

**The Tragedy of Consubstantial Dreams
in Mishima Yukio's *The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea***

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Consubstantial is an odd word: it is a mystical term defining a relationship in which objects or persons become united with and share the same substance as something else, but in which these joined substances retain their own unique natural elements. It is an esoteric concept primarily related to the Christian notion of God as a Holy Trinity. This term, which shows up twice in Japanese writer Mishima Yukio's *The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea*, seems an unusual word choice until the novel's theme and structure are carefully examined. Mishima's novel is an exploration of the horrifying repercussions brought about by the destruction of the visions and beliefs that sustain a man's soul. Its plot is structured around the consubstantial elements within and between the characters and dreams of the thirteen-year-old Kuroda Noboru and the lonely sailor Tsukazaki Ryuji which ultimately lead to a shocking human sacrifice that is remarkably similar to the one at the center of Christian theology.

Early on in Mishima's novel, Ryuji is described as having been certain of his destiny for essentially his entire life: "There's just one thing I'm destined for and that's glory; that's right, glory!" (16) He was also equally sure that "the world would have to topple if he was to attain the glory that was rightfully his" (16). It is here that the term consubstantial is used for the first of two times in describing Ryuji's personal dream and philosophy of life: "They were consubstantial: glory and the capsized world" (17). He feels deeply that his life as a sailor is intimately connected with this destiny - a heroic, "glittering, special-order kind no ordinary man would be permitted" (17) and that will be announced by a "limpid, lonely horn" that will someday trumpet from the clouds (38). Yet, Ryuji soon finds himself drawn away from the life at sea by his blossoming love for Fusako. The word consubstantial is used again in adding this element to a description of Ryuji's philosophy: "Whenever he dreamed of them, glory and death and woman were consubstantial" (180). These three elements form the trinity of Ryuji's dream and are a thread woven throughout the text. Soon after meeting Noboru's mother, Fusako, for the first time, Ryuji

recognizes Fusako as the woman he held as part of this trinity: "And he had been certain that the woman before him was the woman in the dream" (39). Even at this early stage of their relationship, Ryuji has already firmly associated Fusako in his mind with death: "In the grand dream Ryuji had treasured secretly for so long, he was a paragon of manliness and she the consummate woman; and from the opposite corners of the earth they came together in a chance encounter, and death wed them" (39). He felt, however, no fear. Indeed, he describes "the strange passion that catches hold of a man by the scruff of his neck and transports him to a realm beyond the fear of death" (40). In fact, Ryuji welcomed the concept, the scent of Fusako's sweat and perfume that "seemed to clamor for his death ... 'DIE! DIE! DIE!'" (40) Kissing Fusako, Ryuji experiences a sort of psychic death, losing all sense of the separateness of their bodies, of time, and of space. He "was ready to die happily that very moment" (44). Ryuji, his dream, and even Fusako meld into consubstantiality, forming "the very death in love he always dreamed of" (77). A horn sounds in the distance, heralding his destiny.

Noboru's vision is not Ryuji's romantic daydream, but rather an idealized, actual event which he witnesses. Through a peephole in the dresser between his mother's bedroom and his own, Noboru watches as his mother and the sailor make love for the first time. By this point, Noboru has already been regularly spying on his mother through the hole, and already idealizes her as beautiful. But the addition of Tsukazaki's well-muscled body, its "broad shoulders [as]square as beams in a temple roof" and its erect penis as a "lustrous temple tower," creates for Noboru a scene of utter perfection (11). Mishima describes the moonlight reflecting off of Ryuji's shoulders as producing a halo -- a glory -- around him (12). The sailor is clearly admired as godlike by the young boy. Indeed, in Noboru's vision, a horn sounds from a ship in the harbor which is visible through his mother's bedroom window. This horn can be likened to the shofar which is blown during traditional Jewish ceremonies to announce the prophecies of redemption related to the coming of the Messiah. Noboru registers the scene in his mother's bedroom, which comes together at the sound of this horn, as a "perfect whole" of the various elements

from which it is composed (13). "Noboru and mother--mother and man--man and sea--sea and Noboru" - all become consubstantial in this instant (13). Noboru cherishes this vision, one which he feels is "hallowed," or holy, and vows to protect it at any cost: "If this is ever destroyed, it'll mean the end of the world ... I guess I'd do anything to stop that, no matter how awful!" (13)

While the unity of the disparate elements in Noboru and Ryuji's respective visions is significant, it is even more significant that their two dreams are consubstantial in terms of their shared elements. In both visions, sex features prominently. Noboru is described as being "choked, wet, [and] ecstatic" after watching his mother and Ryuji make love, as though he, too, has had an orgasm (13). Fusako is the woman who serves as the object of desire for both the boy and the sailor. When Noboru watches his mother masturbate, he imagines that he sees blood, a fact which relates his perception of sex with Ryuji's equation of sex with death (7). Other parallels include the sounding of horns and the heroic, supernatural nature of the sailor that is shared by both. The most significant shared aspect of Ryuji and Noboru's dreams, however, can be seen in the sailor's notion that the world must be "capsized" for his dream to be fulfilled and in Noboru's conflicting understanding that if his vision is "ever destroyed, it will mean the end of the world" (13). These two seemingly opposite traits of Ryuji and Noboru's visions are essentially two parts of a whole - consubstantial - and their combination leads to the tragic ending of Mishima's novel.

In Christian theology, the notion of consubstantiality describes the relationship of the Holy Trinity in which God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct manifestations of a single divine essence. In Mishima's novel, there are clear indications that though Ryuji and Noboru may not be biologically related, they are spiritually linked and remarkably alike in character. Both have suffered deaths in their immediate families, strongly contributing to a shared sense of loneliness and alienation. Ryuji is considered an unsociable man who does not appreciate the "low-brow chatter" engaged in by the other members of his crew (15). He hates "the ritual of affirming ties with the

brotherhood of man" (15). Noboru, too, is antisocial. Indeed, he does not even know the others in his gang of friends by name, but rather only by dehumanizing numbers. Noboru and the other boys in the group believe that they are superior to their less intelligent classmates, and find nothing in common with them, describing them as "foolish, dirty, pitiful boys" (55). Noboru and Ryuji are both small in stature, although Ryuji as the father figure has developed the well-muscled body of an adult man. Their mutual longing for the sea, ships, and the adventure and purity they symbolize is central to both characters. Ryuji sees himself as heroic; Noboru sees himself as a genius. Both hold grandiose ideas of their relationship with the universe. Ryuji sees the stars as his companions (15), while Noboru has been told by the chief that his genitals are to be used in copulating with the heavens (55). Finally, both are careful watchers: Ryuji 's eyes are described as "piercing" (29) and Noboru's as "unsettling" (171). The sailor and the boy are both fundamentally observers of life, one from his post aboard the deck of the Rakuyo and the other from a peephole into his mother's bedroom.

Dreams are an ancient medium of communication between the gods and man. In Christian theology, the Holy Spirit pours God's vision into humans, filling them with insight into the sacred. As a result, in Christianity, the body is considered a "temple" because it houses the spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This is a direct parallel to the description of Ryuji's body as being like a "temple roof" (11). The Spirit reveals God's mind and anticipates the future. The consubstantial knowledge foreshadowing violence that both Ryuji and Noboru possess about their respective visions is evidence for interpreting the story in terms of this Christian doctrine.

The defining story of Christianity is that of the human sacrifice of Jesus Christ, wherein God the Father arranges for the Son to atone for the sins of mankind through his death. By means of his crucifixion, he achieves immortality and rights mankind with heaven. The premise in Mishima's novel is essentially the same. Here, since it is the father who has "fallen from grace" - that is, sinned - by voluntarily giving up his status as a god and becoming a mere mortal, it is Ryuji's death that is required

to maintain the order of the universe. As historians have noted, the Jesus story has much in common with pagan fertility sacrifices, including the Greek legend of Bacchus, who is dismembered by the Titans and his body cannibalized except for his heart, thus allowing him to regenerate and be reborn. Since a statue of Bacchus serves as the centerpiece of Rex, Fusako's store, Mishima's intention to link his story with this ancient Greek myth is clear. But the need for human blood to transfuse the dying universe is clearly a Christian concept as well. The last image in Mishima's novel is of a poisoned cup of tea being passed to Ryuji. This scene echoes two elements of the Jesus story: Matthew 26:39, in which Jesus begs for a cup, which symbolizes his death, to "pass from him," and Matthew 27:33, where he is offered wine mixed with bitter gall during his crucifixion.

To sacrifice something is to return something to its sacred status. In the sacrifice Mishima depicts, the consubstantial visions of both Ryuji and Noboru are fulfilled. While the end of the novel is shocking in its brutality, it reaffirms this notion of consubstantiality. Physically, the events have one interpretation; spiritually, they possess another, and neither interpretation is adequate without the other.