

Ancestral to None — Mizuko in Kawabata —

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In the middle of the novel *Beauty and Sadness* (*Utsukushisa to kanashimi to*) by Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972),¹ a mother and daughter visit Adashino Nenbutsu-ji in the hills of Sagano in Kyoto. It is the season for *Bon*, the Festival of the Dead, at which time custom calls for welcoming home one's ancestors, entertaining and feeding them, and sending the sated spirits back to their realm (*yomi no kuni* 黄泉の国). Their return to the world of spirits, on 16 August, is signalled by five symbolically shaped bonfires (*daimonji gozan okuribi* 大文字五山送り火) blazing on Kyoto's mountains. Yet this main event does not mark the end of the Bon season. One week later, in the wake of the ordinary dead, the marginal dead are remembered with prayers to Jizō, the bodhisattva guarding the boundary between life and death. Although Jizō-bon² is celebrated as a children's carnival, there is no revelry in Kawabata's novel. On the contrary, the two fictional visitors to Adashino are drawn to this ancient burial ground by a solemn ritual of mourning constituting the temple's most important annual ceremony: the *sentō kuyō* 千燈供養. At dusk on 23 and 24 August a thousand candles are lit and placed at the old gravestones rendered anonymous by wind and rain. Mother and daughter participate in this memorial rite for the unaffiliated and unmourned dead (*muenbotoke* 無縁仏) in the sacred grounds of "the children's limbo" (*sai-in no kawara* 西院の河原 119/17:387).³

¹ *Utsukushisa to kanashimi to* was originally serialized in *Fujin kōron* 婦人公論 (1961–1963), a women's magazine. This indicates that the author consciously wished to address a largely gender-specific problem. Quotations from Kawabata's works are followed by page numbers in parentheses referring to the English translation and the original, respectively. The Kawabata edition used is YAMAMOTO et al. 1980–1983, *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū*, 35 vols. [hereafter KYZ]. The dates in the References refer to the original dates of publication.

² For the evolution of Jizō-bon, held on 22–24 August, see YORITOMI 1984, pp. 147–52.

³ See page 341 of this article for a more complete consideration of *sai no kawara*. Kawa-

The heroine of *Beauty and Sadness*, Ueno Otoko 上野音子, was only nineteen years old⁴ at the time, and the occasion for this crucial visit remains prominent in her mind in the story's narrative present, twenty years later, when it is recalled. At the time of the religious service, only Otoko's mother sheds tears, presumably for the stillbirth Otoko suffered three years earlier. Yet the mother's tears seem tinged with selfishness and sentimentality when she reveals another motive for the visit. She has a marriage proposal for her daughter, who had undergone not only the trauma of child loss but also that of separation from her lover. Moreover, she has taken Otoko to this famous temple to instruct her about *muenbotoke*, a fate looming ahead for both of them if Otoko does not marry and bear children to mourn them after their death. Otoko counters with a violent threat. She evokes the iron bars of the psychiatric hospital she had entered after her stillbirth. Not only is she not ready to begin what her mother considers a healthy life, she is not yet ready to shed tears at a *kuyō*, a rite of comfort. In fact, she flatly rejects the public religious ritual. Otoko's reaction, which seems to her mother to be a defiance of convention, is actually a response no less rooted in Japanese culture than the social norms she rejects. In order to understand the nature of Otoko's discontent and her idiosyncratic solution to it, one must understand her culture's prescribed norms of behavior, their mechanisms and their functions.

To embark upon an analysis of Otoko's discontent is to examine the rituals of mourning in Japanese culture and to explore their reflection (and deflection) in the postwar fiction of Kawabata. Kawabata's work, in turn, provides an interesting example of how the religious elements of Japan influence, and find expression in, its literary tradition. Hence my emphasis in this essay will not be upon aesthetics and the notion of sexual purity—two of the most prominent and extensively discussed elements of Kawabata's work (cf. TSURUTA 1981)—but upon the hitherto unrecognized social and religious issues stemming from child loss. The main focus will be upon *Beauty and Sadness* since it is there that Kawabata

bata's spelling of *sai-in no kawara* 西院の河原 for *sai no kawara* 賽の河原 is unusual. For the legendary origin of the former, see DE VISSER 1914, p. 119. The brochure published by Adashino Nenbutsu-ji (n. d., p. 4) also uses the same uncommon spelling to refer to the 8,000 stone Buddhas in its "limbo," but attaches *fuwiganu* so that the characters are read *sai no kawara*. In the commonly used spelling, the character for *sai* refers to the stones piled up in *sugoroku* 双六, a kind of backgammon. YORITOMI (1984, p. 137) finds that this association (which Kawabata may have wanted to avoid) renders the story of *sai no kawara* somewhat comic.

⁴ Until recently, the Japanese have calculated gestation from the last menstrual period, hence allowing for ten months of pregnancy (COLEMAN 1983, p. 60). Similarly, a newborn, almost one year old at birth, is allowed to turn one on his/her first New Year. Depending on the individual's actual date of birth, disparities may arise. The translator's practice of subtracting one year from the age given in the original is followed here.

most fully explores the theme of *mizuko* 水子⁵ that he touched upon in several earlier works. In the process I hope to commence a type of literary rescue mission for this novel, one of the least regarded (and, perhaps, least understood) of Kawabata's works.⁶

In his fiction, Kawabata has exploited the rich ambiguities of the *mizuko* concept and explored its oblique, even subversive, effects on the individual and on the *ie* 家 (extended family). Many of his works dramatize bereavement, mourning, and the search for healing devices to replace lost children. Although induced abortion is the primary source of child loss in postwar Japan, Kawabata also investigates the aftermath of involuntary loss through miscarriage and stillbirth. Since Japanese society has dealt with the trauma of *mizuko* by means of religious ritual rather than by rational discourse and intellectual debate (LAFLEUR 1990, p. 534), it is hardly unexpected that the novelist also resorts to indirection, relying on symbols, metaphors, and analogies. Kawabata's obliqueness, his strategy of disguise, has doubtless made it difficult for critics to recognize the importance of the *mizuko* theme. In order to realize what Kawabata's postwar works suggest about the psychodynamics of child loss and to rescue *Beauty and Sadness* from undeserved disparagement, one must first understand the importance of *mizuko* in Japanese culture.

Mizuko *Liminality and Sai no kawara Cosmology*

The term *mizuko* (or *mizugo*), covering a wide spectrum of fetus and child loss, has undergone considerable historical change. The status of *mizuko* within the ancestor-oriented family system is highly ambiguous in that the fetus cannot become a child of the *ie* and the woman who has carried it cannot become a mother to the *ie* until after a successful delivery. *Mizuko* thus raise important questions about Japanese ancestor worship.

⁵ *Mizuko* ("water child" or "unseeing child" [for the latter reading, see COLEMAN 1983, p. 60]) refers either to a fetus that was not delivered alive—because of induced abortion, spontaneous abortion (miscarriage), or stillbirth—or to an infant victim of illness, accident, or infanticide. In contemporary Japan, the term *mizuko* is restricted to unborn children or children who die in infancy. Until the beginning of the medieval period, *mizuko* included all children who died under the age of seven; Buddhist memorial services were not held for them. By 1500, however, memorial tablets (*ihai* 位牌) were used for children, acknowledging the individuality of their spirits (HAYAMI 1975, pp. 157–58).

⁶ Donald Keene's judgement on *Beauty and Sadness* is especially forbidding: "This is a disappointing novel, only a few cuts above middlebrow fiction, and of interest chiefly because of the attention given to the relations between the author and the models for his stories" (KEENE 1984, p. 836). In conjunction with the autobiographical approach and the search for models, SUZUKI (1978, p. 244) has underscored Japanese scholars' view that this novel is a middlebrow and second-rate work. For further references to the Japanese focus on autobiographical models, see the entry on *Utsukushisa to kanashimi to* in MIYOSHI 1987, pp. 135–36 and IMAMURA 1988, pp. 199–221.

Ideally, every person belongs to a household in which he or she occupies an ascribed place in the hierarchy: a person venerates his progenitors and produces offspring in order to continue the line and to be venerated in turn by them. It is obvious that *mizuko* cannot participate in this vital continuity between the living worshippers and the worshipped dead. Furthermore, *mizuko* differ from the ordinary dead in their apparent inability to reach ancestorhood. The moment at which the deceased person becomes an ancestor varies, but most commonly a Buddhist memorial service is performed twenty-three or thirty-three years after a person's death, marking the ultimate liminal phase in which the dead, having finally lost their individuality, can cross the threshold between mere death and ancestorhood (YONEMURA 1976, pp. 179–80). Yet *mizuko* never attain personhood and, never having reproduced, cannot become ancestors. Only to the extent that they are remembered in memorial rites and tablets can they become, in a curious reversal of the norm, "ancestors" to their own parents.⁷ They are considered an anomaly and not part of the *ie*. Nonetheless, at prescribed memorial intervals and at New Year's and Bon they are treated as if they were. They must be cared for with special rites to appease and comfort their unredeemed souls.⁸

In order to recognize the fears⁹ and hopes aroused by *mizuko*, their

⁷ There is no consensus on the ancestral status of *mizuko* except perhaps that they belong to the broad classification of *muenbotoke*. One anthropologist has stated that in the Japanese "Salvation Cult" "senzo can be recruited . . . even from a succeeding generation (child)" (LEBRA 1976, p. 222; cf. p. 228); another scholar has observed that *mizuko* are venerated as are "other ancestors" when there is a tablet for them in the ancestral alcove (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984, pp. 78, 80). At Kurozumikyō 黒住教 *mizuko kuyō* the "nunister directs the spirit of the child to enter the tablet as the assistant intones a long 'Ooooo' indicating the spirit's passage into the tablet . . . an ancestral tablet (*mitama bashira* 御霊柱 (HARDACRE 1986, p. 151).

⁸ It has been established that "fully 25 percent of all the tablets were made for young children, ancestral to no one" and that the "differential treatment of the spirits of the dead can best be understood in terms of their closeness to the direct descent line AND in terms of the amount of time that has elapsed since their death. The axis of differentiation may well turn out to be *soseu sūhai* [worship of/reverence for ancestors] on the one hand, and *soseu kuyō* [consolation of the 'ancestors'] on the other" (SMITH 1976, p. 60). The special treatment for the marginal dead advocated by psychic specialists (*reimōryokusha* 霊能力者) in popular manuals can be explained by fears of "'spirit hindrance' (*reishō*)" 霊障 (PICONE 1986, p. 163).

⁹ The psychological and psychosomatic suffering attributed to the curse (*tatari* 祟り) is often believed to emanate from *mizuko* (HOSHINO and TAKEDA 1987, p. 316). One new religion, the Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō 天照皇大神宮教, regards the spirits of aborted fetuses as dangerous (KERNER 1976, p. 211). Psychosomatic illnesses are often attributed to *mizuko* (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984, pp. 80–81). Furthermore, "a woman who has had an abortion . . . is considered the cause of all family troubles" (PICONE 1989, p. 482). BROOKS (1981, p. 144) cites the title of a work by Hashimoto Tetsuma 橋本徹馬, the founder of Shūinzan Jizō-ji 紫雲山地蔵寺 in Chichibu: "Ill Effects of Abortion: Terrible Harms Are Caused by the Souls of Aborted Embryos to Their Families" (Shiunso Society, n.d.). COLEMAN (1983, pp. 62–66) cites a paragraph referring to such a "curse" (*bachi* 罰) in "Thirty-five *Mizuko* Sit on the Chopsticks in My Right Hand" (*Shūkan jōsei*, 24 August 1976, p. 26).

precarious location in a syncretic cosmology composed of Shinto, Buddhist, and folk elements must be defined. *Mizuko* combine in themselves, simultaneously, the pollution attendant upon both birth and death. Belonging properly neither to the world of the living nor to that of the dead, *mizuko* have been allocated the special realm of *sai no kawara* 賽の河原¹⁰ sometimes thought of as a dry riverbed and sometimes associated with the riverbank of *sanzu no kawa* 三途の川, the three-forded river that must be crossed to go from this world to the next. Sometimes, as with Adashino Nenbutsu-ji, *sai no kawara* has been located in mountains.¹¹ The geographically ambiguous concept of *sai no kawara* represents a children's limbo (*meido* 冥土), which precisely reflects the liminal position of *mizuko*. This concept of liminality is also central to the Noh play *Sumidagawa*¹² where the river functions as a border between life and death (SMITH 1988, pp. 11–12). In this Noh play, a Japanese Charon ferries a mad woman who realizes upon reaching the other shore that her kidnapped son lies dead under a mound.¹³ When Kawabata associates *mizuko* with mountain temple and riverbank contemplation by entitling

¹⁰ For an elaborate etymology of *sai no kawara*, see DE VISSER 1914, pp. 117–21. The concept of *sai no kawara* first appeared in Muromachi period *otogizōshi* 御伽草子 (cf. HAYAMI 1975, pp. 152–53). Since that time, the belief has been tied to the fate of dead children (cf. CHIBA and ŌTSU 1983, pp. 172–78; TAMAMURO 1979, p. 177). Early explicit references to *sai no kawara* occur in Asai Ryōi's 浅井了意 *Tōkaidō meishoki* 東海道名所記 (c. 1660); the title of the Mibu Kyōgen 壬生狂言 *Sai no kawara*; Jōruri 浄瑠璃; and *Honchō monzen* 本朝文選 (1705).

¹¹ See YANAGITA 1970, p. 152. The placement of *sai no kawara* in the mountainous solfatara and hot springs of Osorezan and Hakone can be interpreted as an expansion of the riverbed image of hell (*jigoku*) (YORITOMI 1984, pp. 138, 155–56).

¹² In the first half of the fifteenth century, Noh plays like *Sumidagawa*, *Sakuragawa*, and *Miidera* fulfilled a cathartic function by dramatizing the grief-stricken mother's search for her lost child. The Noh *Sumidagawa*, by Jūrō Motomasa 十郎元雅 (1394/95–1431/59), was also depicted by Fukuō Jin'emon Moriyoshi 福王神右衛門盛義 in the handscroll *Sumidagawa no sōshi* (1618). A century later, the story of a mother's search for her child was further popularized and expanded in a set of three unsigned handscrolls, the *Ume-waka-maru emaki* 梅若丸絵巻. For illustrations of the *mizuko kuyō* on the Sumidagawa riverbank, see MURASE 1986, pp. 150–56. In *Sakuragawa* and *Miidera*, both by Zeami 世阿弥 (1363–1443), mother and child are happily reunited at the end.

¹³ The play's river imagery and the theme of mourning captured Kawabata's imagination in "Sumidagawa" (1971), the last of four stories beginning with the question "Where can you have gone?" (*Anata wa doko ni oide na no deshō ka*, KYZ 8: 599). The earlier three stories—"Sorihashi" (KYZ 7: 375–86; 1947), "Shigure" (KYZ 7: 387–97; 1948), and "Sumiyoshi" (KYZ 7: 421–32; 1949)—also end with this question. In "Sumidagawa" Kawabata reverses the action of the Noh: the mother's quest for her son is turned into the son's search for his mother. Whereas the mad woman, paradoxically, comes to the conclusion that her son is dead only upon hearing his voice from the grave, Kawabata's protagonist finally realizes that his obsession with twin prostitutes is a reaction to his traumatic childhood discovery that his mother was in reality his mother's sister. Just as the dead son comes alive in the final scene of the Noh, so in Kawabata's story the lost real mother and the foster mother blend into one, like the twin prostitutes. The mystery lies in the fusion of the real loss and the imagined replacement (TŌGŌ 1987, p. 26).

his last story "Sumidagawa" (1971), he demonstrates great sensitivity to these legends of liminality.

The concept of children in a riverbank limbo evolved slowly over the course of centuries. In "Expedient Devices," the second chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the striking image of "Children who in play/ Gather sand and make it into Buddha-stupas" supports the argument that everyone, "even children," can achieve salvation: "Persons like these/ Have all achieved the Buddha Path" (HURVITZ 1976, pp. 38–39). This blissful notion enjoyed great popularity during the heyday of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the Heian period (794–1186). During the same period, it was also the custom to build rock pagodas (*shakutō* 石塔) on riverbanks for the prevention of illness or in hope of a speedy convalescence (TANAKA 1980, p. 245). When the concept of *mappō* 末法 (the latter days of the Law) weighed heavily on Buddhist believers, crushing their hopes for salvation and enlightenment, they zealously increased the building of rock pagodas for purposes ranging from personal safety to the quelling of military uprisings (TANAKA 1980, pp. 246–50). By the Muromachi period (1392–1573), many of these memorials had evolved into five-stone pagodas (*gorintō* 五輪塔) that were identified with the dead (*hotoke* 仏) (TANAKA 1980, pp. 251, 254). *Gorintō* were also associated with Jizō, a bodhisattva who was believed to stand on riverbanks, the traditional places for burial (DE VISSER 1914, pp. 120–21; TANAKA 1980, pp. 254–55).

It is also in the Muromachi period that the explicit association of rock piling, the riverbank, Jizō, and the sad fate of dead children first occurs. According to folk belief, *mizuko* pile up pebbles to build pagodas on the underworld's riverbank. Demons (*oni* 鬼) destroy these structures and Jizō helps to restore them, only to have them once again knocked down (BROOKS 1981, p. 123; DYKSTRA 1978, p. 189; HEARN 1976, pp. 43–45, 49, 55–56, 59–61, 170, 217–24; HORI 1968, p. 208; YANAGITA 1964, pp. 277–81). Small wonder that dictionaries indicate that *sai no kawara* connotes "futile effort."

Yet not all versions of the legend¹⁴ are unrelentingly gloomy. The children are sometimes thought to be absorbed in their "futile effort" for the sake of their grieving parents. This idea that the children build pebble pagodas in filial piety towards their parents and the *ie* can be seen in *Sai no kawara Jizō wasan*, a hymn in which the children place their peb-

¹⁴ According to another folk belief, *mizuko* are forced to pile up pebbles by Shōzuka no Baba, an old hag who strips the clothes off those trying to cross the *suzuri no kawa* (another reading for "Shōzuka"). This belief is derived from a Japanese sūtra, the *Jizōjūō bosatsukyō* (DYKSTRA 1983b, p. 92 n. 2). DE VISSER traces the idea of the old hag to "Tibetan descriptions of the Buddhist netherworld." However, the emphasis on children assisted by Jizō is a purely Japanese addition (DE VISSER 1914, pp. 116–17). Folk origins are, alas, fading in the public consciousness: "The traditional *Sai-no-kawara* mythology is practically unknown, as a lived reality or even as a myth, to most young Japanese" (WERBLOWSKY 1991, p. 321).

bles “for the sake of our fathers and mothers and siblings.”¹⁵ To the family distressed over the loss of a child, this Japanese hymn suggests that *mizuko*, like regular ancestors, have the capacity to comfort those who mourn, provided that the *ie* remembers them in memorial rites.

For the *mizuko* of *sai no kawara*, there is also the possibility of reincarnation. Through Jizō, who fulfills complementary roles as guardian for dead children and guarantor of fertility (Koyasu Jizō 子安地藏), mourning the dead may be transformed into hope for new life. After all, *mizuko* are popularly believed to have been “‘sent back’ but not permanently” (COLEMAN 1983, p. 60). Since *mizuko* were never born or else died too soon after birth to have sinned, many Japanese, ignoring the darker aspects of the *sai no kawara* legend, believe that they are “easily reborn” (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984, p. 80).¹⁶ In Kawabata’s story “The Camellia” (“Sazanka,” 1946), the narrator responds to the rumor that a newborn in his neighborhood is a replacement for a wartime miscarriage by critically examining his own skepticism about the belief in reincarnation and the comfort such a belief can offer:

I had thought it a rather morbid notion, but changed my mind. Such beliefs had in the past been common and seemed healthy enough. Nor had they died out in our own day. Perhaps the Shimamuras felt a certainty none of the rest of us could have that the other baby had been reborn. There could be no doubt, even if it was no more than sentimentality that it brought comfort and happiness. . . . We would be hard put even to say whether earlier life and later stand in isolation, or whether all life is part of a flow. Reason tells us that the notion of the rebirth of the first child, the dead child, is unscientific, and that is all. It is as difficult to find evidence that there is not rebirth as that there is. (297/1:442–43)

This belief in rebirth, widespread in various forms throughout the world, has been linked in some archaic cultures to the veneration of ancestors (B. LONG 1987, pp. 265–69).

The legend of *sai no kawara* relates also to the dead children’s symbolic representation as the curiously bibbed Kasa Jizō 笠地藏¹⁷ populating the

¹⁵ My translation. For the text of the *Jizō wasan*, see MOCHIZUKI 1954–1958, 2: 1422–24. For the twelve hymns, see MANABE 1960, pp. 198–223; for an English translation of one variant, see HEARN 1976, pp. 59–61. For parodic adaptations of the hymn, see KIMURA 1989, pp. 177–93.

¹⁶ HOSHINO and TAKEDA point to the significance of the old custom of burying the *mizuko* with a fish “to prevent the *mizuko* or child from ‘attaining Buddhahood’ after death and to allow them to be reborn in this world” (1987, p. 308). HEARN marvels at the belief that the dead child can be reincarnated in the new child (1976, p. 610; pp. 521–22).

¹⁷ The headdress (*kasa* 笠) has been replaced by red bibs (cf. MATSUNAGA 1969, p. 237 n. 21). Hats and bibs serve a variety of purposes (READER 1991b, p. 37). For the legend of Kasa Jizō, see YANAGITA 1951, pp. 100–101. For some the bibs represent votive clothing for dead

temple grounds of modern Japan. This close association of Jizō and *mizuko* (LAFLEUR 1983, pp. 50–51) is a distinctly Japanese adaptation from Chinese Buddhism. In this role, Jizō is specifically referred to as Mizuko Jizō.¹⁸ Interestingly, only in Japan does Jizō assume the shape of a child (DYKSTRA 1978, p. 189; HAYAMI 1975, p. 158). In this incarnation, Jizō represents both signifier and signified.¹⁹ Jizō's traditional icons of staff (*shakujō* 錫杖) and tear-shaped jewel (*nyoi hōshu* 如意宝珠) have been changed to indicate the bodhisattva's specific manifestation as Mizuko Jizō. At Kyoto's Adashino Nenbutsu-ji, the temple that features so prominently in Kawabata's *Beauty and Sadness*, the Mizuko Jizō holds in his hand, instead of the jewel, a fetus in a sphere symbolizing the womb (BROOKS 1981, p. 125; COLEMAN 1983, pp. 60–61; TANAKA 1991, pp. 113, 230 fig. 4; WERBLOWSKY 1991, pp. 334–35). Literary evidence of Jizō as a guardian of dead children and as a comforter of mothers dates back to the *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (1279–1283).²⁰ Jizō is said to have consoled “victims of infanticide, starvation, and abortion from at least as early as 1710” (BROOKS 1981, p. 130).

In Japanese folklore Jizō is also associated with the ancient Shinto roadside god Dōsojin 道祖神 (also known as *sae* or *sai no kami* 塞の神) (DE VISSER 1914, pp. 120, 181; EDER 1951, pp. 277–79). Both are represented by phallic stone formations. Folklorists have also established an iconographic linkage between wooden types of Dōsojin and *kokeshi* dolls now commercialized as folk art (*mingei* 民芸; CZAJA 1974, p. 176; NISHIZAWA 1957, pp. 86–87). Indigenous to the Tōhoku region, *kokeshi* are of relatively recent and somewhat uncertain origin (MUNSTERBERG 1982, pp. 92, 95; SAINT-GILLES 1983, p. 21). These brightly painted abstract female dolls may have been designed to commemorate and replace “lost” fetuses and small infants. That infanticide was practiced widely during the Tokugawa period has been confirmed, yet without causal connection to poverty or famines but rather “as a way of planning the sex composition, sex sequence, spacing, and ultimate number of children” (SMITH et al. 1977, p. 64); sex-selective infanticide was fre-

children (GOEPFER 1984, p. 4). It is interesting to note that the Cologne Jizō by Kōen 康圓 (1249) contains miniature bodhisattvas—generically referred to as *tainai-butsu* 胎内仏 or *haragomori* 腹籠—with drops of human blood to establish a magic-religious bond (*kechi-en* 血縁, more commonly read *ketsu-en*) to the Jizō statue (GOEPFER 1984, p. 15).

¹⁸ For the popularity of Mizuko Jizō and the *mizuko biṃu*, see YORITOMI 1984, pp. 157–58. Two other figures besides Jizō are called upon for solace: Kannon Bosatsu and Kishibojin 鬼子母神 (c.f. SMITH n.d., p. 41 n. 20).

¹⁹ Jizō iconography is linked to Jizō efficacy: “The Jizō-child concept developed into the belief that Jizō would protect children, especially those who died before hearing the teachings of the Buddha” (DYKSTRA 1978, p. 189). The gradually evolving linkage appears to have been fully established by the early Edo period.

²⁰ See the tale about the child who fell into a well (cf. WATANABE 1966, NKBT 85.112–13; MORRELL 1985, p. 115).

quently directed at last-born male children (HANLEY and YAMAMURA 1977, pp. 233–41, 256–60; HANLEY and WOLF 1985, pp. 217–18, 223–26). The surrogate effigies were presented as offerings to Jizō (BROOKS 1981, p. 130). Thus *kokeshi* can be counted among votive “Edo period toys,” assuring the dead child’s “peace in the afterlife” (MATSUNAGA 1969, p. 237 n. 21). Contemporary crafts brochures avoid reference to the original purpose of the limbless dolls and spell the word phonetically, in *hiragana* こけし; most dictionaries employ euphemistic *kanji*,²¹ but in scholarly works a more revealing etymology emerges: the “word consists of two characters meaning ‘child’ and ‘to extinguish’” (子消し).²² The meaning of the dolls as *mizuko* surrogates has, however, gradually been lost, and, while still considered “originally children’s toys” (DYKSTRA 1983a, p. 129), they have become souvenir and even collectors’ items, frequently displayed on television sets or in glass cabinets.

There is, then, a series of equations and substitutions: Dōsojin and Jizō; Jizō and dead children; Dōsojin and *kokeshi*; *kokeshi* and dead children. What links all three folk religious effigies—Dōsojin, Jizō, and *kokeshi*—is not only their phallic shape, recalling their embeddedness in the reproductive cycle, but also their provocative liminal placement at cultural borderlines. All three are linked, as *sae no kami* or via *sai no kawara*, to the children’s limbo. Votive offerings and guardian deities have entered a symbiosis so close that it is at times difficult to tell them apart (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984, p. 162).

Yet neither religious traditions nor the related resources of folklore seem to provide an adequate response to the pain of child loss in modern Japan. *Mizuko kuyō*, a specific ritual for coming to terms with child loss of various kinds, is a phenomenon of the postwar era (SMITH 1988, p. 10; TANAKA 1991, pp. 156–69, 193). This widespread ritual is apparently a response to the need for some kind of public consolation for a loss which is common, private, and—increasingly—deliberate. In postwar Japan, more and more women, regardless of age, marital status, and class, have accepted the trauma of induced abortion as a drastic solution to an otherwise insoluble problem. Abortion is a way to assure affluence, to avoid shame, to bow to family pressures, or to preserve health. In the absence of communal consolation, individuals, now acting in secret, are left to shoulder their burdens alone and to suffer from feelings of guilt spared those whose loss is not the result of conscious choice.

²¹ For example, *Kōjien*: 小芥子; *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* also lists 木削子. In addition to an extensive list of dialect variants, NISHIZAWA (1957, p. 88) also lists 木形子, 木化子, 古形子, and, most interestingly, 子化子.

²² BROOKS 1981, p. 130 n. 13. The fact that the dolls are all female underscores the preference in patrilineal societies that the male child survive. For a research overview on sex-selective infanticide in the Tokugawa period, see S. LONG 1987, p. 25.

Such a plight cries out for a solution. As the number of induced abortions soared after the implementation of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 (*yūseihogohō* 優生保護法),²³ special services were created under the direction of specific Buddhist temples and, less commonly, Shinto shrines. *Mizuko kuyō* became especially prominent in the New Religions. These rituals are available not only for women who have elected to undergo induced abortions but also for others who have suffered an involuntary loss. *Mizuko kuyō* are not unlike the *segaki-e* 施餓鬼会 (cf. MOGAMI 1984, pp. 207–13, 290–96) performed for unaffiliated spirits (*muenbotoke*) and “hungry ghosts” (*gaki* 餓鬼) (LAFLEUR 1989, pp. 270–303; SMITH 1974, pp. 42–43). Indeed, in Nagasawa, where some believe *muenbotoke* not to be strangers but rather the spirits of the dead children of the household or of those who died before marriage (OOMS 1967, pp. 251–54), the two rituals are very much alike.

Rituals of Mourning and Reincarnation

ABORTION

Public concern over child loss by abortion has been dramatized in popular fiction. SONO Ayako, for instance, raises the issue of abortion in *Kami no yogoreta te* [The soiled hands of the kami, 1979], a title softened, in the English translation, to *Watcher from the Shore* (1990). Thirty years after the Japanese legalization of abortion in 1948, three of Sono’s characters engage in a discussion of the phenomenon. The gynecologist-protagonist, a middle-aged widow, and a Catholic priest arrive at an estimate of thirty-five million abortions or “the whole population of a country like Korea” (1990, p. 31). Yet the characters accept abortion as a “necessary evil” (cf. COLEMAN 1983, pp. 57–86). Alternatives to abortion, namely, contraceptives for women, are not mentioned even as a possibility. The omission may reflect the fact that Sono is a Catholic or that she sought to avoid conflict with the Japanese medical profession, which has been reluctant to encourage and prescribe birth-control devices.²⁴

The theme of *mizuko* and the problem of abortion appear in an autobiographical story published by Setouchi Harumi. Much closer in its

²³ The more narrowly defined predecessor of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 (revised 1949; for a partial translation, see WERBLOWSKY 1991, pp. 337–41) was the National Eugenic Law of 1940 (COLEMAN 1983, pp. 19–27).

²⁴ For the role of the media, the government, and the profit-oriented medical profession (obstetrician-gynecologists) in perpetuating the practice of abortion while discouraging or neglecting contraception, see COLEMAN 1983, pp. 4, 7–13, 18–56; TANAKA 1991, pp. 58–59, 64–68.

subtle complexity to *Beauty and Sadness* than to the reductionist dialogues of *Watcher from the Shore*, SETOUCHI's "The Pheasant" ("Kiji," 1966) is the story of a divorced mother whose cry for her abandoned daughter is likened to a pheasant's shrieks for its lost young. In order to dispel her guilt and sorrow, Makiko indulges in affairs for more than a decade. Repeated abortions are an obsessive reenactment of the original bond and its rupture through divorce. Makiko experiences long periods of forgetfulness that alternate with times of renewed suffering and resurgent curiosity about her growing daughter. She also seeks relief by nurturing a surrogate daughter—her lover's. None of these strategies brings the desired peace of mind. Ultimately, a journalistic assignment to witness an abortion confronts Makiko with her mirror image. Although supposedly present simply as a reporter, she responds emotionally to the operation. Yet recognition of herself in the anesthetized patient does not in itself bring enlightenment; the disturbing conflation of birth and death does. The dismembered fetus evokes the phantoms of dead children symbolized by the tombstones at Adashino. As if *in extremis*, Makiko's outcry in the face of fetal death blends with the remembrance of her own daughter's birth cry. Nonetheless, the simultaneity of birth and death contains the seed of reconciliation. Setouchi's complex yet lucid story dramatizes not only child loss through divorce and through induced abortion but also the mother's ambivalence toward replacement of the lost child. Symbolically and literally, the author touches on the problematic of *mizuko*.

Yet it was not only women authors like Sono, Setouchi, and Enchi Fumiko (BARGEN 1991, pp. 147–71), but also male authors, foremost among them Kawabata, who explored the full dimensions of the *mizuko* theme. In *The Sound of the Mountain*, Kawabata intertwines the *mizuko* strand with another of his most striking thematic threads—that of incest. Shingo, the aged hero, has a dream about reading the end of a *monogatari* and seeing "the plot as a movie or play." He can remember "only the fact that a girl fourteen or fifteen years old had an abortion, and the words: 'And she has become a holy child [*seishōjo* 聖少女] forever'" (130/12:382; cf. 207–11/12:468–72). What surprises him most is that his rather benevolent dream is a "transformation" (132/12:383) of a waking nightmare.²⁵ That evening Shingo had been shocked to read statistics on teenage pregnancy and induced abortion in a local newspaper.

Shingo's strange dream is related to fantasies of incestuous love. His youthful dreams had focused on his wife Yasuko's beautiful sister, but upon her death he had consoled himself with the lesser beauty. As if

²⁵ A version of Shingo's nightmare appears in Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, *Nemureru bijo*, 1960–1961). Eguchi dreams that his daughter starts "hacking . . . to pieces" (32/18:154) her deformed newborn child.

Kawabata wished to echo similarly constructed love patterns in the *Genji monogatari* (HAGIWARA 1986, p. 76), Shingo remains haunted by dreams of the dead sister and makes every effort to find her mirror image among his closest family members. His own daughter Fusako and her two young daughters are considered disappointments in this respect. The obvious blood tie does not generate excitement. Instead, it is Kikuko, the wife of his son Shūichi, toward whom he is drawn by a powerful forbidden attraction.

Kikuko's marital life is further complicated by her husband's openly acknowledged affair with a war-widow named Kinuko ("Kinu" in translation). When Kikuko becomes pregnant, she aborts the child. Betrayed by her husband and pursued by her father-in-law, Kikuko may have been motivated to abort her child not only to punish Shūichi, who wanted the child, but also to guard herself against Shingo's incestuous fantasies concerning her. There is little doubt that Kikuko's act frustrates her father-in-law as well as her husband. In fact, the trauma of the abortion alters Shingo's consciousness more than Kikuko's. He has the above-mentioned mysterious dream in which he saves a girl (presumably Kikuko) from having an abortion, and she becomes "a holy child forever."²⁶ It is now possible for Shingo to see Kikuko as a substitute for Yasuko's sister; he also begins to imagine that the aborted child might be a reincarnation of the idealized sister:

And even while disliking himself, he was lost in fantasy: would not the child Kikuko had done away with, his lost grandchild, have been Yasuko's sister, reborn, was she not a beauty refused life in this world? He was even more dissatisfied with himself. (179/12:436; cf. TSURUTA 1976, pp. 94, 100)

He later concludes "that the lost life of the child was growing in Kikuko herself" (220/12:481).

When Shūichi reveals that he has given up his affair with Kinuko, Kikuko is able to feel that her psychologically costly strategy has succeeded. Shingo, motivated by this reconciliation as well as by his dream, can rid himself of his incestuous desire for Kikuko. One prominent critic has interpreted these forbidden urges as *amae*, a mutual relationship of dependence and indulgence (TSURUTA 1976, pp. 100–103). However, incestuous attraction in Kawabata may have more to do with attempts to overcome the trauma of child loss by symbolically restoring the break in the family line. The disturbance of *ie* order and the challenge to

²⁶ Yamanouchi interprets this dream as Shingo's "sympathy for her." The girl is seen, possibly, as "the projection of his wife's elder sister" but the critic cautions that she may represent "eternally innocent femininity" on the grounds that "the girl's abortion suggests that it remains after all a disembodied and intangible entity" (YAMANOUCHI 1978, p. 131).

reconstitute it are so immense that a fantasy of taboo violation is required to bring the unborn to life. In this sense, a definition of incestuous desire as “not cohabitation, but . . . becoming a child again” (COPELAND 1988, p. 136) might be applied to the difficult mechanism of coming to terms with *mizuko*. Shingo’s losses and desires occur in the context of *ie* ideology as an ideally *unbroken* chain of ancestral beings. It is no coincidence that as soon as he breaks the spell of incestuous attraction Shingo can confront his own death. Thus the notion of reincarnation and the search for incestuous substitutes are finally replaced by the hero’s acceptance of mortality. The novel ends with a peaceful tableau in which quotidian reality is transcended in a sacred ritual of *ie* reconciliation. Three trout are served for dinner,²⁷ one for each unit of the household: one for Shingo and Yasuko; one for Shūichi and Kikuko; one for Fusako and the children.

STILLBIRTH AND MISCARRIAGE

Liminal Time

Some eleven years before committing suicide on 16 April 1972, Kawabata began to compose *Beauty and Sadness*, his last major novel. The novel begins with a series of moody images reflecting a traumatic love affair that ended in child loss. Ōki Toshio is on the train to Kyoto to hear the famous New Year’s temple bells, if possible, with Ueno Otoko, his lover of twenty-four years earlier. He also harbors the secret desire to renew their love. When Ōki’s eye is caught by an empty chair swivelling on the train, his romantic intentions assume a somber hue. The chair’s instability is unsettling. It is the first image hinting at the empty motion of Ōki’s unfulfilled life. At the Miyako Hotel, Ōki is irritated by the unintelligible noisy chatter of foreign children, who bring back the image of the lonely swivelling chair. To escape the guilt aroused so poignantly by the hyperactive children, Ōki seeks refuge in the poetic landscape of Arashiyama. In this desolate area of many historic sites and monuments, he abandons himself in sad memories of the past. The narrative structure of Ōki’s remembrance features flashback within flashback within flashback, like nesting boxes.

It is no coincidence that Ōki feels drawn to the *mizuko*’s mother at this specific time. It is twenty-three years since the stillbirth of their child; in the ordinary course of events, as we have seen, the dead may achieve ancestral status after twenty-three years. Since this desirable status is denied the *mizuko* languishing in the limbo of *sai no kawara*, the only hope is for reincarnation. Yet the troubled history of this particular twenty-

²⁷ Hagiwara suggests that Shingo “turns himself into a trout . . . being eaten by the members of his family in the Eucharistic ‘Last Supper’ of the story” (HAGIWARA 1986, p. 92).

three year old *mizuko* (see 14/17:274) seems to block any such possibility. Stillborn out of wedlock, this dead child's spirit occupies an ambiguous position between its two parental households instead of firm membership in the normally patrilineal *ie*.²⁸

Ōki, a married man with a son, had seduced Otoko when she was fifteen years old. At sixteen, Otoko had given birth after seven months, but the baby girl was stillborn. Significantly, this *mizuko* was neither a fetus lost through an induced abortion or an accidental miscarriage nor a child who died in early infancy. Instead, the child was lost at just the point when it was ready to separate physically from the mother but not yet ready to survive on its own. The tragedy could have been avoided by a more responsible doctor and, more importantly, by a supportive family and lover. However, neither Ōki nor Otoko's mother wanted the pregnancy. Both were secretly hoping for it to fail. Thus the trauma for Otoko involved not only the loss of the baby but also abandonment by her mother and her lover. Two months after the death of the baby, Otoko tried to kill herself. Even though Ōki nursed Otoko back to life, it was the end of their affair. The damage to her psyche seemed irreparable, and the suicide attempt was followed by a three-month stay in a psychiatric hospital.

The father of the *mizuko* too must wrestle with the past.²⁹ Ōki seeks vainly to summon the dead child's spirit for comfort and pacification (*chinkon* 鎮魂). At Arashiyama, inspired by "a deep, clear jade-green pool in the river," he immerses himself in melancholy reflections. From a distance comes the "plaintive, lingering whistle of a train entering or leaving a tunnel," suggesting the critical moments of conception and birth; Ōki hears in it the "thin cry of a new baby." It is the imagery revolving around the "depths of the green pool" that Kawabata most frequently associates with the *mizuko*. To end his nightmarish recollections, Ōki

²⁸ The plight of *mizuko* is aggravated by "increased individualization and nuclearization" of the family, generating "a growing concern for spiritual explanations of illnesses and worries, and a broadening of the categories of who may be memorialized after death" (READER 1989, pp. 310, 311).

²⁹ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke's novel *Anshitsu* [The dark room, 1970] presents a similar problematic in the *shishōsetsu* 私小説 protagonist's subdued struggle to come to terms with the abortion of a child suspected to be fathered by a rival twenty years earlier and the apparent suicide of his wife Keiko midterm between the traumatic child loss and the narrative present. Nakata reflects on the Jizō cult and mediumistic rituals on Mt. Osore, on *tsubushi* 漬, and on abandoned babies and runaway children. He is obsessed with the "cold lump lying at the bottom of my mind," signifying painful memories of his lost wife and child. He breaks with one lover, Maki, because she refuses his wish to abort their child and becomes tied instead to Natsue, who does not mind abortions. In Natsue's dark room Nakata feels secure as in the womb but nonetheless feels compelled to pursue the dim shadow of his traumatized self (cf. YOSHIYUKI 1975, p. 151). Sekine Eiji focuses his analysis on the sexuality of the hero and "the tyranny involved in the principle of reproduction itself" (SEKINE 1988, p. 164).

claps his hands to summon the waitress; it is a gesture that also serves a religious function – to summon spirits. The atmosphere of the supernatural is heightened by the waitress's story of a man who, bewitched by a badger, fell into the river. As the mood changes from the lyrically evocative to the mysteriously threatening, Ōki feels a mounting need for a rite of comfort. Exactly like Otoko and her mother many years earlier, he sets out to visit the nearby Adashino Nenbutsu-ji, famous for *mizuko kuyō*. Yet, like Otoko, he appears reluctant to accept religious comfort and unprepared to face the past, for he turns back from the numerous gravestones and Jizō figures of the temple. Instead, he seeks to calm himself at the “Moss Temple” (Koke-dera). There he indulges in aesthetic rather than moral contemplations of the water so essential to the green abundance of moss.

After leaving the Koke-dera, Ōki plans an intimate meeting with Otoko, but his plan is frustrated by the presence of Otoko's disciple in the art of painting, Sakami Keiko. Hoping to expel evil and to enter the New Year purified, the three of them listen to the Chion-in bell. In order to reopen the most traumatic chapter in her life, Otoko employs Keiko as medium. Introducing Keiko to Ōki, Otoko describes her disciple as “a bit crazy.” Not unlike a Japanese shamaness or medium (*miko* 巫女), Keiko possesses unusual sensibilities that point to her spiritual powers. As if wearing her charisma on her sleeve, she makes her debut in the story in a kimono with her own “design of plovers fluttering among scattered snowflakes” (26/17:285). Since ancient times, plovers are believed to be repositories for the spirits of the dead (AKIMA 1982, pp. 494, 496, 498; EBERSOLE 1989, pp. 55, 84, 126, 298 n. 8).

The *Shishōsetsu* 私小説 versus the Peony and the Plum

After having brought these three characters together at Chion-in, Kawabata doubles back to Ōki's career during the period between the *mizuko* and the reunion with Otoko. Although the fictive novelist professed to specialize in symbolic realism, his most effective techniques were derived from the autobiographical *shishōsetsu* genre, with which he achieved his greatest popular success. Two years after parting from Otoko, he published a sensational account of their affair, *Jūroku-shichi no shōjo* [A girl of about sixteen]. *Shishōsetsu* authors traditionally have had to pay a high price for their unsparing autobiographical revelations. In Ōki's case, personal tragedy motivated his writing and triggered a further disaster. The outcome of the affair with Otoko was the stillbirth of a premature child, and the result of the fictive rendering of Ōki's experience was similarly tragic. Wanting to confess to his wife but hoping also to use the novel as a therapeutic device for all of those involved, Ōki had asked the jealous Fumiko to type the manuscript. The result was far

from therapeutic: Fumiko suffered a miscarriage. "Two lives were buried in darkness with this novel" (40/17:299).

Fumiko's emotional involvement in her husband's novel followed a roller-coaster pattern. Relieved that the affair had apparently ended with Otoko's move to Kyoto, Fumiko nonetheless experienced anew the pain of an aggrieved wife. Her sense of neglect ironically led to a protest about her absence from the novel. She had agreed to be "part of the machine," but with every word she typed she must have realized her superfluousness as a wife. She castigated herself for being in her husband's way: "Holding on to you was a crime" (39/17:298). Her despair resulted in a miscarriage (the Japanese term, *ryūzan* 流産, reinforces the *mizuko*'s association with water). Yet Fumiko's emotions remained transparent. She was able to act out her rage, paradoxically in another pregnancy.³⁰ When Ōki's novel was published, she gave birth to a girl, Kumiko. In Fumiko, self-sacrifice and practical interest in self-preservation are combined. It is with some distaste that her family members see her profit financially from the novel that hurt her feelings and caused her miscarriage. Her ability to recover from jealousy and neglect as well as the loss of a child stands in sharp contrast to the more subtle story of the introvert Otoko.

Neither able to profit from Ōki's bestseller based on their affair nor willing to replace her lover and her stillborn child, Otoko seeks solace in painting. She refuses her mother's repeated pleas to begin a family. Her mother's seemingly selfish motivation articulated after the *sentō kuyō* at Adashino Nenbutsu-ji has deep roots in religious beliefs. She wants Otoko to marry and have children, not only to alleviate the traumatic loss suffered at age sixteen but also to provide offspring who will continue the family line and pray for the mother's soul after her death. What keeps Otoko from fulfilling her filial duties and from achieving the happiness envisioned by her mother? Why does she resist marriage and childbirth? Unlike Fumiko, who experienced her loss after a male heir had already been born into a secure (if unhappy) marriage, Otoko has nothing to fall back on except the memory of intense passion followed by intense pain. Otoko's vision of the world, formed by her personal losses, aims not at individual salvation or an affirmation of socioreligious values, as does Fumiko's, but at an imaginative truth expressed through religious art.

Ōki, for his part, makes no move to have another child with Otoko. He responds to the loss of the *mizuko* in two ways. He attempts to preserve their passionate, tragic affair unaltered, frozen into the pages of his novel. He also seeks to replace the *mizuko* with a legitimate child,

³⁰ The replacement of tragically lost children through a new pregnancy is also dramatized in MISHIMA Yukio's story "Manatsu no shi" (Death in midsummer, 1953).

unsuccessfully when Fumiko miscarries and then successfully when Kumiko is born. Otoko, however, resents Kumiko³¹ because her very existence testifies to Ōki's selfish effort to find solace for himself while abandoning her to grieve for their *mizuko*.

It is through the discovery of Otoko's art that Ōki is moved to reestablish contact after the ritually significant time span of twenty-three years. The two now share an artistic sensibility that Fumiko lacks. When Ōki purchases Otoko's painting of a peony, it strikes him as "an apparition" (*genkai* 幻怪), presumably of their child. The association becomes clearer in Ōki's mind when he contemplates Otoko's disciple's painting of "a single plum blossom as large as a baby's face [with] both red and white petals" (44/17:303–304). Keiko's abstract painting, untitled as a *mizuko* is nameless,³² reinforces Ōki's impression that the traumatic past is resurfacing. There is an ominous mystery in these paintings, similar to the mystery of Ōki's "freak" plum tree bearing both "red and white blossoms . . . on a single branch" (45/17:304).³³ It is not surprising that Fumiko's jealousy is aroused by these paintings; they allude, after all, to romantic love and its illicit fruit. Because her husband's lover and child are not simply lost and mourned, but evoked with beauty and sadness, Fumiko wants to destroy the paintings.

Keiko's delivery of the two paintings to Ōki's Kamakura residence involves not only Fumiko but also her son Taichirō in a tale long past. Taichirō, a young, unmarried professor of Japanese literature, is regarded as "glum" and "eccentric" by his cheerful younger sister Kumiko, happily married and living in London. We are led to believe that Taichirō's disposition has something to do with the woeful circumstances of his birth. His mother became pregnant with him at the begin-

³¹ New children tend to remind parents of an earlier loss and can evoke the resentful spirit of *mizuko* (e. g., SONO 1990, pp. 262–65).

³² Scholars distinguish between the "namelessness" of dead children under seven years of age in traditional Japan and the practice of giving posthumous names (*kaimyō* 戒名 or *hōmyō* 法名) to these "children (including stillborn children)" in contemporary society. They discriminate further: "A problem arises with aborted children. In general, funeral ceremonies are not performed for them and they are not given posthumous names. However, the namelessness of *mizuko* is based on the fact that the abortion was carried out in secret, hidden from society in general" (HOSHINO and TAKEDA 1987, pp. 314–15). As part of a *mizuko kuyō*, an ancestral tablet with a posthumous name and the death date is sometimes prepared (cf. HARDACRE 1986, p. 151). More commonly perhaps, the family purchases a *tōba* 塔婆 inscribed with the words *mizuko no rei* 水子の霊, family name, and date, or a small Jizō statue for the *butsudan* 仏壇 (cf. BROOKS 1981, pp. 124–27; SMITH 1988, p. 11). In his description of one mother's private *mizuko kuyō*, Lafcadio HEARN mentions the practice of setting afloat votive Jizō paper images printed from woodcuts (*hanko* 判子) (1976, pp. 169–70). Messages written on wooden votive plaques (*ema* 絵馬) are also used to pacify children in limbo (READER 1991a, pp. 24–25, 39–40, 43).

³³ The *mizuko* imagery in ENCHI's novel *Onnawamen* [Women's Noh masks, 1958] is strikingly similar (cf. BARGEN 1991, pp. 147–71).

ning of Ōki's passionate affair with Otoko. After her son's birth, Fumiko fell into suicidal despair over her unhappy marriage and took to wandering around on the railroad tracks in the cold of the night with the newborn baby or hiding under the "freak" plum. Despite a severe illness, Taichirō did not die; soon thereafter, Otoko's baby was lost.

Taichirō reacts to his father's famous novel in accordance with his self-destructive disposition. Uneasy about having survived the extended family drama, he becomes obsessed with thoughts of his father's lost daughter. Like Keiko, Taichirō is motivated largely by his father's novel, yet the function of the novel within the novel is made fully explicit only in the overtly aggressive actions of Fumiko. Unlike the conventional novel within the novel, Ōki's is not narrated but referred to. In other words, *Beauty and Sadness* tells the enclosed story of the author-protagonist's *shishōsetsu* and also dramatizes the Ōki family's suffering and public scandal as typical consequences of the genre's reception. It is no surprise that his novel's impact on the real-life *dramatis personae* weighs heavily on Ōki's mind when, impatiently and full of foreboding, he waits for his son to return from escorting Keiko to the railroad station. As the author-protagonist of his *shishōsetsu*, Ōki had not foreseen his present fears, fears that anticipate the end of Kawabata's novel: Taichirō goes on a trip with Keiko, never to return.

The Green Person

But who is Keiko? The mystery of her identity is alluded to in her repeated inquiry: "Otoko, how old were you when your father died?" Otoko replied: "Eleven, of course! How many times are you going to ask me?" (67/17:327). Why is Keiko obsessed with this question? In connection with Keiko's question another mysterious figure is introduced and never mentioned again: Otoko's half-sister. Yet Keiko cannot be Otoko's "younger half-sister," because Otoko's father was already dead when Keiko was born (in the narrative present Keiko is about twenty-two and Otoko thirty-nine). Keiko has a hunch—perhaps from reading Ōki's novel about Otoko—that her maternal grandfather may have been Otoko's father. And if Keiko is Otoko's younger half-sister's daughter, the arithmetic works out in more than one way.

The prototype for Ōki's novelistic pattern of a married man's affair with a sixteen-year-old girl is—in Kawabata's novel—Otoko's father's affair with a girl "of mixed blood." If Otoko's father had had his affair shortly after Otoko was born, just as Ōki's affair had come to sad fruition after the birth of Taichirō, the half-sister would have been born when Otoko was one or two years old. This calculation is corroborated by the fact that Otoko's father's mistress is still a young woman when Otoko's mother sees her at her husband's funeral. There Otoko's mother learns

that her husband's illicit union produced a little girl, but she fails to adopt her as an additional safeguard against the fate of *muenbotoke*. Otoko's mother continues to be obsessed with the belief that after her only child's death someone will be needed to pray for her. Otoko's half-sister might have prayed for the family dead. Her adoption would have been sanctioned to prevent the extinction of the line. The adoption would also have honored the patrilineal descent rule (cf. TAKEDA 1976, pp. 120–21), while at the same time covering up the illegitimate birth. Since this opportunity was missed, the pressure to wed and bear children reverts to Otoko with the overwhelming force of a socioreligious moral imperative.

The question arises again why Otoko stubbornly refuses this imperative and spurns the healing process prescribed by society. Her sensitivity to the betrayal involved in replacing her lost loved ones allows only for oblique, sublimated, artistic solutions. Keiko is central to this strategy, for she indirectly replaces both the lost daughter and Ōki, by proxy, as it were: she could be Otoko's daughter but is not; she is Otoko's new lover but not of the male sex. Keiko has to be an ambiguous, chameleon-like character to express the simultaneous disguise and disclosure of self (her own and that of another).

In the narrative present Otoko is thirty-nine, the half-sister thirty-eight, and Keiko twenty-two. If Keiko is the half-sister's daughter, the intriguing prefiguration suggests yet another affair at age sixteen—namely, the half-sister's—to echo the title of Ōki's bestselling novel. Significantly, Otoko is unaware of this mysterious half-sister. Because of the implications of forbidden contact, Keiko shrouds her own identity in mystery. She is, it seems, Otoko's lover *and* her niece.

Why did Keiko virtually seek out this precarious position? In part because Keiko, an orphan, is not only trying to straighten out her own strange life by accommodating it to patterns in Otoko's. Ostracized from her brother's house for mistreatment of his child, she is seeking membership in an appropriate household, in order to avoid "living as if dead" (PLATH 1964, pp. 311–12). In lineages threatened by extinction, an "infant orphan" is raised "temporarily under the care of a different *ie* household" so that "this infant orphan will some day, upon reaching the age of maturity, revive his native *ie*" (TAKEDA 1976, p. 121). Since the grown-up orphan Keiko is apparently related to Otoko's household, she seems destined to continue the line in lieu of the *mizuko*. She is, in short, Otoko's "spirit child" (*seirei no ko* 精霊の子; 168/17:445).

The only mention of Otoko's half-sister in the entire novel is preceded by Keiko's repeated question about Otoko's father's age at death and followed by Otoko's nightmare of a "green person" (69/17:330). The sequence of Keiko's apparently unmotivated question, the reference to the half-sister, and the nightmare is not random. These are intricately

linked and superbly crafted episodes that point obliquely to Keiko's role and family background.

Who then is the "green figure floating" in the dream motivated by Keiko's odd question? The color green signals melancholy, as in Otoko's tea-plantation paintings. Descriptions of these pictures abound in ominous water imagery that relates the tea fields to the memory of the "water child" (for premature births, terms like *mijukuji* 未熟児, *midorigo* 緑児 or 嬰兒 [MANABE 1959, pp. 74–75] are sometimes used to suggest the baby's "unripe" or "green" state). Moreover, the term "floating"³⁴ is invariably used for Otoko's *mizuko* and for Keiko's appearance "out of a pale bluish haze" (105, 108/17:372, 375) into Otoko's life. Here it seems that Otoko's obsession with her stillborn child merges with a blurry vision of her half-sister's child. Otoko is frightened by the dream, but Keiko "tittered a little hysterically" and was "exhilarated." Keiko's strangely happy response to Otoko's nightmare is akin to the joys of self-recognition: Keiko is not only the age of Otoko's lost daughter, thus being a symbolic surrogate for the *mizuko*, but she may literally be Otoko's half-sister's daughter. Thus Keiko can be said symbolically and literally to have inspired Otoko's dream. Seen from this perspective, it seems only natural that Keiko identifies wholeheartedly with the green person.

The Magic Couch

At this point the narrative focus shifts back to Ōki. Twenty-four years after the beginning of his most passionate affair and his greatest loss, that of lover and child, he finds himself drawn back into the past. Waiting for a psychoanalytic cure, he takes naps on his "magic couch" (*mahō no neisu* 魔法の寝椅子; 72/17:333). There is no actual Freudian analyst to help Ōki come to terms with the past, but Keiko appears, on her second visit to Kamakura, as the return of the *mizuko* and as Otoko's "double." It is June, and the air is wet and sticky, infused with sensuality.

Keiko brings a painting suggestive, like the earlier ones by Otoko (the peony) and herself (the plum blossom), of Otoko's premature baby. This example of Keiko's "bitter" art is of the "undulating" tea fields at Uji. Ōki merely sees Keiko's youth in the painting; he does not consciously link her to his lost daughter. Ōki's initial suspicion that Keiko might have come for his son instead of him is dispelled by his facetious questions about Keiko's sexual contacts. Through repeated sexual overtures, Keiko makes Ōki forget his anxiety over his latent rivalry with Taichirō. The seduction scene is inspired by erotic references to the lush rainy season and green tea fields.

³⁴ The term *ukabareru* (floating) is especially significant for dead souls: "The soul has to be set afloat from its former ties" (OOMS 1967, p. 281). The floating of *muenbotoke*, however, occurs without any hope of joining the ranks of the ancestors.

Acting as Otoko's double, Keiko confesses her desire to have her teacher paint her portrait. At the same time, she refuses to be the novelist's model, claiming her inability to "equal the girl of [Ōki's] imagination" (78/17:340). Keiko's ambivalence about modeling is hardly illuminated by her stated willingness to "sacrifice" herself. Ōki is puzzled, but his question "Are you sacrificing yourself to Otoko?" (79:342) goes unanswered. At this point Ōki would indeed be unable to comprehend that, as a model for Otoko, Keiko mediates between the dead and the imagined child. Thus surrendering her self to appease and comfort the *mizuko*, she poses as a human sacrifice.

Ōki is frustrated in the fulfillment of his sexual fantasies because he is fearful of incestuous involvement with his son's suspected lover. At the same time, Ōki senses yet another formidable barrier between Keiko and him. Earlier, while trying to distract and pacify his wife, he had insinuated that the bond between Otoko and Keiko amounted to no less than lesbianism. Keiko herself views lesbian lovers as doomed to the fate of *muenbotoke*: "Both of them may be destroyed" (80/17:342). Her mission to Kamakura and her show of heterosexuality are simulations of romantic passions that, like her lesbianism, divert attention from the central issue of coming to terms with the *mizuko*.³⁵ Yet Keiko's incestuous and lesbian liaisons are not only interrelated; they are interlocking strategies intended to challenge society's norms and to transcend the folk religious notion that *mizuko* are forever trapped in *sai no kawara*. In her penchant for expedient devices, Keiko shares in the more hopeful spirit of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Unorthodox sexual behavior alone can "reproduce" the lost child in a defiant act of the imagination, thereby filling a missing link in the ancestral chain.

If Keiko's visit is a return of the repressed past for Ōki, it is a form of therapy for Keiko, acting now as Otoko's substitute or as her rival. As one or the other, she relives the trauma of Otoko's affair with Ōki. At the same time, as the real Keiko, she relives the trauma of the undiscussed but strongly insinuated affair³⁶ that preceded her involvement with Otoko. Ōki and Otoko and Keiko are linked not only in an unconventional triangle in which each of the three has had sexual contact with both of the others. They are, more importantly, linked through the bond of child loss. At the climactic moment of her sexual encounter with Ōki, Keiko cries out Otoko's name to interrupt the act, as if to prevent

³⁵ For a discussion of lesbianism as a fictional inversion of Kawabata's homosexual experience as a young man, see OSAKABE 1969, pp. 300–302. Although similarly neglectful of the issue of *mizuko* in explaining lesbian (and incestuous) tendencies, another critic is vaguely defensive about what she considers "not a catalogue of perversity but Kawabata's symbolic rendering of transience, ambiguity, and the lifeline of love" (PETERSEN 1979, p. 185 n. 32).

³⁶ I am indebted to Marcellene Hearn for the compelling notion that Keiko may have had an affair similar to Otoko's.

a pregnancy that would intensify the bitterness of Otoko's loss. Ōki's discovery that Keiko is not a virgin increases his unease over the rivalry with his son. Still another fateful triangle—of father, son, and Keiko—is beginning to form.

Rocks and Fireflies

It is at the rock garden of Koke-dera, where Ōki had gone just before his reunion with Otoko, that Keiko confesses to Otoko her seduction of Ōki. The garden is an appropriate place for the contemplation of mortality and immortality, reproduction and reincarnation. Like the Adashino gravestones earlier, Musō Kokushi's 夢窓国師 rock arrangement of 1339 strikes the characters as conducive to the memory of the dead. As noted in the discussion of *gorintō*, rocks have been favorite hiding spots for the spirits of the deceased (EBERSOLE 1989, pp. 82–83). It is therefore not surprising that the mortuary aspects of Musō's art inspire the confession.

Keiko confesses that one of her motives was “to break up his family, to get revenge for you [Otoko]” (88/17:352). In addition, Keiko admits that she acted out of jealousy. Keiko's jealousy and possessiveness, however, do not satisfactorily explain her professed hatred of men, especially of older men. Otoko therefore suspects that Keiko's revenge is not for Otoko's sake alone. Ever more compellingly, Keiko's complete empathy for Otoko's trauma with Ōki seems motivated by some nightmarish event in Keiko's own past. That Keiko intends to help heal Otoko rather than hurt her is indicated by her tentative offer to have a child for Otoko, with Ōki. Otoko, however, rejects the suggestion since it would not only change their lesbian relationship—by definition, a childless one—but also the nature of the sacred memory. She does not want Keiko to replace her as Ōki's lover or as the mother of his child. Keiko in turn wants to be the replacement for Otoko's child by Ōki and, like the *mizuko*, be ancestral to no one.

As the two discuss the “human composition” of Musō's rock garden and Keiko's re-creation of it in a subtle, abstract painting that formalistically emulates rock sculpture, they perceive that something frightening, like dead souls, is coming alive in these rocks which are permanent memorials to dead souls and permanent haunts of memory.³⁷ Although the arrangement of the rocks is “man-made,” legend has it that Musō's

³⁷ Itoh Teiji divides Koke-dera (Saihō-ji) into the pond of paradise and the stony hill representing “the present world in all its defilement. Indeed, at one time burials and services for the dead were held there.” It is interesting to note that Musō, in his famous work *Muchū mondō* 夢中間答 (1344), believed the “distinction between holy purity and defilement [to be an] illusion” (Itoh 1984, p. 104).

creation of Koke-dera, and its rock elements in particular, was inspired and assisted by none other than Jizō.³⁸

Otoko warns her disciple that their intense bonding will prevent a normal life: “A woman has marriage and children.’ ‘Oh, that!’ Keiko laughed. ‘I don’t have them!’ ‘That’s my fault. I’m sorry.’ Otoko turned away, her head drooping, and plucked a leaf from a tree” (95/17:361). Their defoliate resolve to stay “single” is not unrelated to the fate of *mizuko*. As unmarried women they are perceived as undermining the principle of procreation and falling into the unfortunate category of *muenbotoke*. Together with *mizuko* they must, after death, linger in *sai no kawara* (OOMS 1967, pp. 253–54, 283, 290). Rather than being a statement of sexual preferences, lesbian bonding here acquires the meaning of parental bonding with *mizuko*. To prove her commitment to Otoko, Keiko offers to visit the riverbed of *sai* temporarily, as an androgynous, salvific Jizō-figure. In her role as daughter-medium she feels compelled to devise a way to affiliate the *mizuko* and thereby open a passage to ancestorhood normally denied all *muenbotoke*.

Keiko’s dilemma echoes that of Mrs. Ōta’s daughter in Kawabata’s *Thousand Cranes*. In that novel, Ōta Fumiko is courted by Mitani Kikuji, the son of her mother’s late lover. At the same time, Fumiko’s mother is driven to despair by Fumiko’s repeated references to the hypothetical “child” that Mrs. Ōta never had by the elder Mitani. Mrs. Ōta commits suicide. Less self-destructive than Mrs. Ōta, Otoko responds with violence to Keiko’s offer to have a child to replace the *mizuko*—she slaps Keiko, who wants to be slapped again. As in *Thousand Cranes*, violence is necessary to dispel the unthinkable incestuous allusion. After Mrs. Ōta’s tragic death, Fumiko and her potential lover Kikuji (Mitani’s son and Mrs. Ōta’s lover) smash Mrs. Ōta’s tea vessels—the heritage of her fertility and passion. In a similar manner, Otoko goes from hitting Keiko to kicking over a cage of fireflies that send off a “greenish-white light” (96/17:363). The gesture in its symbolic coloration may signify Otoko’s waking nightmare of Keiko’s impregnation by Ōki and the threat of their having a child. Like *ignes fatui*, fireflies evoke souls in limbo, flitting to and fro (PICONE 1981, pp. 29, 31). Kawabata’s characters try to respond to the legacy of the unborn with unorthodox behavior: incestuous or homosexual liaisons, suicidal or murderous impulses, and, at the most sublimated level, the creation of memorial art.

³⁸ For this legend, recorded in the *Shokoku kojidan* 諸国古寺譚 (1850), see DE VISSER 1914, p. 145. Itoh refers to the “legend of the Samedono Jizō” and surmises that “this legend arose because the making of the garden had disturbed an ancient burial mound” (ITOH 1984, pp. 106, 107).

Double Take

On the banks of the Kamo River, Otoko blends memories of the past—in particular, her affair at age sixteen with Ōki—with her present affair with Keiko. She associates Keiko's appeal with the irresistible androgyny of young Kabuki actors. Otoko attempts to memorialize her *mizuko* by drawing on religious as well as secular art and by using Keiko as an inspiration. She chooses the effeminate “divine boy” (*chigo* 稚児) Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 (Kūkai 空海)³⁹ as a model for painting Keiko as her *mizuko*. Alternatively, Otoko selects the Christ child to represent Keiko and the Christian ideal of sexually pure maternity as embodied by the Virgin Mary to represent herself. Otoko might have been expected to exploit Buddhism's sexual iconography and to choose Jizō, the “androgynous who represents male and female equally” (SMITH 1988, p. 17),⁴⁰ but a direct reference to Jizō—as Koyasu Jizō—would wrongly imply that Otoko entertains hopes for a new pregnancy.

Religion is but one of the sources Otoko draws on for her evocation of that first moment of meeting Keiko, the “sorceress” (*yōsei* 妖精; 105/17:372) who came into her life “out of a pale bluish haze.” Otoko also cites a picturesque Kabuki-actor scene on the Kamo River from *Illustrated Sights of the Capital*. The sight referred to is of a group of young Kabuki actors disporting on—of all places—a dry riverbank reminiscent of *sai no kawara*. Analogously, Keiko's inspiration to move to Kyoto and become Otoko's disciple is also based on artistic and literary sources.⁴¹ She had seen Otoko's paintings at a Tokyo art exhibit and her photograph in a magazine. It can also be assumed, as Otoko does, that Keiko read Ōki's bestseller. Both of them are clearly persons whose decisions are shaped by art forms—whether painting, photography, fiction, or garden and tea culture—that echo some profoundly disturbing event in their lives.

This passion for religion and art is informed by sexuality. Otoko is drawn to Keiko for two mutually exclusive reasons: Keiko's boyishness appeals sexually to the older woman, while her gender makes her a

³⁹ Chigo Kōbō Daishi is commonly fused with Namubutsu Taishi 南無仏太子 (Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子, 574–622; cf. GUTH 1987, pp. 20, 22–23). Kawabata's Otoko, however, superimposes the image of the Christ child on Kōbō Daishi as a divine boy. It is interesting to note that Kawabata does not refer to the more popularly salvific Jizō, and neither does Guth in her gallery of divine boys. BLACKER also does not include Jizō in her study (1963, pp. 77–88).

⁴⁰ “In Japanese stories Jizō often appears as a handsome young priest or a boy or a child in a devotee's dream—a feature that is very rare in the Chinese tradition” (DYKSTRA 1978, pp. 188–89). For Kōbō Daishi's role in disseminating the Jizō belief, see CASAL 1959, pp. 122–24; TANAKA 1980, p. 251.

⁴¹ It has been argued that Kyoto is not the real Kyoto but the realm of the dead (*meikai* 冥界), where Otoko and Keiko reside as alter egos (*bunrei de ari, bunshin de aru*) (YOSHIMURA 1979, p. 192).

likely surrogate for Otoko's lost daughter. At the same time, Keiko seems to see in Otoko a role model for coping with her own past. Otoko's magazine photo identifies her as the source for the heroine of Ōki's bestselling novel. Otoko's painting of the "double image" of the famous Gion geisha Okayo suggests the concept of the double, of the blurring of identities. It is as if Keiko wanted to blend into Otoko, and vice versa. Kawabata writes of Otoko's desire to paint the *maiko* in this special manner: "She wanted to give an uneasy feeling that the one girl was two, the two one, or perhaps neither one nor two." Significantly, Otoko's painting is not completely original but derivative, like her other paintings based on photographs. The technique reflects Otoko's longing to reconstitute the loss of self experienced in the tragic rupture of the mother-child bond. And Keiko responds sympathetically to this concept of the two-in-one self as well as to the violence implicit in the game of scissors-paper-stone and the contrasting hand positions of the "two" *maiko*, one seemingly on the offensive and one on the defensive.

Back on the balcony by the river, Otoko and Keiko remember their first outing to Arashiyama. Not only did their relationship begin liminally at the boundary where a famous river gives the illusion of being three rivers by changing names from Hozu 保津 to Ōi 大堰 to Katsura 桂, but Arashiyama is also fraught with retrospective meaning for them: it is there that Ōki went in preparation for his reunion with Otoko and his unexpected first encounter with Keiko. Looking at the Kamo riverbank, Keiko expresses her pessimistic view of romantic love, a view reminiscent of her earlier pessimism about marriage and children. Otoko's surprise at Keiko's gloomy prediction about the lovers seen on the riverbank points again to a traumatic event in Keiko's life that shaped her view of heterosexual love.

Another clue to the mysterious relationship between the two women is found in the undercurrent of incestuous violence that runs through the novel. Just after Keiko's most unequivocal hint at an earlier affair: "I'm the kind of girl that's deserted by her lover" (116/17:383), Otoko remembers an incident in which Keiko burned her finger on the spattered oil of a frying pan. In the string of reflections that begins with Keiko's burnt finger, Otoko plays the role of Ōki in her sexual initiation of Keiko. Keiko in turn acts like the sixteen-year-old Otoko, to the point of appearing to quote the Otoko created in Ōki's novel. If it can be assumed that Keiko was wounded by her previous lover, presumably the man whose violation of her explains Keiko's aversion to the male sex, then Otoko's gesture of putting Keiko's burnt finger in her mouth to soothe it can be seen as a spontaneous effort at healing and, perhaps, as a symbolically sexual act. In short, the lesbian affair was triggered by Otoko's recognition of Keiko's need to be healed of a traumatic heterosexual encounter. Keiko, on the other hand, had learned of Otoko's

sufferings even before she met Otoko in person, through Ōki's novel and Otoko's art. To Keiko, Otoko is an open book, whereas to Otoko, Keiko is a riddle, a sorceress, "some strange creature." Keiko's personal history remains shrouded in mystery even after a discussion of her "family." In fact, all that Otoko is able to conclude is that Keiko must have had an experience with a man she would prefer to forget: "Otoko suspected that she [Keiko] was not a virgin" (117/17:385). Otoko further suspects that Keiko came to her to commiserate because she had read Ōki's novel. It is Otoko's ingenious strategy to have found both a lover and a surrogate child in Keiko, while keeping pure her love of Ōki and fixing her lost daughter in the stasis of art, in the paintings that function as memorial photography.

Keiko's apparent allegiance to lesbianism with its destructive aspects for the family line contrasts with her determined and sacrificial excursions into heterosexuality. This contradictory behavior cannot be explained without linking Keiko to the *mizuko*. In particular, her symbolic offer to have a child by Ōki reflects the dualism informing ancestor worship (*sozen sūhai* 祖先崇拝) and the Japanese life and death cycle. Since the requisite twenty-three years have passed since the *mizuko*, it is time to end the conventional mourning period (*tomurai age* 弔い上げ or *toikiri* 訪切) and allow the dead child to become one with the community of ancestors (OOMS 1976, pp. 71–73). Like Adashino stones, Musō's rocks, fireflies, or haze, Keiko is a *katami* 形見 in the classic sense, "a repository for the spirit of a deceased individual" (EBERSOLE 1989, p. 273). As such, Keiko seems to have appeared out of the "pale bluish haze" at just the right time.

It is precisely at this point that Otoko recollects her excruciating trip with her mother to Adashino Nenbutsu-ji twenty years earlier. That experience determined her resolve not to correct the tragedy of the past by getting married and having children. To do so would mean to lead a normal, a non-artistic life. Yet art requires the acknowledgment of a "scar" (121/17:389), not its denial. Thus it is that Ōki's reputation as a writer declined after the *shishōsetsu* based on his "scar." Otoko, on the other hand, was able to maintain her creativity by continuing to live with her "scar" and by not consoling herself with other men. Her lesbian affair, however, forces her to realize that she has given in to a compromise or that she may be fooling herself with a trick, as in the Okayo painting.

Recollections of Adashino Nenbutsu-ji are followed by recollections of another moment of violence. Once Otoko had experienced a murderous impulse to slash Keiko's throat with her mother's razor. The remembered scene is, typically, embedded in a scene from the more distant past, when Ōki had very nearly strangled her. On the occasion when she had shaved Keiko and thought of killing her, Otoko had played Ōki while at the same time identifying with her "victim" Keiko. Through

that identification, Otoko reexperienced the emotions of the frustrated death wish she had felt at the end of her affair with Ōki. Furthermore, the fact that Keiko uses Otoko's mother's razor is a painful reminder that Otoko failed to marry and bear children to relieve her mother of her fears of *muenbotoke*. Keiko represents Otoko's artistic strategy to deal with her trauma and replace her loss. Since Otoko's mother would not have accepted this solution, her razor cuts metaphorically at Otoko's conscience and reawakens her guilty sense that she has not fulfilled her obligations. Simultaneously, the razor is turned against Otoko herself in her resurgent maternal guilt over the loss of a child twenty-three years earlier. The ominous razor precipitates a sacrificial crisis to legitimize Otoko's claim to Keiko as her heir. Through ritual death and rebirth ordinary moral and physical limitations can be suspended to transcend individual identity and transfigure self into other. No one is better suited for this sacrificial role than Keiko. She is programmed, as it were, ultimately to bring peace of mind (*yasuragi* やすらぎ)⁴² as their surrogate daughter (*Keiko to iu musume*, 128/17:397).

Mirrors with Memories

Otoko confronts her self in still another way: by contemplating her difficulties with her lost mother. This occurs when the impending loss of Keiko to Taichirō triggers Otoko's reflections on Keiko as her lover but also as her protégée and symbolic daughter. As with any serious disruption of the mother-child bond, there is an impending loss of self. For Otoko, the endangered mother-child relationship takes various forms: mother-Otoko, Otoko-*mizuko*, and, most recently, Otoko-Keiko.

As for Otoko and her mother, each would see in the other "a mirror reflecting Ōki" (160/17:435). He is the male element that destroys the harmony of the mother-daughter relationship and is nonetheless necessary to ensure its continuity. Otoko is in a pivotal mother-daughter position between her mother and Keiko. In the struggle to proceed from the role of her mother's daughter to that of her child's mother, she refuses to leave this liminal state. Under normal conditions her mother's death would have terminated the former and her child's death the latter, but Keiko's entry into Otoko's life extends the liminal crisis.

It is appropriate at this transitional point for Otoko to interpret her mother's portrait (painted after her mother's death with the aid of an old photograph) as a kind of self-portrait. In a similar effort to break out of the narrow confines of the individual self, Otoko, having rejected the ugly realism of newborn babies in photographs she had seen, had done her sketches of the baby for *Ascension of an Infant* with Keiko in mind. She now sees her as a model (see 168/17:444) for *The Holy Virgin*, with

⁴² Pamphlets advertising *mizuko kuyō* list *yasuragi* as an important benefit (BROOKS 1981, p. 139).

whom Otoko had identified earlier. Roles are in flux: Otoko finally identifies with her mother and accepts Keiko, her “daughter,” as an alter ego. But Otoko’s realization of her narcissism and manipulation fills her with self-loathing. She begins to contrast her portrait of her mother with the selfless art of Nakamura Tsune, whose *Portrait of His Aged Mother* rings true to her because it was painted in the face of death, not only the mother’s but also the painter’s. Thus it served no purpose other than that of art itself.

If it is difficult for Otoko to paint her mother, it is more difficult still for her to portray her *mizuko*, for whom she has no visual impression, not even in the form of a photograph so important in Japanese memorial practices. Otoko’s apparent dependence as a painter on source photographs is based on the assumption that verisimilitude is the aim of art and that photography can best simulate that reality. In the absence of a photograph, then, the painting of a “spirit child” poses the utmost challenge to the artist, and the question arises whether such a painting can ever be accomplished. Otoko has done numerous “sketches,” but the passage of time is a factor that requires continual revision. The *mizuko* has outgrown its status and is now imagined on the threshold of ancestorhood. Otoko is trying to capture the moment of categorical change by deriving inspiration from Keiko’s sleeping form. Yet it is only when the feat of the imagination is accomplished, at the moment when Keiko emerges purified and selfless from the waters of Lake Biwa, that the *mizuko* is transfigured into ancestorhood. Finally, through the mediumship of Keiko, Otoko envisions the paradox of *mizuko* as lost child reincarnated and ancestral being.

“Called Back”⁴³

Another source of profound disturbance for Otoko lies in the notion of improper burial, a universal theme dramatized in Antigone’s tragic effort to bury her brother Polyneikes no less than in Japan’s early lore (cf. NAKAMURA 1973, pp. 81–83). Otoko’s anxious questions concerning the stillborn daughter’s remains are frustrated by evasive responses. Apparently the *mizuko* was simply discarded rather than cremated.⁴⁴ Longing for the dead child is mixed with unease over its restless spirit.

⁴³ Inscription on Emily Dickinson’s gravestone (Amherst, MA), quoting her last letter, May 1886 (JOHNSON 1958, 3: 906; Letter No. 1046).

⁴⁴ Since ancient times, cremation has been regarded as a purifying process. However, the privilege of purifying the corpse by fire was not granted everyone, as is customary in modern Japan. “Until the fifteenth century . . . most corpses were neither cremated nor securely buried, but instead were simply exposed” (GOODWIN 1989, p. 65). The process of establishing cremation practices was slowed by fears “of losing the body through cremation in case the spirit should return to this world.” as. e.g., “in the event that death took place prematurely” (NAKAMURA 1973, p. 81).

Anxiety aroused by the beloved dead is also evident in the episode relating to the historic Princess Kazunomiya 和宮 (1846–1877). Taichirō feels instinctively that there is a similarity between Kazunomiya and the subject of his own research, Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537).⁴⁵ In his desire to hear Sanetaka’s voice from the tomb, Taichirō’s hitherto coldly intellectual pursuit becomes acutely emotional. What stirs Taichirō most in his obsession with ghosts from the past are the religious implications of Kazunomiya’s exhumation, the elusiveness of her secret, and her reburial. Furthermore, the archeological interlude parallels the sequence already in progress concerning the novel’s *mizuko*: the recalling of its spirit, its transformation and immortalization in art (by Ōki and Otoko), its reburial (through Taichirō), and its reincarnation (through Keiko).

In this way, Kazunomiya is intricately bound to the *mizuko*, who in turn is tied to its parents’ real and symbolic children—Taichirō and Keiko, respectively. The princess’s skeleton is discovered in an “innocent pose, like a child taking a nap” (137/17:408), with a strand of hair left on her skull.⁴⁶ The image of Kazunomiya’s pose and hair merges with that of Keiko’s curled-up position in the seduction scene with Ōki, and both images are superimposed upon the memory of the pitch-black hair of Otoko’s stillborn child.

The theme of photographic representation, introduced when Otoko uses old photographs as an aid to portraiture, reappears now in the form of a wet-plate photograph found on Kazunomiya’s skeleton. The image was of an unidentifiable man. It cannot be ascertained whether Kazunomiya had intended thus to immortalize her husband Tokugawa Iemochi (1846–1866) or her childhood ex-fiancé Arisugawa no miya Taruhito (1835–1895).⁴⁷ The sentimental gesture of taking the photograph into the grave with her may suggest either that it was an emblem of romantic love or that it expressed the princess’s unshakable loyalty to the declin-

⁴⁵ Kazunomiya and Sanetaka are two prominent cultural figures who share a diplomatic skill in sorting out their allegiances in apparently hopeless political positions. Sanetaka achieved fame for being on good terms with both the powerless imperial court and the increasingly decadent Muromachi shogunate. Kazunomiya’s political dilemma between the shogunate and the imperial family at a time when the two forces were engaged in bitter fights over hegemony reflects her personal conflict between her politically arranged marriage in March 1862 to Tokugawa Iemochi 徳川家茂 (1846–1866) and her severed childhood betrothal (1851) to Arisugawa no miya Taruhito 有栖川宮熾仁 (1835–1895). The complexity of Kazunomiya also captivated ARIYOSHI Sawako (1931–1984), whose historical novel *Kazu no miyasama otome* [Her Highness Princess Kazu, 1978], employs two substitutes in succession for the princess, one of whom is wedded to the shogun. I am indebted to Mildred M. Tahara for sharing with me a detailed synopsis of her forthcoming translation; for a partial translation see ARIYOSHI 1986.

⁴⁶ The spirit is believed to reside in the skull (NAKAMURA 1973, p. 83).

⁴⁷ Historical sources indicate that Kazunomiya’s love was the shogun (LEE 1967, p. 303).

ing Tokugawa shogunate. When the skeleton and the photograph are exhumed, the latter, exposed to air and light,⁴⁸ vanishes, intensifying thereby the tantalizing mystery of its significance.

While throughout the novel photographs are considered uncomfortably close to reality because of their near-perfect verisimilitude, paintings allow the artist greater freedom to transform one person into another, to produce a doubling of self: the photograph-based portrait of Otoko's mother, for instance, is reinterpreted as Otoko's self-portrait. In the case of Kazunomiya, the photographic likeness of the unidentified man transcends its realistic limitations when it is exposed to light. When it begins to fade, it loses its unambiguous verisimilitude: one identity vanishes into another and then into an inconclusive blank. All that is left is an empty glass plate—a black hole or a magic mirror that has swallowed the secret of Kazunomiya's existence.

Ōki too is fascinated by Kazunomiya's puzzling story, but for him it evokes Keiko rather than Sanjōnishi Sanetaka. Ōki suspects that Keiko, like the princess, is involved with two men. In fact, he fears that his rival may be his own son. Fears of incest overcome Ōki, but it is already too late to prevent the formation of this fateful triangle. What Ōki cannot know is that Taichirō, captivated by Keiko's "wraithlike" charm, will soon vanish like Kazunomiya's beloved on the glass plate exposed to light.

Keiko resembles Kazunomiya in the hold she has on her male lovers as well as in her sprite-like fetal posing, which evokes the spirit of Otoko's lost child. At the same time that she alerts Taichirō to his incestuous involvement with her, she revives in him the guilt he feels for surviving his father's *mizuko*. The exhumation and reburial of Kazunomiya's remains foreshadow the symbolic return (through Keiko) and the irrevocable disappearance (through Taichirō) of the *mizuko*. In the final drama, the story of Kazunomiya takes on the ghostly character of another cryptic tale-within-the-tale of excessive mourning.

Liminal Waters

These complex events are finally propelled toward their ritual climax. Twenty-three years have passed since the *mizuko*'s demise and the symbolic time span of the narrative present—from New Year's to mid-summer—has duplicated the approximate length of Otoko's failed

⁴⁸ It appears from the description that the photograph must have been a collodion "positive" or ambrotype whose image is actually a negative that appears as a positive. When the dark backing is removed or, as seems to have been the case in Kazunomiya's photo of her beloved, somehow damaged by apparent lack of proper protection, the image appears as a negative or as "faded." Technically, it cannot have faded as a result of exposure to "air and light" or "overnight" (139/17:410) (cf. CoE 1977, pp. 31–32).

pregnancy. And finally, midsummer is a time of heightened ritual activity: Shinto purification rites (*nagoshi no harae* 夏越の祓), the celestial union of Altair (Kengyū 牽牛) and Vega (Shokujo 織女) at the *Tanabata matsuri* 七夕祭 (also called *Bon hajime* 盆初め; July 7), the festival day of Jizō (*ennichi* 縁日; July 24), Bon, and Jizō-bon.

The central actor in Kawabata's idiosyncratic rituals of death, purification, and rebirth is the character who has, throughout the novel, been walking a fine line between the real and the unreal, the sacred and the profane, the past and the future. In her role as memorial and salvific figure, Keiko is emblematic of *kokeshi*, *Dōsojin*, and Jizō. As if on liminal waters, she floats betwixt and between two major cycles, that of life (with its rites of passage from birth to marriage) and that of death (with its ancestral rites).

Kawabata's rendering of the ritual of sacrificial death and redemptive rebirth is masterfully dramatic. The final act of the drama begins when, on their *michiyuki* 道行 toward death, Keiko tells Taichirō that her revenge "is finished. I'm just me" (181/17:460). All ties to Otoko seem severed, like an umbilical cord. Earlier Keiko had responded to Taichirō's provocative question of whether her love was her "revenge" with an ambiguous murmur that might be rendered simply as "feminine jealousy" but that could also be translated literally to refer to the baby girl's (i.e., *mizuko*'s) jealousy (*onna no ko no shitto*, 156/17:431). Keiko has long pictured herself as the reincarnation of Otoko's daughter. As such, to re-enter Otoko's life she must be reborn, purified. At the Nison-in in Sagano, where even the Buddha cannot avoid appearing as two-in-one (Shaka and Amida), Keiko and Taichirō embark on their search for the grave of Sanjōnishi Sanetaka. They move from total disorientation to the mutual recognition of each other as Otoko's symbolic children.

At the Lake Biwa Hotel, the two engage in a green-tea ritual that is symbolic of insemination and fertilization. The ritual serves to initiate them into the process of death and rebirth. Keiko then telephones Taichirō's parents to inform them of her incestuous scheme, and thereby sees to it that they will hurry to be on the scene of the anticipated tragedy. Brushing aside Taichirō's fearful reluctance to go boating, Keiko presses ahead: "I want us to cut through our fate and drift along on the waves" (203/17:488). The boat capsizes. Keiko emerges alive from the waters of Lake Biwa, where traditionally the bones of the dead have been buried (EDER 1956, p. 98); Taichirō does not. If Keiko merely represents the *mizuko* at the green-tea ritual, she simultaneously becomes one with and remains distinct from the *mizuko* on Lake Biwa. In a ritual more elaborate than that given the spirits of the unborn in *Thousand Cranes* and *The Sound of the Mountain*, the spirit child in *Beauty and Sadness* enters into what anthropologists call a "spirit marriage." Such a ceremony is performed for the unaffiliated female dead who is

posthumously affiliated, preferably with “a living male spouse . . . usually selected from the dead woman’s lineage” (COHEN 1983, p. 61).⁴⁹ In Kawabata’s novels, such a “posthumous marriage” (AHERN 1973, pp. 128, 235–36) is either thwarted by violent death (Mrs. Ōta), transformed into incestuous fantasy (Shingo), or performed at the sacrifice of the living spouse (Taichirō).

In the liminal waters of Lake Biwa, Keiko eliminates Ōki psychologically and Taichirō literally. She has become, in Otoko’s eyes, as pure as an innocent newborn. Otoko’s spiritual communion with the awakening Keiko is the idiosyncratic symbolic equivalent of the *kuyō* proper at Adashino Nenbutsu-ji. In contrast to the mysterious absolution attained by Otoko, the denouement is a tragedy for the Ōki family. It is understandable that Fumiko accuses Otoko and Keiko of causing Taichirō’s death. If Otoko and Keiko are impassive and aloof in the face of Fumiko’s accusation, it is because they have already experienced, in a way that Fumiko has not, the harrowing trauma of child loss. Caught between the three women, Ōki has no strength left to either accuse or comfort. He is left dangling. Through his involvement with Keiko, he has helped generate this peculiarly intricate outcome, but he is now no more than a helpless bystander. Nonetheless, for him, it is at least conceivable that the new loss of Taichirō may redeem the old one of Otoko’s *mizuko*. If this is indeed the case, the loss of twenty-three years earlier has finally been atoned for by another: the sacrificial death of his son.

A reading of *Beauty and Sadness* that stresses the religious context of the literary experience of child loss reveals a heroic Otoko who at this climactic moment is serenely detached from ordinary reality. Instead of following the norms of quotidian morality, she transcends the sorrows of this world to the point where a mother’s loss is no longer experienced as a personal matter. Otoko ignores Fumiko’s rage, and Keiko—literally unconscious—is equally oblivious to the charge that she is responsible for Taichirō’s death. She too floats in another realm where individual losses no longer matter. Liminality thus makes sport of quotidian reality and morality alike. The moment is an epiphany; there is no need to dwell upon it.

⁴⁹ Although “spirit marriage” or *ming hun* 冥婚 (Jap. *meikon*) is a predominantly Chinese folk custom (JORDAN 1972, pp. 140–55), it also has a tradition in Korea and Japan, where it is known as *meikai kon’in* 冥界婚姻, *bōrei kekkon* 亡靈結婚, or *shiryō kekkon* 死靈結婚. While Okinawa follows the Taiwanese-Chinese belief that the curse associated with the dead spouse can be averted through spirit marriage, other regions of Japan emphasize, instead of the curse, the comfort and ancestral affiliation provided by the ritual intended to complete a disrupted life-cycle (TAKEDA 1990, pp. 156–206). For photographic representations of the dead in “spirit marriages,” see WELLER 1987, p. 66. and TAKEDA 1990, p. 175.

ABBREVIATION

KYZ: YAMAMOTO Kenkichi 山本健吉, INOUE Yasushi 井上 靖, NAKAMURA Mitsuo 中村光夫, eds.

1980–83 *Kawabata Yasunari Zenshū* 川端康成全集 [The complete works of Kawabata Yasunari]. 35 vols. Tokyo: Shinchōsha.

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