

PARTICULARITIES OF TRANSLATION OF A CHAPTER FROM KAZUO ISHIGURO ´S "AN ARTIST OF THE FLOATING WORLD"

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Graduation Thesis

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1. Introduction

The practice of translation is probably as old as speech itself. From ancient times, people have tried to communicate with those from different cultures, and this practice continued as people started writing (Munday, 2016). Literary translation is no exception. Literary works have been translated in order to share new ideas with people from a different culture, to introduce new literary devices (for example, metaphors, motifs, rhymes) and styles into the target language or to practice a foreign language (Lefevere, 1992). At first, the translators of literary works were writers or scholars who spoke a foreign language, but as the field of translation has been established, there is now university education for translation and courses and seminars dedicated to literary translation in particular.

Several theorists of translation, such as Nord (2005) and Newmark (2008), have tried to provide instructions to help translators of literary texts decide on which procedures to use and which parts to focus on the most. However, there is a lot of variation in literary texts, styles, and literary devices can vastly differ from one text to another. Furthermore, the meaning of such texts largely depends on the context and even language itself constantly changes, with new phrases and expressions being added all the time, especially in the age of globalisation when many different cultures often come in contact. All these factors make it impossible to provide a sort of a formula for literary translation that would work for every literary text there is. Nonetheless, the guidelines provided by various theorists can help translators in choosing the right strategies in their work.

This thesis aims to provide a translation of a chapter from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *An Artist of the Floating World* and analysis of categories that are of particular interest, namely idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words, loan words and intertextuality. The thesis consists of two main parts – theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part, the term “translation” will be discussed, followed by the guidelines for literary translation. Furthermore, the relationship between translation and culture will be explored, as well as the translation procedures described by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995). The theoretical part will be followed by a practical part consisting of methodology, translation and the analysis of the four abovementioned categories. Reasons for choosing those four categories will be explained in the methodology section, as well as the connection between the theory of literary translation and the practice of literary translation. Furthermore, an English source text of the chapter from *An Artist of the*

Floating World will be provided, followed by the translation in Croatian. In the analysis, 95 examples divided according to the abovementioned categories will be discussed, and the translator's choices will be explained.

2. Theoretical part

In the theoretical part, the concept of translation will be explained along with some issues that arise from the widely accepted definitions of translation. Furthermore, guidelines for literary translation by notable theorists of translation will be provided, namely by Even-Zohar (1990), Lefevere (1992), Newmark (2008), Nord (2005), Reiss and Vermeer (2015), and Venuti (1995). This chapter will also discuss the role of literary translation in the publishing industry and culture in general. Lastly, seven main procedures used in translation will be named and explained.

2.1. Translation

In order to talk about translation, it is first necessary to explain what this term entails. Munday (2016) emphasizes that the term translation has three different meanings. Firstly it can refer to a field of study. Secondly, it can be used when referring to the process of translating and finally, it can also refer to a product that is a result of the process of translation. When discussing the process of translation, it is important to note that it starts with a source text that is written in the source language and results in a target text that is written in the target language (Munday, 2016). However, this is only the simplified definition of the process that does not account for all situations, such as the source text being written in several languages or versions of the source text being on-line and prone to constant modifications.

This is why it may be useful to consider a broader definition of translation by the linguist Roman Jakobson (1959) that includes three different categories. In his categorization, the traditional definition of translation as the process of translation from a source text to a target text is called interlingual translation. He also refers to this type of translation as “translation proper” (Jakobson, 1959: 233). The other two types of translation are intralingual and intersemiotic. Intralingual translation, also called “rewording” (Jakobson, 1959: 233), means rephrasing the source text using the source language. This type of translation is often used for providing summaries, paraphrasing or simplifying the source text. The intersemiotic translation or “transmutation” (Jakobson, 1959: 233) refers to translation that does not involve only verbal languages. This type of translation is used when a source text is adapted into a play, a movie or a painting. Jakobson (1959) argues that transmutation falls under the term translation because movies or music are also systems of signs, just like languages are.

Another thing that should be taken into consideration is the fact that not all cultures and languages define translation in the same way. As Tymoczko (2006) emphasized, different cultures have different expectations from translation. The western notion of translation has roots in translations of religious texts, namely of the Bible, and was shaped by ideologies that were present in European history. This Eurocentric focus has resulted in several assumptions regarding translation in the western world that are not present in other parts of the world. Firstly, the word translation is most often used to refer to written texts. However, many countries around the world have an oral culture and are not literate like European cultures. Secondly, it is often assumed that only one translator works on a certain text, whereas in other cultures, for example in Chinese tradition, a group of people works on a translation and each of them has their role. Furthermore, translators in the West are often formally trained in schools and programs devised specifically for their profession, and although there are amateurs who provide translations, they are not as respected as professionals. The same expectation should not be held for cultures that are oral and that do not have formal training for translators.

Tymoczko (2006) argues that the field of translation study should be broadened by including non-western cultures and their definitions of translation. She gives examples of the word “translation” in several languages with a meaning different than the word “translation” in English. For example, the Native American word for translation has the meaning of “to tell a story across”, which makes it primarily tied to narration, unlike the English word that primarily refers to written texts. Furthermore, the Chinese word for translation “fan yi” also shows a different approach to translation. Its meaning of “turning over” shows that in Chinese culture, the target text is seen as another side of the source text, not as a different entity. Tymoczko (2006) concludes that translation studies should be more mindful of these definitions and their implications because the process of translation is, after all, intercultural.

2.2. Literary translation

Literary translation has always been an important part of the translation studies. According to Munday (2016), translation workshops existed in America in the 1960s, even before translation studies were an established discipline. These translation workshops were oriented towards literary translation and served as a place for translators to discuss the methods they used in their work and to present new translations to an audience.

It is not surprising then that several theorists of translation studies tried to set rules and methods for literary translation. Reiss and Vermeer (2015) write about three different text types: informative, expressive and operative. The informative text type is focused on communicating facts or news, transmitting knowledge. The expressive text is used for artistic expression and is primarily focused on aesthetics, while the operative text focuses on convincing the reader to follow the author's intentions. Reiss and Vermeer note, however, that it is not always easy to determine the type of a given text. When it comes to literature, it is often assumed that a literary text must be expressive, but that may not always be the case. Reiss and Vermeer (2015) give an example of poetry as a clearly expressive text. However, they also mention a satirical novel as an example of a text that is both expressive and operative because the author wants to convince the reader to adopt their views. They argue that it is important for a translator to recognise these text types in order to determine their translation strategy. For translations of literary texts, this often means that additions or changes in the translations are justified as long as they are in accordance with the author's style and the aesthetic function of the text (Reiss and Vermeer, 2015).

Christiane Nord expands the theory of text types and their corresponding functions in order to include elements outside the text that translators should consider. In the case of literary translation, Nord (2005) mentions that a translator should know what the author's intentions were when writing the source text. This is achieved by studying the author's life, the events that have influenced their writing and other works they have written. In other words, the translator should be as knowledgeable about the author as an informed reader would be. Nord (2005) also acknowledges a unique type of communication that happens between the author and the reader of a literary text, which influences the function of a literary text. The author of a literary text does not write about facts, they write to express themselves, and in doing so, they try to make the reader see their perspective and change their worldview. On the other hand, the reader is someone who, based on their understanding of "literary code" (Nord, 2005: 79), has specific expectations from the literary text they read, which means that the function of the text, in this case, is also determined by the reader.

Although there are many classifications of text types, functions and methods that should be used in translations, literary texts are usually placed in one category, and same methods of translation are recommended for all literary texts. Peter Newmark (2008), however, makes a distinction between serious literature and popular literature. The types of texts he describes are the same three that Reiss and Vermeer (2015) discussed, the only difference being that in

his classification, operational texts are called vocative. Similar to Reiss and Vermeer, Newmark (2008) emphasises that author's intentions and style should be of the utmost importance in expressive texts, such as poetry, stories, novels and plays. In general, he advises the translator of an expressive text to "distinguish the personal components of these texts: i.e. unusual ('infrequent') collocations; original metaphors; 'untranslatable' words, particularly adjectives of 'quality' that have to be translated one-to-two or -three; unconventional syntax; neologisms; strange words (archaisms, dialect, odd technical terms) - all that is often characterised as 'idiolect' or 'personal dialect' - as opposed to 'ordinary language', i.e. stock idioms and metaphors, common collocations, normal syntax, colloquial expressions and 'phaticisms' - the usual tramlines of language" (Newmark, 2008: 40). He does note, however, that some expressions might be explained in a translation if the expressive text is intended for a larger audience. When it comes to popular fiction, Newmark (2008) considers it might be seen as a vocative text and not an expressive one because its main goal is to entertain an audience, and not to express the author's feelings. In this case, he advises the translator to use easily understood language and to focus on emotions the reader is supposed to feel after reading the text.

2.2.1. Literary translation as a part of a larger system

Theorists like Reiss, Vermeer, Nord, and Newmark focused on differentiating types of texts and providing instructions that translators could follow in their work. However, some other theorists also wanted to explore how translated works fit into target culture, how they are seen by people in the publishing industry, by critics and other people who are not directly connected to translators.

Even-Zohar (1990) criticises the fact that translated works are only ever seen in comparison to the source text, and their role in the literary and cultural system is often overlooked. He claims that it is important to address the position of translated literature in a culture because it influences both the texts that are chosen for translation as well as techniques and procedures that are used in the translation of said texts.

According to Even-Zohar (1990), translated literature can have one of two roles in the literary system. It can either have a central role or a peripheral role. Translated literature having a central role means that it is considered more influential than the original literature of a country or a culture. In these cases, translated literature usually sets new trends, new styles of writing

or different uses of language. It brings something innovative that is currently not present in a country's literature. Even-Zohar (1990) names several reasons why this happens. Some cultures and their languages are fairly new, and they have not had the time to develop, so they must rely on foreign literature for innovation. Smaller countries that have already established literary systems often do not have enough resources to cover all their literary needs, so they rely on translated literature. He gives the example of Russian literature that assumed a central position in Hebrew culture between the two world wars, which resulted in Hebrew writers' appropriation of Russian writing style and sentence structure. The influence of Russian literature was so great that the translators of other literatures had to follow the same style that translators of Russian literature used. On the other hand, if translated literature has a peripheral role, it does not set new trends in literature, it merely conforms to already established standards.

Whether translated literature has a central or a peripheral role significantly affects the translator's work (Even-Zohar, 1990). In cases when it has a central position, the translator has more liberty to be creative. Since the works they are translating are supposed to set the trends, the translator does not have to consult already translated works, they can be imaginative and attempt new things that may later become a standard or may be rejected. However, if the translated literature has a peripheral role, the translator often consults already existing translations of similar works and has previously determined strategies and procedures they need to follow.

Even-Zohar (1990) emphasises that these roles are not fixed. They are subject to change and can be influenced by events outside the literary systems, such as wars – when literature in a certain language can become peripheral. It is also important to remember that not all translated literature is the same. Literature in some foreign languages can be considered central, while literature in others is considered peripheral in the same country. There can also be a gap in one genre of literature where translated literature would then be considered central, while in the other genres, it remains peripheral.

The importance of considering translation in the framework of a larger system has also been mentioned in Lefevere's (1992) work. Although literary translation is not as influential as translations of religious texts, it would be wrong to assume it has no influence at all. Precisely because of that influence it falls under the control of the patrons who commissioned the translation. Sometimes the patrons who ensure that the translation reaches the audience do not

agree with everything written in the original text. This may be the case with a monarch of a country or, more commonly today, with an editor or a publisher. In this case, the translator must obey their ideologies, or they risk their translation not reaching the audience at all. However, translators not only face ideological pressure, but they also have to appease the critics who will read their work. This often leads to overly naturalized literary translations that are adapted to the common poetic of the target culture.

Venuti (1995) specifically criticises American and British culture for their domestication practices. He considers that the publishers in America and Britain intentionally choose foreign texts that will fit into their cultural framework, which leads to translated texts that seem like they were originally written in English. This practice not only erases the visibility of the translator but also furthers the domination of these cultures in the world. Venuti (1995) mentions the imbalance in the import of translated works in American and British cultures and the rest of the world. Both these countries benefit economically from English works that are translated into other languages and which comprise a fairly large percentage of their total works published. However, the percentage of translated works in America and Britain remains at around only 2% of the total books published (Venuti, 1995).

2.3. Translation procedures

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) claim that translators usually follow the same steps in translation even though they may not be aware of that. They consider the first steps to be the identification of units of translation, evaluation of the source text content, consideration of the situation around the source text as well as the evaluation of the style of the source text. Having done that, the translators can start working on a target text.

During their work on the target text, the translators will use either direct or oblique translation procedures. Direct translation refers to types of literal translation, while oblique translation refers to changes that the translator deems are necessary in order to achieve the same effect in the target language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995)

There are three types of direct translation procedures (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995):

1. Borrowing – this procedure is considered to be simple because it requires no changes; the word is simply borrowed into the target language in its original form. This procedure can be used to create a stylistic effect in the target language or to introduce elements of the source

culture into the target culture, and some borrowed words may even become a part of the target language in the future. For instance, the Japanese word “kabuki” that was borrowed into Croatian in the translation provided in the practical part of this thesis can be found on the website *Hrvatski jezični portal* (www.hjp.znanje.hr), which means that it is considered to be a part of the Croatian language. It introduces an element of the Japanese culture – a type of theatre performance that does not exist in the target culture.

2. Calque – this procedure is a type of borrowing that consists of taking an expression from the source language and then translating its elements into the target language. A calque can be lexical or structural. Lexical calque introduces a new expression into the target language by respecting its syntactic structure, while structural calque introduces a completely new structure into the target language. The translation in the practical part of this thesis contains an example of a lexical calque – “plutajući svijet”, which also appears in the title of the novel. The calque respects the syntactic structure of the source text expression “floating world” and is used to introduce an element of the Japanese culture that does not exist in the target culture. This element refers to the ukiyo-e genre of art that is known for woodblock prints depicting courtesans and scenes from kabuki plays (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Similar to borrowed words, calques can also become a part of the target language over time. However, sometimes calques become a part of the target language and their meaning changes, which is why translators should make sure they are not using a false friend of the source language expression.

3. Literal translation – this procedure is also known as word-for-word translation (example: “derives from” - “proizlazi iz”). It is most commonly used when the source language and the target language are similar, for example, Italian and Spanish, or when the source and target cultures are similar, as is the case with many European cultures.

Other than these three types of direct translation, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have also described four types of oblique translation procedures that can be used when direct translation has been deemed unacceptable by the translator:

4. Transposition – this procedure consists of changing the class of the word in the source text to better fit the target text without changing its meaning, for example changing the noun into a verb or a verb into an adverb. An example of this procedure can be found in the translated text in the practical part of this thesis. The expression “it is my belief” was translated as “vjerujem”, which means that the noun “belief” was replaced by the verb “vjerujem” in order

to produce a natural-sounding sentence in the target language. Transposition can be obligatory or optional. In cases where literal translation is impossible because it would lead to an incorrect expression in the target language, the transposition is obligatory. If however, the literal translation is not necessarily incorrect in the target language, but a translator thinks that a transposed expression would better fit the context of the sentence, the transposition is optional.

5. Modulation – this procedure involves a change in the semantics of the source language expression. It can be used for cases when other translation procedures produce an expression that is awkward in the target language. For example, the English phrase “I’ll have Junior Lunch too” was translated as “I ja ću uzeti dječji ručak” because the literal translation “I ja ću imati dječji ručak” is not something that a native speaker of Croatian would say. Modulation can be fixed or free. It is fixed when a modulated expression is a widely accepted translation of its equivalent in the source language, to the point of maybe even appearing in dictionaries. On the other hand, if the modulation is not yet widespread in the target language, but a translator evaluates that it would be accepted by the native speakers of the language, the modulation is called free. Modulation can be achieved in different ways, including metonymy, synecdoche, litotes, changing the active to passive and vice-versa and negation of the opposite.

6. Equivalence – this procedure is typically used for phraseological expressions, primarily idioms and proverbs that have a fixed equivalent in the target language. That equivalent may consist of completely different words which render the sense of the phrase in the source text. In the chapter translated in the practical part, an example of equivalence can be seen in the translation of the phrase “put my mind at rest”. The phrase was translated in Croatian using the phrase “biti mirne duše”, which consists of words with a different meaning than the words in the source phrase, but has the same meaning in the target language as the source phrase in the source language. There are some cases when calques of foreign expressions can enter the language and become fixed in that language. However, translators should avoid such innovations and use the procedure of equivalence for phraseological expressions.

7. Adaptation – this procedure is used when the source text is describing a situation or a thing that is not known in the target culture. In these cases, the translator should aim to replace the situation in the source text with one that would cause a reaction in the target text readers equivalent to reaction the source text causes in its readers. This can, for example, mean that a

translator opts to switch a sport mentioned in the source text for one that is familiar to their audience in the target culture.

2.4. Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*

2.4.1. Author

These biographical facts about Kazuo Ishiguro were found in *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* by Brian W. Shaffer (1998) and in the *Kazuo Ishiguro-Biographical* (2020).

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan in 1954. He moved to Guildford, Surrey when he was only six years old because of his father's work as an oceanographer. The move turned out to be permanent, and Ishiguro later became a British citizen. His childhood was marked by the contrast of Japanese culture and Japanese language that was spoken at home and English culture and language that surrounded him. Because of his distinct upbringing, he has often expressed that he feels neither English nor Japanese. Instead, Ishiguro prefers to think of himself as an international writer.

He studied philosophy and English at Kent University where he graduated with honours in 1987. In 1980 he graduated creative writing at the University of East Anglia. His writing career started with short stories and television dramas, but his first success was his novel *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) that focuses on an old Japanese woman who moved to England after the World War and the relationship she has with her two daughters. His two following novels, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* (1989) deal with similar topics of regrets the characters feel about their past. However, in *The Remains of the Day* Ishiguro turns to writing about English people living in England instead of focusing on Japanese characters as he did in his first two novels. His third novel also showed an improvement in writing and a more refined style and was thus awarded the Man Booker prize in 1989 and was later turned into a movie.

His fourth novel marked a turn in his writing style. *The Unconsoled* is a surreal novel inspired by Kafka and Marquez in which a pianist visits family in central Europe hoping to resolve his personal and artistic crisis. Ishiguro's later novels explore various genres, with *When We Were Orphans* (2000) being a detective novel and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) a science-fiction dystopia. His latest novel *The Buried Giant* was published in 2015, and in 2017 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

His writing often includes characters who are ordinary people with normal lives, but are bothered by their past and their psychological struggles are written using language that conceals rather than explicitly expresses their worries.

He has also written screenplays for *The saddest music in the world* (2003) and *The White Countess* (2004), as well as various lyrics and songs in collaboration with different musicians.

2.4.2. Novel

The novel is placed in post-war Japan in a period from 1948 to 1950. The main character is an artist Masuji Ono who is looking back on his life. Before the war, Ono used to live in a villa of his teacher Mori who taught him how to paint in his style, depicting women from the pleasure district. Ono considered those years to be extremely important for his artistic development because, at his previous job, quantity was valued above quality. During his years at Mori's villa, he lived a life typical for a bohemian artist, creating art for the sake of it and constantly drinking and indulging in pleasures in the night district. However, after several years in his teacher's villa, Ono comes under the influence of Matsuda, a nationalist who believes that art should serve a purpose. Matsuda berates him for closing himself off from the real world and ignoring problems of poverty and power imbalance in Japan. Soon after, Ono leaves Mori's villa and joins the far-right nationalists. The new phase of his art turns out to be painting propagandistic art that supports Japan going to war and expanding its territory. He even becomes a member of the Cultural Committee of the Interior Department. After the war is lost, Ono cannot deal with the fact that he was on the wrong side of history. Both his wife and only son lost their lives in the war, but Ono still cannot accept that his ideals were wrong. His daughter Noriko has troubles marrying because of her father's reputation which Ono denies at first, but admits later in a conversation with his other daughter Setsuko that his career might have been at fault. Setsuko is also worried that her father might commit suicide because it was seen as an honourable thing to do in apology for past transgressions. Ono, however, never seems to consider suicide as an option, even though he cannot adapt to the post-war Japan that is heavily influenced by American culture and values. His grandson is watching American movies and cartoons, and his daughter prefers western style apartment blocks that are more convenient than traditional Japanese houses and his son-in-law considers American influence better for their society because it teaches them democracy. Most of the time, Ono seems reluctant to let go of his ideals and values and refuses to recognize his part in the war or finds ways to justify and rationalise his actions. Since he is the one who narrates

the novel, he conveniently forgets some details or misremembers what was said, and in what way, which he himself admits. Consequently, the reader cannot be sure that the memories he recollected are true. It is not sure whether he was as well-known in the art world or as influential during the war as he believed himself to be.

3. Practical part – translation and analysis of a chapter from *An Artist of the Floating World*

3.1. Methodology

The practical part of this thesis consists of translation of a chapter from Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*. The novel was chosen because it has not yet been translated into Croatian. The novel has four chapters; however, for the sake of brevity, only one of them was chosen for translation and analysis. The title of this chapter is *November 1949*. This chapter encompasses pages 93 to 140 in the novel.

The theory on translation, particularly literary translation provided useful guidelines on how to approach the text and which parts of it to prioritise during translation. The text type of this novel is expressive (Reiss and Vermeer, 2015; Nord, 2005; Newmark, 2008) and thus, it was first necessary to read the author's biography and to read about his other works in order to learn about his style and the topics he discusses in his novels. Moreover, the main focus when translating an expressive text should be preserving the author's style, with particular attention paid to metaphors, unconventional syntax and expressions and strange words. Given that the chapter also contains culture-specific words related to Japanese culture, it was useful to consider the theories on how the position of a translation in a culture influences the translation.

In the following subchapter, a source text of the chapter *November 1949* in English will be provided in full, followed by the complete translation in Croatian. Four categories have been chosen for the analysis: idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words, loan words and intertextuality (see subchapter 3.3.). These 'particularities' of translation have been chosen for analysis because these categories can cause doubts when choosing the right translation procedure. Sentences containing these four categories will be provided in a table, with the source text sentence appearing on the left side of the table and the target text sentence on the right side. Below the table, explanations of each translation choice will be provided with references to seven translation procedures as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and discussed in the subchapter 2.3.

3.2. Translation

3.2.1. Source text

NOVEMBER

1949

My recollection of the first time I ever met Dr Saito remains quite vivid, and I am thus confident enough of its accuracy. It must have been all of sixteen years ago now, on the day after I moved into my house. I recall it being a bright summer's day, and I was outside adjusting the fence, or perhaps fixing something to the gateway, and exchanging greetings with those of my new neighbours who passed by. Then at one point, after my back had been turned to the path for some time, I became aware that someone was standing behind me, apparently to watch me work. I turned to find a man of around my own age studying with interest my newly inscribed name on the gatepost.

‘So you are Mr Ono,’ he remarked. ‘Well now, this is a real honour. A real honour to have someone of your stature here in our neighbourhood. I am myself, you see, involved in the world of fine art. My name is Saito, from the Imperial City University.’

‘Dr Saito? Why, this is a great privilege. I have heard much about you, sir.’

I believe we went on talking for several moments there outside my gateway, and I am sure I am not mistaken in recalling that Dr Saito, on that same occasion, made several more references to my work and career. And before he went on his way down the hill, I remember his repeating words to the effect of: ‘A great honour to have an artist of your stature in our neighbourhood, Mr Ono.’

Thereafter, Dr Saito and I always greeted each other respectfully whenever we chanced to meet. It is true, I suppose, that after that initial encounter – until recent events gave us cause for greater intimacy – we rarely stopped for prolonged conversations. But my memory of that first meeting, and of Dr Saito recognizing my name on the gatepost, is sufficiently clear for me to assert with some confidence that my elder daughter, Setsuko, was quite mistaken in at least some of the things she tried to imply last month. It is hardly possible, for instance, that Dr Saito had no idea who I was until the marriage negotiations last year obliged him to find out.

Because her visit this year was so brief, and because she spent it staying at Noriko and Taro's new home in the Izumimachi district, my walk with Setsuko that morning through Kawabe

Park was really my only chance to speak properly with her. It is not surprising then that I should be turning that conversation over in my mind for some time afterwards, and I do not think it unreasonable that I now find myself becoming increasingly irritated by certain things she said to me that day.

At the time, however, I could not have been dwelling too deeply on Setsuko's words, for I recall being in a good enough mood, happy to be in my daughter's company again, and enjoying walking through Kawabe Park, which I had not done for a while. This was just over a month ago, when as you will recall, the days were still sunny, though the leaves were already falling. Setsuko and I were making our way down the wide avenue of trees that runs through the middle of the park, and because we were well ahead of the time we had agreed to meet Noriko and Ichiro beside the statue of the Emperor Taisho, we were walking at an easy pace, stopping every now and then to admire the autumn scenery.

Perhaps you will agree with me that Kawabe Park is the most rewarding of the city parks; certainly after one has been walking around those crowded little streets of the Kawabe district for a time, it is most refreshing to find oneself in one of those spacious long avenues hung over with trees. But if you are new to this city, and unfamiliar with the history of Kawabe Park, I should perhaps explain here why the park has always held a special interest for me.

Here and there around the park, you will no doubt recall passing certain isolated patches of grass, none larger than a school yard, visible through the trees as you walk down any of those avenues. It is as though those who planned the park had become confused and abandoned some scheme or other half-completed. This, in fact, was more or less the case. Some years ago, Akira Sugimura – he whose house I had bought shortly after his death – had the most ambitious of plans concerning Kawabe Park. I realize Akira Sugimura's name is rarely heard these days, but let me point out that not so long ago he was unquestionably one of the most influential men in the city. At one stage, so I heard, he possessed four houses, and it was hardly possible to walk around this city for long before stumbling across some enterprise or other owned by or connected heavily with Sugimura. Then, around 1920 or 1921, at the peak of his success, Sugimura decided to gamble much of his wealth and capital on a project that would allow him to leave his mark for ever on this city and its people. He planned to convert Kawabe Park – which was then a rather drab neglected place – into the focus of the city's culture. Not only would the grounds be enlarged to contain more natural areas for people to relax, the park was to become the site for several glittering cultural centres – a museum of

natural science; a new kabuki theatre for the Takahashi school, who had recently lost their venue in Shirahama Street through fire; a European-style concert hall; and also, somewhat eccentrically, a cemetery for the city's cats and dogs. I cannot remember what else he planned, but there was no mistaking the sweeping ambition of the scheme. Sugimura hoped not only to transform the Kawabe district, but the whole cultural balance of the city, bringing a new emphasis to the northern side of the river. It was, as I have said, nothing less than the attempt of one man to stamp his mark for ever on the character of the city.

Work on the park was well underway, it seems, when the scheme ran into terrible financial difficulties. I am not clear on the details of the affair, but the result was that Sugimura's 'cultural centres' were never built. Sugimura himself lost a great deal of money and never again regained his old influence. After the war, Kawabe Park came under the direct control of the city authorities who built the avenues of trees. All that remain today of Sugimura's schemes are those oddly empty patches of grass where his museums and theatres would have stood.

I may have said before that my dealings with Sugimura's family after his death – on the occasion of my buying the last of his houses – were not of the kind to make me particularly well disposed to the man's memory. Nevertheless, whenever I find myself wandering around Kawabe Park these days, I start to think of Sugimura and his schemes, and I confess I am beginning to feel a certain admiration for the man. For indeed, a man who aspires to rise above the mediocre, to be something more than ordinary, surely deserves admiration, even if in the end he fails and loses a fortune on account of his ambitions. It is my belief, furthermore, that Sugimura did not die an unhappy man. For his failure was quite unlike the undignified failures of most ordinary lives, and a man like Sugimura would have known this. If one has failed only where others have not had the courage or will to try, there is a consolation – indeed, a deep satisfaction – to be gained from this observation when looking back over one's life.

But it was not my intention to dwell on Sugimura. As I say, I was by and large enjoying my walk through Kawabe Park with Setsuko that day, notwithstanding certain of her remarks – whose significance I did not fully grasp until I reflected on them some time later. In any case, our conversation was brought to an end by the fact that in the middle of our path only a short distance ahead loomed the statue of the Emperor Taisho where we had arranged to meet

Noriko and Ichiro. I was casting my gaze towards the benches that circled the statue when I heard a boy's voice shout: 'There's Oji!'

Ichiro came running towards me, his arms outstretched as though to anticipate an embrace. But then as he reached me, he appeared to check himself, and fixing a solemn expression on his face, held out his hand to be shaken.

'Good day,' he said, in a businesslike manner.

'Well, Ichiro, you're indeed growing into a man. How old are you now?'

'I believe I'm eight. Please come this way, Oji. I have a few things to discuss with you.'

His mother and I followed him to the bench where Noriko was waiting. My younger daughter was wearing a bright dress I had never seen before.

'You're looking very cheerful, Noriko,' I said to her. 'It seems when a daughter leaves home, she immediately begins to get unrecognizable.'

'There's no need for a woman to dress drably simply because she marries,' Noriko said quickly, but she seemed pleased by my compliment none the less.

As I recall, we all sat down for a while beneath the Emperor Taisho and conversed for a while. The reason for our meeting in the park was that my two daughters had wished to spend some time together shopping for fabrics, and I had thus agreed to take Ichiro to lunch at a department store, then spend the afternoon showing him the city centre. Ichiro was impatient to leave, and continued to nudge my arm as we sat talking, saying:

'Oji, let the women chatter between themselves. We have things to attend to.'

My grandson and I found ourselves at the department store slightly after the usual time for lunch, and the restaurant floor was no longer crowded. Ichiro took his time choosing between the various dishes displayed in the cabinets, at one point, turning to me and saying:

'Oji, you guess what my favourite food is now.' 'Hmm. I don't know, Ichiro. Hot-cake? Ice-cream?'

'Spinach! Spinach gives you strength!' He puffed out his chest and flexed his biceps.

‘I see. Well now, the Junior Lunch here has some spinach.’ ‘Junior Lunch is for small children.’

‘That may be so, but it’s very nice. Oji may order one for himself.’

‘All right. I’ll have Junior Lunch too. To keep Oji company. But tell the man to give me lots of spinach.’

‘Very well, Ichiro.’

‘Oji, you’re to eat spinach as often as possible. It gives you strength.’

Ichiro chose for us one of the tables beside the row of wide windows, and while waiting for our lunch, continued to place his face against the glass to observe the busy main street four storeys below. I had not seen Ichiro since Setsuko’s visit to my home over a year ago – he had not been present at Noriko’s wedding on account of a virus – and I was struck by how much he had grown in that time. Not only was he significantly taller, his whole manner had become calmer and less childlike. His eyes in particular seemed to have a much older gaze.

In fact, as I watched Ichiro that day, pressing his face against the glass to see the street below, I could see how much he was coming to resemble his father. There were traces of Setsuko too, but these were to be found mainly in his mannerisms and little facial habits. And of course, I was struck yet again by the similarity Ichiro bore to how my own son, Kenji, had been at that age. I confess I take a strange comfort from observing children inherit these resemblances from other members of the family, and it is my hope that my grandson will retain them into his adult years.

Of course, it is not only when we are children that we are open to these small inheritances; a teacher or mentor whom one admires greatly in early adulthood will leave his mark, and indeed, long after one has come to re-evaluate, perhaps even reject, the bulk of that man’s teachings, certain traits will tend to survive, like some shadow of that influence, to remain with one throughout one’s life. I am aware, for instance, that certain of my mannerisms – the way I poise my hand when I am explaining something, certain inflexions in my voice when I am trying to convey irony or impatience, even whole phrases I am fond of using that people have come to think of as my own – I am aware these are all traits I originally acquired from Mori-san, my former teacher. And perhaps I will not be flattering myself unduly were I to suppose many of my own pupils will in turn have gained such small inheritances from me. I

would hope, furthermore, that in spite of any reassessments they may have come to make concerning those years under my supervision, most of them will have remained grateful for much of what they learnt. Certainly, for my own part, whatever the obvious shortcomings of my former teacher, Seiji Moriyama, or ‘Mori-san’ as we always called him, whatever occurred between us in the end, I would always acknowledge that those seven years I spent living at his family villa out in the hilly countryside of the Wakaba prefecture were some of the most crucial to my career.

When I try today to summon a picture of Mori-san’s villa, I tend to recall one particularly satisfying view of it from up on the mountain path leading to the nearest village. As one climbed that path, the villa would appear down in the hollow below, a dark wooden rectangle set amidst the tall cedar trees. The three long sections of the villa linked to form three sides of the rectangle around a central yard; the fourth side was completed by a cedar fence and gateway, so that the yard was entirely enclosed, and one could imagine how in olden times, it would have been no easy task for hostile visitors to gain entry once that heavy gate had swung shut.

A modern intruder, however, would have found little such difficulty. For though one would have been unable to see this from up on that path, Mori-san’s villa was in a state of considerable dilapidation. From up on that path, one would not have guessed how the interiors of the building comprised room after room of torn papering, of tatami floors so worn that in several places there was a danger of falling right through if one trod carelessly. In fact, when I try to recall a picture of the villa seen at closer quarters, what comes to me is an impression of broken roof tiles, decaying latticework, chipped and rotting verandas. Those roofs were forever developing new leaks and after a night of rain, the smell of damp wood and mouldering leaves would pervade every room. And there were those months when insects and moths would invade in such numbers, clinging everywhere to the woodwork, burrowing into every crevice, so that one feared they would cause the place to collapse once and for all.

Of all those rooms, only two or three were in a condition to suggest the splendour the villa must once have possessed. One such room, which filled with a clear light through much of the day, was reserved for special occasions, and I remember how from time to time Mori-san would summon all his pupils – there were ten of us – into that room whenever he had completed a new painting. I recall how before we stepped inside, each of us would pause at the threshold and gasp in admiration at the picture mounted at the centre of the floor. Mori-

san, meanwhile, would be attending to a plant perhaps, or looking out of the window, seemingly oblivious to our arrival. Before long, we would all be seated on the floor around the painting, pointing things out to each other in hushed tones: ‘And look at the way Sensei has filled in that corner there. Remarkable!’ But no one would actually say: ‘Sensei, what a marvellous painting,’ for it was somehow the convention of these occasions that we behave as though our teacher were not present.

Often a new painting would feature some striking innovation, and a debate of some passion would develop among us. Once, for example, I remember we came into the room to be confronted by a picture of a kneeling woman seen from a peculiarly low point of view – so low that we appeared to be looking up at her from floor level.

‘Clearly,’ I remember someone asserting, ‘the low perspective lends the woman a dignity she would otherwise not have. It is a most astonishing achievement. For in all other respects, she looks a self-pitying sort. It is this tension that gives the painting its subtle power.’

‘This may be so,’ someone else said. ‘The woman may well have a sort of dignity, but that hardly derives from the low viewpoint. It seems clear that Sensei is telling us something much more pertinent. He is saying that the perspective appears low only because we have become so attuned to a particular eye level. It is clearly Sensei’s desire to liberate us from such arbitrary and confining habits. He’s saying to us, “there’s no need to always see things from the usual tired angles”. This is why this painting is so inspiring.’

Soon we were all shouting and contradicting each other with our theories about Mori-san’s intentions. And although as we argued, we continually stole glances towards our teacher, he gave no indication as to which of our theories he approved of. I recall him simply standing there at the far end of the room, his arms folded, gazing out across the yard through the wood-lattice bars of the window, an amused look on his face. Then, after he had listened to us argue for some time, he turned and said: ‘Perhaps you’d all leave me now. There are certain matters I wish to attend to.’ At which we all filed out of the room, once more muttering our admiration for the new painting.

As I recount this I am aware that Mori-san’s behaviour may strike you as somewhat arrogant. But it is perhaps easier to understand the aloofness he displayed on such occasions if one has oneself been in a position in which one is constantly looked up to and admired. For it is by no means desirable that one be always instructing and pronouncing to one’s pupils; there are

many situations when it is preferable to remain silent so as to allow them the chance to debate and ponder. As I say, anyone who has been in a position of large influence will appreciate this.

The effect was, in any case, that arguments about our teacher's work could go on for weeks on end. In the continued absence of any explication from Mori-san himself, the tendency was for us to look to one of our number, an artist called Sasaki, who at that point enjoyed the status of being Mori-san's leading pupil. Although as I have said, some arguments could go on a long time, once Sasaki finally made up his mind on a matter, that would usually mark the end of the dispute. Similarly, if Sasaki were to suggest a person's painting was in any way 'disloyal' to our teacher, this would almost always lead to immediate capitulation on the part of the offender – who would then abandon the painting, or in some cases, burn it along with the refuse.

In fact, as I recall, the Tortoise, for several months after our arrival together at the villa, was repeatedly destroying his work under such circumstances. For while I was able to settle easily enough into the way of things there, my companion would again and again produce work displaying elements clearly contrary to our teacher's principles, and I remember many times pleading to my new colleagues on his behalf, explaining that he was not intentionally being disloyal to Mori-san. Often during those early days, the Tortoise would approach me with a distressed air and lead me off to see some half-completed work of his, saying in a low voice: 'Ono-san, please tell me, is this as our teacher would do it?'

And at times, even I became exasperated to discover he had unwittingly employed yet some other obviously offensive element. For it was not as though Mori-san's priorities were at all hard to grasp. The label, 'the modern Utamaro', was often applied to our teacher in those days, and although this was a title conferred all too readily then on any competent artist who specialized in portraying pleasure district women, it tends to sum up Mori-san's concerns rather well. For Mori-san was consciously trying to 'modernize' the Utamaro tradition; in many of his most notable paintings – 'Tying a Dance Drum', say, or 'After a Bath' – the woman is seen from the back in classic Utamaro fashion. Various other such classic features recur in his work: the woman holding a towel to her face, the woman combing out her long hair. And Mori-san made extensive use of the traditional device of expressing emotion through the textiles which the woman holds or wears rather than through the look on her face. But at the same time, his work was full of European influences, which the more staunch admirers of Utamaro would have regarded as iconoclastic; he had, for instance, long

abandoned the use of the traditional dark outline to define his shapes, preferring instead the Western use of blocks of colour, with light and shade to create a three-dimensional appearance. And no doubt, he had taken his cue from the Europeans in what was his most central concern: the use of subdued colours. Mori-san's wish was to evoke a certain melancholy, nocturnal atmosphere around his women, and throughout the years I studied under him, he experimented extensively with colours in an attempt to capture the feel of lantern light. Because of this, it was something of a hallmark of Mori-san's work that a lantern would always figure somewhere in the picture, by implication if not in actuality. It was perhaps typical of the Tortoise's slowness in grasping the essentials of Mori-san's art that even after a year at the villa, he was using colours that created quite the wrong effect, then wondering why he was again being accused of disloyalty when he had remembered to include a lantern in his composition.

For all my pleadings, the likes of Sasaki had little patience for the Tortoise's difficulties and at times the atmosphere threatened to become as hostile for my companion as any he had experienced at Master Takeda's firm. And then – I believe it was some time during our second year at the villa – a change came over Sasaki, a change that was to lead to his suffering hostility of an altogether harsher and darker nature than anything he had ever orchestrated against the Tortoise.

One supposes all groups of pupils tend to have a leader figure – someone whose abilities the teacher has singled out as an example for the others to follow. And it is this leading pupil, by virtue of his having the strongest grasp of his teacher's ideas, who will tend to function, as did Sasaki, as the main interpreter of those ideas to the less able or less experienced pupils. But by the same token, it is this same leading pupil who is most likely to see shortcomings in the teacher's work, or else develop views of his own divergent from those of his teacher. In theory, of course, a good teacher should accept this tendency – indeed, welcome it as a sign that he has brought his pupil to a point of maturity. In practice, however, the emotions involved can be quite complicated. Sometimes, when one has nurtured a gifted pupil long and hard, it is difficult to see any such maturing of talent as anything other than treachery, and some regrettable situations are apt to arise.

Certainly, what we did to Sasaki following his dispute with our teacher was quite unwarranted, and there seems little to be gained in my recalling such things here. I do, however, have some vivid recollections of that night when Sasaki finally left us.

Most of us had already turned in. I was myself lying awake in the darkness in one of those dilapidated rooms, when I heard Sasaki's voice calling to someone a little way down the veranda. He seemed to receive no answer from whoever it was he was addressing, and eventually there came the sounds of a screen sliding shut and Sasaki's footsteps coming nearer. I heard him stop at another room and say something, but again he seemed to be met only with silence. His footsteps came still closer, then I heard him slide open the screen of the room next to mine.

'You and I have been good friends for many years,' I heard him say. 'Won't you at least speak to me?'

There was no response from the person he had addressed. Then Sasaki said:

'Won't you just tell me where the paintings are?'

There was still no response. But as I lay there in the darkness, I could hear the sound of rats scuttling under the floorboards of that neighbouring room, and it seemed to me this noise was some sort of reply.

'If you find them so offensive,' Sasaki's voice continued, 'there's no sense in your keeping them. But they happen to mean a great deal to me at this moment. I wish to take them with me, wherever it is I'm going. I've nothing else to take with me.'

Again, there came the scuttling noise of rats in reply, then a long silence. Indeed, the silence went on for so long, I thought perhaps Sasaki had walked off into the darkness and I had failed to hear him. But then I heard him say again:

'These past few days, the others have done some terrible things to me. But what has hurt me the most has been your refusal to give me even one word of comfort.'

There was another silence. Then Sasaki said: 'Won't you even look at me now and wish me well?'

Eventually, I heard the screen slide shut, and the sounds of Sasaki stepping down from the veranda and walking away across the yard.

After his departure, Sasaki was hardly mentioned at the villa and on the few occasions he was, he tended to be referred to simply as ‘the traitor’. Indeed, I am reminded of just how much Sasaki’s memory was prone to cause offence amongst us when I recall what occurred once or twice during those slanging contests we often indulged in.

On warmer days, because we tended to leave the screens of our rooms wide open, several of us congregating in a room might catch sight of another group similarly gathered on the opposite wing. This situation would soon lead to someone calling out across the yard a witty provocation, and before long, both groups would be assembled out on their respective verandas, shouting insults across at each other. This behaviour may sound absurd when I recount it, but there was something about the architecture of the villa and the echoing acoustics it produced when one shouted from one wing to another, that somehow encouraged us to indulge in these childish contests. The insults could be far-ranging – making fun of someone’s manly prowess, say, or of a painting someone had just completed – but for the most part were devoid of any intent to wound, and I recall many highly amusing exchanges which had both sides red with laughter. Indeed, by and large, my memories of these exchanges sum up well enough the competitive yet family-like intimacy we enjoyed during those years at the villa. And yet, when once or twice Sasaki’s name was invoked during the course of these insults, things suddenly got out of hand, with colleagues abandoning boundaries and actually scrapping in the yard. It did not take us long to learn that to compare someone to ‘the traitor’, even in fun, was never likely to be received in good humour.

You may gather from such recollections that our devotion to our teacher and to his principles was fierce and total. And it is easy with hindsight – once the shortcomings of an influence have become obvious – to be critical of a teacher who fosters such a climate. But then again, anyone who has held ambitions on a grand scale, anyone who has been in a position to achieve something large and has felt the need to impart his ideas as thoroughly as possible, will have some sympathy for the way Mori-san conducted things. For though it may seem a little foolish now in the light of what became of his career, it was Mori-san’s wish at that time to do nothing less than change fundamentally the identity of painting as practised in our city. It was with no less a goal in mind that he devoted so much of his time and wealth to the

nurturing of pupils, and it is perhaps important to remember this when making judgements concerning my former teacher.

His influence over us was not, of course, confined merely to the realms of painting. We lived throughout those years almost entirely in accordance with his values and lifestyle, and this entailed spending much time exploring the city's 'floating world' – the night-time world of pleasure, entertainment and drink which formed the backdrop for all our paintings. I always feel a certain nostalgia now in recalling the city centre as it was in those days; the streets were not so filled with the noise of traffic, and the factories had yet to take the fragrance of seasonal blossoms from the night air. A favourite haunt of ours was a small teahouse beside the canal in Kojima Street called 'Water Lanterns' – for indeed, the lanterns of the establishment could be seen reflected in the canal as one approached. The proprietress was an old friend of Mori-san's, which ensured we always received generous treatment, and I recall some memorable nights there, singing and drinking with our hostesses. Our other regular haunt was an archery parlour in Nagata Street, where the proprietress never tired of reminding us how years before, when she had been working as a geisha in Akihara, Mori-san had used her as a model for a series of wood-block prints which had proved immensely popular. Some six or seven young women hosted that archery parlour and after a while we each had our own favourites with whom to exchange pipes and pass away the night.

Neither was our merrymaking limited to these expeditions into the city. Mori -san seemed to have a never-ending line of acquaintances from the world of entertaining, and impoverished troupes of wandering actors, dancers and musicians were forever arriving at the villa to be greeted as long-lost friends. Large quantities of liquor would then be produced, our visitors would sing and dance through the night, and before long someone would have to be sent out to awaken the wine seller at the nearest village for replenishments. One regular visitor of those days was a story-teller called Maki, a fat jolly man who could reduce us all to helpless laughter one moment and tears of sadness the next with his renderings of the old tales. Years later, I came across Maki a few times at the Migi-Hidari, and we would reminisce with some amazement about those nights at the villa. Maki was convinced he remembered many of those parties continuing straight through one night, through the following day and into a second night. Although I could not be so certain of this, I had to admit to recollections of Mori-san's villa in the daytime, littered everywhere with sleeping or exhausted bodies, some of them collapsed out in the yard with the sun beating down on them.

I have, however, a more vivid memory concerning one such night. I can recall walking alone across the central yard, grateful for the fresh night air, having for a moment escaped the revellings. I remember I walked over to the entrance of the storeroom, and before going in, glanced back across the yard towards the room where my companions and our visitors were entertaining each other. I could see numerous silhouettes dancing behind the paper screens, and a singer's voice came drifting out through the night to me.

I had made my way to the storeroom because it was one of the few places in the villa where there was a chance of remaining undisturbed for any length of time. I imagine in days gone by, when the villa had housed guards and retainers, the room had been used for storing weapons and armour. But when I stepped inside that night and lit the lantern hanging above the door, I found the floor so cluttered with every sort of object it was impossible to cross it without hopping from space to space; everywhere were stacks of old canvasses tied together with rope, broken easels, all manner of pots and jars with brushes or sticks protruding. I negotiated my way to a clearing on the floor and sat down. The lantern above the door, I noticed, was causing the objects around me to throw exaggerated shadows; it was an eerie effect, as though I were sitting in some grotesque miniature cemetery.

I suppose I must have become quite lost in my broodings, for I recall being startled by the sound of the storeroom door sliding open. I looked up to see Mori-san in the doorway and said hurriedly: 'Good evening, Sensei.'

Possibly the lantern above the door did not give sufficient light to illuminate my part of the room, or perhaps it was simply that my face was in shadow. In any case, Mori-san peered forward and asked:

'Who is that? Ono?'

'Indeed, Sensei.'

He continued to peer forward for a moment. Then, taking the lantern down from the beam and holding it out before him, he began to make his way towards me, stepping carefully through the objects on the floor. As he did so, the lantern in his hand caused shadows to move all around us. I hastened to clear a space for him, but before I could do so, Mori-san had seated himself a little way away on an old wooden chest. He gave a sigh and said:

‘I stepped out for a little fresh air, and I saw this light on in here. Darkness everywhere, except this one light. And I thought to myself, now that storeroom’s hardly a place for lovers to be hiding away. Whoever’s in there must be in a lonely mood.’

‘I suppose I must have been sitting here in a dream, Sensei. I had no intention of remaining here so long.’

He had placed the lantern on the floor beside him, so that from where I sat, I could see only his silhouette. ‘One of those dancing girls appeared very taken with you earlier,’ he said. ‘She’ll be disappointed to find you’ve vanished now the night’s here.’

‘I didn’t mean to appear rude to our guests, Sensei. Like yourself, I simply came out for some fresh air.’

We were silent for a moment. Across the yard, our companions could be heard singing and clapping their hands in time.

‘Well, Ono,’ Mori-san said eventually, ‘what do you make of my old friend Gisaburo? Quite a character.’

‘Indeed, Sensei. He seems a most affable gentleman.’

‘He may be dressed in rags these days, but he was once quite a celebrity. And as he showed us tonight, he still has much of his old skill left.’

‘Indeed.’

‘So then, Ono. What is it that worries you?’ ‘Worries me, Sensei? Why, nothing at all.’

‘Can it be that you find something a little offensive about old Gisaburo?’

‘Not at all, Sensei.’ I laughed self-consciously. ‘Why, not at all. A most charming gentleman.’

For a little time after that, we talked of other matters, of anything which came to mind. But when Mori-san had turned the conversation back once more to my ‘worries’, when it became clear he was prepared to sit there waiting until I unburdened myself, I finally said:

‘Gisaburo-san does indeed appear to be the most good-hearted gentleman. He and his dancers have been most kind to entertain us. But then I cannot help thinking, Sensei, we have been visited by their like so often these past few months.’

Mori-san gave no reply, so I continued:

‘Forgive me, Sensei, I mean no disrespect to Gisaburo-san and his friends. But at times I am a little puzzled. I am puzzled that we artists should be devoting so much of our time enjoying the company of those like Gisaburo-san.’

I believe it was around this point that my teacher rose to his feet and, lantern in hand, made his way across the floor towards the back wall of the storeroom. The wall had previously been in darkness, but as he held the lantern up to it, three wood-block prints, hung one below the other, became sharply illuminated. Each of these portrayed a geisha adjusting her coiffure, each seated on the floor and viewed from the back. Mori-san studied the pictures for a few moments, moving the lantern from one to the next. Then he shook his head and muttered to himself: ‘Fatally flawed. Fatally flawed by trivial concerns.’ A few seconds later, he added without turning from the pictures: ‘But one always feels affection for one’s early works. Perhaps you’ll feel the same one day for the work you’ve done here.’ Then he shook his head again, saying: ‘But these are all fatally flawed, Ono.’

‘I cannot agree, Sensei,’ I said. ‘I think those prints are marvellous examples of how an artist’s talent can transcend the limitations of a particular style. I’ve often thought it a great shame Sensei’s early prints should be confined to such rooms as these. Surely they should be open to display along with his paintings.’

Mori-san remained absorbed by his pictures. ‘Fatally flawed,’ he repeated. ‘But I suppose I was very young.’ He moved his lantern again, causing one picture to fade into shadow and another to appear. Then he said: ‘These are all scenes from a certain geisha house in Honcho. A very well-regarded one in my younger days. Gisaburo and I often used to visit such places together.’ Then after a moment or two, he said again: ‘These are fatally flawed, Ono.’

‘But Sensei, I cannot see what faults even the most discerning eye would see in these prints.’

He continued to study the pictures for a few moments more, then began to come back across the room. It seemed to me that he took an inordinate amount of time negotiating his way through the objects on the floor; at times, I would hear him mumbling to himself and the sound of his feet pushing away a jar or box. Indeed, I once or twice thought Mori-san was actually searching for something – perhaps more of his early prints – amidst the chaotic piles, but eventually he seated himself back on the old wooden chest and drew a sigh. After a few further moments of silence, he said:

‘Gisaburo is an unhappy man. He’s had a sad life. His talent has gone to ruin. Those he once loved have long since died or deserted him. Even in our younger days, he was already a lonely, sad character.’ Mori-san paused a moment. Then he went on: ‘But then sometimes we used to drink and enjoy ourselves with the women of the pleasure quarters, and Gisaburo would become happy. Those women would tell him all the things he wanted to hear, and for the night anyway, he’d be able to believe them. Once the morning came, of course, he was too intelligent a man to go on believing such things. But Gisaburo didn’t value those nights any the less for that. The best things, he always used to say, are put together of a night and vanish with the morning. What people call the floating world, Ono, was a world Gisaburo knew how to value.’

Mori-san paused again. As before, I could see his form only in silhouette, but it was my impression he was listening to the sounds of the merrymaking from across the yard. Then he said: ‘He’s older and sadder now, but he’s changed little in many respects. Tonight he’s happy, just as he used to be in those pleasure houses.’ He drew a long breath, as though he were smoking tobacco. Then he went on: ‘The finest, most fragile beauty an artist can hope to capture drifts within those pleasure houses after dark. And on nights like these, Ono, some of that beauty drifts into our own quarters here. But as for those pictures up there, they don’t even hint at these transitory, illusory qualities. They’re deeply flawed, Ono.’

‘But Sensei, to my eyes, those prints suggest most impressively these very things.’

‘I was very young when I prepared those prints. I suspect the reason I couldn’t celebrate the floating world was that I couldn’t bring myself to believe in its worth. Young men are often guilt-ridden about pleasure, and I suppose I was no different. I suppose I thought that to pass away one’s time in such places, to spend one’s skills celebrating things so intangible and transient, I suppose I thought it all rather wasteful, all rather decadent. It’s hard to appreciate the beauty of a world when one doubts its very validity.’

I thought about this, then said: ‘Indeed, Sensei, I admit what you say may well apply in respect to my own work. I will do all I can to put matters right.’

Mori-san appeared not to hear me. ‘But I’ve long since lost all such doubts, Ono,’ he continued. ‘When I am an old man, when I look back over my life and see I have devoted it to the task of capturing the unique beauty of that world, I believe I will be well satisfied. And no man will make me believe I’ve wasted my time.’

It is possible, of course, that Mori-san did not use those exact words. Indeed, on reflection, such phrases sound rather more like the sort of thing I myself would declare to my own pupils after we had been drinking a little at the Migi-Hidari. ‘As the new generation of Japanese artists, you have a great responsibility towards the culture of this nation. I am proud to have the likes of you as my pupils. And while I may deserve only the smallest praise for my own paintings, when I come to look back over my life and remember I have nurtured and assisted the careers of all of you here, why then no man will make me believe I have wasted my time.’ And whenever I made some such statement, all those young men congregated around the table would drown each other out in protest at the way I had dismissed my own paintings – which, they clamoured to inform me, were without doubt great works assured of their place in posterity. But then again, as I have said, many phrases and expressions which came to be most characteristic of me I actually inherited from Mori-san, and so it is quite possible that those were my teacher’s exact words that night, instilled in me by the powerful impression they made on me at the time.

But again I have drifted. I was trying to recall the lunch I had at the department store with my grandson last month following that annoying conversation with Setsuko in Kawabe Park. In fact, I believe I was remembering in particular Ichiro’s extolling of spinach.

Once our lunch had arrived, I recall, Ichiro sat there preoccupied with the spinach on his plate, sometimes prodding at it with his spoon. Then he looked up and said: ‘Oji, you watch!’

My grandson proceeded to pile as much spinach as possible on to the spoon, then raised it high into the air and began pouring it into his mouth. His method resembled someone drinking the last dregs from a bottle.

‘Ichiro,’ I said, ‘I’m not sure that’s such good manners.’

But my grandson continued putting more spinach into his mouth, all the time chewing vigorously. He put down his spoon only when it was empty and his cheeks were full to bursting. Then, still chewing, he fixed a stern expression on his face, thrust out his chest and began punching at the air around him.

‘What are you doing, Ichiro? You tell me now what you’re up to.’ ‘You guess, Oji!’ he said, through the spinach.

‘Hmm. I don’t know, Ichiro. A man drinking sake and fighting. No? Then you tell me. Oji can’t guess.’

‘Popeye Sailorman!’

‘What’s that, Ichiro? Another of your heroes?’

‘Popeye Sailorman eats spinach. Spinach makes him strong.’ He thrust out his chest again and threw more punches at the air.

‘I see, Ichiro,’ I said, laughing. ‘Spinach is a wonderful food indeed.’ ‘Does sake make you strong?’

I smiled and shook my head. ‘Sake can make you believe you’re strong. But in reality, Ichiro, you’re no stronger than before you drank it.’

‘Why do men drink sake then, Oji?’

‘I don’t know, Ichiro. Perhaps because for a little while, they can believe they’re stronger. But sake doesn’t really make a man stronger.’

‘Spinach makes you really strong.’

‘Then spinach is much better than sake. You go on eating spinach, Ichiro. But look, what about all these other things on your plate?’

‘I like drinking sake too. And whisky. At home, there’s a bar I always go to.’

‘Is that so, Ichiro. I think it’s better you go on eating spinach. As you say, that makes you really strong.’

‘I like sake best. I drink ten bottles every night. Then I drink ten bottles of whisky.’

‘Is that so, Ichiro. Now that’s real drinking indeed. This must be a real headache for Mother.’

‘Women never understand about us men drinking,’ Ichiro said, and turned his attention to the lunch in front of him. But soon he looked up again and said: ‘Oji’s coming for supper tonight.’

‘That’s right, Ichiro. I expect Aunt Noriko will prepare something very nice.’

‘Aunt Noriko’s bought some sake. She said Oji and Uncle Taro will drink it all up.’

‘Well, we may do indeed. I’m sure the women will like a little too. But she’s right, Ichiro. Sake’s mainly for the men.’

‘Oji, what happens if women drink sake?’

‘Hmm. There’s no telling. Women aren’t as strong as we men are, Ichiro. So perhaps they’ll get drunk very quickly.’

‘Aunt Noriko might get drunk! She might have a tiny cupful and get completely drunk!’

I gave a laugh. ‘Yes, that’s quite possible.’

‘Aunt Noriko might get completely drunk! She’ll sing songs then fall asleep at the table!’

‘Well, Ichiro,’ I said, still laughing, ‘we men had better keep the sake to ourselves then, hadn’t we?’

‘Men are stronger, so we can drink more.’

‘That’s right, Ichiro. We’d best keep the sake to ourselves.’

Then, after I had thought for a moment, I added: ‘I suppose you’re eight years old now, Ichiro. You’re growing to be a big man. Who knows? Perhaps Oji will see to it you get some sake tonight.’

My grandson looked at me with a slightly threatened expression, and said nothing. I smiled at him, then glanced out at the pale grey sky through the large windows beside us.

‘You never met your Uncle Kenji, Ichiro. When he was your age, he was as big and strong as you are now. I remember he had his first taste of sake at around your age. I’ll see to it, Ichiro, you get a small taste tonight.’

Ichiro seemed to consider this for a moment. Then he said:

‘Mother might be trouble.’

‘Don’t worry about your mother, Ichiro. Your Oji will be able to handle her.’

Ichiro shook his head wearily. ‘Women never understand men drinking,’ he remarked.

‘Well, it’s time a man like you tasted a little sake. Don’t you worry, Ichiro, you leave your mother to Oji. We can’t have the women bossing us around now, can we?’

My grandson remained absorbed in his thoughts for a moment.

Then suddenly he said very loudly:

‘Aunt Noriko might get drunk!’

I laughed. ‘We’ll see, Ichiro,’ I said.

‘Aunt Noriko might get completely drunk!’

It was perhaps fifteen minutes or so later, as we were waiting for ice-cream, that Ichiro asked in a thoughtful voice.

‘Oji, did you know Yujiro Naguchi?’

‘You must mean Yukio Naguchi, Ichiro. No, I never knew him personally.’

My grandson did not respond, apparently absorbed by his reflection in the glass pane beside him.

‘Your mother,’ I went on, ‘also seemed to have Mr Naguchi on her mind when I was speaking with her in the park this morning. I take it the adults were discussing him at supper last night, were they?’

For a moment, Ichiro went on gazing at his reflection. Then he turned to me and asked:

‘Was Mr Naguchi like Oji?’

‘Was Mr Naguchi like me? Well, your mother for one doesn’t seem to think so. It was just something I said to your Uncle Taro once, Ichiro, it was nothing very serious. Your mother seems to have picked it up far too earnestly. I hardly remember what I was talking to Uncle Taro about at the time, but Oji just happened to suggest he had one or two things in common with people like Mr Naguchi. Now you tell me, Ichiro, what were the adults all saying last night?’

‘Oji, why did Mr Naguchi kill himself?’

‘That’s hard to say for sure, Ichiro. I never knew Mr Naguchi personally.’

‘But was he a bad man?’

‘No. He wasn’t a bad man. He was just someone who worked very hard doing what he thought was for the best. But you see, Ichiro, when the war ended, things were very different. The songs Mr Naguchi composed had become very famous, not just in this city, but all over Japan. They were sung on the radio and in bars. And the likes of your Uncle Kenji sang them when they were marching or before a battle. And after the war, Mr Naguchi thought his songs had been – well – a sort of mistake. He thought of all the people who had been killed, all the little boys your age, Ichiro, who no longer had parents, he thought of all these things and he thought perhaps his songs were a mistake. And he felt he should apologize. To everyone who was left. To little boys who no longer had parents. And to parents who had lost little boys like you. To all these people, he wanted to say sorry. I think that’s why he killed himself. Mr Naguchi wasn’t a bad man at all, Ichiro. He was brave to admit the mistakes he’d made. He was very brave and honourable.’

Ichiro was watching me with a thoughtful expression. I gave a laugh and said: ‘What’s the matter, Ichiro?’

My grandson seemed about to speak, but then turned again to look at his face reflected in the glass.

‘Your Oji never meant anything by saying he was like Mr Naguchi,’ I said. ‘It was a sort of joke he was making, that’s all. You tell your mother that, the next time you hear her talking about Mr Naguchi. Because from what she was saying this morning, she’s picked the whole thing up quite wrongly. What’s the matter, Ichiro? Suddenly so quiet.’

After lunch we spent some time wandering around shops in the city centre, looking at toys and books. Then, towards the latter part of the afternoon, I treated Ichiro to another ice-cream at one of those smart refectories along Sakurabashi Street, before making our way to Taro and Noriko’s new apartment in Izumimachi.

The Izumimachi area, as you may be aware, has now become very popular with young couples from the better backgrounds, and there is certainly a clean, respectable atmosphere there. But most of the newly-built apartment blocks that have drawn these young couples seem to me unimaginative and constrictive. Taro and Noriko’s apartment, for instance, is a small two-room affair on the third floor: the ceilings are low, sounds come in from neighbouring apartments and the view from the window is principally of the opposite block and its windows. I am sure it is not simply because I am accustomed to my more spacious,

traditional house that even after a short time I begin to find the place claustrophobic. Noriko, however, seems very proud of her apartment, and is forever extolling its 'modern' qualities. It is, apparently, very easy to keep clean, and the ventilation most effective; in particular, the kitchens and bathrooms throughout the block are of Western design and are, so my daughter assures me, infinitely more practical than, say, the arrangements in my own house.

However convenient the kitchen, it is very small, and when I stepped inside it that evening to see how my daughters were progressing with the meal, there seemed no space for me to stand. Because of this, and because my daughters both seemed busy, I did not remain chatting with them long. But I did remark at one point:

'You know, Ichiro was telling me earlier he's keen to taste a little sake.'

Setsuko and Noriko, who had been standing side by side slicing vegetables, both stopped and glanced up at me.

'I gave it some thought and decided we could let him have a small taste,' I went on. 'But perhaps you should dilute it with some water.'

'I'm sorry, Father,' Setsuko said, 'but you're suggesting Ichiro drink sake tonight?'

'Just a little. He's a growing boy after all. But as I say, you'd best dilute it.'

My daughters exchanged glances. Then Noriko said: 'Father, he's only eight years old.'

'There's no harm so long as you mix it with water. You women may not understand, but these things mean a great deal to a young boy like Ichiro. It's a question of pride. He'll remember it for the rest of his life.'

'Father, this is nonsense,' said Noriko. 'Ichiro would just be sick.'

'Nonsense or not, I've thought this over carefully. You women sometimes don't have enough sympathy for a boy's pride.' I pointed to the sake bottle standing on a shelf above their heads. 'Just a small drop will do.'

With that, I began to leave. But then I heard Noriko say: 'Setsuko, it's out of the question. I don't know what Father can be thinking.'

'Why all this fuss?' I said, turning at the doorway. Behind me, from the main room, I could hear Taro and my grandson laughing over something. I lowered my voice and continued:

‘Anyway, I’ve promised him now, he’s looking forward to it. You women sometimes just don’t understand about pride.’

I was making to leave again, when this time it was Setsuko who spoke.

‘It is very kind of Father to consider Ichiro’s feelings so carefully. However, I wonder if it wouldn’t perhaps be best to wait till Ichiro is a little older.’

I gave a small laugh. ‘You know, I remember your mother protesting in just the same way when I decided to let Kenji have a taste of sake at this age. Well, it certainly did your brother no harm.’ I regretted immediately introducing Kenji into such a trivial disagreement. Indeed, I believe I was momentarily quite annoyed with myself, and it is possible I did not pay much attention to what Setsuko said next. In any case, it seems to me she said something like: ‘There is no doubt Father devoted the most careful thought to my brother’s upbringing. Nevertheless, in the light of what came to pass, we can perhaps see that on one or two points at least, Mother may in fact have had the more correct ideas.’

To be fair, it is possible she did not say anything quite so unpleasant. Indeed, it is possible I misinterpreted entirely what she actually said, for I distinctly recall Noriko not reacting at all to her sister’s words other than to turn wearily back to her vegetables.

Besides, I would not have thought Setsuko capable of introducing so gratuitously such a note to the conversation. Then again, when I consider the sort of insinuations Setsuko had been making in Kawabe Park earlier that same day, I suppose I have to admit the possibility that she did say something along such lines. In any case, I recall Setsuko concluding by saying:

‘Besides, I fear Suichi would not wish Ichiro to drink sake until he is a little older. But it is most kind of Father to have given such consideration to Ichiro’s feelings.’

Conscious that Ichiro might overhear our conversation, and not wishing to put a cloud over what was a rare family reunion, I let the argument rest there and left the kitchen. For a while after that, as I recall, I sat in the main room with Taro and Ichiro, exchanging enjoyable talk as we awaited supper.

We eventually sat down to eat an hour or so later. As we were doing so, Ichiro reached over to the sake flask on the table, tapped it with his fingers and looked over at me knowingly. I smiled at him, but said nothing.

The women had prepared a splendid meal and the conversation was soon flowing effortlessly. At one point, Taro had us all laughing with the story of a colleague of his at work, who through a mixture of misfortune and his own comical stupidity, had gained a reputation for never meeting deadlines. Once, while relating this story, Taro said:

‘Indeed, things have got to such a state it seems our superiors have taken to calling him “the Tortoise”. During a meeting recently, Mr Hayasaka forgot himself and actually announced: “We’ll hear the Tortoise’s report, then break for lunch.” ’

‘Is that so?’ I exclaimed with some surprise. ‘That’s very curious. I myself once had a colleague who had that nickname. For much the same reasons, it would seem.’

But Taro did not seem particularly struck by this coincidence. He nodded politely, and said: ‘I remember at school, too, there was a pupil we all called “the Tortoise”. In fact, just as every group has a natural leader, I suspect every group has its “Tortoise”.’

With that, Taro returned to the relating of his anecdote. Of course, now I come to think of it, I suppose my son-in-law was quite correct; most groups of peers would have their ‘Tortoise’, even if the name itself is not always used. Amongst my own pupils, for instance, it was Shintaro who fulfilled such a role. This is not to deny Shintaro’s basic competence; but when placed alongside the likes of Kuroda, it was as though his talent lacked an entire dimension.

I suppose I do not on the whole greatly admire the Tortoises of this world. While one may appreciate their plodding steadiness and ability to survive, one suspects their lack of frankness, their capacity for treachery. And I suppose, in the end, one despises their unwillingness to take chances in the name of ambition or for the sake of a principle they claim to believe in. Their like will never fall victim to the sort of grand catastrophe that, say, Akira Sugimura suffered over Kawabe Park; but by the same token, notwithstanding the small sorts of respectability they may sometimes achieve as schoolteachers or whatever, they will never accomplish anything above the mediocre.

It is true, I grew quite fond of the Tortoise during those years we spent together at Mori-san’s villa, but then I do not believe I ever respected him as an equal. This had to do with the very nature of our friendship, which had been forged during the days of the Tortoise’s persecution at Master Takeda’s firm and then through his difficulties in our early months at the villa; somehow, after a time, it had cemented itself into one in which he was perpetually indebted to me for some undefined ‘support’ I gave him. Long after he had grasped how to paint without

arousing the hostility of the others at the villa, long after he had come to be generally well liked for his pleasant, obliging nature, he was still saying to me things like:

‘I’m so grateful to you, Ono-san. It’s due to you I’m treated so well here.’

In one sense, of course, the Tortoise was indebted to me; for clearly, without my initiative, he would never have considered leaving Master Takeda’s to become Mori-san’s pupil. He had been extremely reluctant to take such an adventurous step, but once having been compelled to do so, he had never doubted the decision. Indeed, the Tortoise held Mori-san in such reverence that for a long time – for the first two years at least – I cannot recall his being able to hold a conversation with our teacher, other than to mumble: ‘Yes, Sensei’ or ‘No, Sensei.’

Throughout those years, the Tortoise continued to paint as slowly as he ever did, but it did not occur to anyone to hold this against him. In fact, there were a number of others who worked just as slowly, and this faction actually had a tendency to mock those of us with faster working habits. I remember they labelled us ‘the engineers’, comparing the intense and frantic way we worked once an idea had struck with an engine driver shovelling on coal for fear the steam would at any moment run out. We in turn named the slow faction ‘the backwarders’. A ‘backwarder’ was originally a term used at the villa for someone who, in a room crowded with people working at easels, insisted on stepping backwards every few minutes to view his canvas – with the result that he continually collided with colleagues working behind him. It was of course quite unfair to suggest that because an artist liked to take time with a painting – stepping back, as it were, metaphorically – he was any more likely to be guilty of this antisocial habit, but then we enjoyed the very provocativeness of the label. Indeed, I recall a lot of good-humoured bantering concerning ‘engineers’ and ‘backwarders’.

In truth, though, just about all of us were prone to be guilty of ‘backwarding’, and because of this, we would as far as possible avoid crowding together when working. In the summer months, many of my colleagues would set up easels spaced out at points along the verandas, or else out in the yard itself, while others insisted on reserving large numbers of rooms because they liked to circulate from room to room according to the light. The Tortoise and I always tended to work in the disused kitchen – a large, barn-like annex behind one of the wings.

The floor as one entered was of trodden earth, but towards the back was a raised boarded platform, wide enough for our two easels. The low crossbeams with their hooks – from which

once hung pots and other kitchen utensils – and the bamboo racks on the walls, proved most useful for our brushes, rags, paints and so on. And I can recall how the Tortoise and I would fill a large old blackened pot full of water, carry it on to the platform and suspend it on the old pulleys so that it hung at shoulder height between us as we painted.

I remember one afternoon, we were painting in the old kitchen as usual, when the Tortoise said to me:

‘I’m very curious, Ono-san, about your present painting. It must be something very special.’

I smiled without taking my eyes from my work. ‘Why do you say that? It’s just a little experiment of mine, that’s all.’

‘But Ono-san, it’s a long time since I’ve seen you working with such intensity. And you’ve requested privacy. You haven’t requested privacy now for at least two years. Not since you were preparing “Lion-dance” for your first exhibition.’

I should perhaps explain here that occasionally, whenever an artist felt a particular work would be hampered by comments of any sort before its completion, he would ‘request privacy’ for that work, and it was then understood that no one would attempt to look at it until such time as the artist withdrew his request. This was a sensible arrangement, living and working as we did so closely, and gave one room to take risks without fear of making a fool of oneself.

‘Is it really so noticeable?’ I said. ‘I thought I was hiding my excitement rather well.’

‘You must be forgetting, Ono-san. We’ve been painting side by side for almost eight years now. Oh yes, I can tell this is something quite special for you.’

‘Eight years,’ I remarked. ‘I suppose that’s right.’

‘Indeed, Ono-san. And it’s been a privilege to work so close to one of your talent. More than a little humbling at times, but a great privilege nonetheless.’

‘You exaggerate,’ I said, smiling and continuing to paint.

‘Not at all, Ono-san. Indeed, I feel I would never have progressed as I have over these years without the constant inspiration of seeing your works appearing before my eyes. No doubt you’ve noted the extent to which my modest “Autumn Girl” owes itself to your magnificent “Girl at Sunset”. One of many attempts on my part, Ono-san, to emulate your brilliance. A

feeble attempt, I realize, but then Mori-san was good enough to praise it as a significant step forward for me.'

'I wonder now.' I ceased my brush strokes for a moment and looked at my work. 'I wonder if this painting here will also inspire you.'

I continued to regard my half-finished painting for a moment, then glanced across to my friend over the ancient pot suspended between us. The Tortoise was painting happily, unaware of my gaze. He had put on a little more flesh since the days I had first known him at Master Takeda's, and the harassed, fearful look of those days had been largely replaced by an air of childlike contentment. In fact, I recall someone around that time comparing the Tortoise to a puppy who had just been petted, and indeed, this description was not inappropriate to the impression I received as I watched him paint that afternoon in the old kitchen.

'Tell me, Tortoise,' I said to him. 'You're quite happy with your work at present, are you?'

'Most happy, thank you, Ono-san,' he replied immediately. Then glancing up, he added hastily with a grin: 'Of course, it has a long way to go before it can stand alongside your work, Ono-san.'

His eyes returned to his painting and I watched him working for a few more moments. Then I asked:

'You don't consider sometimes trying some ... some new approaches?'

'New approaches, Ono-san?' he said, not looking up.

'Tell me, Tortoise, don't you have ambitions to one day produce paintings of genuine importance? I don't mean simply work that we may admire and praise amongst ourselves here at the villa. I refer to work of real importance. Work that will be a significant contribution to the people of our nation. It's to this end, Tortoise, I talk of the need for a new approach.'

I had watched him carefully as I said all this, but the Tortoise did not pause in his painting.

'To tell you the truth, Ono-san,' he said, 'someone in my humble position is always trying new approaches. But over this past year, I believe I'm beginning to find the right path at last. You see, Ono-san, I've noticed Mori-san looking at my work more and more closely this past year. I know he's pleased with me. Who knows, sometime in the future, I may even be

permitted to exhibit alongside yourself and Mori-san.’ Then at last he looked across to me and laughed self-consciously. ‘Forgive me, Ono-san. Just a fantasy to keep me persevering.’

I decided to let the matter drop. I had intended to try again at some later date to draw my friend into my confidence, but as it turned out, I was pre-empted by events.

It was a sunny morning a few days after the conversation I have just recounted, when I stepped into the old kitchen to discover the Tortoise standing up on the platform at the back of that barn-like building, staring towards me. It took my eyes a few seconds to adjust to the shade after the brightness of the morning outside, but I soon noticed the guarded, almost alarmed expression he was wearing; indeed, there was something in the way he raised an arm awkwardly towards his chest before letting it fall again that suggested he expected me to attack him. He had made no attempt to set up his easel or otherwise prepare for the day’s work, and when I greeted him he remained silent. I came nearer and asked:

‘Is something wrong?’

‘Ono-san ...’ he muttered, but said no more. Then as I came up to the platform, he looked nervously to his left. I followed his gaze to my unfinished painting, covered over and stacked faced against the wall. The Tortoise gestured nervously towards it and said:

‘Ono-san, is this a joke of yours?’

‘No, Tortoise,’ I said, climbing up on to the platform. ‘It’s no joke at all.’

I walked over to the painting, pulled off the drapes and turned it around to face us. The Tortoise immediately averted his eyes.

‘My friend,’ I said, ‘you were once brave enough to listen to me and we took together an important step in our careers. I’d ask you now to consider taking another step forward with me.’

The Tortoise continued to hold his face away. He said:

‘Ono-san, is our teacher aware of this painting?’

‘No, not yet. But I suppose I may as well show it to him. From now on, I intend to always paint along these lines. Tortoise, look at my painting. Let me explain to you what I’m trying to do. Then perhaps we can again take an important step forward together.’

At last he turned to look at me.

‘Ono-san,’ he said, in a near whisper, ‘you are a traitor. Now please excuse me.’

With that, he hurried out of the building.

The painting which had so upset the Tortoise was one entitled ‘Complacency’, and although it did not remain in my possession for long, such was my investment in it at that time that its details have stayed imprinted on my memory; indeed, had I the desire to do so, I feel I could quite accurately recreate that painting today. The inspiration behind it had been a small scene I had witnessed some weeks previously, something I had seen while out walking with Matsuda.

We were, I recall, on our way to meet some of Matsuda’s colleagues from the Okada-Shingen Society to whom he wished to introduce me. It was towards the end of summer; the hottest days were past, but I can recall following Matsuda’s steady stride along the steel bridge at Nishizuru, mopping the sweat from my face and wishing my companion would walk more slowly. Matsuda was dressed that day in an elegant white summer jacket and, as ever, wore his hat slanted down stylishly. For all his pace, his strides had an effortless quality with no suggestion of hurry. And when he paused, half-way across the bridge, I saw he did not seem even to be suffering from the heat.

‘You get an interesting view from up here,’ he remarked. ‘You agree, Ono?’

The view below us was framed by two factory plants looming one to our right, the other to our left. Wedged in between was a dense muddle of roofs, some of the cheap shingled variety, others improvised out of corrugated metals. The Nishizuru district still has today a certain reputation as a deprived area, but in those days, things were infinitely worse. Viewed from the bridge, a stranger may well have assumed that community to be some derelict site half-way to demolition were it not for the many small figures, visible on closer inspection, moving busily around the houses like ants swarming around stones.

‘Look down there, Ono,’ Matsuda said. ‘There are more and more places in our city like this. Only two or three years ago, this was not such a bad place. But now it’s growing into a shanty district. More and more people become poor, Ono, and they are obliged to leave their houses in the countryside to join their fellow sufferers in places like this.’

‘How terrible,’ I said. ‘It makes one want to do something for them.’ Matsuda smiled at me – one of his superior smiles which always made me feel uncomfortable and foolish. ‘Well-meaning sentiments,’ he said, turning back to the view. ‘We all utter them. In every walk of life. Meanwhile, places like these grow everywhere like a bad fungus. Take a deep breath, Ono. Even from here, you can smell the sewage.’

‘I’d noticed an odour. Is it really coming from down there?’ Matsuda did not reply, but continued to look down at that shanty community with a strange smile on his face. Then he said:

‘Politicians and businessmen rarely see places like this. At least if they do, they stand at a safe distance, as we are now. I doubt if many politicians or businessmen have taken a walk down there. Come to that, I doubt if many artists have either.’

Noticing the challenge in his voice, I said:

‘I wouldn’t object if it won’t make us late for our appointment.’

‘On the contrary, we will save ourselves a kilometre or two by cutting through down there.’

Matsuda had been correct in supposing the odour derived from the sewers of that community. As we climbed down to the foot of the steel bridge and began making our way through a series of narrow alleys, the smell grew ever stronger until it became quite nauseous. There was no longer a trace of wind to combat the heat, the only movement in the air around us being the perpetual buzzing of flies. Again, I found myself struggling to keep up with Matsuda’s strides, but this time felt no desire for him to slow down.

On either side of us were what might have been stalls at some marketplace, closed down for the day, but which in fact constituted individual households, partitioned from the alleyway sometimes only by a cloth curtain. Old people sat in some of the doorways, and as we went past gave interested, though never hostile, stares; small children appeared to be coming and going in all directions, while cats too seemed forever to be scurrying away from around our feet. We walked on, dodging blankets and washing hung out along coarse pieces of string; past crying babies, barking dogs and neighbours chatting amiably across the alleyway to each other, seemingly from behind closed curtains. After a while, I grew increasingly aware of the open-sewer ditches dug on either side of the narrow path we were walking. There were flies hovering all along their length and as I continued to follow Matsuda, I had the distinct feeling

the space between the ditches was growing more and more narrow, until it was as though we were balancing along a fallen tree trunk.

Eventually we came to a kind of yard where a crowd of shanty huts closed off the way ahead. But Matsuda pointed to a gap between two of the huts through which was visible an open piece of wasteground.

‘If we cut across there,’ he said, ‘we’ll come up behind Kogane Street.’

Near the entrance of the passage Matsuda had indicated, I noticed three small boys bowed over something on the ground, prodding at it with sticks. As we approached, they spun round with scowls on their faces and although I saw nothing, something in their manner told me they were torturing some animal. Matsuda must have drawn the same conclusion, for he said to me as we walked past: ‘Well, they have little else to amuse themselves with around here.’

I gave those boys little further thought at the time. Then some days later, that image of the three of them, turning towards us with scowls on their faces, brandishing their sticks, standing there amidst all that squalor, returned to me with some vividness, and I used it as the central image of ‘Complacency’. But I might point out that when the Tortoise stole a look at my unfinished painting that morning, the three boys he saw would have differed from their models in one or two important respects. For although they still stood in front of a squalid shanty hut, and their clothes were the same rags the original boys wore, the scowls on their faces would not have been guilty, defensive scowls of little criminals caught in the act; rather, they would have worn the manly scowls of samurai warriors ready to fight. It is no coincidence, furthermore, that the boys in my picture held their sticks in classic kendo stances.

Above the heads of these three boys, the Tortoise would have seen the painting fading into a second image – that of three fat, well-dressed men, sitting in a comfortable bar laughing together. The looks on their faces seem decadent; perhaps they are exchanging jokes about their mistresses or some such matter. These two contrasting images are moulded together within the coastline of the Japanese islands. Down the right-hand margin, in bold red characters, is the word ‘Complacency’; down the left-hand side, in smaller characters, is the declaration: ‘But the young are ready to fight for their dignity.’

When I describe this early and no doubt unsophisticated work, certain of its features may perhaps strike you as familiar. For it is possible you are acquainted with my painting, 'Eyes to the Horizon' which, as a print in the thirties, achieved a certain fame and influence throughout this city. 'Eyes to the Horizon' was indeed a reworking of 'Complacency', though with such differences as might be expected given the passage of years between the two. The later painting, you may recall, also employed two contrasting images merging into one another, bound by the coastline of Japan; the upper image was again that of three well-dressed men conferring, but this time they wore nervous expressions, looking to each other for initiative. And these faces, I need not remind you, resembled those of three prominent politicians. For the lower, more dominant image, the three poverty-stricken boys had become stern-faced soldiers; two of them held bayoneted rifles, flanking an officer who held out his sword, pointing the way forward, west towards Asia. Behind them, there was no longer a backdrop of poverty; simply the military flag of the rising sun. The word 'Complacency' down the right-hand margin had been replaced by 'Eyes to the Horizon!' and on the left-hand side, the message, 'No time for cowardly talking. Japan must go forward.'

Of course, if you are new to this city, it is possible you will not have come across this work. But I do not think it an exaggeration to say that a great many of those living here before the war would be familiar with it, for it did receive much praise at the time for its vigorous brush technique and, particularly, its powerful use of colour. But I am fully aware, of course, that 'Eyes to the Horizon', whatever its artistic merits, is a painting whose sentiments are now outdated. Indeed, I would be the first to admit that those same sentiments are perhaps worthy of condemnation. I am not one of those who are afraid to admit to the shortcomings of past achievements.

But I did not wish to discuss 'Eyes to the Horizon'. I mention it here only because of its obvious relationship to that earlier painting, and I suppose, to acknowledge the impact my meeting Matsuda had on my subsequent career. I had begun to see Matsuda regularly some weeks prior to that morning in the kitchen when the Tortoise had made his discovery. It is, I suppose, a measure of the appeal his ideas had for me that I continued to meet him, for as I recall, I did not at first take much of a liking to him. Indeed, most of our earlier meetings would end with our becoming extremely antagonistic towards one another. I remember one evening, for instance, not long after that day I followed him through the poverty of Nishizuru, going with him to a bar somewhere in the city centre. I do not recall the name or the whereabouts of the bar, but I remember it vividly as a dark, dirty place, frequented by what

looked to be the city's low life. I felt apprehensive as soon as I walked in, but Matsuda seemed to be familiar with the place, saluting to some men playing cards around a table, before leading me to an alcove containing a small, unoccupied table.

My apprehension was not eased when shortly after we had sat down, two rough-looking men, both fairly drunk, came staggering into the alcove, wishing to engage us in conversation. Matsuda told them quite flatly to go away, and I fully expected trouble, but something about my companion seemed to unnerve the men, and they left us without comment.

After that, we sat drinking and conversing for some time, and before long, I recall, our exchanges had become abrasive. At one point I remember saying to him:

'No doubt, we artists may at times deserve mockery from the likes of you. But I'm afraid you're mistaken in assuming we're all so naïve about the world.'

Matsuda laughed and said:

'But you must remember, Ono, I come across many artists. You are on the whole an astonishingly decadent crowd. Often with no more than a child's knowledge of the affairs of this world.'

I was about to protest, but Matsuda continued: 'Take for instance, Ono, this scheme of yours. The one you were proposing so earnestly just now. It's very touching, but if I may say so, displays all the naïveté typical of you artists.'

'I fail to see why my idea is so worthy of your mockery. But then I obviously made a mistake in assuming you felt concern for the poor of this city.'

'No need for such childish jibes. You know very well my concern. But let's consider your little scheme for a moment. Let's suppose the unlikely occurs and your teacher is sympathetic. So then all of you at your villa will spend a week, perhaps two, producing – what? – twenty paintings? Thirty at the most. There seems little point in producing more, you won't sell more than ten or eleven in any case. What will you do then, Ono? Wander the poor areas of this city with a little purse of coins you've raised from all this hard work? Give a sen to each poor person you meet?'

'Forgive me, Matsuda, but I must repeat – you're quite wrong to assume me so naïve. I wasn't for a moment suggesting the exhibition be confined simply to Mori-san's group. I'm fully

aware of the scale of the poverty we're seeking to alleviate, and this is why I'm coming to you with this suggestion. Your Okada-Shingen Society is ably placed to develop such a scheme. Large exhibitions held regularly throughout the city, attracting ever more artists, would bring significant relief to these people.'

'I'm sorry, Ono,' Matsuda said, smiling and shaking his head, 'but I fear I was correct in my assumption after all. As a breed, you artists are desperately naïve.' He leaned back in his seat and gave a sigh. The surface of our table was covered in cigarette ash and Matsuda was thoughtfully sweeping patterns in it with the edge of an empty matchbox left by previous occupants. 'There's a certain kind of artist these days,' he went on, 'whose greatest talent lies in hiding away from the real world. Unfortunately, such artists appear to be in dominance at present, and you, Ono, have come under the sway of one of them. Don't look so angry, it's true. Your knowledge of the world is like a child's. I doubt, for instance, if you could even tell me who Karl Marx was.'

I gave him what must have been a sulky look, but said nothing. He gave a laugh and said: 'You see? But don't be too upset. Most of your colleagues know no better.'

'Don't be ridiculous. Of course I know of Karl Marx.'

'Why, I'm sorry, Ono. Perhaps I did underestimate you. Please, tell me about Marx.'

I shrugged and said: 'I believe he led the Russian revolution.'

'Then what about Lenin, Ono? Was he perhaps Marx's second-in-command?'

'A colleague of some kind.' I saw Matsuda was grinning again, and so said quickly, before he could speak: 'In any case, you're being preposterous. These are the concerns of some far-away country. I'm talking about the poor here in our own city.'

'Indeed, Ono, indeed. But there again, you see, you know very little about anything. You were quite correct in assuming the Okada-Shingen Society was concerned to wake up artists and introduce them to the real world. But I have misled you if I ever suggested our society wished to be turned into a large begging bowl. We're not interested in charity.'

'I fail to see what there is to object to in a little charity. And if at the same time it opens the eyes of us decadent artists, then so much the better, I would have thought.'

‘Your eyes are indeed far from open, Ono, if you believe a little good-hearted charity can help the poor of our country. The truth is, Japan is headed for crisis. We are in the hands of greedy businessmen and weak politicians. Such people will see to it poverty grows every day. Unless, that is, we, the emerging generation, take action. But I’m no political agitator, Ono. My concern is with art. And with artists like you. Talented young artists, not yet irreversibly blinkered by that enclosed little world you all inhabit. The Okada-Shingen exists to help the likes of you open your eyes and produce work of genuine value for these difficult times.’

‘Forgive me, Matsuda, but it strikes me it’s you who are in fact the naïve one. An artist’s concern is to capture beauty wherever he finds it. But however skilfully he may come to do this, he will have little influence on the sort of matters you talk of. Indeed, if the Okada-Shingen is as you claim it is, then it seems to me ill-conceived indeed. It seems to be founded on a naïve mistake about what art can and cannot do.’

‘You know full well, Ono, we do not see things so simply. The fact is, the Okada-Shingen does not exist in isolation. There are young men like us in all walks of life – in politics, in the military – who think the same way. We are the emerging generation. Together, it is within our capability to achieve something of real value. It just so happens that some of us care deeply about art and wish to see it responding to the world of today. The truth is, Ono, in times like these, when people are getting poorer, and children are growing more hungry and sick all around you, it is simply not enough for an artist to hide away somewhere, perfecting pictures of courtesans. I can see you’re angry with me, and even now you’re searching for some way to come back at me. But I mean well, Ono. I hope later on you’ll think carefully about these things. For you, above all, are someone of immense talent.’

‘Well, do tell me then, Matsuda. How can we decadent foolish artists help bring about your political revolution?’

To my annoyance, Matsuda was once more smiling disparagingly across the table. ‘Revolution? Really, Ono! The communists want a revolution. We want nothing of the sort. Quite the opposite, in fact. We wish for a restoration. We simply ask that his Imperial Majesty the Emperor be restored to his rightful place as head of our state.’

‘But our Emperor is precisely that already.’

‘Really, Ono. So naïve and confused.’ His voice, though it remained, as ever, perfectly calm, seemed at this point to grow harder. ‘Our Emperor is our rightful leader, and yet what in

reality has become of things? Power has been grasped from him by these businessmen and their politicians. Listen, Ono, Japan is no longer a backward country of peasant farmers. We are now a mighty nation, capable of matching any of the Western nations. In the Asian hemisphere, Japan stands like a giant amidst cripples and dwarfs. And yet we allow our people to grow more and more desperate, our little children to die of malnutrition. Meanwhile, the businessmen get richer and the politicians forever make excuses and chatter. Can you imagine any of the Western powers allowing such a situation? They would surely have taken action long ago.'

'Action? What sort of action do you refer to, Matsuda?'

'It's time for us to forge an empire as powerful and wealthy as those of the British and the French. We must use our strength to expand abroad. The time is now well due for Japan to take her rightful place amongst the world powers. Believe me, Ono, we have the means to do so, but have yet to discover the will. And we must rid ourselves of these businessmen and politicians. Then the military will be answerable only to his Imperial Majesty the Emperor.'

Then he gave a small laugh and turned his gaze back down to the patterns he was weaving in the cigarette ash. 'But this is largely for others to worry over,' he said. 'The likes of us, Ono, we must concern ourselves with art.'

It is my belief, though, that the reason for the Tortoise's upset in the disused kitchen two or three weeks later had not so much to do with these issues I discussed with Matsuda that night; the Tortoise would not have had the perception to have seen so far into that unfinished painting of mine. All he would have recognized was that it represented a blatant disregard for Mori-san's priorities; abandoned had been the school's collective endeavour to capture the fragile lantern light of the pleasure world; bold calligraphy had been introduced to complement the visual impact; and above all, no doubt, the Tortoise would have been shocked to observe that my technique made extensive use of the hard outline – a traditional enough method, as you will know, but one whose rejection was fundamental to Mori-san's teaching.

Whatever the reasons for his outrage, I knew after that morning I could no longer hide my rapidly developing ideas from those around me, and that it was only a matter of time before our teacher himself came to hear of it all. Thus, by the time I had that conversation with Mori-san inside the pavilion at Takami Gardens, I had turned over in my mind many times what I might say to him, and was firmly resolved not to let myself down.

It was a week or so after that morning in the kitchen. Mori-san and I had spent the afternoon in the city on some errand – perhaps to select and order our materials, I do not remember. What I do recall is that as we went about our business, Mori-san did not behave in any way oddly towards me. Then, with the evening drawing in, finding ourselves with a little time before our train, we climbed the steep steps behind Yotsugawa Station up to the Takami Gardens.

In those days there stood up on Takami Gardens a most pleasing pavilion, just on the rim of the hill overlooking the area – not far, in fact, from where the peace memorial stands today. The most noticeably attractive feature of the pavilion was the way the eaves of its elegant roof were hung all the way round with lanterns – although on that particular night, as I recall, the lanterns were all unlit as we approached. Stepping in under the roof, the pavilion was as spacious as a large room, but since it was not enclosed on any side, only the arched posts supporting the roof broke one's view out over the district below.

Quite possibly, that evening with Mori-san was the occasion I first discovered that pavilion. It was to remain a favourite spot for me over the years, until it was eventually destroyed during the war, and I often took my own pupils there whenever we happened to be passing that way. Indeed, I believe it was in that same pavilion, just before the start of the war, that I was to have my last conversation with Kuroda, the most gifted of my pupils.

In any case, that first evening I followed Mori-san inside it, I recall the sky had become a pale crimson colour and lights were coming on amidst the muddle of roofs still visible down below in the gloom. Mori-san took a few further steps towards the view, then leaning a shoulder against a post, looked up at the sky with some satisfaction and said without turning to me:

‘Ono, there are some matches and tapers in our kerchief. Kindly light these lanterns. The effect, I imagine, will be most interesting.’

As I made my way around the pavilion, lighting lantern after lantern, the gardens around us, which had become still and silent, steadily faded into darkness. All the while, I continued to glance towards the silhouette of Mori-san outlined against the sky, gazing out thoughtfully at the view. I had lit perhaps half of the lanterns when I heard him say:

‘So then, Ono, what is this matter troubling you so much?’

‘I'm sorry, Sensei?’

‘You mentioned earlier today, there was something troubling you.’

I gave a small laugh as I reached up towards a lantern.

‘Just a small thing, Sensei. I wouldn’t bother Sensei with it, but then I am not sure what to make of it. The fact is, two days ago, I discovered that certain of my paintings had been removed from where I always store them in the old kitchen.’

Mori-san remained silent for a moment. Then he said:

‘And what did the others have to say about this?’

‘I asked them, but no one seemed to know anything. Or at least, no one seemed willing to tell me.’

‘So what did you conclude, Ono? Is there some conspiracy against you?’

‘Well, as a matter of fact, Sensei, the others do appear anxious to avoid my company. Indeed, I have been unable to have a single conversation with any of them over these past few days. When I enter a room, people go silent or else leave altogether.’

He made no comment on this, and when I glanced towards him, he appeared to be still absorbed by the setting sky. I was in the process of lighting another lantern when I heard him say:

‘Your paintings are presently in my possession. I’m sorry if I caused you alarm by taking them. It just so happened I had a little spare time the other day and thought it a good opportunity to catch up on your recent work. You appeared to be out somewhere at the time. I suppose I should have told you when you returned, Ono. My apologies.’

‘Why, not at all, Sensei. I’m most grateful you should take such an interest in my work.’

‘But it’s only natural I should take interest. You are my most accomplished pupil. I have invested years nurturing your talent.’

‘Of course, Sensei. I cannot begin to estimate what I owe you.’

Neither of us spoke for a few moments, while I continued to light lanterns. Then I paused and said:

‘I am very relieved no harm has come to my paintings. I should have known there was some simple explanation of this kind. I can now put my mind at rest.’

Mori-san said nothing to this, and from what I could make of his silhouette, he did not take his eyes from the view. It occurred to me he had not heard me, so I said a little more loudly:

‘I am glad I can put my mind at rest regarding the safety of my paintings.’

‘Yes, Ono,’ Mori-san said, as though startled out of some far-away thoughts. ‘I had a little spare time on my hands. So I had someone go and fetch me your recent work.’

‘It was foolish of me to have worried. I’m glad the paintings are safe.’

He did not speak for some time so that I again thought he had not heard me. But then he said: ‘I was a little surprised by what I saw. You seem to be exploring curious avenues.’

Of course, he may well not have used that precise phrase, ‘exploring curious avenues’. For it occurs to me that expression was one I myself tended to use frequently in later years and it may well be that I am remembering my own words to Kuroda on that later occasion in that same pavilion. But then again, I believe Mori-san did at times refer to ‘exploring avenues’; in fact, this is probably another example of my inheriting a characteristic from my former teacher. In any case, I recall I did not respond other than to give a self-conscious laugh and reach for another lantern. Then I heard him saying:

‘It’s no bad thing that a young artist experiment a little. Amongst other things, he is able to get some of his more superficial interests out of his system that way. Then he can return to more serious work with more commitment than ever.’ Then, after a pause, he muttered as though to himself: ‘No, it’s no bad thing to experiment. It’s all part of being young. It’s no bad thing at all.’

‘Sensei,’ I said, ‘I feel strongly that my recent work is the finest I have yet done.’

‘It’s no bad thing, no bad thing at all. But then again, one shouldn’t spend too much time with such experiments. One can become like someone who travels too much. Best return to serious work before too long.’

I waited to see if he would say anything more. After a few moments, I said: ‘I was no doubt foolish to worry so much for the safety of those paintings. But you see, Sensei, I am more

proud of them than anything else I have done. All the same, I should have guessed there would be some such simple explanation.'

Mori-san remained silent. When I glanced at him past the lantern I was lighting, it was difficult to tell whether he was pondering my words or thinking about something else altogether. There was a strange mixture of light in the pavilion as the sky continued to set and I lit more and more lanterns. But Mori-san's figure remained in silhouette, leaning against a post, his back to me.

'Incidentally, Ono,' he said, eventually, 'I was told there were one or two other paintings you've completed recently that were not with those I have now.'

'Quite possibly, there are one or two I did not store with the others.'

'Ah. And no doubt these are the very paintings you are most fond of.'

I did not reply to this. Then Mori-san went on:

'Perhaps when we return, Ono, you will bring me these other paintings. I would be most interested to see them.'

I thought for a moment, then said: 'I would, of course, be most grateful for Sensei's opinions of them. However, I am not at all certain as to where I left them.'

'But you will endeavour to find them, I trust.'

'I will, Sensei. In the meantime, I will perhaps relieve Sensei of the other paintings to which he was so kind as to give his attention. No doubt they are cluttering up his quarters, so I shall remove them as soon as we return.'

'No need to bother with those paintings, Ono. It will be sufficient if you find the remaining ones and bring them to me.'

'I regret, Sensei, that I will not be able to find the remaining paintings.'

'I see, Ono.' He gave a tired sigh, and I could see him once again gazing up at the sky. 'So you do not think you will be able to bring me those paintings of yours.'

'No, Sensei. I fear not.'

'I see. Of course, you have considered your future in the event of your leaving my patronage.'

‘It had been my hope that Sensei would understand my position and continue to support me in pursuing my career.’

He remained silent, so eventually I went on:

‘Sensei, it would cause me the greatest pain to leave the villa. These past several years have been the happiest and most valuable of my life. My colleagues I look upon as brothers. And as for Sensei himself, why, I can hardly begin to estimate what I owe him. I would beg you to look once more at my new paintings and reconsider them. Perhaps, in fact, Sensei will allow me when we return to explain my intentions in each picture.’

He still gave no sign of having heard me. So I continued:

‘I have learnt many things over these past years. I have learnt much in contemplating the world of pleasure, and recognizing its fragile beauty. But I now feel it is time for me to progress to other things. Sensei, it is my belief that in such troubled times as these, artists must learn to value something more tangible than those pleasurable things that disappear with the morning light. It is not necessary that artists always occupy a decadent and enclosed world. My conscience, Sensei, tells me I cannot remain forever an artist of the floating world.’

With that, I turned my attention back to the lanterns. After a few moments, Mori-san said:

‘You have been for some time now my most accomplished pupil. It will be a matter of some pain to me to see you leave. Let us say, then, that you have three days to bring me those remaining paintings. You will bring those to me, then turn your mind back to more proper concerns.’

‘As I have already said, Sensei, it is to my deep regret that I will be unable to bring you those paintings.’

Mori-san made a sound as though he were laughing to himself. Then he said: ‘As you point out yourself, Ono, these are troubled times. All the more so for a young artist, practically unknown and without resources. If you were less talented, I would fear for your future after leaving me. But you are a clever fellow. No doubt you have made arrangements.’

‘As a matter of fact, I have made no arrangements whatsoever. The villa has been my home for so long, I never seriously contemplated it ceasing to be so.’

‘Is that so. Well, as I say, Ono, were you less talented, there would be cause for worry. But you are a clever young man.’ I saw Mori-san’s silhouette turn to face me. ‘You will no doubt succeed in finding work illustrating magazines and comic books. Perhaps you will even manage to join a firm like the one you were employed by when you first came to me. Of course, it will mean the end of your development as a serious artist, but then no doubt you’ve taken all this into account.’

These may sound unnecessarily vindictive words for a teacher to use to a pupil whose admiration he knows he still commands. But then again, when a master painter has given so much in time and resources to a certain pupil, when furthermore he has allowed that pupil’s name to be associated in public with his own, it is perhaps understandable, if not entirely excusable, that the teacher lose for a moment his sense of proportion and react in ways he may later regret. And though the manoeuvrings over the possession of the paintings will no doubt appear petty, it is surely understandable if a teacher who has actually supplied most of the paints and materials should forget in such a moment that his pupil has any right whatever over his own work.

For all that, it is clear that such arrogance and possessiveness on the part of a teacher – however renowned he may be – is to be regretted. From time to time, I still turn over in my mind that cold winter’s morning and the smell of burning growing ever stronger in my nostrils. It was the winter before the outbreak of war and I was standing anxiously at the door of Kuroda’s house – a shabby little affair he used to rent in the Nakamachi area. The burning smell, I could tell, originated from somewhere within the house, from where also came the sound of a woman sobbing. I pulled the bell rope repeatedly and shouted for someone to come and receive me, but there was no response. Eventually I decided to let myself in, but as I pulled back the outer door, a uniformed policeman appeared in the entryway.

‘What do you want?’ he demanded.

‘I came looking for Mr Kuroda. He is home?’

‘The occupant has been taken to police headquarters for questioning.’

‘Questioning?’

‘I advise you to go home,’ the officer said. ‘Or else we’ll be wanting to start checking on you too. We’re interested now in all close associates of the occupant.’

‘But why? Has Mr Kuroda committed any crime?’

‘No one wants his sort around. If you don’t go on your way, we’ll have you in for questioning too.’

Inside the house, the woman – Kuroda’s mother, I assumed – continued to sob. I could hear someone shouting something at her.

‘Where is the officer in charge?’ I asked.

‘On your way. You want to be arrested?’

‘Before we go any further,’ I said, ‘let me explain that my name is Ono.’ The officer showed no recognition, so I continued a little uncertainly: ‘I am the man on whose information you have been brought here. I am Masuji Ono, the artist and member of the Cultural Committee of the Interior Department. Indeed, I am an official adviser to the Committee of Unpatriotic Activities. I believe there’s been some sort of mistake here and I would like to speak with whoever is in charge.’

The officer looked at me suspiciously for a moment, then turned and disappeared into the house. Before long, he came back and gestured for me to step up.

As I followed him through Kuroda’s house, I saw everywhere the contents of cupboards and drawers emptied out over the floor. Some books, I noticed, had been piled up and tied into bundles, while in the main room, the tatami had been lifted and an officer was investigating the floorboards beneath with a torch. From behind a closed partition, I could hear more clearly Kuroda’s mother sobbing and an officer shouting questions at her.

I was led out to the veranda at the back of the house. In the middle of the small yard another uniformed officer and a man in plain clothes were standing around a bonfire. The plain-clothes man turned and came a few steps towards me.

‘Mr Ono?’ he asked, quite respectfully.

The officer who had led me in seemed to sense his earlier rudeness had been inappropriate and quickly turned back into the house.

‘What has happened to Mr Kuroda?’

‘Taken for questioning, Mr Ono. We’ll take care of him, don’t you worry.’

I stared past him at the fire, now almost burnt out. The uniformed officer was poking the pile with a stick.

‘Did you have authorization to burn those paintings?’ I asked.

‘It’s our policy to destroy any offensive material which won’t be needed as evidence. We’ve selected a good enough sample. The rest of this trash we’re just burning.’

‘I had no idea’, I said, ‘something like this would happen. I merely suggested to the committee someone come round and give Mr Kuroda a talking- to for his own good.’ I stared again at the smouldering pile in the middle of the yard. ‘It was quite unnecessary to burn those. There were many fine works amongst them.’

‘Mr Ono, we’re grateful for your help. But now the investigations have been started, you must leave them in the hands of the appropriate authorities. We’ll see to it your Mr Kuroda is treated fairly.’

He smiled, and turning back to the fire, said something to the uniformed officer. The latter poked the fire again and said something under his breath which sounded like: ‘Unpatriotic trash.’

I remained on the veranda, watching with unbelieving eyes.

Eventually, the plain-clothes officer turned to me again and said: ‘Mr Ono, I suggest you return home now.’

‘Things have gone much too far,’ I said. ‘And why are you interrogating Mrs Kuroda? What has she to do with anything?’

‘This is a police matter now, Mr Ono. It doesn’t concern you any longer.’

‘Things have gone much too far. I intend to discuss this with Mr Ubukata. Indeed, I may well take it straight up to Mr Saburi himself.’

The plain-clothes man called to someone in the house and the officer who had answered the door to me appeared at my side.

‘Thank Mr Ono for his help and show him out,’ the plain-clothes man said. Then as he turned back to the fire, he gave a sudden cough. ‘Bad paintings make bad smoke,’ he said with a grin, beating at the air about his face.

But this is all of limited relevance here. I believe I was recalling the events of that day last month when Setsuko was down on her short visit; in fact, I was recounting how Taro had got us all laughing around the supper table with his anecdotes about his work colleagues.

As I remember, supper continued to proceed in a most satisfactory manner. I could not, however, avoid some discomfort in observing Ichiro whenever Noriko poured out sake. For the first few times, he would glance across the table at me with a conspiratorial smile, which I did my best to return in as neutral a way as possible. But then as the meal progressed, and sake continued to be poured, he ceased to look at me, but would stare crossly at his aunt as she refilled our cups.

Taro had told us several more amusing stories about his colleagues, when Setsuko said to him:

‘You make such fun, Taro-san. But I learn from Noriko that morale is very high at your company just now. Surely, it must be most stimulating to work in such an atmosphere.’

At this, Taro’s manner became suddenly very earnest. ‘It is indeed, Setsuko-san,’ he said, nodding. ‘The changes we made after the war are now beginning to bear fruit at all levels of the company. We feel very optimistic about the future. Within the next ten years, provided we all do our best, KNC should be a name recognized not just all over Japan but all over the world.’

‘How splendid. And Noriko was telling me your branch director is a very kindly man. That too must make a big difference to morale.’

‘You’re indeed right. But then Mr Hayasaka is not only a kindly man, he is someone of the greatest ability and vision. I can assure you, Setsuko-san, to work for an incompetent superior, however kindly, can be a demoralizing experience. We are very fortunate to have someone like Mr Hayasaka to lead us.’

‘Indeed, Suichi too is very fortunate in that he has a very capable superior.’

‘Is that so, Setsuko-san? But then I would expect as much of a company like Nippon Electric. Only the best sort of people would hold responsibility in such a firm.’

‘We are so fortunate that seems to be the case. But I am sure it is equally true at KNC, Taro-san. Suichi always speaks highly of KNC.’

‘Excuse me, Taro,’ I put in at this point. ‘Of course, I’m sure you have every reason to be optimistic at KNC. But I’ve been meaning to ask you, is it in your opinion entirely for the good that so many sweeping changes were made at your firm after the war? I hear there is hardly any of the old management left.’

My son-in-law smiled thoughtfully, then said: ‘I appreciate very much Father’s concern. Youth and vigour alone will not always produce the best results. But in all frankness, Father, a complete overhaul was called for. We needed new leaders with a new approach appropriate to the world of today.’

‘Of course, of course. And I’ve no doubt your new leaders are the most capable of men. But tell me, Taro, don’t you worry at times we might be a little too hasty in following the Americans? I would be the first to agree many of the old ways must now be erased for ever, but don’t you think sometimes some good things are being thrown out with the bad? Indeed, sometimes Japan has come to look like a small child learning from a strange adult.’

‘Father is very right. At times, I’m sure, we have been a little hasty. But by and large, the Americans have an immense amount to teach us. Just in these few years, for instance, we Japanese have already come a long way in understanding such things as democracy and individual rights. Indeed, Father, I have a feeling Japan has finally established a foundation on which to build a brilliant future. This is why firms like ours can look forward with the greatest confidence.’

‘Indeed, Taro-san,’ Setsuko said. ‘Suichi has just that same feeling. He has expressed on a number of occasions recently his opinion that after four years of confusion, our country has finally set its sights on the future.’

Although my daughter had addressed this remark to Taro, I had the distinct impression it had been made for my benefit. Taro too seemed to take it that way, for rather than reply to Setsuko, he continued:

‘In fact, Father, just the other week I attended a reunion dinner of my school graduation year and for the first time since the surrender, all those present from every walk of life were expressing optimism for the future. It is then by no means just at KNC there is a feeling things are coming right. And while I fully understand Father’s worries, I’m confident that by and

large the lessons of these past years have been good ones and will lead us all on to a splendid future. But perhaps I am to be corrected, Father.'

'Not at all, not at all,' I said, and gave him a smile. 'As you say, no doubt your generation has a splendid future. And you are all so confident. I can only wish you the best.'

My son-in-law seemed about to respond to this, but just then, Ichiro reached across the table and tapped the sake flask with his finger, as he had done once before. Taro turned to him, saying: 'Ah, Ichiro-san. Just who we needed for our discussions. Tell us, what do you think you'll be when you grow up?'

My grandson continued to regard the sake flask for a moment, then glanced over towards me with a sullen look. His mother touched his arm, whispering to him: 'Ichiro, Uncle Taro's asking you. You tell him what you want to be.'

'President of Nippon Electrics!' Ichiro declared loudly.

We all laughed.

'Now are you sure of that, Ichiro-san?' Taro asked. 'You don't instead wish to lead us at KNC?'

'Nippon Electrics is the best company!'

We all laughed again.

'A great shame for us,' Taro remarked. 'Ichiro-san is just who we'll need at KNC in a few years.'

This exchange seemed to take Ichiro's mind off the sake, and from then on, he seemed to enjoy himself, joining in loudly whenever the adults laughed at something. Only towards the very end of our meal did he ask in a quite disinterested voice:

'Is the sake all finished now?'

'All gone,' Noriko said.

'Would Ichiro-san like more orange juice?' Ichiro refused this offer in a well-mannered way, and turned back to Taro, who had been explaining something to him. For all that, I could

imagine his disappointment and felt a wave of irritation at Setsuko for not being a little more understanding of her little boy's feelings.

I got my chance to talk alone with Ichiro an hour or so later when I went into the small spare room of the apartment to say good-night to him. The light was still on, but Ichiro was under the quilt, on his front, a cheek pressed against his pillow. When I turned off the light, I discovered the blinds did not prevent light from the opposite apartment block coming into the room to throw shadowy bars across the walls and ceiling. From the next room came the sounds of my daughters laughing over something, and as I knelt down beside Ichiro's quilt he whispered:

'Oji, is Aunt Noriko drunk?'

'I don't think so, Ichiro. She's just laughing at something, that's all.'

'She might be a little bit drunk. Don't you think, Oji?'

'Well, perhaps. Just a little. There's no harm in that.'

'Women can't handle sake, can they, Oji?' he said, and giggled into his pillow.

I gave a laugh, then said to him: 'You know, Ichiro, there's no need to be upset about the sake tonight. It really doesn't matter. Soon you'll be older, and then you'll be able to drink sake as much as you like.'

I rose and went to the window to see if the blinds could not be made more effective. I opened and shut them a few times, but the slats remained sufficiently separated so that I could always see the lighted windows of the block opposite.

'No, Ichiro, it's really nothing to get upset about.'

For a moment, my grandson gave no response. Then I heard his voice say behind me: 'Oji's not to worry.'

'Oh? Now what do you mean by that, Ichiro?'

'Oji's not to worry. Because if he worries, he won't get to sleep. And if old people don't sleep, they get ill.'

‘I see. Very well then, Ichiro. Oji promises not to worry. But you’re not to be upset either. Because really, there’s nothing to be getting upset about.’

Ichiro remained silent. I opened and closed the blinds again.

‘But then, of course,’ I said, ‘if Ichiro had actually insisted on sake tonight, Oji was ready to step in and see to it he got some. But as it was, I think we were right to let the women have their way this time. It’s not worth getting them upset over such little things.’

‘Sometimes at home,’ Ichiro said, ‘Father wants to do something and Mother tells him it’s not allowed. Sometimes, even Father’s no match for Mother.’

‘Is that so,’ I said, with a laugh.

‘So Oji’s not to worry.’

‘There’s nothing for either of us to worry about, Ichiro.’ I turned away from the window and knelt down again beside his quilt. ‘Now you try and fall asleep.’

‘Is Oji staying the night?’

‘No, Oji’s going back to his own house soon.’ ‘Why can’t Oji stay here too?’

‘There’s not enough room here, Ichiro. Oji has a large house all to himself, remember.’

‘Will Oji come to say goodbye at the station tomorrow?’

‘Of course, Ichiro. I’ll do that. And no doubt, you’ll be down to visit again before long.’

‘Oji’s not to worry he couldn’t make Mother give me sake.’

‘You seem to be growing up very fast, Ichiro,’ I said, laughing. ‘You’ll be a fine man when you’re grown. Perhaps you really will be head of Nippon Electrics. Or something just as grand. Now, let’s keep quiet for a while and see if you fall asleep.’

I went on sitting beside him for several more moments, giving quiet replies whenever he spoke. And I believe it was during those moments, as I waited in that darkened room for my grandson to fall asleep, listening to the occasional burst of laughter from the neighbouring room, that I began turning over in my mind the conversation I had had that morning with Setsuko in Kawabe Park. That was probably the first opportunity I had had to do so, and until that point, it had not really occurred to me to be so irritated by Setsuko’s words. But by the

time I left my sleeping grandson to rejoin the others in the main room, I believe I had become quite annoyed with my elder daughter, and this no doubt accounts for my saying to Taro, not long after I had sat down:

‘You know, it’s odd when one thinks about it. Your father and I must have been acquainted for over sixteen years, and yet it’s only over this past year we’ve become such good friends.’

‘Indeed,’ said my son-in-law, ‘but I suppose it’s often that way. One always has so many neighbours one does no more than exchange good mornings with. A great pity when you think about it.’

‘But then of course,’ I said, ‘as regards Dr Saito and myself, it wasn’t simply that we were neighbours. Connected as we both were with the art world, we knew of each other by reputation. All the more pity then that your father and I didn’t make more effort to be friends from the beginning. Don’t you think so, Taro?’

As I said this, I gave a quick glance towards Setsuko to make sure she was listening.

‘A great pity indeed,’ Taro said. ‘But at least you had the chance to become friends in the end.’

‘But what I mean, Taro, is that it’s all the more pity since we knew each of other’s reputations in the art world all that time.’

‘Yes, a great pity indeed. One would think the knowledge that a neighbour was also a distinguished colleague would lead to more intimate relations. But then I suppose, what with busy schedules and the next thing, this is too often not the case.’

I glanced with some satisfaction towards Setsuko, but my daughter showed no sign at all of registering the significance of Taro’s words. It is possible, of course, that she was not really attending; my guess, though, is that Setsuko had indeed understood, but was too proud to return my glance, confronted as she was with proof that she had been quite mistaken in making her insinuations that morning in Kawabe Park.

We had been walking down the wide central avenue of the park at an easy pace, admiring the autumnal trees lined on either side of us. We had been comparing our impressions on how Noriko was taking to her new life, and had agreed that to all appearances, she was very happy indeed.

‘It’s all very gratifying,’ I was saying. ‘Her future was becoming a grave worry to me, but now everything looks very good for her. Taro is an admirable man. One could hardly have hoped for a better match.’

‘It seems strange to think’, Setsuko said with a smile, ‘it was only a year ago we were all so worried for her.’

‘It’s all very gratifying. And you know, Setsuko, I’m grateful to you for your part in it all. You were a great support to your sister when things weren’t going so well.’

‘On the contrary, I could do so little, being so far away.’

‘And of course,’ I said, with a laugh, ‘it was you who warned me last year. “Precautionary steps” – you remember that, Setsuko? As you see, I didn’t ignore your advice.’

‘I’m sorry, Father, what advice was this?’

‘Now Setsuko, there’s no need to be so tactful. I’m quite prepared now to acknowledge there are certain aspects to my career I have no cause to be proud of. Indeed, I acknowledged as much during the negotiations, just as you suggested.’

‘I’m sorry, I’m not at all clear what Father is referring to.’

‘Noriko hasn’t told you about the *miai*? Well, I made sure that evening there’d be no obstacles to her happiness on account of my career. I dare say I would have done so in any case, but I was nevertheless grateful for your advice last year.’

‘Forgive me, Father, but I don’t recall offering any advice last year. As for the matter of the *miai*, however, Noriko has indeed mentioned it to me a number of times. Indeed, she wrote to me soon after the *miai* expressing surprise at Father’s ... at Father’s words about himself.’

‘I dare say she was surprised. Noriko always did underestimate her old father. But I’m hardly the sort to allow my own daughter to suffer simply because I’m too proud to face up to things.’

‘Noriko told me she was extremely puzzled by Father’s behaviour that night. It seems the Saitos were equally puzzled. No one was at all sure what Father meant by it all. Indeed, Suichi also expressed his bewilderment when I read him Noriko’s letter.’

‘But this is extraordinary,’ I said, laughing. ‘Why, Setsuko, it was you yourself who pushed me to it last year. It was you who suggested I take “precautionary steps” so that we didn’t slip up with the Saitos as we did with the Miyakes. Do you not remember?’

‘No doubt I am being most forgetful, but I am afraid I have no recollection of what Father refers to.’

‘Now, Setsuko, this is extraordinary.’

Setsuko suddenly stopped walking and exclaimed: ‘How wonderful the maples look at this time of year!’

‘Indeed,’ I said. ‘No doubt they’ll look even better further into the autumn.’

‘So wonderful,’ my daughter said, smiling, and we began to walk again. Then she said: ‘As a matter of fact, Father, it so happened that last night we were discussing one or two things, and Taro-san happened to mention a conversation he had had with you just last week. A conversation concerning the composer who recently committed suicide.’

‘Yukio Naguchi? Ah yes, I remember that conversation. Now let me see, I believe Taro was suggesting the man’s suicide was pointless.’

‘Taro-san was somewhat concerned Father should be so interested in Mr Naguchi’s death. Indeed, it would seem Father was drawing a comparison between Mr Naguchi’s career and his own. We all felt concern at this news. In fact, we have all been somewhat concerned lately that Father is not becoming a little downhearted following his retirement.’

I laughed and said: ‘You can put your mind at rest, Setsuko. I am not for one moment contemplating taking the sort of action Mr Naguchi did.’

‘From what I understand,’ she continued, ‘Mr Naguchi’s songs came to have enormous prevalence at every level of the war effort. There would thus appear to have been some substance to his wish that he should share responsibility along with the politicians and generals. But Father is wrong to even begin thinking in such terms about himself. Father was, after all, a painter.’

‘Let me assure you, Setsuko, I wouldn’t for a moment consider the sort of action Naguchi took. But then I am not too proud to see that I too was a man of some influence, who used that influence towards a disastrous end.’

My daughter seemed to consider this for a moment. Then she said: 'Forgive me, but it is perhaps important to see things in a proper perspective. Father painted some splendid pictures, and was no doubt most influential amongst other such painters. But Father's work had hardly to do with these larger matters of which we are speaking. Father was simply a painter. He must stop believing he has done some great wrong.'

'Well now, Setsuko, this is very different advice from last year. Then it seemed my career was a great liability.'

'Forgive me, Father, but I can only repeat I do not understand these references to the marriage negotiations last year. Indeed, it is some mystery to me why Father's career should have been of any particular relevance to the negotiations. The Saitos, it would seem, were certainly not concerned and, as we have said, they were very puzzled by Father's behaviour at the *miai*.'

'This is quite astonishing, Setsuko. The situation was that Dr Saito and I had been acquainted for a long time. As one of the city's most eminent art critics, he would have followed my career over the years and have been fully aware of its more regrettable aspects. It was therefore right and proper that I should make my attitude clear at that point in the proceedings. Indeed, I'm quite confident Dr Saito much appreciated my doing so.'

'Forgive me, but it would appear from what Taro-san has said that Dr Saito was never so familiar with Father's career. Of course, he always knew Father as a neighbour. But it would seem he was unaware that Father was connected with the art world at all until last year when the negotiations began.'

'You're quite wrong, Setsuko,' I said with a laugh. 'Dr Saito and I have known about each other for many years. We often used to stop in the street and exchange news about the art world.'

'No doubt then I am mistaken. Forgive me. But it is nevertheless important to stress that no one has ever considered Father's past something to view with recrimination. One hopes then that Father will cease to think of himself in terms of men like that unfortunate composer.'

I did not persist in arguing with Setsuko, and I seem to recall we soon moved on to discussing more casual topics. However, there is surely no doubt that my daughter was in error over much of what she asserted that morning. For one thing, it is impossible that Dr Saito could have been ignorant of my reputation as a painter for all those years. And when that evening

after supper I contrived to get Taro to confirm this, I did so merely to make the point clear to Setsuko; for there was never any doubt in my mind. I have, for instance, the most vivid recollection of that sunny day some sixteen years ago when Dr Saito first addressed me as I stood adjusting the fence outside my new house. ‘A great honour to have an artist of your stature in our neighbourhood,’ he had said, recognizing my name on the gatepost. I remember that meeting quite clearly, and there can be no doubt that Setsuko is mistaken.

3.2.2. Target text

STUDENI

1949.

Jasno se sjećam prvog puta kad sam upoznao doktora Saita i zato sam siguran u točnost tog sjećanja. Mora da je to bilo prije šesnaest godina, onog dana kad sam se uselio u svoju kuću. Sjećam se tog sunčanog ljetnog dana, kad sam vani pokušavao namjestiti ogradu, ili sam možda stavljao nešto na ulazna vrata i pozdravljao svoje nove susjede koji su prolazili. Leđa su mi neko vrijeme bila okrenuta prema putu i u jednom trenutku osjetio sam da netko stoji iza mene i vjerojatno me promatra dok radim. Okrenuo sam se i ugledao čovjeka kojih godina kako sa zanimanjem proučava moje nedavno upisano ime na stupu ulaznih vrata.

„Dakle Vi ste gospodin Ono“, rekao je. „Pa ovo je zaista čast. Zaista je čast imati nekoga Vašeg statusa u susjedstvu. Znao, ja se također krećem u umjetničkim krugovima. Zovem se Saito, sa sveučilišta Imperial City.“

„Dr. Saito? Pa ovo je velika čast. Čuo sam toliko toga o Vama, gospodine.“

Mislili smo da smo razgovarali neko vrijeme kraj mojih ulaznih vrata, i sigurno se ne varam u sjećanju da je dr. Saito tom prigodom nekoliko puta spomenuo moje radove i karijeru. Sjećam se da je, prije no što se nastavio spuštati niz brdo, nekoliko puta spomenuo nešto poput: „Velika je čast imati umjetnika Vašeg statusa u susjedstvu, gospodine Ono.“

Nakon toga, dr. Saito i ja pozdravljali bi se s poštovanjem kad god bi se sreli. Rekao bih da smo se nakon tog prvog susreta rijetko zaustavljali i pričali sve dok se zbog nedavnih događaja nismo zbližili. No moje sjećanje tog prvog susreta i dr. Saita koji je prepoznao moje ime na stupu ulaznih vrata dovoljno je jasno kako bih mogao ustanoviti da je moja starija kći Setsuko pogriješila u barem nekim stvarima koje je pokušala natuknuti prošli mjesec. Primjerice, mala je vjerojatnost da dr. Saito nije imao pojma tko sam ja prije nego što je to saznao tijekom ugovaranja braka.

Budući da je njen posjet ove godine bio tako kratak, i zato što su je Noriko i Taro ugostili u svom novom domu u okrugu Izumimachi, šetnja sa Setsuko parkom Kawabe tog jutra bila je zaista jedina prilika da s njom ozbiljno razgovaram. Ne iznenađuje onda činjenica da mi se taj razgovor poslije vrtio u mislima i da su me neke stvari koje je tada rekla počele sve više živcirati.

U to vrijeme, međutim, nisam previše razmišljao o njezinim riječima jer sam bio prilično dobro raspoložen, sretan što sam opet u društvu svoje kćeri uživao u šetnji parkom Kawabe, što dugo nisam imao priliku učiniti. Bilo je to prije nešto više od mjesec dana kad su, kako se sjećate, dani još bili sunčani iako je lišće već padalo. Setsuko i ja šetali smo niz široku aveniju s drvećem koja prolazi sredinom parka, a kako smo uranili na naš dogovor s Noriko i Ichikom s kojima smo se trebali naći pored kipa cara Taisha, šetali smo laganim tempom, zaustavljajući se s vremena na vrijeme kako bi se divili jesenskom krajoliku.

Možda ćete se složiti sa mnom da je park Kawabe najzbudljiviji gradski park. Nakon što čovjek neko vrijeme šeta prenapučenim uličicama okruga Kawabe, zacijelo je osvježavajuće naći se u jednoj od tih prostranih dugih avenija nad kojima se nadvija drveće. Ali ako ste novi u ovom gradu i niste upoznati s poviješću parka Kawabe, možda bih vam ovdje trebao objasniti zašto me taj park oduvijek posebno zanimao.

Tu i tamo ćete u parku zasigurno proći kraj odvojenih travnatih područja, ne većih od školskog dvorišta, koja su vidljiva kroz drveće dok se šćete bilo kojom od onih avenija. Izgleda kao da su se oni koji su projektirali park zbunili i na pola puta napustili plan. Više-manje je i bilo tako. Prije nekoliko godina Akira Sugimura, čiju sam kuću kupio nedugo nakon njegove smrti, imao je jako ambiciozne planove u vezi parka Kawabe. Znam da se ime Akira Sugimura ovih dana rijetko spominje, ali napominjem da je ne tako davno nedvojbeno bio jedan od najutjecajnijih ljudi u gradu. Čuo sam da je jedno vrijeme posjedovao četiri kuće i nije se moglo prošetati gradom bez da se naiđe na neko poduzeće koje je njegovo ili čvrsto povezano s njim. A onda oko 1920. ili 1921. godine, na vrhuncu svog uspjeha, Sugimura je odlučio prokockati velik dio svog bogatstva i kapitala na projekt koji će ostaviti vječni trag na ovom gradu i njegovim stanovnicima. Planirao je pretvoriti park Kawabe koji je tada bio monotono i zapušteno mjesto u žarište gradske kulture. Ne samo da bi se proširila površina kako bi sadržavala više prirodnih područja u kojima bi se ljudi mogli opustiti, park je trebao postati i lokacija nekoliko sjajnih kulturnih centara: muzeja prirodnih znanosti, novog kabuki kazališta za školu Takahashi koja je nedavno izgubila lokaciju u ulici Shirahama u požaru,

koncertne dvorane europskog stila i također pomalo ekscentričnog groblja gradskih mačaka i pasa. Ne mogu se sjetiti što je još planirao, ali projekt je nesumnjivo bio ambiciozan. Sugimura se nadao ne samo preobrazbi okruga Kawabe, nego i cijele ravnoteže kulture grada uz novi naglasak na sjevernu stranu rijeke. Bio je to, kao što sam rekao, ništa manje od pokušaja jednog čovjeka da zauvijek obilježi karakter grada.

Izgleda da su radovi na parku već bili u tijeku kad je plan naišao na strašne financijske poteškoće. Ne sjećam se svih detalja afere ali rezultiralo je time da Sugimurini „kulturni centri” nikad nisu sagrađeni. Sam Sugimura izgubio je veliku količinu novca i više nikada nije vratio svoj stari utjecaj. Nakon rata park Kawabe bio je pod izravnom kontrolom gradskih vlasti koje su gradile avenije s drvećem. Sve što je danas ostalo od Sugimurinih planova su neobično prazna travnata područja tamo gdje su trebali biti muzeji i kazališta.

Možda sam već spomenuo da mi zbog mojih dogovora sa Sugimurinom obitelji nakon njegove smrti, prigodom kupovine njegove zadnje kuće, nije baš ostao u najboljem sjećanju. Ipak, kad god ovih dana lutam po parku Kawabe, počnem razmišljati o Sugimuri i njegovom planu i priznajem da počinjem osjećati određeno divljenje prema čovjeku. Doista, čovjek koji ne želi samo biti prosječan nego se izdici iz mnoštva sigurno zaslužuje divljenje, čak i ako na kraju ne uspije i izgubi bogatstvo uslijed svojih ambicija. Osim toga, vjerujem da Sugimura nije umro nesretan. Njegov neuspjeh razlikovao se od nedostojnih neuspjeha običnih ljudi i čovjek poput Sugimure sigurno je bio svjestan toga. Ako čovjek nije uspio samo tamo gdje drugi nisu imali hrabrosti ili volje da pokušaju, može s utjehom i dubokim zadovoljstvom razmišljati o svom životu.

Ali nije mi bila namjera zadržavati se na Sugimuri. Kao što sam rekao, tog sam dana uglavnom uživao u šetnji parkom Kawabe sa Setsuko, bez obzira na njezine izvjesne primjedbe čije značenje nisam u potpunosti shvatio dok se nisam osvrnuo na njih nešto kasnije. U svakom slučaju, naš razgovor došao je kraju jer je na sredini našeg puta na kratkoj udaljenosti stajao kip cara Taisha, kraj kojeg smo se dogovorili naći s Norikom i Ichikom. Gledao sam klupe koje su se nalazile oko kipa kad sam čuo dječji glas kako viče: „Eno Oji¹!”.

Ichiro je potrčao prema meni ispruženih ruku kao da očekuje zagrljaj. Ali kad je stigao do mene, kao da se predomislio i uz formalni izraz lica ispružio ruku.

1 Djed (jap.)

„Dobar dan“, rekao je poslovno.

„Pa, Ichiro, uistinu izrastaš u muškarca. Koliko sada imaš godina?“

„Vjerujem da imam osam godina. Molim te dođi ovamo, Oji. Moram razgovarati s tobom o nekim stvarima.“

Njegova majka i ja slijedili smo ga do klupe na kojoj je čekala Noriko. Moja mlađa kći nosila je svijetlu haljinu koju sam vidio prvi put.

„Izgledaš vrlo veselo, Noriko,“ rekao sam joj. „Čini se da kći postaje neprepoznatljiva čim napusti dom.“

„Nema potrebe da se žena monotono oblači samo zato što se udala,“ Noriko je brzo odgovorila, no svejedno se činila zadovoljna komplimentom.

Sjećam se da smo neko smo vrijeme sjedili ispod cara Taisha i razgovarali. Razlog našeg sastanka u parku bio je taj što su moje dvije kćeri željele provesti vrijeme skupa kupujući tkanine, a ja sam onda pristao odvesti Ichira na ručak u robnu kuću i zatim provesti popodne pokazujući mu centar grada. Ichiro je nestrpljivo čekao odlazak i stalno mi gurkao ruku dok smo sjedili i razgovarali, govoreći:

„Oji, pusti žene da razgovaraju. Mi imamo drugog posla.“

Moj unuk i ja našli smo se u robnoj kući nakon uobičajenog vremena za ručak tako da u restoranu više nije bilo gužve. Ichiro je pomno izabirao između raznih izloženih jela i u jednom trenutku se okrenuo prema meni i rekao:

„Oji, pogodi koja mi je trenutno najdraža hrana.“

„Hmm. Ne znam, Ichiro. Palačinke? Sladoled?“

„Špinat! Špinat ti daje snagu!“ isprsi se i pokazao bicepse.

„Tako znači. Dječji ručak sadrži špinat.“

„Dječji ručak je za malu djecu.“

„Istina ali vrlo je ukusan. Možda ću ga naručiti za sebe.“

„U redu. I ja ću uzeti dječji ručak. Kako bih ti pravio društvo. No reci čovjeku da mi stavi dosta špinata.”

„U redu, Ichiro.”

„Oji, trebaš jesti špinat što je češće moguće. To ti daje snagu.”

Ichiro nam je izabrao jedan od stolova kraj velikih prozora i dok smo čekali ručak naslonio je glavu na staklo prozora kako bi promatrao prometnu ulicu četiri kata ispod. Zadnji put sam Ichira vidio prije više od godinu dana kad me posjetila Setsuko, jer na Norikinom vjenčanju nije bio zbog upale i iznenadilo me koliko je odrastao u to vrijeme. Ne samo da je narastao nego je postao i mirniji i manje djetinjast. Osobito je njegov pogled djelovao starije.

Ustvari, dok sam tog dana gledao Ichira kako naslanja lice na staklo kako bi vidio ulicu ispod, vidio sam koliko počinje sličiti svom ocu. Sličio je i Setsuko, ali sličnost njoj većinom se odražavala u gestama i izrazima lica. I naravno, zapanjilo me koliko Ichiro slični mom vlastitom sinu Kenjiju kad je bio tih godina. Priznajem da me neobično tješi činjenica da djeca sliče ostalim članovima obitelji i nadam se da će moj unuk zadržati te sličnosti i u odrasloj dobi.

Naravno, nisu samo djeca ta koja primaju ta mala nasljedstva već će i na adolescentima učitelj ili mentor kojem se dive ostaviti traga i zaista, čak i ako se predomisle ili odbace većinu učenja svog mentora, određene značajke zadržat će se kao sjena tog utjecaja i pratiti ih kroz život. Na primjer, ja sam svjestan da neke moje geste, način na koji držim ruku kad objašnjavam nešto, moja intonacija kad želim prenijeti ironiju ili nestrpljenje, čak i cijele rečenice kojima se volim koristiti i za koje ljudi misle da su moje, svjestan sam da su to sve značajke koje sam pokupio od svog bivšeg učitelja Mori-sana. Bez laskanja samom sebi pretpostavit ću da su i moji učenici poprimili takva mala naslijeđa od mene. Nadalje se nadam da su, iako možda razmišljaju drukčije nego onih godina pod mojim nadzorom, i dalje zahvalni na većini onoga što su naučili. Svakako, i ja ću, unatoč očitim manama mog bivšeg učitelja Seijija Moriyame ili Mori-sana kako smo ga uvijek zvali, i unatoč onome što se dogodilo s nama na kraju, uvijek misliti da su tih sedam godina koje sam proveo u njegovoj obiteljskoj vili u brdovitom kraju prefekture Wakaba bile jedne od najvažnijih za moju karijeru.

Kad se pokušam prisjetiti vile Mori-sana, prvo mi na pamet pada prilično zadovoljavajući pogled na tu vilu s planinskog puta koji vodi do sljedećeg sela. Kad bi se penjao tim putem,

vila bi se pojavila u udubini ispod, tamni drveni pravokutnik okružen visokim cedrovima. Tri duga dijela vile tvorila su tri stranice pravokutnika oko središnjeg dvorišta. Četvrtu stranu činile su ograda od cedrovine i kapija tako da je dvorište bilo potpuno zatvoreno i u to vrijeme uljezi bi teško uspjeli ući nakon što bi se zatvorila teška kapija.

Međutim, modernog uljeza to ne bi zaustavilo. Iako to nitko nije mogao vidjeti odozgo s puta, vila Mori-sana bila je u raspadu. Gledajući s puta nije se moglo znati da je unutrašnjost vile bila puna rastrganih tapeta i tatamija koji su toliko istrošeni da bi netko mogao propasti kroz njih ako ne pazi gdje hoda. Ustvari, kad se pokušam bolje sjetiti vile, vidim prizor slomljenih crjepova, propadajućih rešetki, oštećenih i trošnih trjemova. Na tim krovovima uvijek je bilo novih pukotina i prokišnjavanja zbog čega bi smrad vlažnog drva i trulog lišća prožimao svaku prostoriju. Bilo je i mjeseci najezde mnoštva kukaca i moljaca koji bi se zavukli u svaku pukotinu drvenarije do te mjere da je bilo straha da će se sve urušiti.

Od svih tih soba samo su dvije ili tri dale naslutiti raskoš koju je vila nekad imala. Jedna takva soba koja je bila dobro osvijetljena većinu dana bila je rezervirana za posebne prigode. Sjećam se da bi Mori-san s vremena na vrijeme pozvao svoje učenike u tu sobu, nas deset, kad god bi dovršio novu sliku. Sjećam se da bi prije ulaska u sobu, svaki od nas zastao na pragu i uzdahnuo od oduševljenja slikom postavljenom na sredini prostorije. U međuvremenu, Mori-san bi zalijevao biljke ili gledao kroz prozor kao da ne zna da smo tu. Uskoro bi svi sjedili na podu i tiho komentirali među sobom: „Pogledaj kako je Sensei² ispunio onaj ugao. Izuzetno!“. Ali nitko ne bi rekao: „Sensei, slika je izuzetna“ jer je običaj bio da komentiramo kao da naš učitelj nije prisutan.

Često bi nova slika sadržavala neke upečatljive inovacije, a među nama bi se razvila strastvena rasprava. Jednom nas je primjerice u sobi dočekala slika žene koja kleči naslikana iz neobično niske perspektive, toliko niske da je izgledalo kao da gledamo u nju s poda.

„Jasno“, sjećam se da je netko tvrdio, „niska perspektiva pruža ženi dostojanstvo kakvo inače ne bi imala. To je zapanjujuće dostignuće. Iz svake druge perspektive izgledala bi kao da se samosažalijeva. Ta napetost daje slici jednu suptilnu snagu.“

„Možda“. Odvratio je netko. „Možda žena ima neko dostojanstvo, no teško da ono proizlazi iz niske perspektive. Jasno je da nam Sensei želi reći nešto mnogo važnije. Želi nam reći da

2 Učitelj (jap.)

nam se perspektiva čini neobično niska samo zato što smo navikli gledati stvari iz određene perspektive. Očito nas Sensei želi osloboditi tih proizvoljnih navika koje nas ograničavaju. Govori nam: „nema potrebe da uvijek gledate stvari iz uobičajenih kutova”. Zato je ova slika toliko nadahnjujuća.”

Ubrzo smo svi vikali svoje suprotstavljajuće teorije o Mori-sanovim namjerama. Iako smo stalno pogledavali prema našem učitelju dok smo raspravljali, on nije dao nikakve naznake o tome čiju teoriju odobrava. Sjećam se da je samo stajao na drugom kraju sobe prekrivenih ruku i s osmjehom na licu gledao dvorište kroz drvene rešetke prozora. Zatim, nakon što je neko vrijeme slušao našu raspravu, okrenuo se i rekao: „Možda je najbolje da odete, imam nekog posla.” Napustili smo sobu još jednom mumljajući koliko nas je zadivila nova slika.

Sad kad to prepričavam, svjestan sam da vam se ponašanje Mori-sana može činiti arogantnim. No možda bi bilo lakše razumjeti njegovu rezerviranost u takvim situacijama da ste i sami bili u poziciji da se netko uvijek ugleda u vas i divi vam se. Nije uvijek dobro davati upute učenicima, postoje mnoge situacije kad je bolje šutjeti i dati im šansu da raspravljaju međusobno i preispituju se. Svatko tko je bio na utjecajnoj poziciji će se složiti sa mnom.

Zbog toga su rasprave o radu našeg učitelja nekad trajale tjednima. Budući da nam Mori-san nije nudio nikakvo objašnjenje, okrenuli bi se za pomoć našem kolegi, umjetniku Sasakiu koji je bio najbolji učenik Mori-sana. Iako su rasprave znale trajati tjednima, kad bi Sasaki dao svoj odgovor, to bi obično bio kraj rasprave. Isto tako, ako bi Sasaki rekao da nečija slika ne odgovara učenjima našeg učitelja, druga osoba bi se odmah predala i prestala raditi na slici ili je čak spalila s otpadom.

Zapravo, ako se dobro sjećam, Kornjača je zbog toga stalno uništavao svoje radove nekoliko mjeseci nakon našeg dolaska u vilu. Iako sam se ja uspio dobro prilagoditi toj okolini, slike mog kolege uvijek su iznova sadržavale elemente koji su očito suprotni načelima našeg učitelja i sjećam se da sam puno puta u njegovo ime molio kolege za razumijevanje jer on nije namjerno zanemario načela Mori-sana. Tijekom tih ranih dana, Kornjača bi mi često prilazio rastresen i vodio me da vidim njegove nedovršene radove uz tiho pitanje: „Ono-san, molim te reci mi bi li to naš učitelj ovako naslikao?”

Ponekad bih se iznervirao kad bih vidio da je nesvjesno upotrijebio neki novi, očito uvredljivi element. Jer nije da je bilo teško shvatiti načela Morija-sana. Često su ga zvali „moderni Utamaro” i „iako se taj naziv olako rabio za skoro svakog kompetentnog umjetnika koji se

specijalizirao za portrete kurtizana, prilično dobro opisuje načela Mori-sana. Mori-san je svjesno težio „modernizaciji” Utamarove tradicije. U mnogim njegovim istaknutim slikama poput „Vežući bubanj za ples” ili „Poslije kupke”, žena je prikazana s leđa kao u klasičnoj Utamarovoj tradiciji. Mnogi drugi klasični prikazi mogu se vidjeti u njegovim radovima: žena koja je prislonila ručnik na lice ili žena koja raščešljava svoju dugu kosu. Mori-san je također često prikazivao emocije kroz tkaninu koju žena drži ili nosi umjesto kroz njen izraz lica. Istodobno, njegovi radovi bili su prožeti europskim utjecajem koji su vjerni obožavatelji Utamara smatrali ikonoklastičkim. Primjerice, nije rabio tamne linije kako bi definirao oblike već je rabio zapadnjačke obojene plohe s kontrastom svjetla i sjene kako bi dobio trodimenzionalni izgled. Od Europljana je zasigurno preuzeo svoj glavni interes: slikanje zagasitim bojama. Mori-san je želio pobuditi određenu melankoliju, noćnu atmosferu oko žena koje je slikao i tijekom godina koje sam proveo učeći od njega intenzivno je eksperimentirao s bojama pokušavajući reproducirati ugođaj svjetlosti fenjera. Tako je prepoznatljiv znak njegovih slika postao fenjer koji bi uvijek bio naslikan ili barem impliciran. Kornjačina tipična sporost shvaćanja suštine umjetnosti Mori-sana značila je da je i nakon godinu dana u vili rabio boje koje su stvarale pogrešan dojam i onda se pitao zašto opet govore da nije vjeran stilu Mori-sana kad se sjetio ukomponirati fenjer u sliku.

Unatoč mojim molbama, ljudi poput Sasaki nisu imali razumijevanja za Kornjačine poteškoće i u to vrijeme okruženje je za mog kolegu postalo gotovo jednako neprijateljsko kao ono koje je iskusio u poduzeću direktora Takede. A onda, vjerujem da je to bilo tijekom naše druge godine u vili, Sasaki se promijenio i zbog te promjene doživio je okrutnije i mračnije neprijateljstvo od onoga kojeg je organizirao protiv Kornjače.

Moglo bi se reći da svaka skupina učenika ima vođu, nekog čije sposobnosti učitelj ističe drugima kako bi ga slijedili. I zato što taj glavni učenik najbolje razumije učiteljeve ideje, on je taj koji kao i Sasaki objašnjava ideje manje iskusnim i upućenim učenicima. Isto tako, taj učenik će najvjerojatnije primijetiti nedostatke u djelima učitelja, ili razviti vlastite stavove koji se razlikuju od učiteljevih. U teoriji, dobar učitelj trebao bi to prihvatiti kao znak da je pomogao učeniku da sazrije. Međutim, u praksi se ti osjećaji mogu zakomplicirati. Kad netko dugo i naporno njeguje talent nadarenog učenika, teško je vidjeti bilo kakvo sazrijevanje talenta kao išta osim izdaju i zbog toga nastaju neke neželjene situacije.

Zasigurno je ono što smo učinili Sasakiju nakon prepirke s našim učiteljem neopravdano, i vjerojatno nema puno smisla prisjećati se toga sada. No jasno se sjećam te noći kad nas je Sasaki napokon napustio.

Većina nas već je bila u krevetu. Ja sam budan ležao u tami u jednoj od onih oronulih soba kad sam čuo Sasakijev glas kako doziva nekoga na trijemu. Činilo se da nije dobio odgovor od onoga kome se obraćao pa se nakon nekog vremena čulo zatvaranje kliznih vrata i približavanje Sasakijevih koraka. Čuo sam kako je zastao u drugoj sobi i rekao nešto no opet nije bilo odgovora. Njegovi koraci nastavili su se približavati i onda sam čuo kako otvara klizna vrata susjedne sobe.

„Dugi niz godina bili smo dobri prijatelji”, čuo sam kako govori. „Zar nećete niti razgovarati sa mnom?”

Nije bilo odgovora osobe kojoj se obratio. Tada je Sasaki rekao:

„Nećete mi niti reći gdje su slike?”

Još uvijek nije bilo odgovora. Ali dok sam ležao tamo u tami, čuo sam štakore koji su trčkarali ispod dasaka susjedne sobe i činilo mi se da je taj zvuk bio svojevrsan odgovor.

„Ako ih smatrate toliko uvredljivima”, nastavio je Sasakijev glas, "nema smisla da ih zadržite. Ali meni u ovom trenutku znače mnogo. Želim ih uzeti sa sobom, gdje god idem. To je jedino što imam za ponijeti sa sobom.”

Opet se čuo zvuk trčkanja štakora umjesto odgovora, a zatim duga tišina. Doista, tišina je trajala toliko dugo da sam pomislio da je Sasaki odšetao u tamu bez da sam ga čuo. No onda sam ga opet čuo kako govori:

„Posljednjih nekoliko dana drugi su mi učinili neke grozne stvari. Ali najviše me povrijedilo to što mi niste rekli niti jednu utješnu riječ.”

Usljedila je još jedna tišina. Tada je Sasaki rekao: „Zar me nećete niti pogledati i poželjeti mi sreću?”

Na kraju sam čuo zatvaranje kliznih vrata i Sasakija kako silazi s verande i odlazi kroz dvorište.

Nakon njegovog odlaska, Sasakijevo ime nije se spominjalo u vili osim u onih par prigoda kad su ga nazivali „izdajicom”. Istinski se prisjetim koliko nas je zapravo vrijeđao spomen Sasakija kad se sjetim što se par puta dogodilo tijekom naših čestih natjecanja u vrijeđanju.

Toplijih dana često bi ostavili klizna vrata otvorena pa bi se nekoliko nas skupilo u sobi i vidjeli bi sličnu skupinu u sobi nasuprot. Onda bi netko od nas dobacio domišljatu provokaciju onima nasuprot i ne bi trebalo dugo da se dvije grupe skupe svaka na svom trijemu i viču uvrede jedni drugima. Možda se takvo ponašanje čini apsurdnim sad kad ga prepričavam, no bilo je nešto u arhitekturi vile i odjekujućoj akustici koju bi proizvela kad bi netko vikao s jednog krila vile na drugi što nas je poticalo da se upustimo u to djetinjasto natjecanje. Uvrede su bile širokog raspona, od ismijavanja nečije muškosti do ismijavanja slike koju je netko upravo dovršio, no većinom nije bilo namjere da se nekog povrijedi i sjećam se da bi se nakon tih razmjena obje strane crvenjele od smijeha. Moja sjećanja tih razmjena zaista dobro prikazuju rivalstvo i gotovo obiteljsku bliskost koje smo osjećali tih godina u vili. No ipak, jednom ili dvaput Sasakijevo ime spomenulo se tijekom vrijeđanja i stvari su odjednom izmakle kontroli i kolege bi prešli granicu i potukli se u dvorištu. Nije nam trebalo dugo da naučimo kako nazivanje nekog „izdajicom” neće biti dobro primljeno čak ni u šali.

Iz tih priča možete zaključiti da smo snažno i potpuno bili posvećeni učitelju i njegovim principima. Gledajući unatrag, lako je kritizirati učitelja koji njeguje takvu atmosferu nakon što su nedostaci njegovog utjecaja postali očiti. S druge strane, bilo tko tko je imao velike ambicije, tko je imao mogućnost postići nešto veliko i osjećao potrebu da što podrobnije prenese svoje ideje, imat će razumijevanja za način na koji je Mori-san postupao. Premda se sad u svjetlu onoga što je postala njegova karijera čini pomalo blesavo, Mori-san htio je iz temelja promijeniti slikarstvo kakvo se prakticiralo u našem gradu. Pri prosuđivanju njegovog karaktera bitno je imati na umu da je moj bivši učitelj s takvim velikim ciljem posvetio toliko svog vremena odgoju učenika.

Njegov utjecaj na nas naravno nije bio ograničen samo na područje slikarstva. Živjeli smo tih godina gotovo u potpunosti u skladu s njegovim vrijednostima i načinom života, a to je podrazumijevalo provođenje vremena u istraživanju „plutajućeg svijeta“ - noćnog svijeta užitka, zabave i pića koji je činio podlogu svih naših slika. Uvijek osjećam određenu nostalgiju kad se prisjetim središta grada kakav je bio u one dane. Ulice nisu bile toliko ispunjene bukom prometa, a tvornice još nisu uništile miris sezonskog cvijeća u noćnom

zraku. Naše omiljeno okupljalište bila je mala čajana kraj kanala u ulici Kojima naziva „Vodeni lampioni” i zaista, odraz lampiona čajane vidio se u kanalu kad bi se približili. Gazdarica je bila stara prijateljica Mori-sana pa smo uvijek velikodušno ugošćeni i u sjećanju su mi ostale noći provedene tamo u pjesmi i opijanju s našim hostesama. Naše drugo uobičajeno okupljalište bilo je streličarski salon u ulici Nagata gdje bi nas gazdarica uvijek podsjećala da je davno prije, kad je radila kao gejša u Akihari, bila model za šest drvoreza Mori-sana koji su bili iznimno popularni. Nekih šest ili sedam mladih žena bile su hostese u tom salonu i uskoro je svako od nas imao svoju najdražu hostesu s kojom bi dijelio lulu i provodio noć.

Naša zabava nije bila ograničena na te ekspedicije u grad. Činilo se da Mori-san ima nepresušan izvor poznanika iz svijeta zabave. Osiromašene trupe lutajućih glumaca, plesači i glazbenici stalno su pristizali u vilu i dočekivani su kao davno izgubljeni prijatelji. Zatim bi se točile velike količine alkohola, posjetitelji bi pjevali i plesali cijelu noć i ne bi dugo prošlo prije nego bi netko od nas morao ići buditi prodavača vina u najbližem selu i obnoviti zalihe. Jedan od redovnih posjetitelja tih dana bio je pripovjedač zvan Maki, debeli veseli čovjek koji nas je mogao natjerati na bespomoćan smijeh jedan trenutak i tužne suze drugi trenutak sa svojim prepričavanjem starih pripovijetki. Godinama kasnije, nekoliko sam puta naišao na Makija u Migi-Hidariju i s čuđenjem bi se prisjećali tih noći u vili. Maki je bio uvjeren da su te zabave trajale cijelu noć, sljedeći dan i nastavljale se sljedeću noć. Iako nisam siguran u točnost njegovih sjećanja, sjećam se da je vila Mori-sana po danu bila puna spavača i iscrpljenih ljudi od kojih su se neki srušili u dvorištu dok je sunce tuklo u njih.

Međutim, živopisno se sjećam jedne noći kad sam šetao središnjim dvorištem, zahvalan na svježem noćnom zraku nakon što sam nakratko pobjegao sa zabave. Šetao sam do ulaza u ostavu i prije no što sam ušao pogledao sam preko dvorišta na sobu gdje su moji kolege i gosti zabavljali jedni druge. Razaznao sam nekoliko silueta kako plešu iza papirnatih vrata i pjevačev glas je doplutao do mene kroz noć.

Došetao sam do ostave jer je to bilo jedno od rijetkih mjesta u vili gdje je postojala mogućnost da me nitko neće ometati neko vrijeme. Mislim da je nekoć davno, kad su u vili živjeli stražari i sluge, ova soba služila za skladištenje oružja i oklopa. Ali kad sam ušao unutra te noći i zapalio fenjer koji je visio iznad vrata, pod je bio toliko zatrpan svakakvim predmetima da je bilo nemoguće proći bez preskakivanja stvari. Svugdje su se nalazile hrpe starih platna vezanih konopom, slomljeni štafelaji, razne posude i staklenke pune kistova i štapića. Uspio

sam se probiti do čistine na podu i sjeo sam. Primijetio sam da su predmeti oko mene zbog fenjera bacali pretjerane sjene. Bio je to jeziv osjećaj, kao da sjedim na nekom grotesknom minijaturnom groblju.

Mora da sam se izgubio u svojim mislima jer se sjećam da me prepao zvuk otvaranja vrata ostave. Podigao sam pogled i ugledao Morija-sana na vratima i žurno rekao: „Dobra večer Sensei.”

Fenjer iznad vrata vjerojatno nije dovoljno osvijetlio dio sobe u kojem sam se nalazio ili je moje lice bilo u sjeni. U svakom slučaju, Mori-san je zavirio u sobu i pitao:

„Tko je to? Ono?”

„Ja sam, Sensei.”

Na trenutak je nastavio viriti. Zatim je, uzevši fenjer s nosača, počeo hodati prema meni pažljivo izbjegavajući predmete na podu. Dok je hodao, fenjer u njegovim rukama stvorio je ples sjena oko nas. Žurno sam mu krenuo oslobađati prostor, no prije nego što sam uspio Mori-san je sjeo malo dalje od mene na stari drveni sanduk. Uzdahnuo je i rekao:

„Izašao sam malo na svjež zrak i vidio svjetlo ovdje. Tama svugdje, osim ovdje. I pomislio sam u sebi da ta ostava sigurno nije mjesto u kojem bi se ljubavnici skrivali. Tko god je unutra, mora da se osjeća usamljeno.”

„Izgleda da sam usnuo sjedeći ovdje, Sensei. Nisam imao namjeru toliko se zadržati.”

Stavio je fenjer na pod kraj sebe, tako da sam iz svoje pozicije mogao vidjeti samo njegovu siluetu. „Činilo se da je jedna od onih plesačica jako zainteresirana za tebe,” rekao je. „Bit će razočarana što si nestao sad kad se spustila noć.”

"Nisam htio ispasti bezobrazan prema našim gostima, Sensei. Samo sam izašao na svjež zrak kao i Vi.

Na trenutak smo šutjeli. Kroz dvorište su se mogli čuti naši prijatelji kako pjevaju i plješću rukama u ritmu.

„I, Ono", rekao je onda Mori-san, „što ti se čini od mog starog prijatelja Gisabura? Zanimljiv je lik.”

„Doista, Sensei. Čini se kao prijatan gospodin.”

„Ovih dana je možda odjeven u dronjke no nekada je bio prilično slavan. I kao što nam je pokazao večeras, još uvijek je vješt kao nekad.”

„Zaista.”

„Dakle, Ono. Što te brine?”

„Što me brine Sensei? Pa ništa.”

„Znači ne smatraš da postoji nešto uvredljivo u vezi starog Gisabura?”

„Nipošto, Sensei.” Smijao sam se nervozno. „Nipošto. Zaista je dražestan gospodin.”

Neko vrijeme nakon toga razgovarali smo o drugim stvarima, o bilo čemu što mi je palo na pamet. Ali kad je Mori-san još jednom skrenuo razgovor na moje „brige”, kad je postalo jasno da je spreman sjediti tamo i čekati dok ne olakšam dušu, konačno sam rekao:

„Gisaburo-san doista djeluje kao dobrodušan gospodin. On i njegovi plesači ljubazno su nas zabavili. Ali ne mogu ne pomisliti, Sensei, da su nas ljudi poput njih posjetili mnogo puta posljednjih nekoliko mjeseci.”

Mori-san nije odgovorio, pa sam nastavio:

„Oprostite mi, Sensei, nije mi namjera omalovažavati Gisaburo-sana i njegove prijatelje.

No nekad sam malo zbunjen. Zbunjuje me da mi umjetnici posvećujemo toliko svog vremena uživanju u društvu takvih poput Gisaburo-sana.”

Mislim da se tada moj učitelj ustao i s fenjerom u ruci došao do stražnjeg zida ostave. Zid je dotad bio u tami no kad je stavio fenjer kraj njega osvijetlio je tri drvoreza koja su bila ovješena jedan ispod drugog. Svaki od njih je odostraga prikazivao gejšu koja sjedi na podu i namješta frizuru. Mori-san je nekoliko trenutaka proučavao slike, pomičući fenjer s jednog na drugi. Potom je odmahnuo glavom i promrmljao: „Potpuno promašene. Potpuno promašene zbog zamaranja trivijalnostima.” Nekoliko sekunda kasnije, ne skidajući pogled sa slika dodao je: „Ali čovjek uvijek osjeća privrženost prema prvim djelima. Možda ćeš ti jednog dana osjećati isto prema djelima koje si naslikao tijekom boravka ovdje.” Opet je odmahnuo glavom govoreći: „Ali sve one su potpuno promašene Ono.”

„Ne bih se složio Sensei,” rekao sam. „Mislim da ovi drvorezi izvrsno prikazuju da umjetnikov talent može nadići ograničenja određenog stila. Često sam mislio kako je šteta što su Vaši raniji drvorezi zatvoreni u ovoj sobi. Trebali bi biti izloženi skupa s Vašim slikama.”

Mori-san je i dalje bio zaokupljen slikama. „Potpuno promašene”, ponovio je. „Ali tada sam ipak bio vrlo mlad.” Ponovno je pomaknuo fenjer zbog čega je jednu sliku pokrila tama, a druga je postala vidljiva. Zatim je rekao: „Ovo su scene iz jedne kuće gejša u Honchu. Ugledno mjesto moje mladosti. Gisaburo i ja često smo zajedno posjećivali takva mjesta.” Ubrzo je opet rekao: „Ove su potpuno promašene Ono.”

„Ali Sensei, ne mogu vidjeti kakve bi greške i najoštrije oko vidjelo u ovim drvorezima.”

Nastavio je proučavati slike još nekoliko trenutaka, a zatim se vratio. Činilo mi se da mu je trebalo neobično mnogo vremena da prijeđe preko stvari na podu; povremeno bih ga čuo kako mrmlja sebi u bradu i kako odmiče kutiju ili staklenku nogama. Čak sam pomislio da Mori-san traži nešto među kaotičnim hrpama, možda još svojih ranijih drvoreza, no kasnije je napokon sjeo nazad na drvenu škrinju i uzdahnuo. Nakon nekoliko trenutaka tišine, rekao je:

„Gisaburo je nesretan čovjek. Imao je tužan život. Njegov talent je propao. Oni koje je nekoć volio odavno su umrli ili su ga napustili. Već je u našoj mladosti bio usamljen, tužan lik.” Mori-san je zastao na trenutak. Zatim je nastavio: „Ali nekad kad bi pili i uživali sa ženama iz javnih kuća Gisaburo bi postao sretan. Te žene bi mu rekle sve što je želio čuti i barem tu jednu noć on bi im povjerovao. Naravno, bio je previše inteligentan kako bi nastavio vjerovati te stvari nakon što bi svanulo. Ali Gisaburo je baš zbog toga cijenio te noći. Govorio je da najbolje stvari nastanu u noći i nestanu ujutro. Gisaburo je znao cijiniti ono što ljudi zovu plutajući svijet.”

Mori-san je opet zastao. Kao i prije, vidio sam samo njegovu siluetu ali imao sam osjećaj da sluša zvukove zabave na drugom kraju dvorišta. Zatim je rekao: „Sada je stariji i tužniji, ali nije se puno promijenio. Večeras je sretan, baš kao što je bio i nekada u tim javnim kućama.” Duboko je udahnuo, kao da puši. Zatim je nastavio: "Najljepša, najkrhkija ljepota kojoj se umjetnik može nadati struji tim javnim kućama kad se spusti mrak. A tijekom ovakvih noći, Ono, dio te ljepote nađe se i u našim odajama. Ali ove slike na zidu, one niti ne počinju prikazivati te prolazne i prividne kvalitete. Potpuno su promašene, Ono.”

„Ali Sensei, ja mislim da printovi prikazuju upravo to.”

„Bio sam vrlo mlad kad sam radio te drvoreze. Mislim da tad nisam mogao slaviti plutajući svijet zato što nisam mogao vjerovati da je vrijedan toga. Mladići često osjećaju krivnju zbog užitka, a ni ja nisam bio ništa drukčiji. Smatrao sam da je prilično nepotrebno, pa čak i dekadentno provoditi vrijeme u takvim mjestima i trošiti talent na slavljenje nečeg tako nevidljivog i prolaznog. Teško je cijiniti ljepotu svijeta kad sumnjaš u njegovu valjanost.”

Razmislio sam o tome i rekao: „Doista, Sensei, priznajem da bi se ovo što kažete moglo primijeniti i na moje radove. Učinit ću sve što mogu kako bih ispravio stvari.”

Činilo se da me Mori-san nije čuo. „Ali odavno sam prestao sumnjati, Ono,” nastavio je. „Kad ostarim, kad se osvrnem na svoj život i vidim da sam ga posvetio tome da prikazem jedinstvenu ljepotu tog svijeta, vjerujem da ću biti zadovoljan. I nitko me neće natjerati da vjerujem da sam potratio vrijeme.”

Moguće je, naravno, da Mori-san nije rekao točno te riječi. Kad bolje razmislim, te rečenice su više nešto što bih ja rekao vlastitim učenicima nakon par pića u Migi-Hidariju. „Kao nova generacija japanskih umjetnika, imate veliku odgovornost prema kulturi ovog naroda. Ponosan sam što ste moji učenici. Iako moje slike ne zaslužuju veliku slavu, kad pogledam na svoj život i sjetim se da sam pomogao vašem razvoju i karijerama, nitko me ne može natjerati da mislim da sam potratio vrijeme.” I kad god bih rekao takvo nešto, svi mladići okupljeni oko stola nadglasavali bi jedan drugog u znak protesta na moje podcjenjivanje vlastitih slika koje su, govorili bi vičući, nesumnjivo velika djela koja su osigurala svoje mjesto u umjetnosti. Ali opet, kao što sam već rekao, mnoge rečenice i izrazi koje rabim naslijedio sam od Mori-sana tako da je moguće da su to ipak bile točne riječi mog učitelja koje sam zapamtio zbog snažnog dojma koji su ostavile na mene.

Opet sam odlutao. Pokušavao sam se prisjetiti ručka s mojim unukom u robnoj kući prošlog mjeseca nakon onog iritantnog razgovora sa Setsuko u parku Kawabe. Zapravo, vjerujem da sam pričao o Ichirovom veličanju špinata.

Sjećam se da je kad je ručak stigao Ichiro sjedio zaokupljen špinatom na tanjuru, gurkajući ga žlicom. Zatim je dignuo pogled i rekao: „Gledaj, Oji!”

Moj je unuk gomilao što više špinata na žlicu, a zatim je podigao visoko u zrak i počeo sipati špinat u usta. Način na koji je jeo podsjećao je na nekog tko ispija posljednje kapi iz boce.

„Ichiro”, rekao sam, „mislim da to nije primjereno ponašanje.”

No moj je unuk nastavio trpati još više špinata u usta, cijelo vrijeme energično žvačući. Odložio je žlicu tek kad je bila prazna i kad su mu obrazi bili toliko puni kao da će puknuti. Zatim se, još žvačući, sa surovim izrazom lica isprasio i počeo udarati zrak oko sebe.

„Što radiš, Ichiro? Reci mi što smjeraš.”

„Pogodi, Oji!” rekao je kroz špinat.

„Hmm. Ne znam, Ichiro. Glumiš čovjeka koji pije sake i tuče se? Ne? Onda mi reci. Ne mogu pogoditi.”

„Mornar Popaj!”

„Što je to, Ichiro? Još jedan od tvojih superjunaka?”

„Mornar Popaj jede špinat. Špinat ga čini snažnim.” Ponovno se isprasio i udario po zraku još nekoliko puta.

„Vidim, Ichiro”, rekao sam smijući se. „Špinat je doista divna namirnica.”

„Čini li te sake snažnim?”

Nasmiješio sam se i odmahnuo glavom. „Zbog sakea možeš pomisliti da si snažan. Ali u stvarnosti Ichiro, nisi ništa snažniji nego prije što si ga popio.”

„Zašto onda muškarci piju sake, Oji?”

„Ne znam, Ichiro. Možda zato što nakratko mogu vjerovati da su snažniji. Ali sake ne čini čovjeka snažnim.”

„Špinat te stvarno čini snažnim.”

„Onda je špinat puno bolji od sakea. Nastavi jesti špinat Ichiro. Ali gledaj, što je sa svim ostalim namirnicama na tanjuru?”

„Ja volim i piti sake. I viski. Postoji bar u koji uvijek idem kod kuće.”

„Je li, Ichiro? Mislim da je bolje da nastaviš jesti špinat. Kao što si rekao, to te stvarno čini snažnim.”

„Najviše volim sake. Popijem deset boca svaku večer. A onda popijem deset boca viskija.”

„Je li, Ichiro? Zaista puno piješ. Tvojaj majci se to sigurno ne sviđa.”

„Žene nikad neće razumjeti zašto mi muškarci pijemo,” rekao je Ichiro i skrenuo pozornost na ručak pred sobom. Ali ubrzo je ponovno podigao pogled i rekao: "Večeras dolaziš na večeru.”

„Tako je, Ichiro. Teta Noriko će sigurno pripremiti nešto ukusno.”

„Teta Noriko je kupila sake. Rekla je da ćete ti i ujak Taro sve popiti.”

„Moguće je da hoćemo. Siguran sam da će i žene malo popiti. Ali Noriko je u pravu, Ichiro. Sake je uglavnom za muškarce.”

„Oji, što se događa kad žene popiju sake?”

„Hmm. Tko zna. Žene nisu snažne kao mi muškarci, Ichiro. Tako da će se možda brzo opiti.”

„Teta Noriko se možda opije! Možda popije malu čašicu i opije se!”

Nasmijao sam se. „Da, to je sasvim moguće.”

„Teta Noriko se možda skroz opije! Pjevat će i onda zaspati za stolom!”

„Pa, Ichiro”, rekao sam smijući se, „onda je bolje da mi muškarci zadržimo sake za sebe, zar ne?”

„Muškarci su jači, pa možemo piti više.”

„Tako je, Ichiro. Najbolje da zadržimo sake za sebe.”

Zatim sam, nakon što sam trenutak razmišljao, dodao: „Imaš već osam godina Ichiro. Odrastaš u čovjeka. Tko zna, možda će ti Oji dati malo sakea večeras.”

Unuk me pogledao pomalo ugroženim izrazom i nastavio šutjeti. Nasmiješio sam mu se i zatim kroz prozor kraj nas pogledao svijetlo sivo nebo.

„Nisi upoznao svog ujaka Kenjija, Ichiro. Kad je bio tvojih godina, bio je velik i snažan kao ti sada. Sjećam se da je tvojih godina i prvi put probao sake. Pobrinut ću se da ga i ti probaš večeras, Ichiro.”

Činilo se da je Ichiro na trenutak razmišljao o tome. Zatim je rekao:

„Majka bi mogla stvarati probleme.”

„Ne brini za svoju majku, Ichiro. Tvoj Oji će riješiti stvari s njom.”

Ichiro je umorno odmahnuo glavom. „Žene nikada ne razumiju zašto muškarci piju”, dodao je.

„Pa vrijeme je da čovjek poput tebe okusi malo sakea. Ne brini Ichiro, prepusti majku meni. Ne možemo dopustiti da nam žene zapovijedaju, zar ne?”

Moj unuk je na trenutak ostao zaokupljen vlastitim mislima.

Zatim je odjednom vrlo glasno rekao:

„Teta Noriko se možda opije!”

Nasmijao sam se. „Vidjet ćemo, Ichiro”, rekao sam.

„Teta Noriko se možda potpuno opije!”

Bilo je možda petnaest minuta kasnije dok smo čekali sladoled kad je Ichiro pitao zamišljenim tonom.

„Oji, jesi li poznavao Yujira Naguchija?”

„Sigurno misliš na Yukija Naguchija, Ichiro. Ne, nisam ga osobno poznavao.”

Moj unuk nije reagirao, očito zaokupljen svojim odrazom u staklu kraj njega.

„Tvoja majka”, nastavio sam, „se također sjetila gospodina Naguchija kad sam razgovarao s njom u parku jutros. Pretpostavljam da su odrasli pričali o njemu tijekom večere sinoć?”

Ichiro je nastavio gledati u svoj odraz. Zatim se okrenuo prema meni i pitao:

„Je li gospodin Naguchi bio poput tebe?”

„Je li gospodin Naguchi bio poput mene? Pa, izgleda da tvoja majka ne misli da je. To sam jednom rekao tvom ujaku Tarou, Ichiro, nisam bio toliko ozbiljan. Čini se da je tvoja majka to vrlo ozbiljno shvatila. Ne sjećam se baš o čemu sam tada razgovarao s tvojim ujakom Taroom, ali samo sam natuknuo da imam nešto zajedničko s ljudima poput gospodina Naguchija. Reci mi Ichiro, što su odrasli govorili sinoć?”

„Oji, zašto se gospodin Naguchi ubio?”

„Teško je sa sigurnošću reći Ichiro. Nisam osobno poznavao gospodina Naguchija.”

„Ali je li bio loš čovjek?”

„Ne. Nije bio loš čovjek. Bio je samo netko tko se jako trudio raditi ono što je smatrao da je najbolje. Ali Ichiro, kad je rat završio stvari su se promijenile. Pjesme koje je skladao gospodin Naguchi bile su slavne ne samo u ovom gradu već i u cijelom Japanu. Pjevale su se u barovima i puštale na radiju. Ljudi poput tvog ujaka Kenjija pjevali su ih kad su marširali ili prije bitke. Nakon rata gospodin Naguchi mislio je da su njegove pjesme bile, pa, da su bile pogrešne. I smatrao je da se treba ispričati. Svima koji su ostali. Dječacima koji su izgubili roditelje. I roditeljima koji su izgubili dječake poput tebe. Htio se ispričati svim tim ljudima. Mislim da se zato ubio. Gospodin Naguchi uopće nije bio loš čovjek, Ichiro. Hrabro je priznao svoje greške. Bio je vrlo hrabar i častan.

Ichiro me promatrao zamišljenim izrazom. Nasmijao sam se i rekao: „Što je bilo, Ichiro?”

Činilo mi se da će moj unuk nešto reći, ali onda se opet okrenuo i gledao svoj odraz u staklu.

„Nisam ništa loše mislio kad sam rekao da sam poput gospodina Naguchija,” rekao sam. „Bila je to samo šala, ništa drugo. Reci to majci idući put kad je čuješ da priča o gospodinu Naguchiju. Prema onome što je govorila jutros čini se da je sve krivo shvatila. Što je, Ichiro? Odjednom si utihnuo.”

Nakon ručka neko smo vrijeme lutali trgovinama u centru grada i gledali igračke i knjige. Zatim sam kasnije popodne kupio Ichiru još jedan sladoled u jednoj od onih menzi u ulici Sakubarashi prije no što smo se uputili u novi stan Taroa i Noriko u Izumimachiju.

Izumimachi je, kao što možda znate, postalo vrlo popularno područje među mladim parovima višeg statusa i zaista odiše čistoćom i ugledom. Ali većina novoizgrađenih stambenih zgrada koje su privukle mlade parove djeluje mi nezanimljivo i ograničeno. Na primjer, stan Taroa i Noriko mali je dvosobni prostor na trećem katu: stropovi su niski, čuju se zvukovi iz susjednih stanova, a pogled s prozora daje prizor suprotne zgrade i njenih prozora. Siguran sam da nije samo zato što sam naviknut na svoju prostraniju, tradicionalnu kuću, da se čak i nakon kratkog vremena tamo počnem osjećati klaustrofobično. Noriko je, međutim, naizgled vrlo ponosna na svoj stan i stalno veliča njegove „moderne” karakteristike. Navodno je vrlo lako održavati stan čistim i prozračnim. Kći me uvjerava da su posebno kuhinje i kupaonice zapadnjačkog dizajna neizmjerljivo praktičnije od onih u mojoj kući.

Koliko god je praktična kuhinja, vrlo je mala i kad sam te večeri zakoračio unutra kako bih provjerio kako napreduje obrok, činilo mi se da nemam gdje stati. Zbog toga i zato što su moje kćeri djelovale zauzeto, samo sam kratko ostao razgovarati s njima. Ali u jednom sam trenutku rekao:

„Znate, Ichiro mi je ranije govorio da bi želio probati malo sakea.”

Setsuko i Noriko prestale su rezati povrće i pogledale me.

„Razmislio sam o tome i odlučio da bi mu mogli dopustiti da proba malo,” nastavio sam. „Ali možda bi ga trebalo razrijediti s vodom.”

„Čekajte, oče” rekla je Setsuko, „je li Vi predlažete da Ichiro večeras pije sake?”

„Samo malo. Ipak je on dječak u razvoju. Kao što sam rekao, bilo bi dobro da ga razrijediš.”

Kćeri su razmijenile poglede. Tada je Noriko rekla: „Oče, on ima samo osam godina.”

„Neće mu naštetiti ako ga pomiješaš s vodom. Vi žene to možda ne razumijete, no ovakve stvari su jako bitne dječacima njegove dobi. To je pitanje ponosa. Sjećat će se toga do kraja života.”

„Oče to je ludost,” reče Noriko. „Ichiru bi samo pozlilo.”

„Ludost ili ne, dobro sam razmislio o tome. Vi žene ponekad niste dovoljno obzirne prema dječakovom ponosu.” Prstom sam pokazao bocu sakea koja je stajala iznad njihovih glava. „Samo mala kap će biti dovoljna.”

Rekavši to krenuo sam prema vratima. Ali tada sam čuo Noriko kako govori: „Setsuko, ne dolazi u obzir. Ne znam kako to otac uopće može predložiti.”

„Čemu takva strka?”, rekao sam okrećući se na vratima. Iza sebe sam mogao čuti Taroa i mog unuka kako se nešto smiju u boravku. Snizio sam ton i nastavio:

„U svakom slučaju, već sam mu obećao i raduje se tome. Vi žene ponekad jednostavno ne razumijete ponos.”

Kad sam ponovno krenuo iz kuhinje, Setsuko je počela govoriti.

„Vrlo je ljubazno od Vas da toliko uvažavate Ichirove osjećaje. Međutim, zar ne bi bilo bolje možda pričekati da Ichiro malo poraste?”

Nasmijao sam se. „Znate, sjećam se da je vaša majka na isti način prigovarala kad sam Kenjiju u tim godinama dopustio da proba sake. Vašem bratu sigurno nije naštetilo.” Odmah sam požalio što sam uvukao Kenjija u takvu nebitnu raspravu. Zaista mislim da sam u tom trenutku bio toliko ljut na sebe da nisam niti pratio što je Setsuko odgovorila. U svakom slučaju, čini mi se da je rekla nešto poput: „Ne sumnjam da ste se jako pažljivo posvetili odgoju mog brata. Ipak, u svjetlu onoga što se dogodilo, možda bismo mogli reći da je majka barem u nekim stvarima imala pravo.”

Da iskreno kažem, moguće je da se nije baš tako neugodno izrazila. U biti je moguće da sam ja posve krivo shvatio ono što je zapravo rekla jer se jasno sjećam da Noriko nije uopće reagirala na sestrine riječi već se umorno okrenula svom povrću.

Osim toga, ne čini mi se da bi Setsuko bez ikakvog povoda odgovorila na takav način. Onda opet, kad se sjetim što je Setsuko insinuirala ranije tog dana u parku Kawabe, moram priznati da postoji mogućnost da je rekla takvo nešto. U svakom slučaju, sjećam se da je Setsuko završila razgovor rekavši:

"Osim toga, bojim se da Suichi ne bi htio da Ichiro pije sake dok ne bude malo stariji. Ali vrlo je ljubazno od Vas što ste mislili na Ichirove osjećaje.”

Budući da sam znao da bi Ichiro mogao načuti naš razgovor i da nisam htio pokvariti atmosferu na rijetkom obiteljskom okupljanju, prekinuo sam raspravu i napustio kuhinju. Sjećam se da sam neko vrijeme nakon toga sjedio u boravku s Taroom i Ichikom u ugodnom razgovoru dok smo čekali večeru.

Oko sat vremena kasnije sjeli smo kako bi večerali. Dok smo sjedili, Ichiro je posegnuo za bocom sakea na stolu, dodirnuo je prstima i znalački me pogledao. Nasmiješio sam mu se ali nisam ništa rekao.

Žene su pripremile sjajan obrok i razgovor je ubrzo tekao bez problema. U jednom trenutku nas je Taro nasmijao s pričom o njegovom kolegi s posla, koji je zbog kombinacije loše sreće i vlastite komične gluposti stekao reputaciju da nikad ne ispoštuje rokove. Dok je pripovijedao ovu priču, Taro je rekao:

„Zaista, stvari su otišle toliko daleko da su ga nadređeni počeli zvati „Kornjača”. Tijekom nedavnog sastanka, gospodin Hayasaka se zbunio i najavio: „Poslušat ćemo Kornjačin izvještaj pa ćemo napraviti pauzu za ručak.”

„Ozbiljno?” uzviknuo sam iznenađeno. „Kako zanimljivo. Ja sam isto jednom imao kolegu s tim nadimkom. Čini se da ga je dobio iz potpuno istih razloga.”

No Taro ova slučajnost nije nimalo iznenadila. Uljudno je klimnuo glavom i rekao: „Sjećam se da je u školi također bio jedan učenik kojeg smo svi zvali „Kornjača”. Uistinu, kao što svaka grupa ima prirodnog vođu, mislim da svaka grupa ima i svoju „Kornjaču”.”

Zatim je Taro nastavio prepričavati svoju anegdotu. Naravno, kad sad razmislim o tome, čini mi se da je moj zet bio u pravu: većina grupa vršnjaka ima svoju „Kornjaču”, iako ga možda ne zovu tim imenom. Primjerice, među mojim učenicima, tu ulogu imao je Shintaro. Ne može se reći da Shintaro nije sposoban no kad ga se uspoređi s nekim poput Kurode, njegovom talentu kao da nedostaje čitava jedna dimenzija.

Rekao bih da se u globalu ne divim Kornjačama ovog svijeta. Premda netko može cijeniti njihovu postojanost i sposobnost preživljavanja, njihov nedostatak iskrenosti i mogućnost izdaje čine ljude sumnjičavima. Rekao bih da, naposljetku, ljudi preziru njihovu nespremnost da riskiraju u ime ambicije ili principa u koji vjeruju. Takvi nikada neće postati žrtve neke velike katastrofe kao što je to bio, recimo, Akira Sugimura zbog parka Kawabe. Isto tako, bez obzira na ugled koji nekad mogu imati kao učitelji ili nešto slično, nikada se neće uzdignuti iz prosjeka.

Istina je da mi je Kornjača prirastao srcu tijekom onih godina koje smo proveli zajedno u vili Mori-sana, ali sumnjam da sam ga ikad smatrao ravnopravnim. Zbog same naravi našeg prijateljstva, koje je sklopljeno tijekom izгона Kornjače iz tvrtke direktora Takede i tijekom njegovih poteškoća ranih mjeseci našeg boravka u vili, nekako je naše prijateljstvo zacementirano u ono u kojem mi on vječno duguje zbog nedefinirane „podrške” koju sam mu pružio. Dugo nakon što je shvatio kako slikati bez da izazove bijes drugih u vili, dugo nakon što su ga zavoljeli zbog njegove ugodne, uslužne naravi, još mi je govorio stvari poput:

„Za toliko sam ti toga zahvalan, Ono-san. Zbog tebe su ovako dobri prema meni.”

U nekom smislu, naravno, Kornjača mi je dugovao jer bez moje inicijative očito ne bi nikada napustio direktora Takedu i postao učenik Mori-sana. Iznimno je nevoljko napravio taj avanturistički korak, no kad ga je jednom napravio nikad nije sumnjao u tu odluku. Kornjača je toliko poštovao Mori-sana da dugo vremena, barem prve dvije godine, nije nijednom razgovarao s našim učiteljem osim što bi promrmljao: „Da, Sensei” ili „Ne, Sensei.”

Tih godina Kornjača je nastavio slikati sporo kao uvijek, no nitko mu to nije zamjerao. Štoviše, nekolicina drugih također je slikala sporo i oni su zapravo ismijavali nas koji smo slikali brže. Sjećam se da su nas zvali „strojari” jer je intenzivan i užurban način na koji smo radili kad bismo dobili ideju podsjećao na strojovođu koji bi lopatao ugljen u strahu da će para svakog trenutka nestati. Mi smo ih zauzvrat nazivali „nazadnjaci”. „Nazadnjak” je inače bio termin koji je označavao nekoga tko bi u sobi prepunoj ljudi koji rade sa štafelajima svako par minuta zakoračio natrag kako bi pogledalo svoje platno pa bi se stalno sudarao s kolegama iza njega. Naravno, nije bilo u redu od nas sugerirati da samo zato što umjetnik voli provesti više vremena slikajući, metaforički zakoračiti natrag, da će se zato vjerojatnije ponašati ovako antisocijalno, ali uživali smo u provokativnosti tog naziva. Zaista, sjećam se puno dobroćudnih svađa između „strojara” i „nazadnjaka”.

Zapravo smo svi bili skloni „nazadovanju” i zato smo izbjegavali gužve koliko god smo mogli. U ljetnim mjesecima dosta mojih kolega razmaknulo bi štafelaje po trjemovima ili po dvorištu, a neki bi zauzeli više soba jer bi kružili od sobe do sobe ovisno o svjetlu. Kornjača i ja uvijek smo slikali u napuštenoj kuhinji, velikom aneksu nalik štali iza jednog od krila vile.

Pod se sastojao od utabane zemlje no u kraju prostorijske nalazila se uzvišena daščana platforma koja je bila dovoljno široka za dva štafelaja. Niske poprečne grede s kukama na kojima su nekada bili ovješeni lonci i kuhinjsko posuđe i police od bambusa na zidovima pokazale su se odličnima za držanje naših kistova, krpa, boja i ostalog. Sjećam se i da bi Kornjača i ja napunili veliki stari čađavi lonac vodom, donijeli ga na platformu i objesili ga na stare remenice kako bi visio između nas u razini ramena dok smo slikali.

Sjećam se jednog poslijepodneva, slikali smo u staroj kuhinji kao i obično, kad mi je Kornjača rekao:

„Jako me zanima slika na kojoj radiš, Ono-san. Mora da će biti posebna.”

Nasmiješio sam se ne skidajući pogled sa slike. „Zašto to misliš? Samo eksperimentiram, nije ništa posebno.”

„Ali Ono-san, dugo te nisam vidio kako radiš s takvim intenzitetom. I još si zatražio privatnost. Nisi zatražio privatnost ima barem dvije godine. Ne otkad si pripremao „Lavljji ples” za svoju prvu izložbu.”

Možda bih sad trebao objasniti da bi povremeno umjetnik „zatražio privatnost” kad bi osjećao da će bilo kakvi komentari otežati slikanje nekog djela i onda se podrazumijevalo da ga nitko neće gledati dok umjetnik ne povuče svoj zahtjev. To je bio razuman dogovor koji nam je omogućio da riskiramo bez straha da ćemo se osramotiti iako smo živjeli i radili u jednoj vili.

„Zar se toliko primijeti?” rekao sam. „Mislio sam da sam dobro prikrio svoje uzbuđenje.”

„Počeo si zaboravljati, Ono-san. Slikamo zajedno već skoro osam godina. Naravno da vidim da ti je ova slika posebna.”

„Osam godina,” odgovorio sam. „Izgleda da je tako.”

„Tako je, Ono-san. Velika je čast raditi blizu nekog s takvim talentom. Nekad i ponižavajuće, ali svejedno je velika čast.”

„Pretjeruješ”, rekao sam smiješeći se i nastavljajući slikati.

„Nipošto Ono-san. Zaista, osjećam da ne bih nikad napredovao kao prošlih godina da nisam stalno bio inspiriran gledajući tvoje radove. Zasižno si primijetio koliko je moja skromna „Jesenska djevojka” inspirirana tvojom veličanstvenom „Djevojkom na zalasku”. Jedan od mnogih mojih pokušaja da oponašam tvoju izvrsnost. Znam da je to bio slab pokušaj ali Morisan ga je pohvalio kao značajan korak naprijed za mene.”

„Pitam se.” Na trenutak sam prekinuo slikati i pogledao svoje djelo. „Pitam se hoće li te i ova slika inspirirati.”

Nastavio sam na trenutak gledati svoju polugotovu sliku, a zatim sam pogledao svog prijatelja iza lonca koji je visio između nas. Kornjača je sretno slikao, nesvjestan mog pogleda. Nabacio je koji kilogram otkad sam ga upoznao kod direktora Takede, a uznemireni i zastrašeni pogled zamijenila je aura dječjeg zadovoljstva. Zapravo se sjećam da je netko tada usporedio Kornjaču sa psićem kojeg je netko upravo pomazio i zaista, taj opis je odgovarao dojmju koji sam imao kad sam ga gledao kako slika tog popodneva u staroj kuhinji.

„Reci mi, Kornjačo”, rekao sam mu. „Prilično si zadovoljan svojim sadašnjim radom, zar ne?”

„Jako sam zadovoljan, Ono-san,” odgovorio je odmah. Onda me pogledao i žurno dodao s osmijehom: „Naravno, nije ni blizu tvojih radova, Ono-san.”

Spustio je pogled na svoju sliku i promatrao sam ga kako radi još neko vrijeme. Zatim sam pitao:

„Ne poželješ li nekad isprobati...neke nove pristupe?”

„Nove pristupe Ono-san?”, rekao je ne dižući pogled.

"Reci mi Kornjačo, zar ne želiš jednog dana stvarati slike koje su istinski bitne? Ne samo djela kojima se divimo i koja hvalimo ovdje u vili. Mislim na djela koja su zaista bitna. Djela koja će biti važan doprinos našem narodu. S takvim ciljem pričam o potrebi za novim pristupom.”

Pažljivo sam ga promatrao dok sam sve to govorio, ali Kornjača nije prestao slikati.

„Da ti iskreno kažem, Ono-san,” rekao je, „netko u mom poniznom položaju uvijek isprobava nove pristupe. Ali tijekom ove prošle godine, vjerujem da sam konačno uspio pronaći pravi put. Vidiš, Ono-san, primijetio sam da Mori-san sve pažljivije promatra moje radove od prošle godine. Znam da je zadovoljan sa mnom. Tko zna, možda ću u budućnosti imati priliku izložiti svoje radove uz tvoje i Mori-sanove.” Zatim me pogledao i samosvjesno se nasmijao. „Oprosti, Ono-san. To je samo fantazija koja me drži.”

Odlučio sam odustati od rasprave. Planirao sam se neki drugi put povjeriti svom prijatelju, ali nisam dobio priliku učiniti to uslijed određenih događaja.

Jednog sunčanog jutra par dana nakon našeg razgovora, ušao sam u staru kuhinju i vidio Kornjaču na platformi u kraju te prostorije nalik štali kako zuri u mene. Trebalo je nekoliko sekunda da mi se oči prilagode tami prostorije nakon jutarnje vedrine vani, ali ubrzo sam primijetio njegov oprezan, gotovo zabrinut izraz lica. Bilo je nešto u tom načinu na koji je nespretno podigao ruku prema prsima prije nego ju je opet spustio kao da je očekivao da ću ga napasti. Nije ni počeo postavljati svoj štafelaj niti pripremati se za rad i kad sam ga pozdravio šutio je. Približio sam mu se i pitao:

„Je li postoji kakav problem?”

„Ono-san ...” promrmljao je, ali nije rekao ništa više. Kad sam došao do platforme nervozno je pogledao prema lijevo. Pratio sam njegov pogled do moje nedovršene slike, prekrivene i okrenute prema zidu. Kornjača je nervozno pokazao na nju i rekao:

„Ono-san, je li ovo nekakva šala?”

„Ne, Kornjačo,” rekao sam, penjući se na platformu. „Nije nikakva šala.”

Prišao sam slici, skinuo pokriv i okrenuo je prema nama. Kornjača je odmah skrenuo pogled.

„Prijetelju”, rekao sam, „jednom si bio dovoljno hrabar da me poslušáš i zajedno smo poduzeli važan korak u karijeri. Sada ću te zamoliti da razmisliš o tome da opet zakoračiš naprijed sa mnom.”

Kornjača je i dalje gledao u stranu. Rekao je:

„Ono-san, zna li naš učitelj za ovu sliku?”

„Ne još. Ali mogao bih mu je pokazati. Odsad namjeravam uvijek ovako slikati. Kornjačo, pogledaj moju sliku. Dopusti da ti objasnim što pokušavam napraviti. Onda možda možemo zajedno napraviti važan korak.”

Napokon se okrenuo i pogledao me.

„Ono-san,” rekao je gotovo šapćući, „ti si izdajica. A sad me ispričaj.”

Nakon toga izjurio je iz kuhinje.

Slika koja je toliko uznemirila Kornjaču zvala se „Samodopadnost” i, iako je kratko bila u mene, tada mi je toliko značila da su mi sve pojedinosti slike ostale u sjećanju. Zaista mislim da bih je i danas mogao ponovno nacrtati iz sjećanja da to želim. Sliku je inspirirala scena kojoj sam svjedočio nekoliko tjedana ranije, nešto što sam vidio tijekom šetnje s Matsudom.

Sjećam se da smo se išli sastati s nekim Matsudinim kolegama iz društva Okada-Shigen s kojima me želio upoznati. Bližio se kraj ljeta, najvrući dani već su prošli, ali sjećam se da sam slijedio Matsudino koračanje željeznim mostom u Nishizuru, brisao znoj s lica i želio da uspori. Matsuda je nosio elegantan ljetni bijeli sako i, kao uvijek, njegov šešir bio je nakrivljen sa stilom. Unatoč njegovom koračanju, činilo se da hoda s lakoćom i bez ikakve žurbe. Kad je zastao na pola puta preko mosta činilo mi se da mu vrućina ne smeta.

„Pogled odavde je zanimljiv,” rekao je. „Slažeš li se Ono?”

Scenu ispod nas uokvirivala su dva tvornička postrojenja, jedno s naše desne strane, a drugo s lijeve. Između njih nalazio se gusto zbijeni nered krovova, neki od kojih su bili od jeftine šindre, a neki improvizirani od valovitih metala. Okrug Nishizu i danas ima određenu reputaciju siromašnog područja, ali tada je bilo neusporedivo gore. Gledajući s mosta, stranac

bi mogao pomisliti da je ta zajednica neko napušteno područje koje čeka rušenje da usput ne vidi male figurice vidljive pomnijim pogledom koje se žurno kreću između kuća kao mravi između kamenja.

„Pogledaj dolje, Ono”, rekao je Matsuda. „U našem gradu ima sve više područja poput ovog. Prije samo dvije ili tri godine ovo nije bilo tako loše mjesto. Ali sada postaje okrug straćara. Sve više ljudi je siromašno i moraju napustiti svoje kuće na selu kako bi se pridružili drugim patnicima u ovakvim mjestima.”

„Kako grozno”, rekoh. „Zaista bih htio učiniti nešto za njih.” Matsuda mi se nasmijao jednim od svojih superiornih smiješaka zbog kojih sam se uvijek osjećao nelagodno i blesavo. „Dobronamjerne želje,” rekao je okrećući se pogledu. „Svi ih izgovaramo. Iz svih struka. U međuvremenu, ova mjesta šire se svuda poput gljivica. Duboko udahni, Ono. Čak i odavde osjeti se miris kanalizacije.”

„Primijetio sam smrad. Zar zaista dolazi od ispod?”

Matsuda nije odgovorio, ali je nastavio gledati dolje na tu zajednicu straćara s čudnim osmijehom na licu. Onda je rekao:

„Političari i poduzetnici rijetko vide ovakva mjesta. A i kad ih vide stoje na sigurnoj udaljenosti kao mi sada. Teško da su se mnogi političari ili poduzetnici prošetalih dolje. Štoviše, teško da su to učinili i mnogi umjetnici.”

Shvativši izazov u njegovom glasu, rekao sam:

„Ne bih imao ništa protiv ako zbog toga nećemo zakasniti.”

„Naprotiv, skratit ćemo put za kilometar- dva ako prođemo dolje.”

Matsuda je točno pretpostavio da smrad dolazi iz kanalizacije te zajednice. Kad smo se spustili na dno željeznog mosta i nastavili šetati kroz niz uskih uličica smrad je bio sve jači, do te mjere da je izazivao mučninu. Više nije bilo ni traga vjetru koji bi ublažio vrućinu, u zraku se jedino moglo čuti neprestano zujanje muha. Opet sam jedva pratio Matsudino koračanje, no ovaj put nisam želio da uspori.

S obje naše strane nalazilo se nešto nalik štandovima tržnice nakon radnog vremena, ali zapravo su to bila pojedinačna kućanstva od kojih su neka od ulice dijelile samo platnene zavjese. Starci su sjedili na nekim od ulaznih vrata i kad smo prolazili gledali su nas sa

zanimanjem, ne neprijateljski. Djeca su dolazila i odlazila u svim smjerovima, a mačke su nam se stalno motale oko nogu. Nastavili smo šetati izbjegavajući deke i odjeću obješene na grubim konopima, prolazeći pored beba koje su plakale, pasa koji su lajali i susjeda koji su ljubazno čavrljali jedni s drugima preko prolaza, iza zatvorenih zavjesa. Nakon nekog vremena sve sam više primjećivao otvorenu kanalizaciju iskopanu uz strane prolaza kojim smo hodali. Muhe su letjele cijelom duljinom kanalizacije i dok sam slijedio Matsudu činilo mi se da se prostor između kanalizacija sve više sužava, sve dok nije izgledalo kao da šetamo po deblu srušenog stabla.

Na kraju smo došli do svojevrsnog dvorišta u kojem nam je gomila straćara zapriječila put. Ali Matsuda je pokazao razmak između dvije straćare kroz koji se mogao vidjeti komad puste zemlje.

„Prijeđemo li ovdje,” rekao je, „doći ćemo iza ulice Kogane.”

Blizu ulaza u prolaz koji je Matsuda pokazao primijetio sam tri dječaka koja su bila okupljena oko nečeg na tlu i bockali to štapovima. Kad smo se približili, okrenuli su se namrštenih izraza i, iako nisam ništa vidio, njihove geste su ukazivale na to da muče neku životinju. Matsuda je vjerojatno došao do istog zaključka jer mi je dok smo prolazili rekao: „Pa, nije da se ovdje imaju čim drugim zabaviti.”

Tada mi se nisu dugo zadržali u mislima. Ali nekoliko dana poslije jasno sam se sjetio njih trojice kako se okreću prema nama namrštenih lica i zamahuju štapovima usred one bijede i to je postala osnova moje slike „Samodopadnost”. No želim naglasiti da kad je Kornjača to jutro pogledao moju nedovršenu sliku, tri dječaka na njoj razlikovala su se od modela prema kojima su napravljena u nekoliko važnih aspekata. Iako su i oni stajali ispred prljave straćare i odjeća im je bila izlizana kao i stvarnim dječacima, njihovi izrazi nisu prikazivali obrambenu namrštenost zločinaca uhvaćenih na djelu, nego je to bila namrštenost muževnih samuraja koji su spremni za borbu. Dječaci na mojoj slici nisu slučajno držali svoje štapove na klasičan način na koji se oni drže u kendou.

Iznad glava ovih triju dječaka, Kornjača je vidio kako se slika spaja s drugom koja prikazuje tri debela, dobro odjevena muškarca koja sjede u baru i smiju se. Pogledi na njihovim licima činili su se dekadentni, kao da su se šalili o svojim ljubavnicama ili nečem sličnom. Ove dvije kontrastirajuće slike tvorile su oblik obale japanskih otoka. Na desnom rubu slike pisalo je

„Samodopadnost”, a na lijevoj strani, manjim slovima, bilo je napisano „Ali mladi su spremni boriti se za svoje dostojanstvo.”

Kad opisujem ovo rano i bez sumnje nerafinirano djelo, neke od njegovih karakteristika možda će vam se činiti poznatima. To je zato što ste se možda susreli s ovom slikom. „Pogled u horizont” bio je print iz tridesetih koji je postigao određenu slavu i imao utjecaja u ovom gradu i doista, to je bila prerada slike „Samodopadnost” s nekim razlikama nastalim zbog vremenskog razmaka od nekoliko godina između njih. Novija slika također je imala dvije spojene kontrastirajuće slike koje su tvorile oblik japanske obale i gornja slika opet je prikazivala tri dobro obučena muškarca, ali ovaj put izrazi njihovih lica bili su nervozni, međusobno su tražili inicijativu. Ne moram vas podsjećati da su ta tri lica sličila onima od triju istaknutih političara. Donja, dominantnija slika nije više prikazivala tri dječaka pogođena siromaštvom nego vojnike strogih lica od kojih su dvojica držali puške s bajonetima, a s njihove strane nalazio se časnik s mačem koji je pokazivao put naprijed, zapadno prema Aziji. Iza njih više nije bilo prikazano siromaštvo nego vojna zastava izlazećeg sunca. Riječ „Samodopadnost” na desnom rubu zamijenio je „Pogled u horizont!”, a na lijevoj strani bila je poruka „Nema vremena za kukavičke razgovore. Japan mora ići naprijed!”

Naravno, ako ste novi u ovom gradu, moguće je da se niste susreli s ovim djelom. No ne pretjerujem kad kažem da ga je većina onih koji su živjeli ovdje prije rata vidjela jer je djelo primilo mnoge pohvale na račun energičnih poteza kistom i slikovite upotrebe boja. Svjestan sam da su, bez obzira na umjetničku vrijednost, osjećaji koje slika izaziva sad zastarjeli. Prvi bih priznao da se takve osjećaje možda treba i osuditi. Nisam jedan od onih koji se boje priznati mane prošlih dostignuća.

Ali nisam htio pričati o „Pogledu prema horizontu”. Spominjem ga ovdje samo zato što je povezan s onom ranijom slikom i valjda kako bih objasnio koliki je utjecaj na moju kasniju karijeru imao susret s Matsudom. Počeo sam se redovito nalaziti s Matsudom nekoliko tjedana prije tog jutra kad je Kornjača otkrio sliku u kuhinji. Mislim da dovoljno govori o privlačnosti njegovih ideja to da sam se nastavio nalaziti s njim iako mi se u početku nije sviđao. Većina naših ranijih susreta završila bi s obostranim neprijateljskim osjećajima. Sjećam se na primjer jedne večeri, nedugo nakon onog dana kad sam ga slijedio u siromaštvo Nishizurua, kad smo išli u neki bar u centru grada. Ne sjećam se imena ni lokacije bara ali jasno se sjećam da je bilo mračno i prljavo mjesto i da su se u njemu okupljali oni koji su se činili kao gradski ološ. Osjećao sam se zabrinuto čim sam ušao, ali Matsuda je poznavao to

mjesto, pozdravio je muškarce koji su kartali za stolom i odveo me zaklonjenu prostorijicu u kojoj se nalazio mali slobodni stol.

I dalje sam bio zabrinut kad su nedugo nakon što smo sjeli, dva muškarca grubog izgleda, prilično pijani, teturajući ušli u prostorijicu želeći razgovarati s nama. Matsuda im je odlučno rekao da nas puste na miru i ja sam očekivao da će biti nevolje, ali činilo se da ih je nešto u vezi mog prijatelja uznemirilo pa su nas napustili bez komentara.

Nakon toga smo neko vrijeme sjedili, pili i razgovarali i sjećam se da nije trebalo dugo da se naše rasprave zaoštire. Sjećam se da sam mu u jednom trenutku rekao:

„Istina je da nekad mi umjetnici zaslužujemo da nam se netko poput tebe ruga. Ali mislim da griješiš kad pretpostavljaš da svi tako naivno gledamo na svijet.”

Matsuda se nasmijao i rekao:

„Moraš imati na umu, Ono, da se ja susrećem s mnogim umjetnicima. Sve u svemu, vi ste zapanjujuće dekadentna skupina. Često o događajima u svijetu znate koliko i djeca.”

Htio sam odgovoriti, ali Matsuda je nastavio: „Uzmimo za primjer, Ono, ovaj tvoj plan. Ovaj koji si tako žustro maloprije predložio. Vrlo je dirljiv, ali ako smijem reći, prikazuje naivnost tipičnu za jednog umjetnika.”

„Ne vidim čime je moja ideja zaslužila tvoje izrugivanje. Ali očito sam pogriješio kad sam mislio da se brineš za siromahe ovog grada.”

„Nema potrebe za takvim djetinjastim podbadaњem. Dobro znaš što mene brine. Ali razmislimo malo o tvom planu. Pretpostavimo da tvoj učitelj suosjeća iako je mala vjerojatnost za to. Recimo onda da provedete tjedan-dva u vili slikajući nekih dvadesetak slika. Maksimalno trideset. Nema svrhe naslikati više od toga, ionako nećete prodati više od deset ili jedanaest. Što nakon toga, Ono? Hoćeš li hodati siromašnim područjima ovog grada s novčanikom punim kovanica koje ćeš prikupiti tim napornim radom? Hoćeš li dati tisućicu jena svakoj siromašnoj osobi koju sretnješ?”

„Oprosti Matsuda ali moram ponoviti, pogrešno pretpostavljaš da sam ja tako naivan. Nisam predložio da izložba bude ograničena na grupu Mori-sana. U potpunosti sam svjestan razmjera siromaštva koje pokušavamo ublažiti i zato ti ovo predlažem. Tvoja tvrtka Okada-

Shingen dobro je pozicionirana za razvoj takvog plana. Velike izložbe koje se redovito održavaju u gradu privlačile bi sve više umjetnika i donijele značajnu pomoć siromašnima.”

„Žao mi je, Ono”, rekao je Matsuda, smijući se i odmahujući glavom, „ali bojim se da sam ipak bio u pravu. Vi umjetnici ste očajnički naivna vrsta.” Naslonio se nazad i uzdahnuo. Površina našeg stola bila je prekrivena pepelom cigareta i Matsuda je pažljivo crtao uzorke u pepelu praznom kutijom koju su ostavili prethodni gosti. „Postoji određena vrsta umjetnika ovih dana”, nastavio je, „čiji je najveći talent skrivanje od stvarnog svijeta. Nažalost, takvi umjetnici su sad u većini i ti si, Ono, došao pod utjecaj jednog od njih. Nemoj se ljutiti, govorim istinu. Tvoje znanje o ovom svijetu je kao djetetovo. Sumnjam da bi mi uopće znao reći tko je na primjer Karl Marx.

Pogledao sam ga mrzovoljno, ali nisam ništa rekao. Nasmijao se i rekao: „Vidiš? Ali nemoj se uzrujavati. Većina tvojih kolega isto nema pojma.”

„Ne budi smiješan. Naravno da znam za Karla Marxa.”

„Onda se ispričavam, Ono. Možda sam te zaista podcijenio. Molim te reci mi o Marxu.”

Slegnuo sam ramenima i rekao: „Vjerujem da je on vodio rusku revoluciju.”

„A Lenjin, Ono? Je li on mu on možda bio zamjenik?”

„Nekakav kolega.” Vidio sam da se Matsuda opet smije, pa sam brzo, prije no što je počeo govoriti rekao: „U svakom slučaju, pretjeruješ. To su brige neke daleke države. Ja govorim o siromašnim ljudima ovdje u našem gradu.”

„Doista, Ono, doista. Ali opet, vidiš, ti ne znaš ni o drugim stvarima. Točno si pretpostavio da tvrtka Okada-Shingen želi probuditi umjetnike i uvesti ih u stvarni svijet. Ali pogrešno sam ti objasnio ako si shvatio da želimo našu tvrtku pretvoriti u veliku zdjelu za prosjačenje. Ne zanima nas humanitarni rad.”

„Ne shvaćam što je loše u humanitarnom radu. Ako u isto vrijeme otvori oči dekadentnim umjetnicima, mislim da je to još bolje.”

„Oči su ti doista daleko od otvorenih, Ono, ako vjeruješ da će malo dobronamjerne humanitarne pomoći spasiti našu jadnu državu. Istina je da će Japan ući u krizu. U rukama smo pohlepnih poduzetnika i slabih političara. Takvi ljudi osigurat će sve veći rast siromaštva. Osim ako mi, nova generacija, ne poduzmemo nešto. Ali ja nisam politički huškač, Ono.

Mene brine umjetnost. I umjetnici poput tebe. Talentirani mladi umjetnici koji još nisu nepovratno zaslijepjeni ograđenim malim svijetom u kojem živite. Okada-Shingen postoji kako bi pomogli otvoriti oči takvima poput tebe kako biste proizveli djela s istinskom vrijednošću u ovim teškim vremenima.”

„Oprosti Matsuda, ali čini mi se da si ti taj koji je naivan. Umjetnik želi prikazati ljepotu gdje god je nađe. No koliko god to vješto napravio, neće imati puno utjecaja na stvari o kojima ti govoriš. Zaista, ako je Okada-Shingen takva tvrtka kakvom je predstavljaš, čini mi se loše osmišljena. Čini mi se da je zasnovana na naivnoj zabludi o onome što umjetnost može i ne može učiniti.”

„Dobro znaš, Ono, da ne gledamo stvari tako jednostavno. Činjenica je da Okada-Shingen ne postoji u vakuumu. Mladići poput nas koji razmišljaju na isti način nalaze se u svim strukama, u politici, u vojsci. Mi smo nova generacija. Zajedno možemo postići nešto istinski vrijedno. Samo što neki od nas zaista vole umjetnost i žele da ona odgovara današnjem svijetu. Ono, istina je da u vremenima poput ovih, kad su ljudi sve siromašniji i djeca sve gladnija, nije više dovoljno da se umjetnik skriva negdje i usavršava slike kurtizana. Vidim da se ljutiš na mene i čak i sada mi želiš proturječiti. Ali želim ti dobro, Ono. Nadam se da ćeš kasnije pomno razmisliti o ovome. Ti si ipak osoba s neizmjernim talentom.”

„Pa, reci mi onda, Matsuda. Kako mi dekadentni glupavi umjetnici možemo pomoći u ostvarenju tvoje političke revolucije?”

Na moju iritaciju, Matsuda se još jednom omalovažavajuće osmjehnuo. „Revolucija? Stvarno, Ono! Komunisti žele revoluciju. Mi ne želimo ništa takvo. Upravo suprotno. Želimo obnovu. Jednostavno želimo da se njegovo Carsko Veličanstvo vrati na mjesto koje mu pripada kao glavi naše države.”

„Ali naš car je već na toj poziciji.”

„Stvarno, Ono. Tako si naivan i zbunjen.” Njegov glas se, iako je ostao savršeno miran kao i uvijek, činio kao da postaje glasnjiji. „Naš car je naš zakoniti vođa, no je li to u stvarnosti tako? Oni poduzetnici i političari su mu oduzeli moć. Slušaj Ono, Japan više nije nazadna zemlja seljaka poljoprivrednika. Sad smo moćna nacija koja može parirati zapadnim nacijama. Na azijskom području Japan se ističe kao div među bogaljima i patuljcima. I svejedno dopuštamo da nam ljudi postaju sve očajniji i da nam djeca umiru od neuhranjenosti. U međuvremenu, poduzetnici postaju sve bogatiji, a političari stalno pronalaze izgovore i

brbljaju. Možeš li zamisliti da bilo koja zapadna sila dopušta takvu situaciju? Sigurno bi odavno reagirali.”

„Reakcija? Na kakvu reakciju misliš, Matsuda?”

„Vrijeme je da stvorimo carstvo jednako snažno i bogato kao britansko i francusko. Moramo upotrijebiti svoju snagu kako bi se proširili u inozemstvo. Sada je pravo vrijeme da Japan zauzme mjesto koje zaslužuje među svjetskim silama. Vjeruj mi, Ono, imamo sredstva za to, ali volju još uvijek ne. I moramo se riješiti tih poduzetnika i političara. Tada će vojska odgovarati samo Njegovom Carskom Veličanstvu.” Zatim se nasmijao i pogledao dolje u uzorke koje je crtao u pepelu cigareta. „No drugi će se brinuti o tome”, rekao je. „Ljudi poput nas, Ono, trebaju se brinuti o umjetnosti.”

Vjerujem, međutim, da razlog zbog kojeg je Kornjača stajao uzrujan u staroj kuhinji dva ili tri tjedna kasnije nema veze s ovim problemima o kojima sam razgovarao s Matsudom te večeri. Kornjača nije imao dovoljnu percepciju kako bi vidio toliko duboko značenje u mojoj nedovršenoj slici. Jedino bi prepoznao da je to izrazito nepoštivanje principa Mori-sana. Zanemario sam nastojanje njegove škole da se prikaže krhko svjetlo fenjera svijeta užitka, dodao sam istaknutu kaligrafiju koja je komplimentirala vizualni dojam i za kraj, Kornjaču su sigurno šokirali tvrdi obrisi, što je bila tradicionalna tehnika čije je odbacivanje bilo osnova učenja Mori-sana.

Bez obzira na razlog njegovog bijesa, znao sam da nakon tog jutra više nisam mogao sakriti svoje brzo razvijajuće ideje od onih oko mene i bilo je samo pitanje vremena kad će moj učitelj čuti o svemu tome. Stoga sam prije tog razgovora s Mori-sanom u paviljonu u vrtovima Takami puno puta promislio o tome što ću mu reći i čvrsto odlučio da neću iznevjeriti samog sebe.

Prošlo je tjedan dana ili nešto više nakon tog jutra u kuhinji. Mori-san i ja proveli smo popodne u gradu obavljajući neke sitne poslove, možda smo birali i naručivali nove materijale, ne sjećam se baš. Ali sjećam se da se Mori-san nije ponašao nimalo neuobičajeno prema meni dok smo obavljali što smo trebali. Onda, kad se noć počela spuštati, kad smo shvatili da imamo još vremena do dolaska vlaka, popeli smo se do vrtova Takami strmim stubama iza postaje Yotsugawa.

.Tih se dana se u vrtovima Takami nalazio divan paviljon, tik uz rub brda koje nadgleda područje, nedaleko od mjesta gdje se danas nalazi spomenik mira. Najuočljivija atrakcija

paviljona bili su fenjeri koji su visjeli cijelom duljinom streha njegovog elegantnog krova, iako se sjećam da su te noći svi bili ugašeni kad smo prolazili. Kad bi zakoračili unutra pod krov, našli bi se u paviljonu prostranom poput velike sobe, koji nije bio zatvoren s nijedne strane, nego su samo zaobljeni stupovi koji podupiru krov remetili pogled na okrug ispod.

Sasvim je vjerojatno da sam te večeri s Mori-sanom prvi put otkrio taj paviljon. Bilo mi je to omiljeno mjesto godinama, sve dok nije bilo uništeno u ratu i često sam tamo vodio učenike kad bi se našli u blizini. Vjerujem da je to čak bio paviljon u kojem sam, prije samog početka rata, zadnji put razgovarao s Kurodom, mojim najdarovitijim učenikom.

U svakom slučaju, te prve večeri slijedio sam Mori-sana unutar paviljona, sjećam se da je nebo bilo svijetle grimizne boje i svjetla su se palila između krovova koji su se još uvijek vidjeli dolje u tami. Mori-san je napravio nekoliko koraka prema pogledu, naslonio rame na stup, zadovoljno pogledao u nebo i rekao, ne okrećući se prema meni:

„Ono, u rupcu imamo šibice i voštanice. Molim te upali ove fenjere. Vjerujem da će stvoriti jako zanimljiv efekt.”

Dok sam se kretao po paviljonu, paleći fenjer nakon fenjera, vrtovi oko nas, koji su postali mirni i tihi, nestajali su u mraku. Cijelo to vrijeme nastavio sam gledati siluetu Mori-sana koja se ocrtavala u nebu dok je zamišljeno gledao u pogled. Upalilo sam možda pola fenjera kad sam ga čuo kako govori:

„I, Ono, što te to toliko muči?”

„Kako mislite, Sensei?”

„Ranije danas spomenuo si da te nešto muči.”

Blago sam se osmjehnuo dok sam pokušavao dosegnuti fenjer.

„Sitnica, Sensei. Ne bih Vas zamarao time, ali nisam siguran što da mislim. Stvar je u tome da sam prije dva dana primijetio da su neke od mojih slika nestale s mjesta gdje sam ih uvijek ostavljao u staroj kuhinji.”

Mori-san je šutio na trenutak. Onda je rekao:

„Što ostali kažu na to?”

„Pitao sam ih, ali čini se da nitko ništa ne zna. Ili mi barem nitko ništa nije htio reći.”

„I što si zaključio, Ono? Postoji li neka zavjera protiv tebe?“

„Zapravo, Sensei, čini se da me ostali žurno izbjegavaju. Zaista, nisam imao priliku razgovarati s nijednim od njih prošlih nekoliko dana. Kad uđem u sobu, svi zašute ili napuste sobu.“

Nije ništa odgovorio, a kad sam pogledao prema njemu, činilo se da je još zaokupljen zalaskom sunca. Palio sam još jedan fenjer kad sam ga čuo kako govori:

„Tvoje slike su trenutno kod mene. Ispričavam se ako sam te uznemirio kad sam ih uzeo. Stvar je u tome da sam neki dan imao viška vremena pa sam mislio da je to dobra prilika da pogledam tvoje novije radove. Mislim da si tada bio negdje vani. Trebao sam ti reći kad si se vratio, Ono. Ispričavam se.“

„Ma nema potrebe, Sensei. Istinski sam zahvalan što se toliko zimate za moj rad.“

„Naravno da me zanima tvoj rad. Ti si moj najuspješniji učenik. Uložio sam godine u razvoj tvog talenta.“

„Naravno, Sensei. Ne mogu ni zamisliti koliko Vam dugujem.“

Šutjeli smo nekoliko trenutaka dok sam ja palio fenjere. Onda sam zastao i rekao:

„Laknulo mi je jer znam da su slike na sigurnom. Trebao sam znati da postoji neko jednostavno objašnjenje. Sad mogu biti mirne duše.“

Mori-san nije na to ništa odgovorio i koliko sam mogao vidjeti od njegove siluete, nastavio je promatrati pogled. Pomislio sam da me nije čuo, pa sam rekao malo glasnije:

„Drago mi je da se ne moram brinuti za sigurnost svojih slika.“

„Da, Ono“, reče Mori-san, kao da se prenuo iz nekih dalekih misli. „Imao sam viška vremena. Pa sam rekao nekome da mi donese tvoje novije radove.“

„Glupo je od mene što sam se brinuo. Drago mi je da su slike na sigurnom.“

Neko vrijeme je šutio tako da sam opet pomislio da me nije čuo. Ali onda je rekao: „Malo me iznenadilo ono što sam vidio. Čini se da istražuješ zanimljive putove.“

Naravno, možda i nije rekao točno tu frazu, „istražuješ zanimljive putove“. Sjećam se da sam kasnijih godina ja često rabio tu frazu pa je lako moguće da se sjećam onoga što sam govorio

Kurodi nekom drugom prilikom u tom istom paviljonu. Onda opet, vjerujem da je Mori-san nekad rabio izraz „istraživanje putova”. U biti, to je vjerojatno još jedan primjer nasljeđa od mog bivšeg učitelja. U svakom slučaju, sjećam se da nisam ništa odgovorio nego sam se nervozno nasmijao i krenuo paliti još jedan fenjer. Onda je rekao:

„Nema ništa loše u tome da mladi umjetnik malo eksperimentira. Na taj način, između ostalog, može izbaciti iz sebe neke svoje površne interese. Onda se može s još većom predanošću vratiti ozbiljnom poslu.” Nakon stanke promrmeljao je, kao da priča sa sobom: „Ne, nije loše eksperimentirati. Sve je to dio mladosti. Nije uopće loše.”

„Sensei”, rekao sam, „čvrsto osjećam da su moji novi radovi najbolji koje sam napravio.”

„Nije loše, uopće nije loše. Ali opet, ne treba trošiti previše vremena na takve eksperimente. Čovjek može postati poput onih koji previše putuju. Najbolje se vratiti ozbiljnom radu prije nego što prođe previše vremena.”

Čekao sam da vidim hoće li reći nešto više. Nakon nekoliko trenutaka rekao sam: „Zaista je bilo blesavo brinuti se za sigurnost tih slika. Ali vidite, Sensei, ponosniji sam na njih nego išta drugo što sam učinio. Svejedno, pretpostavljao sam da će postojati neko tako jednostavno objašnjenje.”

Mori-san je nastavio šutjeti. Kad sam skrenuo pogled s fenjera koji sam palio na njega, bilo je teško reći razmišlja li o mojim riječima ili o nečemu sasvim drugom. U paviljonu se mogla vidjeti čudna mješavina svjetla sunca koje je zalazilo i fenjera koje sam palio. Ali figura Mori-sana je i dalje bila naslonjena na stup, leđima okrenutim prema meni.

„Ono,” rekao je konačno, „slučajno sam saznao da si nedavno završio još jednu ili dvije slike koje nisu bile s onima koje trenutno imam.”

„Sasvim je moguće da postoji jedna ili dvije koje nisam spremio s ostalima.”

„Ah. I ne sumnjam da su ti upravo te slike najdraže.”

Nisam odgovorio na ovo. Zatim je Mori-san nastavio:

„Možda bi mi mogao donijeti te slike kad se vratimo, Ono. Jako me zanimaju.”

Promislio sam na trenutak, a zatim rekao: „Bio bih, naravno, iznimno zahvalan kad bih čuo što mislite o tim slikama. Međutim, nisam siguran gdje sam ih ostavio.”

„Ali vjerujem da ćeš se potruditi da ih pronadeš.”

„Hoću, Sensei. U međuvremenu ću Vas možda osloboditi ostalih slika kojima ste tako ljubazno posvetili svoju pažnju. Ne sumnjam da Vam stvaraju nered u sobi, pa ću ih maknuti čim se vratimo.”

„Ne trebaš se zamarati tim slikama, Ono. Dovoljno je da pronadeš ostale slike i doneseš mi ih.”

„Žao mi je, Sensei, što neću uspjeti pronaći preostale slike.”

„Znači tako, Ono." Umorno je uzdahnuo i vidio sam da opet gleda u nebo. „Znači, ne misliš da ćeš mi moći donijeti te slike.”

„Ne, Sensei. Bojim se da neću moći.”

„U redu. Sigurno si razmišljao o svojoj budućnosti u slučaju da napustiš moj patronat.”

„Nadao sam se da ćete imati razumijevanja za moje stajalište i nastaviti podupirati moju karijeru.”

Nije ništa rekao, pa sam nastavio:

„Sensei, jako bi me pogodilo da moram napustiti vilu. Prošlih nekoliko godina bile su najsretnije i najvrjednije godine mog života. Smatram svoje kolege braćom. A što se tiče Vas, ne mogu ni zamisliti koliko Vam dugujem. Molio bih Vas da još jednom pogledate moje nove slike i razmislite o njima. Možda bi mi mogli dopustiti da Vam objasnim što sam htio postići sa svakom slikom kad se vratimo.”

Još uvijek nije bilo naznaka da me čuo. Tako da sam nastavio:

„Naučio sam mnoge stvari tijekom proteklih godina. Naučio sam mnogo razmišljajući o svijetu užitka i prepoznavajući njegovu krhku ljepotu. Ali osjećam da je vrijeme da se posvetim drugim stvarima. Sensei, vjerujem da u ovakvim teškim vremenima, umjetnici moraju naučiti vrijednost nečeg opipljivijeg od užitaka koji nestaju s jutarnjim svjetlom. Nije nužno da se umjetnici uvijek nalaze u dekadentnom i ograđenom svijetu. Moja savjest, Sensei, mi govori da ne mogu zauvijek ostati umjetnik plutajućeg svijeta.”

Nakon toga sam se vratio fenjerima. Nakon nekoliko trenutaka, Mori-san je rekao:

„Ti si već neko vrijeme moj najuspješniji učenik. Bilo bi mi teško da odeš. Recimo onda da imaš tri dana da mi doneseš ostale slike. Donijet ćeš mi ih, a onda se posvetiti prikladnijim stvarima.”

„Kao što sam već rekao, Sensei, na moju veliku žalost ne mogu Vam donijeti te slike.”

Mori-san je zvučao kao da se smije sam sa sobom. Zatim je rekao: „Kao što si i sam rekao, Ono, ovo su teška vremena. Još teža za mladog umjetnika koji je praktički nepoznat i bez prihoda. Da si manje talentiran, bilo bi me strah za tvoju budućnost nakon što me napustiš. Ali ti si pametan čovjek. Sigurno si se već organizirao.”

„Zapravo, nisam ništa organizirao. Vila je toliko dugo bila moj dom, nikad nisam ozbiljno pomislio da to jednom neće biti.”

„Zaista? Pa, kao što sam rekao, Ono, da nisi toliko talentiran, bilo bi razloga za brigu. Ali ti si pametan mladić.” Vidio sam siluetu Mori-sana kako se okreće prema meni. „Bez sumnje ćeš uspjeti pronaći posao u ilustraciji časopisa i stripova. Možda ćeš se i uspjeti zaposliti u tvrtki poput one u kojoj si radio prije nego što si došao kod mene. Naravno, to će biti kraj tvog razvoja u ozbiljnog umjetnika, ali to sigurno već znaš.”

Ove riječi možda se čine previše osvetoljubivima za učitelja koji zna da je još uvijek uzor svom učeniku. No opet, kad odličan slikar posveti toliko vremena i sredstava jednom učeniku, kad dopusti da se učenikovo ime u javnosti povezuje s njegovim, možda je razumljivo, ako ne i potpuno opravdano, da učitelj na trenutak zaboravi na primjerenost svojih riječi i reagira na način koji bi poslije mogao požaliti. I iako se natezanje oko slika sigurno čini sitničavim, zasigurno je razumljivo da učitelj koji je nabavio većinu boja i materijala zaboravi u tom trenutku da njegov učenik ima ikakva prava na svoja djela.

Unatoč svemu tome, jasno je da treba žaliti zbog takve arogancije i posesivnosti učitelja, koliko god on bio ugledan. S vremena na vrijeme još uvijek u mislima vrtim to hladno zimsko jutro i sve jači miris paljevine u nosnicama. Bila je to zima prije nego je izbio rat i ja sam nervozno stajao na vratima Kurodine kuće, male straćare koju je unajmio u Nakamichiju. Miris paljevine, primijetio sam, dolazio je iz kuće, kao i zvuk jecanja žene. Više puta sam povukao konop zvona kako bi me netko pustio unutra, ali nije bilo odgovora. Na kraju sam odlučio sam ući ali taman kad sam otvorio vanjska vrata, policajac u uniformi pojavio se na ulazu.

„Što želite?” zahtijevao je.

„Tražim gospodina Kurodu. Je li kod kuće?”

„Odveden je u policijski ured na ispitivanje.”

„Ispitivanje?”

„Savjetujem Vam da odete kući”, rekao je policajac. „Ili ćemo početi provjeravati i Vas. Zanimaju nas svi bliski suradnici ovog stanara.”

„Ali zašto? Je li gospodin Kuroda počinio neki zločin?”

„Nitko ne želi takve poput njega u blizini. Ne odete li, odvest ćemo i Vas na ispitivanje.”

Unutar kuće, žena, pretpostavio sam Kurodina majka, je nastavila jecati. Čuo sam kako netko viče na nju.

„Gdje je nadležni policajac?” pitao sam.

„Idite svojim putem. Zar želite da Vas uhitimo?”

„Prije nego nastavimo”, rekao sam, „dopustite mi da kažem da se zovem Ono.” Policajac me nije prepoznao, pa sam pomalo nesigurno nastavio: „Ja sam čovjek zbog čijih ste informacija tu. Ja sam Masuji Ono, umjetnik i član Odbora za kulturu Ministarstva unutarnjih poslova. Štoviše, ja sam službeni savjetnik Odbora za nepatriotske aktivnosti. Vjerujem da je ovdje došlo do neke zabune i želim razgovarati s onim tko je odgovoran.”

Policajac me na trenutak sumnjičavo pogledao, a onda se okrenuo i otišao u kuću. Nedugo zatim se vratio i pokazao da uđem.

Dok sam ga pratio kroz Kurodinu kuću, svugdje sam vidio sadržaj ormara i ladica koje su ispraznili na pod. Neke knjige, primijetio sam, bile su posložene u hrpe i svezane, a u boravku su podignuli tatami i policajac je istraživao podne daske s ručnom svjetiljkom. Iza zatvorene pregrade jasnije sam čuo Kurodinu majku kako plače dok službenik viče pitanja.

Izveli su me na trijem na stražnjem dijelu kuće. Usred malog dvorišta još jedan policajac u uniformi i muškarac u civilu stajali su oko vatre. Muškarac u civilu se okrenuo i napravio nekoliko koraka prema meni.

„Gospodin Ono?” upita s poštovanjem.

Izgledalo je da je policajac koji me uveo unutra shvatio da je njegova nepristojnost bila neumjesna pa se vratio nazad u kuću.

„Što se dogodilo s gospodinom Kurodom?”

„Odveli su ga na ispitivanje, gospodine Ono. Pobrinit ćemo se za njega, ne brinite.”

Gledao sam vatru iza njega koja je gotovo izgorjela. Policajac u uniformi štapom je bockao hrpu.

„Jeste li imali dozvolu za paljenje tih slika?” pitao sam.

„Naša je politika uništiti bilo koji uvredljivi materijal koji nećemo trebati za dokaz. Probrali smo dovoljan uzorak. Ostatak ovog smeća smo upravo spalili.”

„Nisam imao pojma”, rekao sam, „da će se ovakvo nešto dogoditi. Samo sam predložio odboru da netko dođe i porazgovara s gospodinom Kurodom za njegovo dobro.” Zurio sam opet u spaljenu hrpu na sredini dvorišta. „Nije bilo potrebno paliti sve te slike. Među njima je bilo i puno dobrih djela.”

„Gospodine Ono, zahvalni smo na Vašoj pomoći. Ali sad kad je pokrenuta istraga, morate to prepustiti nadležnim službama. Pobrinit ćemo se da se prema Vašem gospodinu Kurodi pravedno postupa.”

Nasmiješio se i okrenuvši se natrag vatri rekao nešto policajcu u uniformi. Potonji je ponovo zapalio vatru i promrmljao u bradu nešto što je zvučalo kao: „Nepatriotsko smeće.”

Ostao sam na trijemu, promatrajući u nevjerici. Na kraju se policajac u civilu opet obratio meni i rekao: „Gospodine Ono, predlažem da se sada vratite kući.”

„Ovo je pretjerano”, rekao sam. „Zašto ispitujete gospođu Kuroda? Kakve veze ona ima s ičim?”

„Ovo je u policijskoj nadležnosti, gospodine Ono. Više se ne tiče Vas.”

„Pretjerali ste. Namjeravam razgovarati o ovome s gospodinom Ubukatom. Štoviše, mogao bih o ovome razgovarati čak i s gospodinom Saburijem.”

Muškarac u civilu pozvao je nekoga u kući i policajac koji je otvorio vrata pojavio se kraj mene.

„Zahvali gospodinu Onou za pomoć i isprati ga van”, rekao je muškarac u civilu. Kad se okrenuo prema vatri iznenada se zakašljao. „Loš dim od loših slika”, rekao je s osmijehom, odmahujući rukama zrak oko lica.

Ali ovo nije toliko bitno sada. Vjerujem da sam se prisjećao događaja onog dana prošlog mjeseca kad je Setsuko došla u kratki posjet. Zapravo, prisjećao sam se kako nas je Taro sve nasmijao tijekom večere sa svojim anegdotama o kolegama s posla.

Koliko se sjećam, večera se nastavila u vrlo ugodnoj atmosferi. Nisam, međutim, mogao ne osjećati neugodu svaki put kad bih vidio Ichira kako promatra Noriko dok ulijeva sake. Prvih nekoliko puta pogledao bi me preko stola sa zavjereničkim osmijehom koji sam ja pokušavao odvratiti što neutralnije. Ali kako je obrok napredovao i sve više sakea se lijevalo, prestao je gledati u mene i gledao je ljutito u svoju tetu dok je punila naše čaše.

Taro nam je pričao još neke zabavne priče o svojim kolegama kad mu je Setsuko rekla:

„Baš si nas zabavio, Taro-san. Ali čula sam od Noriko da je trenutno moral na visokoj razini u tvojoj tvrtki. Sigurno je jako poticajno raditi u takvoj atmosferi.”

Čuvši to, Taro se odjednom uozbiljio. „Zaista je, Setsuko-san”, rekao je, kimnuvši. „Promjene koje smo uveli nakon rata urodile su plodom u svim aspektima tvrtke. Vrlo smo optimistični u vezi budućnosti. Ako se nastavimo truditi, za deset godina ime KNC postat će poznato ne samo u Japanu, nego i u cijelom svijetu.”

„Sjajno. Noriko mi je govorila i da je direktor tvoje podružnice vrlo ljubazan čovjek. Sigurno i to čini veliku razliku u moralu u tvrtki.”

„Uistinu si u pravu. Ali gospodin Hayasaka nije samo ljubazan čovjek, on je također čovjek s izvanrednim sposobnostima i vizijom. Vjeruj mi Setsuko-san, raditi za nadređenog koji je nesposoban je demoralizirajuće bez obzira na to koliko je on ljubazan. Jako smo sretni da nas vodi netko poput gospodina Hayasake.”

„Istina, Suichi također ima tu sreću da mu je nadređeni vrlo sposoban.”

„Je li, Setsuko-san? Ali to bih i očekivao od tvrtke poput Nippon Electrics. Samo bi najbolji ljudi mogli imati odgovornost u takvoj tvrtki.”

„Imamo sreće da je tako. Ali siguran sam da je to istinito i za KNC, Taro-san. Suichi uvijek hvali KNC.”

„Oprosti, Taro”, ubacio sam se u ovom trenutku. „Naravno, siguran sam da si s razlogom optimističan u KNC-u. No htio sam te pitati misliš li da je sasvim dobro da je toliko radikalnih promjena uvedeno u tvrtki nakon rata? Čujem da je malo tko od stare uprave ostao.”

Moj zet se zamišljeno nasmiješio, a zatim rekao: „Zaista cijenim Vašu zabrinutost. Sama mladost i energičnost neće uvijek dati najbolje rezultate. Ali iskreno, ovakva reforma bila je potrebna. Sada trebamo nove vođe s novim pristupima današnjem svijetu.”

„Naravno, naravno. I ne sumnjam da su vaši novi vođe iznimno sposobni muškarci. Ali reci mi, Taro, ne brineš li se ponekad da previše brzopletu slijedimo Amerikance? Prvi bih se složio da se mnogi stari načini moraju zauvijek promijeniti, ali ne misliš li da se uz njih odbacuju i neke dobre stvari? Doista, ponekad Japan sličí djetetu kojeg podučava čudna odrasla osoba.”

„U pravu ste. Siguran sam da smo bili malo brzopletí. Ali kad se sve zbroji i oduzme, Amerikanci imaju toliko toga za naučiti nas. Na primjer, samo u ovih nekoliko godina, mi Japanci smo daleko dogurali u razumijevanju stvari poput demokracije i prava pojedinca. Zaista imam osjećaj da je Japan konačno stvorio temelje na kojima će graditi sjajnu budućnost. Zbog toga u tvrtkama poput naše možemo samouvjereno gledati naprijed.

„Tako je, Taro-san.” rekla je Setsuko. „Suichi osjeća isto što i ti. U nekoliko navrata izrazio je mišljenje da se nakon četiri godine smetenosti naša država napokon usredotočila na budućnost.”

Iako se moja kći obratila Tarou, imao sam dojam da to govori zbog mene. Taro je očito isto tako shvatio, pa je umjesto da odgovara njoj, nastavio:

„Zapravo, oče, baš sam prošli tjedan bio na večeri za godišnjicu mature i prvi put nakon predaje, ljudi iz svih struka bili su optimistični u vezi budućnosti. Znači da nemamo samo mi u KNC-u osjećaj da sve dolazi na svoje mjesto. I dok u potpunosti razumijem Vaše brige, uvjeren sam da su pouke koje smo izvukli proteklih godina većinom bile dobre i da će nas voditi u sjajnu budućnost. Ali možda se varam, oče.”

„Nipošto, nipošto,” rekao sam i nasmiješio mu se. „Kao što si rekao, vašu generaciju sigurno čeka sjajna budućnost. I svi ste puni samopouzdanja, Mogu vam samo poželjeti sve najbolje.”

Činilo se da će moj zet odgovoriti, ali u tom trenutku je Ichiro posegnuo prema stolu i dodirnuo bocu sakea, kao što je već jednom učinio. Taro se okrenuo prema njemu, govoreći:

„Ah, Ichiro-san. Točno onaj kojeg trebamo u ovoj raspravi. Reci nam, što misliš biti kad odrasteš?”

Moj unuk je na trenutak nastavio gledati bocu sakea, a zatim je potišteno pogledao u mene. Majka mu je dodirnula ruku i šapnula: „Ichiro, ujak Taro te nešto pitao. Reci mu što želiš biti.”

„Predsjednik tvrtke Nippon Electrics!” Ichiro izjavi glasno.

Svi smo se nasmijali.

„Jesi li siguran u to, Ichiro-san?” upita Taro. „Ne želiš li umjesto toga voditi nas u KNC-u?”

„Nippon Electrics je najbolja tvrtka!”

Svi smo se ponovno nasmijali.

„Velika šteta za nas”, rekao je Taro. „Baš ćemo Ichiro-sana trebati u KNC-u za nekoliko godina.”

Činilo se da je zbog tog razgovora Ichiro smetnuo sake s uma i nakon toga je uživao i pridružio se glasno kad god bi čuo da se odrasli smiju nečemu. Tek na kraju obroka pitao je prilično nezainteresiranim tonom:

„Jeste li popili sav sake?”

„Popili smo sve”, rekla je Noriko. „Želiš li još soka od naranče?”

Ichiro je pristojno odbio i okrenuo se Tarou koji mu je nešto objašnjavao. Unatoč tome, mogao sam zamisliti njegovo razočaranje i bio sam ljut na Setsuko jer nije imala malo više razumijevanja za osjećaje svog sina.

Dobio sam priliku da razgovaram sam s Ichikom sat vremena kasnije kad sam ušao u malu gostinjsku sobu stana da mu poželim laku noć. Svjetlo je još bilo upaljeno, ali Ichiro je ležao ispod pokrivača na trbuhu, s obrazom pritisnutim u jastuk. Kad sam ugasio svjetlo, primijetio sam da rolete nisu sprječavale da svjetlo iz suprotne zgrade ulazi u sobu i baca sjene po zidovima i stropu. Iz susjedne sobe čuo se smijeh mojih kćeri i kad sam kleknuo kraj Ichirovog pokrivača šapnuo je:

„Oji, je li teta Noriko pijana?”

„Mislim da nije, Ichiro. Samo se smije nečemu, to je sve.”

„Možda je malo pijana. Ne misliš li da je, Oji?”

„Pa možda. Samo malo. Ništa strašno.”

„Žene ne mogu podnijeti sake, zar ne, Oji?” rekao je i zahihotao se u jastuk.

Nasmijao sam se, a zatim mu rekao: „Znaš Ichiro, nema potrebe da budeš uzrujan zbog sakea večeras. To zaista nije bitno. Uskoro ćeš biti stariji i onda ćeš moći piti koliko kod sakea želiš.”

Ustao sam i otišao do prozora kako bih pokušao bolje namjestiti rolete. Otvorio sam ih i zatvorio nekoliko puta, ali letvice su ostale odvojene tako da sam svakako mogao vidjeti svjetlo iz suprotne zgrade.

„Ne, Ichiro, stvarno se ne trebaš uzrujavati.”

Na trenutak moj unuk ništa odgovorio. Onda sam čuo njegov glas kako govori iza mene: „Ne trebaš se brinuti, Oji.”

„Oh? Kako to misliš, Ichiro?”

„Nemoj se brinuti, Oji. Ako se brineš, nećeš spavati. A ako starci ne spavaju, razbole se.”

„Tako znači. U redu onda, Ichiro. Obećavam da se neću brinuti. Ali ti se isto ne smiješ uzrujavati. Jer zaista, nemaš zbog čega biti uzrujan.”

Ichiro je šutio. Ponovno sam otvorio i zatvorio rolete.

„S druge strane,” rekao sam, „da si večeras inzistirao na sakeu, ja bih se umiješao i pobrinuo se da ga i dobiješ. Ovako je možda bolje da smo ženama pustili da bude po njihovom. Ne vrijedi ih uznemiravati zbog takvih sitnica.”

„Ponekad, kod kuće”, rekao je Ichiro, „otac želi nešto učiniti, a majka mu kaže da ne smije. Ponekad čak ni otac nema šanse protiv majke.”

„Je li”, rekao sam uz smijeh.

„Tako da se Oji ne treba brinuti.”

„Obojica se ne trebamo brinuti, Ichiro.” Okrenuo sam se od prozora i kleknuo opet pored njegovog pokrivača. „Sada pokušaj zaspati.”

„Hoćeš li provesti noć ovdje?”

„Ne, uskoro se vraćam svojoj kući.”

„Zašto ne možeš i ti ostati ovdje?”

„Ovdje nema dovoljno mjesta, Ichiro. Imam veliku kuću samo za sebe, sjećaš se?”

„Hoćeš li nas doći pozdraviti na kolodvoru sutra?”

„Naravno, Ichiro. Doći ću. I sigurno ćete uskoro opet doći u posjet.”

„Ne brini se što nisi mogao nagovoriti majku da mi da sake.”

„Čini se da odrastaš vrlo brzo, Ichiro”, rekao sam smijući se. „Bit ćeš dobar čovjek kad odrasteš. Možda ćeš stvarno biti direktor tvrtke Nippon Electrics. Ili nešto jednako važno. A sad budimo tihi neko vrijeme i vidimo hoćeš li zaspati.”

Sjedio sam kraj njega još nekoliko trenutaka i tiho mu odgovarao kad god je nešto rekao. Vjerujem da mi se u tim trenucima, dok sam čekao svog unuka da zaspe u toj zamračenoj sobi, slušajući smijeh iz susjedne sobe, počeo vrtjeti u mislima razgovor sa Setsuko od tog jutra u parku Kawabe. To je vjerojatno bila prva prilika koju sam imao da razmislim o našem razgovoru i sve do tad nisam bio toliko ljut na njene riječi. No kad sam ostavio unuka da spava u sobi i pridružio se ostalima u boravku, poprilično me živcirala moja starija kći i sigurno sam zbog toga nedugo nakon što sam sjeo rekao Tarou:

„Znate, čudno je kad razmislimo o tome. Tvoj otac i ja znamo se sigurno više od šesnaest godina, a tek smo tijekom prošle godine postali tako dobri prijatelji. ”

„Zaista”, rekao je moj zet, „ali pretpostavljam da je često tako. Čovjek uvijek ima toliko susjeda koje samo pozdravi. Velika šteta kad razmislite o tome.”

„Onda opet”, rekao sam, „dr. Saito i ja, mi nismo samo bili susjedi. Obojica smo se kretali u umjetničkim krugovima i znali jedan za drugog. Zato je još žalosnije da se tvoj otac i ja nismo više potrudili da postanemo prijatelji. Slažeš li se, Taro?”

Dok sam to govorio, brzo sam pogledao u Setsuko kako bih se uvjerio da me sluša.

„Zaista velika šteta”, rekao je Taro. „Ali ste barem na kraju imali priliku postati prijatelji.”

„Ali ono što želim reći, Taro, je da je još veća šteta jer smo obojica znali za reputaciju onog drugog u umjetničkim krugovima u to vrijeme.”

„Da, zaista velika šteta. Čovjek bi pomislio da bi činjenica da je susjed ugledan kolega dovela do bliskih odnosa među vama. Ali pretpostavljam da zbog užurbanog načina života i ostalih stvari to često nije tako.”

Pogledao sam Setsuko s određenom dozom zadovoljstva, ali moja kći nije izgledala kao da je shvatila važnost Tarovih riječi. Moguće je, naravno, da Setsuko stvarno nije razumjela. Međutim, pretpostavljam da je Setsuko razumjela, ali je bila previše ponosna da bi uzvratila moj pogled kad je bila suočena s dokazom da je pogriješila s onim insinuacijama tog jutra u parku Kawabe.

Šetali smo širokom središnjom avenijom parka laganim tempom i divili se jesenskim stablima koja su se nalazila s obje strane. Razmjenjivali smo dojmove o tome kako se Noriko navikava na svoj novi život i složili smo se da je, prema svemu sudeći, uistinu sretna.

„Vrlo sam zadovoljan”, rekao sam. „Počeo sam se strašno brinuti za njenu budućnost, ali izgleda da je sad sve u redu. Taro je izvrstan čovjek. Teško da je mogla naći boljeg supruga.”

„Čini mi se čudno”, rekla je Setsuko uz osmijeh, „da smo prije samo godinu dana svi bili toliko zabrinuti za nju.”

„Baš sam zadovoljan. I znaš, Setsuko, zahvalan sam na tvojoj ulozi u svemu tome. Bila si velika podrška svojoj sestri kad stvari nisu bile ovako dobre.”

„Naprotiv, nisam puno mogla učiniti kad sam bila tako daleko.”

„I naravno”, rekao sam uz smijeh, „ti si bila ta koja me upozorila prošle godine. „Mjere predostrožnosti”, sjećaš li se, Setsuko? Kao što vidiš, nisam ignorirao tvoj savjet.”

„Oprostite, koji savjet?”

„Ma, Setsuko, nema potrebe da se pretvaramo. Sad sam spreman priznati da nema razloga da se ponosim nekim aspektima svoje karijere. Doista, to sam i priznao tijekom ugovaranja braka, baš kao što si sugerirala.”

„Žao mi je, uopće mi nije jasno na što točno mislite.”

„Noriko ti nije ispričala za *miai*³? Pa, te večeri pobrinuo sam se da moja karijera ne bude prepreka njenoj sreći. Usudio bih se reći da bih svakako tako postupio ali sam svejedno zahvalan na tvom savjetu prošle godine.”

„Oprostite, ali ne sjećam se da sam prošle godine išta savjetovala. Što se tiče *miaija*, međutim, Noriko mi ga je spomenula nekoliko puta. Doista, pisala mi je nedugo nakon *miaija* kako ju je iznenadilo na koji ste način...pričali o sebi.”

„Usudio bih se reći da je bila iznenađena. Noriko je uvijek podcjenjivala svog starog oca. Ali teško da bih mogao dopustiti da moja vlastita kći pati samo zato što sam previše ponosan da se suočim sa stvarima.”

„Noriko mi je rekla da ju je Vaše ponašanje te noći izrazito zbunilo. Čini se da je i obitelj Saito bila jednako zbunjena. Nitko nije bio siguran što mislite. Doista, čak je i Suichi izrazio čuđenje kad sam mu pročitala pismo koje je Noriko poslala.”

„Pa ovo je odlično”, rekao sam uz smijeh. „Pa Setusko, upravo si me ti navela na to prošle godine. Ti si predložila „mjere predostrožnosti” kako ne bismo uništili šanse s obitelji Saito kao što smo to učinili s obitelji Miyake. Zar se ne sjećaš?”

„Sigurno sam jako zaboravna, ali bojim se da se nimalo ne sjećam toga o čemu pričate.”

„Pa, Setsuko, to je nevjerojatno.”

Setsuko je iznenada prestala hodati i izjavila: „Kako su divni javori u ovo doba godine!”

„Istina”, rekao sam. „Zasigurno će izgledati još bolje na jesen.”

„Tako je divno”, rekla mi je kći smiješeći se pa smo nastavili šetati. Zatim je rekla: „Zapravo, oče, sinoć smo razgovarali o nekim stvarima i Taro-san je spomenuo razgovor koji je vodio s Vama prošli tjedan. Razgovor o skladatelju koji je nedavno počinio samoubojstvo.”

„Yukio Naguchi? Ah da, sjećam se tog razgovora. Vjerujem da je Taro sugerirao da je njegovo samoubojstvo bilo besmisleno.”

3 Pregovor o braku (jap.)

„Taro-san je bio pomalo zabrinut jer Vas je toliko zanimala smrt gospodina Naguchija. Doista, činilo se da uspoređujete svoju karijeru s onom gospodina Naguchija. Svi smo bili zabrinuti zbog toga. Ustvari, u zadnje vrijeme se brinemo da ste postali pomalo potišteni u mirovini.”

Nasmijao sam se i rekao: „Ne moraš se brinuti, Setsuko. Ni u jednom trenutku nisam htio učiniti što je učinio gospodin Naguchi.”

„Koliko znam”, nastavila je, „pjesme gospodina Naguchija bile su rasprostranjene na svim razinama rata. Zato se čini na neki način opravdano da je htio dijeliti odgovornost s političarima i generalima. Ali u krivu ste ako tako mislite i o sebi. Vi ste ipak bili samo slikar.”

„Uvjeravam te, Setsuko, da ni u jednom trenutku nisam mislio učiniti ono što je učinio Naguchi. Ali svejedno se ne ponosim time što sam imao utjecaj, i što sam se koristio tim utjecajem u pogubne svrhe.”

Činilo se da je moja kći razmišlja o tome. Zatim je rekla: „Oprostite, ali možda bi bilo dobro pogledati stvari iz druge perspektive. Naslikali ste neke prekrasne slike i bili ste zasigurno najutjecajniji među takvim slikarima. Ali Vaš rad nema gotovo nikakve veze s ovim drugim stvarima o kojima pričamo. Vi ste bili samo slikar. Nemojte misliti da ste učinili neko veliko zlo.”

„Pa, Setsuko, ovo je vrlo drukčiji savjet od onoga prošle godine. Tada se činilo da se uz moju karijeru veže velika odgovornost.”

„Oprostite, ali mogu Vam samo ponoviti da ne razumijem ove reference na prošlogodišnje pregovore o braku. Doista mi nije jasno zašto bi Vaša karijera bila od ikakve važnosti u pregovorima. Čini se da ni obitelj Saito nije bila zabrinuta i, kao što smo rekli, zbunilo ih je vaše ponašanje tijekom *miaija*.”

„Ovo je prilično zapanjujuće, Setsuko. Situacija je bila takva da smo se dr. Saito i ja dugo poznavali. Kao jedan od najistaknutijih umjetničkih kritičara u gradu, pratio je moju karijeru tokom godina i bio u potpunosti svjestan njenih ne tako dobrih aspekata. Stoga je bilo potrebno da pojasnim svoje stavove u toj fazi pregovora. Doista sam siguran da je dr. Saito to cijenio.”

„Oprostite, ali prema Tarovim riječima čini se da dr. Saito nije znao puno o Vašoj karijeri. Naravno, znao je Vas kao susjeda. No čini se da nije uopće znao da se bavite umjetnošću sve do prošle godine kad su počeli pregovori.”

„Potpuno si u krivu, Setsuko”, rekao sam uz smijeh. „Dr. Saito i ja poznavali smo se mnogo godina. Često smo se zaustavljali na ulici i razmjenjivali vijesti o umjetnosti”.

„Sigurno sam pogriješila. Ispričavam se. Ali svejedno je bitno naglasiti da nitko ne misli da Vaša prošlost zaslužuje osudu. Zato se nadamo da nećete misliti o sebi kao i o muškarcima poput onog nesretnog skladatelja.”

Nisam ustrajao u raspravi sa Setsuko i sjećam se da smo se prebacili na neke lakše teme. Međutim, nema sumnje u to da je moja kći pogriješila u mnogim tvrdnjama tog jutra. Kao prvo, nemoguće je da dr. Saito nije znao za moju reputaciju u slikarstvu svih tih godina. I kad sam te večeri nakon večere pokušao navesti Taroa da to potvrdi, učinio sam to samo kako bi Setsuko to shvatila jer sam ja već bio siguran da sam u pravu. Najjasnije se, primjerice, sjećam tog sunčanog dana prije nekih šesnaest godina kad mi se dr. Saito prvi put obratio dok sam pokušavao namjestiti ogradu ispred moje nove kuće. „Velika je čast imati umjetnika poput Vas u susjedstvu”, rekao je prepoznavši moje ime na kapiji. Sjećam se tog susreta sasvim jasno i siguran sam da je Setsuko pogriješila.

3.3. Analysis

In the following subchapters, translation choices for four different categories will be analysed: idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words, loan words, and intertextuality. The total number of examples is 95. As mentioned before, examples for each category are presented in a table with the English source text in the left column and the Croatian translation in the right column. Translation choices are explained below each table.

3.3.1. Idiomatic expressions

In this part, the translation of 82 idioms and phrasal verbs will be explained (Table 1). These idiomatic expressions were determined with the help of *Idioms and Phrases* (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>), *Hrvatski jezični portal* (<http://hjp.znanje.hr/>) and *Hrvatsko-engleski frazeološki rječnik* (2008). Having translated the chapter, the expressions resembling idioms were outlined and then searched in the aforementioned dictionaries. According to Kovecses and Szabo (1996) an idiom is a set of words that has a meaning different from the meaning of its individual constituents. It is important to note that there is no clear definition that would allow one to determine whether an expression is an idiom or not with absolute certainty. However, Mantyla (2004) lists a few features that can be helpful in identifying idioms. Firstly, an idiom has a figurative meaning that may or may not be linked to its literal meaning. Secondly, the meaning of an idiom cannot be derived from the meaning of its individual constituents. Thirdly, lexical variations are highly uncommon in idioms, but syntactic changes are possible, such as the change in tenses. Lastly, an idiom always contains more than one word. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) consider that the preferred translation procedure for these expressions is equivalence, that is, finding the corresponding idiomatic expression in the target language. However, the number of idiomatic expressions in the English language far exceeds the number of these expressions in the Croatian language, so for the majority of analysed examples finding an equivalent was not possible.

Table 1 Translation choices for idiomatic expressions

ENGLISH	CROATIAN
(1) It is not surprising then that I should be turning that conversation over in my mind for some time afterwards (...)	Ne iznenađuje onda činjenica da mi se taj razgovor poslije vratio u mislima (...)

<p>(2) At the time, however, I could not have been dwelling too deeply on Setsuko's words (...)</p>	<p>U to vrijeme, međutim, nisam previše razmišljao o njezinim riječima (...)</p>
<p>(3) At one stage, so I heard, he possessed four houses, and it was hardly possible to walk around this city for long before stumbling across some enterprise or other owned by or connected heavily with Sugimura.</p>	<p>Čuo sam da je jedno vrijeme posjedovao četiri kuće i nije se moglo prošetati gradom bez da se naide na neko poduzeće koje je njegovo ili čvrsto povezano s njim.</p>
<p>(4) Then, around 1920 or 1921, at the peak of his success, Sugimura decided to gamble much of his wealth and capital on a project that would allow him to leave his mark for ever on this city and its people.</p>	<p>A onda oko 1920. ili 1921. godine, na vrhuncu svog uspjeha, Sugimura je odlučio prokockati velik dio svog bogatstva i kapitala na projekt koji će ostaviti vječni trag na ovom gradu i njegovim stanovnicima.</p>
<p>(5) If one has failed only where others have not had the courage or will to try, there is a consolation – indeed, a deep satisfaction – to be gained from this observation when looking back over one's life.</p>	<p>Ako čovjek nije uspio samo tamo gdje drugi nisu imali hrabrosti ili volje da pokušaju, može s utjehom i dubokim zadovoljstvom razmišljati o svom životu.</p>
<p>(6) But it was not my intention to dwell on Sugimura.</p>	<p>Ali nije mi bila namjera zadržavati se na Sugimuri.</p>
<p>(7) As I say, I was by and large enjoying my walk through Kawabe Park with Setsuko that day, notwithstanding certain of her remarks – whose significance I did not fully grasp until I reflected on them some time later.</p>	<p>Kao što sam rekao, tog sam dana uglavnom uživao u šetnji parkom Kawabe sa Setsuko, bez obzira na njezine izvjesne primjedbe čije značenje nisam u potpunosti shvatio dok se nisam osvrnuo na njih nešto kasnije.</p>
<p>(8) In any case, our conversation was brought to an end by the fact that in the middle of our path only a short distance ahead loomed the statue of the Emperor Taisho where we had arranged to meet Noriko and Ichiro.</p>	<p>U svakom slučaju, naš razgovor došao je kraju jer je na sredini našeg puta na kratkoj udaljenosti stajao kip cara Taisha, kraj kojeg smo se dogovorili naći s Noriko i Ichikom.</p>
<p>(9) Ichiro took his time choosing between</p>	<p>Ichiro je pomno izabirao između raznih</p>

the various dishes displayed in the cabinets, at one point,	izloženih jela i u jednom trenutku
(10) He puffed out his chest and flexed his biceps.	Isprasio se i pokazao bicepse.
(11) I had not seen Ichiro since Setsuko's visit to my home over a year ago – he had not been present at Noriko's wedding on account of a virus (...)	Zadnji put sam Ichira vidio prije više od godinu dana kad me posjetila Setsuko, jer na Norikinom vjenčanju nije bio zbog upale (...)
(12) When I try today to summon a picture of Mori-san's villa, I tend to recall one particularly satisfying view of it from up on the mountain path leading to the nearest village.	Kad se pokušam prisjetiti vile Mori-sana, prvo mi na pamet pada prilično zadovoljavajući pogled na tu vilu s planinskog puta koji vodi do sljedećeg sela.
(13) (...) and I remember how from time to time Mori-san would summon all his pupils – there were ten of us – into that room whenever he had completed a new painting.	Sjećam se da bi Mori-san s vremena na vrijeme pozvao svoje učenike u tu sobu, nas deset, kad god bi dovršio novu sliku.
(14) Mori-san, meanwhile, would be attending to a plant perhaps, or looking out of the window, seemingly oblivious to our arrival.	U međuvremenu, Mori-san bi zalijevao biljke ili gledao kroz prozor kao da ne zna da smo tu.
(15) Once, for example, I remember we came into the room to be confronted by a picture of a kneeling woman seen from a peculiarly low point of view – so low that we appeared to be looking up at her from floor level.	Jednom nas je primjerice u sobi dočekala slika žene koja kleči naslikana iz neobično niske perspektive , toliko niske da je izgledalo kao da gledamo u nju s poda.
(16) 'The woman may well have a sort of dignity, but that hardly derives from the low viewpoint.	„Možda žena ima neko dostojanstvo, no teško da ono proizlazi iz niske perspektive.
(17) And although as we argued, we continually stole glances towards our teacher, he gave no indication as to which of	Iako smo stalno pogledavali prema našem učitelju dok smo raspravljali, on nije dao nikakve naznake o tome čiju teoriju

our theories he approved of.	odobrava.
(18) At which we all filed out of the room, once more muttering our admiration for the new painting.	Napustili smo sobu još jednom mumljajući koliko nas je zadivila nova slika.
(19) As I recount this I am aware that Mori-san's behaviour may strike you as somewhat arrogant.	Sad kad to prepričavam, svjestan sam da vam se ponašanje Mori-sana može činiti arogantnim.
(20) But it is perhaps easier to understand the aloofness he displayed on such occasions if one has oneself been in a position in which one is constantly looked up to and admired.	No možda bi bilo lakše razumjeti njegovu rezerviranost u takvim situacijama da ste i sami bili u poziciji da se netko uvijek ugleda u vas i divi vam se.
(21) The effect was, in any case, that arguments about our teacher's work could go on for weeks on end.	Zbog toga su rasprave o radu našeg učitelja nekad trajale tjednima.
(22) In the continued absence of any explication from Mori-san himself, the tendency was for us to look to one of our number, an artist called Sasaki, who at that point enjoyed the status of being Mori-san's leading pupil.	Budući da nam Mori-san nije nudio nikakvo objašnjenje, okrenuli bi se za pomoć našem kolegi, umjetniku Sasakiju koji je bio najbolji učenik Mori-sana.
(23) Although as I have said, some arguments could go on a long time, once Sasaki finally made up his mind on a matter, that would usually mark the end of the dispute.	Iako su rasprave znale trajati tjednima, kad bi Sasaki dao svoj odgovor , to bi obično bio kraj rasprave.
(24) Similarly, if Sasaki were to suggest a person's painting was in any way 'disloyal' to our teacher, this would almost always lead to immediate capitulation on the part of the offender – who would then abandon the painting, or in some cases, burn it along with the refuse.	Isto tako, ako bi Sasaki rekao da nečija slika ne odgovara učenjima našeg učitelja, druga osoba bi se odmah predala i prestala raditi na slici ili je čak spalila s otpadom.
(25) The label, 'the modern Utamaro', was	Često su ga zvali „moderni Utamaro” i „iako

often applied to our teacher in those days, and although this was a title conferred all too readily then on any competent artist who specialized in portraying pleasure district women, it tends to sum up Mori-san's concerns rather well.	se taj naziv olako rabio za skoro svakog kompetentnog umjetnika koji se specijalizirao za portrete kurtizana, prilično dobro opisuje načela Mori-sana.
(26) For all my pleadings, the likes of Sasaki had little patience for the Tortoise's difficulties (...)	Unatoč mojim molbama, ljudi poput Sasakija nisu imali razumijevanja za Kornjačine poteškoće (...)
(27) And then – I believe it was some time during our second year at the villa – a change came over Sasaki, a change that was to lead to his suffering hostility of an altogether harsher and darker nature than anything he had ever orchestrated against the Tortoise.	A onda, vjerujem da je to bilo tijekom naše druge godine u vili, Sasaki se promijenio i zbog te promjene doživio je okrutnije i mračnije neprijateljstvo od onoga kojeg je organizirao protiv Kornjače.
(28) (...) someone whose abilities the teacher has singled out as an example for the others to follow.	(...) nekog čije sposobnosti učitelj ističe drugima kako bi ga slijedili.
(29) But by the same token , it is this same leading pupil who is most likely to see shortcomings in the teacher's work, or else develop views of his own divergent from those of his teacher.	Isto tako , taj učenik će najvjerojatnije primijetiti nedostatke u djelima učitelja, ili razviti vlastite stavove koji se razlikuju od učiteljevih.
(30) Most of us had already turned in .	Većina nas već je bila u krevetu .
(31) On warmer days, because we tended to leave the screens of our rooms wide open, several of us congregating in a room might catch sight of another group similarly gathered on the opposite wing.	Toplijih dana često bi ostavili klizna vrata otvorena pa bi se nekoliko nas skupilo u sobi i vidjeli bi sličnu skupinu u sobi nasuprot.
(32) This situation would soon lead to someone calling out across the yard a witty provocation, and before long, both groups	Onda bi netko od nas dobacio domišljatu provokaciju onima nasuprot i ne bi trebalo dugo da se dvije grupe skupe svaka na svom

would be assembled out on their respective verandas, shouting insults across at each other.	trijemu i viču uvrede jedni drugima.
(33) (...) but there was something about the architecture of the villa and the echoing acoustics it produced when one shouted from one wing to another, that somehow encouraged us to indulge in these childish contests.	(...) no bilo je nešto u arhitekturi vile i odjekujućoj akustici koju bi proizvela kad bi netko vikao s jednog krila vile na drugi što nas je poticalo da se upustimo u to djetinjasto natjecanje.
(34) The insults could be far-ranging – making fun of someone’s manly prowess, say, or of a painting someone had just completed (...)	Uvrede su bile širokog raspona, od ismijavanja nečije muškosti do ismijavanja slike koju je netko upravo dovršio (...)
(35) Indeed, by and large, my memories of these exchanges sum up well enough the competitive yet family-like intimacy we enjoyed during those years at the villa.	Moja sjećanja tih razmjena zaista dobro prikazuju rivalstvo i gotovo obiteljsku bliskost koje smo osjećali tih godina u vili.
(36) And yet, when once or twice Sasaki’s name was invoked during the course of these insults, things suddenly got out of hand (...)	No ipak, jednom ili dvaput Sasakijevo ime spomenulo se tijekom vrijeđanja i stvari su odjednom izmakle kontroli (...)
(37) It did not take us long to learn that to compare someone to ‘the traitor’, even in fun , was never likely to be received in good humour.	Nije nam trebalo dugo da naučimo kako nazivanje nekog „izdajicom” neće biti dobro primljeno čak ni u šali .
(38) One regular visitor of those days was a story-teller called Maki, a fat jolly man who could reduce us all to helpless laughter one moment and tears of sadness the next with his renderings of the old tales.	Jedan od redovnih posjetitelja tih dana bio je pripovjedač zvan Maki, debeli veseli čovjek koji nas je mogao natjerati na bespomoćan smijeh jedan trenutak i tužne suze drugi trenutak sa svojim prepričavanjem starih pripovijetki.
(39) (...) some of them collapsed out in the yard with the sun beating down on them.	(...) iscrpljenih ljudi od kojih su se neki srušili u dvorištu dok je sunce tuklo u njih.
(40) ‘I stepped out for a little fresh air, and I	Izašao sam malo na svjež zrak i vidio svjetlo

saw this light on in here.	ovdje.
(41) And I thought to myself , now that storeroom's hardly a place for lovers to be hiding away.	I pomislio sam u sebi da ta ostava sigurno nije mjesto u kojem bi se ljubavnici skrivali.
(42) 'One of those dancing girls appeared very taken with you earlier,' he said.	„Činilo se da je jedna od onih plesačica jako zainteresirana za tebe ,” rekao je.
(43) For a little time after that, we talked of other matters, of anything which came to mind .	Neko vrijeme nakon toga razgovarali smo o drugim stvarima, o bilo čemu što mi je palo na pamet .
(44) Mori-san had turned the conversation back once more to my 'worries', when it became clear he was prepared to sit there waiting until I unburdened myself , (...)	Ali kad je Mori-san još jednom skrenuo razgovor na moje „brige”, kad je postalo jasno da je spreman sjediti tamo i čekati dok ne olakšam dušu , (...)
(45) I suspect the reason I couldn't celebrate the floating world was that I couldn't bring myself to believe in its worth.	Mislim da tad nisam mogao slaviti plutajući svijet zato što nisam mogao vjerovati da je vrijedan toga.
(46) I will do all I can to put matters right .	Učinit ću sve što mogu kako bih ispravio stvari .
(47) When I am an old man, when I look back over my life and see I have devoted it to the task of capturing the unique beauty of that world, I believe I will be well satisfied.	Kad ostarim, kad se osvrnem na svoj život i vidim da sam ga posvetio tome da prikazem jedinstvenu ljepotu tog svijeta, vjerujem da ću biti zadovoljan.
(48) (...) all those young men congregated around the table would drown each other out in protest at the way I had dismissed my own paintings (...)	(...) svi mladići okupljeni oko stola nadglasavali bi jedan drugog u znak protesta na moje podcjenjivanje vlastitih slika (...)
(49) (...) and so it is quite possible that those were my teacher's exact words that night, instilled in me by the powerful impression they made on me at the time.	(...) tako da je moguće da su to ipak bile točne riječi mog učitelja koje sam zapamtio zbog snažnog dojma koji su ostavile na mene .
(50) We can't have the women bossing us around now, can we?	Ne možemo dopustiti da nam žene zapovijedaju , zar ne?
(51) My grandson remained absorbed in his	Moj unuk je na trenutak ostao zaokupljen

thoughts for a moment.	vlastitim mislima.
(52) ‘ What’s the matter , Ichiro?’	„ Što je bilo , Ichiro?’”
(53) (...) the ceilings are low, sounds come in from neighbouring apartments and the view from the window is principally of the opposite block and its windows.	(...) stropovi su niski, čuju se zvukovi iz susjednih stanova, a pogled s prozora daje prizor suprotne zgrade i njenih prozora.
(54) Indeed, I believe I was momentarily quite annoyed with myself, and it is possible I did not pay much attention to what Setsuko said next.	Zaista mislim da sam u tom trenutku bio toliko ljut na sebe da nisam niti pratio što je Setsuko odgovorila.
(55) Conscious that Ichiro might overhear our conversation, and not wishing to put a cloud over what was a rare family reunion, I let the argument rest there and left the kitchen.	Budući da sam znao da bi Ichiro mogao načuti naš razgovor i da nisam htio pokvariti atmosferu na rijetkom obiteljskom okupljanju, prekinuo sam raspravu i napustio kuhinju.
(56) Their like will never fall victim to the sort of grand catastrophe that, say, Akira Sugimura suffered over Kawabe Park; (...)	Takvi nikada neće postati žrtve neke velike katastrofe kao što je to bio, recimo, Akira Sugimura zbog parka Kawabe.
(57) It is true, I grew quite fond of the Tortoise during those years we spent together at Mori-san’s villa, (...)	Istina je da mi je Kornjača prirastao srcu tijekom onih godina koje smo proveli zajedno u vili Mori-sana (...)
(58) I had intended to try again at some later date to draw my friend into my confidence , (...)	Planirao sam se neki drugi put povjeriti svom prijatelju , (...)
(59) We all utter them. In every walk of life . Meanwhile, places like these grow everywhere like a bad fungus.	Svi ih izgovaramo. Iz svih struka . U međuvremenu, ova mjesta šire se svuda poput gljivica.
(60) Eventually we came to a kind of yard where a crowd of shanty huts closed off the way ahead.	Na kraju smo došli do svojevrsnog dvorišta u kojem nam je gomila straćara zapriječila put.
(61) I gave those boys little further thought at the time.	Tada mi se nisu dugo zadržali u mislima .
(62) Of course, if you are new to this city, it	Naravno, ako ste novi u ovom gradu, moguće

is possible you will not have come across this work.	je da se niste susreli s ovim djelom.
(63) Matsuda told them quite flatly to go away , and I fully expected trouble, (...)	Matsuda im je odlučno rekao da nas puste na miru i ja sam očekivao da će biti nevolje, (...)
(64) They would surely have taken action long ago.	Sigurno bi odavno reagirali .
(65) (...) I had turned over in my mind many times what I might say to him, and was firmly resolved not to let myself down .	(...) puno puta promislio o tome što ću mu reći i čvrsto odlučio da neću iznevjeriti samog sebe .
(66) What I do recall is that as we went about our business , Mori-san did not behave in any way oddly towards me.	Ali sjećam se da se Mori-san nije ponašao nimalo neuobičajeno prema meni dok smo obavljali što smo trebali .
(67) Then, with the evening drawing in, finding ourselves with a little time before our train, (...)	Onda, kad se noć počela spuštati, kad smo shvatili da imamo još vremena do dolaska vlaka, (...)
(68) I can now put my mind at rest .’	Sad mogu biti mirne duše .
(69) I am glad I can put my mind at rest regarding the safety of my paintings.’	„Drago mi je da se ne moram brinuti za sigurnost svojih slika.”
(70) You will bring those to me, then turn your mind back to more proper concerns.	Donijet ćeš mi ih, a onda se posvetiti prikladnijim stvarima.”
(71) ‘As you point out yourself, Ono, these are troubled times.	Kao što si i sam rekao , Ono, ovo su teška vremena.
(72) Of course, it will mean the end of your development as a serious artist, but then no doubt you’ve taken all this into account .	Naravno, to će biti kraj tvog razvoja u ozbiljnog umjetnika, ali to sigurno već znaš .
(73) If you don’t go on your way, we’ll have you in for questioning too.	Ne odete li, odvest ćemo i Vas na ispitivanje.
(74) We’ll see to it your Mr Kuroda is treated fairly.	Pobrinut ćemo se da se prema Vašem gospodinu Kurodi pravedno postupa.
(75) The latter poked the fire again and said something under his breath which sounded like: ‘Unpatriotic trash.’	Potonji je ponovo zapalio vatru i promrmljao u bradu nešto što je zvučalo kao: „Nepatriotsko smeće.”
(76) He has expressed on a number of	U nekoliko navrata izrazio je mišljenje da se

occasions recently his opinion that after four years of confusion, our country has finally set its sights on the future.	nakon četiri godine smetenosti naša država napokon usredotočila na budućnost.
(77) This exchange seemed to take Ichiro's mind off the sake , and from then on, he seemed to enjoy himself, joining in loudly whenever the adults laughed at something.	Činilo se da je zbog tog razgovora Ichiro smetnuo sake s uma i nakon toga je uživao i pridružio se glasno kad god bi čuo da se odrasli smiju nečemu.
(78) 'Sometimes at home,' Ichiro said, 'Father wants to do something and Mother tells him it's not allowed. Sometimes, even Father's no match for Mother.'	„Ponekad, kod kuće”, rekao je Ichiro, „otac želi nešto učiniti, a majka mu kaže da ne smije. Ponekad čak ni otac nema šanse protiv majke.”
(79) 'Is Oji staying the night? '	„Hoćeš li provesti noć ovdje?”
(80) Well, I made sure that evening there'd be no obstacles to her happiness on account of my career.	Pa, te večeri pobrinuo sam se da moja karijera ne bude prepreka njenoj sreći.
(81) But I'm hardly the sort to allow my own daughter to suffer simply because I'm too proud to face up to things .	Ali teško da bih mogao dopustiti da moja vlastita kći pati samo zato što sam previše ponosan da se suočim sa stvarima .
(82) I did not persist in arguing with Setsuko, and I seem to recall we soon moved on to discussing more casual topics.	Nisam ustrajao u raspravi sa Setsuko i sjećam se da smo se prebacili na neke lakše teme.

(1) *Turning something in one's mind* means that a person is continuously thinking about something. The Croatian expression *vrtojati u mislima* is not a word-for-word translation, but it is an equivalent that preserves the image the source text provides.

(2) A person *dwelling on* something means that a person is thinking about something to an excessive degree. Considering that the Croatian language does not have an equivalent expression, it was replaced with the verb *razmišljati* that has more general meaning.

(3) The Croatian language does not have an idiomatic expression equivalent to *stumbling across*, but the verb *naići* has the same meaning of *finding something without searching for it*.

(4) *Leave a mark* is an idiom that has an equivalent in Croatian: *ostaviti trag*. This equivalent also happens to be a literal translation of the phrase.

(5) In this context, *looking back* means that a person is thinking about the past. Given that the Croatian language does not have an expression with equivalent meaning, this idiom was translated with the verb *razmišljati* that is not as specific.

(6) Once again, the source text contains the phrase *dwell on* that does not have an equivalent in Croatian. However, in this context, the meaning is not that of *obsessively thinking about something* but of *lingering*. This is why it was translated with the Croatian verb *zadržavati se*.

(7) *By and large* is an idiom that is used as an adverb, meaning *in general*. The Croatian language does not have an idiom with the same meaning, and the literal translation would result in a nonsensical phrase. Instead, the adverb *uglavnom* was used because it has the same meaning as the idiom.

(8) Croatian idiom *staviti točku na kraj* comes quite close in meaning to English *bring to an end*, but it would not make sense in this context. The expression *doći kraju* fits the meaning better and also is closer to the structure of the idiom in the source text.

(9) In this case, the fact that Ichiro *took his time* choosing implies that he was choosing carefully. This was explicitated in the Croatian translation with the adverb *pomno* because there is no corresponding Croatian idiom.

(10) The phrasal verb *puff out* denotes that something *swelled* or *expanded*. In this case, Ichiro was expanding his chest and although there is no corresponding phrasal verb in Croatian, the reflexive verb *isprsi se* perfectly encompasses the meaning of the phrasal verb and the object that follows it.

(11) An idiom corresponding to *on account of* does not exist in Croatian, but in this context, the meaning is equivalent to the Croatian preposition *zbog*.

(12) The Croatian language does not have phrasal verbs but *tend to* was compensated for by using Croatian idiom *pasti na pamet* that fits into the context of the sentence in question.

(13) Croatian expression *s vremena na vrijeme* is not a literal translation of the English *from time to time* because of differing prepositions but the meaning is the same so it can be considered a proper equivalent.

(14) In this context, *attending to* a plant means *taking care of* it or *focusing on* it. In Croatian translation, this phrasal verb was replaced by the verb *zalijevati* (*watering*) which has a more

particular meaning than in the source text, but *watering* a plant also implies that someone is taking care of it and giving it attention so it does not stray far from the original meaning of the source text.

(15) In this case, the idiom *point of view* refers to a painting and in this context, the correct translation of that idiom would be *perspektiva* that refers to the same concept in painting.

(16) *Derive from* is a phrasal verb whose equivalent in Croatian is also a literal translation. However, *proizaći iz* would not be considered an idiomatic expression in the Croatian language.

(17) *Stealing a glance* means *looking at something quickly and discreetly*. The Croatian idiom *baciti pogled* would cover part of the meaning of the English idiom because it also has the meaning of *looking at something quickly*. However, in this particular context, it is important to emphasize that the students were discreetly looking at the teacher, which is why the verb *pogledavati* seems to be a better fit even though it is not an idiom.

(18) The phrasal verb *file out* has the meaning of *leaving a place*. Considering that there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, the verb *napustiti* was used instead, and the meaning was preserved.

(19) To *strike someone as something* means that something *leaves a certain kind of impression on someone*. The Croatian language does not have a literal equivalent, but the expression *čini se* has the same meaning as the English idiom.

(20) To *look up to someone* means *to admire that person and to want to be like them*. The Croatian idiom *ugledati se u nekog* corresponds to the English idiom in both meaning and form.

(21) The phrasal verb *go on* has several possible meanings, but in this context it means that the arguments continued for an exasperating amount of time. Considering that there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, the phrasal verb was translated with the verb *trajati*. There is a loss of meaning in this case because the verb *trajati* is neutral in meaning and does not have the negative connotation of *go on*.

(22) In this context, *look to* means that the students depended on Sasaki to help them understand their teacher's intentions. Since there is no corresponding idiomatic expression in Croatian, in order to express the same meaning explicitation was used. *Okrenuli bi se za*

pomoć conveys the same meaning even though it is not as subtle as the expression in the source text.

(23) To *make up one's mind* means that a person has decided on something. Considering that there is no Croatian idiomatic expression that can be used in this context, modulation was used in order to translate the English idiom.

(24) In this context, *on the part of* means *regarding*. This expression was left out in the Croatian translation because there is no equivalent idiomatic expression that would fit the context of the sentence.

(25) *Sum up* does not have an equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, but the meaning can be conveyed by the verb *sažeti*. However, in this context, the verb *opisati* that has a more general meaning than *sažeti* seems to be a better fit.

(26) *The likes of* is an idiom that, in this case, refers to people who are similar to Sasaki. There is no Croatian idiom equivalent to this English idiom, but the phrase *ljudi poput* has the same meaning. However, there is a loss in translation because the Croatian phrase does not have the negative connotation that the English idiom has.

(27) *Come over* is an idiom with several different meanings. In this context, it means that a change *affected* Sasaki. There is no equivalent Croatian idiomatic expression but the reflexive verb *promijeniti se* preserves the meaning without any losses.

(28) The Croatian verb *istaknuti* conveys the meaning of the phrasal verb *single out* even though it is not an idiomatic expression. In the source text and the translation it is clear that the teacher is focusing on the abilities of a certain student.

(29) *By the same token* is an idiom that expresses the meaning of *in the same way*. The literal translation of this idiom would not make sense in Croatian but the phrase *isto tako* is an idiomatic expression equivalent to the English idiom.

(30) *Turn in* is an idiom with several possible meanings. In this case, it means that the students were already in bed. There is no Croatian idiomatic expression with the same meaning, therefore the equivalence was achieved with the phrase *biti u krevetu*.

(31) The English language has a variety of idiomatic expressions that convey the meaning of seeing something briefly, one of those being *catch sight of*. Because the Croatian language

does not have the same variety of idiomatic expressions, this idiom was translated with the verb *vidjeti*.

(32) In this context, *calling out* means *yelling loudly*, so the students were yelling provocations to each other across the yard. Since there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, the verb *dobaciti* was used because it fits into the context of saying something offensive to someone. However, there is a slight loss in translation because the verb *dobaciti* does not imply that something was said *loudly*.

(33) The Croatian reflexive verb *upustiti se* is the closest translation of the English idiom *indulge in*, but it does not have the connotation of enjoying the activity that the English idiom has.

(34) *Making fun of* something means *ridiculing* it and considering that there is no Croatian idiomatic expression with the same meaning, this English idiom was translated using the Croatian verb *ismijavati*.

(35) In this case, the phrasal verb *sum up* was translated with the Croatian verb *prikazivati*. Earlier in the text, the same idiom was translated using a different Croatian verb. This showcases the importance of considering the context of the sentence the idiom appears in because a translation may not always fit the sentence even if it is correct.

(36) Things *getting out of hand* means that things were uncontrollable. The Croatian equivalent to this idiom is the phrase *izmaknuti kontroli*.

(37) Saying something *in fun* means that something was said *in order to amuse people*. The Croatian expression *u šali* is not only the equivalent of the English idiom but also the literal translation.

(38) The idiom *reduce someone to something* denotes *bringing someone to a certain state*, in this case in the state of helpless laughter. The Croatian language does not possess an equivalent idiom, but the meaning of the English idiom is conveyed by combining the verb *natjerati* and the preposition *na*.

(39) The sun *beating down* on people means it was shining on them repeatedly to the point of becoming a nuisance. In this case, the equivalence in translation was achieved through the literal translation of the verb *to beat*.

(40) *Stepping out* means leaving briefly. A corresponding idiomatic expression does not exist in Croatian, so equivalence was achieved by using the verb *izaći* and explicating the meaning of the idiom by adding the adverb *malo*.

(41) The Croatian phrase *pomisliti u sebi* is an equivalent in both meaning and form to the English idiom *think to oneself*.

(42) The phrasal verb *taken with* means that somebody is *highly attracted to* someone or something. The Croatian language does not contain an equivalent idiomatic expression, but the reflexive verb *zainteresirati se* is close in meaning to the English idiom. It should, however, be noted that the Croatian verb does not express attraction as intensely as the English phrasal verb.

(43) The Croatian idiom *pasti na pamet* is an equivalent in meaning to the English idiom *come to mind*, they both denote that an idea or thought has suddenly occurred in somebody's mind.

(44) *Unburdening oneself* means that a person *confided in someone and revealed personal thoughts and feelings to that person*. The Croatian idiom the meaning of which completely corresponds to the meaning of this English idiom is *olakšati dušu*.

(45) In this context, the character not being able to *bring himself to believe* in worth of the world he was a part of suggests that he was trying to force himself to find worth in his surroundings at the time but was still unable to do so. There is no idiomatic expression in the Croatian language that could convey the same meaning, so the idiom was translated using the phrase *nisam mogao vjerovati*. The Croatian phrase causes a loss in the meaning of the source text because it does not express the character's frustration of being unable to believe in the worth of his surroundings.

(46) The idiom *put matters right* means *fixing something*. The Croatian language does not have an equivalent idiomatic expression. The closest equivalent to the English idiom is the phrase consisting of the verb *ispraviti* and the noun *stvari*, which results in an economized translation.

(47) The phrasal verb *look back* has the meaning of *thinking about the past* in this context, The Croatian reflexive verb *osvrnuti se* is considered its equivalent in meaning.

(48) The students *drowning each other out* means that they were *talking loudly at the same time*. Although there is no idiom in Croatian with the same meaning, the incomplete aspect of the verb *nadglasati* serves as an appropriate translation.

(49) *Making an impression* on someone means *having a strong effect* on that person. The equivalent Croatian expression is *ostaviti dojam* that is also the literal translation of the idiom *leave an impression*, akin to the English idiom in question.

(50) There is no Croatian idiomatic expression equivalent to *boss someone around*, so the verb *zapovijedati* was used instead. Although the Croatian verb correctly translates the meaning of the English idiom, it lacks the connotation that the controlling behaviour is unwarranted.

(51) The idiom *absorbed in thoughts* does not have an equivalent idiom in Croatian but usually when somebody is very concentrated on an idea or a thought to the point of ignoring the outside world, it is said that the person is *zaokupljen vlastitim mislima*.

(52) *What's the matter* is a question that is usually asked when a person is looking upset in order to figure out what is troubling them. The Croatian equivalent would be *što je bilo*, a direct translation of the phrase *what happened*.

(53) The phrasal verb *come in* does not have an equivalent idiomatic phrase in Croatian. In this case, the phrasal verb was translated using optional modulation. The Croatian verb *čuti* changes the semantics of the source text in order to fit the target language better.

(54) The idiom *pay attention to* was translated using the Croatian verb *pratiti* that also has the meaning of *listening attentively to someone*. The translation is more economical because it uses fewer words than the author used in the source text but there is a loss in translation because the verb is not an idiomatic expression.

(55) *Letting the argument rest* means that the character ended the argument. There is no equivalent Croatian idiomatic expression, but the phrase *prekinuti raspravu* successfully conveys the same meaning.

(56) *Falling victim* to something means sustaining damage from it. The literal translation of this idiomatic expression would result in a phrase unnatural to the target language. However, after substituting the verb, the phrase *postati žrtva* expresses the same image as the source text in a manner appropriate to the target language.

(57) *Prirasti srcu* is a Croatian idiom that is equivalent to *growing fond of someone* even though it is not a literal translation.

(58) The author used the combination of the phrasal verb *draw into* and the idiom *take someone into confidence* to express that the character planned to reveal his secrets to his friend. Since there is no Croatian idiomatic expression with the same meaning, the reflexive verb *povjeriti se* was used in the translation.

(59) *Walk of life* is an idiom with two different meanings, the first being *socioeconomic status* and the second *profession*. In this case, the author was referring to the latter meaning, which becomes clear later in the text when the same idiom was used. Thus, the idiom was translated using the Croatian word *struka*.

(60) In this case, *closed off* means that the way was blocked and there was no way to proceed forward. Since there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian, the same meaning was expressed using the verb *zapriječiti*.

(61) *Giving someone thought* means *considering* that person. In this case, the idiom is modified by *little* which means that the character did not spend much time thinking about the boys he encountered. In Croatian, this was expressed using the phrase *zadržati se u mislima*. Although the meaning stays the same, the point of view of the source language is changed.

(62) Although there is no Croatian idiomatic expression equivalent to *come across*, the verb *susresti* adequately covers the meaning of this phrasal verb.

(63) The character telling people to *go away* means that he wants them not only to *move away* from him physically but also to *stop bothering* him. The Croatian idiom *pustiti na miru* has the same meaning.

(64) *Taking action* means *doing something*. In the translation, modulation was used instead of direct translation. The verb *reagirati* changes the semantics of the source text but it fits the context of rebelling against the given situation.

(65) The character being resolved not to *let himself down* means that he did not want to fail in doing what he resolved to do. This is expressed in Croatian using the phrase *iznevjeriti samog sebe*.

(66) Considering that there is no Croatian idiomatic expression equivalent to *going about one's business*, the phrase *obaviti što treba* was used in the translation to render the same meaning.

(67) *Finding oneself with something* means that someone reached a conclusion or ended up in a certain state unexpectedly. Since there is no Croatian idiom that expresses the same meaning and the literal translation would make no sense in Croatian, modulation was used. The verb *shvatiti* changes the semantics of the source text but it does not stray too far from the meaning of the source text.

(68) The Croatian idiom *biti mirne duše* is equivalent in meaning to the English idiom *put mind at rest*.

(69) The idiom *put mind at rest* has a Croatian equivalent. However, this equivalent would sound unnatural in a given context, which is why the reflexive verb *brinuti se* was used instead.

(70) *Turning one's mind to something* means *focusing on something*. Considering that there is no Croatian idiom with this meaning, the reflexive verb *posvetiti se* was used without any loss in meaning.

(71) There is no Croatian idiomatic expression equivalent to *point out*. Using modulation, the phrasal verb was translated with the Croatian verb *reći* that has a more general meaning than *brining attention to something*.

(72) *Taking something into account* means *being aware of something* or *considering something*. The Croatian expression *uzeti u obzir* corresponds to the English idiom perfectly, but considering the context in which the character is being spiteful, the phrase *to sigurno već znaš* better expresses the connotative meaning.

(73) Generally, *having someone in* means *inviting someone to one's home*, but in this context it is clear that the police officer is threatening that he will take the character to the police station for questioning. The Croatian verb *odvesti* is not a direct translation of the English phrasal verb in question; however, it correctly expresses the underlying threat.

(74) There is no Croatian idiomatic expression equivalent to *see to it*, but the reflexive verb *pobrinuti se* expresses the same meaning of *making sure something happens*.

(75) *Promrmljati u bradu* is a Croatian idiom that is equivalent to the English *say something under breath*.

(76) None of the Croatian idiomatic expressions is equivalent to the English idiom *set sights on something*. However, the Croatian reflexive verb *usredotočiti se* in combination with the preposition *na* renders the meaning of *focusing on something*.

(77) The Croatian idiom *smetnuti s uma* has meaning equivalent to the meaning of the English idiom *take one's mind off something*.

(78) Being a *match for someone* in this context means *being able to stand up to that person*. The Croatian expression *imati šanse protiv* is not a direct translation, but it conveys the same meaning.

(79) Considering that the Croatian language does not have an idiomatic expression equivalent to *stay the night*, this English idiom was translated using the method of explicative modulation, which includes the addition of the adverb *ovdje* to the phrase *provesti noć*.

(80) In this context, *making sure* means that something was done in order to be certain of a future outcome. Since there is no equivalent idiomatic expression in the Croatian language, the reflexive verb *pobrinuti se* that is the closest in meaning to the English idiom was used in the target text.

(81) The Croatian language does not have an idiom equivalent to *face up to something*. In this case, the idiom was translated using the reflexive verb *suočiti se* that has the same meaning.

(82) In this context, the phrasal verb *move on* refers to *changing the topic of the conversation*. Since the Croatian language does not have an equivalent idiomatic expression, the reflexive verb *prebaciti se* was used in the translation.

3.3.2. Culture-specific words

In this subchapter, translations of seven culture-specific words will be analysed (Table 2). All of the words are related to Japanese culture. The procedure of adaptation was not used for any of the terms below because it seemed that it would disrupt the setting of the novel. Furthermore, some of these elements of Japanese culture are well-known globally, and the readers of the target text would probably be familiar with them. Adding that some of the less-

known elements are explained in the source text, the best translation procedures seem to be borrowing and literal translation.

Table 2 Translation choices for culture-specific words

ENGLISH	CROATIAN
<p>(83) Not only would the grounds be enlarged to contain more natural areas for people to relax, the park was to become the site for several glittering cultural centres – a museum of natural science; a new kabuki theatre for the Takahashi school, who had recently lost their venue in Shirahama Street through fire; a European-style concert hall; and also, somewhat eccentrically, a cemetery for the city’s cats and dogs.</p>	<p>Ne samo da bi se proširila površina kako bi sadržavala više prirodnih područja u kojima bi se ljudi mogli opustiti, park je trebao postati i lokacija nekoliko sjajnih kulturnih centara: muzeja prirodnih znanosti, novog kabuki kazališta za školu Takahashi koja je nedavno izgubila lokaciju u ulici Shirahama u požaru, koncertne dvorane europskog stila i također pomalo ekscentričnog groblja gradskih mačaka i pasa.</p>
<p>(84) We lived throughout those years almost entirely in accordance with his values and lifestyle, and this entailed spending much time exploring the city’s ‘floating world’ – the night-time world of pleasure, entertainment and drink which formed the backdrop for all our paintings.</p>	<p>Živjeli smo tih godina gotovo u potpunosti u skladu s njegovim vrijednostima i načinom života, a to je podrazumijevalo provođenje vremena u istraživanju „plutajućeg svijeta“ - noćnog svijeta užitka, zabave i pića koji je činio podlogu svih naših slika.</p>
<p>(85)(86) Our other regular haunt was an archery parlour in Nagata Street, where the proprietress never tired of reminding us how years before, when she had been working as a geisha in Akihara, Mori-san had used her as a model for a series of wood-block prints which had proved immensely popular.</p>	<p>Naše drugo uobičajeno okupljalište bilo je streličarski salon u ulici Nagata gdje bi nas gazdarica uvijek podsjećala da je davno prije, kad je radila kao gejša u Akihari, bila model za šest drvoreza Mori-sana koji su bili iznimno popularni.</p>
<p>(87) These are all scenes from a certain geisha house in Honcho. A very well-regarded one in my younger days.</p>	<p>Ovo su scene iz jedne kuće gejša u Honchu. Ugledno mjesto moje mladosti.</p>

(88) It is no coincidence, furthermore, that the boys in my picture held their sticks in classic kendo stances.	Dječaci na mojoj slici nisu slučajno držali svoje štapove na klasičan način na koji se oni drže u kendu .
(89) What will you do then, Ono? Wander the poor areas of this city with a little purse of coins you've raised from all this hard work? Give a sen to each poor person you meet?	Hoćeš li hodati siromašnim područjima ovog grada s novčanikom punim kovanica koje ćeš prikupiti tim napornim radom? Hoćeš li dati tisućicu jena svakoj siromašnoj osobi koju sretneš?"

(83) *Kabuki* is a type of theatre play that originates from Japan and that combines dance, acting, music and elaborate costumes (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Because this is a type of play unique to the culture of the source language, the term was borrowed into the target language and considering that it is followed by the word *theatre* the reader can easily understand the term without explicitation on the part of the translator.

(84) The *floating world* refers to the Japanese ukiyo-e genre of art, which literally translates to *pictures of the floating world* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). In this case, the phrase *floating world* was translated into Croatian literally, just as it was translated from Japanese into English. There was no need for explicitation because the term is explained in the source text.

(85) In this case, *archery parlour* probably refers to a place where archery was practiced, and the guests were entertained by geisha or hostesses. Since this kind of place is particular to Japanese culture, an adequate term for it does not exist in the Croatian language, and the best translation seems to be the literal translation of the words in the phrase.

(86) *Geisha* is a profession that only exists in Japanese culture. It refers to women whose job was traditionally entertaining men by singing, dancing or otherwise performing (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Although this profession does not exist in Croatian culture, the term *geisha* was borrowed from Japanese and adapted into *gejša* in the Croatian language.

(87) *Geisha house* was a place that men frequented in order to get service from geisha as well as the place where young girls came to learn and train in order to become a geisha (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Considering that there is no equivalent to a geisha house in

Croatian culture, the phrase was translated literally with a change in word order to better fit the grammatical structure of the target language.

(88) *Kendo* is a style of fencing that originates from Japan (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). The term was borrowed from Japanese and thus remains unchanged in Croatian, save for a change in case in this particular example. No explicitation was needed because it is clear from the context that *kendo* is a sport so even the readers who are not familiar with the term will have no trouble understanding the sentence.

(89) *Sen* means *a thousand* in Japanese, but from the context of the sentence, it is clear that the author is using the word colloquially in place of *thousand yen note*. In this case, explicitation was used in order to clarify the term used in the source text. The word *jen* was added so the reader could immediately realize that the character is referring to a thousand yen note and the word *tisućica* was used instead of *tisuću* in order to keep the colloquial tone.

3.3.3. Loan words

The table below contains the four loan words that were found in the text (Table 3). This category only concerns the words that were borrowed and does not encapsulate loan words that are integrated into English. Considering that the author decided to borrow these Japanese words even though there are English words that have the same meaning, his choice was respected in the target language.

Table 3 Translation choices for loan words

ENGLISH	CROATIAN
(90) ‘I believe I’m eight. Please come this way, Oji . I have a few things to discuss with you.’	„Vjerujem da imam osam godina. Molim te dođi ovamo, Oji . Moram razgovarati s tobom o nekim stvarima.”
(91) (...) I am aware these are all traits I originally acquired from Mori-san , my former teacher.	(...) svjestan sam da su to sve značajke koje sam pokupio od svog bivšeg učitelja Mori-sana .
(92) But no one would actually say: ‘ Sensei , what a marvellous painting,’ for it was somehow the convention of these occasions	Ali nitko ne bi rekao: „ Sensei , slika je izuzetna” jer je običaj bio da komentiramo kao da naš učitelj nije prisutan.

that we behave as though our teacher were not present.	
(93) ‘Noriko hasn’t told you about the <i>miai</i> ? Well, I made sure that evening there’d be no obstacles to her happiness on account of my career.	„Noriko ti nije ispričala za <i>miai</i> ? Pa, te večeri pobrinuo sam se da moja karijera ne bude prepreka njenoj sreći.

(90) *Oji* is the Japanese word for *grandfather*. Since the author decided to use the Japanese word instead of its English counterpart, the same was done in Croatian translation. However, a footnote was added in order to inform readers of the meaning of this word.

(91) The Japanese suffix *-san* is usually added to the first or the last name of a person to show respect. The author decided to keep the suffix in the English novel, so the suffix was also borrowed in Croatian translation. Given that the Croatian language has cases, the use of the suffix turned out to be more complicated than in English. Since this suffix does not exist in Croatian, there are no rules on its declination. However, considering that the suffix is added to a name with a hyphen, the name and the suffix were treated as any other hyphenated word in Croatian, that is, they were declined as one word.

(92) The Japanese word *sensei* is usually translated in English as *teacher* even though its range of meaning is wider because it refers not only to teachers but also to any person that is considered an expert in a certain field. However, the author chose not use the English translation of the word when referring to the character Mori and this choice was respected in Croatian translation. A footnote was added to inform the reader of the meaning of the word when it first appeared in the text.

(93) *Miai* is a Japanese word that means *marriage negotiations*. The author uses both the English translation and the Japanese word interchangeably. Unlike other Japanese loanwords in the source text, *miai* is written in cursive, which clearly marks it as a foreign word whereas *oji* and *sensei* might be understood as nicknames by the readers of the source text. The author's choices were respected in the target text and *miai* was borrowed and marked in cursive, but a footnote explaining the meaning was added in order not to confuse the readers of the target text.

3.3.4. Intertextuality

The following table contains two examples of intertextuality that were found in the source text (Table 4). In both cases, adaptation was unnecessary because readers of the target text are either familiar with the reference or will be able to understand it from the context.

Table 4 Translation choices for intertextuality

ENGLISH	CROATIAN
(94) The label, ‘the modern Utamaro ’, was often applied to our teacher in those days, and although this was a title conferred all too readily then on any competent artist who specialized in portraying pleasure district women, it tends to sum up Mori-san’s concerns rather well.	Često su ga zvali „moderni Utamaro ” i ,iako se taj naziv olako rabio za skoro svakog kompetentnog umjetnika koji se specijalizirao za portrete kurtizana, prilično dobro opisuje načela Mori-sana.
(95) ‘ Popeye Sailor man eats spinach. Spinach makes him strong.’	„ Mornar Popaj jede špinat. Špinat ga čini snažnim.”

(94) *Utamaro* is one of the Japanese artists that was known for his works in ukiyo-e style that was referenced several times throughout the novel. Although the majority of the target text audience would not be familiar with this artist, there is no need for adaptation because the author describes in the novel who *Utamaro* is and what his style is like.

(95) *Popeye Sailor* man is mentioned by Ichiro while he is eating spinach. This is a character from the cartoon with the same name, and it would be familiar to the majority of the Croatian readers because the cartoon was also shown on Croatian television programs under the name *Mornar Popaj*.

4. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to translate chapter *November 1949* of *An Artist of the Floating World* and to analyse the categories of particular interest within the translation. This particular novel was chosen because of interest in Kazuo Ishiguro's work. The writer is a Nobel Prize winner whose novels have been translated in many languages, which attests to the quality of his works. *An Artist of the Floating World* is the only novel of his that has not yet been translated into Croatian, so it presented a great opportunity to explore Kazuo Ishiguro's writing style from a translator's viewpoint without being influenced by an already existing translation.

In the practical part of this thesis, four categories were analysed: idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words, loan words and intertextuality. In the case of idiomatic expressions, the recommended translation procedure by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) is finding the idiomatic expression with equivalent meaning to the meaning of the expression in the source text. However, the English language has an abundance of idiomatic expressions that do not have an equivalent in the Croatian language. Furthermore, the English language has a whole category of idiomatic expressions that do not exist at all in the Croatian language – phrasal verbs. The language of the target text inevitably turned out less diverse than the language in the source text.

The second category that was analysed contains culture-specific words. Some of them, such as “geisha” or “kendo”, are probably known to Croatian audience because Japanese culture is quite popular in the western countries. As to other culture-specific words, no adaptation was used, primarily because the novel is set in Japan and thus it would make no sense to adapt all the elements related to Japanese culture to Croatian audience. It should also be mentioned that Croatian culture would not be considered dominant in relation to Japanese culture. Thus, Croatian audience would probably not mind these culture-specific words even if they were not crucial to the setting of the novel, whereas the readers from other cultures might prefer an adaptation. For the same reason, Japanese loan words that were present in the English source text were also left untranslated in the target text. Words such as “sensei” or the suffix “-san” may even be familiar to a Croatian reader, but footnotes with translations were added just in case.

The last category that was analysed was also the smallest, with only two examples. The first example of intertextuality was a reference to a famous Japanese painter that would probably

not be familiar to an average Croatian reader. However, the painter's style was described in the text, so there was no need for an intervention on part of the translator. The second example of intertextuality was a reference to a cartoon that was also broadcast in Croatia, so once again there was no need for an adaptation.

In conclusion, this translation and a subsequent analysis provided a valuable insight into literary translation and the factors that influence it. It was also a great opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of translation procedures. Based on this new knowledge, the next step would hopefully be to translate the whole novel so that the Croatian readers could enjoy it in full.

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Summary

This graduation thesis aims to provide a translation of a chapter from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *An Artist of the Floating World*, as well as the analysis of categories that are of particular interest (idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words, loan words and intertextuality). The theoretical part contains literary translation guidelines and an explanation of translation procedures, as well as the biographical facts about the author and his literary style. The practical part contains the translation of the chapter and the analysis of 95 examples divided into the categories as mentioned above. The “recommended” procedure for idiomatic expressions is, according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), equivalence. This, however, was not always possible due to English having more idiomatic expressions than Croatian. As for culture-specific words and loan words, the best procedures turned out to be calque and borrowing. There were only two examples of intertextuality, and due to context and target culture, adaptation was not necessary and literal translation proved to be adequate.

Key words: literary translation, Kazuo Ishiguro, translation procedures, translation analysis

Sažetak

Cilj ovog diplomskog rada bio je prevesti poglavlje iz romana Kazua Ishigura „An Artist of the Floating World“ te analizirati sljedeće kategorije: idiomatske izraze, kulturospecifične riječi, posuđenice i intertekstualnost. Prvi dio ovog rada sadržava teorijsku podlogu koja uključuje smjernice za književno prevođenje, tehnike prevođenja i biografske podatke o autoru i njegovom književnom stilu. U drugom dijelu rada nalazi se prijevod poglavlja i analiza 95 primjera podijeljenih prema navedenim kategorijama. Vinay i Darbelnet (1995) navode da je najbolja tehnika prevođenja za idiomatske izraze ekvivalencija, no ona nije uvijek moguća jer engleski jezik ima više idiomatskih izraza nego hrvatski. Kulturospecifične riječi i posuđenice prevedene su služeći se posuđivanjem i kalkovima. U prijevodu su nađena samo dva primjera intertekstualnosti koja zbog konteksta i ciljne kulture nisu prilagođena nego prevedena doslovno.

Ključne riječi: književni prijevod, Kazuo Ishiguro, tehnike prevođenja, analiza prijevoda

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