

芥川龍之介・英訳作品研究

—「お富の貞操」—

平岡敏夫

Remarks on Akutagawa's Works

—“Otomi's Virginity”—

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[Introduction]

Akutagawa wrote many historical stories. Among them, there are stories called, “Kaikaki-mono”, which means the stories with the background of the Age of Enlightenment (early modern Japan). There are five: “The Murder in the Age of Enlightenment,” “The Husband in the Age of Enlightenment” “The Ball,” “Otomi's Virginity” and “The Doll.” There are many problems in Japan's modernization because of the great contradictions between the old traditional culture and new civilization from Western countries.

Akutagawa was one of the intellectuals who were suffering from such contradictions. But, in the early modern period, even though the contradictions were appearing, they were not so remarkable. And so, Akutagawa might be nostalgic for the Age of Enlightenment. We can find Akutagawa's longing for the good old days of Meiji, even in “Otomi's Virginity.”

This paper is the fifth one and the last based on my lecture at Dickinson College in 1987. Preceding four papers contain my student's opinions on the lecture, but this one doesn't. Because the semester ended up before I asked it to them.

I wish to express my great thanks to Professor Roselee Bundy for her kindly correcting my poor English and Secretary Elaine Mellen for

her kindly typing my lecture note.

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.

OTOMI'S VIRGINITY (1922)

[Text 1]

Aa a Little past noon, May 14, 1868, in the city of Edo, a notice was posted, reading: "At dawn tomorrow the Imperial Army will attack the 'Shogitai' entrenched in Toei Hill. Civilians living in the vicinity of Ueno should take refuge anywhere they can."

Inside the house evacuated by Masabei Kogaya, a grocer, at Michome, Shitaya-machi, a tortoiseshell colored cat was crouching in front of a large sea-shell in the corner of the kitchen. The house was so tightly shuttered that even in broad daylight it was dark and quiet inside. The only sound was the pattering of the rain that had been falling for days. From time to time a heavy downfall poured upon the roof and each time the sound grew louder, the cat raised her amber eyes—eyes that gave off an ominous phosphorescent glow in the room so dark that even the stove was not discernible. Finding that no change occurred except in the pattering of the rain, the cat stayed still, but narrowed her eyes thread-thin.

Repeating this action again and again, she must have fallen asleep, for soon she stopped opening her eyes at all. The rain continued to fall heavily and to ease, alternately. Three o'clock... Four o'clock... The time gradually passed into dusk amidst the sound of the rain.

(Remark 1)

"May 14, 1868, in the city of Edo." -- Five months later, on September 3, Edo became Tokyo because of the Meiji restoration in the year after the Civil War ended.

(Remark 2)

"The Imperial Army will attack the Shogitai entrenched in Toei Hill." -- The Imperial Army is the Japanese government's new army. In the Edo period, the Shogunate had ruled Japan. By 1868, the Imperial Army had defeated the Shogunate Army, and the Shogunate government had been ruined. But a group of Samurai called "Shogitai", who still supported the old Shogunate, was confronting the new army at Toei Hill. This hill is now a part of Ueno Park. Ueno has been famous as the terminal station to the northeastern district (Tohoku) in Japan's main island since the newly Meiji period.

(Remark 3)

"A tortoise-shell colored cat in a grocery, Masabei Kogaya." -- In the original, Seibeï Kogaya, a fancy goods store at Ni-chome, Shitayamachi had evacuated with his family and maids. But their cat came back home alone. Here we notice the following :

1) The store of Seibeï (not Masabei) Kogaya was not a grocery but a fancy goods store. There is a subtle difference in nuance between a grocery and a fancy goods store. Mrs. Seibeï Kogaya loved her cat so much that She sent her maid to look for the missing cat.

2) This cat is a male in the original, although the translator writes "the cat raised *her* amber eyes." Why should the cat be male in this story? This is a difficult question. A male cat might be suitable for the following situation.

3) Nobody was there except the cat. In its significance, the cat is equivalent to the cricket in "Rashomon," or the puppy in "The Tangerines." But the cat has an important role in the development of the story.

(Remark 4)

"The time gradually passed into dusk amidst the sound of the rain." -- We are reminded that "Rashomon" begins at dusk in the rain. Soon, a man who waits for a break in the rain will appear here, like genin in "Rashomon."

[Text 2]

When five o'clock came, the cat suddenly rounded her eyes and pin-pointed them, as if something had frightened her. The rain had subsided, and *nothing was audible but the cries of sedan-carriers running down the street.* After several seconds of silence, the kitchen suddenly became dimly lighted. Then into view, object by object, came the kitchen-stove, the sparkling of the water in a lidless jar, the kitchen shrine, and the rope for opening the skylight. Looking all the more uneasy, the cat slowly raised her large body and glared at the outer door, which had just been opened.

The person who opened the door at that moment—not only the outer door, but also the inner, paper door—was a beggar as wet as a drowned rat. Stretching his neck, which was wrapped in an old towel, he listened stealthily and attentively for any possible noise in the quiet house. After making sure that *there was not a soul within,* he went into the kitchen, his new straw raincoat bright with rain. Flattening her ears, the cat recoiled a few steps. Paying no attention to the cat for the moment, the beggar slid the paper door closed behind him and slowly unwrapped the towel from around his neck. His uncut hair was extremely long, and he had a couple of adhesive paper bandages on his face. Although he was very dirty, he had rather regular features.

"Pussy, pussy," he said in a low tone, wiping his hair and face, which were dripping with rain. The cat pricked up her ears as though she recognized his voice. But staying where she was, she fixed suspicious eyes upon him at intervals. Meanwhile, the beggar took off his raincoat, sat down on the floor in front of the cat, and crossed his legs, which were so muddy that the color of his skins was hardly visible.

"How do you do, pussy?" he asked, laughing to himself and stroking the cat on the head. "Seeing nobody's here, I'd say they've left you in the lurch." For a second the cat seemed about to poise on tiptoe for light, but she did not spring away. On the contrary, she remained sitting, but gradually began to narrow her eyes. When he had stopped stroking the cat, the beggar took an oiled pistol out of his pocket and

started examining its trigger in the twilight. The beggar, handling his pistol in the kitchen of the deserted house in an atmosphere of threatening was—this certainly was an unusual and curious sight! Yet, with her eyes narrowed and her back humped, the cat remained sitting as indifferently as though she knew all secrets.

“Hey, pussy,” the beggar said to the cat; “tomorrow showers of bullets will fall in this neighborhood. If you’re hit, you’ll die. So no matter how great a tumult breaks out, don’t stir out of the house, and lie hidden under the floor.

“We’ve been pals. But this will be the last I’ll see of you,” he said to the cat from time to time, while examining his pistol. “Tomorrow may be an evil day for both you and me. Tomorrow I may die, too. Even if I get off unhurt, I won’t hunt around rubbish heaps any more, and you’ll be mighty happy, won’t you?”

In the meantime the sound of the rain was louder. The clouds were close enough to obscure the roof tiles. The twilight which had hung over the kitchen grew darker and fainter than ever. The beggar, without raising his face, started to load his pistol which he had finished examining.

“Will you miss me any when I’m gone?” he went on. “No, cats forget three years’ kindness, they say, so I guess you can’t be trusted, either.—Well, that doesn’t matter. But when I’m gone, too. . . .”

(Remark 1)

“About some details.” -- (1) The cries of sedan-carriers--when two persons were carrying the old type of Japanese sedan chair in the Edo period, they used to shout to each other. (2) Kitchen shrine -- In the past, Japanese people believed that there was a God of the kitchen. This worship is probably related to that of fire in ancient times. Even now, we can find there little kitchen shrines in old houses. (3) The rope for opening the skylight -- the window, near to the ceiling, could be opened by the rope. (4) Paper door -- Paper-fitted door (sliding screen), the frames of which are made of wood. (5) His new straw raincoat -- in

the original, it is only a new straw mat to be used to wrap up the barrel of "sake." Even if it is the a straw coat, a new one is not cheap and not suitable for a beggar.

(Remark 2)

"Although he was very dirty, he had rather regular features." -- It means he was not only a beggar but might be a special person. Later, he spoke to the cat in using samurai words. (This can be hardly translated into English).

(Remark 3)

"The beggar took an oiled pistol out of his pocket." -- In those days in Japan, a pistol was very precious and expensive. Why does the beggar have a pistol? It is clear that he is not a mere beggar.

(Remark 4)

"This certainly was an unusual and curious sight! -- In the original, Akutagawa writes "This certainly was a curious sight like that in a fiction." Since the scene is the fiction, why does he say this? Because he describes the scene of the beggar and pistol as reality as nonfiction.

[Text 3]

The beggar suddenly was silent, for he heard someone stepping up to the outside of the outer door. He thought someone stepped up to the outer door simultaneously with his putting away his pistol, and just as he looked back, the backdoor was thrust open. Quicker than thought, he assumed the posture of defense, and soon the beggar and the intruder were looking straight at each other.

The instant the incomer saw the beggar, she gave an outcry of sudden surprise. She was a barefooted young woman, holding a paper umbrella in her hand. She had an almost impulsive desire to dash back into the rain, but at last regaining her courage after her first astonishment, she tried to look into the beggar's face through the little bit of light in the

kitchen.

In blank amazement, the beggar watched her closely, raising one knee under his *yukata* (unlined kimono.) His look showed that he was no longer on his guard. For a while the two silently looked at each other face to face.

"You're Shinko, aren't you?" she asked the beggar recovering some of her composure.

"Oh, pardon me," the beggar said with a grin, and bobbed his head a couple of times towards her. "The heavy shower just drove me into your house in your absence. I haven't turned housebreaker, I assure you."

"I'm really surprised. Even if you are not a housebreaker, you carry your impudence too far," she cried out in vexation, swishing water off her umbrella. "Now get out of here. I'm coming in."

"Yes, I'll go without your ordering me to. Haven't you taken refuge yet, miss?"

"Yes, I have. Why not? But what does it matter?"

"Then you left something, I guess. Now come right in here. You're exposed to the rain out there."

As if still exasperated, without giving any reply to his remark, she sat down on the kitchen floor. Stretching her dirty feet, she began ladling water on her dirty feet. Then the beggar, who sat crossed-legged with full composure, stared fixedly at her, stroking his shaggy-bearded chin. She was a buxom country brunette with pimples on her nose. She wore a plain homespun garment and a cotton sash, as befitting a young maid. Her lively features and attractive figure had an irresistible charm.

(Remark 1)

"The incomer, a bare-footed young woman." -- The second character in this story appears, like the girl in "The Tangerine," or the old woman in "Rashomon." And this vacant house might be equivalent to the Rashomon. The young woman is not wearing wooden clogs (*geta*). She might have been in such a hurry that she couldn't help putting off *geta*,

which prevents one from walking quickly or easily in a heavy shower. In this case, her bare feet suggests the fresh beauty of the young woman.

(Remark 2)

"Attitude of the beggar (Shinko)." -- He sat crossed-legged with full composure and stared fixedly at her. Japanese men commonly sit cross-legged except in the presence of a superior person. In this case, the young woman, although she is a maid, has higher status than a beggar. So, the beggar should not take such an attitude. Besides, he did so with full composure and he stared fixedly at her. And so, we can see that he had an advantage over her.

(Remark 3)

"About the young woman." -- Although "she was a buxom country brunette with pimples on her nose" in the text, in the original "she was a country-bred maid who had a dark-complected face with a mole near her nose" (my translation).

"Her lively features and attractive figure had an irresistable charm" is "there was a beauty which was associated with a new peach or pear in her lively features and tight body (not "buxom")" in the original. We are reminded of Masago in "In a Grove" and her beauty of wildness (or brutality).

[Text 4]

"Since you have come back in this confusion, you must have left something very important," he went on asking. "What did you leave? Eh? Miss... Otomi-san?"

"Mind your own business. First of all, get out at once, I tell you."

Otomi's answer was blunt. Looking up into his face, she started questioning him with a serious look, as if she had thought of something.

"Shinko," she said, "Do you know where our pussy is?"

"Pussy? She was here just now," he said, looking around. "Oh, dear! Where could she have gone?"

The cat had crept up to the shelf unnoticed and was crouching between an earthenware mortar and an iron pot. Otomi caught of the cat at the same moment as Shinko. Instantly Otomi threw away her dipper, and stood up on the floor as though she had forgotten the beggar's presence. And with a bright smile, she called the cat on the shelf. Shinko shifted his curious eyes from the cat to Otomi.

"Is it the cat that you left, miss?"

"Why shouldn't it be a cat? Pussy, pussy, now come down."

Shinko suddenly burst out laughing. His laughter called forth an eerie echo amidst the resounding noise of the rain. Otomi, quite surprised, shouted at Shinko out of her renewed vexation, with her cheeks all flushed.

"What makes you laugh? The mistress is upset about having left her cat behind. Worried about the life of the cat, she has been crying all the while. Out of pity for her I've come back all the way in the rain..."

"All right. I won't laugh any more..." Still continuing to laugh, Shinko interrupted Otomi's remark. "I won't laugh any more. But just think of it. When war may break out tomorrow, a mere cat or two—it is funny, whatever one thinks about it. With all deference to your presence, let me take the liberty of telling you the mistress here is the most unreasonable and selfish woman I've ever heard of. First of all, to look for her pussy..."

"Shut up!" Otomi exclaimed with a threatening look, "I don't like to hear you slander my mistress."

As might be expected, the beggar was not frightened by her threatening countenance. On the contrary he had been fixing a rude look upon her person. Her figure at that moment was really savage beauty itself. Her rain-wet *yukata* and petticoat were stuck fast to her skin and her bare soft virginal body was transparent. Shinko, with his eyes fixed upon her, continued to talk laughingly.

"Above anything else, you can tell it by her sending you here to look for the pussy. Now every family in the vicinity of Ueno has already

taken refuge. The people's houses are as deserted as uninhabited fields. No wolves may possibly come out, but there's no knowing what terrible danger you may meet with."

"Don't worry unnecessarily, and catch the cat quickly. I don't expect war will break out. How could there be any danger?"

"Don't talk nonsense. If there's no danger in a young girl's walking alone, there can be no danger whatever," Shinko gradually began talking in a vein half-serious and half-jocular. "Coming to the point, we're only two of us here. If I should have a funny desire, what would you do, miss?"

There was not a shadow of fear in Otomi's eyes, but her cheeks were flushed with more blood than ever.

"What, Shinko?—Do you mean to threaten me?" Otomi shouted, taking a step up to his side, as though she were threatening him.

"Threaten?" he retorted. "Lots of titled people are rotten and ill-mannered. Moreover, I'm a beggar. I may do more than threaten. If I really got a funny desire, . . ."

Before he had finished, he was knocked heavily on the head. Before he was aware of it, Otomi was brandishing her umbrella in front of him.

"Don't talk fresh!" Again she struck him on the head with her umbrella with all her *might*. He tried to *dodge* the blows but at that instant her umbrella hit him hard on his shoulder which was covered only with a hemp garment. Aroused, the cat, kicking down an iron kettle, sprang upon the shelf where the family kitchen shrine was placed. At the same time the pine branch and the oil lamp on the shelf fell down on Shinko. Before he could spring to his feet, he was repeatedly slugged with Otomi's umbrella.

"Damn you! Damn you!" she cried and continued to brandish her umbrella. Finally, he succeeded in snatching the umbrella from her.

No sooner had he thrown off the umbrella than he furiously sprang upon her. For a while the two grappled with each other on the small wooden floor. Amidst this scuffle the shower, gathering in strength,

battered the roof. As the sound of the rain became louder, the dusk deepened moment by moment. Beaten and scratched, the beggar furiously strove to overpower and hold her down by his physical strength. The instant he seized hold of her after repeated failures, he dashed toward the entrance like a shot.

(Remark 1)

"Otomi-san." -- Otomi is her first name and she has no last name because she doesn't belong to the samurai class. His calling her by name shows his advantage over her. Generally speaking, he shouldn't call her by name, even if he called her *Otomi-san* (a term of respect). People who can call her by name are friends, person who is intimate with her or a little higher class.

The name of Otomi (means 'wealth') was popular in the Edo period. Even now, Otomi is famous as the heroine's name in a Kabuki play. By the way, some readers today remember the popular song "Otomisan" which was sung widely in post-World War II Japan. "Otomi" is a very familiar name to readers.

(Remark 2)

"Her loyalty to her mistress and savage beauty." -- She got angry when she heard him slander her mistress. At that time, she was really savage beauty itself. "Savage beauty" is the beauty we called "The Beauty of Wildness or Brutality." Akutagawa himself writes "the brutal beauty" in English. He found it in "Konjaku-monogatari" and in the pictures of Gauguin and Van Gogh. He wanted to hear the call of the wild, having read Jack London's "The Call of the Wild." Brutal beauty is very alive, fresh and attractive. Akutagawa wanted it as the energy to live on, in order to resist the temptation to suicide.

(Remark 3)

"Her bare, soft, virginal body was transparent." -- In the original, "It showed her young and fresh body, to be that of a virgin at a glance"

(literally translation). It is very important to notice Otomi's virginity here. Of course, it concerns her later strange action.

(Remark 4)

"The rain and the dusk." -- As the sound of the rain became louder, the dusk deepened moment by moment. Both are associated with the scuffle. These sound and light effects are very interesting. One is fade-in and the other, fade-out. And later, on the contrary, we can find such a description as "The noise of the rain had already greatly subsided by that time. Moreover, the breaks in the clouds might have been lit by the glow of the setting sun." Here, the sound is fade-out and the light is fade in. These sound and light-effects function as symbolizing the meaning of the scene where Otomi lies on the floor.

[Text 5]

"You damned bitch!" he glared at her fiercely with the sliding screen as his shield.

With her hair already disheveled, Otomi, sat down flat on the floor, grasping a razor in her hand with the blade down. Presumably she had brought it in her sash. Her grim look and strange maidenly charm was like that of the cat with her back rounded on the shelf of the shrine. Remaining silent for a few seconds, they studied each other's eyes. Then wearing an affected grin, Shinko took the pistol out of his pocket.

"Now struggle as you will," he said, deliberately aiming the muzzle of his pistol at her chest. Although she looked at him regretfully, she did not open her mouth. Noting her silence, he directed the muzzle higher as if he had thought of something. In front of the muzzle, gleamed the ambercolored eyes of the cat.

"All right, Otomi-san?" he asked in a voice pregnant with a smile as if to tease her.

"If I fire this pistol, the cat'll drop headlong dead." He was on the point of pulling the trigger. "It'll be the same with you. Agreed?"

"Don't!" Otomi suddenly cried out. "Shinko, don't fire!"

Shinko shifted his eyes towards her, with his pistol still aimed at the tortoise-shell cat.

"Of course, I guess you'll be sorry."

"It's a pity to shoot her. For mercy's sake, don't". Now a complete change came over Otomi. Her eyes showed her concern. Through her slightly trembling lips showed a row of fine teeth. With a look of half-derision and half-wonder, the beggar lowered the muzzle. This brought a look of relief over the girl's face.

"Well, I'll spare the cat. In place of it..." he triumphantly declared. "In place of it I'll just take you."

Otomi turned her eyes away. For that instant her inmost heart seemed to seethe in a turmoil of various feelings: hatred, anger, disgust, and grief. Keeping a careful watch over these expressions, he walked sidewise behind her back, and threw open the paper sliding-doors of the living room, which was still darker than the kitchen. In this room, the chest of drawers and the oblong charcoal brazier loomed up distinctly. The empty room clear of anything else imparted a vivid impression of the evacuation. Standing behind Otomi, he dropped his eyes to her neck which looked slightly moist with perspiration. She may have sensed it. Twisting her body, she looked up into his face. The lively color, just as before, was already back in her face. However, as if he were very confused, giving a queer blink, he turned his pistol again at the cat.

"Don't! I tell you, don't!" Trying to stop him, she dropped the razor which she had held in her hand.

"If I mustn't go over there," he said with a faint smile.

"Oh, you're nasty," she grumbled in vexation. But getting up, she hurriedly went into the living room in the manner of an indelicate woman. He looked somewhat astonished at her complete resignation to her fate. The noise of the rain had already greatly subsided by that time. Moreover, the breaks in the clouds might have been lit by the glow of the setting sun. The kitchen, which had been gloomy, gradually grew lighter. Standing in the kitchen, he listened carefully to the sound

of rustling in the living room, her untying of her cotton sash, and presumably her lying down on the mat. After that the living-room became deadly still.

After some apparent hesitation, he set foot in the dimly lit living room. In the middle of the room he found her lying still on her back, her face covered with her sleeves. The moment he saw her, he scurried back to the kitchen. His face had a strange, indescribable expression, which looked like disgust or shame. The minute he was back in the kitchen, he started laughing, with his back still turned toward the living room.

"I've been teasing you, Otomi-san," he cried out. "I've been teasing. Now come out here, please."

Some minutes later Otomi, with the cat in her bosom and her umbrella in her hand, was talking cheerfully with Shinko, who was sitting on a small thin mat.

"Miss!" he asked, without daring to look her in the face as if he were still embarrassed, "I have something I'd like to ask you."

"What is it?"

"Well, nothing particularly serious," he quibbled. "But you see, it's a matter of vital importance in a woman's life to give herself to a man. You Otomi-san . . . in exchange for the cat's life. Anyway that was too reckless of you, Otomi-san, wasn't it?" He held his tongue for a minute. Otomi, with a smile beaming all over her face, gave no answer, only caressed the cat in her bosom.

"Do you love the cat so much?"

"Yes, I do love the cat," she answered vaguely.

"Well, you've got a fine reputation in the neighborhood for your faithful service to your master. Were you afraid that you'd be terribly sorry for your mistress if the cat were killed?"

"Well, I love pussy, and to be sure my mistress is important to me, but I . . ." Inclining her head slightly on one side, she behaved as though she were looking far away. "Well, how should I put it? I somehow felt I must act like that. That's all."

Several minutes later, left alone, Shinko was squatting absent-mindedly in the kitchen, with his hands on his knees under his old hempen garment. Amidst a sprinkling of rain, evening dusk had been gradually closing in around where he was. The rope of the skylight, the water-jar by the sink, sank out of sight one by one, when the sporadic temple-bells of Ueno, pent up by the rain clouds, began pealing their heavy gongs. As if surprised at the sound, he looked about his surroundings enveloped in dead silence. Then groping his way to the sink, he filled a dipper with water.

"Shinsaburo Shigemitsu, surnamed Murakami, son of the old House of Minamoto as I am, I've suffered a blow today." So grumbling, he enjoyed his fill of water.

(Remark 1)

"Shinko's behavior when he found Otomi still lying on her back." -- Why did he scurry back to the kitchen? "His face had a strange, indescribable expression, which looked like disgust or shame." -- Why? He must be struck by her action, and felt something indescribable.

(Remark 2)

"Why was she going to give herself to such a beggar?" -- She answered why she was going to do so.

- (1) She loved the cat.
- (2) Her mistress is important to her.
- (3) These are not all the reasons. She further adds, "But I"

(Remark 3)

"She behaved as though she were looking far away." -- What does "looking far away" mean? It means something beyond the real world, which contains the above two reasons. It suggests the sentiment of sacrifice that might exist in this common young woman.

She said, "I somehow felt I must act like that." She acted that way unconsciously. This unconscious sentiment belongs to the mind of

sacrifice. Lorenzo in "The Martyr" acted consciously to devote herself to save a baby because of Christian faith. But Otomi is not a Christian and a cat is not a human being. But her action is nevertheless a kind of devotion.

She sensed that Shinko was not only a beggar. Some readers might think that she must have loved him. I don't deny such a guess, but that's not all.

(Remark 4)

"The scene where Shinko was staying alone." -- "Amidst a sprinkling of rain, evening dusk had been gradually closing in around where he was." The dusk with rain concerned Shinko's sentiment. And the sound-effect of the sporadic temple-bells of Ueno functions to make his surrounding more silent than before it sounded. This surrounding and atmosphere are suitable for Shinko to think alone and carry on a monologue.

(Remark 5)

"Why did he call himself by his real full name?" -- There are two reasons and meanings.

(1) He was not a beggar but a samurai, a member honorable class. He disguised himself as a beggar.

(2) He spoke his full name and gave his lineage. Why? Because he, such an honorable samurai, suffered a blow by a common young maid. He couldn't help retreating without any action or any words when he found her lying still, out of her innocent willingness to sacrifice herself for something noble beyond the world.

[Text 6]

The 26th March, 1889, saw Otomi and her husband walking with their three children on the boulevard of Ueno.

That was the very day when the opening ceremony of the third national exposition was held at Takenodai, Ueno. And, the cherry blossoms around the entrance to Ueno Park were mostly all out. So the boulevard of Ueno was hustling and bustling with immense crowds of people. From the direction of Ueno there were constant streams of coaches and *jinrikisha* (man-pulled carts) coming on their way home from the opening ceremony. Among the passengers of these vehicles were prominent people, such as Masana Maeda, Ukichi Taguchi, Eiichi Shibusawa, Shinji Tsuji, Kakuzo Okakura, and Masao Gejo.

His eldest son holding onto his sleeve, Otomi's husband was carrying his five-year-old second son in his arms, and dodging his way through the congestion of the pedestrian and vehicular traffic, from time to time he anxiously looked back at Otomi leading her daughter by the hand. Otomi threw him a radiant smile each time. Of course the lapse of the intervening twenty years had brought her a certain maturity. But her eyes were just as clear and bright as in her former years. Around 1870 she had married her present husband, nephew to Furukawaya, Seibei. He kept a small watch store first in Yokohama and now on Ginza Street, Tokyo.

Otomi happened to look up, and saw Shinko sitting leisurely in a two-horse carriage which happened to be passing by. She was particularly attracted to his breast which appeared to be buried under various badges of honor—many large and small decorations, gold-laced stripes, and peacock feathers. Nevertheless, it was beyond doubt that this ruddy gray-bearded face looking at her was that of the former beggar. She slackened her pace in spite of herself. But strangely enough, she was not surprised. Somehow she had known that he was no mere beggar. She might have observed this by his countenance, language, or the pistol he carried. She fixed her gaze intently on his face. Whether intentionally or accidentally he was also closely watching hers. At that instant her memory of twenty years ago was awakened with painful distinctness. On that far-away day she had imprudently resigned herself to giving herself up to him to save the cat's life. What was her motive

then? She could not tell. In such a situation he could not persuade himself even to touch the body which she had surrendered to him. What was his motive then? She could not tell that either. Although she could not tell, that was all too natural to her. Crossing his carriage, she felt her mind relieved of all her cares.

When the carriage had passed by, Otomi's husband looked over at her through the dense throng of people. Looking back at him cheerfully and happily, Otomi smiled as though nothing had happened.

(Remark 1)

"Otomi's sentiment when she saw Shinko." -- After twenty yeays passed, Otomi happened to see Shinko. Japan, especially Edo, even Tokyo, had been changed by the influence of the western civilization. And Shinko had also changed to a higher station in life. Otomi had become a happy wife of an honest watch store's master, with three children.

"At that instant her memory of twenty years ago was awakened *painful distinctness* (in the original, "so clearly as she felt pain"). She recalled the old scene as follows ;

- (1) What had been her motive then?
- (2) What had been his motive then?
- (3) She could not answer either question.
- (4) And that she couldn't answer was all too natural to her.

Even Akutagawa seems unable to provide an explanation. The translator writes "She felt her mind relieved of all her cares." What cares had she have? Akutagawa writes nothing of her cares. He only writes in the original, "She felt somehow as though her heart extended." She remembered that she had unconsciously touched something noble (containing the humanity and love) twenty years ago.

Shinko couldn't persuade himself even to touch her body, because he had touched something noble in her action.

(Remark 2)

"The last sentence of this story." -- "Looking back at him (her husband) cheerfully and happily, Otomi smiled as though nothing had happened." She didn't need to talk the past occurrence to her husband, because nothing had happened and it was too difficult to explain to anyone else, let alone herself.

[Conclusion]

(1) I would like to say that Otomi was very happy because she had such an innocent and beautiful memory in her mind, which belonged to something noble that even she could hardly explain.

(2) We can often find such noble feelings and minds in the common people depicted by Akutagawa, like Lorenzo or the country girl in "The Tangerines."

(3) We can also find the same phrase as "looking far away" in Mori Ogai's "Mrs. Yasui." In addition, Ogai created many heroines who devote themselves to the other people, or to something noble beyond the real world.

(4) They say that Akutagawa had been much influenced by Ogai.

He certainly depicted such heroines as Ogai's. But there is a great difference between Akutagawa's heroines and Ogai's.

Akutagawa discovered noble feelings among common people, country girls or nameless women like Otomi, a maid or Lorenzo. On the contrary, most of heroines who devoted themselves to the others in Ogai's works belong to samurai or honorable classes like Mrs. Yasui, Sayo and Io in "Shibue Chusai".

There is no doubt that Akutagawa was longing for such noble feelings, beauty of the moment and warm-hearted person in order to live on, resisting unintelligible, vulgar and wearsome life and his destiny since he was born and raised in modern Japan, although he committed suicide on July 24 in 1927, at the age of thirty-five.

(The end)