**His own cosmos**

“While every novelist endeavors to create a proper setting for his novel, Kawabata seems to have been especially careful in preparing a **cosmos uniquely his own**. . . . In these worlds of Kawabata’s, some of the commonest words come to have special meanings, though they may vary somewhat from one reader to another. There emerges a tension between the generality of the word and the specifics of the context, and that tension becomes a source of stimulation for the reader’s fancy.”

--Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers*, 213

**Wide margins of canvas of life**

(moths, Russian woman) “The kaleidoscopic succession of images . . . effectively suspends the narrative progress and forces us to pay attention to those **large margins in the canvas of life**.”

--Miyashi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 111

In *The Sound of the Mountain*: “the paragraphs, highlighting the objects of [Shingo’s] consciousness, nonetheless gradually move away from the interior of his existence toward the container of all the drama – the world around, the **wide margins of the novel**.”

--Miyashi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 118

**Nature by itself**

“Kawabata’s achievement . . . lies in just this, his keen awareness of the objects around men that **exist in themselves as solidly as people do**. Objects, in the world and in the world of the novel, are somehow or other related to people, but Kawabata seldom makes the connection between them explicit for us. With each of his brief paragraphs self-contained in this way . . . . these objects tend to stand autonomous.”

--Miyashi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 119

> not a statement of atomism, but of biocentrism

“What I would call Kawabata’s **nominal imagination** is apparent even in his earliest work. The objects **here are not organized syntactically**. He does not relate them, with verbs and conjugations, into a sentence, a proposition, but just leaves them as he finds them. Exactly in the same way, *The Sound of the Mountain* reaches out and gathers objects into a narrative, but refuses to hook them into a chain of cause and effect, a plot. They are assembled and unconnected. What emerges, then, is not an argument – which any construction of plot (the whole cause-effect complex) implies – but a perception of the world and an acceptance of it as perceived, one thing at a time.”

--Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 119-120

**Primitive nature**

“The Milky Way, now as the Woman [affects Shimamura profoundly] for the **power of primitive nature** is less intellectual, more immediate. It can flow down inside a person with a roar, even when that person is an atheist.”

--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 87

“a novel embodying a sustained search for the purest, noblest, supremely beautiful way of life, a way of life that forever remains untouched by the foulness of mankind. The search is difficult. . . . The only hope lies with a virgin, a person who instinctively defies foulness, a person who is destroyed at the touch of foulness. But could there be an eternal virgin? . . . It is by becoming a nun. . . . She will lead a life of penance, with full knowledge of both the nobility and depravity of humanity. **She will merge with wild, primeval nature, humbly dedicating herself to it.**”

--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 87-88

**Real but etherealized nature**

“Kawabata refuses to take a trip into a never-never land. . . . In Kawabata’s locations, the basic **laws of nature remain** in operation, but to set the stage he reduces the glare and rawness of the real world by carefully selecting either a **remote place** like this snow district or a ‘detached’ **space** within reality like
“the tea-room” [in Thousand Cranes].
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 251-252

**Interrelationship**
“The instant at which **intense and complete union of the three characters** takes place comes when the vertical-horizontal movements reach a sudden climax in the twitch in Yoko’s leg. Komako’s scream and Yoko’s spasm produce in Shimamura an unusual pair of simultaneous ‘motions’: ‘The scream stabbed him through. At the spasm in Yoko’s leg a chill passed down his spine to his very feet. His heart was pounding in an undefinable anguish.’ Only after this union does ‘Shimamura become ready for a union of a much greater dimension, **union with the Milky Way. It is a kind of union made possible only when Shimamura demands the purest of experiences, through mirror, not through raw reality.”**
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 264

“Kawabata . . . rejects this artificial separation of things instituted by us for the sake of survival. **He sees all things as organically related.** He refuses to recognize any division among things – the animate and the inanimate, man and beast, man and plant. He sees the world as one gigantic flow of a river. Thus he uses various devices to enable his reader to see things in this state of flux, so that the reader may gain experience of the basic life-force pervading the universe. One can almost say that Kawabata is anxious to reduce the rational world to its primeval stage so that his reader may be allowed a glimpse of the beauty of life no longer marred by rational compartments. This is why Kawabata takes advantage of dualities in order to eliminate them, since they are the fundamental division of things. Tokyo versus snow country, snow versus fire, sky versus earth, the past versus the future, man versus woman – these opposites are exploited until in the end **they all merge into the single experience of the Milky Way roaring into Shimamura.”**
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 264-265

**Liquefied nature**
“We have already observed how the night train has **liquefied the scenery outside** and turned it into a **continuously flowing landscape . . .”**
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 255

**Senses & nature**
“It is a novel in which action is rendered in natural images and symbolic clues rather than in straightforward account. He displays the **precision of the senses**, juxtaposed with suggestion that is characteristic of **haiku** form. Kawabata’s style combines two critical aspects of **haiku** poetry: motion and silence.”

Kawabata “makes maximum use of the ambiguity of the Japanese language, with its multiplicity of meanings, verbal and sensory hints, and erotic symbolism. Kawabata also brings the Yukiguni to the reader through the other **sense of hearing, smell, and taste**. He fuses **motion and silence** in Snow Country by mingling the sense of hearing with images of motions in the human landscape.”

“the reader becomes a view of Donald W. Meinig’s **landscape as environment,** that is **engaging all of our senses**, the sounds and smells and **ineffable feel of a place.**”

**Poetry of place**
“The reader becomes a view of Donald W. Meinig’s **landscape as environment,** that is **engaging all of our senses**, the sounds and smells and **ineffable feel of a place.**”

“Kawabata’s ability to **evoke a natural scene and blend his characters with the geography** of a place was one of his strongest talents as a writer. He was able to strike a delicate balance between a particular place and its poetic implications, producing a **poetry of place.”**
“Kawabata’s remarks reveal a necessary and close connection postulated between the poetic impulse and the atmosphere of the place that gives rise to that impulse. The aptness and simplicity of Issa’s response represent the outcome of his attunement to what might be termed the poetry of place. His reactions are personal and precise.”

--Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions*. 166

**Emotion and landscape**

“Chinese and Indian artistic principles . . . give emphasis to particular seasons, flowers and trees which are understood in those cultures to match certain emotional experiences.”


**Nature as essentially quiescent**

In *The Sound of the Mountain*: “Shingo himself is not really very substantial in this moonlit reality; rather it is his instrumental role in making accessible the wide world that spreads around him. For Shingo, as for Kawabata, the awareness of the large margins of the world around human beings and their actions, the large area of silence that stays intact despite human speech and the words of the novel—that is what powerfully informs his mind.”

--Miyashi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 118

“For Kawabata, the margins of life blend imperceptibly into that yawning voiceless world and are finally commensurate with it.”

--Miyashi, *Accomplices of Silence*, 121