Title: Shichiro Fukazawa — the Observation of Modernity from Vulgar Culture

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The modern writer Shichiro Fukazawa (1914-1987) won the Prize of the Best New Writer by his first novel Narayama Bushiko (The Ballad of Narayama) which was published at Chuokoron (Central Review) in November of 1956. This dissertation stands on the current studies and achievements, analyzed the motif of Fukazawa’s literary works, his writing techniques, as well as his consciousness of the works. This research aims to supply a comprehensive understanding of the panorama of vulgar culture in Fukazawa’s literary works. In this dissertation, literary works of other writers like Kenji Nakagama, Yukio Mishima and Yasushi Inoue are selected for comparing with Fukazawa’s literary works. By employing the multi-comparative methods and text analysis, the significance of this dissertation is to represent Fukazawa’s impact in twentieth century’s literary world and aiming to recall its literary glamour.

In the first part of the dissertation, Fukazawa’s magnum opus Narayama Bushiko and the representative long novel Fuefukigawa are selected and analyzed by exploring the original impulsion of his creation of vulgar culture. Fukazawa emphasizes individual existence, in which he employed contemporary writing techniques to construct the vulgar world of pre-modern society. Horitatsu and Inoue depicted contemporary moods via employing classic motif; however, different from them, Fukazawa regarded nature as the absolute theme of human beings. His work Narayama Bushiko avoided affected from “Houhou Kajou” (which means the writing techniques are far beyond the content itself). Due to this, the Narayama Bushiko gained its own unique and great success in the world of literature.

Fuefukigawa is the first long novel of Fukazawa which was published in April, 1958. Different from the short story Narayama Bushiko, which applied Mambo (a Brazilian musical expression) with bright and fast tempo to unfold the scenario, Fuefukigawa is more likely to be a relaxation of a symphony. Fukazawa constructed his specific vulgar world via not only observing vulgar space, plebian thinking and living styles, but also via “nature” observed human beings.

Around 1960s, the Tokyo’s Prince opened the gate of Fukazawa’s creation of contemporary novel. Koshu Komori Uta is the representative work of his transition period. In this work, the protagonist Oka fought desperately for saving the household and village community, but it was destroyed and devastated by strong and inevitable modernization brought by Tokujiro. Fukazawa set the metropolitan as the background of this work, in which he described the formalization and emptiness of modernization by ruthless narratives.

In order to explicitly analyze the collapse of vulgar world, this research made the comparison of vulgar space and protagonist’s change between Fukazawa and Nakagami. No matter from regional or consanguineous community, or the vulgar world authorized by maternity, both of the writers in
their early works constructed the independent world with independent survival rules. In their middle period work, both of Nakagami and Fukazawa constructed the collapse of the vulgar world. Nakagami created the process that how the protagonist fought for survival in modern society. And Fukazawa presented a cluster of images that how the pre-modern famers lost their survival value. Nakagami was born in vulgar world but grew up in metropolitan, which explained why he measured this world by his modern insight. Different to him, Fukazawa fought for entering into vulgar world in his whole life, he is probably not a pure vulgar writer, rather, he might be called a writer who was looking for a vulgar world.

In the next part, I would like to talk about Fukazawa’s “The case of Furyu Mutan”. This case produced a significant impact in his whole life. Fukazawa selected royal family as the theme of this work, which was aiming to sarcastically criticize the ridiculous modernity by presenting the authenticity of Japanese traditions. In the meanwhile, this work was described by the mechanism of dream, which manifested author’s schizophrenic character.

For a better understanding of Fukazawa's consciousness toward Tennoism, this dissertation made a comparative studies of Yukio Mishima as well. In Mishima’s work Yukoku, Emperor’s extreme authority becomes the essential mainstay of this work. Different to Mishima, the detestation toward authority and modernization are widely revealed in Fukazawa’s works. But in meanwhile, both Fukazawa and Mishima were hoping to escape from the reality that the Emperor was human Emperor not the God anymore; and both of them desire to flee from the fake reality of post-war prosperity and peace.

After Fukazawa moved to “Love Me Farm” in 1964, he started his hermit life there while observed the post-war democratic society by sharp and calm insights. In his later-year works, Fukazawa stretched his insights to the philosophy of life and the nature of death. Stands on the destination of death, Fukazawa redefined the conception of life. This is what exactly the prominent value of Fukazawa’s literary work.

Michinokumo Ningyo Tachi is the representative one of Fukazawa’s late work. It told a story about the Mabiki (the scenario that new born babies were killed). The similar scenario was also appeared in Chinese novelist Yan Mo’s work Frog. By comparing of the two writers, it is observed that there are similarities and differences existed in both China and Japan’s vulgar existence. Fukazawa’s philosophy of life and death, plus Mo’s sharp criticism toward reality highlighted the value of this dissertation.

The longing toward vulgar world and plebeian life style attracted Fukazawa in his whole life. He employed the sharp writing, the ruthless insight and the sarcastic tone strongly resisted the post-war modern society. In his works, the disaster of nuclear power plant, the problem of aging, the nihilistic thought of modern people were all described, which were recognized as fictional discourse at that time, but all became true after twenty years. Fukazawa described human’s arrogant toward nature, and revealed his aloof attitude toward the post-war society. Fukazawa is an idealist who spent his whole life in chasing vulgar panorama. His works are filled with black humor and centripetal force of vulgar culture. It made his works are likely to be an isolated sacred mountain, which has transcended time and space, mocked to the impenitent human in the modern society.