

# The Influence of Tanizaki's Early Works on Edogawa Ranpo's Novels

## A Comparison between *Konjiki no shi* and *Panoramatō kidan*

Luisa Bienati  
(Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

**Abstract** From his debut in 1923, Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965) acknowledged the influence of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and often referred to his works. Tanizaki had published several short stories characterised by *tantei shumi* between 1911 and 1927, yet the link between the two authors lies not only in their choice of the narrative genre. Tanizaki was a great admirer of Edgar Allan Poe and translated many of his stories including “The Domain of Arnheim”. Ranpo, too, was overtly inspired by Poe's stories “The Domain of Arnheim” and “Landor's Cottage”, which can be seen in the plot and descriptions of *Panoramatō kidan*. The aim of my investigation is therefore to examine the path that leads us from Poe's “The Domain of Arnheim”, to Tanizaki's *Konjiki no shi*, and from Poe and Tanizaki to Ranpo's *Panoramatō kidan*.

**Summary** 1 Literary Gardens. – 2 A Garden in the Sky. – 3 A Servant Devoted to Art.

**Keywords** Edogawa Ranpo. Edgar Allan Poe. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. Literary gardens.

No definition had spoken of the landscape-gardener as of the poet; yet it seems to my friend that the creation of the landscape-garden offered to the proper Muse the most magnificent of opportunities.

(Edgar Allan Poe 1847)

## 1 Literary Gardens

This quotation from Edgar Allan Poe underscores the connection between nature and art, but a particular kind of art: the art of gardens. The sentence is from “The Domain of Arnheim” (1847), the famous short story that inspired both Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Edogawa Ranpo. Tanizaki translated this text into Japanese and reworked its ideas in the novel *Konjiki no shi* (The Golden Death, [1914] 1983). Ranpo was inspired by it when he wrote *Panoramatō kidan* (Strange Tale of Panorama Island, 1927). However, *Panoramatō kidan* would not have been conceived in this manner if

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inspired only by Poe's story, and *Konjiki no shi* (Tanizaki [1914] 1983) would have not served as a bridge between the two writers (Nagamori 2014, 311).

Critics often recognise the link between the two authors, and consider Tanizaki the 'father' of Ranpo. We know that Ranpo himself appreciated the fantastic, the imagination, and the plots of the novels by Tanizaki, and that Tanizaki in the decade between 1910 and 1920 was greatly interested in intricate storylines, detective novels etc.

In the essay "Nihon no hokoriuru tantei shōsetsu" (Japan's Prouderable Detective Story, 1925), Ranpo affirms his love and admiration both for Poe and for Tanizaki: "Tanizaki has been compared to Oscar Wilde" he wrote, but in his opinion he should be compared to Poe. In the same passage he states that the first work by Tanizaki he read was *Konjiki no shi*. It was serialised in a newspaper and, reading it day by day, he realised that the novel was influenced by "The Domain of Arnheim" and "Landor's Cottage". Ranpo confesses that his admiration for Tanizaki began after reading this novel because he discovered that in Japan, too, there was a writer like Poe, and this made him "very happy" (Ranpo 1925).

Later in the same essay, Ranpo, listing many other short novels by Tanizaki, comments on the novel *Tojō* (Along the Road, 1920): it's "an epoch-making work in *tantei shōsetsu*", and "among Japanese detective novels, one of which we can be proud in front of the Westerners". The writer affirmed also that he "read Tanizaki's stories omitting none" (Silver 2008, 173). For these reasons, in "Nihon no hokoriuru tantei shōsetsu", Ranpo called Tanizaki the "Poe of Japan".

Beginning with these considerations, I would like to compare the very unusual novel by Tanizaki ([1914] 1983), *Konjiki no shi*, which is for some reason almost forgotten, and the most famous *Panoramatō kidan* by Ranpo (1927). Both are indebted to Edgar Allan Poe, but their differences override the most obvious similarities and challenge the link with Western literature, with originality and imitation, and with the cultural trends of the periods in which Tanizaki and Ranpo lived. First and foremost, Poe's and Tanizaki's novels are not crime stories.

Why Edgar Allan Poe? It's a rhetorical question, as we know that Ranpo saw himself as a 'double' of the American writer. We can also easily understand why critics so often compare Ranpo's and Poe's novels. As Mark Silver commented:

The writings of Ranpo and those of the critics contemporary to him suggest the difficulty their authors faced when it came to seeing themselves as something other than second-rate copies of their Western counterparts [...] to describe Ranpo's work as "derivative" risks reinstating a dubious hierarchy of literary value in which the works that inspired Ranpo are implicitly valorized as 'originals' and Ranpo's works themselves are demoted to the status of "copies". (Silver 2008, 134)

The writers of detective novels recognised explicitly their Western 'fathers' and, in this case, Ranpo appreciated and quoted Tanizaki's novels many times.

My purpose here is not to consider *Panoramatō kidan* a second-rate work. Through the analysis of the adoption/migration of themes, I would like to highlight the links between the three works and to establish the originality of both Tanizaki's and Ranpo's literary gardens. Who is Ranpo's literary 'father' in this novel? Much more Tanizaki than Poe, I think.

In *Panoramatō kidan* Ranpo quotes Edgar Allan Poe twice, by engaging in the following:

1. listing some Western works on Utopia he declared: "It was "The Domain of Arnheim" by Edgar Allan Poe that attracted him [the protagonist] the most" (Ranpo 1927);
2. confessing to the reader his criminal plots and the way he exchanged his identity with that of a dead man, he quoted *A Premature Burial* by Poe (Ranpo 1927).

Ranpo does not quote *Konjiki no shi* nor does he explicitly reveal here his inspiration from Tanizaki. But we know from the quotation above that he loved *Konjiki no shi* precisely because of its inspiration from Poe. The basic idea of the three works is the construction of a magnificent garden, which is a symbol of Paradise on earth, a form of Utopia, "the utopia of a land of dream and beauty, a true terrestrial paradise" (Poe 1847).

In Poe's novel, "The Domain of Arnheim", an anonymous narrator tells of the happiness and prosperity of his friend Ellison. According to the theories of the protagonist, there are four "elementary principles, or more strictly, conditions of bliss" (Poe 1847): exercise in the open air i.e. health; love of a woman; contempt for ambition; an object of unceasing pursuit. He has natural gifts, such as beauty and intelligence, and is lucky enough to belong to a wealthy and prominent family. Moreover, the singular will of an ancestor allows him to inherit a fabulous fortune.

Ellison is a 'poet' and his dream is the creation of beauty. He does not become a musician or a writer or painter or sculptor, but always looks for purely physical beauty in an ambitious quest for perfection. The supreme poet is, thus, the landscape-gardener.

Here indeed was the fairest field for the display of the imagination, in the endless combining of forms of novel beauty; the elements to enter into combination being, by a vast superiority, the most glorious which the earth could afford. In the multiform and multicolor of the flowers and the trees, he recognized the most direct and energetic efforts of Nature at physical loveliness. And in the direction or concentration of this effort - or, more properly, in its adaptation to the eyes which were to behold it on earth - he perceived that he should be employing the best means - laboring to the greatest advantage - in the fulfillment, not

only of his own destiny as poet, but of the august purposes for which the Deity had implanted the poetic sentiment in man. (Poe 1847)

Together with his friend-narrator, Ellison chooses the appropriate place for the construction of his heaven on earth. Poe does not dwell on the way he built it, but goes on to describe the path the two friends take toward the paradise, a journey through time and space: they get to Arnheim along a river. They leave in the morning and arrive in the evening in a gradual move towards ever more perfect beauty. The beauty of nature is not only a "natural beauty". We always find in these descriptions a complex relation between natural and artificial: to the completeness of nature he adds the ability of human composition, with the effect of bringing out the perfection of the natural through the artificial. At the end, a portal marks the passage of the journey towards the beatific vision:

Meantime the whole Paradise of Arnheim bursts upon the view. There is a gush of entrancing melody; there is an oppressive sense of strange sweet odor, - there is a dream - like intermingling to the eye of tall slender Eastern trees - bosky shrubberies - flocks of golden and crimson birds - lily-fringed lakes - meadows of violets, tulips, poppies, hyacinths, and tuberoses - long intertangled lines of silver streamlets - and, upspringing confusedly from amid all, a mass of semi-Gothic, semi-Saracenic architecture sustaining itself by miracle in mid-air, glittering in the red sunlight with a hundred oriels, minarets, and pinnacles; and seeming the phantom handiwork, conjointly, of the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii and of the Gnomes. (Poe 1847)

Thus "the vision ends in a crescendo: the kingdom ceases to be the 'land' to become the paradise of Arnheim" (Halliburton 1973, 361). The end of the novel is a contemplation of nature and art at the same time. This place is the material proof of how art can transform a space on this earth into another world, into a paradise. It is a spiritual experience, and the reader will continue reading the sequel to the novel, "Landor's Cottage". The narration of *The Domain* ends all of a sudden, as words seem no longer able to evoke the beauty of that view. In the last lines of the novel the description of nature almost becomes a list and provides a sense of confusion creating a grotesque effect: exotic buildings of various architectural styles such as "semi-Gothic, semi-Saracenic architecture... minarets, pinnacles, Sylphs, Fairies, Genii and Gnomes" (Poe 1874).

In Tanizaki's work we can find many references to this novel by Edgar Allan Poe. In "Majutsushi" (The Magician, 1917), Tanizaki quotes "The Domain of Arnheim" and "Landor's Cottage", describing the mysterious park in the story:

Until now I had thought it odd that the park completely lacked any natural beauty – no trees, forests, or water – but arriving in this area, I saw that these elements had been put to use here. The natural features employed here had not, of course, been arranged to reproduce a natural scene; rather, they had been used as material for promoting artificiality and supplementing the effects of warped craftsmanship. Seeing these words, some readers may picture the gardening arts depicted in such stories as Poe's *The Domain of Arnheim* and *Landor's Cottage*, but the man-made landscape of which I speak seemed to employ even more elaborate handiwork and to be farther removed from natural scenery than those. (Tanizaki 2016, 119)

But *Konjiki no shi* is the work that is more directly inspired by “The Domain of Arnheim”, copying and developing its central idea. This work has a very unusual story, which explains why it is almost forgotten and little studied by critics. Tanizaki repudiated this work and it reappeared in his complete works only after Mishima Yukio became interested in it and wrote a preface to it, offering his original interpretation (Mishima [1966] 1973-82). I will not dwell on this essay here but I will quote it again at a later point, discussing the conception of art that lies behind the creation of these gardens.<sup>1</sup>

The protagonist of Tanizaki, Okamura, gives life to an ambitious project: building an ideal space, a heavenly garden, synthesis of all the arts in which the artistic object *par excellence*, his body, came to be the supreme beauty of the forms, dying coated with gold. Perfection and beauty inherent in nature are enhanced by the genius of man: Okamura identifies a well-defined space and within definite boundaries shapes it with all the visible manifestations of matter. The landscape artist is a maker and creator god who has made his design of the universe in the material world.

Tanizaki's garden is not a frame to the artistic experience of the protagonist but is its very creation, an alternative way of making art that not only involves the language of words or painting. A natural park in the landscape-garden tradition (English Garden) that in the West had replaced the Renaissance garden. No geometric shapes or labyrinthine paths, but a natural park where artifice must remain concealed. This is the idea that Tanizaki takes from Poe but – in my opinion – here the similarities end and the differences begin. Tanizaki, claiming to create a compendium of all man's artistic achievements of every epoch, adds to the iconography of 'his' paradise an endless array of classical and modern buildings, Eastern and Western, sculpture of all eras from Michelangelo to Rodin... so heterogeneous a park as to become distorted.

1 For Mishima's essay cf. Tanizaki 2006.

The short list that we read at the end of Poe's story expands dramatically in both *Konjiki no shi* and *Panoramatō kidan*, emphasising the writers' grotesque tastes. This is one of the most important elements that I would like to emphasise in the transition from Poe to Tanizaki and to Ranpo.

Suzuki Sadami said that the origin of the so-called *ero-guro-nansensu* has to be placed in the Taishō period and in the works published by Tanizaki in that period. He refers to *Shisei* (Tattoo, 1910) and Tanizaki's early stories, but certainly *Konjiki no shi* must also be included amongst these works (Suzuki 1996). Edogawa Ranpo and his works of the twenties represent the epitome of the *ero-guro-nansensu*. In the garden of *Panoramatō kidan* there is an even more unlikely mixture: Egyptian sphinxes like in *The Domain*, Greek and Roman temples, the Great Wall of China, Buddhist pavilions of the Asuka era, Ginkakuki and Kinkakuji... East and West, past and present, exactly as in Tanizaki's imagination.

According to Suzuki Sadami, these tastes are an expression of the sensibility of the period,

a form of resistance and critique of modern materialistic, profit-oriented civilization [...]. The ecstasy of desire produces a vision of the world in which everything is upside down, contrary to the normal way of things. Such a vision, which form the point of view of commonsense cannot but appear as utterly nonsensical, may also be regarded as an expression of radical dissent, as a calling into question of the historical context in which the poem is inscribed. (Suzuki 1996, 27)

Also Mishima Yukio commenting on this passage from Tanizaki, judges this mixture negatively and interprets it as the crisis of Taishō intellectuals.

Tanizaki [...] portrays the utopia of beauty but the story remains imprisoned in the cultural constructions of the time... the careless mixture of East and West reflects faithfully the confusion of the utopias of the intellectuals of the time and reveals the ugliness of Japanese culture that had lost its unifying and distinctive style.

That description of the park is not a traditional nor decadent beauty, and yet you cannot claim that Tanizaki is responsible. Responsibilities and limitations are due to the Japanese culture of the time. (Mishima [1966] 1973-82, 392-3)

The same could be said of *Panoramatō kidan*, and the contemporary, highly technological landscape could be seen as a critique of contemporary Japanese society. "An ocular critic of modernity" as Igarashi has commented (Igarashi 2005, 299). Moreover, the writer obsessively stresses the pathological condition of the protagonist, not only as a criminal but also as a person in a fragile nervous condition, always struggling with doubts and

anxiety. The fragility and fluidity of his personality is a reflection of the culture of the times.

## 2 A Garden in the Sky

The description of the garden at the end of “The Domain of Arnheim” is the perfect iconography of a paradise, and it has traditional motifs of a journey toward paradise: a detached place reached by boat on the river; passing through a transparent channel of water closed by high dark walls, the narrator and his friend enter a portal and beyond it a beatific vision opens up. An unexpected prospect of natural and artificial beauty accompanied by a sweet melody, by a perfume, by a new “view”.

Grandeur in any of its moods, but especially in that of extent, startles, excites – and then fatigues, depresses. For the occasional scene nothing can be better – for the constant view nothing worse. And, in the constant view, the most objectionable phase of grandeur is that of extent; the worst phase of extent, that of distance. (Poe 1847)

The river trip is actually an interior journey, the imaginary fulfillment of the writer’s dreams (Mizuta Lippit 1977).

Reading Tanizaki’s description we find hints of the paradise of Western iconography (“as Dante guided by Virgil, we crossed the grass that served as a first door [...] we were taken into a forest with every variety of flowers, bright as in a Jakuchū picture of flowers and birds” Tanizaki [1914] 1983, 494). In addition this is traditional Buddhist iconography: in the middle of his paradise there is the statue of a golden Buddha... another disguise, masking of the eccentric Okamura (“After having played many figures of beautiful men and women, he took the features of a *rakan* or *bosatsu*, assumed the guise of a demon, then painting the whole body with gold he created the appearance of the Tathagata Buddha”, 497). In the morning, there is revealed the chilling and grotesque scene of his golden death, his body covered in gold leaf.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas, evil spirits and demons, everyone was weeping at the foot of the golden corpse. This scene made me suspect that all efforts to create his art were designed to this: to offer his dying body, recreating the grand scene of the death of the Buddha. (Tanizaki [1914] 1983, 498)

The construction of the paradise is the construction of an immortal body. For Okamura, the pursuit of beauty through the construction of the garden is the quest for immortality that Tanizaki imagines according to the

classic Buddhist iconography that portrays the body of the Buddha in the middle of a paradise.

Garden/paradise and death form an inseparable dual relationship. However, this theme of death is not present in Poe's story. We know *en passant* from the narrator that Ellison died, but his death is not linked to the creation of his heaven on earth.

If we now think about *Panoramatō kidan*, we can say that two major themes present in *Konjiki no shi* are developed in an even more original way by Edogawa Ranpo: the theme of death and that of the body.

The transformation of the basic motive of the story – the construction of a paradise garden – implies a different narrative structure. We might say that Ranpo begins the narrative from the end, creating a sense of mystery for the reader. The narrator describes an island now abandoned with the remains of the imposing building materials that had been transported there “for reasons unknown” (Ranpo 2013, 1) and gradually tells the story as “a secret tale” (4). The reader quickly learns that the protagonist, a friend of the narrator, is dead and that the family has abandoned that “kind of fabulous work of art” (3).

The reader perceives the criminal aspect of his plan, but does not imagine what will happen. It is important here to emphasise the role of the narrator/friend: in Poe's and in Tanizaki's novels, a narrator tells the story of a friend with good fortune, beauty, virtue and wealth. The narrator/friend relationship with the protagonist, however, is different. At the beginning of Poe's story the two points of view are quite distinct, but once you enter the paradise the distinction blends in the final description. However, not only does the narrator's friend Okamura, protagonist of *Konjiki no shi*, not share the ultimate ecstasy, but he seems to always maintain a critical, sometimes ironic distance, in revealing the maniacal aspects of his friend, who fascinates him but at the same time he judges a crazy esthete and an artist, ultimately, a failure.

In Ranpo, the narrator is not characterised; he is an omniscient narrator, but we do not know how he learned the story and what his relationship with the protagonist is. This allows him to maintain the same critical distance as the creator of the gardens we find in Tanizaki. The greater the critical distance, the greater the impact of the author's irony and the grotesque elements of the work.

The garden paradise of Ranpo is immediately characterised as a utopia. The author quotes Plato and European writers, stating that he was not interested in political or economic utopias. He promptly adds that the text that had attracted him the most was “The Domain of Arnheim” by Poe. This theme of utopia is a clear reflection of the Meiji and Taishō period, with the widening popularity of Western authors in Japan and famous attempts to create utopian communities, such as *Atarashiki mura* (New Village) by Mushanokōji Saneatsu (1885-1976).

The idea of utopia (*eu-topos*) as a happy place is undoubtedly a strong bond with the stories of Poe and Tanizaki, but in rereading it, Ranpo's utopia becomes closer to a dystopia. As an antonym for 'utopia', 'cacotopia' or 'dystopia' are terms generally referred to an unpleasant futuristic world dominated by a cataclysmic decline of social frameworks. The future of Ranpo's utopia-island is the description on the first page of the novel, the destruction of Utopia's realisation and "hardly a place that one would hazard danger to go near" (Ranpo 2013, 1).

The island is the place of the crime – the murder of the wife of his alter ego – the place of the unveiling of his criminal project that had led him to hide the dead body of Komoda Genzaburō and replace him as his twin and 'double' (the theme of the double is recognised as a point in common with the stories of Tanizaki, in particular *The Story of Tomoda and Matsunaga* of the same year, *Tomoda to Matsunaga no hanashi*, 1926). In Ranpo's novel the double is linked to the theme of death, with the unnatural scenes at the cemetery.

The idea of dystopia is also suggested by the fact that everything in Ranpo's paradise is unconventional. The view provokes excessive fear, mystery, not a sense of beauty and the sublime:

It was disgusting rather than sublime, chaotic rather than harmonious. Each and every one of those curves and the arrangement of the inflamed, festering flowers gave endless displeasure instead of delight. (Ranpo 2013, 81)

In the traditional Buddhist view, the senses of paradise are sight and hearing. A new way of seeing, a new visual landscape accompanies the perception of these spaces; heavenly music delights the entrance into paradise. In Ranpo's island the sight captures discrepancies: "Strangely artificial mixture added to those curves was like hearing strangely beautiful orchestral music filled with exceptionally discordant sounds" (Ranpo 2013, 81).

In Tanizaki's utopia, there is a balance between the natural and the artificial. When the artificial prevails, the reader has the feeling of a grotesque description. In Ranpo's novel the artificial is stressed over the natural: "All these features revealed the intention of their creator to outdo nature". There is a manipulation of nature: "I have extended and contracted distances in nature just as I wanted" (2013, 74).

The forest is frightening because a "diabolic artifice" has been added to its magnificence, "concealed with obsessive care and could only be sensed indistinctly". So it appears only to a keen observer: again visibility is a keyword to access Ranpo's landscape "so unnatural, so indescribably artificial" (Ranpo 2013, 78).

To get this effect, Ranpo adds to the elements of nature something totally absent from Poe's and Tanizaki's landscapes: the realisations made

possible by new technologies. At the beginning of the novel, we read a list of materials for the construction of the garden which, together with rocks, trees and lumber, encompasses barrels of concrete to build iron-framed concrete structures.

When the protagonist guides his wife Chiyoko to visit his “garden in the sky”, the reader sees the landscape from the woman’s point of view. The narration slips from Hitomi’s perspective to his wife’s in order to provide an outsider’s impression of his fantastical island.

Hence, her surprise is the reader’s surprise in seeing special effects made possible by glass and electric lights. The marvels of electricity had from the early twenties begun to loom ever larger in the Japanese popular imagination, but even earlier we can recall the descriptions of Tokyo illuminated by flashlights in Nagai Kafū’s or Natsume Sōseki’s famous novels.

In Ranpo’s garden the electric light is a recurrent motif. The spectator can see the bottom of the sea through a glass tunnel and the electric lamps try to conquer the darkness at the bottom. A marvellous and frightening world then appears, a long list of seaweed and fish accentuates the magnificence of the place: “as they entered the area lit by electric lamps they revealed their strange shapes as in a magic lantern” (Ranpo 2013, 55).

One of the new techniques that magnifies the effect of light are the fireworks, which in the story are the subject of continuous wonder, until the chilling final scene. In the first decades of the twentieth century, fireworks accompanied every major event or official celebration in Japan. I would like to mention here the splendid essay *Hanabi (Fireworks)*, 1919 by Nagai Kafū that traces the most important historical and political events of his life, through the memory of the celebrations accompanied by fireworks.

New technologies create the effect of amplifying the vision, and through the glass, lens and lighting effects even small fish seem to become gigantic. This enlargement effect (magnification) is related to the new visual technologies, in particular to cinematic techniques, a new subjective experience of space and time. In this regard, the link with the literature of Tanizaki of the twenties becomes even closer. According to the Japanese critic Nagamori Kazuko, *Panoramatō kidan* receives from Tanizaki two important influences: the first is that of the paradise garden by *Konjiki no shi*; the second is that of the visual effects by *Jinmenso (The Tumor with a Human Face)*, 1918). In this story, as has been well highlighted by Thomas LaMarre (2005), the descriptive technique recalls the cinematic technique of close-up. Tanizaki has transposed his experience in the film world even into his fiction, and many works recall visual film effects (I mention here only *Aoi hana, Ave Maria* etc.). I would like also to remember that in 1917 Tanizaki wrote a famous and very innovative essay, *Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai* (The Present and the Future of the Moving Pictures). The single attribute of cinema that intrigued him the most is the ability of the medium to portray both realistic and fantastic images

in an equally convincing manner. In *Katsudō shashin no genzai to shōrai* Tanizaki praised the evocative power of such innovative techniques such as the close-up shot:

The actors being made larger than in life, the distinctive features of their faces and physiques, which would not be as remarkable in a stage performance, are projected with extreme clarity down to their final details.

Every aspect of the person's face and body, aspects that would ordinarily be overlooked, are perceived so keenly and urgently that it exerts a fascination difficult to put into words. (LaMarre 2005, 68)

The enlargement effect could be so realistic as to become awesome. In *Eiga no kyōfu* (The Horrors of Film, 1926), an essay of 1926, Ranpo wrote:

I am terrified of moving pictures. They are the dreams of an opium addict. From a single inch of a film emerge giants who fill the whole theater [...] Swift's vision of a land of giants exquisitely unfolds before our eyes. A massive face a thousand times larger than mine suffuses the screen. (Ranpo 2008)

In *Panoramatō kidan* "the island was full of visual illusions that enhanced the beauty of its scenery" (Ranpo 2013, 66). As in Tanizaki's narrative, these effects blur the boundaries between reality and dream. The protagonist of *Panoramatō kidan* is often caught in the dilemma between the attraction of his dreams and the fear of reality, i.e., the danger that his crime will be discovered: "He couldn't give up his dreams, but the temptation of reality was too strong" (43). So he decides to kill the woman and this indeed marks the beginning of the end of his dream.

A further technological element in the novel is the role of machines. On the island there is another world, crammed with lifeless steel machines: "Black monsters that turn round and round without end" (Ranpo 2013, 76), moved by electricity generated below the surface of the island. These monsters are "symbols of a strange mechanical power of a kind that appears in certain dreams" (76).

The narration continues with the description of other worlds: large cities filled with buildings of beautiful architecture; a weird world of wild beasts and poisonous plants; a world of fountains and waterfalls with all kinds of water games; a place full of naked women in a paradise of celestial music (compared to Adam and Eve's paradise), soon transformed into a chaotic human wave where bodies lose their identity and visitors lose their senses. The visitor moves between these worlds like "a dreamer who has different dreams every night" (Ranpo 2013, 77).

Ranpo's description is very original but he does not betray the classical iconography of paradise. In the multiple visions of the 'panorama' there

is a centre, a unifying place which stands in the middle, a huge column: "From there, the whole island is a single panorama [...] made up of assembled panoramas" (Ranpo 2013, 77). The vision is that of the title of the work, a Panorama like the Panorama hall so famous in Asakusa since 1890 and well described in the novel.

Hence the visuality of the place arouses mixed feelings that are very different from the contemplation of paradise by Ellison or Okamura. The island is not a universe but a number of very different universes. The best metaphor Ranpo uses for describing it, is the world of dreams or "a motion-picture film" (2013, 78). The panorama's vision has been called *panoramashugi* and, like cinema, is a fluid, and surrogate experience.

What is real in this garden? Paradise cannot be experienced before death. So only death is the real, complete vision the protagonist can reach. After the crime of his wife's killing, the protagonist's plan has been discovered and the only way for him to escape is by killing himself. In the fantastically disgusting ending, his body is shot into the sky, fragmented into the sparks of light of the fireworks. The scene is described from the point of view of the man who sees the wonder of these fires and only later realises the meaning of the drops of blood falling from the sky.

The body of the protagonist sprays the paradise garden that he created and that, without him, will face the same destruction. The death of the creator is also the death of the creature. "By exploding his body - writes Igarashi Yoshikuni - Hitomi completes his project: he becomes the panorama" (Ranpo 2013, 77).

Like the body of Okamura, the body of Hirosuke Hitomi is at the centre of its creation. Both remain imprisoned by the same wonders they have created and which may include their 'beautiful death'.

In Poe's story, body and death do not have the same central role: indeed the garden paradise is presented to the reader a certain time after Ellison's death but, in spite of this, it has kept all its magnificence. In Poe's vision, there is a cosmology, a metaphysical dimension that is totally absent in his imitators. The world of Tanizaki and Ranpo seems anchored in an earthly dimension, both objective and carnal.

In the likeness of a golden Buddha or in the multicolored light of fireworks filling the sky, the body of the protagonists is at the centre of their "garden in the sky". Mishima wrote commenting about *Konjiki no shi*: "Beauty can be achieved only through its destruction" ([1966] 1973-82, 389).

### 3 A Servant Devoted to Art

The art of the garden is presented in all three works discussed here as the highest form of art and, artistic research is the way to realisation of the garden paradise. Ellison is a poet in search of new forms of beauty, a

purely physical beauty. For Poe (1847), creating gardens “was the fairest field for the display of imagination in the endless combining of forms of novel beauty”.

In *Konjiki no shi* there is a long philosophical disquisition on beauty and art between Okamura and his narrator/friend, starting from the artistic conception of the German philosopher Lessing. The discussion is on the relationship between objective beauty and subjective beauty: Okamura reiterates his belief only in the “physicality”, in the human body as an ideal container for beauty:

I cannot understand the beauty if it's not realized so clearly before me, the beauty that you see with your eyes, you touch with your hands, you hear with your ears. I am not happy if I do not taste an intense beauty... (Tanizaki [1914] 1983, 482)

The landscape artist is a creator god who has made his design of the universe in the natural world. The garden, apotheosis of cosmic harmony, is the archetype of perfection. At the centre, his physical body, a metaphor of the world and icon of the divine, a Buddha incorruptible and bright as gold, immortal and eternal as the paradise.

Mishima Yukio ([1966] 1973-82) wrote that Tanizaki had achieved objective beauty (and perhaps because of this he rejected the work, in favour of the greater subjectivity of art) and had accomplished the unification of the artist with the art work. Even Ranpo unified artist and work of art, but the same cannot be found in Poe's story. This is an important point of divergence from the ‘father’ of the detective novels and a point of convergence between Tanizaki and Ranpo.

What role has this conception of art in Ranpo's story? The construction of a “garden in the sky” is the line that leads the whole story, braided with the original elements that we have already highlighted. However, it may seem secondary compared to other more obvious issues: for example the double, the crime and the discovery of the guilty... Nevertheless the realisation of an artistic ideal is a reason that makes the plot coherent till the end. In the opening pages, immediately after quoting “The Domain of Arnheim”, the narrator begins talking about the garden project as “some kind of fabulous work of art” (Ranpo 2013, 3).

The protagonist Hitomi had, as a young man, a connection with the arts: he is introduced to us at the beginning of the story as a writer of little talent, and with little success, trying to realise his ideals through words. This failure leads him to develop other forms of artistic achievement. The difference here with Poe and Tanizaki is that he does not receive a fabulous legacy but obtains it by criminal means: a huge sum of money “to build the paradise on earth, the land of beauty I've always dreamt about” (Ranpo 2013, 7). The reader at the end of the long novel has almost forgotten

the protagonist's literary career. But it emerges again at the end when the *Story of RA*, one of his unsuccessful novels, will provide the detective with the solution and will permit the discovery of the murder. Therefore his own art, a literary text, is the cause of his failure; a minor work of art will ruin his paradise on earth. However, the detective does not resort to the police because he is an admirer of that work of art and decides not to report him, defining himself "a servant devoted to art" (Rampo 2013, 104).

Art till the end of the novel is superior to everything, even to justice in a crime story.

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