be the snow, we must go on,[1]
Though trackless be the snow, we must go on,
And from the marshes gather herbs to-day.



If we await the melting of the snow,
Old will grow the herbs.
Though cold the snow-enfolded fields
And cold the wind-swept woods,
The seven herbs of spring[2] are out;
Come, let us gather the young herbs of Ikuta,
Come, let us gather the young herbs of Ikuta.

They enter the stage. The MAIDEN *stands in the centre and the* GIRLS *stand at the* Waki *Front.*

3

MONK May I ask you something, maidens? This place is Ikuta, is it not? *Rises.*

GIRLS Knowing it is so,
Why do you ask?
And seeing the fields so fair about you,
Easily should you know.

[1] Part of an anonymous poem in the *Kokinshū*:

Trackless lies the snow
In front of my house,
For no one cares to come
Treading through it.

[2] I.e. *nazuna* (shepherd's purse), *hakobe* (chickweed), *seri* (a sort of parsley), *suzuna* (turnip), *gogyō* (*Gnaphalium multiceps*), *suzushiro* (radish) and *hotoke-no-za* (*Lapsana apogonoides*). It was the New Year custom to eat these herbs in broth or gruel on the seventh of January, as a prevention against all forms of disease. The custom is still observed in some country districts.

MAIDEN Do you not know these woods to be the famous woods of Ikuta?[1]

GIRLS And the water you crossed even now
The renowned river Ikuta?

MAIDEN The water is the pale green of the early spring,
and girls are gathering herbs in the snowy field;

MAIDEN and GIRLS Should you see a field
Sparsely strewn with herbs,
Would you not at once say, 'Little Field'?[2]
Do not ask us idle questions.

MONK The sights before my eyes,
The woods, stream and sea,
This misted Ono field, the whole scene
Is worthy of the famed Ikuta,
But where is the Motome-zuka?[3]

GIRLS The name Motome-zuka often have I heard,
But where is it, indeed?
Nothing we know of it.

MAIDEN Come, come, traveller, do not ask such aimless questions; we are busy picking herbs.

[1] Still in good preservation in the grounds of the Ikuta shrine in Kobe. During the Genji-Heike War the Heike fortified the former villa of Taira-no-Kiyomori, calling it the castle of Ichinotani and built its main gate by the woods, where a fierce battle was fought between the two armies.

[2] *Ono* in Japanese. The name is derived from Tsunesue's poem in the *Fubokushū*, compiled in 1310:

Though I dare not ask,
For whom is she gathering tender herbs
On the 'Little Field' of Ikuta
In the province of Tsu?

[3] There are three mound-tombs, about two-thirds of a mile apart; one for Chinu-no-Masurao, which is at Goten in Sumiyoshi Village (east of Mikage City); another for Unai-Otome (also called Otome-zuka, 'Maiden's Tomb') which is found at Tōmyō in Mikage City; and the other for Sasada-Onoko, which used to be at Mitoro, Tsugano Village, but is now demolished.

GIRLS — You are hastening on your journey,
Why then linger here?

MAIDEN — An old poem says:

CHORUS — "To make a traveller linger on the road,
age-uta — To make a traveller linger on the road,
They pick the tender herbs
In Ono Field of Ikuta."[1]

Why ask such idle questions?
Though with ice the marsh is mirrored still,
Let us seek the parsley shoots
Where deep the waters lie,
And pick it with its leaves of green,
And pick it with its leaves of green.

rongi — Among the first fresh herbs of early spring
We may not find so many kinds.

MAIDEN — "When on this new spring's morning
We see the snow upon the field,
We feel the old year has hardly passed"[2]
And there is little of the new year's growth.

Let us take young shoots with old leaves.

CHORUS — Though old the leaves,
The herbs in truth are those
That bring back youth.
Be careful in the field in spring:

MAIDEN — To the field in spring,
To the field in spring

[1] Poem by Minamoto-no-Moroyori in the *Horikawa Hyakushu*, a collection of 1600 poems by 16 poets compiled at the beginning of the 12th century in the reign of the Emperor Horikawa.

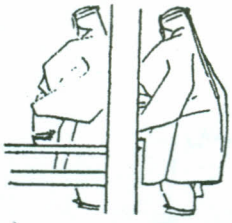
[2] Poem by Taira-no-Suketaka in the *Shūishū* (1001).

He came to gather violets,[1]
But the young purple[2] leaves he picked.

CHORUS Oh, how green

MAIDEN The shepherd's purse of Chōan,[3]

CHORUS The bitter herbs, and parsley shoots!
So covered with the snow of dawn
That we cannot easily pluck them.
With the cold morning breeze of Ono,
And snow that bends the boughs of pines,
Where can we find the breath of spring?
Bleak is the river wind
And cold are our wind-blown sleeves;
Let us return and leave the herbs ungathered,
Let us return and leave the herbs ungathered.



The GIRLS *rise and go out through the Sliding Door.*

4

MONK How strange! When the girls who were gathering the young shoots have all gone home, why do you alone remain in the field?

MAIDEN Did you not ask me about the Motome-zuka?

MONK Yes. Will you please show it to me?

[1] Part of a poem by Yamabe-no-Akahito in the *Manyōshū* (Bk. VIII, 1424):

Forth to the field of spring
I went to gather violets,
But enamoured of the field
I slept there all night through.

[2] Purple in Japanese is *murasaki*. The underlying meaning is that he fell in love with a girl whose name is *Wakamurasaki* who afterwards became the second wife of the hero of the *Tale of Genji*. See Waley, The *Tale of Genji*, Vol. I, Ch. V. The name is taken from that of the plant from the root of which a purple dye used to be extracted.

[3] I.e. Chang-an (長安), the capital of several dynasties down to T'ang in ancient China.

MAIDEN Come this way. This is the Motome-zuka.

Takes a few steps to the mound.

MONK Do you know what is its history?

MAIDEN *katari* Yes. Long ago in Ikuta there lived a maiden called Unai-Otome. Sasada-Onoko and Chinu-no-Masurao fell in love with her, and at the same hour on the same day they sent to her letters of passionate devotion. Unai thought that if she should give her heart to one, the other would be embittered, so she would yield neither to the one nor to the other. After various contests of skill the youths shot a mandarin-duck[1] on the Ikuta river, both their arrows hitting the selfsame wing. Then I thought

Sits down in the centre.

What cruelty!
Sailing on the green water,
Those birds were to each other bound,
And now because of me
One has lost its dearest life;
How breaks my heart to see
The duck without its loving mate!
"Weary am I of life!
I will seek my death
In the waters of the river of Ikuta,[2]
Whose name proves false."[3]

[1] The mandarin-duck is found in East Siberia, China, Korea and Japan. It comes to Japan only in winter. The male and the female birds always swim in pairs and so they are traditionally regarded as a symbol of wedded love. Lafcadio Hearn has collected in his *Kwaidan* a legendary story that a hunter killed a male bird to ease his hunger. That night the female appeared in his dreams lamenting the cruel loss. The next morning, at the very site of the murder and before the hunter's eyes, she tore herself to death with her beak. The hunter shaved his head and became a priest.

[2] I.e. 'Field of Life.' *Iku* in Ikuta means 'to live.'

[3] Poem ascribed to Unai-Otome in the *Yamato Monogatari*.

CHORUS
age-uta

With these last words,
With these last words
I sank beneath the waves.
To this mound where I lay buried,
The young men came
And thinking life too vain to hold,
Each other stabbed and died,
When evening tide coursed up the stream.
Among my sins
Their death is counted too.
O save my miserable soul!
And lo! into the mound she vanishes,
And lo! into the mound she vanishes.

The MAIDEN *points to the mound behind her.*

The MAIDEN *rises and goes into the mound.*

INTERLUDE

The MAN OF THE PLACE, *wearing a striped kimono, sleeveless robe and trailing divided skirt and carrying a short sword, appears and enters the stage and, asked by the* MONK, *tells the history of the Motome-zuka. Then he goes out.*

PART TWO

1

MONK and ATTENDANTS
machi-utai

Sitting all night through
Among the sere grass—litter for the stag,
Among the sere grass—litter for the stag,
To pacify the wandering soul
That stole into the grassy mound,
We read the holy *sutra*—
"O that the spirit gain enlightenment,
Released from chains of life and death,

The MONK *joins his hands in prayer to the mound.*

The MONK *sits on the* Waki *Seat.*

And so attain the Buddhahood ! ”

2

The GHOST OF UNAI-OTOME, *wearing a ‘ lean woman ’ mask, wig, painted gold-patterned under-kimono, white twill kimono in* tsuboori *style, and light-blue broad divided skirt, is seated on a stool within the framework mound which is hung round with a curtain. The* deha *music begins.*

UNAI-OTOME Solitariness stalks this desolate field
sashi And nothing I see but my ancient tomb.
The savage beasts contending for the corpses
Come and go ; the flying spirits,
Sentinels of the mound,
Flit in the wind that sighs through pines.
Lightning’s flash, the sparkling dew of morn,
Linger still before my eye.
issei Most ancient tombs the young enclose ;[1]
Such is mine, belying the name of Ikuta.
CHORUS A priest comes from the world I died to long ago
UNAI-OTOME And grateful I am for his voice of prayer !
CHORUS Deep is my longing for the world !
age-uta But as for men
Within a single day and night,
Within a single day and night,
Eight hundred million and four thousand thoughts[2]
Torment the frailty of his frame ;

[1] A line from a poem contained in the *Wakan Rōeishū*.
[2] According to Buddhism man has eight hundred million and four thousand fleeting thoughts.

How long must I thus lie
Beneath the grass, under the moss?
There is no peace for me.
My agonies consume my soul.
Behold my Burning House!

Stage-attendants takes away the curtain from the mound.

3

MONK O what a piteous plight is yours!
Cleanse your mind of old delusions,
From the boundless sins you will be freed:
"Hell, World of Pretas, Realm of Beasts,
All evil worlds, and agonies
Of birth, age, sickness, and death
Shall diminish and cease at last."[1]
Come, come, attain the blissful realm.

UNAI-OTOME O grateful! In my ceaseless pain
I hear the chanting voice of prayer
And see some break revealed
In the smoke of the lasting fire of hell.[2]
How thankful I am!

O what terror! Who are you? The ghost of Sasada-Onoko? And you? Chinu-no-Masurao? Each takes my hand and urges me to his side.

To escape the sufferings of the Three Worlds,[3]
On what power can I rely?

O terrible! A flying spirit dashes before my eyes. O that iron mandarin-bird,[4] with its beak

[1] A passage from the *Lotus Sutra*.

[2] One of the eight great hells, which are described below on pp. 84–5.

[3] I.e. the world of desire-driven beings, the world of beings with form, and the world of beings without form.

[4] A fearful bird in hell, a sort of harpy. It has an iron beak and copper claws for tormenting sinners.

of steel and claws like sword-blades, pecks at my skull, feasts on my brains.

Is this my suffering for my sinful act?
O how bitter is my fate!
O holy monk, pray cease my agony.

MONK Now comes the hour of suffering!
Hardly have I spoken when flames
Come flying and hang above the tomb;

UNAI-OTOME Turning into hellish fiends
That rack the afflicted souls,

MONK They raise their rods and drive at her.

UNAI-OTOME If I attempt to flee, before me lies the sea,

MONK And flames are in the rear.

UNAI-OTOME On left,

MONK And on right,

UNAI-OTOME Water and fire harass my feeble form.

MONK Helpless,

UNAI-OTOME To the pillar of the Burning House

CHORUS I reach my hands and try to cling.
Into flames the pillar bursts,
And the burning post I must embrace.
O scorching fire! Never can I endure!

UNAI-OTOME subsides.

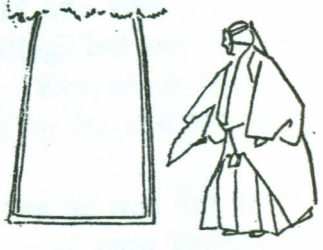
UNAI-OTOME And when I rise,

CHORUS And when I rise,
My jailors drive at me with rods;
Staggering I stumble out and wander
Through the endless sufferings
Of the eight great hells. For my soul's sake
These monstrous hells I will describe;
The hell of life and death alternate,
Of iron rope white-hot,
Of iron mountains spiked with swords,
Of cries, of bitter cries,

UNAI-OTOME goes out of the mound and dances while the following lines are being chanted.

The hell of heat, of scorching heat,
And last the hell of ceaseless torments.
Down to the pit of all these hells
I plunge and fall, head foremost,
For three years and three months.
The suffering ended, my pain grows less,
The fiends have gone, the flames extinct.
And utter darkness reigns.
Now to my Burning House I go.

Where is my shelter? I seek my mound,
Through darkness groping hither and thither.
At last I find and touch my tomb.
Then like the dews upon the grass,
Then like the dews upon the grass,
The ghost is gone and lost,
The ghost is gone and lost.



UNAI-OTOME *enters the mound and sits down.*

Extract from:

JSPSR. *Japanese Noh Drama: Ten Plays*, Vol. II. Tokyo: JSPSR, 1959. 73-85.

IKUTA

By ZEMBŌ MOTOYASU (1453–1532)

PERSONS

PRIEST (a follower of Hōnen Shōnin).[1] *ATSUMORI'S CHILD.*
ATSUMORI. *CHORUS.*

PRIEST.

I am one that serves Hōnen Shōnin of Kurodani; and as for this child here,—once when Hōnen was on a visit to the Temple of Kamo he saw a box lying under a trailing fir-tree; and when he raised the lid, what should he find inside but a lovely man-child one year old! It did not seem to be more than a common foundling, but my master in his compassion took the infant home with him. Ever since then he has had it in his care, doing all that was needful for it; and now the boy is over ten years old.

But it is a hard thing to have no father or mother, so one day after his preaching the Shōnin told the child's story. And sure enough a young woman stepped out from among the hearers and said it was her child. And when he took her aside and questioned her, he found that the child's father was Taira no Atsumori, who had fallen in battle at Ichi-no-Tani years ago. When the boy was told of this, he longed earnestly to see his father's face, were it but in a dream, and the Shōnin bade him go and pray at the shrine of Kamo. He was to go every day for a week, and this is the last day.

That is why I have brought him out with me.
But here we are at the Kamo shrine.
Pray well, boy, pray well!

BOY.

How fills my heart with awe
When I behold the crimson palisade
Of this abode of gods!
Oh may my heart be clean

[1] A great preacher; died 1212 A. D.

As the River of Ablution; [1]
And the God's kindness deep
As its unfathomed waters. Show to me,
Though it were but in dream,
My father's face and form.
Is not my heart so ground away with prayer,
So smooth that it will slip
Unfelt into the favour of the gods?
But thou too, Censor of our prayers,
God of Tadasu,[2] on the gods prevail
That what I crave may be!
How strange! While I was praying I fell half-asleep
and had a wonderful dream.

PRIEST.

Tell me your wonderful dream.

BOY.

A strange voice spoke to me from within the Treasure Hall, saying, "If you are wanting, though it were but in a dream, to see your father's face, go down from here to the woods of Ikuta in the country of Settsu." That is the marvellous dream I had.

PRIEST.

It is indeed a wonderful message that the God has sent you. And why should I go back at once to Kurodani? I had best take you straight to the forest of Ikuta. Let us be going.

PRIEST *(describing the journey).*

From the shrine of Kamo,
From under the shadow of the hills,
We set out swiftly;
Past Yamazaki to the fog-bound
Shores of Minasé;
And onward where the gale
Tears travellers' coats and winds about their bones.
"Autumn has come to woods where yesterday

[1] The name given to streams which flow through temples. In this case the River Kamo.

[2] Tadasu means to "straighten," "correct." The shrine of Kamo lay in the forest of Tadasu.

We might have plucked the green." [1]
To Settsu, to those woods of Ikuta
Lo! We are come.

We have gone so fast that here we are already at the woods of Ikuta in the country of Settsu. I have heard tell in the Capital of the beauty of these woods and the river that runs through them. But what I see now surpasses all that I have heard.

Look! Those meadows must be the Downs of Ikuta. Let us go nearer and admire them.

But while we have been going about looking at one view and another, the day has dusked.

I think I see a light over there. There must be a house. Let us go to it and ask for lodging.

ATSUMORI *(speaking from inside a hut).*

Beauty, perception, knowledge, motion, consciousness,—
The Five Attributes of Being,—
All are vain mockery.
How comes it that men prize
So weak a thing as body?
For the soul that guards it from corruption
Suddenly to the night-moon flies,
And the poor naked ghost wails desolate
In the autumn wind.
Oh! I am lonely. I am lonely!

PRIEST.

How strange! Inside that grass-hut I see a young soldier dressed in helmet and breastplate. What can he be doing there?

ATSUMORI.

Oh foolish men, was it not to meet me that you came to this place? I am—oh! I am ashamed to say it,—I am the ghost of what once was . . . Atsumori.

BOY.

Atsumori? My father . . .

CHORUS.

And lightly he ran,

[1] Adapted from a poem in the *Shin Kokinshū*.

Plucked at the warrior's sleeve,
And though his tears might seem like the long woe
Of nightingales that weep,
Yet were they tears of meeting-joy,
Of happiness too great for human heart.
So think we, yet oh that we might change
This fragile dream of joy
Into the lasting love of waking life!

ATSUMORI.

Oh pitiful!
To see this child, born after me,
Darling that should be gay as a flower,
Walking in tattered coat of old black cloth.
Alas!
Child, when your love of me
Led you to Kamo shrine, praying to the God
That, though but in a dream,
You might behold my face,
The God of Kamo, full of pity, came
To Yama, king of Hell.
King Yama listened and ordained for me
A moment's respite, but hereafter, never.

CHORUS.

"The moon is sinking.
Come while the night is dark," he said,
"I will tell my tale."

ATSUMORI.

When the house of Taira was in its pride,
When its glory was young,
Among the flowers we sported,
Among birds, wind and moonlight;
With pipes and strings, with song and verse
We welcomed Springs and Autumns.
Till at last, because our time was come,
Across the bridges of Kiso a host unseen
Swept and devoured us.
Then the whole clan

Our lord leading
Fled from the City of Flowers.
By paths untrodden
To the Western Sea our journey brought us.
Lakes and hills we crossed
Till we ourselves grew to be like wild men.
At last by mountain ways—
We too tossed hither and thither like its waves—
To Suma came we,
To the First Valley and the woods of Ikuta.
And now while all of us,
We children of Taira, were light of heart
Because our homes were near,
Suddenly our foes in great strength appeared.

CHORUS.

Noriyori, Yoshitsune,—their hosts like clouds,
Like mists of spring.
For a little while we fought them,
But the day of our House was ended,
Our hearts weakened
That had been swift as arrows from the bowstring.
We scattered, scattered; till at last
To the deep waters of the Field of Life[1]
We came, but how we found there Death, not Life,
What profit were it to tell?

ATSUMORI.

Who is that?

(Pointing in terror at a figure which he sees off the stage.)

Can it be Yama's messenger? He comes to tell me that I have outstayed my time. The Lord of Hell is angry: he asks why I am late?

CHORUS.

So he spoke. But behold
Suddenly black clouds rise,
Earth and sky resound with the clash of arms;

[1] Ikuta means "Field of Life."

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War-demons innumerable
Flash fierce sparks from brandished spears.

ATSUMORI.

The Shura foes who night and day
Come thick about me!

CHORUS.

He waves his sword and rushes among them,
Hither and thither he runs slashing furiously;
Fire glints upon the steel.
But in a little while
The dark clouds recede;
The demons have vanished,
The moon shines unsullied;
The sky is ready for dawn.

ATSUMORI.

Oh! I am ashamed. . . .
And the child to see me so. . . .

CHORUS.

"To see my misery!
I must go back.
Oh pray for me; pray for me
When I am gone," he said,
And weeping, weeping,
Dropped the child's hand.
He has faded; he dwindles
Like the dew from rush-leaves
Of hazy meadows.
His form has vanished.

Extract from:

Waley, Arthur, (trans). *The Noh Plays of Japan*. New York: Dover Publications, 1998. 45-50.

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