English Translation and Interpretation of *Yureru ie* by Fukazawa Shichirō

Joanna D. HARE
English

Abstract. This paper consists of an English translation and interpretation of the short story *Yureru ie* by Fukazawa Shichirō. The interpretation focuses briefly on the history and distinctive character of Fukagawa (Kōtō Ward, Tokyo), describing the changes that have occurred there particularly since World War II and their significance in the story. This is followed by an analysis of some of the characters of *Yureru ie* with reference to the author's background. The interpretation concludes with a discussion of the connection between Fukazawa's musical background and his literary style as evidenced in the sensory nature and rhythmical, musical composition of *Yureru ie*.

Introduction

Yureru ie [Rocking the Boat] was published in the literary magazine *Shinchō* in February 1957 when Fukazawa was 43 years old. It also appeared in a compilation of Fukazawa's work entitled *Narayama bushikō [The Ballad of Narayama]* published by Chūō Kōronsha the same month, which included *Yureru ie* with Fukazawa's two other previously published works, *Narayama bushikō* and *Tōhoku no zummutachi [The Zummu Boys of Tōhoku]*. Fukazawa's debut masterpiece *Narayama bushikō* (November 1956) had won the Chūō Kōronsha Award for New Writers the previous year, astounding the literary world with the raw, unadorned, compelling originality of both its content and style.

Although *Yureru ie* has not received the same acclaim as *Narayama bushikō*, I was captivated by this beautifully executed, bittersweet portrait of the naive resilience of childhood. Dealing with the basic concerns of human existence – family, food, work, sex – Fukazawa portrays his characters with sensitivity, understanding and humor born from an ability to see the purity in even the most base and common specimens of mankind.

I was also attracted by the immediacy of Fukazawa's prose and the distinctive musical rhythm of recurring words and images that is a feature of *Yureru ie*. And in addition to its literary merits, I found this story, set on a houseboat on the waterways of Tokyo in the 1950s, to be a fascinating reflection of the last vestiges of a world that has since disappeared

forever.

Yureru ie delights me afresh with every rereading. Although critics agree that Fukazawa's style is inimitable, I only hope that the following translation and interpretation manage to convey even a glimmer of his unique and mysterious charm.

前書き

『揺れる家』は深沢が43才の時の1957年2月に文芸雑誌“新潮”に刊行され、また同月に中央公論社から深沢著作集『楢山節子』の中に出版された。この著作集には、『楢山節子』、『東北の神武たち』、『揺れる家』の3部作が掲載されているが、深沢のデビュー作である『楢山節子』(1956年11月出版）は、題材の面でも、手法の面でも、純朴無垢なオリジナリテイーによってその時代の文学世界に驚きをもたらした。そして、中央公論新人賞の受賞に輝いたのである。

『揺れる家』は、『楢山節子』ほどの喝采を一般には受けなかったけれども、ナイーブな子供心のあどけなさを見事に描写している点に私は魅了された。人間存在の本性に関わる、家族、食餌、労働、性、老化などを通して、深沢は、彼自身のもつ豊かな感受性、理解力、ユーモアに基づき、登場人物の姿を写し出している。この描写は、深沢のもつ、根源的な人間の純粋性を感じとることができる潜在能力により、はじめて可能だったのであろう。

私は、また、深沢の文体の直感性や、『揺れる家』の特徴である、反復する言葉とイメージの音楽的なリズムに魅了された。そして、その文学的な価値に加えて、1950年代の東京の水路を行来する屋形船に設定されたこの物語りが、永遠に消え去ってしまった世界の、最後の面影を見事に写し出していることにも、私は感動を覚えたのである。

『揺れる家』は、読むたびごとに今でも私を魅了し続けている。深沢の手法は、無比であり、誰にもまねのできるものではないことは、私は承知している。しかし、この翻訳と解釈が、彼のユニークさと、神秘的な魅力について、少しでも伝えることができたならば、望外の喜びである。

Rocking The Boat

Shōkichi ran across the narrow wooden gangplank and landed with a thud on the boat that was his home. The boat rocked from side to side, as usual, splashing water up onto the house. He darted like a squirrel on his little legs to the drying place and peered down into the water. He had to wait for the water to calm down because his reflection kept expanding and shrinking on the waves. Today was the day he was going to take a good look at his face and then decide the matter once and for all. While he waited he pictured the faces of his

father and grandpa.

The waves subsided and he saw himself clearly reflected in the water. He stared down at his face.

It's true, I don't look like him. I only look like Grandpa. I don't look like Dad. I'm nothing like him.

He had finally made up his mind.

So they really were telling the truth.

Now that he knew for sure, suddenly everything went topsy-turvy. He shuddered to see a huge serpent creeping through the water by the boat where the old log raft had been. It had given him a fright once before, at night, and he'd called out for his dad and clung on to him, but now that his dad wasn't his dad any more what was he going to do the next time something like that happened?

That old grump for a dad!

Now that he thought about it, though, he had a feeling it was bound to happen sooner or later.

Yuck! . . . But I'd better watch out or it might really happen.

These thoughts were running through Shōkichi's mind, when something came flying through the air and hit him on the back. He picked up a piece of wood shaped like a sword, whose surface had been polished to a smooth shine by the sea.

Hey, I can have a swordfight with this, he thought. *Where'd it come from, I wonder?*

He looked round and saw his dad's smiling face pop up from behind the motor.

"Ah, it was you, Dad."

His dad was always finding things in the water for him to play with.

Maybe Dad hasn't noticed yet, thought Shōkichi. *Doesn't look like it. I'd better keep quiet about it.*

Shōkichi lived on a houseboat tied up to the concrete bank of a canal. A narrow wooden gangplank served as both a boundary and a road between the land and the water. Trains and buses and taxis drove around on the land, and just up the road round the corner was Monzennaka-chō, the amusement district of Fukagawa, where glittering neon signs lit up the night. The rice granaries of Botan-chō were lined up on the other side of the river. Sometimes the river water turned to seawater. And sometimes seagulls came flying around. If you went 300 meters along from Shōkichi's house you came out onto the Sumida River near Eitaibashi Bridge. Every morning Shōkichi went with his family all the way up the Sumida River to Kitasenju or Arakawa, where they loaded a great heap of sand onto the boat and then delivered it up and down the river. That was their job. Dad worked the motor and Grandpa took the money. Once they had picked up and delivered their load of

sand, Shōkichi was allowed to play in the empty space on the deck. This part of the boat, where they loaded the cargo or played, was called the drying place because there was a frame there for the drying pole on which they hung things out to air.

"I tell you, we'd starve to death without this place," Grandpa always said.

The living area was a tiny room next to the motor with straw mats on the floor. This two-mat room, measuring scarcely more than three meters square, was the only part of the boat with a roof. After their day's work was done they went back to their mooring, and as soon as they got there Shōkichi could go up onto the land and play.

The people who lived on the land called Shōkichi a boat kid. There was a school next to Heikyūbashi Bridge where all the boat kids went, and this year Shōkichi was old enough to go with them, but Grandpa said, "Starting school's nothing but trouble, I tell you, what with the ward office and all the damn paperwork. Next year's soon enough for all that." So in the end he didn't go.

There were lots of other houseboats like Shōkichi's lined up along the riverbank. Each boat had its own place with an iron mooring where they tied up every night. So they got to know their neighbors just as if they lived side by side in houses on the land.

There were lots of children on the boats, and they were all called boat kids. The boat kids simply called the land the land, but the land people called each place by a different name. Even when Shōkichi and the others went way up the Arakawa River, it was all just the land to them. About the only place names they knew were Block 1, Block 2, Naka-chō and Furuishiba.

Once a land kid asked Shōkichi, "Where's Block 2?" But when he pointed it out, "Over there," the land kid shouted at him, "That's Eitai Block 2, you jerk. Block 2 doesn't mean nothing if you don't say what Block 2." But everyone in Shōkichi's family understood what it meant. The only other place name he knew was Edagawa, where his mother came from. He knew the names of quite a few bridges though.

Block 2 was where Shōkichi always went with his father to buy soy sauce and vegetables. Block 1 was Botan-chō Block 1, and he went there with his father too, to the bathhouse. They went to the amusement district in Naka-chō for fun, and the rest of the time their house was on the move.

The house on the land directly in front of Shōkichi's house had a fishing boat for hire. They had a sign on the roof advertising, 'Customized trips; Fishing trips; Pleasure trips,' in big red letters, but they hardly ever got any customers: "As if anyone'd want to go out in that old tub," everyone said. So they would take the boat out to the bay and bring oysters

and clams back to the house to shell. They would stick a knife into the shell, pull out the meat and throw it into a bucket. They tossed all the shells across the road, where they piled up and blocked the gangplank to Shōkichi's house. So whenever anyone in his family wanted to go up onto the land they had to climb over a mountain of shells. Sometimes a truck came and took all the shells away for chicken feed, and then the place was so clean you'd think someone had come along with a broom and swept it.

They slept in the two-mat room, and they had their meals there, too.

Tonight, as usual, as soon as they sat down to eat, Grandpa started his growling. It was always Shōkichi's dad that he picked on.

"Born a fool, die a fool, that's what they say, and I'm sick 'n' tired of that Kichi and his nonsense. How many times do I have to tell him to keep the damn motor clean before he'll get it through his head? Give him a brush to scrub the boat down and he heaves it over the side. Give him a rag to wipe the outfit and he dumps it when he's done. 'Cos he thinks rags grow on trees. Doesn't know they cost money. Thinks you gotta dump a rag if it gets a bit of dirt on it. Doesn't know you can put the damn thing away and use it again. I tell you, that blockhead doesn't even know the meaning of waste not, want not. Born a fool, die a fool, that's what they say, and there's no helping that Kichi."

Here we go again, thought Shōkichi. He must have heard it a thousand times before. The old man might just as well have been reading it out of a book. And he went on and on about the same old things that had happened ages ago. It made Shōkichi want to shout at him: Shut up, you stinky old fart! But on second thoughts, if what he'd found out this afternoon was true, maybe he'd better not always side with his dad.

Shōkichi studied his father's face as he sat there stiff and silent, eyes downcast, listening to the old man's complaints. It was nothing like his own broad face that he had seen reflected in the water. His father's head was shaped like a gourd, pointed on top like a steeple-crowned hat, and his face was no bigger than a soup ladle.

It's true, I don't look like him, he thought yet again.

The boss of the fishing-boat place across the road was a big, strong man like one of the Deva Kings who guarded the temple gate. With his great big eyeballs popping out of his great big face, he was always shouting at his son Yoshi, who operated the boat. Even when Yoshi wasn't there he would bellow to himself, "Where the hell's that hopeless bastard?" Yoshi's dad always called him 'that hopeless bastard.' And every now and then he called him Yoshi-boy. When he took his shirt off you could see that he had blue drawings all over his back; you couldn't tell what the pictures were of though. Shōkichi could see right into

the second-floor room of the fishing-boat place from his house. That was Yoshi's room, and every evening like clockwork he would anoint his hair with pomade. Then he would rip off a piece of newspaper, wipe his hands on it and toss it out the window over at the boats. Next he would carefully comb every hair back into place. And then when he was ready he would head off up the road whistling a tune.

That was about the time Grandpa would start his growling. He droned on and on as if he were reading page after page from the same old book. Late at night Yoshi would come home drunk. Then his dad would bellow, "You've been out on the booze again, you hopeless bastard." Yoshi would go straight upstairs to bed without answering, and his dad never said anything else after that either. When Yoshi went to bed, that was about the time the two strolling minstrels would come round. One sang while the other played the guitar. 'The Happy Face' bar on the corner of Kurobunebashi Bridge attracted a late-night crowd, so the pair of minstrels always turned up around that time. Not a night went by when they didn't sing that song, the Fukagawa strolling minstrels' specialty, 'Just Can't Stop The Tears.' And all the bar customers would join in.

It was the same routine every night. Even after the light was turned off, the old man droned on and on in the pitch darkness. Shōkichi would fall asleep listening to his grandpa's growling, wake up in the night with the fishing-boat man's bellowing and drift off to sleep again to the sound of the strolling minstrels' guitar.

When Shōkichi heard them talking that afternoon it was as if their voices were coming from a faraway place deep in the clouds, so at first he didn't even think they were talking about him. He was watching them shell shellfish in front of the fishing-boat place. The fishing-boat man was talking to the man from the *tsukudani*[1] shop.

Just then, Shōkichi's grandpa and mother came up the gangplank on their way to the bathhouse. "Coming to the bath, Shō?" asked Grandpa, holding out a wash-towel to him. But Shōkichi shook his head, saying, "I'll go with Dad."

Shōkichi always tagged along behind his father when he went to the bathhouse or to do the shopping. His father never scolded him nor told him what to do, and when Shōkichi stopped to play along the way he just stood there quietly waiting for him. Pocket money, he got from Grandpa. He pestered his mum for money too, but about one time in three she told him, "Go and ask your grandpa." His mother would give him five yen, but when Grandpa

[1] A sticky, salty-sweet condiment that is eaten as an accompaniment to rice – made primarily from small fish or shellfish, which are boiled down in soy sauce and sugar to preserve them. *Tsukudani* was first made in the Edo period at Tsukudajima, an island at the mouth of the Sumida River, after which it is nameed.

gave him money it was usually ten. His father didn't have any money. On the contrary, he would snatch Shōkichi's candy or rice crackers from him and eat them himself, but he was the only one who would play with him on the boat.

Shōkichi was gazing absently after his grandpa and mother as they walked off to the bath-house, when he heard the fishing-boat man say behind him, "Just look at those two, eh, walking side by side like man and wife for all the world to see."

"Yeah," said the *tsukudani* man, "thick as thieves, those two, eh."

Shōkichi had a feeling they were saying something bad. But come to think of it, they were only telling the truth. His grandpa was always talking to his mother, and more often than not they ignored Shōkichi when he tried to say something. It was no fun at all when they did that.

The fishing-boat man called out to Shōkichi, "Hey, Shō, so you like old Kichi better than your grandpa, eh, boy?"

He was about to say, "Course I like my dad best," when the *tsukudani* man said, "Nah, you like your grandpa, don't ya."

When Shōkichi turned towards him, the *tsukudani* man looked searchingly at his face. Then he said, "Yeah, I see what you mean. He's the spitting image of his grandpa. Nothing like Kichi." He said it admiringly, as if he were praising Shōkichi and telling him what a good boy he was.

"Yeah, I look like Grandpa, don't I. Grandpa's the best," Shōkichi agreed proudly. After all, it was Grandpa who bossed everyone in the family around and counted out bunches of 100-yen notes.

But the fishing-boat man caught him by surprise when he laughed in his big, booming voice and said, "Course he looks like his grandpa – he's his grandpa's boy, isn't he?"

"Yeah, course he doesn't look like Kichi, 'cos he ain't his kid," said the *tsukudani* man.

Then the two of them laughed in a creepy kind of way.

Shōkichi didn't really understand what was going on. It was as if he could faintly hear their voices saying nasty things about him somewhere far away in the distance. But it occurred to him that the sniggering faces of these two grown-ups were making a laughingstock of his whole family.

Shōkichi took off. He ran and ran. He ran all the way to the corner of Naka-chō, where he happened to see his father, who had come to buy tofu. Dad! He was overjoyed to see him.

"Dad, the fishing-boat man was teasing me."

"What'd he do?"

"He said I'm Grandpa's boy," he almost shouted in his haste to get the words out.

Shōkichi expected his father to charge down there and give the fishing-boat man a good telling-off when he heard this. But all the life seemed to drain out of his face, and then he just carried on dragging his feet slowly down the road. Shōkichi felt all the more frustrated.

Right! He made up his mind. *I'll get back at them all by myself.*

He sneaked round the back of the fishing-boat place. He picked up a stone and gripped it hard. Then he tiptoed along the road against the wall and came right up behind the fishing-boat man and the *tsukudani* man, who were out the back talking.

He was about to shout: Go to hell! But then he realized they were still talking about him.

"I mean, just look at them. The old guy does nothing but moan about him night after night," said the fishing-boat man.

"In that case he shouldn't've taken him on as a son-in-law in the first place," said the *tsukudani* man.

"That's just it; he had it all worked out. That's why he picked the poor bastard: 'cos he was the ugliest, stupidest sucker he could find."

"But, I mean, why'd he have to go through all that performance? Why didn't he just come right out and marry her?"

"It's not that easy, you know. Her folks never would've agreed to it. He's 45 years older than her for a start. You can be damn sure that's the last thing they had in mind for their little girl when they handed her over. They never would've let him adopt her if they'd known what was gonna happen. They still come and check up on them sometimes, you know. That's when old Kichi, the puppet husband, comes in handy. Anyhow, when they found out she was in the family way with Shōkichi, you should've heard 'em rant 'n' rave. And there's the old guy down on his knees out there in the drying place, he's bowing down till he's damn near kissing the deck, and he's whining, "I'll find her a husband." Oh yes, I saw the whole thing from start to finish. Anyhow, then they go 'n' drag the girl out there, and they're all set to take her back with 'em. I bet the old guy thought the game was over, but that girl, she's got guts. You know what she did? She didn't cry, not a tear. And there they are, they're pulling on her arms, they're trying to drag her away, and she just grabs onto the old guy's shoulders and she hangs on for dear life. I saw it all – she never said a word but she sure as hell wasn't going back with 'em – and I thought, ah, you can't beat a woman."

"So where's the kid stand in the family register?"

"How the hell would I know? What difference does it make, anyway, if he's Kichi's kid or the old guy's? He's not at school yet, so no one's gonna know if he's registered or not, are

they. But you gotta hand it to the old goat, pushing 70 and bedding down with a girl like that every night."

Shōkichi, who had been standing behind the two men listening to their conversation, felt hot with shame without really knowing why. And on top of that, now his dad wasn't his dad any more – his grandpa was. *They could be right*, he thought. He had a feeling this wasn't the first time he'd heard this kind of talk.

Shōkichi backed away and slipped out the back door. He ran as far as Naka-chō, where he stopped again. The whole thing was so humiliating he could hardly stand it. He threw away the stone he had in his hand and took off again. He ran blindly through the crossroad and kept on running.

The face he saw reflected in the water looked like Grandpa and no one else. There was no doubt about it. In the light of what he'd heard, Grandpa's face seemed somehow scary and hateful all at the same time.

After dark the granaries of Botan-chō looked like a long, black, hump-backed sea monster. But this side of the river was resplendent with neon signs that lit up the night like a fireworks display. The houseboats tied up at the riverbank had only one dim light apiece, so when it got dark everyone, children and adults alike, spent all their time up on the land. There was nothing to do at home but sleep, so they quickly finished their evening meal and went up to play or stroll on the land.

The two-mat room of Shōkichi's house was lit by a single bulb drawn from the motor. But although there was nothing to do in the cramped semi-darkness of the tiny room, Shokichi was the only one of his family who went up onto the land. As soon as they finished eating Grandpa would say to Dad, "Turn off the light; it's a waste of power." When the light was off the room was pitch-black. The drying place took up most of the space on the boat, so Shokichi and his family slept squashed up together in the roofed two-mat room. Shōkichi slept on one side with his mother next to him, then came his grandpa, and his dad slept over on the other side. It was so cramped they sometimes ended up on top of one another.

That night, as usual, Shōkichi lay down and went straight to sleep as soon as he got back from playing on the land. The light was off so it was pitch-black, but he had no trouble finding his place in the tiny room.

He was woken in the night by the fishing-boat man's bellowing: "You've been out on the booze again, you hopeless bastard. How many times do I have to tell you? Where'd you go and get yourself plastered this time, boozing away money we haven't got?"

Just then Yoshi gave a loud agonized groan from upstairs.

"What's the matter, Yoshi-boy?" his dad shouted up to him.

"Ohhh, I've got a rotten pain," Yoshi's voice came down from above.

With that his dad stopped shouting. But after a while he called out again, "Yoshi-boy, you alright? Want me to go up the road and get some ice for you?"

And then he said quietly, "Stupid bastard, drinking yourself half to death."

Yoshi's dad shouts at him all the time, but the next minute he says he'll go and get ice for him. It's not like that with Grandpa; he'd never do that for Dad. With these thoughts milling around in his head, along with the memory of his reflection and the talk about his face, Shōkichi couldn't get back to sleep. Then, from out of the pitch darkness, Grandpa started on another episode of the usual story.

"Born a fool, die a fool, that's what they say, and that Kichi, he hasn't got the brains he was born with. Get a new bulb for the light and he smashes it. Leaves his mess all over the place 'cos he doesn't give a damn about waste not, want not. Never lifts a finger to pay his way neither. The useless bastard could go and get himself some work up on the land when things are quiet on the boat, but nah, he'd rather loaf around here eating us out of house and home. Talk about a born fool. Sees a boat making a beeline for us, and he just sits there gaping. Hasn't even got the gumption to get out of its way. No skin off his nose if he wrecks the boat and we starve to death. Takes more than a month or two to scrape together enough for a boat like this, I tell you, but that Kichi, he hasn't got a damn clue what I went through."

Shōkichi's father took everything the old man dealt out to him in silence. His mother took no notice. When his mother was angry with his dad she screamed blue murder at him. She never got angry with Grandpa.

Now Shōkichi wasn't sleepy at all; he was wide awake.

He became aware that his grandpa's growling had stopped. Then he noticed that the house was gently rocking from side to side. Glancing over he saw that his grandpa and mother were on top of each other and their bodies were shaking. He realized they were doing that mysterious, secret grown-up thing. And then it erupted – a violent duel between black shadow pictures. It was an eerie battle that raged without a word in the pitch darkness. Shōkichi thought he'd better pretend not to notice. He lay still and held his breath.

It all started when Shōkichi's father suddenly got up and came over from where he had been lying on the other side of the room and squeezed himself in between Shōkichi and his mother. His father wrapped his arms round his mother, and Shōkichi felt an unbearable weight descend on him as if he were being pressed under a stone. Shōkichi didn't want to

make a fuss, seeing it was his dad, but the weight on him was as heavy as stone. He felt as if the life were being crushed out of him, but he thought he'd better pretend not to notice so he bore it without making a sound. Then his grandpa reached out a hand and slapped his dad on the head: Whack! But his dad didn't loosen his hold on his mother. His grandpa was clinging onto his mother too. Nobody said a word. From time to time the sound of his grandpa slapping his dad's head echoed loudly in the room.

After a while Shōkichi's dad stood up. Shōkichi could breathe again at last. His dad put both his hands round his grandpa's neck. The house rocked violently and both his grandpa and his dad crashed against the wooden door. Waves splashed up the sides of the house. Now it was his dad who lay down on top of his mother. His grandpa got up and sank his teeth into his dad's neck, trying to drag him off. But his dad wouldn't be separated from his mother's body.

Shōkichi's grandpa lashed out wildly at his dad, beating and kicking him. But his dad still clung on and refused to let go. The old man laid into Shōkichi's dad like a madman. With every kick the house rocked violently. It was as if two silent black demons were on the rampage.

Shōkichi was scared and started to cry.

But nobody took any notice.

The house rocked violently again. Shōkichi cried himself to sleep.

He was woken by more violent rocking. His grandpa had managed to pull his dad to his feet by grabbing hold of his ear and twisting it. He pulled Shōkichi's dad by the ear out to the drying place and still not a word was spoken. Grandpa came straight back by himself and sat down next to Shōkichi's mother.

Whack! Shōkichi's mother received a resounding slap. Shōkichi could hear the strolling minstrels' guitar. They were singing that song again.

When he woke up the next morning Shōkichi had forgotten all about the events of the night before. He could hear the tram clattering over Kurobunebashi Bridge and the sun was high above the boat so he knew it must be around lunchtime. Everyone had slept late. There was an unbearably delicious smell of miso soup in the room. He was desperately hungry. His grandpa and mother were sitting there in silence and neither of them said a word. Usually Grandpa would start his growling, but today he was strangely silent.

Breakfast was already on the table.

"I'm starving," he nagged his mother, so she brought the table over. It was simply set with a pile of chopsticks and a stack of bowls, a pot of boiled rice and another containing

miso soup. Shōkichi went straight to the table and picked up his chopsticks. His mother filled his rice bowl first, followed by Grandpa's and then her own. Dad always served himself. As soon as his mother had dished out three bowls of soup, Shōkichi picked up his rice bowl and took a mouthful. Usually everyone started eating straight away, but today they all just sat there. Sensing that something was amiss, Shōkichi looked round at each of their faces in turn as he chewed his rice. They all wore the same grim expression.

After a while Shōkichi's mother and grandpa started to pick at their food. At this, his dad helped himself to some rice and miso soup and picked up his chopsticks.

Suddenly Grandpa put down his chopsticks and rice bowl and rose to his feet. He grabbed Shōkichi's dad by the scruff of his neck. With the other hand he took hold of his right arm and twisted it up behind his back. Still Shōkichi's dad neither spoke nor offered any resistance. Grandpa marched him out to the drying place and over the gangplank and shoved him with all his might. Shōkichi's dad ended up on all fours on the pile of shells.

After that the three of them started eating. After he had finished his meal, Shōkichi stuck his head out and looked over at his dad on the land. His dad was sitting hunched over on the pile of shells.

"Dad!" Shōkichi called out to him. But his dad didn't look up.

The boat started to shudder. Grandpa had started up the motor. They chugged slowly away from the bank.

"Dad!" he shouted louder.

"Idiot!" Grandpa roared at him. It frightened Shōkichi to hear such a loud, angry voice coming from his grandpa, who never usually raised his voice above a low growl. The boat moved further and further away and his dad got smaller and smaller. They chugged down the Sumida River to the Tsukiji fruit and vegetable market, where they pulled into the bank. Five or six dockers shouldering boxes of mandarins came out and piled them up in the drying place. Shōkichi was so pleased with the mandarins that he forgot all about his dad. Once they'd delivered the mandarins at the riverbank at Senju their day's work was done. They'd had a late start so the sun was already setting by the time all the boxes were unloaded. And then, to top it off, they met the incoming tide on the way back, so the going was slow all the way back from Senjuōhashi Bridge. When they passed under Kototoibashi Bridge heading down towards Azumabashi Bridge the neon lights were beginning to light up the land. And by the time they turned at Eitaibashi Bridge and arrived at their mooring it was completely dark. There was a light on upstairs at the fishing-boat place, but Yoshi would surely have left by now. When they neared the bank Shōkichi noticed his dad

standing there.

That's right, Dad's been waiting here for us since this morning! he remembered. Shōkichi looked over at his dad and smiled happily at him. But his dad just stood there as if in a daze.

When the boat reached the bank and was almost at a standstill, Shōkichi's grandpa exclaimed, "Ah!" and said to his mother hastily, "Look, your folks are here from Edagawa." Shōkichi's mother's parents were standing on the bank behind his dad.

"Oh?" Shōkichi's mother looked up at the bank with a hint of pleasure. When the boat stopped moving, Shōkichi's Edagawa grandma and grandpa crossed the wooden gangplank and stepped down onto the drying place. His dad followed along behind them. The three of them sat down on the floor of the two-mat room and everyone was silent. Shōkichi's mother sat down with them.

"Where's your grandpa?" Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa asked him. Shōkichi looked over at the bow where he had seen his grandpa tying the boat up to the mooring, but there was no sign of him.

"Oh, he was there a moment ago," Shōkichi said, surprised.

"He'll be back in a minute," said his mum. "I'll make some tea, shall I?" But she stayed where she was, making no move to get up and boil the water.

I wonder where Grandpa went, thought Shōkichi. He hadn't crossed the gangplank, so he must have used the mooring rope to pull himself up onto the land. It must have been quite an effort for the old man to get up that bank.

Shōkichi leaned back against his mother's knees and stretched his legs out towards his dad.

Grandpa was gone for a long time and everyone just sat there without saying anything, so Shōkichi thought he might as well go up and play on the land, but he knew it wouldn't be much fun without any money so he waited quietly. If he waited long enough his Edagawa grandma always gave him some pocket money. But today she showed no sign of giving him anything.

She couldn't've forgotten, could she? He fixed his eyes on the sash of her kimono. The silence continued. Counting Shōkichi there were five of them in the tiny two-mat room, in which the family's sleeping mats were also rolled up in a corner. From where Shōkichi lay stretched out on the floor, the silent faces, all lined up, looked like a row of paper-dolls' heads.

Finally he thought he heard someone crossing the gangplank. There was a loud thud and the boat rocked violently. Someone must have jumped down onto the drying place, but the way the boat was rocking must be due to something more than that.

Everyone rushed out to the drying place to see what had happened, and there was Grandpa lying on the deck brandishing a large bottle of sake. He must have missed his footing and fallen down onto the boat. But he just lay where he was, without uttering a sound or attempting to get up. Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa ran over to him.

"You alright?"

Grandpa held out the bottle of sake to him in lieu of a reply. Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa quickly took it from him. "You're lucky this didn't break. You could've really hurt yourself, you know."

Grandpa slowly started to pick himself up.

Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa went and sat down again in the two-mat room. Holding the top of the sake bottle with both hands, he secured the bottle between his knees and lowered his chin to rest it on his hands. Grandpa came in dragging his leg. He lay down on the floor, positioning himself so that his head was hidden behind Shōkichi's mother, and groaned painfully.

"Rub Grandpa's leg for him, will you," Shōkichi's mother said to him, so Shōkichi did as he was told and stroked his grandpa's leg.

Everyone fell silent again. Grandpa had his legs stretched out, so there was even less space than before in the tiny room.

Then, swaying slightly back and forth, Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa said, "By the way, Kichi turned up at our place today."

Grandpa responded with a long, loud groan.

"Oh dear, you'd better see a doctor if it's that bad," said Shōkichi's Edagawa grandma.

Everyone fell silent.

Shōkichi's Edagawa grandfather spoke up again: "Kichi turned up at our place today and he said you threw him out. Is that right?" His cheek was resting on the sake bottle, so the words didn't come out very clearly.

Grandpa let out another groan. From where Shōkichi sat he could see his grandpa reach out and poke his mother in the back. When Grandpa groaned everyone was quiet.

Now it was Shōkichi's Edagawa grandma who said, "You didn't have to throw the poor thing out, did you?"

Suddenly Shōkichi's mother announced in a sharp, high-pitched voice, "I don't consider that creature to be my husband, you know."

Everyone fell silent again.

"You can't always have your own way," said Shōkichi's Edagawa grandma. "You've got to

think of other people sometimes."

Shōkichi's mother's voice went up a level: "Alright, so I'm selfish, but I swear I'll die if I have to go on living with that creature – that halfwit." She was almost in tears. Shōkichi was horrified. If his mother died what would happen to him? He burst into tears at the thought of it. His Edagawa grandma stroked his head.

Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa stood up. "Well then, we'll leave Kichi here and let you get on with things."

The next minute Grandpa raised himself up, all smiles. "I was meaning to offer you a drink but my back's hurting me too much. Take the bottle home with you and have one for me too," he said to Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa in a lively voice, gesturing as if to drink from an imaginary sake cup.

"Thanks a lot. We'll be off then. We'll leave you to sort things out with Kichi."

But Shōkichi's grandma stayed where she was. Squaring her shoulders, she turned to Grandpa and said, "As long as there's three of you in this house, on this boat, there's always going to be trouble."

Grandpa gave another groan and prodded Shōkichi's mother vigorously in the back.

His mother suddenly turned very pale. "So what are we supposed to do then?"

Grandma turned to face her. "Don't you think it's about time the old man went and got himself a place up on the land? Yeah, you see, he doesn't need to hang round here forevermore. Kichi could make enough on his own if he had to – at least enough to feed you all."

Grandpa didn't even groan this time; he reached out and pinched Shōkichi's mother on the bottom.

Shōkichi's mother picked up a china rice bowl and threw it at his dad. It smashed against the wooden wall behind him. Then she pushed Grandma hard on the shoulders with both hands. Grandma fell heavily backwards and both women burst into tears. Shōkichi was shaking so much by now that the tears wouldn't even come.

Grandpa got to his feet and gave Grandma a hand up, saying, "Now, now, no need to worry, it's alright, I'll go and live up on the land, 'cos you know, I was just thinking it was about time I got myself a place up there, so you see, there's really nothing to worry about."

"Well, well, right then," said Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa, swinging the bottle of sake back and forth. Then he said to Shōkichi, "How about coming back to Edagawa with us for the night, Shō?"

Shōkichi instantly forgot all about being scared and wanting to cry. He ran on ahead over

the gangplank and up onto the land. He looked back and saw his grandma, who had been in tears just a moment ago, standing in the drying place smiling at his mum and saying in a sugary-sweet voice, "I love your hair. Isn't that the latest fashion? It looks so good on you."

When the three of them stopped to look down from Kurobunebashi Bridge, Shōkichi's dad was standing out in the drying place all by himself. Remembering the argument his grandma had just had with his mother, Shōkichi said to her, "Mum's silly, isn't she. She only talks to Grandpa, you know. She's so silly."

Shōkichi thought this would please his grandma, but she didn't even answer him. She just said to his grandpa, "Thank goodness they agreed to put an end to all that before Shō gets any bigger."

Shōkichi played at Edagawa all the next day. He stayed there that night too, but on the third day he felt like going home so he went back by himself.

There wasn't a single boat tied up at the bank. He played at Naka-chō until after dark, but when he went back to the canal all the boats were there except his. There was nothing for it but to stand on the bank and wait. He hadn't been there long when a man stuck his head out of one of the boats and called out to him, "Hey, Shō, if you're waiting for your folks, I saw 'em over at Furuishiba."

So that's where they were. They must be spending the night there. Shōkichi set off straight away. All he had to do to get to Furuishiba was cross Kurobunebashi Bridge, go straight through Botan-chō Block 1, then turn left at Ecchujima. And sure enough, there was the boat tied up near Chōrenbashi Bridge just where he'd pictured it. They had a wooden gangplank there too. Shokichi crossed the gangplank and bounded down onto the boat. He went into the two-mat room and found his grandpa and mother sitting facing each other at the table eating their evening meal. Realizing how hungry he was, Shōkichi quickly sat down and joined them. When he had finished eating he noticed his dad wasn't there.

"Where's Dad? he asked his mother.

"He's gone. And that halfwit's not your dad," growled Grandpa. *So it was true, he really wasn't my dad,* thought Shōkichi.

They stayed at Furuishiba for a long time. Day after day passed, but Shōkichi's dad didn't come back. Their cargo had changed too: now it was logs that they loaded on and off every day. Grandpa worked the motor. Now that Dad was gone they didn't carry sand any more. Every day they followed the same route under Heikyūbashi Bridge to the lumberyard.

A chilly wind continued for several days and they were back to carrying mandarins again. They spent their nights back at Kurobunebashi Bridge. Naka-chō bustled with

activity: pine and bamboo decorations lined the street, and red and yellow flags fluttered in the breeze announcing end-of-year sales. Now that his dad wasn't there any more, Shōkichi often tagged along behind Yoshi from the fishing-boat place. Yoshi still followed his nightly routine of anointing his hair with pomade, ripping off a piece of newspaper, wiping his hands on it and tossing it out the window at the boats. Then he would slick his hair down with a comb and head off up the road whistling a tune.

The fishing-boat man would bellow, "Where the hell's that hopeless bastard?" Yoshi would come home late at night and his dad would bellow, "You've been out on the booze again, you hopeless bastard." Shōkichi would wake up with the bellowing and then he would hear the strolling minstrels' guitar.

It was the morning Santa Claus was going to be in town. Two policemen came to Shōkichi's house and both his grandpa and his mother went away with them.

"You be a good boy and go to Edagawa, Shō," said his mother and his grandpa one after another in shaky voices and then they were gone.

As soon as they were out of sight the fishing-boat man came running over. "Why don't you come and play at our place till they come for you?" he said, but instead of his usual bellow, his voice was soft like a woman's. He gave Shōkichi some candy and didn't act like himself at all.

"So your dad's ghost hasn't showed up yet, Shō?"

"Showed up where?" asked Shōkichi, taken by surprise.

"Little Shō's not going to see any ghost. He didn't do anything wrong," said the fishing-boat man's wife from inside the house. Shōkichi had no idea what they were talking about.

Soon a crowd of people had gathered on the riverbank and there was lots of noise and excitement. There were lots of people on Kurobunebashi Bridge too. They were all staring down at the river.

"What's everyone looking at?" said Shōkichi. He was about to go outside and see, but the fishing-boat man's wife said sharply, as if to scold him, "No, Shō, you stay here. Don't you go looking out there now."

"Nothing yet," said the fishing-boat man, bursting into the house. The next minute he rushed out again, shouting, "Anything come up yet?" Then he burst back in again: "Shō, mind you don't go looking out there, boy,"

Just then a shout went up behind the house. The fishing-boat man rushed outside again, bellowing, "Did something come up?"

Ah! thought Shōkichi. *So that's what he meant. They're waiting for Dad's ghost to show up.* The

thought of it made his legs go all shaky.

The fishing-boat man rushed in again: "Nah, nothing yet. The mud's pretty deep out there, you know."

Just then Shōkichi's Edagawa grandpa came in the back door. Shōkichi burst into tears and ran over and clung to him.

He went and stayed at Edagawa after that. It was no fun, though, because his grandma and grandpa just kept whispering secrets to each other all the time.

Tomorrow was New Year's Day. Shōkichi gathered that his mum and grandpa were back, but Grandma said, "You stay here with us, Shō," so he didn't go home. On the second day of the new year he went to the river. Looking down at the boat from Kurobunebashi Bridge, he saw his grandpa out in the drying place fanning the portable stove with a paper fan. Shōkichi crossed the gangplank and landed with a thud in the drying place.

"Where've you been all this time, Grandpa?" he asked.

"Ahhh, we went to a hot-spring resort for a few days," he growled.

"A resort?"

"Yeah, beautiful place – so nice and cool too," said Grandpa in an angry voice.

Then he started fanning Shōkichi with the tattered fan and laughing loudly, "Ha, ha, ha!" It frightened Shōkichi when Grandpa raised his voice. And he was freezing cold so he ran away into the two-mat room. His mum had been asleep but she sat up with a start when he came in. "What do you think you're doing, barging in here and giving me a fright like that?" she said crossly, frowning at Shōkichi, but then she picked up some mandarins from a tray and rolled them over to him.

"We did our first delivery for the year today – mandarins – and it'll be more of the same tomorrow. Looks like it's going to be us and mandarins on the boat for a week or two yet."

"It's not fair, just you and Grandpa going away somewhere nice and leaving me behind," said Shōkichi, picking up the mandarins.

His mother rolled another few mandarins over to him. "They'll give us another free box tomorrow."

Shōkichi was suddenly filled with glee. At Edagawa he was only allowed one at a time, but these were all for him and he was going to gobble them down all by himself! He took them up onto the land, thinking he'd show them to Yoshi at the fishing-boat place, but Yoshi wasn't there.

Yoshi was always giving him things. He even gave him the rest of his apple. And he'd say, "Hey, kid, why don't you come and live with us?" But Grandpa growled, "You keep

away from that lout, you hear?" He didn't get angry when Shōkichi went over there though.

Yoshi wasn't home, so he kept half the mandarins to show him later.

Today was the day for the demons to come out at the temple at Naka-chō. And from today they were carrying logs again.

"Let's hurry up and get rid of this load so we can go home," said Shōkichi, holding a chipped tray of parched beans. He was impatient to get back and scatter the beans to banish the demons for another year. But it was impossible to hurry through the narrow waterways of the lumberyard. It was almost dusk by the time they unloaded the last of their cargo at Higashikomagata and headed for home. Shōkichi was dreamily watching the sardine head they had hung from the bow to ward off the demons, when he saw his dad's ghost.

[1]They were at the crossroad after Shumokubashi Bridge, about to turn towards Kikkabashi Bridge, when a horrible stench filled the air. It was the smell of the night-soil boat passing by. A man dressed like a workman was standing at the stern. As the two boats passed each other, Shōkichi looked at the man's face and saw that it was his dad.

"Dad!" Shōkichi shouted. His dad looked at him. But he quickly looked away again without answering.

"Dad!" Shōkichi shouted out to him. His dad didn't turn his head. Thump! The boat rocked violently, almost throwing Shōkichi over the side. Ahh! he cried out, clutching onto the spray-guard.

---

[1] See appendix for alternative ending.

Interpretation

Looking down from Kurobunebashi today onto the concrete-lined canal below, there is not a boat to be seen. An office building stands on the site of the bathhouse and the rice granaries of Botan-chō have been replaced with a park. Further up the canal an old man dangles a fishing-line from a bridge. Below him a couple of authentically preserved wooden houseboats are moored under a sign advertising pleasure cruises up the Sumida River, where gleaming apartment buildings tower against the sky. Subway entrances mark the four corners of Monzennaka-chō and an expressway soars overhead nearby. During the passage of 50 years or so, the Fukagawa of Shōkichi's childhood has all but vanished. Not only the boats but most of the canals themselves have disappeared, some of them transformed into walkways and parks where one can stroll around the area, imagining days gone by when Fukagawa bustled with merchants, artisans and laborers whose lives were intimately connected with its network of rivers and canals.

The district called Fukagawa currently refers to the northwestern part of Kōtō Ward in southwest Tokyo. The history of the area dates back to the 1590s when the Onagi River was constructed under Tokugawa Ieyasu[1] as a means to transport salt into the new capital of Edo (Tokyo). The capital was initially established mainly west of the Sumida River, but in 1657 a massive fire, in which over 100,000 people lost their lives, prompted the government to develop the area to the east of the river to alleviate crowding and prevent the reoccurrence of such a tragedy. By 1700 three bridges had been constructed connecting the western and eastern banks of the Sumida River (Ryōgokubashi in 1661, Shinōhashi in 1693 and Eitaibashi in 1698). Bordered by the Sumida River to the west and Tokyo Bay to the south, and with road access over the bridges into central Edo, Fukagawa was ideally situated for the construction of a network of canals by which to transport goods and raw materials into the city. Many warehouses were constructed along the canals and Fukagawa developed as an important center for the storage and distribution of goods on their arrival in the capital (Hisazome 11).

The Tokugawa realm brought peace and stability after years of civil war, and the new city of Edo rapidly grew and prospered. The shogunate engaged in a vast amount of building: palaces, mansions, temples and shrines commissioned by the ruling samurai elite, as well as a surge of urban construction (Totman 19). Many temples were established in Fukagawa and these combined with the coastal location of the area to gain it a dual

[1] First shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled Japan during the Edo period (1603－1868).

reputation as both a religious center and a popular leisure spot (Hisazome 11).

To cater to the building boom, a lumberyard was established in Fukagawa in the late 1600s, and the canal network was further extended. Logs were tied together to form rafts, which were transported by the waterways both to and within the lumberyard and from there to the timber dealers, construction companies and warehouses that had sprung up along the sides of the canals. The lumberyard was to play a central role in Fukagawa's development over the next 280 years.

Thus Fukagawa emerged as a colorful, lively *shitamachi* neighborhood of merchants, artisans, fishermen and laborers. Literally an urban area of low-lying land, the term *shitamachi* generally refers to primarily commercial and industrial areas, and since the Edo period the *shitamachi* neighborhoods of Tokyo, which lie east of the Sumida River, have exuded the animation, warmth and openness of the common working people (Daijisen).

In the bustling new city of Edo, although theoretically the samurai class was dominant, in reality the vast majority of them were rather impoverished, while the merchant class soon became very prosperous. Subject to strict economic and social controls that prevented them from flaunting their wealth and power openly, the merchant class contributed generously to the worlds of pleasure and entertainment, resulting in the flowering of a rich '*shitamachi* culture' catering to the vigorous, earthy tastes of the commoner classes (Internet 1).

People of all social levels flocked to Fukagawa to indulge in leisure activities such as boating, sumo wrestling, street entertainment and festivals, and to enjoy the attractions of the neighborhood's colorful nightlife. As well as a large number of eating and drinking establishments, Fukagawa was renowned for *tatsumi geisha*, who entertained their guests with rousing performances of heroic tales of chivalry, which they enacted through song and dance, dressed in male costume (Daijisen). Another popular form of entertainment was *shinnai-nagashi* [strolling minstrels], who narrated sensational stories from kabuki dance plays in an intensely sensual style of singing with a shamisen[1] accompaniment. The *shinnai* performers would stroll down the street in pairs playing the shamisen, and interested patrons would call them in and have them perform for their party (Internet 3). Fukagawa was also known for the delights of its unlicensed brothels [*okabasho*] (as opposed to the more respectable licensed establishments of the Yoshiwara district) (Daijisen). Later, particularly

[1] A three-stringed lute-like instrument, with a long neck and square wooden body. The strings are stretched over a bridge, which in turn sits on a skin (cat or dog) stretched over the hollow body. The strings are struck with a large wedge-shaped instrument, causing both the strings and skin to vibrate (Internet 2).

from the beginning of the Shōwa Period (1925–1989) until the end of World War II (WWII), *yomise* [night stalls], reminiscent of carnival sideshows, offered a variety of merchandise and amusements, which were popular among the many workmen who commuted in from outlying areas (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai 98, 366).

From the Meiji Restoration[1], the artisan industry of the Edo period gave way to mechanized factories and mass-production, and Fukagawa continued to flourish as a center for fishing, commerce, manufacturing and storage. In 1872 the first cement company in Japan was established there, followed by a fish market and a rice market in the late 1880s. Many spinning factories were opened in the late 1800s and after 1900 the area became a center for heavy industry. During this period Fukagawa was extended to the south by reclaiming land from Tokyo Bay to enable further industrial development (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai 38).

Due to the establishment of a railway system in the 1870s, water transport was gradually replaced by rail and Tokyo was transformed from a "city on water" to a "city on land" (Internet 4). In Fukagawa, however, the efficiency of the canal network for the distribution of materials and manufactured goods, and the dependence of the local community on industries that had developed along its waterways, ensured that the area retained much of its original character right up until WWII (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai 38).

Although *Rocking the Boat* was published in 1957, the story seems to float timelessly between two worlds. Apart from life on the boat itself, details such as the rice granaries lined up along the canal, the public bathhouse, the fishing-boat man with his tattooed back[2], the *tsukudani* man and the neighborhood tofu shop, the strolling minstrels, the night-soil boat and the portable stove[3], conjure up visions of life in Fukagawa a century or two ago.

Shōkichi's pocket money of 5 or 10 yen and Grandpa's bunches of 100-yen notes, however,

---

[1] 1868–1912. Marked the return of political power to the Emperor of Japan by the last shogun of the Tokugawa line.

[2] During the late Edo period tattoos were a popular fashion statement among the working-class people of the *shitamachi* (Internet 5). In modern times, however, they tend to indicate an association with the *yakuza* – street peddlers or members of gamboling or crime syndicates, who are often tattooed with elaborate body murals incorprating their clan's insignia (Internet 6).

[3] *Shichirin* (七輪) – portable earthenware or clay stove for cooking with charcoal. Burning charcoal is placed on a grid set halfway down the stove, and the heat is adjusted by increasing or decreasing the amount of charcoal and controlling the amount of air by opening or closing an aperture at the bottom of the stove. *Shichirin* were first designed for crowded living in the late 17th or early 18th century and quickly spread all over Japan with the mass production of charcoal in the 18th century (Enbutsu 21).

are indications of post-war inflation (Internet 7). The glittering neon signs are also a post-war image, symbolizing the period of dazzling economic growth that took place during the 1950s after Japan had recovered from the devastation of the war. Yoshi's hairstyle, slicked back with pomade, is typical of a young man-about-town in the 1950s when Elvis Presley was in his heyday; and it was due to the American influence during the post-WWII occupation that Christmas and Santa Claus came to be widely recognized in Japan (Internet 8).

Rocking the Boat is therefore probably a fairly accurate reflection of the Fukagawa that existed when Fukazawa wrote the story in 1957. The decade of the 1950s was a fascinating period in Japan's history when traditional Japanese lifestyle and values overlapped with the influence of the west and economic prosperity. On one side of the canal dark wooden rice warehouses loom menacingly, relics of the past, while the other bank is "resplendent with neon signs," symbolic of a bright new future; "cars and buses drive around on the land," while on and along the canal people continue to live as their predecessors have done for centuries; the tradition of the strolling minstrels continues although their shamisen has been replaced by a guitar; the year ends with Santa Claus and his dual associations of Christianity and commercialism, while the following year begins with the traditional Buddhist *setsubun* ceremony[1].

This immediate juxtaposition of traditional and modern, Japanese and western, was not long-lived, however. Postwar reconstruction followed by a period of explosive economic growth, combined with the far-reaching influence of the United States during the occupation, succeeded in eradicating within a couple of decades many of these lingering vestiges of pre-war urban Japan.

Several factors combined to permanently change the face of Fukagawa after WWII. First, massive reconstruction was required, as the area had suffered extensive bombing due to the many factories there that had been used for arms production. Because of the prime location of the land close to central Tokyo, the factories and warehouses were relocated in the suburbs, and apartment buildings were erected in their place. As the fishing-boat man's dilapidated business in *Rocking the Boat* portends, although commercial fishing in Tokyo Bay had recommenced after the war, pollution became steadily worse and no licenses were granted from 1962. As a means of refuse disposal and in order to enable further development of the port area, more land was reclaimed from Tokyo Bay and Fukagawa was

[1] *Setsubun* (節分) – a ceremony carried out on the last day of winter according the traditional lunar calendar (usually February 3), whereby people scatter beans in their house, intoning, "In with fortune, out with demons!" and/or display a sardine head attached to a spring of holly outside the door in order to ward off misfortune (Daijisen).

further extended to the south. Once a popular seaside leisure spot, Fukagawa thus became further and further distanced from the sea. The redundant waterways were filled in with rubble from the war and transformed into the parks and walkways of today.

One of the last vestiges of the past to disappear was the lumberyard, which had characterized the area since the end of the 17th century. Water transport had gradually become inconvenient and uneconomical for a variety of reasons – damage and loss of timber due to flooding, proliferation of flies and mosquitoes, transportation difficulties due to sinking of the land and bridges, distance from Tokyo Port – so eventually the waterways that had been used to transport timber both in and out of and within the lumberyard were filled in, and in 1974 the lumberyard was relocated closer to the port, while the original site was converted into parks, shops and residential buildings (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai 75).

Born around 1890, Shōkichi's grandpa must have seen immense changes along the waterways of Fukagawa in his lifetime: beginning with the mechanization of industry and the development of the railways from the Meiji period, followed by the industrial boom of the first half of the 20th century, then the hardship and uncertainty of the war years and the period of post-war recovery, and now, paradoxically, a time of furious economic growth that threatens his livelihood like nothing that has come before. It is not only social and economic change that Grandpa has experienced: he has survived floods and typhoons, the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and the terror of the WWII air raids. He takes pride in his boat and is aware that his family's livelihood depends on it: "I tell you, we'd starve to death without this place." And now his position is being threatened by Kichi, who lacks both wisdom and experience, shows no attachment to the boat – he has to be reminded even to clean the motor – and yet possesses the one attribute that Grandpa lacks: youth.

Grandpa's personal struggle for survival parallels that of the doomed waterways on which he depends for his livelihood; his life's blood is the water that runs through the canals. Shōkichi's Edagawa grandma's suggestion that he is redundant on the boat and should get himself a place on the land forebodes the imminent demise of the canals themselves. Thus Grandpa's readily compliant response – "Now, now, no need to worry, it's alright, I'll go and live up on the land, 'cos you know, I was just thinking it was about time I got myself a place up there, so you see, there's really nothing to worry about" – belies his fierce determination to vanquish Kichi and defend his territory to the bitter end, as if by maintaining his supremacy on the boat he can somehow single-handedly reverse the laws of nature and stem the tide of progress.

The silent duel between Grandpa and Kichi is therefore much more than a squabble over a woman. Times have changed and work on the waterways is scarce. Grandpa senses that the years are numbered when a family of four will be able to survive on the income from the boat alone. And yet it is the only life he knows and it is a life that he has worked hard to maintain. But the old man is no longer capable of hard physical labor. It is Kichi who does the heavy work now, while Grandpa looks after the financial side of things. Grandpa has the brains but Kichi has the brawn, and since the Edo period the measure of a laborer on the waterways has depended on his physical strength. No matter how much Grandpa despises Kichi for his stupidity, he knows that the laws of nature will favor Kichi in the end. Not only his position as breadwinner and head of the family, but his pride as a man is at stake. If the old man is to have a chance against Kichi it must be now before his strength fails him completely. Thus Grandpa responds to Kichi's challenge with every last ounce of energy he can muster.

Grandpa's animosity toward Kichi is further magnified by their unusual family circumstances. It is not clear from the story whether Grandpa was originally married, but it is likely that he was and that the couple was unable to have children. From the beginning of the Meiji period, adoption laws in Japan existed primarily for the benefit of the household [*ie*] in order to enable a family without children of their own to continue the family line. Although minor revisions were made to the law after WWII, it was not until as late as 1987 that an adoption law was passed with the welfare of the child as its primary objective (Kōsei hakusho 102). It was therefore a simple process and not uncommon for a couple without children to adopt the child of a relative or close acquaintance. When times were hard, a family with many mouths to feed was often only too willing to part with their offspring, particularly a daughter if they already had a son and heir. Thus, having no son of their own, Grandpa and his wife probably adopted Shōkichi's mother as a child with the expectation that she would eventually marry and provide them with a son-in-law who would be willing to take on the family name, care for them in their old age and produce a future heir. Due to the relationship that subsequently developed between Grandpa and his adopted daughter, however, the son-in-law became nothing more than an annoying necessity in order to maintain a veneer of respectability. Having produced his own son and heir, Grandpa was certainly not going to relinquish his position as head of the household, nor his relationship with Shōkichi's mother, to an outsider – and an ugly, stupid one at that.

Fukazawa was actually living in Botan-chō in Fukagawa in 1956 when he wrote *Rocking*

the Boat, working as a guitarist at the Nichigeki Music Hall strip theater[1], which explains his intimate knowledge of the *shitamachi* of Tokyo. Unlike his two previously published works, *Narayama bushikō* and *Tōhoku no zummutachi*, which were set in remote rural areas at some unspecified time in the past, the setting of *Rocking the Boat* is urban and both the location and time frame are clearly defined. The characters in all three works, however, are simple, common people.

Fukazawa himself is said to have lacked any kind of artifice or social graces. He seems to have had no aspirations for social recognition or advancement. He never stayed in one job or residence for long and shunned labels such as writer or musician, although he was acclaimed not only for his writing but also for his expertise as a classical guitarist. He preferred the company of common people and considered himself to be one of them (Hare 2001: 28).

Fukazawa often stressed that humans are no different from any other kind of animal or even plant: we don't "live," we are just "alive" for no reason, no different from maggots or caterpillars (Hare 2002: 22); we need air and water just like beans or goldfish (Chikuma Shobō 1997: vol. 7, 388). Describing the inhabitants of a village in Fukazawa's home prefecture of Yamanashi, on whom the characters of *Narayama bushikō* are thought to be based, he says:

> [...] The people of this village knew how to live as human beings in the most natural way, without any kind of artifice. They lived without imitating anything, as if they had sprung forth naturally, born from the earth. I came to love these people. Anyone who writes a novel loves the main characters in it.
>
> Even if there is an evil character in the story, the writer portrays him or her with understanding of that evil. I came to love the people of this village because I found in them the very extremes of human warmth and tradition; I could sense in them the lingering essence of the origins of mankind (qtd in Fukuoka 81).

In *Rocking the Boat*, also, the characters seem to have "sprung forth naturally" from the waterways of Fukagawa. Fukazawa portrays them in affectionate and honest detail with no sense of moral judgment. With the exception of Kichi, all the characters in the story are cunning at times, but the transparency of their behavior has the effect of transforming their very artifice into an endearing guilelessness. Their preoccupations reflect the fundamental

[1] Esteemed for the expertise and tasteful stylishness of its performers, the Nichigeki Music Hall was reputed to be one of the top three theaters in Tokyo at the time, rivaling the kabuki theater and the Asakusa Kokusai Gekijo (Fukuoka 71).

needs of mankind－food, shelter and sex－and they are self-centered and spontaneous in a primitive, almost animal-like way. The wordless conflict between Grandpa and Kichi could indeed be an instinctive battle for supremacy between any two males in the animal kingdom, where the only rule is survival of the fittest.

There are glimpses of Fukazawa himself, both past and present, in *Rocking the Boat.* The problem of whether Shōkichi's birth had been correctly recorded in the family register－a document held at the local municipal office in which all births, deaths, marriages and divorces in the family are recorded－reflects back to Fukazawa's own birth in Yamanashi Prefecture, which was registered as January 29th 1914, but was apparently in fact some time in April of that year. As the school year begins in April and a child must be six years old on the first of April in order to attend, Fukazawa would have missed out by just a week or two and had to wait another whole year if his birth had been registered correctly. Apparently in those days it was common procedure to adjust a child's birth date in this way, and the local municipal office was quite willing to turn a blind eye on receipt of a small "fine." As far as the families were concerned the fine was a small price to pay compared with the expense of having to feed the child for an extra year (Fukazawa 1991: 340-341). The current Family Registration Law which dates from 1947, however, requires that a child's birth be registered within 14 days at the local municipal office by either one of the parents, who must present a certificate issued at the time of birth and signed and sealed by the doctor or midwife. My local city office assured me that there is no provision for leeway on payment of a fine.

It is not clear exactly why Grandpa is reluctant to send Shōkichi to school although he is old enough to go, but the reason seems to be related to the family register, which is kept at the ward office. It is possible that the details of Shōkichi's birth, and even possibly Kichi's marriage to Shōkichi's mother, have been recorded incorrectly, or not at all, and Grandpa is putting off the day when this will be revealed by Shōkichi's enrolment in school.

Fukazawa also shared Shōkichi's free-spirited naivety. A close acquaintance writes:

> [...] He suffers from an underdeveloped capacity for common sense. [...] All his thoughts and actions are self-centered like a child's. [...] But one cannot belittle him for [this] because it is what enables him to perceive things with such purity [...] (qtd in Sōma 212).

Reflecting on the success of *Narayama bushikō* thirty years later, Fukazawa writes:

> I had no idea *Narayama bushikō* would cause such a sensation. When it first came out and received all that attention, I felt like a naughty little boy who had been

> caught in the act. It makes me want to run away and hide just to think of it. I felt as if I were being scolded for a mischievous prank. People have been scolding me all my life ever since I was a child; *Narayama bushikō* was the first time anyone ever praised me (Fukazawa 1985: 307).

Perhaps it was this childlike aspect to his nature that enabled Fukazawa to portray Shōkichi with such insight and sensitivity.

We can see another side of Fukazawa in Yoshi's nightly routine. Photographs of Fukazawa in the 1950s show him to be a dapper dresser, with his hair smoothly parted and glistening with pomade. One can imagine him standing in front of the mirror in his three-mat room[1] in Botan-chō, slicking his hair back in the style of Elvis Presley, whom he adored, before setting off, guitar in hand, for a night's work at the Nichigeki Music Hall.

The occupation of a strolling musician is one that would have appealed to Fukazawa, an accomplished guitarist and songwriter, who showed a lifelong aversion to settling in any one place for long: "The day I stop wandering will be the day I die," he wrote in the preface to a later work *Rurō no shuki [Memoirs of a Wanderer]* (Hare 2002: 17). Even if this was not among the many occupations to which he had turned his hand, therefore, it is sure to have been a lifestyle with which he was well-acquainted, and the Fukazawa strolling minstrels' specialty, "Just Can't Stop the Tears," that features in *Rocking the Boat* may well have been one of his own compositions.

Suffering from pleurisy as a youth, which developed into tuberculosis during the war years, Fukazawa was an invalid for long periods from the age of 20 to about 36. He writes:

> [...] [P]eople kept saying how "weak" and "skinny" I was, and I was allowed to spend my time however I liked, doing whatever took my fancy (Fukazawa 1993: 357).
>
> From junior high school I lived aimlessly from day to day just pleasing myself, doing whatever I liked. I fooled around day after day right the way through. When I got tired of fooling around I would occasionally do something I like; I would write something. I'd write something from time to time and then I'd tear it up, and that's how *Narayama bushikō* eventually came about (Fukazawa 1993: 357).

He writes of his invalid years:

---

[1] The size of a Japanese room is expressed by the number of tatami mats on the floor. As one standard tatami mat measures roughly 180×90cm, Fukazwa's three-mat room in Botan-chō would have measured 225×225cm. The roofed part of the boat where Shōkichi and his family lived is described as being a two-mat room, so it would have measured about 180×180cm.

> During those years as an invalid I built up a life for myself that was isolated from other people (Fukazawa 1993: 357).
>
> When I was about 30, I experienced a feeling of solitude. I like that feeling of solitude more than anything. It's not a question of whether it's good or bad, I just like it (qtd in Fukuoka 56).

Thus Fukazawa developed into a capricious, unpredictable character, who was friendly enough and loved to joke and fool around, but was happiest in his own company: "I soon made friends with anyone, but I just as soon got sick of them; I liked to be alone." (Fukazawa 1985: 371).

Fukazawa's two passions in life were playing the guitar and writing, both of which he began at junior high school and continued off and on for the rest of his days. Having lived in the shadow of death for most of his youth, he thought of the ensuing years as a bonus. Both writing and playing the guitar were suitable pastimes for his "bonus life." He could do them whenever he liked and if he got sick of them he could easily give them up at any time (Fukuoka 56):

> I like writing stories but I only write when I feel like it so I don't actually spend much time doing it. I can earn a bit when I write but I don't like to earn money that way. I was brought up in a business[1] so I don't feel satisfied unless I am involved in some kind of business, but it has to be something small like a street stall. I like the kind of business that I can easily set up and quit at any time.
>
> Because I only write from time to time when feel like it, I don't agonize over it; the words flow quickly and easily (Fukazawa 1985: 307).

On the other hand, it seems that he did not actually find it quite so easy to give up either writing or playing the guitar:

> I think playing the guitar is the same as being ill. No matter how I try to resist it, I can't stop playing. It's as if I were taken ill. Physical illness involves an abnormal amount of discomfort, but I don't think it is normal to feel an urgent impulse to do something you enjoy either. I think drawing a picture or climbing a mountain are also types of illness. I think writing is too. The urge to write doesn't seem to me to be a normal condition (qtd in Fukuoka 30).

Just as Fukazawa thought of the urge to write and to play the guitar as being symptoms of the same malady, so was his distinctive writing style intimately connected with his music. His first story was entitled *Allegro*: "In music 'allegro' refers not only to the speed of the

[1] Fukazawa's father had a printing business to which he was apprenticed for a short time.

piece but also to the quality of the sound: it is fast and sharp. That's the tone I wanted in my story." (Fukazawa 1993: 372). He was not happy with the result, however, and tore up the story as soon as it was completed. This was followed by a series of equally disappointing attempts:

> They were all worthless stories and so badly written that I just wanted to tear them up immediately. The main reason I was attracted to writing was that I wanted to compose a story along the lines of a rondo or a fugue or a variation on a theme, but nothing turned out right (Fukazawa 1993: 372).

To Fukazawa, with his background in classical guitar music, the influx of new types of western music after the war was a revelation:

> I was amazed when rockabilly became popular – mambo and country music too – the way they played however they liked, purely for their own enjoyment, these spontaneous, intense, short pieces that lasted only two or three minutes. I was amazed at this music where they played only the bits they liked, however they liked. It wasn't the type of music that you hear with your ears and contemplate with your mind; it was the type of performance to which your whole body responded (Fukazawa 1993: 372–373).

Fukazawa's free spirit delighted in this new, spontaneous, irrational music with its roots in the common people that "makes you dance and sing and turns you inside out" (Tsunazawa 8), and he knew that he wanted to write "stories like mambo or country or rockabilly music" (Fukazawa 1993: 372-373). The uncontrived, instinctive nature of this new type of music illustrated not only what Fukazawa felt music should be: "Music is something you do, and it is something that touches you physically. It's no good trying to hear it with your ears; you have to feel it with your skin. Music is just rhythmical sounds" (qtd in Orihara 95) – and what it should not be: If you try to express something through music, it becomes "something cultured and academic, something difficult that is not really music at all" (qtd in Hare 2002: 22) – it touched on his philosophy of life itself: "When thinking and ideas and that sort of thing disappear, that is progress for mankind" (qtd in Orihara 74).

Thus Fukazawa hit on the formula for his literary success. "Sometimes I wonder if my style is not too blunt and rough," he reflected in later years (Fukazawa 1985: 306), but it is this unpolished, rhythmical sense of immediacy, that bypasses the intellect and appeals directly to the senses, for which his work is so highly acclaimed.

In *Rocking the Boat* Fukazawa achieves this immediate, sensory effect by defining his characters through sound and action rather than description of their mental state. He writes

in short, simple sentences that make no demands on our intellect. We sense the story rather than interpreting it with our minds. Thump, thud, whack, slap－we hear the action taking place, and we feel the boat rock in response. We hear the fishing-boat man's bellowing, Grandpa's growling and the strolling minstrels' guitar; we see Yoshi preening himself for a night on the town and tossing the newspaper out the window. We sense the essence of each character through the sounds and actions associated with them. Fukazawa does not have to tell us about Shōkichi's feelings; we instinctively know how he feels because we see and hear and feel what he experiences.

Another feature of *Rocking the Boat* is the sudden changes of mood and tempo that occur particularly in the latter half of the story: the violent fight that breaks out in the silent darkness of the night, followed by Shōkichi waking up the next morning to sunshine, having completely forgotten his anguish of the night before; the emotional exchange between Shōkichi's mother and his Edagawa grandma that has Grandma in tears and Shōkichi "shaking so much that the tears wouldn't even come," followed by Grandma chatting to her daughter, while Shōkichi happily runs ahead over the gangplank; Shōkichi being so pleased when he sees the mandarins that he forgets all about his father, or being startled from his reverie by the sight of his dad's "ghost"－one emotion flows effortlessly into the next.

There is also a wide range in tone and volume: apart from the nightly routine of the contrasting tones of Grandpa's monotonous growling, the fishing-boat man's raucous bellowing, and the melodious strolling minstrels' guitar, Grandpa's usual drone changes without warning to a roar or loud laugh, while the fishing-boat man's bellow suddenly becomes "soft like a woman's voice."

It appears that this versatility of tempo and tone also derives from Fukazawa's experience as a musician. He describes in an interview the changes that take place in music:

> In music [...] you play faster and then you suddenly slow down, and then the tempo suddenly changes again, so it goes from fast to slow, from strong to weak, and you move from heroic to tragic to romantic to sorrowful; the music keeps changing from one thing to the next (Orihara 87).
>
> When I play the guitar, I play an extremely romantic piece, and then I turn over the page and there's something light and airy; I play a sorrowful lament and I turn over the page and there's something else. So my mood keeps changing from one thing to another. [...] You get practiced at doing that when you are a musician; you are trained to do it; it becomes a habit. [...] So you end up being able to switch easily from one mood to the next, from being angry to sad to happy; that becomes

> normal. [...] I suppose that's why my stories never end up being very long – because the sad bits and the happy bits don't last, the story keeps changing so quickly (Orihara 86-90).

In the interview above Fukazawa denied that this transient, musical quality was a deliberate technique in his writing, implying that it was the unconscious result of his training as a musician and that the story progressed that way of its own accord. The year following the publication of *Rocking the Boat*, however, he elaborated on his consciously musical approach to literary composition:

> The first thing I do when I write a story is think about the plot. And then I think about the composition. I don't like to use the same pattern twice. Sometimes I decide the composition before the plot and sometimes I alter the plot to fit in with the composition. For *Narayama bushikō* I had the idea of using the songs in it as a base on which to build variations on a theme. In *Tōhoku no zummutachi* I tried to develop the plot around the two phrases, "The thumping in [his] chest and the throbbing in [his] throat . . ." and "'I see, I see,' [he] nodded his head up and down." I enjoy trying to create a rondo effect. In music the same melody is repeated, but with a slight variation each time. I try to do that by adding to or subtracting from a passage. It's fun when it works out conforming to a musical pattern.
>
> In musical composition there is the A-B-A form. B is the second and middle part. In the first part the melody is clearly defined; then it develops into something else in the middle; then the same distinct melody appears again in the third part. In a novel you can't have the beginning reappearing after the middle section, but I do my best to make the ending resemble the initial melody (Orihara 74-75).

The composition of *Rocking the Boat* clearly illustrates these techniques, with the three entwined recurring melodies of the fishing-boat man's bellowing, Grandpa's growling and the strolling minstrels' guitar woven into the fabric of the story. There is also the independently recurring theme of Yoshi's nightly routine, which culminates in him walking off up the road, whistling a tune – variations on a tune, no doubt. And beneath it all, the boat keeps up a persistent, percussion-like rhythm, rocking gently or violently in harmony with the action.

The two examples of Grandpa's nightly monologues are miniature musical compositions in themselves: variations on the themes of "born a fool, die a fool" and "waste not, want not," punctuated by rhythmical repetition of words and phrases, and composed according to the A-B-A pattern, which ties the final sentence in with the first one. Grandpa's short, sharp

sentences are characteristic of his rough-and-ready *shitamachi* background. One inhabitant of Fukagawa, born in 1921, neatly sums up the economy of words that characterizes the language of the *shitamachi* in the following way: "Rather than saying, 'Well, first there's this and then there's that and then there's the other thing,' [we] are more likely to say, 'It's like this and this and this'" (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai 385). In addition to Fukazawa's affinity with the uncontrived humanity of the people of the *shitamachi* themselves, he no doubt appreciated the unadorned, rhythmical nature of their language for its musical possibilities as well.

The A-B-A pattern is evident in *Rocking the Boat* not only in the musical structure of the story but also in its setting. The first section, where the three central melodies are developed, culminates in the dramatic slaps, whacks and kicks of the fight between Grandpa and Kichi, and fades away to the strains of the strolling minstrels' guitar: "Shōkichi could hear the strolling minstrels' guitar. They were singing that song again." This leads into the comparatively slow-moving middle section, where Shōkichi stays with his Edagawa grandparents and returns to find the boat moored at a different location. In contrast to the wild emotional fluctuations of the first section, the middle section moves along uneventfully to the monotonous, andante rhythm of daily life: "They stayed at Furuishiba for a long time. Day after day passed but Shōkichi's Dad didn't come back. [...] [N]ow it was logs that they loaded off and on every day. [...] Every day they followed the same route under Heikyūbashi Bridge to the lumberyard." The third section is marked by the return to the original location at Kurobunebashi Bridge and the simultaneous reappearance of all the musical themes of part A:

> Yoshi still followed his nightly routine of anointing his hair with pomade, ripping off a piece of newspaper, wiping his hands on it and tossing it out the window at the boats. Then he would slick his hair down with a comb and head off up the road whistling a tune.
>
> The fishing-boat man would bellow, "Where the hell's that hopeless bastard?" Yoshi would come home late at night and his dad would bellow, "You've been out on the booze again, you hopeless bastard." Shōkichi would wake up with the bellowing and then he would hear the strolling minstrels' guitar.

The piece ends with a "thump!" that rocks the boat violently, echoing the "thud" that rocks the boat in the first sentence, thus neatly completing the A-B-A sequence.

The three principal melodies in *Rocking the Boat* are timed so as to have a soporific effect. Combined with the cradle-like rocking of the boat, they act as a familiar lullaby, heard in a

world between waking and dreaming:

> It was the same routine every night. Even after the light was turned off, the old man droned on and on in the pitch darkness. Shōkichi would fall asleep listening to his grandpa's growling, wake up in the night with the fishing-boat man's bellowing and drift off to sleep again to the sound of the strolling minstrels' guitar.

The entire story exudes a dreamlike aura, in fact. Shōkichi's mind oscillates between reality and a world of dreams and fears and imagination. When he first hears the fishing-boat man and the *tsukudani* man talking, it is as if their voices are coming from "a faraway place deep in the clouds"; he sees "a huge serpent creeping through the water by the boat where the old log raft had been"; the rice granaries of Botan-chō look like "a long, black, hump-backed sea monster"; "a violent duel between black shadow pictures" breaks out in the night and "two silent black demons" rage in the darkness; the faces of his family lined up look like "a row of paper-dolls' heads." The gap between fantasy and reality gradually narrows until in the final scene there is no distinction between them at all; his father and his father's ghost merge into one. Perhaps it is only a dream after all. Perhaps the final thump that makes Shōkichi cry out and almost throws him over the side of the boat will wake him up to find himself lying in the two-mat room with his mother and grandpa and father lined up next to him. And then he will drift off to sleep again to the sound of the strolling minstrels' guitar.

The immediacy of Fukazawa's prose and the humanness of his characters create a deceptively realistic impression. It was not reality that he was interested in exploring in his stories, however. He explains in the postscript to *Gokuraku makuraotoshi zu [Pillow to Paradise]*, the final compilation of his work that was published in his lifetime:

> When the urge took me and I felt like writing a story, it was as if I were entering another world to have a look around. That world was the world of the human heart. That's why there is so little description of scenery in my writing (Fukazawa 1985: 36).

Rocking the Boat is unusual and therefore all the more deceptive because the time period and geographical location are so clearly defined. Although some knowledge of the social and historical background adds an interesting dimension to our understanding of the characters, interpretations of the story should by no means be limited to the confines of time and space.

Fukazawa was initially attracted to writing because he wanted to compose "a story along the classical lines of a rondo or a fugue or a variation on a theme." Having little success with this, he decided he wanted to write "spontaneous, intense, short stories like mambo or

country or rockabilly music, that you don't hear with your ears and contemplate with your mind, but feel with your skin." *Rocking the Boat* was his third successful realization of both these ambitions. From the harmonious fusion of two contrasting musical forms, Fukazawa inadvertently gave birth to a literary style so unique and revolutionary that *Narayama bushikō* was described on its publication as an attempt to "break through and redefine the boundaries of the modern novel" (Fukazawa 1957: dust-jacket). Much literary criticism has been written over the years about Fukazawa's work and about the man himself. Of what I have read so far, the closest to my own response to Fukazawa are the words of Tanaka Masuko on reading *Narayama bushikō:* "I felt as if I had encountered the most beautiful, the purest of souls, and my tears overflowed." I could say the same for *Rocking the Boat.* I am not sure that a soul can be translated, but I have tried.

Afterword

There seems at first glance to be little in modern Fukagawa to remind us of its colorful past, apart from the Edo Museum and evocative place names such as Kiba [lumberyard] or Tatsumi (of *tatsumi geisha*). If one delves a little deeper, however, just a street or two away from the busy Monzennaka-chō intersection with its American-style fast-food outlets, a distinct flavor of the *shitamachi* of yesteryear still lingers in the air.

On the streets along the canal east of Kurobunebashi, once renowned for *tatsumi geisha,* many casual Japanese-style restaurants and bars, some of which have been in business for generations, advertise local specialties such as *Fukagawa meshi* (clams and rice) or *Fukagawa don* (miso soup with clams and green onions poured over rice), which originated in the Edo period as quick, nourishing meals that fishermen or laborers could whip up during their work-breaks.

On religious festival days, which are held on the 1st, 15th and 28th of every month, the streets leading up to the Fudōdō temple (the temple at Naka-chō where "the demons come out" at *setsubun*) or the Tomioka-Hachimangu shrine, are lined with variety stalls reminiscent of the *yomise* of the past, where worshippers browse for bargains and souvenirs.

In addition, annual festivals such as the lumberyard festival [*Kiba matsuri*] where athletic young men perform balancing feats on floating logs, or the strongman contest [*chikaramochi matsuri*] where they vie with each other to carry the heaviest bales of rice, reflect the days of their forefathers when physical fitness was the ultimate measure of a man.

While many of the small specialized stores have given way to supermarkets and

convenience stores, it is still possible to find family-run businesses that date from well before WWII. And it is in these places that one can discover the real *shitamachi* in the unselfconscious warmth and openness of the storekeepers. I happened to wander into one such *sake* store on my first visit to Fukagawa and came away several hours later after an impromptu guided walking tour of the neighborhood followed by coffee at a local café, where not only the waiter was drawn into the discussion but several of the other customers as well. Time seems to move more slowly in this little corner of Tokyo. The canals and boats have disappeared from Fukagawa, but beneath its modern veneer the spirit of the *shitamachi* of Shōkichi's childhood, and that of his grandpa's before him, lives on.

Appendix

Subsequent to the first two publications of *Yureru ie* by Shinchōsha and Chūō Kōronsha in February 1957, the story appeared in an anthology of Fukazawa's work that was published in 1965 by Kawadeshobō Shinsha as Volume 31 of a 43-volume series entitled *Gendai no bungaku [Modern Literature]*. In this publication, however, the ending of the story is substantially different from the two identical previously published versions. The 1965 ending is shorter and more dramatic than the original one and leaves more to the reader's imagination.

The next publication of *Yureru ie* was in 1972 in a compilation entitled *Tōhoku no zummmutachi*, published by Shinchōsha, in which it appeared in the original 1957 version. The story has since appeared in two different posthumous anthologies published by Chikumashobō – a selection of Fukazawa's work in 1993 and a complete 10-volume anthology in 1997 – the former with the revised ending taken from the 1965 Kawadeshobō Shinsha anthology, and the latter with the original 1957 ending. Thus in a total of 6 publications, the original version of the story has appeared 4 times and the revised version twice.

As I have found no explanation for the amendment, I can only assume that Fukazawa deliberately revised the story for publication in the 1965 anthology. I have therefore chosen to respect Fukazawa's decision by translating the revised version, while appending the following translation of the original ending for reference.

Rocking the Boat (Original Ending)

They were at the crossroad after Shumokubashi Bridge, about to turn towards

Kikkabashi Bridge, when a horrible stench filled the air. It was the smell of the night-soil boat passing by. A man dressed like a workman was standing at the stern. As the two boats passed each other Shōkichi looked at the man's face. "Ahhh! It's Dad's ghost!" he shouted, darting into the two-mat room and leaping onto his mother.

"What is it? What are you doing, giving me a fright like that, you silly thing," said his mum, her face very pale. Grandpa, who was standing by the motor holding onto the rudder, quickly looked up at the river.

"It's Dad's ghost, look, over there!"

"Don't talk nonsense, boy," Grandpa shouted at him, turning round to his mother to say, "Hey, it's Kichi, all right. He's on the muck boat."

"Oh, really!" Shōkichi's mother sounded relieved.

"I thought he would've died in a ditch somewhere by now, but just look at him," growled Grandpa, and then he laughed, "Ha ha ha!"

Shōkichi's mother started laughing too. "Spare me the sight of him," she said.

"Look, Shō, he's got legs, hasn't he?" said Grandpa sitting down heavily by the motor.

So there wasn't even a ghost after all, thought Shōkichi. He went out to have another look, but the night-soil boat was already round the corner out of sight. Shōkichi ran to the stern and raised his hand. "Dad!" he waved. The boat rocked violently, almost throwing Shōkichi over the side. Ahh! he cried out, clutching onto the spray-guard.

Works Cited

大辞泉 (Daijisen), 小学館 (Shōgakukan), Tokyo: 1995.

Enbutsu Sumiko (translation), Fukagawa Edo Museum, Fukagawa Edo Museum, Tokyo: 1987.

深沢七郎 (Fukazawa Shichirō), 深沢七郎－筑摩日本文学全集 (Fukazawa Shichirō－Chikuma nihonbungaku zenshū), 筑摩書房 (Chikuma Shobō), Tokyo: 1993.

深澤七郎 (Fukazawa Shichirō), 楢山節考 (Narayama bushikō), 中央公論社 (Chūō Kōron Sha), Japan: 1957.

深沢七郎 (Fukazawa Shichirō), 娯楽まくらおとし図 (Gokuraku makuraotoshi zu) 集英社 (Shūeisha), Tokyo: 1985.

福岡哲史 (Fukuoka Tetsushi), 深沢七郎ラプソディー (Fukazawa Shichirō Rhapsody), TBS Britannica, Tokyo: 1994.

Hare, Joanna, "English Translation and Interpretation of *Michinoku no Ningyōtachi* by Fukazawa Shichirō," Research Reports of Kochi Medical School No. 17, Kochi Medical School, Kochi, Japan: December 2001.

Hare, Joanna, "English Translation and Interpretation of *Inochi no tomoshibi* by Fukazawa Shichirō," Research Reports of Kochi Medical School No. 18, Kochi Medical School, Kochi, Japan: December 2002.

久染健夫 (Hisazome Takeo),「深川の発展」("Fukagawa no hatten"), 下町情報誌－深川2003 No. 154:9･10月号 (Shitamachi jōhōshi: Fukagawa, No. 54, Sept/Oct 2003), クリオ・プロジェクト (Kurio Project), Tokyo: 2003.

厚生白書平成10年版 (Kōsei hakusho heisei jūnenban), [White Paper on Health and Welfare 1998], 日本厚生省 (Nihon kōseishō) [Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare], Tokyo: 1998.

江東区教育委員会 (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai) [The Board of Education of Kōtō Ward], 江東区の民俗－深川編 (Kōtō-ku no minzoku－Fukagawa hen), 江東区教育委員会 (Kōtō-ku kyōiku iinkai), Tokyo: 2002.

折原脩三 (Orihara Shūzō), 深澤七郎論 (Fukazawa Shichirō ron), 他畑書店 (Tabata Shoten), Tokyo: 1988.

相馬庸郎 (Sōma Tsuneo), 深沢七郎・この面妖なる魅力 (Fukazawa Shichirō: kono menyō naru miryoku), 勉誠出版 (Bensei Shuppan), Tokyo: 2000.

田中眞壽子 (Tanaka Masuko), 心の旅人・深沢七郎 (Kokoro no tabibito: Fukazawa Shichirō),「唯一者」発行所 (Yūitsusha hakkōsho) [Distributor], Kyoto, Japan: 1998.

Totman, Conrad, The Lumber Industry in Early Modern Japan, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu: 1995.

Internet Sources

1. Japanese Traditional Music [History of Japanese Traditional Music]: Japanese Music in the Early Modern Period
http://jtrad.colombia.jp/eng/history03.html
2. Robertson, Scott Paul, Japanese Music
http://home.att.net/~s.robertson/koto/
3. Japanese Traditional Music [History of Japanese Traditional Music]: Japanese Music in the Early Modern Period
http://jtrad.columbia.jp/eng/history04.html
4. Architronic: City on Water
http://architronic.saed.kent.edu/v6n1/v6n1.04.html
5. The Art of the Japanese Tattoo
http://www.japanprints.com/misc/JapaneseTattoo.htm
6. Bruno, Anthony, The Yakuza
http://www.crimelibrary.com/gangsters_outlaws/gang/yakuza/1.html
7. Modern Japanese History as Seen Through its Currency: 3-7 Postwar Inflation and the Changeover to the New Yen
http://www.imes.boj.or.jp/cm/english_htmls/feature_gra3-7.htm
8. Okawa Mariko; Onishi Akio (translation), The Christmas Archives: Old Japanese Christmas and Samurai Santa, Felissimo Christmas Museum, Hakodate, Japan.
http://www.christmasarchives.com/wjapan.html

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nomura Teruko for her invaluable assistance with my research on Fukagawa, and Erin Macnamara and Amanda Suzuki for their proofreading and insightful comments.

Note

All quotations and titles are my provisional translation from the Japanese for the purposes of this paper.