

Mother-Son : The *Hahakoi* Novels of Tanizaki and Lawrence

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要 約

母と息子——谷崎潤一郎とロレンスの母恋い小説

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奇しくも同年(1885)生れの東西の作家による同じ主題の小説を比較しながら、両者のエロティシズムの根源と、その背後にあるイギリス(ヨーロッパ)と日本の伝統の本質に迫る。

Sons and Lovers は単に D. H. Lawrence の代表作の一つというだけでなく、肉欲と精神のディレンマが生むエロティック・ラブというヨーロッパとイギリスの偉大な伝統をも代表する、現代の古典である。その伝統は Shakespeare の *Hamlet* やギリシャ悲劇 *Oedipus* に遡る。高貴で美しい母への愛・崇拜は、ことに *Oedipus* において、血縁と禁じられた性からくる永遠の意識下の情念であり、近親相姦と父殺し、復讐、個人の運命を超えた一つの時代、世界全体の死までを暗示する明瞭なプロットは、西洋世界の潜在的誘惑と恐怖を意味していた。Lawrence が一見、近代英国社会の階級変動と、より高い知的経済的レベルの生活をめざす母と息子のどこにでもありそうな関係をリアリスティックな手法で描きながら、その中に、まさにギリシャ悲劇的衝撃的テーマを潜ませ、曖昧だが暗示に富むイメージを紡ぎながら、独特のエロティシズムと、その息づまるような終焉を描き切った意味は何か。

他方、谷崎もまた、日本文学のいわゆる〈母恋い物語〉の伝統を受け継ぐような、同時に潤一郎独特の不思議なエロティシズムの漂う名作『少将滋幹の母』を書いた。〈母恋い〉は、幼くして母親から引き離された子供の、母を慕う切ない想いを語るものだが、いくつかヨーロッパの伝統とは異なる性格も持っている。一つは、母親が絶対に手の届かぬ、しばしば非人間的(狐、鶴、天女、雪女など)存在であること。さらには、子供の中の無垢、無力な小児的メンタリティが生涯、続いて変わらないこと(父親もまた、自分の元を去った妻を責めることなく、ただ妻を恋い慕うばかりという点では、子供と同じである)。しかし、『少将滋幹の母』の特異性は、まず滋幹が無垢なる子供でありながら繰返し、その無知を破壊するような衝動的光景に立ち会わされ、また、母親を性行為に直接、結びつけるようなイメージの連想を微妙に綴り合わせた文章のコンテキストの中に置かれていることだ。その結果、彼の意識は実に微妙かつ曖昧な位置に置かれて母親の色香の強烈な印象を反芻しつつ、やがて恐怖と陶酔、夢と現実の入り混じった夢幻の世界へと導かれる。いくつもの日本的伝承、物語の枠組みと、情欲の醜悪さと死の恐怖、色事師の平中すら陥る滑稽さまで刻明に描くリアリズム手法を合わせながら、そのすべてを夢の中にかすめとって究極の美に転ずる谷崎文学独特のからくり。谷崎の小説は、西洋文学との類似性と相違を示しながら、単に二つの異なる文学を結合させたのではなく、〈母恋い〉の日本的伝統の底に潜む性の暗示とエロティシズムを、その極限の恐怖までも顕にした、という事ができる。

Although D. H. Lawrence was English and Junichiro Tanizaki was Japanese, and although the two novelists never met each other nor spoke of each other's works, they both wrote novels in which sexuality and eroticism, the conflicting consciousness of sex and the continuous search for a fulfilling relationship with woman, played the central role. Born in the same year (1885), both novelists became the fond targets of Freudian or psycho-analytical criticism in their respective countries ; especially their life-story and their novels of mother-son relationships were associated with Oedipal complex. The two novelists lived socially and morally rather outrageous private lives, but in different ways both of them passionately sought to fulfill the demands of their own nature against all censures, which has had some romantic appeal to modern readers. At the same time, their novels are unique and challenging in their styles and attitudes to society and to literary tradition, and they both demand the depth and subtlety of reading which cannot be reduced to an analysis by any fixed discipline.

It seems worthwhile simply to read their novels side by side and to examine their differences on their strikingly common themes, subjects and imagery, in the hope of finding some secrets of their creativity, individual and yet located in their respective culture and family background. In this paper we will limit our attention to the two novels where the image of the mother and her relationship with the protagonist are central, problematic, erotic and most artistically developed, *Sons and Lovers* and *Syohsyoh Shigemoto no Haha (Major-General Shigemoto's Mother)*.

First, the age and the social, cultural and literary atmosphere which the novelists imbibed should be briefly mentioned. They were born in the same year, 1885, though Lawrence died from tuberculosis at the age of forty-four (1929), while Tanizaki lived till the age of eighty (1965). The family's financial and emotional instabilities—the decline of the family, for Tanizaki, and the ugliness and meanness of the mining neighborhood and the constant danger of accidents and death in which the family was caught, for Lawrence—symbolically represented the spreading feeling of the age in which things were not going quite right for many people, in spite of the call for further industrialization and further prosperity of their society, the great Empire. They were both aware of the decadent atmosphere and literature of *fin de siècle*, of Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde (in Tanizaki's case, also the Japanese literature of the Edo Era), and their earliest novels in some ways reflect their fascination with (and horror of) anti-social, decaying, and yet maddeningly beautiful visions to which the young artists were exposed.

Tanizaki was married three times, and the story of his giving-away his second-wife once to his friend and poet, Haruo Sato, of then refusing to part with her, and later on of asking Sato again to accept his 'present', became a well-known scandal. But the third wife, Matsuko, was the most important woman, who was a married woman and got a divorce in order to marry Tanizaki. Learning from his 'failures' with his former wives, Tanizaki acted the role of a servant to Matsuko in order to keep the romantic graceful image of the woman whom he could look up to for his artistic inspiration. Lawrence

eloped with his former professor's wife, Frieda Weekley, a daughter of a German baron, and more or less did most of cooking and house-keeping himself and let her have her careless, aristocratic way of life even in the midst of poverty. (However, he never said it was for his art. For him, it was natural to Frieda's nature, and he liked her for escaping the British middle-class concern for what is right and proper.) The couple were most severely censured in England because Frieda 'deserted' three children as well as her very respectable husband and also because she was German, especially during the War. Lawrence, too, had several girl-friends and love-affairs before Frieda—the most important of which was his adolescent love with Jessie Chambers, who grew up in the English farm but was intellectually motivated, believed in him and stimulated his growth as an artist and man, and who became the model for Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*.

They both felt strongly attached to their mother and had a personal, precious or sanctified image of their mother as a beautiful high-born lady, for ever young and untouched by life, who, however, was done out of her rights by marrying an undeserving husband and was forced into poverty, worries, and drudgery work of daily life. Each son had the childish fantasy to rescue his lady-mother from her present confinement, and he would do all he could to save her pure, uncorrupted image.

Both novelists had a difficulty in facing the illness and death of their mother not only for emotional reasons but also because they had to watch the beautiful image of their mother gradually and relentlessly corrupted and destroyed.

Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers*, like Lawrence in real life, watched and jealously guarded his mother who did not give in to the last. In the novel Lawrence had to develop or invent the most awful long-stretched night and day of watching the mother snore and breathe at great intervals, with her mouth wide open, after Paul and his sister Annie give her an excessive amount of morphine with an implicitly matricidal intention. In her death, she is beautiful and young again.

Tanizaki, learning the effect of erysipelas on her face, which was swollen, disfigured and, moreover, was smeared with black medicine, took a trip to Izu Peninsula as if to escape from her, and did not come home until he knew that the trace of this illness went—but she was dead with a heart-attack before he got home. However, when he arrived, he was relieved to see her face beautiful, restored.

Apart from the novels, those biographical 'facts' themselves seem to hide or imply the novelists' secret feelings. It is tempting to adopt them, or our reading of those biographical facts, to our reading of the novels, and yet it is so easy to fall into the trap of psychological theorization.

A Study of Tanizaki Junichiro by Takehiko Noguchi shows how we can take a hint from some psychological theory and use it for interpreting both the texts and the biographical facts, associating them at a deeper, unconscious level without being limited by the original theory. He does this by using the careful reading of the texts for interpreting the biographical facts and vice versa. For instance, sensing that Tanizaki's mixed feelings towards his mother are related to his deepest feelings towards sex and a woman's body in general, Noguchi finds the psychological image of 'vagina dentata'

helpful—the theory that the ugly, distorted face of a woman is the image of the vagina with teeth—which enables him to interpret the novelist’s minute description of the corruption (or ugly transformation) of the young women’s bodies in *Major-General Shigemoto’s Mother* as his fascination with a woman as the sexual object, the vagina itself. The truth in this seems testified again in *Syunkin-syoh (The Tale of Syunkin)* where Tanizaki destroys the most beautiful face of a rich and haughty, sadistic blind girl in a fire, before her devoted servant stings his own eyes and can subsequently become her secret lover. Tanizaki was so afraid of his mother’s ugly face because, at a deeper level, it reminded him of the vagina; a woman’s beautiful face first has to be destroyed before it becomes a sexual object. This interpretation seems helpful for us, too, not only for reading Tanizaki but for reading Lawrence and comparing the two novelists as well.

In *Major-General Shigemoto’s Mother* which is set in a distant society of the ninth century courtiers, Shigemoto’s father, very old, has his young, beautiful wife robbed before his very eyes, by the most powerful minister of the court who is his nephew, and he tries to exterminate his painful passion for his wife by nightly visiting the graveyard (or rather the river-side bank where some common people’s corpses were piled up) and contemplating the young women’s rotting bodies. Shigemoto as a little boy is likewise deprived of his mother. He secretly follows his father and watches the ghastly scene in the moonlight, transfixed. According to Noguchi’s interpretation, it is no wonder that Shigemoto’s father cannot deliver his soul from physical bondage; the view of the young women’s rotting bodies, with eyes bulging out, hair coming off and maggots crawling over the bursting bowels, is the vision that secretly stirs his sexual passion. This also explains why Shigemoto, though horrified, cannot take his eyes away from the scene.

Through subtler and more challenging associations, this can also explain why in his forties Shigemoto recalls this scene so vividly when he at last comes to meet his long-separated mother in another visionary moonlight.

Shigemoto, wondering if he should turn back, as the tone of the twilight was getting darker and making it difficult even to distinguish the water-surface, yet was unable to resist some undefinable allurements, which made him follow the brook along the shallows, over the stones, on and on until he unawares was climbing up above the top of a waterfall ... his unknowing glance over the valley met a large cherry tree on the cliff of the bank, which blossomed so profusely as to push back the thickening darkness around.... Everybody has the experience of walking in a lonely, dark street and suddenly meeting a beautiful maiden in her solitary walk, which strikes him with more terror than meeting a man. Similarly, this cherry tree in the twilight in its quiet full bloom, in such a lonely place without a shape of man, seemed to be wrapped in some demonic, bewitching beauty, and he dared not go nearer but watched it from a distance, not quite believing his own eyes. The cliff was almost entirely a rock, moss-grown ... a narrow trickle of

water sprang up somewhere and ran around the base of the cliff, down to the valley below, and a clump of kerrias in blooming clusters were leaning towards the springwater. So much time had passed, and yet why was it that Shigemoto could see the details of the view over there so clearly, from where he stood? —Perhaps because the cherry-blossoms created the effect of snow, brightening the objects around against the darkness? —For a minute Shigemoto wondered like this, but it was not the blossoms. It was the moon in the sky above the blossoms that was increasing its light. Though the ground was wet with dew and the touch of air so cool, the sky was veiled in the haze of spring, and the hazy moon was shining through the cloud of cherry-blossoms, so that the space in the valley, with the faint scent of the cherry-blossoms in the evening, was dipped in the fantastic beams of light.

Once before, when he was small and followed his father across the grassy field, he saw a ghastly scene in the pale moonlight, but that was a sharp, clear moon in the midnight of fall, not such a cloud-wrapped moon as that of today which is soft and balmy like cotton-wool. (*Syohsyoh Shigemoto no Haha*, 428)

In this scene, too, the image of beauty, whether it is a beautiful woman or cherry blossoms, is the image of terror against the encroaching night. Shigemoto in middle ages still hesitates to go nearer; as in childhood, he is led by some mysterious force to witness the maddening fascination of the forbidden sensual experience. In both scenes, the moonlight plays an important role. But there is a clear contrast between the two scenes which seems to imply something important about Tanizaki. Against the other moon-lit scene, of the women's rotting corpses, where everything including maggots was visible in the relentless light, the moon-light here, shed through the spring-mist and through the cherry-blossoms, is creating the faintly-lit space of fantasy. Under the cherry-tree, everything is visible, but "everything is outlined with the misty light like a picture in the magic lantern" —outlined with the light of fantasy which belongs only to the moment.

Here the word "outlined", interestingly, means almost the same thing as the elimination of outlines in the Impressionist paintings. Lawrence's interest in a similar artistic effect can be found in *Sons and Lovers* where Paul Morel struggles to explain his own sketch:

... here is scarcely any shadow in it—it's more shimmery—as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real thing. The shape is a dead crust. (*Sons and Lovers*, 183)

We can almost apply this explanation to Tanizaki's passage and read the scene of hazy moonlight and cherry-blossoms as another, transformed version of the terrible moonlit corpses; the corpses are the women's dead crusts, and the real sensual attraction

of women is in the “shimmeriness” inside, or the shimmeriness released and represented in the unvisited “space in the valley” in the midst of spring.

We can push this reading further when Shigemoto’s eyes “by and by fall on something unexpected—something white and fluffy floating in the air beneath the cherry-tree ... something too big to be a flower, white and fluffy”, which turns out to be his mother in her nun’s costume. Now a widow and presumably old, the forlorn figure looks up towards the sky, “perhaps admiring the blossoms, perhaps yearning for the moon”, and eventually she starts climbing down the cliff to the spring-water, to bend towards the yellow kerrias to pluck a spray. In the Japanese poetic tradition of the period, plucking a spray and putting it over or on the head was an expression of love. The series of movement seems to imply Shigemoto’s mother’s unquenched physical yearning, now so removed and aesthetic as to be almost ritualistic. The mother and the son meet and learn who they are, when suddenly Shigemoto runs to her and calls out, “Mother!”, clasping her knees”. Nearly falling, she sits on the nearby rock. Kneeling and leaning on her lap, he looks up at her face, which is again “veiled in the moonlight, which comes through the cherry-blossoms, and pretty and small as if wearing a halo behind”. He wipes his tears “again and again on her sleeves like a child”. This beautiful vision of love between the mother and the son belongs only to the moment. Time, age, conflict ... those are out of sight. Thus the viewer, paradoxically, both escapes his commitment to the sexual imagery, like a child, and is able to be absorbed in it as the image of eternal beauty and ultimate sensual gratification.

However, we should not miss another important point—Tanizaki’s passage depends so much on the blurring of the outlines which makes us almost forget the lack of reality in the image of the woman, of the mother whose face Shigemoto hardly remembers. He only recalls the sweetness of the incense and the warmth in her arms, which he experienced only a few times when he was allowed to visit her as a little child, and a momentary vision of her face lit up by passion and light. (After the minister carries her away and makes her his wife, her past lover Heichyu out of newly-stirred passion and regret sends her a love-poem by writing it on her little son’s arm ; eager to see it better, she quickly opens the sliding door of her dark bower to let in the light, and tears fall from her eyes.) How beautiful, Shigemoto thought at the time, but there was or is no reality in the mother-son relationship itself. In his vision alone, he can meet his mother.

In *Sons and Lovers*, too, some of Paul’s and his mother’s actions are ritualistic and memorable as independent scenes.

There is a disturbing childhood scene where Paul, having broken the face of his sister’s doll by accident, decides to make a bon-fire of it and takes a wicked delight in watching it with her.

Paul’s mother, after quarrelling with her drunken husband and being locked out of the house by him, finds herself in the great white light of the August moon, which falls cold on her body “while a child boiled within her”. She becomes aware of “something about her”, which turns out to be “the tall white lilies reeling in the moonlight”, and “the air

was charged with their perfume, as with their presence" (*Sons and Lovers*, 34). At first gasping in fear, Mrs. Morel touches the flowers, bends down "to look at the bin-ful of yellow pollen" which appears only "dusky", and drinks "a deep draught of the scent". The series of actions, like those of Shigemoto's mother, are symbolic and come out of her unconscious, yearning sexual passion beneath her suffering and coldness in the night. What is different from Tanizaki's passage, however, is the reality and strength of her suffering, roused passion, and terror both in the couple's quarrels and in Mrs. Morel's solitary walk among the silverly moon-lit lilies outside.

The difference may partly result from the fact that *Sons and Lovers* is perhaps Lawrence's most realistic novel, while *Major-General Shigemoto's Mother* is written in the form of a historical romance, with the pretense that it is based on several sources of other historical documents and romances. In fact, most of the sources mentioned in the novel do exist, but there is a crucial one which is entirely invented—the one which is supposed to have dealt with Shigemoto's father's nightly visit to the graveyard and also Shigemoto's reunion with his mother about thirty-five years later. In other words, Tanizaki wanted to put an impenetrable "clouded" distance between the author and the scenes in the story, as if avoiding commitment and vaguely wandering in the world of "something" and "somehow", while at the same time maintaining that the scenes are not invented but based on real facts. Even the recorded 'facts' such as the powerful Minister's publicly 'stealing' a beautiful woman before her husband's very eyes, and also Heichyu's stealing and watching the excrement of another woman he was courting with no luck at the time, in order to exterminate his attachment to her ... are so extraordinary as to help create the world of fantasy, though too comic or vulgar to be a fantasy by themselves. Tanizaki dwells much on Heichu's holding, smelling and "tasting" the small and "fragrant" excrement. Tanizaki elaborates on Shigemoto's father's miserably humble hospitality and drunkenness before the Minister and on the Minister's red face and brazen-faced glances towards Shigemoto's mother—the disturbingly realistic details of the vulgar actions which prepare for the breath-taking appearance of "an enormous poppy or peony swaying out" (Shigemoto's mother) from behind the screen, shaken loose and floating into the Minister's carriage.

On the other hand, *Sons and Lovers*, based on the author's personal life-story, has such scenes of ordinary daily-life activities as Mrs. Morel's listening to the heat of the iron and spitting on it, her ironing the color of her son's shirt till it shines by the sheer pressure of her hand, and her filling the kettle for the next morning, which for her children relieves the tension of quietness after the parents' quarreling voices in the stormy night. The scenes are so realistically rendered though the eyes or ears of her children, particularly through the attentiveness, affection and admiration of Paul, the most sensitive son, that paradoxically the realistic details acquire a sort of religious glamour which is extraordinary.

The half fantastic scene of the lily-garden in the moonlight, for instance, is one step beyond this, where Mrs. Morel is outside her normal self, almost unconscious with the passion of the quarrel, the chilliness of the night and the physical awareness of the child

in her womb (Paul), burning-hot against the circumstances. The scene takes place before Paul is born, and there is nobody watching the scene, except for the moon and the lilies whose inhuman presences and consciousnesses, if they could be called thus, seem more powerful than the presence of Mrs. Morel's 'mind' which is temporarily overshadowed. A similar thing could be said also with a number of seemingly 'realistic' scenes such as Mr. Morel stirring earliest in the morning, making a fire in his lively manner, singing to himself, and thrusting a piece of bacon over it to let its oozing fat drip onto his bread before he goes to the pit. That the man is so absorbed in his actions, alone and unaware, that the scene could be just any morning but is not logically related to any other scene before or after, that it appears as a sort of flashback in the memory of someone who cannot have been logically there ... these things, combined, create an atmosphere where memorable scenes are called up from the depth of the unconscious—the depth into which certain images are dropped and which is shared by the author and the reader. The reader, not born in the miner's family, still feels as if he or she remembers the scene somewhere.

Although there is more to be said about the techniques of the novel, we can conclude that *Sons and Lovers*, though more realistic and based on the author's own life, is written with the spirit of fantasy or other-worldliness which now and then threatens to dominate the human mind.

To say the least, Tanizaki elsewhere showed he could write more realistic novels, and Lawrence wrote more fantastic and mythical novels, too. The essential difference between the two novels, then, is not between realism and fantasy but between the original states of the son's relationship with his mother—commitment and distance. The difference is deeply ingrained, perhaps both individual and cultural.

Being estranged from his mother at a stage too early for physical and emotional independence, Tanizaki wrote a number of novels and short stories which more or less belong to the tradition of *hahakoi*—the tale of the child's yearning for the mother who left, died or turned into some animal-shape) and whose ultimate goal is the fantastic reunion with the mother. It has to be fantastic because the physical reunion is impossible or nearly impossible. The outline of images surrounding the mother has to be blurred to let the impossible take place, next to the unconscious.

Paul as the physically delicate youngest son, requiring attention and sensitive to the mother's social and intellectual aspirations as a young man, is so much committed to her emotions and to her values. His problem is that he cannot escape her as he grows into a man and even as her aging and illness reveals the widening gap between their unconscious wishes. This was Lawrence's own problem, and it also reflects the typical problem of a modern young man in the age of advanced industrialization. What apparently matters in society is money, and what matters in the mechanism which produces money is the mind and its efficiency, while all the time the man's physical or sexual demands are denied and undervalued by the dominating presence of his mother in his mind. What he secretly needs to aim at is his parting with his mother, her death, but it also means his cutting off his life-line, his death. This is shown by that Paul gives his

mother an over-large portion of morphine, which finally brings her death and temporarily relieves him of pain, and that he subsequently feels cut off and dead, with nothing to hold on to in life.

What is interesting, then, is the direction which Paul finally takes in the darkness without his mother :

And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. That seemed something. Where was he? —one tiny speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field... Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet nothing.

“Mother!” he whimpered, “mother!”

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself! He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her.

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly. (*Sons and Lovers*, 464)

After all Paul does recognize his flesh is “something” in the middle of the darkness which denies all commitments and values, and that it is in the flesh that he should live. The darkness where his mother has “intermingled herself” is the world of death ; to follow her there, hanging on to his attachment to what can no longer respond, is an act of suicide, of defeat in all efforts at living. Instead of choosing the momentary vision of solace, the meeting and intermingling with his mother which is characteristically “dark”, Paul abandons the “whimpering” image of himself and walks as a man “towards the faintly humming, glowing town”. Though he cannot see clearly what's waiting for him there, what he has chosen is also a vision of a sort : of different lives, tiny specks of flesh, isolated but living, striving against the darkness, terrified, and embracing each other in love. It is a touching vision of apparently insignificant individual lives, yet not quite insignificant, undaunted, among the malignant forces of death and nullification. The vision comes through accepting the transience of everything in life, which is all the more telling because of the strong reality in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Morels, their children, and their friends and neighborhood of the mining town and the farm.

At the end of *Sons and Lovers*, then, we realize that it is not a simple ‘realistic’ novel, that such people and such places are ‘real’ because they are viewed through the eyes

which acknowledge the death and transience of everything and which fish from the subconscious depth of memory the vision of living moments, of passions gleaming against the inhuman darkness. The implication is that the negative darkness paradoxically becomes “the living darkness” —the phrase Lawrence is going to use, and the image he is going to develop, much in his later writings.

In Lawrence’s novel, it is when Paul accepts death and its parting him from his mother that he paradoxically begins to see a vision of her life, his relationship with her, and the whole life which has surrounded them. It is a religious and ambivalently Western vision. Being ‘religious’ in its own way, the vision denies its Westernness and perhaps comes close to some Eastern visions, but it is still a Western vision. The physical and spiritual bond with the mother is so long established in all the tactile details of the son’s life that to part from her is an annihilation of life for him. What remains of him is only a husk, and yet paradoxically it is when he accepts this ‘husk’ as an independent reality that he starts his own life of flesh and blood and can also see his relationship with his mother as an irrecoverable past ‘vision’, full of rich ambiguities about their sexual (infantile or more sublimated) gratifications and fears.

In Tanizaki’s novel, death is implicitly taken for granted, and parting with the mother has taken place before the son’s consciousness is fully awakened. What he has is only the “vague” memory, glimpses of her fantastic beauty, caught mostly through the senses other than eyes, which comes purely from the depth of the unconscious and is, therefore, almost absolute, beyond the touch of any personal, moral and even aesthetic claims. Though he in his childhood longed to see her and though he must have continued to do so after he was denied the opportunity, it seems as if he got more and more to love her vision and was reluctant to seek her out in actual contact with her. The climax of such love can come, therefore, only as a reunion in the half-fantastic world, where the “outlines” of reality are dimmed and the vision overlaps. Such near-absolute-ness of the vision, the impossibility of human contact, reflects the unconscious mentality of the traditional Japanese culture where a man, very early, is denied attachment to his mother and seeks the vision of beauty outside the human and social pale. It is unique of Tanizaki, however, that he combines the visions of horror, of ugliness, and even of the comic and the scandalous, so that the reality of the vision is considerably enmeshed in layers of struggling passions and ambiguities, which, rather than obliterating it, enhance it by releasing a kind of sexual excitement.

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(Received December 15, 1997)