

## Abstract

Dissertation Title

Issues in Literature and Times of Osamu Dazai:  
Centered on the middle period

Name: Kim Kyoungsook

The research objective for this thesis is the middle period literary works of Osamu Dazai. These middle period literary works were written in the atmosphere of Sino-Japanese and Pacific wars. What did Osamu Dazai express and what kind of literary activities he has accomplished in these severe conditions of war? In this dissertation we shall investigate the answers to this question with reference to the contemporary context.

The first task of this paper is, at the beginning, to identify the ways of expression in the mid-term works. It has been confirmed through the analysis of the relationship between the era and the author as a man of literature. At the time, Dazai maintained a sobering look at the wartime policies and the situation in the world of literature. Among the mid-term works, there are many which were written to reflect that. The war footing has placed restrictions on people's lives and freedom of expression. In this harsh reality, he had to come up with various ideas and strategies in order to protect his own literature works. Dazai has given consideration to many war policies and has criticized them using such literature expressions as satire or buffoonery, allegory and metaphors.

The second task of this paper is the study of the novel "Female Monologue," also written in the middle period. The middle period work "Female Monologue" was created with a true conscious relation to the era. Throughout this work the problems in literature and of the time period that the author was thinking about were expressed in various forms. Actually to express them Dazai has used various strategic ways. Through them the whole individuality of the work "Female Monologue" is demonstrated.

In the 1st part, in the beginning in order to understand how Dazai thought of the relationship between politics and literature, examined his earlier works. Here we can observe his feelings: being weak himself in comparison to "others," political inclination toward communistic ideas and the conflict within his aims in literature, as well as the recantation from the communistic ideas. At all times, through focusing the main point

on the feelings between individuals and himself, he has acted independently within literature. Afterwards, through giving as an example the work which displays a close correlation with war times, we have examined what he has expressed through the relation with the times. The fact that the word "wait" was the expression used to reflect "peace," and the clear intention to protect his own literature was included in it. We have also examined his strategy to express his hidden true intentions inside the words, and the criticism of the values in the words "for the country," that demanded devotion only for the war footing. As opposed to the war and totalitarian regimes he has continued to write works expressing individualism and liberalism.

In the 2nd part, we have examined Dazai's strategies of expression as in the characteristics of the novel "Female Monologue" and the war times. Commonly appearing image of a "dirty woman" in the "Female Monologue" is very different from the image of a woman valued by the system, politics, and education of the time. The voices of real women suffering were reflected in it. These images of "dirty women" appear throughout the "Female Monologue" novel and in the mid-term works. These served to firmly deny the patriarchy and a "good wife and a wise mother" ideology. This point is a particular characteristic of the "Female Monologue" work in the middle period of Dazai's literature. From the 4th chapter there is theory of individual works. The piece "Lantern" is Dazai's "critical artistic crossroads," and is aiming to break away from the written style of the previous period. In the conversion of this literary style the question of awareness towards art itself and the presence of the artist have worked distinctively. This was not only the question of Dazai but the theme related to literature in general. In the piece "Heart and Skin" of the 5th chapter, we demonstrated the strategies chosen by Dazai, to point out the movements in literary world in the times of 1939 and to promote freedom of expression despite the shackles of censorship. The "stupid woman" images appearing in this work are contrasted to those normalized by the wartime regime and the generalized images of a woman as a good wife and a wise mother. While on one side his words showed war regime and policies as correct, at the same time he used ironic ways to criticize them through abnormalities and reflections. In the piece "Grasshopper" in chapter 6, the author's protest against totalitarianism and the spread of "New Government Movement" in the 1940s, can be confirmed. The image of a woman in this piece is that of a person, who lives her life according to her own ideas and places her values in individualism and liberalism. In the piece "December 8th" in chapter 7, it is considered what Dazai thought of December 8th, the day of the outbreak of the Pacific War and how as a man of literature he has expressed his critical spirit. In this work, through showing the purpose of war in a comical way Dazai criticized war itself. Also

through writing about people who have strayed from “Family Nation Community” he has expressed his consciousness toward the war regime.

As shown above, in the mid-term of his literary career, Dazai at all times questioned the era associated with war and invented various expression strategies and techniques to express that. He has also kept on writing works that criticize the war regime and the ideology of control. By being honest to his own senses he has protected his own literature from the torrent of war and totalitarianism. In this thesis we could observe such individual qualities of Dazai as an expressionist.