

**“RIVERS OF THE SOUL”
BY MIYAMOTO YURIKO**

**BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR
TRANSLATION
AND DISCUSSION**

AN EXTENDED ESSAY

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	i
1. The Life of Miyamoto Yuriko	1
2. "Rivers of the Soul" - a translation of "Kokoro no Kawa"	19
3. "Rivers of the Soul" - a discussion	49
4. Conclusion	64
NOTES	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73

Introduction

Miyamoto Yuriko has been acclaimed as a writer for many years, although it is perhaps only since the war that her works have been made more readily available to the public. During much of her life, she was placed under a writing ban by the authorities and could publish little. Moreover, the works she wrote as a Communist, and her works on women in particular, were more readily accepted by the public after various social changes occurred in post-war Japan.

Most of her works, apart from essays and criticisms of which she wrote a great many, are autobiographical. This lends a deep credibility and vitality to her writing since her growth and development, both as a woman and as a writer, are vividly portrayed.

One of her works, "Kokoro no Kawa", is a short story describing in semi-autobiographical style her first marriage to Araki Shigeru. It depicts the protagonist's development, and her increasing awareness and understanding of her position, to the final climax of the story.

A translation of "Kokoro no Kawa" is here presented, together with a biography of Yuriko and a detailed analysis of the story itself.

THE LIFE OF MIYAMOTO YURIKO

Miyamoto Yuriko¹ was born in Tokyo on 13 February 1899 into an upper-middle class intellectual family. Her father Chūjō Seiichirō² was an engineer/technician for the Ministry of Education, and her mother Yoshie³ was the daughter of Nishimura Shigeki:⁴ a famous Meiji scholar. Yuriko's mother,

was a vibrant woman, interested in literature, but her ability and enthusiasm were crushed by the social conventions in existence at the time, and she became a woman full of contradictions.⁵

Yuriko was born into this stimulating family background and it was to have a profound influence on her life.

In October 1899, the family moved to Sapporo where her father had been appointed architect of the Sapporo Agriculture School. They spent three years in Sapporo and returned to Tokyo in 1901. The family moved to Hayashi machi where Yuriko spent most of her early life, and she often wrote of her home there in later years. In 1903 Yuriko's father went to Cambridge University to undertake architectural research, and opened his own business in Japan upon his return four years later.

Yuriko had meanwhile begun her schooling and always did well in the subjects she studied. She enjoyed reading and was encouraged by her mother, under whose influence Yuriko read a great deal of classical Japanese literature. Although young women were not encouraged to read novels, Yuriko was always given the freedom to read as she pleased.

From the age of fifteen she became absorbed in Russian literature and particularly enjoyed the works of Tolstoy.

During her years at school, Yuriko used to spend her holidays at her grandmother's home in Fukushima Prefecture. She had come from a wealthy bourgeois family, and the great poverty and terrible conditions which existed among the workers on her grandfather's farm had an immense influence on her.

In 1915, based on her experiences on her grandfather's farm, and under the influence of the Shirakabaha School,⁶ Yuriko wrote a novel called Nōson⁷ (A Farm Village).

A year later, after graduating from Ochanomizu Girls' High School, she enrolled for the preparatory course in English literature at the Japan Women's University at the age of seventeen, but left after only one term to begin a career writing. She rewrote Nōson as Mazushiki Hitobito no Mure⁸ (A Crowd of Poor People), and under the recommendation of Tsubouchi Shōyō⁹ who was a friend of her father's, it was published in the September edition of Chūō Kōron.¹⁰

Mazushiki Hitobito no Mure was immediately hailed as a work of great merit, particularly as it had been written by a seventeen year old.

Yuriko was encouraged by the response to her novel and drawn toward the humanist themes popular at the time. She continued to write, producing such works as Negi Sama Mieta¹¹ which depicts a good tenant farmer who was used by his landlord and gradually robbed of all his land. In 1918, she travelled around Hokkaidō and wrote about the Ainu there in works such as Kaze ni Notte Kuru Koropokkuru.¹²

However, as Yuriko continued to write, and gained more public recognition, she found the expectations of her mother a considerable burden. Yuriko's mother no doubt focused the hopes and ambitions she once possessed onto her daughter, but Yuriko felt restricted by this and longed for freedom. Therefore, when Yuriko's mother raised the finance for Yuriko to accompany her father on a trip to America to develop as a writer, Yuriko viewed the plan as an opportunity to escape from the oppressive atmosphere she felt at home. In September 1918, she and her father left for New York.

In 1919, Yuriko began to attend lectures at Columbia University as a visiting student. There, she met Araki Shigeru¹³ who was a scholar of Oriental Linguistics. Araki was some fifteen years older than Yuriko and had been studying under considerable hardship for fifteen years in the United States. Yuriko fell in love with him, and from May to September, lived with him at Lake George; something which would have been unthinkable in Japan.

In October, much against her parents' wishes, Yuriko and Araki were married. Yuriko's mother in particular, strongly opposed the match. She had hoped that Yuriko would take the trip she had planned for her to London to further widen her education. She had also hoped that Yuriko would marry an aristocrat, and was not happy with the fact that Araki was so much older than her daughter. Yuriko, however, felt restricted by her family and saw the marriage as an opportunity to break away from the parental pressure under which she had been living, and begin a life on her own.

Yuriko felt that she and Araki could nurture and care for one another, while each would retain their individuality and respective careers. Yuriko had therefore proposed to

Araki, something which was quite unusual, particularly in the social climate of the time. However, since she wanted Araki to completely understand her, as she would understand him, and because she wanted to be totally honest; before they were married Yuriko explained her need for the freedom to pursue her writing and the fact that to have children would prevent her from fulfilling herself as a writer. Araki "not only accepted that but insisted that he would sacrifice himself for her".¹⁴ Yuriko entered married life with high expectations of a loving and fulfilling relationship.

However, Yuriko was soon to be disappointed with her husband and his attitudes towards her.

Two months after the marriage, Yuriko received a letter from her father saying that her diabetic mother was about to have a baby. Concerned for her safety, Yuriko made a lonely journey back to Japan, to find that her mother had already given birth. A short time later, Araki joined her in Japan and they lived with her parents at Hayashi machi.

However, Yuriko's mother could not bring herself to like Araki, for the same reasons she had originally opposed the marriage. She could never accept his inferior social background, and this caused many arguments between Yuriko and her mother. Therefore, once Araki had established himself as a lecturer at Keio University, he and Yuriko soon moved to a rented house of their own. Yuriko continued to write, and, for a time, was happy.

Problems soon began to arise however, and as early as 1920, Yuriko expressed doubts about her marriage. "I love him very much. Why then, is there always such dissatisfaction in my heart?"¹⁵

In 1922, Yuriko wrote in her diary:

Because I really believed that the reason he is unsociable is because he is a man of deep character and therefore doesn't get on well with others, I thought that my trust and love could, to a certain extent, change him, and so I married him. But he's a stone. He won't change.¹⁶ (14 March 1922)

Yuriko was a woman who, because of her upbringing in an upper-middle class intellectual family, had developed an enquiring mind, a marked degree of self-confidence, and a desire always to learn from life. She was never content to remain as she was, but continued to grow and develop as a person. Although she married Araki partly to escape from parental pressure, she sincerely believed that they could help one another to grow as individuals, while living together in an environment of love and mutual support.

It was certainly damaging to Yuriko's ego to gradually realise that her parents were perhaps right in their opposition to the marriage. However, Yuriko was hurt most by Araki's attitudes; particularly by his small-mindedness and his attempts to tie her to her home in a way that made a mockery of all that he had agreed to before their marriage.

This is how I feel. Supposing I left A. and lived at Hayashi machi. If I did that, they would think that they were right and try to convince me that it was a mistake to marry him. And they would probably try to control me. I would hate that. Nor do I want to let A. dominate me.¹⁷ (24 March, 1922)

Yuriko has focused on the problem that women have had for generations: the problem of dependency. In her diary on the same day, she reached a crucial point in her understanding of women's position by relating the cause of their dependency. She wrote of it in her diary, just as Virginia Woolf spoke of it in her lectures to women students six years later in England.

I want to become the master of my own life. In order to do that, unless I have money enough to feed myself, if I don't earn just that much, I will not be able to live without being dependent on anyone. How can I earn that money?¹⁹
(24 March, 1922)

At this stage, Yuriko was still young, just twenty three years old, and had come from an affluent background. Yet she had already realised, through her transition from daughter dependent on her father, to wife dependent on her husband, that unless she could earn enough money to support herself, she would never be truly independent. As with all other experiences, Yuriko absorbed this knowledge, learnt from it, and expanded on it at later times throughout her life.

It is not only money though which is the problem of a woman's independence. Yuriko began to realise that it was also the burden of the family system with all its inherent obligations that hindered her.

When will I be able to realise my dream of being my own master? I thought that by getting married, I would become free, but what happened is that it has added one more pressure. There's always something stopping me doing what I want to.²⁰
(25 March, 1922)

How happy I would be if I could experience things directly and be completely free, without being controlled by anyone....²¹ (22 April, 1922)

Yuriko tried to discuss the problem she felt with Araki, but found he tended to reject all thoughts or discussion on the matter and refused even to acknowledge that there may perhaps be a problem in their marriage. When Yuriko suggested separation, he said that if she left him, he would give up all his work. This prevented her from divorcing him but she realised that if he really loved her as he said, he would consider her feelings more.²² (22 May, 1923)

One of the problems may have perhaps been in the differences in background between Yuriko and Araki. At times, particularly in the early stages of her career, Yuriko displayed values no doubt cultivated from her bourgeois background. She complained that Araki was lacking in some of the more refined characteristics. As Nakamura Tomoko writes:

Life in Hayashi machi had a great effect in enriching her pride, interests, and broad-mindedness. The dignity, pleasure and sensitivity towards beauty with which she was endowed, helped prevent her career and way of life from being crude and unpolished. But her husband Araki had lived the life of a poor student for fifteen years. In Araki, Yuriko saw again the problem of poverty, and of poverty in human nature which was the theme of Mazushiki Hitobito no Mure....²³

She wrote about him in her diary as follows:

It's important for people to be well-bred to a certain degree - not a snobbish elegance, but for people to possess honesty, a quick mind, an ability to feel and strength, has much in common with the characteristics developed from a good upbringing.... If there's too much poverty which stops people growing, then God must do something. I believe this if I look at Kazuo and A. What are they living for?...Because they've worked hard to earn a living and because they were always in that situation, when it comes to appreciating art or human emotion away from the way they live - they can't really do it....²⁴

Yuriko possessed a highly developed degree of sensitivity, and she expected others to reach the same level. At this stage, she was possibly more deeply entrenched in the kind of values instilled in her from her background than she perhaps realised. She appears to be concerned with poverty, not so much because of its detrimental effects on society as a whole, but because of the effect she believed it had on an individual's growth. It was not until later in her personal development and career, that she began to examine the wider implications of social injustice. However,

at this stage she had the problem of her marriage to deal with, and found that she was increasingly disturbed by Araki and his small-mindedness.

Despite his assurances before their marriage that Yuriko could continue to write and, to a certain extent, be free to lead her own life, Yuriko soon found that, "(t)he family pressure she felt as a daughter was replaced by an even heavier pressure in her role as a wife."²⁵ Araki did not honestly believe that it was acceptable for Yuriko to want to use her mind, or to lead an active life. He considered that he should be the one to work, while Yuriko should remain at home in the traditional passive role, and be supported by him.

When A. has free time he does the gardening, weeds the lawn, waters the plants and does his exercises. What is going on in his mind? I'm lonely, so lonely. Nothing that is in my mind is in his. What I've got to say to him would take him by surprise and so for him it is something unnatural...he won't improve... he'll probably become more ordinary and as he gets older might get more conservative and jealous.... How happy I would be if my desire to grow bigger and bigger was much smaller. At least it would go with being dependent on men, and life would have fewer problems....I have not been happy in spirit with him for one day since we were married.²⁶
(23 April, 1922)

Yuriko realised that it was partly due to her need to grow as an individual that Araki was so unsatisfactory as a husband. If she were a lesser woman, perhaps she would have been content with her cold, scholarly husband, but she had seen too much, read too much, and experienced too much to ever be able to step back from the path she had chosen for herself. She was born with an active, questioning mind, and as a writer, and as an intelligent woman, knew she must use it to its fullest capacity.

Yuriko simply could not communicate with Araki. She

would have liked the two of them, as husband and wife, to live together in a partnership, but says that "my demand for 'we, together' was rejected and distorted by him."²⁷

(22 May, 1923) If she tried to discuss separating from him, he either tried to use his 'love' for her to blackmail her into staying, or alternatively told her she was being hysterical, and that if she continued he wouldn't be able to sleep.²⁸ (23 April, 1922)

On the rare occasions when he did discuss separation with her he displayed a callous and selfish attitude:

He tells me to say clearly whether we will live together or split up. He doesn't try to think about what's gone wrong with our life. He says 'if only you would sort yourself out, Yuri-chan... I haven't changed at all since we decided to live together', as if it is good that he hasn't changed since that time.²⁹ (7 August, 1924)

Yuriko's increasing awareness and unhappiness in her marriage, are depicted in such works as "Ware ni Somoku"³⁰ (Against Me), "Hi no Tsuita Kakeito"³¹ (The Burning Heel), and "Kokoro no Kawa"³² (Rivers of the Soul), which was published in June 1924, in Kaizō.³³

During this period, Yuriko met Yuasa Yoshiko,³⁴ a scholar of Russian literature, through a mutual friend; Nogami Yaeko.³⁵ Her friendship with these two women, particularly with Yoshiko, who believed that "marriage hampered a woman's freedom and growth"³⁶ strengthened and encouraged her in the final difficult and depressing months of her marriage.

Yuriko knew that she could not continue to live with Araki. She was not a person who could accept things as they were and give up her own beliefs and ideals, simply to prevent any problems from arising. She knew that she had to leave Araki in order to remain herself. She could not

feel happy, or even write well, in her frame of mind.

I put my work first, and A. knows that, but my own feelings aren't complete so I can't devote myself to my work.³⁷ (30 April, 1922)

In June 1924 Yuriko went to her grandmother's home in Kaiseizan, and commuted between there and Tokyo. She decided to write Nobuko,³⁸ probably her most well-known and respected novel, the first part of which was published in the September edition of Kaizo.

In Nobuko, Yuriko has tried to show, together with the characteristic form of conflict between husbands and wives, just how suffocating are the Japanese social concepts towards marriage and home life, the fetters of the oppressive family system with its framework and women as daughters and wives, for the female who wants to develop, and who wants the space to be an individual.³⁹

In November 1924, Yuriko finally divorced Araki.

The traumatic experiences during the four years of what she called her 'swamp period' convinced her finally that any ideas which were not substantiated by her personal life were meaningless. She set out to establish her own life style and to live according to her own ideas.⁴⁰

Her 'swamp period' enabled her to expand her ideas on women's position, their relationship with men, and the importance of human relationships.

She continued to learn and grow as an individual, and her friendship with Yoshiko provided the next stage in her development.

They began to live together, and following her experience of marriage to Araki, she found this deep friendship with a woman an important phase of her life, both in terms of helping her to recover emotionally, and also to lead her to find new truths for herself.

Yuriko found, after being married to Araki and trying to cope with his desire to be dominant, that "companions of the same sex can love one another without subordination".⁴¹

She found too, however, in her life with Yoshiko, that "single women tend to become emotional cripples deprived of proper objects of love, and that a satisfying male/female, or sexual relationship is necessary for women's happiness".⁴²

Yoshiko had always wanted to visit the Soviet Union and Yuriko decided to learn Russian in case she chose to accompany Yoshiko. During this period Yuriko continued with her writing and completed the serialisation of Nobuko in 1926 with "Amego"⁴³ (After the Rain). She became increasingly involved in various women's groups and produced articles for magazines such as Fujin Kōron⁴⁴ and Josei Dōmei.⁴⁵ Yuriko's life since the completion of Nobuko is described in "Ippon no Hana"⁴⁶ (A Flower) which was published the following year, in 1927.

In July 1927, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke⁴⁷ committed suicide; an event which both shocked and frightened Yuriko.

Yuriko received Akutagawa's death as the tragic self-dissolution of a bourgeois intellectual, fundamentally alienated from life itself, as the total defeat of his intellectualism and aestheticism. She was chilled by the thought that she herself might follow his path if she continued to live as a detached intellectual writer.⁴⁸

Her past experiences and the feelings generated in her by Akutagawa's suicide, culminated in her decision to go to Russia. After she attended Akutagawa's funeral with her mother and wrote "Tabata no Saka"⁴⁹ (The Slope in Tabata) for a memorial volume of Bungei Shunju⁵⁰ to Akutagawa, she met Yoshiko in Kyoto, and they arrived in Moscow on December 15.

This period of her life, including the effect Akutagawa's suicide had upon her, is depicted in her novel Futatsu no Niwa⁵¹ which she wrote some twenty years later in 1947.

Yuriko spent three years away from Japan, mostly in the Soviet Union, but she also visited various countries in Western Europe, on one occasion with her parents. Shortly after going to Russia, she learnt of her younger brother's suicide; an event which, like the suicide of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, she linked to the decline in bourgeois values and a sense of alienation from the mainstream of society.

While Yuriko was in the Soviet Union she met Maxim Gorky. She wrote articles for Senki⁵² which she sent back to Japan, and was offered translation work concerning Marxist theory. However, Yuriko returned to Japan in August 1929, and in November, Yuriko also decided to leave the Soviet Union, returning to Japan via Siberia. Omokage⁵³ (Images), Hiroba⁵⁴ (The Square), and Atarashiki Shiberia wo Yokogiru⁵⁵ (Crossing the New Siberia), are all accounts of her experiences.

Following her return to Japan, Yuriko joined the Japan Proletarian Writers' League (Nihon Puroretaria Sakka Dōmei)⁵⁶ and NAPF;⁵⁷ a natural progression from her early days when she wrote Mazushiki Hitobito no Mure, to her experiences and education in the Soviet Union where she saw first hand the struggle for equality between classes.

In 1931, Yuriko went to Kyoto and Osaka with Sata Ineko⁵⁸ and others for a series of defence lectures for Senki, and NAPF. In May she attended the third conference of the Proletarian Writers' League and in July she was elected to its central committee.

She became increasingly involved with the Proletariat Movement, but remained concerned with the position of women, which was not dealt with by the Movement as an issue in itself. After she was elected as chairperson of the Women's Committee of the Writers' League (Sakka Dōmei Fujin I-inkai),⁵⁹

she wrote:

Within the Proletariat Movement there are many burdens on women in terms of both culture and society, and their literary growth is also obstructed because of the half feudal social conditions which still exist in Japan. Giving special consideration to this, the Women's Committee was created to aid the literary growth of women, particularly working women, and women in the villages.⁶⁰

Activity among Left-Wing Groups increased considerably following the Manchurian Incident and various new groups were formed. One such group was the Japan Proletariat Culture Federation (Nihon Proletaria Bunka Renmei)⁶¹ or "Koppu" (from its Esperanto name) which was established in 1931. Yuriko was fully involved in its activities as central conference delegate, chairperson of the women's conference, and editor of its new magazine; "Hataraku Fujin",⁶² (Working Women). Yuriko wrote her first proletariat novels based on her experiences in the Soviet Union, and these include; Zurakatta Shinkichi⁶³ (The Runaway Shinkichi) and Pēcha no Hanashi⁶⁴ (Pecha's Story).

In Autumn of 1931, Yuriko joined the illegal Japan Communist Party itself, which had been formed in 1920. "...after her experience in Russia she accepted it as an ideology which facilitates both human growth and social justice."⁶⁵

In February 1932, she married Miyamoto Kenji⁶⁶ whom she had met in 1931 at a conference of the Proletarian Writers' League. Despite their age difference (Yuriko was thirty three, and Kenji twenty four), Yuriko's mother said to her: "It seems that this time you'll find happiness."⁶⁷

However, this happiness was not to be gained for some time. After only two months of married life together, Yuriko was separated from Kenji on their way home from a lecture tour. Yuriko was arrested by the Thought Control

Police, and Kenji was forced to begin a life underground with Kobayashi Takiji.⁶⁸

Yuriko was released from prison in May, and although shaken by the experience and concerned for the safety of her husband, she was determined not to submit to political pressure. In September she was again arrested with everyone else present at a meeting of the Women's Conference of the Culture League (Bunka Dōmei Fujin Kyōgikai),⁶⁹ and released in the middle of October. She moved to a house with her younger brother and his wife, and in December she wrote a pamphlet for the Japan Proletariat Culture Federation, entitled "Rōdōsha Nōmin no Kokka to Burujōa Jinushi no Kokka"⁷⁰ (A Nation of Labourers and Farmers and a Nation of Bourgeois Landlords). This was written in cooperation with Kenji who was still underground.

On February 20, 1933, Kobayashi Takiji was brutally murdered by the police. This was a direct result of the tightening in policy against left wing organisations, which continued for some time. During this period, Yuriko wrote "Senkyūhyakusanjuuninen no Haru"⁷¹ (The Spring of 1932), and "Kokukoku"⁷² (Moment by Moment), which depicts a detention centre as a miniature of the class war, but which could not be published until after her death due to the political situation at the time.

On 26 December Kenji was arrested as a spy, and their twelve year long separation began. With Kenji in prison, Yuriko had to again begin a life on her own. During the next twelve years she wrote when she could, but her work was continually interrupted by arrests and periods of imprisonment. As a direct result of this, she was left in an extremely poor state of health.

In 1934 she wrote Koiwa no Ikka⁷³ (The Family of Koiwa) about the wife of a Communist forced to go underground, again based on her own life and experiences.

During this time, under pressure from the government and because of internal disagreements over present form and future direction, both the Japan Proletarian Writers' League and the Japan Proletariat Culture Federation were dissolved.

Yuriko continued to write but could get little published because she had been placed under a writing ban by the government. In 1934, Yuriko was again imprisoned but when her mother became ill, Yuriko was released from prison to see her. She reached the hospital just fifteen minutes before her mother died.

In 1935, almost two years after Kenji had been arrested, Yuriko found out that he was alive and in prison.

The fact that Miyamoto had not been killed by the police but had gone to prison filled me with relief. I felt as if I could write a novel.⁷⁴

The result of this was Chibusa⁷⁵ (The Breast).

Yuriko was able to publish some works during this time, including "Tottei"⁷⁶ (The Pier), which she wrote while in Yodo Police Station.

However, in October she was prosecuted for infringement of the Peace Preservation Law and sent to Ichigaya Prison. Her trial was held in 1936, but she was released for a short time on bail because her father had died. By this time the continual spells which she had undergone in prison left her with poor vision and a weak heart.

When she returned to court she was sentenced to a period of two years' imprisonment suspended for four years. This sentence was mainly in response to her literary activities since she had not admitted to her membership

of the Communist Party.

Kenji was now permitted to receive visitors and Yuriko visited him almost every day although their meetings were constantly monitored. In 1937, as a birthday gift for Kenji, she changed her name from Chūjō to Miyamoto, and consequently received a great deal of criticism from women writers and intellectuals who felt she was merely protecting his male ego. Although Yuriko could not see this at the time, in later years she realised that it was true, and that it was wrong of her to over-protect Kenji, in the same way as Araki had tried to over-protect her.

Placed again under a writing ban, Yuriko was forced to work on translations in order to support herself. This period of her life was physically and mentally demanding. She was visiting Kenji in prison almost every day, studying Lenin, Marx and Engels, as well as trying to improve her health. In addition to this she wrote as much as she could, since she felt an obligation to write whenever possible, in order to publish during the periods when she was not under a writing ban.

In 1941, on the day after Japan declared war on the Allies, Yuriko was arrested and spent a considerable period in prison, undergoing much questioning. In July 1942 she suffered from heat exhaustion, poor eyesight, and a speech impediment, and was released by the prison authorities who believed she was about to die.

However, Yuriko recovered and attended Kenji's ongoing trial. On 4 December 1944, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. An appeal was immediately lodged with a higher court, but rejected in 1945. Yuriko believed that he would be taken north and wrote to Kobayashi Takiji's

mother, asking if she could stay with her if Kenji was indeed transferred. She found out that he was sent to Abashiri Prison in Hokkaidō, but while waiting for the ferry at Kaiseizan, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Amidst the devastation and confusion, Yuriko went to Shimada, searching for Kenji's brother who had been in Hiroshima when the bomb was dropped, only to discover that he was dead.

On 15 August 1945, Japan surrendered. On 4 October the Peace Preservation Law was abolished, and political prisoners were released. Yuriko returned to Tokyo on the 12th and Kenji arrived on the 14th. Their twelve year long separation was finally over and they were at last reunited.

Life thus began anew for Kenji and Yuriko.

Yuriko and Kenji had undergone the terrible ordeal of having their married life together torn apart by the force of the State. As a result of this, Yuriko was strengthened both spiritually and intellectually, and played a leading role in the post-war populist literature and women's movements.⁷⁷

With her new aim of establishing peace, and continuing with her life's work of writing and learning, Yuriko began to produce more novels and essays, based once again on her past experiences.

Her works included "Shin Nihon Bungaku no Tansho"⁷⁸ (The Road to New Japanese Literature), and "Utageo yo, Okore"⁷⁹ (Arise, voices!), which she wrote for the first volume of Shin Nihon Bungaku⁸⁰ (New Japanese Literature).

Yuriko participated in the re-establishment of the now legal Japan Communist Party, and also helped establish the journal Fujin Minshu Gurafu⁸¹ (Women's Democratic Graph) and the literary group Shin Nihon Bungakkai⁸² (The New Japan

Literary Society), the first conference of which she attended as a central committee member. She was also involved with the Women's Section and Culture Section of the Communist Party.

Yuriko's main novels of this period are: Banshu Heiya⁸³ (The Banshū Plains), Fūchisō⁸⁴ (Purple Grass), and Futatsu no Niwa⁸⁵ (The Two Gardens). Banshū Heiya was written in 1946 and concerns the experiences of a revolutionary couple over the preceding few months. It is written through the eyes of the wife, Hiroko,⁸⁶ in the style of the I-novel. Fūchisō was also written in 1946 and deals with Kenji and Yuriko in their life together from their reunion, to a rally of the Communist Party in December. In addition to her novels, Yuriko produced such works as "Watashitachi wa Heiwa wo Tebanasanai"⁸⁷ (We Must Not Lose Peace), "Josei no Rekishi"⁸⁸ (The History of Women), and "Fujin to Bungaku"⁸⁹ (Women and Literature).

The last major work which Yuriko undertook was a long autobiographical novel: Dōhyō⁹⁰ (Milestones). Her work on this novel was continually interrupted due to her ill-health. Following the completion of Part Three of Dōhyō, Yuriko died before dawn on 21 January 1951.

Yuriko possessed the ability to take social conditions and events and write about them from the depths of her own experiences. Filled with a spontaneity and desire to learn and grow, her life was enriched from experiences both good and bad, and her novels are imprinted with these experiences. As Mizuta-Lippit wrote,

She accepted historical incidents as personally significant events and grew from a bourgeois humanist into a humanistic communist, from an intellectual observer into a committed fighter, from the bright, over protected daughter of an elite family into a liberated woman, and, above all, she grew into a fine fiction writer who combined history and individual experience in literature.⁹¹

"RIVERS OF THE SOUL"

A Translation of Miyamoto Yuriko's "Kokoro no Kawa"

I.

In the garden, cypresses, fir trees, and other evergreens were growing luxuriantly. In the intense sunlight of early summer, and with the reflection of green, it seemed as if the eight-mat room¹ with its low ceiling lay among duckweed at the bottom of a pond.

Sayo² sat alone in the room which, in spite of the impression of green, was somehow gloomy. Her thoughts were of one thing. She was thinking about oatmeal. Since finishing her lunch, which she had eaten in solitude sitting on the small, Korean-bamboo stool, that one thought had been in her mind. The maid had returned to her home for about ten days, so Sayo had been cooking breakfast. Every morning she prepared bread, tea, and soft-boiled eggs for her husband and herself. But it was becoming monotonous and Sayo herself wanted a change.

It was then, while trying to think of something that she hadn't had for a while, that she felt suddenly overwhelmed by a desire for oatmeal.

But at the small stores in the suburbs she was never sure whether they sold real oatmeal or not. She thought about it, almost saying out loud to her husband, "It's a bit out of your way, but could you get some on your way home? It's not too far to Ginza."

However, Sayo knew very well what a lazybones her

husband was at his age. She also knew that he was not as particular as she was about food. Rather than changing crowded trains in order to go to Ginza or somewhere just to buy a can of oatmeal, he would probably say that for a couple of weeks, it would be better to make do with bread which could easily be bought.

Sayo gazed over the garden. In the depths of her eyes, the scene in May around Ginza and Nihonbashi, full of vivid colours, bustling activity and fine dust, was reflected like a small, clear panorama. Her mind filled with images of the things she had seen from Nihonbashi Bridge one fine, clear day, like the ripples on the surface of the water, the view of the houses clustered together on both banks, and the soft, pale blue sky. In her mind's eye, the fast, French-looking cars drove past Murai Bank, the red flag of Nishikawa Futon Store fluttered in the wind, and the gentle, refreshing breeze blew lightly along the Tokyo streets - Sayo wanted to wander aimlessly along those streets wearing a light kimono and carrying a parasol. To her, buying a can of oatmeal was good enough a reason to go from the far side of Hiratsuka to the centre of the city. Even if she had nothing more to do than that, she could easily spend half a day strolling along the pavements of the main streets of Tokyo, feeling happy and full of life. And yet, because it was considered dangerous for a house to be left empty, she couldn't even make that excursion as she had planned in her mind. Her lonely, heavy heart pressed in on her like an overcast day in Spring.

Sayo stood up and went to fetch her knitting bag.

Sitting in a rattan chair on the verandah, she took some silver grey thread from the bag, and with the metal

needles, their sharply pointed tips shining in the green light which poured into the room, she began to knit a shawl for her grandmother.

That day her husband was later than usual returning home.

The whole neighbourhood had grown completely dark. Sayo was alone and felt as if her brightly lit house stood out conspicuously like a solitary lantern shining in a dark field. She felt very uneasy. Even though she shut the doors and windows, she was still afraid, as if the whole house were transparent and she were being watched from the pitch darkness outside. She felt as if the sounds that she made in the kitchen echoed clearly and eerily in every direction. She even felt that her own face, reflected in a pane of glass, was something strange and unfamiliar. She concentrated on some simple cooking with strained nerves.

So when she heard her husband's voice in the entrance hall, she felt as relieved as if she had finally completed a dangerous tightrope crossing. She quickly unlocked the lattice gate and welcomed her husband.

"I'm glad you're home. You're a bit late tonight."

It was about the first time since morning that she'd spoken to anyone, so no matter how much she talked, she felt a warm, endless flow of words welling up within her.

"How was your day?"

"Well, I suddenly remembered that I had to go to Itōya Stationery Store - that's why I'm late. It's terrible there at this time of day. You can't move for people."

"Do you mean the Itōya at Ginza?"

Sayo looked down at her husband's back while he was taking off his shoes. She felt disappointed.

"If I'd known you were going to Ginza, there's something I would've asked you to get for me."

"Really? What was it? I wonder if I'll be going again...?"

From behind his black leather briefcase he took a paper package which Sayo hadn't seen until then.

"I've got this for you."

It had the Meijiya Store trademark on it. She said as a joke, "Shall I try and guess what it is?"

Hanging up his overcoat and going into the living room, Yasuo³ said, "I don't think you'll be able to guess."

"Yes I will. You'll see."

Sayo was certain that she was wrong, nevertheless declared, "Is it two cans of oatmeal? Or is one can something else?"

"You're crafty - you felt it didn't you?"

"No! I wouldn't do anything like that."

Unsure of herself now, Sayo asked her husband, "But, was I right?"

"For once you guessed right - it's oatmeal - both cans."

"Well!" Sayo was taken aback. She had been expecting to be contradicted with a single "No!". She was then going to take the opportunity to tell Yasuo that oatmeal was what she had really wanted. She was astonished, not at the fact that she had guessed correctly, but at the fact that her husband had felt like buying oatmeal - especially today.

"Did I say something this morning about oatmeal?"

"No, nothing."

Yasuo quickly saw from Sayo's face that he had done the right thing, and, assuming the air of a confident husband said, "Of course I understand these sorts of things. I

can tell by looking at your face."

When she had finished clearing up after dinner, Sayo put a blue double-boiler on the heat ready to make the next morning's breakfast. Inside the pot was the oatmeal. She sat on the stool in the brightly lit kitchen with both elbows resting on the table, and, while keeping an eye on the pot, considered her own feelings.

If it were six months ago, even something like this would have excited her. Things were very different now, but she still remembered how she used to be impressed by the subtlety of love when she realised that her husband's feelings and her's were the same, even if it were over a small matter like this.

Now she wasn't so easily excited. She didn't even think that this kind of coincidence was something special that happened only to them. It was probably just one of those minor events that happened in any household - an ordinary, everyday occurrence. And yet, Sayo couldn't help feeling an inexplicable ray of tenderness and warmth at these commonplace events. She thought to herself, "If I looked down on the world from somewhere high up in the sky, people would seem very small, but all the time while they were going about their daily activities they would be touching one another in silent communication."

Heat began to rise cheerfully from the boiling pot. From her husband's study came the pleasant, regular click-clack of the typewriter, reminding her of his presence.

While she worked in the kitchen, Sayo suddenly recalled a poem that she had always liked:

Crossing the summit of the steep mountain road of Hakone
The wide sea of Izu
Opens up below me!
I see the white waves
Lapping the shore of a small island
In the midst of the ocean.

Sayo felt a peaceful joy and warmth as if their life together was like a tiny island in the middle of the ocean floating in the wide bright scene, full of love.

II

Some time after that, Sayo, her husband and his friend were sitting around the dinner table. Sayo's husband was sitting next to her. Directly opposite Sayo was the friend. Just after Yasuo had started eating, he looked at Sayo as if to ask her something while making an unintelligible noise from the back of his mouth, "Uh! Uh! Uh!"

Sayo stared at her husband's face but straight away replied, "Yes, they're ready to eat." The tips of Yasuo's chopsticks were touching a small bowl of vegetables - boiled and flavoured with soy sauce,⁴ so Sayo had immediately understood the monkey-like noise "Uh! Uh! Uh!" to be, "Have these got soy sauce on them?"

Over the centrepiece of nasturtiums the friend looked from one to the other.

"What's going on?"

When Yasuo explained, the friend's response seemed slightly exaggerated.

"Well! Husbands and wives certainly have a unique way of communicating with each other, don't they! I would never have been able to guess what was happening. Hmmm. You two really do communicate well with each other."

Sayo smiled silently. The friend was single. She didn't know how to respond to words which might have been said in fun, from courtesy, or from a feeling of envy. The exclamation "You two really do communicate well with each other!" was clearly said without ill-will, and yet she was left with a feeling of loneliness, as if her very soul had turned into a piece of machinery, or something that had been thoroughly examined.

There was a full moon that night, so Sayo and her husband walked the five or six blocks to the railway station to see the friend off. On the way back they were bathed in the light of the bright moon. Perhaps because of condensation, a very large golden-ash coloured ring comfortably and serenely encircled the moon. A single brightly shining star lay at the edge of the ring as if it were a kind of decoration. They walked a path in the shade of the chestnut trees and dark branches of the slender Zelkovas which grew profusely with a pleasant scent. The light from the motionless moon and stars, always ahead of them, softened the atmosphere of the early summer evening. Sayo felt as if her feet were drawn magnetically towards the moon. Yasuo, carrying a light walking stick, but without a hat, walked slowly along beside her with long strides. Sayo knew that he was feeling peaceful and contented, and that somewhere in his mind he was savouring his friend's words, and thinking of them over and over again. From the time the friend first arrived, until he had left, he had talked of almost nothing but married life. If not about the hopes and expectations he had in his own life, then about such things as the success or failure of other friends' marriages. He would regularly punctuate his sentences by saying, "You're alright. You're

a perfect match", or "anyway, you two understand one another perfectly. You don't even need words." When they parted at the railway station, he called from the platform, "Find someone for me before I come again."

The road followed a hedge of oaks and chestnuts, and then became a lane filled with weeds. On the left flowed a stream which sparkled in the light of the drowsy moon. On the right, low-lying rice fields were interspersed here and there with cedar forests, and were veiled with moonlight like a brilliant, transparent mist. The moon, with its indistinct halo like that of a saint, seemed to grow increasingly closer. One star sparkled more and more beautifully. Yasuo was mumbling something about how sad it was, when a night like this was overflowing with love, that their friend had grown tipsy on beer and had to return home alone.

"Isn't there anyone? You've got lots of friends. Yamaoka⁵ said it as a joke, but he was really serious."

"Yes, he was, wasn't he," Sayo replied vaguely.

Yasuo was silent. The surrounding scenery was so still and dream-like that he didn't even feel like whistling. Sayo, walking along as if floating in the moonlight and completely unmindful of the steps she was taking, thought of one thing over and over again. Carefully, she considered the words "you two understand one another perfectly. You don't even need words.", that Yamaoka had amusingly repeated so many times.

On reflection, she found that occasions when they knew intuitively what was on the other's mind were not rare in their lives. Sayo recalled the episode with the oatmeal that had occurred a few days earlier. What had happened then was not an isolated incident. Often small matters like that

were settled by just a few cryptic words. Those words simply hinted at a part of their thoughts, and were somehow "conveniently" supplemented by the other's intuitive understanding. They were nearly always right.

When Sayo thought about it, she felt that the timeless sun continued to rise and set over the two flowing rivers of their souls, which sometimes merged, sometimes crossed, and sometimes flowed side by side in harmony. She sensed too, that the essence of their own life together seemed to exist somewhere on a level deeper than just the reality of their eating together, taking walks together, and sleeping together. She wondered what it would be like for them when words had completely disappeared. She wanted to know to what depths did their intuition really go. And as for her husband, to what extent could he really understand her emotions and reflect these with his own feelings and desires?

Sayo wanted to probe deeply into the hearts of her husband and herself with the new self-awareness she now possessed. She began to wonder what it would be like if she sank to the depths of the two rivers which she and her husband were floating down, to see for the first time the ebb and flow of the river and the condition of the pools.

Sayo's eyes had grown accustomed to the light of the moon and when they returned home the colour of the lamp seemed an ugly yellow-red and looked hot and stagnant.

Complaining of the humidity indoors, Yasuo asked for some iced barley tea. Sayo placed it on a tray, and pushing it toward her husband, watched him drain it. She smiled to herself. She thought that if she was alert to her husband's every word and movement, she would understand what he was thinking while he drank his barley tea, and so, during the course of the evening she prepared herself to watch over her

unsuspecting husband both that night, and from then on. But when Yasuo asked, "What is it? What are you smiling at?", she hid her new plan in her heart, like a child hiding a toy. Slyly and happily, she silently shook her head and smiled to herself.

III

From Yasuo's point of view, Sayo had lately become a very attentive wife.

Finding something that he needed and getting it for him before he had said anything, made Sayo terribly happy. She seemed to find more joy than most wives, upon seeing her husband satisfied. To Sayo, the achievement she felt, seeing Yasuo pick up a bottle of Eau de Cologne and hearing him say, "You've bought some - I thought the other day that I'd have to go and get some more," was her proof that she had guessed correctly. From that, Sayo obtained a two-fold happiness.

Sometimes she would quickly interrupt her husband as he was about to speak, saying,

"Wait a minute. Don't say it! Don't say it!"

After dinner they'd relax and chat until eight o'clock. On mild evenings they'd sit side by side on the verandah, or stroll around the garden. At times such as these, Sayo would interrupt the flow of conversation and call out enthusiastically, "Wait a minute."

Thrusting both hands in the waistband of his kimono, Yasuo would look round at her with a strange expression and ask, "Why?".

"Because I'll say the rest," Sayo explained without taking her eyes off her husband's face.

"I'll tell you what I think you're going to say. Tell me honestly whether I'm right or not."

Sometimes Sayo would imitate Yasuo and half seriously tell him what she believed to be his thoughts and feelings.

"The Ministry - the Section Secretary Tani Yasuo⁶ - you're just about to say something about his younger cousin finding a job."

With an embarrassed smile, Yasuo would laughingly call Sayo stupid, but still listened to her interpretation of his thoughts. She would speak with a curious expression of earnestness, as if trying to find even a flicker of recognition in Yasuo's face, and whenever she felt a little uncertain of her story, would say emphatically, "Isn't that right? Am I wrong? Am I quite wrong?".

When she was completely mistaken, Yasuo would laugh and gently mock her, even calling her stupid. Sayo scratched her head, indicating that she would give up. But even when she was wrong, it was always enjoyable as an after-dinner amusement. Yasuo would say with a grin, "Well if that's what you think, that's what it will be."

When Yasuo tried to guess what she was going to say, it was never as much fun as when she took that role.

Sayo said to her husband, "Yesterday when Mr Yoshimura⁷ came, I had a feeling about him. Do you know what it is? Try and guess - compare him with Mr Suzuki."⁸

Yasuo unenthusiastically breathed out his cigarette smoke.

"What on earth's going on now? Your 'feeling about Yoshimura'. It's too vague to be a question."

Wanting to arouse her husband's interest, Sayo replied emphatically, "Mr Yoshimura and Mr Suzuki are both businessmen aren't they. Well, they're businessmen, but I thought that the motives they each had for going into business were quite different. That's what I was talking about."

"That's rather complicated."

Yasuo responded with a meaningless comment.

"Firstly, a man seen through a man's eyes, and a man seen through a woman's eyes are quite different, you know."

"Be serious!"

Sayo gave a harsh laugh.

"It's precisely because of that difference that I'm asking you to guess. Their characters are quite different, aren't they? I'm asking you to tell me what I felt about the difference between them."

"Well, what would it be? Suzuki's nervous and he's the kind of person who wouldn't be able to sleep once his mind gets going, but Yoshimura is more outgoing. I guess only Yoshimura is capable of giving a great laugh even when he suffers a major loss."

Sayo looked at her husband disappointedly. She persisted, "That's got nothing to do with what I said."

"Well that's the way he is. It's a fact."

Sayo was silent. She felt an indescribable emptiness and loneliness. It was as if she had used all her strength to shoot an arrow, and then at the most crucial moment, the target had leaned to the side and the arrow had flown straight past without hitting anything. Sayo wanted him at least to realise that even if he was wrong, the whole thing was pointless unless he said, "Well seeing it's you, you must have thought something like this...."

"Doesn't he care about the lack of communication between us?" Surprised and angry, Sayo looked at her husband's face and felt a sadness from deep within her heart.

The guessing game that Sayo called "a journey into the mind" had begun with a certain degree of fun. But as time passed, the game gradually intensified the complexity of their feelings. It also became a little cruel. Sayo was given the opportunity of examining in detail her husband's character. She had until this point placed him in the vague category of "a good person", and she had felt happy with him. She began to think that a person of "good character" which her parents had told her was the most essential characteristic in a spouse, was not necessarily someone interesting, or someone whom she could rely on to be a good person for her. Moreover a "good person" was not necessarily someone with whom she could lead a fulfilling life.

Sayo felt that behind the guessing game something dark and sinister had emerged. After dinner she spoke casually to her husband who was reading the evening paper.

"Aunt Sawaguchi⁹ came today."

"Oh, what did she say?"

"She was complaining about Yukio.¹⁰ She said that he's a real problem. Apparently he turned down that job offer she mentioned the other day."

Sayo waited expectantly for Yasuo's reply. Yukio was a younger cousin and her husband was like an elder brother to him.

"That's a luxury - turning down a good offer at a time of such high unemployment."

Yukio's indifferent reply was just what she had expected and she felt both sad and frustrated. She went on talking

miserably aware that her mind was working in a complex and unkind way towards him.

"I said to Aunty that I was sure you'd have a talk with Yukio if he comes again - you would, wouldn't you? You'd tell Yukio to hurry up and put his mother's mind at ease wouldn't you?"

Sayo felt frustrated. She wanted to say to Yasuo: "How can you be so apathetic? How can you sit there so calmly with complete disregard for Yukio's feelings?", but instead said sarcastically, "Isn't Yukio lucky to have such a nice cousin."

But it seemed that Yasuo was oblivious to the feelings that boiled inside Sayo and to the difficulty she had controlling them. As if he felt neither concerned nor anxious, his bland, aristocratic face with its pleasant lustre floated in the light of the quiet lounge.

Sayo's life - bright and smooth like the silk thread twirled round her knitting fingers - changed a little within her heart. They both wanted to go for a walk at the same time, they both thought at the same moment that they'd like some green tea. But for the first time since they got married she felt terrible doubts as to whether there was really anything else over which their minds would meet in silent harmony.

IV

It was already June.

When she was alone she would go out onto the verandah where the green of the darkening leaves shimmered in the light.

She gazed at the colours of the fresh young hydrangea leaves, and at the goldfish which shone scarlet and white as they swam around in the glass bowl, and became lost in thought.

She realized that her sentimentality over these things meant she was attached to her husband. But why was she attached to him? Because she loved him. But when she asked herself what it was about him that she loved, she felt distressed. She knew that she felt an unseverable bond between her husband and herself, but at the same time, she was also aware that he was unsatisfactory and boring, and that he did not possess the qualities she sought. This left her full of feelings of confusion and doubt. For Sayo, the sad part was that she could not confide any of this in her husband. She had to find a solution silently and alone. This was something else that they would not do together - she herself would have to change in some way. Sayo knew that Yasuo would never realise his own mediocrity. Furthermore, she knew that he was not like a naive seventeen or eighteen year old youth who would listen to what she had to say and then feel remorse over what he had done.

In Sayo's eyes, Yasuo seemed like a man who had been born wearing snowshoes. No matter how deep the snow, the snowshoes prevented him from sinking or being left stranded. She discovered that no such convenient a device was attached to her feet, so that when she tried to follow him, she floundered helplessly in the snow, making little progress. If she had only one goal, Sayo felt that she had to find a path which would suit her own feet.

Since she was dealing only with an intangible problem of her feelings, Yasuo didn't understand her desperation at being left helplessly alone in the snow, crying. Even if she complained about it, he with his snowshoes, would probably say,

"Is there honestly any problem? If you really want to come, you can come."

Even if Sayo said she couldn't, she still would feel sad and at a loss. She knew that what she had to make him understand was not something you could see or touch, but was a part of her character; real, but without form.

It was just before the rainy season. The bright sky was like a taut piece of semi-transparent glass, and the shining light rain washed the leaves as it came pattering down. Sayo rested her chin in her hands and leaned on the arms of her chair. Large stepping stones had been placed in traditional style around the trees. Sayo gazed at the moss which was growing on the stones, as if hot, dark, green tea had been poured over them. The drizzling rain fell lightly, ceaselessly from the sky, and melted into the moss as soon as it touched it. The rain that followed also softly disappeared. The still green moss endlessly sucked in the rain which fell during that day in June.

The pupils of Sayo's eyes gradually blurred as she watched the rain intently. Tears rolled down the front of her purple serge jacket like dew on lotus leaves. She wondered, for what reason, for what purpose, did they go on living each day under the one roof? On the surface of their life, Yasuo had his office where he went each morning, the documents to which he affixed his seal, and the Westminister cigarettes which he smoked, but where she wondered, was the real purpose and significance of it all? Or was it like a kettle which has a firm external form but which contains nothing. In her life with him, where could she find a place for herself where she felt secure and happy?

Threatened by her thoughts, Sayo made as if to rise from the chair. Her restless eyes roamed around the corridor, and the wet and gloomy garden, as if searching for help. Outside the rain poured down as if it would crush both nature and people. The sound of the raindrops droned on monotonously. Sayo stood up and walked to the end of the corridor. As if forced back by something, she stopped beneath a pillar, and lingered there until the lamplight started sparkling on the puddles in the garden.

That evening she refused her husband's embrace with as much composure as possible. When she was left alone, she cried violently and silently in the depths of the darkness. When, feeling the way she did, she thought of becoming pregnant with her husband's child, her limbs turned to ice with fear and shame. She stared into the darkness and tears spilt from the corners of her eyes as she watched her husband's peaceful breathing with an intensity she didn't understand.

V

If people could be taken to pieces like a kimono, Sayo would doubtless begin to take her husband apart. She would take each piece, look at it, feel it and turn it over until she fully understood how he worked, and then she would put him back into shape again. Only then would she feel at peace. But this was impossible even in the imagination. Her husband whom she could not reach in this way, outwardly seemed intimate and close, but Sayo found that this physical closeness made her even sadder.

These desolate, troubled feelings were completely different from the way she felt just one month ago when she was alone at home. At that time, as soon as her husband came home, she instantly felt better. The suffocating gloom of a day spent alone disappeared the moment she saw her husband's face, but now it was the exact opposite. When she saw Yasuo sit down beside her, his dark hair glossy after his bath, as if he had no doubts or cares in the world, she was filled with desolation and loneliness to the point of desperation.

She spent the days barely suppressing her feelings of being like a wild animal. At last she couldn't bear it any longer. She attacked him with a pitifully serious face.

As usual it was after dinner. Probably because Sayo was just sitting there without saying a word, with her eyes cast down at the table, Yasuo soon went to his study. Left behind, she talked to the maid for a while, but finally followed her husband into the study. The six-mat room projected out into the garden as if it were a separate room connected only by a short corridor, like the shape of a key. Yasuo had placed his desk facing the open verandah at the front of the house. The thick, liquid darkness was pushed back just at the edge of the room where it met the bright light spilling over. Looking at Yasuo from behind, it seemed as if his shoulders, which were bathed in light, floated somewhere above the darkness.

Sayo went silently to the side of the desk. Yasuo was holding a blue pencil in his right hand and was reading some bound papers. Gazing at the narrow, horizontal writing which made no sense to her, Sayo spoke.

"Are you busy?"

Yasuo stretched his back and rustled through the papers.

"Not really, why?"

Sayo held the sleeves of her thin kimono around her as if the cool night atmosphere were closing in on her. Yasuo looked at the expression on her face and his own faintly changed. She fixed her eyes on a pamphlet made of cheap looking paper and spoke, deep in thought.

"Do you...feel safe?"

"What? It's hard to reply to your questions. They're so abrupt."

Yasuo's words sounded prepared. He spoke calmly and with a note of indifference as if talking to a child.

"What do you mean? Do you think there's going to be an earthquake or something?" There had been a big earthquake in Shōnan Chihō, Tokyo, in 1923 and there were occasional after-shocks even during the following year.

"I'm not talking about an earthquake. I'm talking about us." Raising her head, she looked straight at her husband. "Don't you ever have any doubts about us? Do you really feel secure?"

Yasuo narrowed his eyelids as if avoiding the cigarette smoke.

"Are you saying that there's something wrong in our life?"

Sayo agreed. "It's been unbearable lately."

"...but surely there isn't any cause for you to feel that way. I'm such a faithful husband! As for you, you're free to choose whether you get up or sleep in all day!

Something wrong? I feel really happy. In fact, your life is better than Utopia."

Sayo stopped her husband's joke disagreeably.

"Save the jokes for later. I'm serious. Do you honestly think our life is complete? Do you really think that

everything's perfect as it is? I haven't been feeling happy at all lately. I feel as if something is wrong."

"I suppose you're just spoiled?"

Yasuo even put on an exaggerated expression, trying to lure a smile from Sayo, who denied the accusation earnestly.

"That's not so. That's definitely not so. As long as we live together this is important, so you'd better listen to me seriously. Lately I just don't understand you. I feel hurt all the time because it seems as if your heart isn't with me at all - it seems to be so far away from me. There are of course..." She explained to Yasuo who had started to listen properly. "...times when our hearts are together. There are also times when we think and feel the same way about something, but it's always over a trivial matter, and as neither of us care about it much, we unconsciously compromise - it's true, and then when something important does happen, it seems as if our hearts are miles apart. Do you understand what I'm saying? For instance, until I said these things, you weren't feeling anything like it were you? It's not just that you didn't feel this way yourself, but that you didn't even sense that it was the way I was feeling, did you? That's why I'm saying..."

"Hmmm, but that's probably because you don't understand my feelings. You still don't..."

"I wonder if that's so. I feel quite the opposite. Isn't it that you feel at peace just knowing that in the eyes of society we're husband and wife, and that it seems as if everything is well with us? I don't like merely noting appearances as others do and feeling good while ignoring the real problem within. I want to feel at peace from deep within my soul. I want us to share something which is special to

both of us."

"You're full of doubts aren't you."

Yasuo looked at Sayo with an unusual, somewhat disturbed expression hovering around his well-groomed moustache.

"How else should we live our life apart from the way we're living now? And you're being so vague. If there's something wrong you should say what it is - not just come out with words like 'far apart', or 'lonely'. If you can't do that, then I can only conclude that there's no clear foundation to what you're saying."

"It's not that there's something specifically wrong with us. It's not a matter of just saying, 'cure it'. It's a matter of going deeper into your heart. I want you to be more sensitive. To be frank, you're trying to make me explain logically how I feel, and that's what makes me sad. Do you understand? I'm talking about emotions - about what you feel from your soul."

"Well, we've gone right round in a circle and you're just saying that it's pointless talking to me aren't you." Yasuo displayed a cold business-like attitude that chilled Sayo's heart. She was barely able to control her tears.

"I can't just give up and do nothing! If we're going to go on living together, I want to make some sort of effort, so..."

"Hey, Sayo." Yasuo put out his cigarette in the ash-tray and interrupted the angry Sayo.

"Something like happiness in life is a kind of faith, like love. It depends on your beliefs...and you still don't really know what life is all about. Even so, surely you can believe in my love for you? Isn't that love the whole of our life together?"

He took Sayo's hand, who was about to say something.

"Now stop being so argumentative and be a sweet Sayo."

He drew her near and tried to caress her. Sayo went red and finally began to cry.

"You mustn't just brush it aside like that. You're so cunning." Pulling back her hands she sat up straight.

"I want to say this because I think we're important to each other. Even if we swear to each other a million times that we love one another, can you be content if we just can't communicate properly with one another?"

Sayo wanted him to at least say at this point, 'No, I would hate it. How could I leave things as they were in that case?' If he had said that one thing, it would probably have saved her some of her heartache. She wanted to hit out at Yasuo's open, bared soul, and because of that, she talked a lot, but Yasuo said with surprising coldness,

"It's all in your imagination - I'll prove that what you said was something you made up because you have nothing else to occupy your mind." As if he were the victor, he even wore a triumphant smile in his eyes.

"Look, I've been living in this house, all this time, and I haven't felt anything like that at all."

"You're so thick-skinned!" Sayo shouted out loud, unable to contain herself any longer. "How can you say that? Do you think the only way of life that exists is the kind of life you understand?"

"Don't get excited - I never think of you as a stranger - after all, I am your husband. How could I, your husband, not understand your feelings when you are my wife? So I'm sorry, but if you try and claim that I, who am not of low intelligence,

do not understand your feelings, I can only say that the basis of your argument is weak."

Sayo exercised a steel-like self-control. If she could she would have struck her husband and shocked him from his self-righteous, aristocratic, cold-blooded obstinacy. He did not even attempt to think about how troubled she was. Rather, she felt that he was revelling in his pedantry. Sayo moaned like an animal. How relieved she would feel, if, like a Hottentot woman, she could bite and fight with her husband, and then everything would be all right again. Since she was just a little more intelligent than a Hottentot woman, Sayo could not become violent. She knew too, that this pain was not something that would disappear after a fight. And she knew that Yasuo was not a man who, when struck, would strike back. Rather, he would express his contempt with icy indifference, without even batting an eyelid.

Soothing her burning anger with a few violent tears, she placed both her hands gracefully on her knees like a model Japanese woman of refinement. She sat, distracted with many thoughts.

"I wonder if husbands and wives everywhere are so insipid? All I want is for our body and soul to be as one. Can I never fulfill even that simple hope?"

Crying softly to herself, Sayo recalled with despair, the saying that a husband and wife are closer than a parent and child.

VI

A long stretched-out silence filled the garden and their brightly lit house. The only faint sound was of Sayo moving every now and again. She felt that the silence which surrounded her, deepened as it grew darker outside....

Finally Yasuo stirred. He looked at Sayo's wet face and said, "Go and wash your face."

Sayo didn't like the way Yasuo spoke, as if the crisis had passed. She didn't move.

"...Go on. Go and wash your face. Your make-up will run."

When he saw that even then she wasn't going to answer, or move, he muttered bitterly to himself, trying to hurt her, "You're in a very strange mood tonight." He purposefully blew two long puffs of cigarette smoke toward the light, and, as if there was a deeper meaning to his words, asked Sayo, "When is it?"

Giving him a sideways glance, in a low voice full of tears, Sayo asked, "What?"

"You know, your..., that."

Sayo turned to look at Yasuo. The sight of him with his proud face filled her vision. Instinctively, Sayo perceived his meaning. At the same time she felt an indignant shock, as if her blood had started flowing the other way.

"My God! Do you think that what I'm saying is some kind of hysterical attack? Even my husband has the egoism of men who label what they don't like neurotic!" The blood drained from Sayo's lips. Putting all her strength into her voice she spoke in short, sharp sentences, her face tense with anger.

"Don't give me such half-baked knowledge. You think... you can understand me with such pathetic ideas? Why don't you try and face up to it and comes to terms with it? You're a coward. A real coward."

The words stuck in Sayo's throat and her whole body shuddered as if she had a fever.

"You think I will shut up if you hurt my pride, don't you? You think you'll try and take advantage of what you think is my pathetic vanity and inflated ego."

It was as though a violent chill and fever were pushing their way through her body and her head. Sayo hid her face in her hands, and leaned on Yasuo's desk. She felt as though her body had floated up from the floor to a nauseously high place in the clouds, and then suddenly she began to feel dizzy and felt as if she had sunk lower and lower into a bottomless darkness.

Silently, she started to cry. Her warm tears ran down her palm to the back of her hand and fell in big splashes on the desk. Behind the tears, she recalled a forgotten scene from many years ago.

It was the bath house of their home where she'd lived for the first twenty years of her life. The changing room was four and a half mats in size, with straw mats on the wooden floor, and a bamboo lattice window in one wall. Underneath the window was her mother's mirror stand. Over the mirror was a cloth covered in a traditional pattern of rain, fallen flowers and swallows, on a grey background. She had got out of bed at two o'clock in the morning with a vague feeling of anxiety, and padding along the floor in her bare feet, found her mother crying in front of the mirror.

"Sayo, come and listen to me and see which one of us is

wrong - your father or I. It doesn't matter how logically I speak, your father won't take me seriously - he just says that I'm hysterical. Why was I born a woman when we only live once?"

At that time, her mother was thirty four or thirty five. Sayo was twelve or thirteen. She vividly remembered the scene and recalled how, as a young girl, she had pressed her crying mother's shoulder to her chest. At a loss, she had put her mouth against her mother's hair and whispered, "Don't cry Mother. Don't cry. I'll say something to Father, so please stop crying."

What was she going to say to her father? Now, Sayo realised that she herself was crying the suffocating tears of her mother. She knew too, that if she was the mother of a small child, that child would certainly speak as she had, with the same confusion and sadness, her hands shaking with sympathy from a cause not understood, "I'll say something for you. Don't cry." But again, she too, just like Sayo herself, would have no concept of what she should say to her father, until the time came when her own tears flowed....

Gradually she felt calmer, until she had reached the point where she was able to think about what significance the ten years or so that had passed since that time, had in the life of a woman.

Until she had got married how many times had Sayo heard the same complaint, in different forms, from her mother? When she thought about the words of comfort that she offered her mother, she realised that although the words she had used had grown more sophisticated as the years went by, their actual message was no different from the time she had said, "Don't cry" at the age of twelve or thirteen.

She recalled that it had done nothing at all to ease her mother's burden. For her mother, the only value of the almost meaningless words that she repeated each time, lay in the fact that they were spoken by her daughter who was feeling bewildered and sympathetic from her heart.

For almost her whole life until she lost her passion with old age, her mother had lived under the burden of unrelieved suffering. Sayo was struck with a new thought - hadn't her mother married her to Yasuo eagerly and proudly, believing that he would guide her to a woman's paradise!

Sayo found there a contradiction close to absurdity. But as she thought more about it, she was filled with affection for her mother. Didn't her mother marry her off, and send her out into the world with the hope that she could experience for herself and achieve in her generation more of the many dreams of people, of women, than her mother was ever able to fulfill? Sayo's mother had simply acted in the same way as her own mother had at the beginning of the Meiji Period. She too, had wanted Sayo's mother, who was then a young woman wearing a hairpin with a long silk fringe, to achieve these same things.

The problems encountered by each generation of women were passed on to Sayo unsolved. But Sayo didn't want to hand down to her own daughter in the next generation, the piece of paper; blank as she had received it, or with a few half written lines, showing that she hadn't been able to solve the problem. Somehow she wanted to find an answer, and be able to say to her daughter, without the sentimentalism of her grandmother and mother, "This is how I've solved it. What do you think? What would you have done?"

When she thought of her life passing her by as it had

done for her women ancestors, a life only half lived, with tears shed for the same reason, and with the same complaints, she felt that she was wasting time by arguing with her husband.

She took her hands away from her face and with a deep sigh, pushed her matted hair back from her forehead.

When she looked at her husband, his chin was resting in his hands at one end of the desk. He was holding a cigarette between his first and middle fingers, the scentless smoke was wafting upwards, and he was staring aimlessly into the moonlit night in front of him. But Sayo knew at a glance that his attention was not focused on the garden as it seemed, but on her. His whole attitude was saying, "You've made me completely disagreeable. I can't work or do anything. It's your fault."

Yet it was quite apparent that somewhere in his mind he was thinking that if she came up to him feeling remorseful about what she had done, and said "I was wrong. I'm sorry," he would straight away forgive her adding tender words, and would kiss her on the forehead. Sayo felt that her once calmed feelings would again be aroused. She wanted the care and attention from Yasuo that she knew she could get, but she also knew that if she gave in to her desire, it would mean admitting that everything she had said up to then was something for which she should apologise. She knew that she would experience this conflict of emotions, but at the same time she felt disgusted at Yasuo's cruelty in trying to weaken her anger so that she would give in to him.

Inside her a barbarian began to act again. In her heart she moaned "Go to hell! Go to hell! Why do you do it? When are you going to stop causing me pain...?"

As Sayo stared at her husband's profile, she suddenly noticed an expression of gloom which was hovering on his face. In her mind, an idea glimmered. Her mouth twisted and she asked Yasuo slowly in a low voice, "What are you thinking? The same thing? The same thing as me?"

Taken by surprise, her husband opened his eyes wide and stared at Sayo's face.

"Don't be stupid!"

Stunned, he suddenly sat down on the cushion. Sayo's palms broke out into a cold sweat. Strong palpitations struck at her painfully, and she felt as if she couldn't keep quiet any longer.

"He must have been thinking the same thing as me. Otherwise how could he say that with such significance. What the two of us would think of at the same time would be... with each other..."

Sayo couldn't bear to stay. She stood up and went out onto the verandah. Outside it was dark too. Dark, like the centre of her heart. In the tenacious darkness which sprawled out in front of her, a single, narrow inclining telegraph pole stood among the thick evergreens. Parts of the smooth leaves of the evergreen shrub near the verandah shone gloomily in a reddish light radiating from the room. Above it, the telegraph pole stood at a crooked angle. The light had the effect of making one side of the pole seem much closer as if it were some sort of unpleasant, white living thing. Sayo brushed her forehead nervously with cold fingers. She thought, "I feel as if I've been living in the darkness for more than a hundred years. I wonder if this long, heavy, painful evening will really end tomorrow...."

Sayo longed for the clear bright morning; for the refreshing dawn breeze, the pleasant scent of the quivering trees, the gradual dawning of the day and the cool dry heat of the sun which makes the forests, the house and even the stones at the side of the road, shine brilliantly as it rises. Sayo was suddenly filled with a dark fear, that she may never again experience the same feelings of happiness in the dawning of a new day.

"RIVERS OF THE SOUL"
A Discussion

"Rivers of the Soul" was written not long before Yuriko's divorce in November, 1924. Completed in April, she originally called it "Teichō"¹ (Low Water), but renamed it "Kokoro no Kawa" (Rivers of the Soul). It was published in Kaizō² in June 1924.

"Rivers of the Soul", written at a time of extreme depression for Yuriko, reflects with clarity her mood of the time, as well as being a work of significance in regard to the relationship between a husband and wife, and the potential problems that exist for a married woman. It has a universal message, and although written almost sixty years ago, is still relevant to today's situation.

The two central characters around whom the story evolves, are husband and wife: Yasuo and Sayo. An indication as to the nature of their relationship is immediately given in Yasuo's name, the characters for which mean 'protecting husband' or 'a husband holding responsibility'. Thus, we are told that Yasuo is the dominant partner in the relationship, and that he 'takes care' of his wife Sayo.

Sayo is seen as a general symbol for any woman trapped in a marriage. While many of her thoughts and cries for understanding echo Yuriko's own feelings at the time, she nevertheless maintains a universal appeal.

Yasuo, on the other hand, while also portraying a man in perhaps any marriage, is described to a much greater extent than Sayo. We know that he is a bureaucrat and smokes Winston cigarettes. He is depicted as cold and logical,

"revelling in his pedantry"³, "his bland aristocratic face with its pleasant lustre".⁴ Furthermore, he seems unimagi-
native; "When Yasuo tried to guess what she was going to say, it was never as much fun as when she took that role".⁵ By describing him in these ways, Yuriko has connected him much more directly to Araki, by transposing many of Araki's comments, attitudes, and even lifestyle, as revealed in her diary, onto Yasuo himself.

Moreover, all the other characters who either appear, or are mentioned in the story, are associated with Yasuo. His aunt Sawaguchi⁶ and cousin Yukio⁷ are discussed, Sayo talks about his colleagues; Yoshimura⁸ and Suzuki,⁹ and it is Yasuo's friend who comes to dinner one night and talks about their "silent understanding". While Sayo is portrayed as a very lonely woman, tied to the house, associated only with her unhappy mother, her grandmother, and the maid, another woman whose life revolves about the house, Yasuo is seen to have a much wider circle of family, friends and colleagues. His life is immediately filled with more variety and stimulation. Yasuo mentions Sayo's friends, "You've got lots of friends",¹⁰ but nothing is ever seen or heard of them.

Theme

The theme of the story is, of course, marriage and what it means for a woman, relevant not only to the social context of the time in which it was written, but also to society today.

When we first see Sayo, it is Spring, and although she is very lonely, Sayo still believes herself to be content with her situation.

Sayo felt a peaceful joy and warmth, as if their life together was like a tiny island in the middle of the ocean, floating in the wide bright scene, full of love. ¹¹

As the story progresses, showing the decline in Sayo's marriage, Yuriko skilfully uses the progression of Spring into Summer to echo and emphasise the decline.

At the beginning, Sayo is sitting alone, having finished her lunch in solitude, and thinking about oatmeal. The reason given for this is that the maid has returned to her home for a short time, and while she is preparing her own meals, Sayo wants to eat something different.

This shows two things: the boring, repetitive style of Sayo's life, described by the fact that she always made the same things for breakfast, and the fact that she has a maid, who, since she had returned to her home for ten days, must live-in, leaving Sayo with probably little to do, even around the house.

We are also given a hint as to what Sayo's husband might be like. He is described as a "lazybones" who probably wouldn't go into Ginza to buy Sayo some oatmeal.¹²

Sayo imagines what it would be like at Ginza. The scene of "vivid colours, bustling activity...and...ripples on the surface of the water"¹³ contrasts sharply with the gloomy green with which she is surrounded, emphasising her loneliness and depression, as does the comment that:

(e)ven if she had nothing more to do than that (buy a can of oatmeal), she could easily spend half a day strolling along the pavements of the main streets of Tokyo, feeling happy and full of life.¹⁴

The reason that she cannot go is because of the opinion that it is dangerous to leave a house alone, thus effectively trapping Sayo in her home, like an animal in a cage.

Sayo's feeling of being like an animal, which resulted from her lack of independence, increases as the story progresses

She spent the days barely suppressing her feelings of being like a wild animal.¹⁵

Later, when Sayo was arguing with her husband, she "moaned like an animal".¹⁶

Sayo was tied to the house, and her inevitable dependence on her husband, resulting from this situation, is shown not only in the fact that she must rely on him for something as trivial as a can of oatmeal, but is also revealed in the scene describing how frightened she feels when he is late home. When "she heard his voice in the entrance hall, she felt as relieved as if she had finally completed a dangerous tightrope crossing".¹⁷

Her loneliness and isolation, as well as her dependence upon her husband as almost sole source of human contact, are further emphasised.

It was about the first time since morning that she'd spoken to anyone, so no matter how much she talked, she felt a warm endless flow of words welling up within her.¹⁸

Yasuo had brought her a present, which turned out to be the very oatmeal that she had wanted. Astonished at the coincidence, she kept asking Yasuo if she had said anything that morning about wanting oatmeal.

Yasuo, seeing that he had "done the right thing"¹⁹ assured Sayo that he understands her and her every need. "Of course I understand these sorts of things. I can tell by looking at your face."²⁰ The irony of this is that, as we see later, Yasuo has never understood Sayo and never will, no matter how hard she tries to communicate her feelings to him.

At this point, Sayo begins to be aware of her emotions and the fact that while she was once content with the feeling

of excitement these kind of coincidences once brought her, she no longer finds herself impressed by them, although she still feels "an inexplicable ray of tenderness and warmth at these commonplace events".²¹

The apparent understanding between them is focused on at the beginning of Chapter Two, when a friend; Yasuo's friend, is at their home for dinner. His comments on this "silent understanding" between them, arouse a great loneliness in Sayo who was beginning to question the depth of this understanding that she valued so highly.

Sayo knows that Yasuo felt pleased by the friend's comments, but she knows too, that it is because he sees only the surface of their marriage, as others do. Yasuo financially supports his wife, and because of this, feels no desire or even necessity to contribute in any other way toward their marriage. More than this though, he is not even aware that he could contribute in other ways. Since their relationship appears on the surface to be a success, he feels proud and self-satisfied, while showing a blatant disregard for, and ignorance of, his wife's needs and emotions. Sayo needs a deeper level of communication between them to satisfy her ideal of a marriage partnership, but this is beyond Yasuo's comprehension.

Sayo compares their lives to two rivers which flow, sometimes running into each other, but always existing in apparent harmony. She feels a need to get below the surface calm of the water, and see what the pools underneath were really like.

This is reminiscent of Yuriko herself; Yuriko, whose own marriage was so unhappy, partly because she could never

communicate with Araki in any real depth. "Nothing in my mind is in his...I'm so lonely."²²

In her book, Nakamura criticises this:

In Yuriko was the idealism that the hearts of a husband and wife should match exactly and respond to one another with the same sensitivity. Because of this, excessive expectations and demands on the husband arise, and small differences are a major shock.... In a household where daily matters are communicated through 'silent understanding', the new wife Sayo demands union, even on a psychological level, and feels great disappointment if her husband doesn't display the same enthusiasm as she does for things she's interested in. ²³

I feel that such a statement not only displays a lack of understanding of Yuriko's message, but is also a very sexist attitude.

Yuriko believed that a husband and wife could love one another, support and encourage each other in an equal partnership, while still retaining their respective independence. In order to achieve this completely, she believed it was necessary to share ideological opinions in order to reach this deep level of communication necessary to fulfill one's own and one's partner's deepest needs.

I am uncertain as to why believing that a husband and wife should respond to, and care for, one another with the same degree of sensitivity should create "excessive expectations of and demands on the husband" as Nakamura states, unless the underlying supposition in her statement is that a husband is perhaps too busy earning money and supporting his wife to worry about such minor matters as attempting to understand her feelings. This is surely Yuriko's most fundamental message, and the basic theme of "Rivers of the Soul" - that an unbridgeable gap will arise in a marriage if no such attempt

at communicating and understanding is made. Yuriko is trying to show the tragedy in human relationships that will inevitably result if women are forced into the narrow, confining role of housewife with no stimulation and total dependence on their husbands, who, in turn, regard them as a mere appendage with no right to make any demands on their time and energy. Yasuo, for example, would have been unwilling to go and buy oatmeal for Sayo, despite the fact that she was unable to go herself.

Rather than changing crowded trains in order to go to Ginza or somewhere just to buy a can of oatmeal, he would probably say that for a couple of weeks it would be better to make do with bread which could easily be bought. ²⁴

It is surely not "idealistic" for Yuriko, Sayo, or any other woman to expect that each partner be sensitive to the other's beliefs, hopes and expectations.

They began to play a game, which Sayo called "a journey into the mind"²⁵ where she would try and guess what was in Yasuo's mind before he spoke. While Yasuo found it interesting, if only as a diversion, to Sayo it was important as the only means she could think of to understand her husband. It was very one-sided; there is no indication of Yasuo viewing the 'game' in the same way. In fact, it demonstrates a further example of his insensitivity in that he did not seem to put as much effort into the game as Sayo, and was not as successful at it.²⁶ Yet even these attempts seem destined to failure, due to Yasuo himself.

It was as if she had used all her strength to shoot an arrow, and then at the most crucial moment, the target had leaned to the side and the arrow had flown straight past without hitting anything.²⁷

Sayo found too, as the game continued, that although she loved Yasuo, "he was unsatisfactory and boring and did not possess the qualities she sought".²⁸

Sayo tried to find a meaning in their life, convinced that it must lie beyond the daily, boring routine of Yasuo going to the office, affixing his seal, and smoking his cigarettes.²⁹ She was afraid that their life together might be like "a kettle which has a firm external form, but which contains nothing".³⁰

That night "when, feeling the way she did, she thought of becoming pregnant with her husband's child, her limbs turned to ice with fear and shame".³¹

Sayo's marriage had almost reached its crisis point. As her situation worsened, the seasons pass from Spring into Summer. At the beginning of Chapter Four, we are told, "It was already June."³² - the first month of Summer. With the Summer, comes the gloomy rainy season, overshadowing Sayo's life, and as the heat of the Summer intensifies, so too does the tension and arguments between Sayo and her husband.

She finds that once the boredom and gloom of a day on her own disappeared, "the moment she saw her husband's face, but now it was the exact opposite...she was filled with desolation and loneliness to the point of desperation."³³

When Sayo broached the subject of her feelings, Yasuo simply had no concept of what she was talking about.

I'm such a faithful husband...you're free to choose whether you get up or sleep in all day!...In fact, your life is better than Utopia.³⁴

Sayo was not, in fact, 'free to choose' anything at all. She was unable to choose to leave her house, even to go and buy some oatmeal, but was forced to rely on Yasuo to

buy it for her. Sayo felt as if she were living in a cage. She felt as if her "lonely heavy heart pressed in on her like an overcast day in Spring".³⁵ Moreover, she was living in a state of total dependence on her husband to fulfill her every need. Such a life could not be described by the word 'Utopia'.

Sayo persevered with her case but was told:

you're being so vague. If there's something wrong you should say what it is - not just come out with words like 'far apart' or 'lonely'.³⁶

He tells her that because she cannot explain things "logically" her "argument is weak".

Yasuo tries to dismiss Sayo's whole life in a single sentence. "Isn't that love (his love for her) the whole of our life together?"³⁷ It is certainly not the whole of his life: he has a career, friends and family, but he displays the arrogance of men who think that a woman should be content with a man's love and financial support, in order to feel fulfilled as a human being.

Sayo is completely devastated. She cannot believe that the man she thought she loved is revealing himself in all his ignorance and chauvanism. And then, when Yasuo tries to blame the outburst as an hysterical attack due to her period, she grows angry.³⁸

He is blaming her for disturbing him.

His whole attitude was saying, "You've made me completely disagreeable. I can't work or do anything. It's your fault!"³⁹

This scene is reminiscent of Yuriko and Araki.

After dinner I finally told him what was on my mind. A. probably didn't understand, or even if he did, he tried to change the subject by saying I was being hysterical again and that he wouldn't be able to sleep.⁴⁰ (23 April, 1922)

Sayo then recalls a scene from many years ago which demonstrates the universal theme of "Rivers of the Soul".

As a child, Sayo found her mother crying, saying:

It doesn't matter how logically I speak, your father won't take me seriously - he just says that I'm hysterical. Why was I born a woman when we only live once?⁴¹

Sayo remembered her mother's unhappiness and realised that "she herself was crying the suffocating tears of her mother".⁴² Sayo also knows that if she herself had a child, the same scene would occur. She is then struck by the thought, "hadn't her mother married her to Yasuo eagerly and proudly, believing he would guide her to a woman's paradise!".⁴³

Sayo realised, on reflection, that her mother had used marriage as the only means she knew to let her daughter out into the world, to "experience for herself, and achieve in her generation, more of the many dreams of people, of women, than her mother was ever able to fulfill".⁴⁴ For the majority of women at the time, who could not hope to have a career, marriage was seemingly their only opportunity in life, and yet, marriage itself, in the restricting, paralysing form it was, crushed them and left them nothing but a slave to their husband, home, and social conventions.

Sayo wanted to progress. She wanted to be able to say to her own daughter: "This is how I've solved it. What do you think? What would you have done?".⁴⁵ Yet, the problem was too big for her to handle alone.

When she thought of her life passing her by as it had done for her women ancestors, a life only half lived, with tears shed for the same reason, and with the same complaints, she felt that she was wasting time by arguing with her husband.⁴⁶

Sayo knew that Yasuo still did not take her seriously. He treated her as a child: "He spoke calmly and with a note of indifference as if talking to a child.",⁴⁷ and tells her to "be a sweet Sayo".⁴⁸ She knew too, that if she apologised, he would forget all about it. She felt as if she had "been living in the darkness for more than a hundred years".⁴⁹ But she had no solution. She was left at the end, feeling "filled with a dark fear that she may never again experience the same feelings of happiness in the dawning of a new day".⁵⁰

Sayo had passed the point of no return. She had reached too high a level in her awareness to ever be able to turn back and be happy with Yasuo. Just as Yuriko reached the point in her life where she knew she could no longer go on with Araki, so has Sayo now reached that point. She has lost forever the 'Spring' of her marriage. She has experienced the Summer with its tensions, growing awareness, and increasing anger, and ahead of her can only see darkness and fear.

Imagery

Much imagery is used throughout "Rivers of the Soul" to portray the various moods reflected in the story and to depict Yasuo and Sayo with the problems in their relationship.

The scene is set at the beginning of the story when the colour green is seen as a symbol for Sayo's loneliness and depression. The garden is full of trees growing luxuriantly, and reflecting into the room so that "it seemed as if the eight-mat room with its low ceiling lay among duckweed at the bottom of a pond".⁵¹ The luxuriance of the trees only serves to emphasise Sayo's loneliness and physical solitude.

Sayo sat alone in the room which, in spite of the impression of green, was somehow gloomy. Her thoughts were of one thing.⁵²

She is surrounded by the colour green, just as she is surrounded by loneliness.

When she was alone, she would go out onto the verandah where the green of the darkening leaves shimmered in the light.⁵³

The colour green not only surrounds Sayo, but is also associated with everything that is oppressing her.

Sayo gazed at the moss which was growing on the stones, as if hot, dark, green tea had been poured over them. The drizzling rain fell lightly, ceaselessly from the sky and melted into the moss as soon as it touched it....The still green moss endlessly sucked in the rain which fell during that day in June.⁵⁴

Rain is thus associated with the mood of gloom and oppression.

Her restless eyes roamed around the corridor, and the wet and gloomy garden, as if searching for help. Outside the rain poured down as if it would crush both nature and people. The sound of the raindrops droned on monotonously.⁵⁵

Sayo's life too, drones on monotonously like the rain.

Inside the house, the colour yellow-red is used to portray Sayo's feelings of being trapped. "(W)hen they returned home the colour of the lamp seemed an ugly yellow-red and looked hot and stagnant.⁵⁶ Toward the end of the story, "the smooth leaves of the evergreen shrub near the verandah, shone gloomily in a reddish light radiating from the room".⁵⁷

The contrast between light and dark is used a great deal, and often depicts Sayo's growing fears about the reality of their relationship.

She imagines going to Ginza, and the scene is filled with bright colours. She describes such things as the ripples on the surface of the water, the refreshing breeze blowing lightly along the Tokyo streets, and the soft, pale blue sky. However, unable to leave the house, "her lonely, heavy heart pressed in on her like an overcast day in Spring".⁵⁸

Her fears and unhappiness grow worse, and alone and unaided in their relationship, she "felt as if her brightly lit house stood out conspicuously like a solitary lantern shining in a dark field".⁵⁹

When Sayo attempts to talk to Yasuo, she is only just able to keep disaster away. She clings to the hope that everything will work out between them.

The thick liquid darkness of the evening was pushed back just at the edge of the room where it met the bright light spilling over⁶⁰

The moon and stars also appear as effective metaphors for Yasuo and Sayo. The moon represents Yasuo; the all protecting husband who sheds his bright light over everything. However, something has gone wrong with their relationship, and we see that around the self-satisfied, contented Yasuo, who makes no attempt to understand or communicate with Sayo, "a very large, golden ash coloured ring comfortably and serenely encircled the moon".⁶¹ Something is now separating Yasuo from Sayo, who is represented by a star.

...a single, brightly shining star lay at the edge of the ring as if it were a kind of decoration.⁶²

Sayo, "a kind of decoration", is, in reality, regarded by Yasuo as a mere appendage who is now separated from him by a "haze".

Sayo, although beginning to be more aware of the doubts she has concerning the depth of their understanding, and of the validity of the relationship that exists between them, still believes that she loves Yasuo, and is very much dependent on him. "Sayo felt as if her feet were drawn magnetically towards the moon."⁶³ Later on when they were arguing, Sayo realises that despite her anger "she wanted the care and

attention from Yasuo that she knew she could get".⁶⁴ She still feels attracted to Yasuo and is surrounded by his presence.

On the left flowed a stream which sparkled in the light of the drowsy moon. On the right, low-lying rice fields...were veiled with moonlight like a brilliant, transparent mist.⁶⁵

There is, however, an indication of the way events will progress. It is hinted that there will be a confrontation, and that Sayo, having become more aware of the reality of their marriage, will develop a strength, as yet unknown.

The moon, with its indistinct halo like that of a saint, seemed to grow increasingly closer. One star sparkled more and more beautifully.⁶⁶

At the end of the story, much is again portrayed through the use of colours. The garden is once more described as being very green; full of trees growing luxuriantly, but we now know that this is like their marriage. From the outside, it seems as if everything is going well for them, but when the light shines through the luxuriance into the room, everything looks gloomy.

Yasuo is now depicted as a telegraph pole. He was once, perhaps, a "living tree" in the green of their marriage, but he is now dead, and standing at an unusual angle, sticking out awkwardly from among the other trees.

The mood of darkness is emphasised. "Outside it was dark too. Dark, like the centre of her heart."⁶⁷

Amidst this darkness, Yasuo's superficial loving words, are no longer strong enough to keep the marriage going. When Sayo went to talk to Yasuo about the way she felt, she thought that "his shoulders which were bathed in light, floated somewhere above the darkness."⁶⁸

However, Sayo is no longer content with empty words, and we see that one side of the telegraph pole "seem(ed) much closer as if it were some sort of unpleasant, white living thing."⁶⁹

Yasuo can no longer hold Sayo with his meaningless words of love and she can no longer hide from the empty reality of their marriage. Surrounded without and filled within by darkness, Sayo can only face herself and her future filled with a fear of what may lie ahead.

Conclusion

Following the completion of "Rivers of the Soul", Yuriko went on to divorce Araki and create a new life for herself. Her continual growth as an individual is always apparent in her works and she devoted herself fully to her life and her writing.

In many ways, Yuriko was a woman ahead of her time. Her comments and writings on subjects such as the position of women were valid at the time and remain so even today. However, it has, in a sense, taken the public a long time to catch up with Yuriko. Although she has always remained a well-known author, only now is there beginning to be a resurgence of interest in Yuriko, her life, and her works.

Notes pp.1-18

1. 宮本百合子
2. 中條精一郎
3. 葦江
4. 西村茂樹
5. Nihon Joryū Bungakushi, ed. Yoshida Seiichi (Tokyo: Dōbun Shōin, 1972), p.267. My trans. (All translations are mine.)
6. 白樺派
7. 「農村」
8. 「貧しき人々の群」
9. 坪内逍遙
10. 「中央公論」
11. 「福宜様宮田」
12. 「風に乗って来るコロポックル」
13. 荒木茂
14. Komazawa Kimi, "Miyamoto Yuriko - Fuken to Kokken ni Kōshite", Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kyōzai no Kenkyū, 24, No.4, March. Special Edition (1979), p.204.
15. Nakamura Tomoko, Miyamoto Yuriko (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1974), p.61.
16. Miyamoto Yuriko Zenshū (Hereafter cited as M.Y.Z.), ed. Shin Nihon Shuppansha (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1980), XXIII, 489.
17. ibid., p.495.
18. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, (Hertshire: Triad/Panther, 1977), p.6.
19. M.Y.Z., XXIII, 495.
20. ibid., p.496.
21. ibid., p.509.
22. ibid., p.671.
23. Nakamura Tomoko, p.69.
24. ibid., p.69.

25. Noriko Mizuta Lippit, Reality and Fiction in Modern Japanese Literature (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1980), p.149.
26. M.Y.Z., XXIII, 511.
27. ibid., p.671.
28. ibid., p.511.
29. ibid., p.776.
30. 「我に叛く」
31. 「火のついた踵」
32. 「心の河」
33. 「改造」
34. 湯浅芳子
35. 野上弥生子
36. Kokubungaku, XXIV, 204
37. M.Y.Z., XXIII, 515.
38. 「伸子」
39. Mizuno Akiyoshi, "Kaisetsu" in Nobuko, by Miyamoto Yuriko (Tokyo: Shinchō Bunko, 1978), p.458.
40. Mizuta Lippit, p.150.
41. Komazawa Kimi, p.205.
42. Mizuta Lippit, p.152.
43. 「雨後」
44. 「婦人公論」
45. 「女性同盟」
46. 「一本の花」
47. 芥川龍之介
48. Mizuta Lippit, p.153.
49. 「田端の坂」
50. 「文藝春秋」
51. 「二つの庭」
52. 「戦旗」

53. 「おもかけ」
54. 「広場」
55. 「新しきシベリアを横切る」
56. 日本プロレタリア作家同盟
57. Nippona Proleta Artista Federacio - All Japan Proletariat Arts League.
58. 佐多稲子
59. 作家同盟 婦人委員会
60. Miyamoto Yuriko Ten, ed. Matsumoto Seichō (Tokyo: Seibu Bijutsukan, 1981).
61. 日本プロレタリア文化連盟
62. 「働く婦人」
63. 「ズラかった信吉」
64. 「ペーチャの話」
65. Mizuta Lippit, p.158.
66. 宮本顕治
67. Kokubungaku, p.205.
68. 小林多喜二
69. 文化同盟 婦人協議会
70. 「労働者農民の国家とブルジョア地主の国家」
71. 「一九百三十二年の春」
72. 「亥リ々」
73. 「小祝の一家」
74. Ōmori Sueko, Miyamoto Yuriko Arubamu, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1959), p.35.
75. 「乳房」
76. 「突堤」
77. Kokubungaku, p.205.
78. 「新日本文学の端緒」
79. 「歌声よ、おこれ」
80. 「新日本文学」

81. 「婦人民主グラフ」
82. 新日本文学会
83. 「播州平野」
84. 「草知風」
85. 「二つの庭」
86. ひろ子
87. 「わたしたちは平和を手離さない」
88. 「女性の歴史」
89. 「婦人と文学」
90. 「道標」
91. Mizuta Lippit, p.147.

Notes pp.19-48

1. One tatami mat is approximately one yard by two yards.
2. さよ
3. 保夫
4. 浸し物
5. 山岡
6. 谷保夫
7. 吉村
8. 鈴木
9. 沢口
10. 幸雄

Notes pp.49-63

1. 「底潮」
2. 「改造」
3. M.Y.Z. II, 473.
4. ibid., p.465
5. ibid., p.462.
6. 沢口
7. 幸雄
8. 吉村
9. 鈴木
10. M.Y.Z. II, 459.
11. ibid., p.456.
12. ibid., p.453.
13. ibid., p.453.
14. ibid., p.453.
15. ibid., p.468.
16. ibid., p.473.
17. ibid., p.454.
18. ibid., p.454.
19. ibid., p.455.
20. ibid., p.456.
21. ibid., p.456.
22. M.Y.Z. XXIII, 510.
23. Nakamura Tomoko, p.67.
24. M.Y.Z. II, 453.
25. ibid., p.463.
26. ibid., p.462.
27. ibid., p.463.
28. ibid., p.465.
29. ibid., p.467.

30. ibid., p.467.
31. ibid., p.467.
32. ibid., p.465.
33. ibid., p.468.
34. ibid., p.470.
35. ibid., p.453.
36. ibid., p.471.
37. ibid., p.472.
38. ibid., p.475.
39. ibid., p.478.
40. M.Y.Z. XXIII, 511.
41. M.Y.Z. II, 476.
42. ibid., p.476.
43. ibid., p.477.
44. ibid., p.477.
45. ibid., p.477.
46. ibid., p.478.
47. ibid., p.469.
48. ibid., p.472.
49. ibid., p.479.
50. ibid., p.479.
51. ibid., p.452.
52. ibid., p.452.
53. ibid., p.465.
54. ibid., p.466.
55. ibid., p.467.
56. ibid., p.460.
57. ibid., p.479.
58. ibid., p.453.
59. ibid., p.453.

60. ibid., p.468.
61. ibid., p.458.
62. ibid., p.458.
63. ibid., p.458.
64. ibid., p.478.
65. ibid., p.458.
66. ibid., p.458.
67. ibid., p.479.
68. ibid., p.469.
69. ibid., p.477.

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