

芥川龍之介・英訳作品研究

—「蜜柑」—

平岡敏夫

Remarks on Akutagawa's Works

— "The Tangerines" —

Toshio Hiraoka

[Introduction]

Many modern Japanese stories, including a famous story-teller, Akutagawa Ryunosuke's have been translated in English. Recently I had a chance to give lectures on Akutagawa at Dickinson College in the United States. My students (undergraduate) could not understand any Japanese, and so, I used the texts translated in English.

On my lectures, I found many problems in the translations. These problems are not only on the mistranslations but also on how to read the original texts. There are many scholars of Akutagawa in Japan. They have presented their papers and published many books. These have exactly shown how to read Akutagawa's works. But I think that most translators of Akutagawa's stories do not refer to the studies of the scholars, because most translators are scholars of English language and literature or foreign scholars. I believe that in translating even a story of Akutagawa, translators are not enough to understand the concerned story only. They must pay attention not only to the other stories by Akutagawa but also to contemporary works by other writers, and they must understand them in the context of the history of Japanese literature.

Of course, the scholars of modern Japanese literature including scholars of Akutagawa can understand even a short story in the context of the literary history and contemporary literature. However, most scholars of modern Japanese literature do not care of the translations of Japanese literature. I believe that they should refer to the translations in order to offer better texts of Japanese literature for foreign readers. They should reflect their studies of modern Japanese literature on the translations.

I am very interested in the translations of Akutagawa's stories, because I can know how translators read his stories. Their readings can be known even in using an adverb or adjective. In my lectures in English, I tried to be faithful to the originals, comparing with the translations. And so, I made many remarks on the texts of the translations. According to these remarks, readers of this paper will be able to understand how I read Akutagawa's stories.

In my class, I asked the students written assignments every time when we finished reading a story. Their papers are very interesting because these show how American students read Akutagawa's stories. I will quote their opinions in this paper in order to show how I had given lectures and how my class students had responded to my lectures.

I wish to express my great thanks to Professor Roselee Bundy for her patiently correcting my poor English and Secretary Mrs. Elaine Mellen for her kindly typing my lecture notes.

The text I use here is "Japanese Short Stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa" (Translated by Takashi Kojima. Introduction by John McVittie. Published by the Charles E. Tuttle Company. 1981). I also have a lot of thanks to the translator and publisher.

THE TANGERINES (1919)

[Text 1]

One cloudy winter evening I sat in the corner of a second-class car of the Tokyo-Yokosuka train and waited for the starting whistle.

In the car there was, surprisingly, no passenger but myself. Looking out on the platform, strangely enough there was not a single person who had come to bid someone good-bye. The only sound was that of a puppy whining sadly from time to time. All of these things seemed wholly suited to my mood. Fatigue and ennui enshrouded me with their dull and heavy shadows, like a gray and shadowy sky. With both hands deep in my pockets, I didn't even feel like taking the evening paper out of my pocket.

After a while I heard the starting whistle. Feeling tired but comfortable, my head leaning against the window frame, I waited for the station to begin moving backward, away from me. Just then I heard the sharp clatter of *geta* and the sharp voice of the guard. The door of my second-class coach clattered open and a girl about thirteen rushed in. At the same time the train, with a jerk, began to move slowly forward. The pillars of the platform, passing one by one, blocked off my vision; a tank car appeared, as though misplaced, and a porter bowed over a tip. All these fell behind me as if with lingering reluctance while the smoke belched from the engine blew against my window. Feeling slightly relieved, I lit a cigarette, raised my eyes and looked at the girl who was sitting opposite me.

She was a dull-looking country girl but interesting enough to be worthy of my study. I noticed her uncoiled hair dressed in a tight butterfly knot. Her chapped cheeks had a slightly disagreeable, but ruddy glow as though she had been rubbing them with her hands. In her lap, over which lay a light green muffler dangling from her neck, was a large bundle. Her coarse, cold hands, clamped tightly over the bundle, clutched a third-class ticket as though it were her last link with life itself. Her features, coarse in themselves and her clothes, lacking in taste, did not much appeal to me. She was apparently stupid as well—could not tell a second from a third-class coach.

Lighting a cigarette and partly wishing to forget her depressing

presence, I casually looked at the evening paper which I had taken from my pocket and spread over my knees. Then the pale twilight which had been falling over my paper was suddenly illumined by a brilliant electric light, and the almost indecipherable letters of several columns flashed into view with unexpected distinctness. The train had just entered one of the many tunnels on the Yokosuka line.

(Remark 1)

"One cloudy winter evening."—This is one of Akutagawa's stories that begin at nightfall or dusk. And so, "evening" should be replaced by "nightfall" or "dusk" which is a shorter time than "evening."

"It was a cloudy nightfall in winter" is in the original. The reason why we notice "nightfall" or "dusk" is because it is not only suitable for the original but also the boundary between day and night.

It is very important that this story begins at nightfall and in winter. This beginning suggests a dark and gloomy development.

(Remark 2)

"I"—"I" is a narrator and hero of this story, not Akutagawa himself. But the readers who know Akutagawa's history might consider that "I" is himself. Such readers believe that this story is true and they feel this story is more real than a common fiction without "I." There are many such "I" stories in modern Japanese fiction. These are called "Watakushi-shosetsu" in Japanese (Calling these "Shi-shosetsu" is not right. One should use not "shi" but "watakushi" which means "I.").

(Remark 3)

"A second-class car of the Tokyo-Yokosuka train."—The train bound for Tokyo in the Yokosuka Line, which is a national railway. (Recently changed to private line, JR.) In those days, there were first, second and third class cars, now, there are only common and green-class cars.

Yokosuka was famous as a naval port. (It is still a famous

port for Japan's Defence Force and a United States' naval base.) Akutagawa taught English in the Naval College of Engineering in Yokosuka from December of 1916 to April of 1919. "The Tangerines" was published in the month after his retirement.

(Remark 4)

"No passenger but myself" and "a puppy."—This situation reminds us of that of "Rashomon." In "Rashomon," there was only Genji and a cricket at nightfall. The cricket did not chirp but the puppy *in a cage* (in the original) is whining sadly from time to time. This sound works effectively to suggest the mood, fatigue and ennui that enshrouded "me." And then, as in "Rashomon" the hero will meet someone.

(Remark 5)

"Geta"—Japanese-style wooden clogs with "two teeth" each. In those days, most people used to wear the geta when they were wearing kimono. It is clear that the girl is wearing a kimono in this case. These days, most people do not wear kimonos (and wooden clogs) except when going out for a special event.

(Remark 6)

"The girl."—"She was a dull-looking country girl but interesting enough to be worthy of my study" is not written in the original. "She was indeed a country girl with uncoiled hair dressed in the ginko-leaf style, whose chapped cheeks, reddened the more because she rubbed them with her hand, were glowing disagreeably" is the literary translation of the original.

Akutagawa describes her in a long sentence with many adjectives. A number of adjectives in this sentence conveys the hero's displeasure. At any rate, she is not "interesting enough to be worthy of the hero's study", because he could not see her as significant. Lately in the story, we will find such a line as "wishing to forget her depressing presence." The girl is equivalent to the old woman in "Rashomon."

(Remark 7)

“A large bundle.”—This bundle is called “Furoshiki” in Japanese. It is very convenient for bundling and carrying something. These days, most Japanese, especially the young, seldom use a furoshiki because carrying it looks old-fashioned. And even in those days, the person with a large furoshiki looked like country person. In this case, the large furoshiki also means that the girl is leaving her home to go somewhere relatively far and that she will stay there for a long time. The large bundle probably contains things she needs in her daily life.

(Remark 8)

“How the hero express his displeasure with the girl?”—He arranges the reason why he feels so at three levels. The following is according to the original.

- (1) I hated her coarse features.
- (2) And then I was displeased that her clothes were unclean.
- (3) And last, I got angry at her for her stupidity in not knowing a second from a third-class coach.

Stressing her depressing presence in this way will lead to an unexpected reversal.

(Remark 9)

“The train had just entered one of the many tunnels.”—We notice that the sudden change from the outside to the inside of the tunnel is depicted clearly by the brilliant electric light on the newspaper’s letters. The tunnel might be symbolizing something.

[Text 2]

The paper, though illumined by light, merely showed the usual pedestrian events—the peace problem, brides and bridegrooms, bribe cases, obituaries, and so on. The instant we entered the tunnel, I felt, almost as if in hallucination, that the direction of the train had been reversed, while I mechanically ran my eyes from one *prosaic column* to another.

In the meantime the girl was there, sitting in front of me, appearing to embody all the vulgar realities in the human shape. I was always aware of her. The train, the tunnel, the girl, the evening paper full of commonplace events—they were nothing but the symbols of an unintelligible and wearisome life. Everything was absurd. I dropped the paper I had been reading, and, leaning my head against the window frame I closed my eyes as though in another world.

Several minutes passed. Suddenly and unaccountably feeling frightened, I looked around and found that she had moved from the other side to the seat next to mine, and I saw her anxiously trying to open the window. The heavy frame would not move. Her cold, chapped cheeks grew redder than ever and her occasional sniffings were heard above the noise of the train. This was something which could at least claim a bit of my sympathy.

But I could also see that we were near the mouth of another tunnel. The mountain sides overgrown with tall grass bright in the twilight were closing in fast upon us. The girl was still intent upon opening the window which had been closed because we had to pass through tunnels. I didn't know why she wanted it open, and I felt it was merely a whim. So I sat still feeling bitter and watched her cold hands desperately struggling to lift it. Then suddenly with a terrific noise, the train rushed into the tunnel and at the same time the window opened with a crash. Through the square hole of the window, billows of air black with soot began to blanket the entire car. The smoke dashed against my face too suddenly for me to protect myself with a handkerchief, and I, who usually have difficulty in breathing, was almost choked. Her butterfly knot waving in the black streaming air, the girl showed no concern at all for me. Stretching her neck outside the window, she looked straight ahead in the direction the train was going. And my eyes were riveted upon her figure silhouetted in the smoke-dimmed electric light. Had not then the car quickly grown light again, and

the refreshing smell of earth, hay and water flown in to drive off the choking smoke, I should undoubtedly have given her a sharp reprimand to make her close the window, for I had barely stopped coughing by that time.

(Remark 1)

"The usual pedestrian events."—"I" counts even the peace problem or obituaries among the routine events of every day. The peace problem means the peace treaty of World War I which was signed at Versailles in France, June of 1919. This problem was a remarkable historical event, and death is of course serious. But these were very routine for him. Why? It comes from his view of life.

(Remark 2)

"The symbol of an unintelligible and wearisome life."—The original is "the symbol of an unintelligible, vulgar and wearisome life." We shouldn't miss that he considers a life vulgar. Life is not precious but vulgar for him. His view of life reminds us that Akutagawa writes that, "Life is less precious than even a line of Baudelaire" in his last essay, "The Life of a Fool."

(Remark 3)

"Her trying to open the window."—"Her *cold* (not in the original) chapped cheeks grew redder than ever and her occasional sniffings were heard above *the noise of the train* (not right, the sound of her breathing).

There are three elements, 'Character', 'Location' and 'Event' in the story. Her action means an event, accurately speaking, the beginning of the event in this story. Readers must be interested in why she opens the window, too.

(Remark 4)

"Another tunnel."—The train passed through the first tunnel. In the first tunnel, "I" considers everything the symbol of an unintelligible, vulgar and wearisome, life. How about in the other tunnel? The second tunnel is more emphasized as the symbol of life

than the first one. The train rushed into the tunnel and *at the same time* the window opened with a crash. "At the same time" is important. Since this was a steam-locomotive, billows of air, black with soot, began to blanket the entire car through the square hole of the window.

The tunnel, or the car in the tunnel with the sooted black air, is the symbol of life. In such life, "I" was almost choked.

(Remark 5)

"The refreshing smell of earth, hay and water."—This means nature. Out of the tunnel, "I" could be refreshed by nature. And then, the girl was going to try something. It must be "the event" in this story.

[Text 3]

Now however, the train had already glided out of the tunnel and was nearing a small crossing on the outskirts of a town hemmed in between hills. Near the crossing stood a dirty cluster of straw-thatched huts and tile-roofed cottages. The white flag of the watchman languidly waved in the dusk. Just after the train had passed out of the tunnel, there appeared at this bleak crossing three ruddy-cheeked little boys, standing closely side by side.

They were all short as though compressed and stunted under the clouded sky. Their clothes were the same color as the dismal town where they lived. The minute they caught sight of the approaching train, they looked up and raised their hands, and opening their little throats like so many little birds, they yelled out their farewell at the top of their voices.

At that time the young girl who had thrust half of her body out of the train window, stretched out and waved her hands left and right. Then, as though from the heavenly skies upon the heads of the little children fell five or six tangerines dyed with the warm fiery color of sunshine, which made my heart pound and pause for some seconds.

Breathlessly I watched, for in this instant I understood everything. The girl, who was probably going out to work somewhere, threw these tangerines which she had held in her lap to her little brothers as both a surprise and a reward for coming to the crossing to wave and shout their goodbyes to their big sister leaving home.

The crossing at the outskirts of this lonely town in the dusk of evening, the three little youngsters who called like little birds, and the bright tangerines which fell down over their heads—all this that came and went in the twinkling of an eye was indelibly branded upon my heart.

I felt something like life welling up within me. Deeply impressed, I turned slightly and looked at the young girl as though she were a different person. There she was already back in her own seat which she had first taken opposite mine, burying her cold cheeks in her light green muffler. She was tightly grasping her third-class ticket like a precious treasure in her cold chapped hands upon the large bundle in her lap.

It was at this moment that I completely forgot my intense fatigue and ennui, becoming oblivious to the unintelligible absurdity of my own tiresome, dull life.

(Remark 1)

“Three ruddy-cheeked little boys.”—They were all short as though compressed and stunted under the clouded sky. Their clothes were the same color as *gloomy scenes out skirts of town* (in the original). They looked up and raised their hands, and yelled out *something unintelligible* (“their farewell” is not right) at the top of their voice, opening their little throats *like so many little birds* (not written in the original).

The translator changed “something unintelligible” (in the original) to “their farewell.” “I” could understand everything after the girl had thrown tangerines. If the children yelled out their farewell here, “I” should have understood their purpose before she threw the tangerines. And it is not suitable to add, “like so many little

birds" about the children who appeared compressed and stunted under the clouded sky here. Such an adverbial phrase sounds merrily. Later, we can find "like little birds" in the original. It is a suitable adverbial phrase there.

(Remark 2)

"The moment the girl threw tangerines."—"At that time" is not so bad, but "*At the moment*" is in the original. Akutagawa stressed the moment as you know. Later, we can also find "for in this instant, I understood everything," or "in the twinkling of an eye."

(Remark 3)

"The scene of falling tangerines."—"Then, as though from the heavenly skies upon the heads of the little children fell five or six tangerines dyed with the warm fiery color of sunshine..." In the original, "Then, five or six tangerines dyed with the warm color of sunshine as to beat heart fell upon the heads of the children from the sky." (my literal translation). "Heavenly" the translator adds to the sky, will invite students to read this scene more deeply.

Akutagawa depicts the color of tangerines with the warm color of sunshine, because the tangerines are the symbol of the sister's love for her little brothers. "The warm fiery color" in the text is problematic because "warm" is in contradiction with "fiery".

(Remark 4)

"For in this instant I understood everything."—He is greatly impressed by the poor girl's love for her little brothers, condensed in this moment and expressed through such a little present.

(Remark 5)

"All this that came and went in the twinkling of an eye."—"All passed by outside the train's window in the twinkling of an eye. But this scene was so vivid that I felt pain and it was branded upon my heart." (in the original). Before "All," Akutagawa repeats and reconfirms the scene as "The crossing at the outskirts of this lonely town in the dusk of evening, the three little youngsters who

called like little birds, and the bright tangerines which fell down over their heads. . . ." Here, we can find the hero's deep impression on the scene. And so, this time, the cries of the boys were described as "like little birds."

(Remark 6)

"Something like life."—In the original, it is "A strange and bright feeling." Why is it strange? Because he had never felt such a feeling in his wearisome life. Why is it bright? Because he had never seen such love to in his gloomy days.

(Remark 7)

"As though she were a different person."—Why did she look as though she were a different person for him? Because he could sense the love hidden in the depth of the mind of the girl who appeared a mere country girl.

(Remark 8)

"I completely forgot my intense fatigue and ennui."—In the original, it is "a little" or "for a little while," instead of "completely." "I" can never forget his fatigue and ennui, . . . completely in his whole life. But at this moment, he could forget his intense fatigue and ennui, and then *the unintelligible, vulgar and wearisome life* (this is the same as his description of life in the first tunnel in the original.)

[Conclusion]

(1) In "The Tangerines", the moment is also important. Life is always unintelligible, vulgar and wearisome for hero of this story. But for a moment he forgot that life. The moment is bright, beautiful and precious for Akutagawa, too.

(2) We can say that Akutagawa discovered a beautiful human mind in the nameless poor country girl, just like he discovered the selflessness or the soul of a martyr in the nameless fair-eyed girl in Nagasaki in this story of a year earlier. Akutagawa found the beauty of the moment in the beautiful girl of "The Martyr," but

Akutagawa could find the beauty of the moment in the country girl of coarse features, not having Christianity. In this story, Akutagawa emphasized the beauty of the moment, that belonged to the spirit and not the body.

[Students' opinions and My comments]

(1) 'From the heavenly skies'—Michael Piker:

"Then as though from the heavenly skies upon the heads of the little children fell five or six tangerines dyed with the warm fiery color of sunshine. . . ." Tangerines grow in nature with the help of god. When the country girl threw the fruit, it was the help of god. When the country girl threw the fruit, it was like an unborn baby coming alive for everyone to see and cherish. God made the tangerines bright because new life is bright and he wanted to make the moment memorable for the three little boys.

Tunnels play an important and symbolic role in this story. They represent a void between the author's contrasting impressions of the country girl. Tunnels are empty and emotionless.

(My comment on Michael's)—Your remark on the tunnel is very interesting. I appreciate that you pay much attentions to words and expressions every time. Your other remark on tangerines based on the image of God, according to such a phrase as 'from the heavenly skies'. But 'heavenly' is what the translator adds, as I told in the class. This remark is unique and might deepen the meaning of tangerines.

(2) 'The beauty of the moment'—Most students caught the beauty of the moment in the girl's throwing tangerines to her brothers.

Daniela Stephanz:

Akutagawa explores the importance of the moment: In *The Tangerines*. His theme seems to be, "Even in the drabness and ugliness of the world, the power of kindness and love persists."

This theme is visible through Akutagawa's use of contrast when discussing the country girl's features, the little boys' clothes, and the moment the tangerines fall from the girl's hands into the laps of her little brothers. . . .

Finally, the tangerines themselves, the token of love and symbol of the beauty of the moment, are the only thing that is colorful and bright. They are described as "dyed with so warm color of sunshine as to beat heart." The tangerines are bright and beautiful so that they will stand out against the dreary, dull and ugly background. This is the contrast between the beautiful and the plain, and their beauty comes to life in the moment that they are given to the little boys by their sister.

As a symbol of love, the tangerines symbolize the beauty found in the hearts of people everywhere in the world. The beauty of the moment, though, exemplified in the action of falling tangerines, is symbolized through a contrast of bright color and dreary backgrounds. *The Tangerines*, then, shows us Akutagawa's concern with the goodness in peoples' hearts through these examples.

(My comment on Daniela's)—Your paper itself is very beautiful and excellent. You write this naturally and smoothly, because you understand this story so clearly. Especially, it is very good to find the beauty of the moment in the contrast between the color of the tangerines and character's garments (and the background).

Jennifer Meehan:

Both stories use the beauty of a young girl to show the beauty of the moment. In "The Tangerines," she was just a nameless, poor country girl. To make her seem even more universal, Akutagawa never even gave her a name, she was simply the representation of beauty. Lorenzo also represented the beauty of the moment. She is more physically beautiful than the other, yet Lorenzo's beauty is still shown through her actions. She even went so far as to jeopardize her own life in order to save a child that was not even hers, in order to keep up appearances.

Most importantly, "The Martyr" and "The Tangerines" show the importance of a single moment. For that one moment, the world seems to stand still, and that which had previously been unintelligible suddenly becomes beautiful and precious. This, perhaps, is best of all.

(My comment on Jennifer's)—Your paper is very excellent. You succeed in making a comparison between the girl in 'The Tangerines' and Lorenzo in 'The Martyr', recognizing that both concentrate upon the beauty of the moment.

Tamara L. Baker:

In the instant that the peasant girl threw the tangerines, the character "I" understood everything. He saw the love and kindness in the girl's heart. He no longer saw her coarse features, but rather her spiritual beauty. This new awareness filled his heart and made it ache. The "strange and bright feeling" was something like life. This was the "beauty of the moment."

Thus, after passing through the dark, choking tunnel and seeing this bright, beautiful scene the character found his life changed. He forgot the drudgery of his tiresome life and saw the goodness that was still in the world, all because of a few tangerines.

(My comment on Tamara's)—You appreciation of this story is excellent. You write about the moment that 'I' found the girl's 'spiritual beauty'. Of course, it is called "The beauty of the moment". But, only one I concern with your paper, is that you write '—his life changed'. I pointed in my class that the translation about this is not right. His vargar and wearisome life can't be changed easily. He could forget such life *in a little while*, not 'completely.'

(3) 'Changing the First Impression'—Elizabeth Schwartz:

(Quoted in full)

Our first impressions of people are often quite difficult to alter, even after a significant passage of time. What we have a tendency to overlook is the fact that first impressions are primarily subjec-

tive. We make judgements based on our perceptions of "right" and "wrong" and even on our temporary moods. The latter example is portrayed by Akutagawa's narrator of the short story "The Tangerines." When a young girl enters a train car one evening, the narrator's initial perception of her is truly a reflection of his own dismal outlook on life. As the train travels onward, the first impression changes faster than in the average process.

The narrator enters the train car with "fatigue and ennui" that evening. He is alone with his depression, until an additional depressing element is introduced: the "dullest country girl." He makes an effort to ignore her, however, he has difficulty.

"In the meantime the girl was there, sitting in front of me, appearing to embody all the vulgar realities in the human shape."

One action on the part of the country girl changes the perspective of the narrator concerning both the girl herself and the world around him. When he witnesses the throwing of the tangerines to her younger brothers, he is moved emotionally:

"I felt something like life welling up within me. Deeply impressed, I turned slightly and looked at the young girl as though she were a different person."

The art of giving is heart-lifting to witness. It is this giving of the tangerines that puts the girl in a different light, while it also casts a new light on the world of the narrator. The beauty of the moment has been incorporated into the once-dismal existence of the narrator, enlightening the audience to this pleasure as well.

(My comment on Elizabeth's)—The style of your paper is usually unique and different from another students'. More objective observation and persuasion are in your papers. I am very interested in 'Our first impression of people are often quite difficult to alter, even after a significant passage of time.' and 'As the train travels onward, the first impression changes faster than in the average process.' You also write 'When he witness the throwing of the tangerines to her younger brothers, he is moved *emotionally*:' and

'The beauty of the moment has been incorporated into the once-dismal existence of the narrator, enlightening the audience to this pleasure as well.' Can you imagine that he changed his view of life since he encountered the beauty of the moment?

(4) **'The inner beauty of the country girl'**—Some students write about the inner beauty of the country girl.

Anne G. Walsh:

Akutagawa in his short story "The Tangerines" depicts the inner beauty of a simple country girl. This is different from the depiction of the physical beauty of Lorenzo in "The Martyr" and Masago in "In A Grove". The country girl is not pretty. She is described by "I", the narrator in the story. The narrator does not experience pleasantness due to the girl's presence nor does he understand her inner, spiritual beauty until he witnesses her act of love. . . .

Upon seeing this act, the narrator experiences a "strange and bright feeling". The reader may ask why has he never felt such a feeling in his wearisome life. This is because he has never seen such a scene of love in his gloomy days. The narrator has witnessed this impressive scene.

After the narrator witnesses this impressive scene he regards the simple girl "as though she were a different person." Because now he could understand the deep love in her: a truthful love in this country girl. She is not as simple as he first thought.

The simple country girl possesses an inner, spiritual beauty. The narrator could not understand this until he witnessed her perform an act of love.

(My comment on Anne's)--You caught part and parcel of this story. The title of your paper, 'The inner beauty of the country girl' itself tells all. It is very good to find the inner beauty in the country girl comparing with another heroine in 'The Martyr' and 'In A Grove'. The other student wrote 'Her spiritual beauty'.

Catherine Benkert:

Akutagawa, in his short story "The Tangerines," concentrates on presenting the idea of a beautiful human mind and soul, and not necessarily a beautiful outside. The technique he uses is to display the intensesness of a moment, and what one realises or is able to realise in a moment. . . .

At the onset of the story, the man also described his fatigue and ennui, along with his impatience with the mundane articles in the paper reflecting the monotony of life. After witnessing the scene of the girl throwing the tangerines, the man forgets these thoughts and concentrates on the girl and now his thoughts concerning her changed. In the moment he realised her inner beauty he also began to realise the beauty that could be in life, although one just doesn't notice it until an incident like this occurs. This becomes apparent to the reader when the man disregards his earlier feelings concerning his train journey, the paper, and the girl.

Akutagawa shows the reader an inner beauty of people and the potential beauty of life through his use of special moments.

(My comment on Catherine's)—As your conclusion shows, your appreciation of this story is excellent. You also write the potential beauty of life. One thing I concern with your paper is whether you think that 'I' was no longer depressing in his life, or not? He could forget tiresome life only in a while.

(5) "The girl's hopes and dreams"—Steven M. Weber:

He realizes her purpose when he sees three young ruddy-faced boys running towards the train. The girl waves and throws several tangerines to these boys, who are obviously her little brothers. The narrator realizes that she is rewarding them for coming to see her as she leaves home to go to work for the first time. He is filled with admiration for this girl and realizes that she is a person with a family, who obviously has hopes and dreams, not unlike himself. He confesses to having lost his earlier weariness. This impression

could only have occurred in a situation where he could actually get to know her character.

(My comment on Steven's)—You can understand this story well. I am interested in your addition to the girl, her hopes and dreams that we can hardly find in her appearance. Do you believe that he could have parted his wearisome life after this? You should know he lost his earlier weariness *in a while*.

(6) 'Appreciation of "The Tangerines"'.

Sean Pickard:

This is a very interesting story by Akutagawa. I think I enjoy his psychological and philosophical studies more than his straight-forward short stories such as "Rashomon" or even the beautiful tale of "The Martyr". I would be interested in reading more stories like "The Tangerines".

(My comment on Sean's)—I wonder if 'Rashomon' is a straight-forward short story. 'The Martyr' is of course beautiful tale. I am very interested in the appreciation that you consider this story psychological and philosophical. Jennifer writes 'This ("The Tangerines"), perhaps, best of all.'

Rodney Huff:

"The Tangerines" is yet another example of Akutagawa's tremendous gift as a writer. The genius of his writing is that he is able to use two opposite symbols, the ugly and consuming smoke, and the beautiful and refreshing tangerines, both as a symbol of life. These both express the bittersweet and paradoxical nature of life, which the hero of the story comes to accept as shown when he sees the girl, whom he once despised, as an entirely different person. He is able to accept this through his experience with the beauty of the moment.

(My comment on Rodney's)—You appreciate the genius of Akutagawa's writing in using two opposite symbols. The last line of your paper is exactly right. The girl looks entirely different person

for the hero. Do you believe that his view of life entirely changed?

Kimberly A. Harrison: (Quoted in full)

Ryunosuke Akutagawa in his story "The Tangerines" has an interest in "the beauty of the moment." In the story, it is the power of one moment which totally transforms the opinion of the narrator in the story. In the beginning of the narrative, it is clear that the narrator finds the country girl, who shares the train ride with him, very unappealing because of her physical appearance. However, the moment in which the girl throws the tangerines to the young boys from the train window changes his opinion of the girl. It is in "the beauty of this moment" that the narrator is able to see the true beauty of the country girl; it is a beauty within.

The narrator's description of the country girl in the beginning of the train ride is very derogatory. At this point in the story, he finds the girl repulsive because of her external appearance. The narrator describes the girl's "physique" with many adjectives which are not flattering. For example, he explains that the girl is "dull-looking" with a "slightly disagreeable" ruddy glow in her cheeks. Moreover, the narrator is particularly disgusted by the fact that the girl is so 'stupid' that she sits in a second class section of the train with a third class ticket. All in all, this passage indicates that the girl is very depressing in appearance and that the narrator is appalled by her presence because of this.

However, the narrator is strongly moved when the girl throws the tangerines to the boys at the crossing. He exclaims that the scene made his "heart pound and pause for some seconds." This is the "beautiful moment" which Akutagawa emphasizes because it is at this point that the narrator realizes the true beauty of the country girl.

The moment in which the country girl throws the tangerines to the boys is very moving because it demonstrates a deep sense of love, generosity, and caring on the part of the country girl. The narrator recognizes this, and these qualities seem to replace the

disagreeable qualities of his first impression of her. The narrator explains that he was "deeply impressed" by the girl's actions and that the girl appeared to him "as though she were a different person." However, it is clear that this change in opinion is strictly in the mind of the narrator because she physically is described after she throws the tangerines in the same "dull" and unappealing manner as in the beginning of the story. What has changed in the mind of the narrator is his conception of beauty; he has come to recognize the inner, spiritual beauty of the girl and this beauty outweighs her unpleasant exterior beauty. At the end of the story, because of the "beauty of the moment", the narrator sees the country girl as a beautiful human being.

In conclusion, the "beauty of the moment" can be seen as a very powerful force in Akutagawa's story "The Tangerines." It is because at one beautiful moment that the narrator in the story is able to recognize the true essence of what makes a person beautiful. The narrator learns that beauty can not be judged only in terms of external appearances; sometimes it is the inner, spiritual qualities, like the love, caring, and generosity of the country girl, which create the true essence of beauty.

(My comment on Kimberly's)—I think your paper is nearly perfect. Every time you write very well. Especially, this last one is the best, or no less excellent than before. You caught part and parcel of this story and Akutagawa. You are also able to recognize the true essence of what makes a person beautiful. This recognition is apt to lead moral appreciation of the story. People have a tendency to appreciate literary works morally. I think that I can find such a tendency more in American students than in Japanese, because of Puritanism in the United States.

David Silverberg: (Quoted in full)

After reading "The Tangerines", one thing struck me about it. Although Akutagawa shows us the beauty in the country girl, he contrasts it with a bitter irony: the fact that the hero, "I", cannot

feel the type of love or warmth that the girl feels. I found this strange and sad and terribly profound.

In the first paragraph of the story, "I" talks of the mood he was in on the train. "Fatigue and ennui enshrouded me with their dull and heavy shadows like a gray and shadowy sky. With both hands deep in my pockets, I didn't even feel like taking the evening paper out of my pocket." This passage shows the reader exactly how gloomy the life of this man is. He cannot enjoy the simplest thing such as reading a newspaper. And the statement "With both hands deep in my pockets" seems to me a little symbolic. As if to say that the hero was totally immersed in his melancholy world.

The comments "I" makes comparing his situation to that of the girl is also revealing. He calls her "depressing" and "embodying all the vulgar realities in the human shape", saying that she was part of "the symbols of an unintelligible and wearisome life". He says this, but later realizes that it is he who symbolizes all that is unintelligible and wearisome and depressing. In the scene of the falling tangerines, he sees that she is full of love and life and color. It strikes him so deeply that (according to Hiraoka Toshio's translation, not the textbook's) "the scene was so clearly branded upon my heart that I felt pain". He was overjoyed at seeing and experiencing such a sight, but it hurt him, because at that moment he realized that it was he who was dull and lifeless. It is another example of how Akutagawa uses conflicting or "ambivalent" emotions to make a statement. We can see the hero's reaction in the last paragraph, which shows us the irony that Akutagawa wants the reader to feel. (Again according to Hiraoka Toshio's translation rather than the book's) "For a little while I could forget my intense fatigue and ennui, becoming oblivious to the unintelligible absurdity of my own tiresome, dull life."

(My comment on David's)—Every time you write well. Especially, this last one is the best. Your appreciation of this story is deep and sharp. Some students think that 'I' could forget the

vargar and wearisome life *completely*, according to the text-book. You might be only one to point Akutagawa's irony and gloomy life.

Nick Bates: (Quoted in full)

The concept of "the moment" is used a great deal by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, especially in his short story *The Tangerines*. Here, in particular, this idea and its importance is expressed by the narrator of the story: "Breathlessly I watched, for in this instant[moment] I understood everything." Throughout the story the reader is subject to the thoughts of the narrator, who is in the third person, on such varied topics as current news and the country girl who is sitting close to him. In fact, most of his time is spent on studying this girl. The above quote tells of a near instantaneous change of heart that the narrator has towards the country girl. The consequence being a deeper understanding of the girl both to the narrator and the reader. The importance here is that the reader "sees" the country girl thru the eyes of the narrator, and it isn't until the narrator understands-until his eyes are clear- that the reader can develop intelligent opinions about the girl. Akutagawa has developed his story in such a way that the readers understanding of the girl coincides with the narrators, and it occurs in a moment of time. The change of attitude that happens to the narrator also happens within the reader and makes it possible to get a greater understanding of the story.

There is a lesson to be learned from the narrators change of attitude towards the country girl. From the outset he judges the girl based on her appearance. The narrator seems to be able to categorize for himself everything about the girl solely based on what she looks like. An example of his attitude: "Lighting a cigarette and partly wishing to forget her depressing presence," First of all, the narrator finds her presence depressing, based on her looks. He lists things like her hair, cheeks, and clothes as ample proof for justifying his conclusions about her. What about her expression? Is the country girl smiling? Do her eyes have any

twinkling in them? The narrator does not list these things, and I assume therefore that they are not important to him. If he could describe her cheeks, then surely he could comment about her expression. Secondly, her looks bothered him so much that he wanted to forget her. It is obvious that the narrator has put himself upon a pedestal and believes that he has the authority to look down upon her as if she was any less a human than he. The reader, who is looking thru the narrators eyes, unconsciously begins to develop opinions about the girl based on the narrators view of her. Akutagawa has caught the reader offguard. At the end of the story the narrator is able to witness a moving display of affection between the country girl and her brothers. As a result "I turned slightly and looked at the young girl as though she were a different person." The narrator has a different opinion of the girl based on this encounter. The author used this encounter to open the eyes of the narrator, so that he may understand the girl based on her inner being rather than her outer. This also opens the eyes of the reader who was holding incorrect opinions about the girl based solely on her looks. This story makes the point that there is more to a person than his/her looks. And if the reader is not careful, he will start judging someone based on appearance and not the inner spirit, just as the narrator did. It is learned that unattractive, even seemingly selfish people, can be very loving inside, and that such judgements are often made based on biased information. The reader is introduced to the country girl, who certainly is not as attractive as Lorenzo, but has a similiar loving spirit. Akutagawa is making a strong statement about a persons quality and how it should not be derived.

(My comment on Nick's)—"The Tangerines' taught us a lesson that people shouldn't judge the other person on his/her appearance, because he/she might have a beautiful heart inside. That's of course right. As you know, this story is not a didactic story. I believe that Akutagawa wouldn't intend to give us such a lesson. He only wanted

to write that there might be a beautiful moment even in the gloomy life. Your former comment in this paper concerns 'the moment' and the relation between the narrator and reader. That's right, too. I am very happy to read your excellent paper every time.

(“The Tangerines” — End.)