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Dazai Osamu's *Otogi zōshi*: A Structural and Narratological Analysis

by

Kazumi Nagaike

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

in

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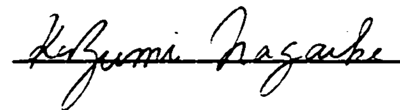

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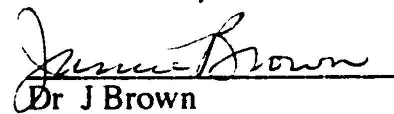
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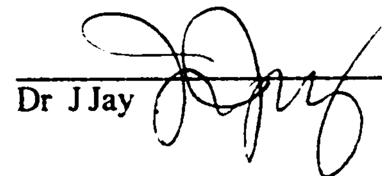
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Abstract

Japanese Dazai Osamu critics usually privilege Dazai's later writings, such as *No Longer Human* and *The Setting Sun*, and underestimate the value and validity of his literary works in the middle period, including *Otogi zōshi*. This tendency is deeply connected with a Japanese literary methodology: literary critics in Japan usually base their remarks primarily on biographical research, taking into consideration the synchronization between fiction and reality, and underrate the importance of the explicit facts created by a structure of a text.

My focus in this thesis is to establish a balance between the author (Dazai Osamu) and the text (*Otogi zōshi*). I employ a narratological approach for a structural analysis of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi*. For a further analysis, I compare Dazai's rewritten versions with the original folktales, considering the cross-cultural validity of Propp's morphological method and limitations. I also examine *Otogi zōshi's* ingenious structural constructions that blend metafictional elements and features of *watakushi shōsetsu* (I-novel). By creating different kinds of narrative levels as well as reflecting upon his life-experiences in *Otogi zōshi*, Dazai establishes his ideological "self" in the pursuit of his identity in the modern era.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Otogi zōshi (Fairy Tales) is written by Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), one of the outstanding "story-tellers" in the beginning of the Shōwa era (1926-1989). Dazai left his mark on the history of Japanese literature because of his thematically and technically complex writings. *Otogi zōshi* consists of four short stories: "Kobutori" (Taking the Wen Away), "Urashima san" (The Tale of Urashima), "Kachi kachi yama" (Crackling Mountain), and "Shitakiri suzume" (The Split-Tongue Sparrow). Even if Japanese do not know Dazai's version of *Otogi zōshi*, they all have heard these four stories, which are extremely popular traditional tales. However, the academic research on *Otogi zōshi* is still limited--less than thirty articles have been published in Japan, and none overseas--mainly because there is a fixed idea that Dazai Osamu's only works worthy of criticism and acclaim are *No Longer Human* and *The Setting Sun*. Moreover, the lack of enthusiasm for theoretical research in the Japanese literary community also contributes to the neglect of *Otogi zōshi* because its structural strategies are perceptible only after an adequate analysis. In this thesis, I propose to analyze the tales in *Otogi zōshi* from a theoretical perspective in order to indicate *Otogi zōshi*'s literary merits which have been underrated so far.

Dazai's literary works are neither highly valued by all literary critics nor

praised by all his readers. The *bundan* (the Japanese literary circle)[1] at one time devalued all aspects of Dazai's literature and ignored his prominence as a writer, mostly because of the decadent character of his life:

> When referring to Dazai's weakness and self-indulgence, self-described experts in literature all talked in a contemptuous and triumphant manner. This tendency was initiated by Mishima Yukio. And as for literary research, a certain famous critic boldly insisted that almost all mass-produced research papers about Dazai Osamu were nothing but wastepaper (Tōgō *Dazai Osamu jiten* 310).

Nevertheless, with Okuno Takeo's contribution to the study of Dazai, Dazai's vindication gradually began. Okuno Takeo, the pioneer of Dazai studies, who "first made explicit the whole figure of Dazai the writer" (Chiba 134), established the foundation of Dazai research. Moreover, he "recommends *Otogi zōshi* as Dazai's best artistic work" (155). Dazai Osamu himself also highly valued his *Otogi zōshi*, suggesting its thematic and structural complexity: "I would be satisfied if only one or two persons understand this work" (qtd. in Tōgō's *Dazai Osamu jiten* 32).

However, Japanese critics do not praise *Otogi zōshi* and Dazai's other writings of his middle period as highly as they do his later works. Literary critics usually admire only Dazai's later writings, considering them the literary works that reveal the intrinsic value of his work. Inasmuch as Dazai's literary reputation comes from his status as a *watakushi shōsetsu* (autobiographical novel) writer, the critical praise of Dazai's early and later writings and the censure of his other

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[1] Literary circles have played particularly important roles in modern Japan. The doyens of the literary community have exercised strict control over other writers through highly valuing *jun bungaku* (pure literature). Young writers who were against the value judgments of prominent writers were excluded from the *bundan* and, as a result, were often forced to end their careers as writers.

works, including *Otogi zōshi,* is relatively understandable. As a *watakushi shōsetsu* writer, Dazai himself emphasizes the act of confessing, especially in his later writings. He sees the confession of an author's emotional struggle with his/her everyday life as the most remarkable trait of the Japanese *watakushi shōsetsu.* As Hirano Ken points out, however, overestimating the later literary works by paying attention only to the style of confession and ignoring the value and validity of Dazai's literary writings in the middle period is a superficial approach :

> Generally speaking, people accept the idea that Dazai's later works are his masterpieces revealing the soul of his literature. I do not deny the quintessence of Dazai's literature in "Buiyon no tsuma"(Villon's Wife), *No Longer Human,* and *The Setting Sun.* But I do object to the evaluation which praises only his early and later works and looks down upon his middle works (80).

Though *Otogi zōshi* is neglected by Japanese critics, its systematic construction is unconventionally original in Japanese literature from a narratological point of view. In *Otogi zōshi,* Dazai breaks from his former writing method, loosely a confessional writing style, by systematizing his stories, resulting in a style distinctively his own, combining the act of confessing and the act of rewriting. Dazai's elaborate structural strategy is reflected metafictionally in *Otogi zōshi* and its different levels of narrative domain. Therefore, I examine the "narrative systems" (or narrative frames) of the stories in *Otogi zōshi,* which are embedded stories (or stories within stories), which have a metafictional character. Eventually, I allude to a correlation between metafiction and *watakushi shōsetsu* : in terms of "self-reflexivity" or "self-mirroring," *watakushi shōsetsu* and metafiction have a somewhat explicit similarity. For a further

analysis. I shall also explore the experimental classification or categorization of Japanese traditional folktales from theoretical perspectives by analyzing the developments and the endings of the original stories and of Dazai's version. I also consider whether Propp's prominent theory about Russian folktales is applicable to Japanese folktales and Dazai's folktale-based stories.

Moreover, I deal with a biographical analysis of both Dazai Osamu and his literary works, as well as historical studies of these four Japanese folktales in the first chapter. Generally speaking, Dazai's work is a mirror or a medium for him to reflect himself and his own "inescapable reality:" each of his literary works is inscribed with the tone of his painful feelings, underscoring the bleakness of living in a materialistic society. Therefore, inasmuch as Dazai immerses himself in both reality and fiction by reflecting upon his real life and creating characters modeled on himself, a biographical study is necessary. Historical backgrounds of these four Japanese folktales are also needed. Of importance in this chapter is not only the relationship between Japanese history and folktales, but also Dazai's ideological notions of folktales.

My research makes a thematic comparison between the original folktales and Dazai's retellings, taking social circumstances and historical backgrounds into consideration in the third chapter. This kind of comparison is necessary because the original stories and the rewritten versions indicate different themes, respectively. In the process of articulating the nature of Dazai's writing, I suggest possible readings of his act of rewriting and focus on its purpose, validity, and effectiveness, taking into account the facts discussed in the introduction and first two chapters. The desire for a "revolution," the notions of "the elect," and "original sin," and Dazai's concept of "horobi" (ruin) will be key words in this chapter and in my entire thesis.

Chapter 1

The Life of Dazai Osamu and Sources of *Otogi zōshi*

Biographical Study of Dazai Osamu

A shooting star destined to be short-lived, Dazai Osamu mysteriously rose out of obscurity to attain fame in the literary circles of Japan and then vanished as suddenly as he had appeared. In 1909, Tsushima Shūji (the future Dazai Osamu), the tenth child of a local wealthy family, was born in Aomori Prefecture, in the northern part of Japan. The fact that his father, Genemon, was on the ranked list of millionaires as an extensive property owner and politician suggests how wealthy the Tsushima family was at that time. Although not the only major factor in the process of determining the distinctive quality of Dazai's work, his constant consciousness of Japanese hierarchical society and the conception of class are the key to understanding the essence of his literature because they are deeply connected with the sense of "sin" resulting from being born in the exploiting class. This concept of "sin" is reflected in a number of Dazai's literary works and is enlarged and elevated to such an extent that it is consonant with his later concept of "the elect" as the chosen one. Dazai's participation in an illegitimate leftist movement, in spite of his family's strong objection, and his devotion to Marxism during his school days illustrate his dislike of the Japanese

class-system. Moreover, his ephemeral acclamation of proletarian literature[1] also indicates his "rebellious" spirit towards the established society. As well as his bourgeois origins, the complicated circumstances in which Dazai was raised also exerted an influence on the future writer and provided various themes for his literature. One of the most noticeable aspects of his childhood is his insecure position in the family, owing to the absence of his parents. Genemon and his wife, Tane, the biological parents of Dazai, were unable to fulfill their duties as his parents. Right after birth, Dazai was separated from his mother and placed under the care of a nursemaid. One year later, he was handed over to an aunt. In his autobiographical story, "Omoide" (Recollections), the narrator-protagonist states[2]:

> I have quite a few memories of my aunt, but, curiously enough, not a single one of my parents at that time. To be sure, it was a big family.... But it was as if, except for my aunt, I lived for five or six years without knowing anything about the others (Lyons 190).

Moreover,

> My father was a very busy man and he was not home very often.... I was afraid of him.... I couldn't get close to mother, either.... so I didn't really know my mother until I was in second or third grade (Lyons 193).

It is noteworthy here that Dazai, as the author of *watakushi shosetsu* (or *shi*

---

1 At the beginning of the Shōwa era (1926-1989), proletarian authors were at their peak and occupied an important position in the Japanese literary community. However, they were severely oppressed during the war because of their anti-government ideology, and they gradually lost power in literary circles.

2 Even though the semantic domain of literature does not allow literary works to conform to the real world, biographical studies as well as contextual analysis offer an appropriate space in which the reader may consider the synchronization between fiction and reality. Many critical works, including biographical studies, endorse the notion that Dazai's literary works contain autobiographical elements.

shōsetsu), loosely called autobiographical fiction, blends reality and fiction into one symbolic domain. For a Japanese "I" novelist, his/her existence itself is the object that has to be used for artistic creation. Creating a number of characters who have something psychologically and spiritually in common with the author, Dazai aims at blurring the border-line between reality and fiction. As a Japanese "I" novelist, Dazai depicts his real experiences in his creative art by exploring his artistic depth, considering his writing as a medium to bring harmony into his mental state.

Dazai, who did not have much contact with his real parents, was brought up by his aunt, Kie, and considered her to be his real mother, as Kie's oldest daughter, Rie, confirms: "Dazai firmly believed for a while that he was a real son of my mother, and my mother also made him believe that" (qtd. in Tōgō's *Dazai Osamu jiten* 12). The six-year-old Dazai experienced losing his "mother" once again when Kie left Dazai behind in order to live with her married daughter. Kie's act of "abandoning" Dazai gave rise to Dazai's inner chaos and his loss of any foundation of self-identity once again. In my opinion, a child starts to build a sense of "ego" in the first stage of his growth by recognizing his parents. Indispensable elements, which facilitate his establishing his first self-identity as a child, should come from his parents. If that is the case, Dazai could never find during his entire life the unwavering foundation on which to build a sense of identity, and so he ultimately ended his life. Dazai's spiritual instability, caused by the traumatic loss of his parents and the lack of a stable foundation as a human being, brought about his life-long self-destructive tendencies. The unexpected death of Genemon, who had been occupied with politics in Tokyo and rarely saw Dazai in Aomori, did not, on the surface, have a significant impact on Dazai. However, we can take his unconscious yearning for a

"substitute father" in both reality and his fiction as due to Genemon's death, which led to the complete absence of paternal influence on Dazai after 1923.

Three important events have to be considered in any discussion about his Hiromae high school days: meeting his first wife Oyama Hatsuyo; the beginning of writing a full-scale creative work; and the first suicide attempt. The first contact between Hatsuyo, a geisha, and Dazai happened during the time when he was attracted by various performance arts associated with Edo culture, such as *gidayū* and *jōruri.* [3] Having given himself up to such pleasures as women and wine without regard to cost, Dazai intentionally escaped from considering the meaning of his life. Dazai continuously creates women characters modeled on Hatsuyo, who produced a powerful effect on him, as if she were representative of all womankind. However, she usually influenced Dazai negatively and tormented him for various reasons. Dazai suffered from Hatsuyo's lack of intelligence, her innocence thus became in his eyes cruelty, and lies about her virginity. "Mukan naraku" (The Bottomless Hell), published in *Saibō Bungei* (*Cell Literature*),[4] can be considered one of Dazai's first creative works. Being a young writer with a bent towards proletarian literature, Dazai, in "The Bottomless Hell," malevolently dramatizes his late father and the life of the wealthy landowner and harshly criticizes the notorious "bourgeois" class. The fatal dilemma caused by Dazai's contradictory lifestyle--his extravagant epicurean style of life even though detesting the exploiting class--gave rise to his first suicide attempt in 1928. While setting about writing fiction in earnest, Dazai could not find a way out of a vicious spiral, indulging in a pleasure-seeking life as

3 In the Edo period (1600-1868) *shomin bunka* (the common people's culture) developed and flourished. *Gidayū*, a ballad-drama and *jōruri*, a ballad-drama with puppets, were extremely popular entertainments at that time.

4 *Saibō bungei* is one of the *Dōjin shi* (literary coterie magazines) edited by Dazai himself.

a means of running from harsh reality. Driving himself into a tight corner, Dazai sought death at his own hand. Henceforth, as the "poet of despair" (Lyons 1), the concept of "death" never left Dazai until his fifth and final suicide attempt in 1948.

In 1930 Dazai left for Tokyo in order to study at Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University) and began to lead an active life as a full-fledged writer. His life in Tokyo cannot be discussed without examining his own literary works because the two realms, his actual life and phenomenological (or fictional) world, became more and more interrelated. Classifying an author's literary works in according to subject matter, the times, writing styles, and themes sometimes ends in confusion because there is no perfect method for categorizing literary works. As well, "literature," a term of wide meaning, never indicates an unassailable method for a classification of an author's literary works. However, inasmuch as Dazai produced an enormous amount of work and brought various subjects and themes to his work after 1930, I will consider the division of his writings into distinctive categories. By both analyzing Dazai's writings and consulting the critical works of important Dazai Osamu scholars such as Fukuda Kawazō and Hirano Ken, we are able to classify Dazai's literary works into three types. Each of the respective categories possesses its peculiar characteristics that are condensed into one symbolic atmosphere reflected in Dazai's writing style. Dazai's early works, produced before 1937, are represented by "Omoide" (Recollections), *Bannen* (Final Years), "Gyofukuki" (Metamorphosis), "Dōke no hana" (The Flower of Buffoonery), "Nijusseiki kishu" (Standard-Bearer for the Twentieth Century), and "Human Lost" (the original title).

One outstanding trait of Dazai's early works is his penchant for self destruction or self-negation, the sources of which can be traced back to his

childhood. Being overly sensitive and vulnerable, Dazai portrays only his negative disposition and also intensifies and dramatizes it. He recognizes (or defines) himself by his fixed or obsessive conceptions and is finally hurt by his own writing. For Dazai at that time, writing was synonymous with self-destruction. The famous epigraph of "Standard-bearer for the Twentieth Century"--"Forgive me for having been born"--tells a great deal about the tone of his negative self-image, underscoring the bleakness of the meaning of his existence. One of the most impressive examples of Dazai's self-deprecating attitude is found in "The Flower of Buffoonery," in which he deals with his double suicide attempt without embellishing or dramatizing the protagonist modeled on Dazai himself nor justifying his survival of the attempts. A number of Dazai's early literary works illustrate his inability to use his fiction to compensate himself for the inadequacies in his own life. For example, although he could persist in pleading his innocence by fictionalizing reality and his actual feelings, he never reveals in "The Flower of Buffoonery" whether the protagonist modeled on Dazai really wants to die. His lack of self-confidence or self-respect often lent impetus to his difficult circumstances and caused him personal difficulties.

Dazai's illegal leftist activities during his university years in Tokyo caused relations with his family in Aomori to be severed. Tsushima Bunji, Dazai's oldest brother as well as the head of the Tsushima family at that time, was infuriated at Dazai's irresponsibility and determination to marry Hatsuyo. Thus, Bunji sentenced Dazai to set up a *bunke* (collateral family).[5] Bunji's decision greatly shocked Dazai; at this point in his life, Dazai lost his foundation or "home," increasing his inner chaos and mental instability. Dazai's instinctive attempts to

[5] See Lyons' *The Saga of Dazai Osamu* (8-11) in which she explains the Japanese family system.

return home both in reality and in fiction are also delineated in his images of home: softness and tenderness. After withdrawing from university, failing the entrance examination of Asahi News Agency and attempting suicide for the third time in 1935, Dazai was chosen as one of five finalists for the First Akutagawa Literary Prize.[6] Feeling confident and anchoring his last hope on this prize, Dazai had already written to his brother, saying that he might win the award. However, despite his eagerness to win, Dazai was not chosen as the winner. Furthermore, Kawabata Yasunari's incisive criticism of "The Flower of Buffoonery" as well as Dazai's fairly disorganized life contributed to his failure. Dazai tried to confront Kawabata in a rebuttal entitled "Kawabata Yasunari e" (To Kawabata Yasunari). The Third Akutagawa Literary Prize also distressed Dazai, who was nominated once again. Dazai was lost in wild fancies of a drug addiction and never doubted he would win the prize, but, once again, he did not. Dazai severely condemned Satō Haruo, a member of the nomination committee and a mentor.

In the process of assessing Dazai's work, we need to consider his behaving like a spoilt child toward Japanese literary "father" figures, such as Kawabata Yasunari, Satō Haruno, Shiga Naoya, and Ibuse Masuji. Just as a child frets when his parents' presumed unlimited love "betrays" him, so Dazai was sometimes so dependent on his mentors and senior writers that he did not know when (or where) to draw the line. While castigating Satō Haruo in his work "Sōseiki" (The Book of Genesis), Dazai used Satō Haruo's real name. However, Dazai also sent a pathetic letter to Satō, saying, "If I can win the Akutagawa Literary Prize, I will delightfully cry thinking of your mercy.... Please help me.

[6] This literary prize is one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Japan for new authors. Dazai, who admired Akutagawa as his model, really wanted to win this prize.

You, Mr. Satō, can help me.... from the homeless sparrow, Osamu" ("To Satō Haruo" 63-64). Dazai's inexorably chaotic years, in which he continued to attempt suicide and tried to save himself by establishing a literary reputation, came to an end in 1937 after a fourth failed suicide attempt.[7]

During the middle period of his literary career (from 1938 to 1945), Dazai was at the zenith of his success as a prestigious writer and a family-minded husband, and he produced an enormous amount of work. In contrast to the early Dazai, for whom the concept of "destruction" had always been so familiar, Dazai in the middle period showed an indomitable will to live in "normal" circumstances. As indicated by several critics, Dazai's productive and creative attitude during the middle period is metaphysically correlated with the outbreak of World War II. Regarding himself as the sole afflicted "martyr," Dazai always excluded himself from society, failing to synchronize spiritually with other people. The war, however, brought misfortune and suffering to all human beings, including Dazai. His sudden awakening to the realization that others were equally tormented by the war seems to have given him a sort of pleasure and freedom:

> The burden of one's life, which originally had to be borne by oneself, was discharged by the avoidable outburst of the war. The theory that people can be in easy circumstances under the state of war is universally accepted. Since the war dominated their destiny, people experienced a sort of freedom. Dazai's exceptional soundness, eloquence, fruitfulness and so forth are probably connected with this fact (Isogai 284).

[7] His fourth suicide attempt was a double suicide with his wife, Hatsuyo, who had had an affair with Dazai's close friend. After this incident, the couple decided to divorce.

In contrast to other Japanese authors, who set their minds toward politics or kept silent because of the oppressive censorship during World War II, Dazai continued writing, completely free from politics and war, revealing a new potential in his literature.

A distinctive feature of his literary work during this period is that he breaks from the predominant writing style of the time, *watakushi shōsetsu*, no longer limiting himself to autobiographical writing. Dazai's reworking of Japanese folktales, classics, historical figures, and foreign literary works without being fascinated with *ryūkō bungaku* ("trendy" literature)[8] indicates his new departure and efforts to grow as a prominent writer. "Hashire Merosu" (Run! Melos), written in 1940 after his second marriage, to Ishihara Miwako, possesses several features suggesting a new positive perspective that can also be seen in his vitality and well-organized life. By depicting the sincere comradeship between Melos and his friend, Dazai seems eager to believe in "love," "truth," and "justice." "Udaijin Sanetomo" (Sanetomo, Minister of Right), skillfully structured by a combination of fiction and history, met with public approval and was highly valued as a work of literary merit. By interpreting Japanese folktales in terms of his own values, and rewriting the tales, Dazai created *Otogi zōshi (Fairy Tales)* and *Shinshaku shokoku banashi (New Tales of the Provinces)*. *Shin Hamlet* (*A New Hamlet*), Dazai's dramatic version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, is a wholly original work revealing most of the main characteristics of his writing. One of the dispositions of human beings indicated by Dazai is the tendency to be duplicitous--everybody possesses this

[8] From the end of the Meiji era (1868-1912) to the end of World War II, "I-novelists" were at their peak and occupied an important position in the Japanese literary community. Almost all prominent writers during this period were "I-novelists." Thus, we can call "I-novels" *ryūkō bungaku* (literature of popular at the time).

quality. The main characters in Dazai's *Hamlet* speak and behave inconsistently, revealing their unstable personalities. The reader is confused by their contradictions and has difficulties in deciding the truth about them. By bringing the characters' inevitable dilemmas to light, Dazai makes them more weak and vacillating than those of the original *Hamlet*. While indicating the new potential in his literary works such as *Otogi zōshi*, *Udaijin Sanetomo*, and "Hashire Melos," Dazai also reveals the serenity of his mind in *Tsugaru* and "Fugaku hyakkei" (The Hundred Views of Mount Fuji). In his reunion with Take, his nursemaid, in *Tsugaru*, Dazai discovered his origins as the spiritual son of Take, establishing a more stable self-identity. Just as the Zen Buddhist is enlightened by communing with nature, the protagonist in "The Hundred Views of Mount Fuji" sublimates his past regrets, agony, and pain through the continuity of his discourse with various views of a symbolically personified Mount Fuji.

In contrast to Dazai's literary works in his middle period, in which he is eager to outgrow his former self and sublimate his past by setting out on a new path in his literature, Dazai in the late period of his career from 1946 to 1948 returns to his pessimistic focus on self-destruction (or self-negation), underlining and dramatizing the dark part of the human mind. In terms of the literary value of his works in the later period, works such as *No Longer Human*, *The Setting Sun* and "Villon's Wife" are generally defined as masterpieces revealing the quintessence of Dazai's literature. Once again living a precarious life, including love affairs with several women, Dazai, who seemed to have given up his attempt to be a "normal" person as both a husband and a writer, turned his focus to his internal self and to negating his personality by writing as a *burai no sakka*

(libertine).[9] However, compared with Dazai's early works, in which he was always caught in a vicious circle by depicting and emphasizing his negative disposition, Dazai's concept of self-negation in the later period is enlarged and elevated to such an extent that it enlightens him and provides him with a supreme reason to write.

The Setting Sun, celebrated as Dazai's best work, is also well-known because Dazai fictionalizes certain facts which he extracted from the diary of one of his mistresses, Ōta Shizuko. Four main characters in *The Setting Sun* symbolically possess distinctive human traits. Each of them, Uehara's cunningness, Naoji's vulnerability, Kazuko's idealistic spirit, and the mother's nobility, is reciprocally related to the others. Depicting these four kinds of human characteristics, Dazai suggests that the inner existence of human beings still remains in the realm of the unknown. In comparison with the characters in Dazai's early works, who have continual affliction without salvation, the characters in *The Setting Sun* are determined to search for their salvation through analyzing or accepting their natural temperaments.

Ōba Yōzō, the protagonist of *No Longer Human*, Dazai's last completed work, is his ultimate and most idealistic "other self" who acts as his spokesman. Yōzō's spiritual world, in which established and standard human morals are null and void, indicates that Dazai is not limited in his sense of reality, nor does he continue to hold fast to his ideal world any longer. *No Longer Human* opens with the sensational sentence: "Mine has been a life of much shame" (Keene *NLH* [*No Longer Human*] 18). By heavily emphasizing how sinful he is, Dazai

9 *Burai ha* indicates authors who destroy their lives to establish their creative art. *Burai ha* writers' circumstances are very similar to those of Beat writers in America. "Beat Literature" written by authors who were disillusioned by war experiences was popular in America after World War II. *Burai ha* literature written by writers who were influenced by the outbreak of the World War II could also be found for a short time in Japan after the war. See D. Keene's *Dawn to the West*, especially 1026-1112.

affirmatively accepts his negative nature. Dazai is eager to transcend his dilemma of having ideals and hopes in a materialistic society, the antithesis between reality and the ideal, which has tormented him for a long time. *No Longer Human* may be Dazai's last letter of vindication, apologizing to those people who cared about him. As a disqualified human being, he "could not even guess himself what it must be to live the life of a human being" (Keene *NLH* 18). However, Dazai also shows his inner spiritual salvation in *No Longer Human* by portraying Ōba Yōzō, Dazai's idealistic "other self," as a god-like figure at the end of the story, "Yō-chan (Yōzō) was really gentle and considerate. He would have been better, if only he didn't drink.... No, even though he was a drunk, he was a really good person like a god" (Dazai *Ningen shikkaku* 514). Expressing his own ideology as well as his sense of limitation caused by living as a human being in this existential and materialistic sphere, Dazai left *No Longer Human* as a last will and testament. Even though his works arise from his desire for self-exculpation, Dazai's literary works from the late period, in which his concept of "sin" is emphasized to such an extent that it goes beyond the realm of human ethics and judgments, offer a transcendental quality and are memorable in the history of Japanese literature.

Historical Backgrounds of *Otogi zōshi*

The title of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* traces its origin to the Muromachi era (1338-1573) *Otogi zōshi*. The latter is composed of twenty-three short pieces. However, the term *Otogi zōshi* historically contains a two-fold connotation resulting from its vaguely known historical background and the anonymity of its authors. First of all, according to several Japanese scholars, we can refer to the

work comprised of twenty-three tales compiled and published by Shibukawa Kiyoemon in the middle of the Edo period (1600-1868) as the literary book *Otogi zōshi*. Shibukawa collected *monogatari sōshi* (story books), which probably were collected and compiled by unidentified authors and editors in the Muromachi era. These story books were printed with inserted cut-in illustrations. By implication, then, the worth of this work, on the one hand, derives from the historical fact that Shibukawa's *Otogi zōshi* is one of the original sources of the later Japanese *ehon dōwa* (pictured folk or fairy tales) which are usually a combination of illustrations and folk and fairy tales used as stories for children. On the other hand, *otogi zōshi* is also used as a generic term for all of the *monogatari sōshi* from the Muromachi era, including Shibukawa's twenty three stories; there are between three and five hundred *monogatari sōshi* from the Muromachi era. Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is composed of four *monogatari sōshi*: "Taking the Wen Away," "Urashima san," "Crackling Mountain," and "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," whereas *Otogi zōshi* edited by Shibukawa contains only the tale of "Urashima." In this thesis, I would like to refer to *Otogi zōshi* in three ways: 1) those arranged by Shibukawa, 2) those tales rewritten by Dazai, and 3) as a general term for all of the *monogatari sōshi* in the Muromachi era. Our next step is to trace Dazai's four tales to their origins in the history of Japanese literature[10] and to note their variations.

Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* starts with the tale of "Taking the Wen Away" whose roots lie in the early Kamakura era (1185-1333) *Uji shūi monogatari (The Tale of Uji)*, an anonymous compilation of fifteen books whose date of completion remains obscure. As a collection of *setsuwa shū* (narrative or legendary

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[10] Ikeda Hiroko, a Japanese folklore scholar, briefly introduces the origins of these four Japanese folktales in her book entitled *A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature*.

literature), *Uji shūi monogatari*'s tales were primarily handed down through an oral tradition and, during the Kamakura period, were compiled into one literary work by an unknown editor. In accordance with the preface of *Uji shūi monogatari*, the origin, contents, and formation of these literary works are intertextually related with *Uji dainagon monogatari*,[11] which is composed of "tales of India, of the Great T'ang and of Japan. They are of many different kinds, some inspiring, some amusing, some terrifying, some moving, some coarse" (Mills 83). The fact that "he (Uji dainagon) would call in passers-by, low-class people as well as high, and invite them to tell tales of days gone by, while he reclined in his room and wrote down the tales in large notebooks, just as they were told" (Mills 83) indicates that *Uji dainagon monogatari* and *Uji shūi monogatari* have their roots in oral literature. An unidentified editor or compiler describes the process of creation of *Uji shūi monogatari* as follows:

> And now in our time, a text has appeared in which further stories have been interpolated. It seems to have gathered in some stories which are not found in the Major Counselor's tales (*Uji dainagon monogatari*), and to have collected some later than his time. It is called *Uji shūi monogatari*. It is difficult to know whether it was given this name because it gathers in tales remaining at Uji, or whether it is so called because a *jījū* is known as a *shūi*.[12] It remains a mystery (Mills 83).

The third tale of the first book, "Oni ni kobu toraruru koto"(The Wen Taken Away by Oni), the original tale of "Taking the Wen Away," is in *Uji shūi*

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[11] This literary work seems to be lost. Therefore, we do not know much about what kind of literary work this is except as mentioned in the preface of *Uji shui monogatari*.

[12] *Jījū* and *shūi* mean chamberlain. According to *Uji shūi monogatari*, the original copy of *Uji dainagon monogatari* was in the possession of the Chamberlain (*jījū*) Toshisada.

monogatari. The plot and the context of this *setsuwa* conform closely with those of the present-day version of "Taking the Wen Away." In this modern version, the plot development follows a sequence corresponding to the didacticism often found in folk and fairy tales; the first old man's act of losing his wen is virtually connected with his good conduct, while the second old man receives two wens on both his cheeks because of his evil-mindedness. Yet, the clear-cut law of cause and effect is not reflected in "Taking the Wen Away" in *Uji shūi monogatari*; there are no clear depictions of the characters of these two old men. However, the unknown author of the original tale of "Taking the Wen Away" supplies a somewhat dogmatic conclusion to the narrative, inserting the sentence "mono urayami ha semajiki koto nari kato" (never be envious of others, they say) (Mills 140). The moralizing statement at the end of this *Uji shūi monogatari* may have been responsible over time for the change in the characters of the old men. It is valid for us to suppose that people attempted to vary the contexts to make the characters of the old man agree with the concluding sentence noted above to make the tale more moralistic and didactic.

The second tale of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is "Urashima san," a tale dating back to the eighth-century compilation of poems, *Manyōshū*. *Manyōshū* is composed of almost 4500 poems including *Chōka* (long poems), *Tanka* (Japanese verses of thirty-one syllables), and *Sendōka* (head-repeated poem). Compiled in the Nara period (710-784) when the Japanese lyric tradition thrived, *Manyōshū* contains the work of a number of outstanding poets such as Ōtomo no Yakamochi and Yamanoue no Okura. What is noteworthy here about *Manyōshū* poets is how profound their awareness and understanding of nature is and how vigorous and pure the intonations of their poems are. As the 1740th poem in *Manyōshū*, the *Chōka* of "Mizue no Urashimako wo yomu isshu" (Urashima of Mizunoe) is one

of the oldest historiographical materials dealing with the subject of "Urashima":

When, in spring, the sun is misted, / And going out on Suminoe's shore
I see rocking fisher-boats, / They remind me of the things
That happened long ago. /Urashima of Mizunoe /Went a-fishing to the sea;
Proud of his plentiful catch / Of sea-bream and bonito,
He did not come back home / Though seven days came and went;
But beyond the bounds of sea / He rowed out his little boat;
Then it happened that he met / The Sea God's daughter.
They talked, agreed, pledged love, / And hand in hand they reached
The Land everlasting. / There in the Sea God's palace,
In its sweet and inmost chamber, / They might have lived, both he and she,
Never growing old, nor dying, / Until the end of time.
How foolish of this worldly man: / He said to his beloved:
'Let me go home for a while / And take word to my father and mother;
Then, again, as soon as it is morrow, / I shall come back to you.'
'If you will come again / To this Land of Happiness, / And meet me just as
now, Take this casket, but keep it closed.' / She said to him over and over.

Arriving at the shore of Suminoe
He sought his home, but could find none,
He sought his hamlet, which he could not see.
In wild wonderment he though:
'In three years since I left, / How could my home be lost,
No trace of fence remaining? / If I open this casket,' he said,
'My old house may appear to me.' / Thereupon he opened it a little.
A white cloud rose out of the casket,

And drifted towards the Land Everlasting.

He ran, shouted, waved his sleeves;

He stamped and writhed upon the ground,

Then swooned upon the beach. / Wrinkles furrowed his youthful skin,

His black hair turned white.

His breath grew fainter and fainter, / At last he died.

That Urashima of Mizunoe, / I see the site of his abode.

Envoy

When he might have lived for ever / In the Land Everlasting,

How foolish of that man, / Though of his own choice! (216-218)

The above *Chōka*, along with the tale of "Urashima" of today, follows a sequence corresponding to common narrative developments and regulations of folktales: the law of cause and effect, and didactism. Moreover, the *Hanka* (envoy) of this poem contains especially didactic, dogmatic connotations considerably deeper than its surface meanings suggest. It is in *Nihonshoki* (or *Nihongi*) that we can find the next historical trace of "Urashima." *Nihonshoki*, which may have been edited by Prince Toneri and Ono no Yasumaro around the year 720, deals profoundly with imperial matters and Japanese mythology traditionally handed down by oral transmission. This literary work, containing epic elements successively described following a chronological list of sovereigns can also be called *kisai bungaku* (documentary literature). The story of "Urashima" can be seen in the section dealing with the sovereignty of Emperor Yūryaku:

22nd year (of Emperor Yūryaku's reign,)--A.D. 478--Spring, 1st

> month. Prince Shiraga was made Heir Apparent. Autumn, 7th month. A man of Tsutsukaha in the district of Yosa in the province of Tamba, the child of Urashima of Mizunoye, went fishing in a boat. At length he caught a large tortoise, which straightaway became changed into a woman. Hereupon Urashima's child fell in love with her, and made her his wife. They went down together into the sea and reached Horai San, where they saw the genii. The story is in another book (Aston 368).

Fūdoki also contain all kinds of Japanese local mythologies and legends as well as the tale of "Urashima" with four lyrics. *Fūdoki* from the eighth-century are topographies (descriptions of the natural features of a region). The literary value and significance of the *Fūdoki* stem from their variations in terms of literary styles, formations, and themes; *Fūdoki* were composed by a number of authors, compilers, and editors. The tale of "Urashima" in *Tango Fūdoki* appears to be blended with the tales of "Urashima" in *Nihonshoki* and *Manyōshū*, which may be versions of the tale of "Urashima" in *Fūdoki*: the turtle saved by the son of Urashima assumes its original form as the daughter of the Dragon King. He marries her and lives happily with her in the Land Everlasting until he becomes homesick for his parents. Urashima goes back to his hometown, opens the casket given by his wife, and is turned into an old man. The old Urashima conveys in verse his despair and yearning for his wife in the Land Everlasting. The tale of "Urashima" in Shibukawa's *Otogi zōshi* is somewhat similar to other "Urashima" tales in its story-line. The most perceptible divergence of Shibukawa's "Urashima" is found in its conclusion, in which the old Urashima becomes the figure of the crane as the god of the Tango prefecture and lives happily ever after with his turtle wife, who also becomes the god of Tango. The

crane and the turtle appear in Japanese culture as good omens; the proverb "*tsuru wa sennen kame wa mannen*" (a crane lives a thousand and a tortoise ten thousands years) can be interpreted as "May you live long!" After indicating salvation for the old Urashima as well as his turtle wife by comparing their figures to these Japanese symbols of good luck, this tale ends with the sentence "this is a former example of extreme happiness" (Ōshima 212). Aside from well-known literary works such as *Manyōshū*, *Nihonshoki* and *Fūdoki*, local legends dealing with the subject of "Urashima" are legion; the tale of "Urashima" has been handed down from generation to generation in Kyōto (Shukō 195-200), Kanagawa (Ōshima 50-53), Ishikawa (Fujishima 185-190) and other prefectures. After hearing one tale of "Urashima," in which Urashima goes over to Korea and China (Shukō 196), the present-day reader may be surprised by various gaps among "Urashima" legends. It is in the tale of "Urashima," which varies according to time and locality, that we see the archetypal example of orally transmitted literature.

In contrast to the tales of "Taking the Wen Away" and "Urashima,"whose origins can be traced back to authoritative literary canons, such as *Manyōshū* and *Uji shūi monogatari*, the earliest printed text of the tale of "Kachi kachi yama" (Crackling Mountain) "appears to be one of the rare seventeenth-century *aka kohon*, 'little red book,' a Japanese equivalent of the chap book" (Ikeda 229). However, the fact that *Nippon Bungaku Daijiten* (the standard dictionary of Japanese literature) mentions the tale of "Crackling Mountain" indicates its nation-wide popularity, inasmuch as this dictionary of literature contains few references to folklore. The standard version of plot development given in *Nippon Bungaku Daijiten* is the following:

> An old man traps a bad badger in the mountain, brings it home

> and hangs it from the ceiling, tying its legs together. After he has gone to work again, the captive badger persuades the wife to untie the rope. When freed, the badger kills her and makes a soup of her. He disguises himself as the wife, and when the old man comes home, serves him the soup calling it badger soup. The badger taunts the old man that he has eaten his own wife, then flees.
>
> A rabbit comes along while the old man is crying, and promises to seek revenge for him. The rabbit by deception makes the badger carry firewood on his back, and from behind strikes a flint, "Click-Click," to set fire to the firewood. The badger questions the sound, and the rabbit says that there is such a noise here because the place is the Click-Click Mountain. A similar explanation is given for the sound of burning wood on his back, before he realizes that he is afire.
>
> Red-pepper plaster is applied as ointment to the burns by the rabbit. When the burns have finally healed, the rabbit invites the badger for boating. Riding a wooden boat himself, the rabbit provides the badger with a boat of mud, which dissolves in the water and drowns the badger (qtd. in Ikeda 230).

According to Yanagida Kunio, a pioneer of Japanese ethnology, the standard version of "Crackling Mountain" is a combination of several different tales and has changed its formation as a natural consequence of oral transmission. Compared with other folktales, the tale of "Crackling Mountain" exists in a number of different versions from all over Japan indicating the lack of a clear-cut, original source for this tale. In order to prove structurally the validity of his theory, Yanagida suggests that this tale can be divided into three parts; the first

part lasts until the badger is trapped by the farmer, the second part ends when the badger kills the farmer's wife, and the rest, in which the rabbit takes revenge on the badger, constitutes the third part. Moreover, Yanagida points out that the badger's disposition is quite unstable in the tale; the badger is very cunning and clever in the first two parts, but his stupidity and innocence are clearly perceptible in the last part. Just as Yanagida uses various versions of "Crackling Mountain" to show the history of oral tradition and influence of locality--for instance, in the Tohoku district, a bear takes the place of the badger--so Ikeda Hiroko divides the tale into ten component parts and gives thirty-three different combinations, each revealing its own regional characteristics.

Despite its popularity as a well-known Japanese folktale, "Shitakiri suzume"(The Split-Tongue Sparrow) still has controversial aspects that are under investigation. There is a dearth of historical research on this tale; "even whether our 'Split-Tongue Sparrow' was a sparrow from the beginning (or another animal) has not been proved yet" (Yanagida vol 8 127). By suggesting several significant grounds for research, Yanagida points out similarities between the tale of "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" and tales of "Momotarō" (The Peach Boy) and "Uriko hime" (The Melon Princess). The most perceptible similarity among these three tales is that the three protagonists are saved (or raised) by old parents and later repay their parents' kindness. Yanagida's theory is also substantiated by a tale from the Tokushima prefecture in which a sparrow born from a melon becomes the sparrow of "The Split-Tongue Sparrow." The following is the outline of today's standard version of "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" given by Algarin:

> A man keeps a sparrow as a pet. One day his bad-natured wife prepares some starch to use in doing her laundry, but the bird eats

> the starch. The angry old woman cuts the sparrow's tongue with a pair of scissors and drives the bird away. The man goes to search for the sparrow and comes to her house in the woods. He is lavishly entertained there. As he is about to leave, the sparrows bring him two boxes, one large and one small, and ask him to choose one as a gift. He chooses the smaller box. When he arrives home, he opens it and finds it full of gold and treasure. The old woman goes to the sparrow's house. When she is about to leave, she chooses the large box. On the road home, the box becomes heavier and heavier, so the woman finally stops and opens it. It is filled with snakes, centipedes, and demons who jump out of the box and kill the woman. (In some versions the woman is rescued by her husband and repents of her past wickedness) (189).

The standard version of this tale, in which the law of cause and effect is a dominant theme--the malicious woman who cuts the tongue of the sparrow is punished, while the old man is rewarded by his modest and generous behavior--may differ from the original. To sum up Yanagida's concepts about the tale of "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," the tale, whose genesis is associated with tales of "The Peach Boy" and "The Melon Princess," has developed in the process of oral transmission and has become more didactic and dogmatic as a folktale.

The above discussion gives a general idea of the history (or transmission) of these four Japanese folktales. Next we must consider which versions are the objects of Dazai's rewriting in *Otogi zōshi* since Dazai never identifies the original sources of his tales. My focal point in the following chapters is a structural and thematic comparison of the original tales and Dazai's *Otogi zōshi*. Even though these folktales exist in different versions as orally transmitted

literature, examining what Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* implies about its original sources and identifying them are necessary. First of all, Dazai's rewriting is based on the stories from the picture books, which typically contain today's most standard and accepted versions of folktales. This fact is clearly discernible in *Otogi zōshi*. As he notes, "Here I am, squatting in the air-raid shelter with just a picture-book open in my lap. I'd better forget about these inquiries and tell the tale on my own. It will probably turn out more lively that way" (O'Brien "TWA" [Taking the Wen Away] 202). And also, "In a picture-book, there is no sentence like 'Poor Urashima! He was in really pitiful circumstances,' after he became 300 years old. The story ends with the sentence 'suddenly he becomes the white-haired old man'" (Dazai OZ [*Otogi zōshi*] 276). Finally he asserts that "In the illustrated version now on sale, the badger only wounds the old woman before running away. In my opinion no one should object to this change as a means of getting around the ban" (O'Brien "CM" [Crackling Mountain] 222).

In order to discover the original folktales for Dazai's versions, we must focus on the key elements Dazai identifies throughout *Otogi zōshi*. In the original tale of "Taking the Wen Away," two old men have to possess completely different dispositions--in a simple way, good and bad--because as Dazai says in his "Taking the Wen Away," "in these old tales someone who does wrong usually ends up getting punished for it" (O'Brien "TWA" 241). The original source for Dazai's "Urashima san" is the old version of "Urashima," in which the turtle saved by Urashima is different from the daughter of the Dragon King, and Urashima never becomes the god of Tango. The plot development and narrative agents in the original "Crackling Mountain" conform to the summary of the tale in *Nippon Bungaku Daijiten*. The malicious old woman who cuts out the sparrow's tongue, avariciously chooses the bigger casket, and is killed in the

end is the woman of the original tale on which Dazai's "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" is based.

Determining exactly what kind of picture book Dazai used as his original source would be next to impossible for us, and even for Dazai himself as he may have arranged and rewritten folktales that he vaguely remembered after reading one or more picture books chosen from the number of versions in existence. Therefore, we can regard almost all versions containing the standard (or most accepted) contents, including plots and characters, in addition to the key elements that I indicated before, as being Dazai's original sources for his *Otogi zōshi*. I would like to use Yei Theodora Ozaki's *The Japanese Fairy Book*[13] and Helen and William McAlpine's *Japanese Tales and Legends* in the process of thematically and structurally comparing Dazai's version and original tales. In comparison with other books,[14] these two texts contain folktales very similar to the original sources suggested by Dazai himself.

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13 According to the preface, the stories in this book correspond to the stories written by Sadanami Sanjin, but they are not literal translations.

14 Aside from Ozaki's *The Japanese Fairy Book* and McAlpine's *Japanese Tales and Legends*, there are several English translations available containing these four folktales: S. Ballard's *Fairy Tales from Far Japan*, E.W. Dolch's *Stories from Japan*, H. Lafcadio's *Japanese Fairy Tales*, A.B. Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan*, J.E. O'Donnell's *Japanese Folk Tales*, K. Seki's *Folktales of Japan*, Y. Ueda's *Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folk Tales*, A.L. Whitehorn's *Wonder Tales of Old Japan*, Y. Yasuda's *Old Tale of Japan*. and R. Tyler's *Japanese Tales*. See Works Cited.

Chapter 2

Narratology in *Otogi zōshi*

Morphology of *Otogi zōshi*

In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp remarks:

> Since the tale is exceptionally diverse, and evidently cannot be studied at once in its full extent, the material must be divided into sections, i.e., it must be classified. Correct classification is one of the first steps in a scientific description (5).

The schematized classification of folktales is the most feasible type of analysis when "there are no completely objective criteria for the separation of one theme (a series of motifs) from another" (Propp 9). As Propp indicates in his text, thematic classification is not a universally accepted method nor an impeccable procedure because it is so ambiguous and varies according to a sociological context or a classifier's particular taste. I would like to analyze Japanese traditional folktales from Propp's point of view, partially because of the lack of such an established method of structural analysis in Japan,[1] and mainly because I would like to discover a possible solution to the question, "whether Propp's analysis is applicable to non-Indo-European folktales" (Dundes Intro. xiv). Dundes demonstrates the partial cross-cultural validity of Propp's theory

[1] There are thematic as well as regional classifications of Japanese folktales such as *Nihon densetsu taikei* and Ikeda Hiroko's *A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature*. There are also prominent folklore researchers, such as Yanagida Kunio. However no method of systematic and structural analysis of folktales has been established in Japan as yet.

through investigating African and American Indian tales.[2] If this type of investigation is possible, then what about Asian (Japanese) folktales? This experimental structural analysis of Japanese traditional folktales (and Dazai's *Otogi zōshi*) has to be considered as but a first step in analysis. Drawing clear-cut border-lines between "folktales" and "fairy tales" is semantically impossible because their distinctive synthesis of literary and sociological principles cannot be defined. However, I would like to examine the narrow definition that "fairy tales" are "usually located in a never-never land where all kinds of supernatural events occur," (Leach 365) while the word "folktale" "has been left as a general word referring to all kinds of traditional narrative" (Leach 408). I will also define these four Japanese tales, "Crackling Mountain," "Urashima san," "Taking the Wen Away," and "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," as folktales in that they "are handed down from one person to another (traditionally) ... and are heard and repeated as they are remembered" (Leach 408).

According to Propp, the tale is a combination of five categories of elements: 1) the functions of the dramatis personae (basic components), 2) conjunctive elements, 3) motivations, 4) forms of appearance of the dramatis personae, and 5) attributive elements (or accessories). Let me try to deconstruct "Crackling Mountain,"[3] which is the primary inspiration of Dazai's "Crackling Mountain,"[4] into component parts as an example. I will take particularly the "functions of dramatis personae" into consideration. The "initial situation," in which "the members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero is simply

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2 See Dundes Alan's *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales.*

3 In this chapter, I mainly examine "Crackling Mountain" and "Taking the Wen Away." The other two tales, "Urashima san" and "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," will be discussed in the next chapter.

4 We do not know what version is "original" for Dazai, as I explained in the previous chapter. However, I would like to use "Crackling Mountain" in Y.T. Ozaki's *The Japanese Fairy Book* as a source, which can generally be said to be the most standard modern version.

introduced by the mention of his name or indication of his status," (Propp 25) is the first noticeable element of the tale, even though this element is not a function. As a preliminary remark, the "initial situation" is therefore intended primarily for a further narrative process. The "initial situation" of "Crackling Mountain" is the following: "Long, long ago, there lived an old farmer and his wife who had made their home in the mountains far from any town" (Ozaki 43). The farmer, who has been afflicted by the mischievous work of a badger (the future villain), lures him into a trap and captures him. Before going out to work in the fields, the farmer provides an interdiction (function II)-- "an interdiction is addressed to the hero" (Propp 26). In this case, however, the interdiction is addressed to the victim: "I have at last caught the badger. You must keep an eye on him while I am out at work and not let him escape because I want to make him into soup tonight" (Ozaki 43). The "interdiction" (function II) and the "violation" (function III) are mutual functions because they are reciprocally related. Therefore, the farmer's interdiction has to be violated, and thus, the badger's cunningly skillful speech persuades the wife to untie him. The wife's act of unbinding the badger fulfills the seventh function (complicity), in which "the victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy" (Propp 30). The eighth function (villainy)-- "the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family" (Propp 30)--is carried out when the badger against his promises "killed her (the farmer's wife) and cut her up and made soup of her, and waited for the return of the old farmer" (Ozaki 45). As Propp indicates, this function is exceptionally significant because it gives rise to the main story and becomes the core function for other later functions. In front of the poor farmer, who has eaten the soup made of his wife and who is crushed with grief, the hero (or the helper to the farmer) appears (function IX: mediation): "Misfortune or lack

is made known; The hero is approached with a request or command" (Propp 36). The scene of the hero's advent in this story is the following: "Now, not far away there lived in the same mountain a kind, good-natured old rabbit. He heard the old man crying and sobbing and at once set out to see what was the matter.... The old man told him all that had happened" (Ozaki 47). After the ninth function, the tenth function (beginning counteraction) follows when "the seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction:" (Propp 38) "When the rabbit heard the story he was very angry at the wicked and deceitful badger, and told the old man to leave everything to him and he could avenge his wife's death" (Ozaki 47). The rabbit's departure to search for the badger fulfills the eleventh function (departure): "The next day the weather was fine, and the rabbit went out to find the badger" (Ozaki 47). Precisely speaking, the rabbit's ingenious attempts to kill the badger--first, he scorches the badger's back and puts red pepper ointment on the burn on the badger's back and second, he drowns the badger by giving him a clay boat--cannot be defined as combats because the badger never realizes the rabbit's malicious intent until he is about to die. However, the rabbit's murder of the badger (hero's victory) is the result defining the rabbit's actions as combat between the hero and the villain. Therefore, the sixteenth function (struggle), in which "The hero and the villain join in direct combat," (Propp 51) is also contained in this story. Inasmuch as the combat between the hero and the villain appears in the story, the hero's victory (function XVIII) is to be expected. The hero's victory scene in "Crackling Mountain" is as follows:

> In the middle of the race the badger found his boat going to pieces, for the water now began to soften the clay. He cried out in great fear to the rabbit to help him.... Then he [rabbit] raised his oar and struck at the badger with all his strength till he fell with the sinking

> clay boat and was seen no more (Ozaki 53).

Finally, this story ends with the twentieth function (return) when "the hero returns":

> The rabbit now turned and rowed shorewards, and having landed and pulled his boat upon the beach, hurried back to tell the old farmer everything, and how the badger, his enemy, had been killed. The old farmer thanked him with tears in his eyes.... He begged the rabbit to stay with him and share his home, so from this day the rabbit went to stay with the old farmer and they both lived together as good friends to the end of their days (Ozaki 53).

Propp's theory of classification is based on his analysis of Russian folktales. A detailed comparison of Russian folktales and Japanese folktales requires an analysis in terms of social ideology in order to attain a more precise understanding; for example, one would need to consider the meaning of dead teeth in Russia or the role of the badger in the Japanese cultural context. Because "all of the codes or models of the already-known are culturally determined; but the so-called referential or cultural code is the most obviously cultural among them" (Prince *Dictionary of Narratology* 17), the examination of the "cultural code" is an indispensable element in the field of comparative literature. However, a comparison between Russian folktales and Japanese folktales is far beyond the scope of my thesis; my focus is only on the cross-cultural validity of Propp's theory and the experimental disassembling of the functions of the Japanese traditional folktale "Crackling Mountain" in accordance with Propp's method. Based upon my analysis of this tale and the others, the plot developments of the four Japanese folktales that are the sources for Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* can be structurally analyzed by using Propp's method

as follows:

Chart 1. Plot Developments of Four Japanese Folktales

(Crackling Mountain)

--(Initial Situation) + II (interdiction) + III (violation) + VII (complicity) + VIII (villainy) + IX (mediation) + X (beginning) + XI (departure) +XVI (struggle) + XVIII (victory) + XX (return)

(The Split-Tongue Sparrow)

--(1st move) = (Initial Situation) + I (absentation) + VIII (villainy) + VIIIa (lack) + X (departure) + XV (spatial transference) + XIX (lack liquidated)

(2nd move) = XXIV (unfounded claims) + XXVIII (exposure) + XXX (punishment)

(Urashima)

--(1st move) = (Initial Situation) + VIII (villainy) + IX (mediation) + XVI (struggle) + XVIII (victory) + XIX (lack liquidated)

(2nd move) = X-XI (the hero once more sets out in search of something) + XII (function of the donor)+ XIII (the hero's reaction) + XIV (receipt of a magical agent) + XIX (lack liquidated)

(3rd move) = X-XI (the hero once more sets out in search of something)+ II (interdiction) + III (violation)

(Taking the Wen Away)

--(1st move) = (Initial Situation) + IX (mediation) + XI (departure) + XII (function of the donor) + XIII (the hero's reaction) + XIV (receipt of a magical agent) + XIX (lack liquidated) + XX (return)

(2nd move) = XXIV (unfounded claims) + XXVIII (exposure) +XXX (punishment)

I have indicated how the story-lines of these four Japanese folktales are a combination of several "functions of dramatis personae," which illustrates the validity of applying Propp's morphological method to Japanese folktales.

In contrast to the original version of "Crackling Mountain," in which plot development runs parallel with Propp's theory, Dazai's version of "Crackling Mountain" provides a slightly different variation in terms not of Propp's morphological procedure but of contextual analysis. If the original "Crackling Mountain" and Dazai's version were totally different works, that is, a "folktale" and "literature,"[5] respectively, no detailed comparison would be required. However, given that Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is composed by means of reworking the folktales in consideration, a comparison of the original tales and Dazai's rewritten versions is indispensable in order to examine more profoundly Dazai's *Otogi zōshi.* Dazai takes the original version and, according to his personal views, changes the original into a completely different story. This change in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" may be caused by a factor other than that of structure because Dazai's story-line is analogous to the original, except for the metafictional portion. The depth and meaning of "human nature," which is uniquely explicated by Dazai in "Crackling Mountain," can be seen as the core reason for this change.

Taking the outline of the original folktale, Dazai reworks the traditional tale and eventually creates his own work through adding his "flavoring." From the point of view of morphology, Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" possesses the same "functions of dramatis personae" as the original one: the badger (villain),

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[5] In this essay, I would like to define folktales loosely as narratives which are handed down from generation to generation by oral transmission and whose authors remain obscure, that is, as "oral tradition." By contrast, I would like to define literary works, which are usually created by identified authors and having only a sole version, as "written form."

who wounds the farmer's wife[6], is finally killed by the rabbit (hero and helper). The initial cause, the combat between the hero and villain, and the result all correspond to the original narrative process. Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" can also be deconstructed into its components by Propp's structural methods. However, the context and the feeling suggested by Dazai in his "Crackling Mountain" provide a totally different tale, in spite of its resemblance to the original one in terms of structures (or functions). The notion of "difference" implicit in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" is clearly discernible from the first sentence: "In spite of appearances, the rabbit in 'Crackling Mountain' is actually a teenage girl, while the badger who undergoes a heartrending defeat is an ugly man in love with her" (O'Brien "CM" 220-221). Dazai's original scenario already indicates the opening of a different tale with a similar story-line. As indicated previously, in the long history of Japanese folktales, there exist several versions of "Crackling Mountain," each of them possessing slightly different elements in terms of both structure and context. For example, the "Crackling Mountain" discussed in the previous paragraph is an older version no longer accepted by the public. The divergency between this old version and today's most accepted version results from the public's objection to the cruel scene in which the badger makes a soup out of the farmer's wife which the farmer unknowingly eats. In the most popular twentieth-century version, the badger only wounds the farmer's wife before running away. The cause and inspiration of Dazai's rewriting is due initially to this change: does the badger deserve to be killed with such cruelty only because he wounds the old woman? As Dazai observes, "But the badger's only crime in the recent illustrated version is to claw the old woman while making his escape. One can hardly call reasonable self-

6 In older versions, however, the wife is killed by the badger.

defense a terrible deed, even if unintended injury is inflicted" (O'Brien "CM" 222). Dazai's preface to the story reveals the fact that the badger in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" is not a wicked "villain" at all, but a simple and pitiable fellow:

> Those who doubt what I say should observe our poor badger as he yearns for his Artemis-like teenager. If I'm correct, the malicious and unmanly chastisement of the badger is perfectly understandable. Whichever crime he committed, stewing the old woman or clawing her, makes no difference to the girl--this we must grant as fact, even as we sigh over it. Moreover, our so-called badger is just the sort who would woo an Artemis-like teenager. That is, he's a roly-poly glutton both stupid and uncouth who cuts a sorry figure even among his cohorts (O'Brien "CM" 225).

Despite its folktale elements, Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" does not fit Propp's morphological theory in terms of content analysis because of its lack of a "villain" and his effectiveness in the narrative process. Important in "Crackling Mountain," as it is in any kind of written work, are the author's (or the narrator's) artistically creative intentions, which gradually become explicit in the process of narration.

Bal and Rimmon-Kenan accept the hierarchical system of the characters--which comes from the author's intentions--in a story. Bal notes: "there usually is never a doubt in our minds which character should receive most attention and sympathy" (105). Moreover, Rimmon-Kenan argues: "In the simplest case, the 'norms' are presented through a single dominant perspective, that of the narrator-focalizer. If additional ideologies emerge in such texts, they become subordinate to the dominant focalizer..." (81). As long as the badge archetypally

receives most of the author's concern and sympathy, he is no longer a "villain," but a "victim." In Dazai's "Crackling Mountain," he wounds the old woman partially because the farmer tries to make him into stew without any reason and mainly because of his love for the rabbit:

> the old man had captured the badger and decided to make him into stew. But, desperate to see his rabbit-maid once more, the badger fretted and struggled until he finally escaped into the hills. Restlessly he searched all over for her, mumbling something or other all the while (O'Brien "CM" 225).

In contrast, the analysis of the disposition and behavior of the rabbit in "Crackling Mountain" reveals that her sense of cruelty is magnified to such an extent that her action goes beyond the act of normal vengeance. One of the most significant scenes revealing her "Artemis-like" inhumanity is the following:

> "Ah, how lovely," the rabbit murmured, entranced by the sunset over Ugashima. This is strange indeed. It seems that not even the worst villain could be taken with natural beauty the moment before carrying out some cruel deed. Yet, our fifteen-year-old charmer squints her eyes and contemplates the scenery, an indication that innocence is truly a hair breadth from villainy (O'Brien "CM" 244).

In contrast to the badger, who attracts the reader's attention and sympathy as the author's favorite character, the rabbit is depicted as a selfish, merciless teenager, who murders the badger without any compassion or hesitation. Even though Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" can be said to fulfill Propp's "functions of dramatis personae" from the viewpoint of structure, the author's ideological purpose makes it a story without a clear-cut villain. If that is the case, we cannot consider the rabbit as hero or villain. The answer to "whether the rabbit is the

hero" or not varies according to our way of apprehending "human nature."

The above discussion gives an idea of the validity of Propp's morphology for Japanese folktales and also of the fact that his morphological method is but a first step in analyzing folktales in general. The original "Crackling Mountain" and Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" have totally different atmospheres, even though, from the morphological perspective, they possess the same kind of story-lines. The author (or teller) in folk and fairy tales is generalized (or objective) rather than subjective, emphasizes "stylization" much more, and his/her products are "full of commonplace expressions and motifs which tend to be used in other tales and to be a part of the general style of the story-teller" (Leach 366). On the one hand, stylizing the characters, a specific quality of folk and fairy tales, is necessary for smoothly organizing and generalizing plot development; for example, the rabbit ("good") gains a victory over the badger ("bad"). Dazai, on the other hand, is so subjective and eloquent that he creates a completely distinctive tale, embedding the old folktale and emphasizing the significance of subjectivity. Dundes remarks that "Propp's syntagmatic approach has unfortunately dealt with the structure of text alone, just as literary folklorists generally have considered the text in isolation from its social and cultural context" (Dundes Intro. xii). As noted by critics, Propp's theory is a very advantageous method for the structural analysis of the folktale (or folktale-based-literature). However, we need to take other factors into consideration in considering the nature of folktales in order to enter upon the next phase of my argument.

When structural analysis is not sufficient to explicate the folktale, what kind of method (or notion) is needed in the next stage? Analysis of genuine folk and fairy tales must consider the social and cultural context because folk and fairy

tales, which generally have no specific author, have developed over time as oral literature. Analysis of literary works whose authors are clearly specified have to be connected with the study of the author himself as well as with the social and cultural context. Like "Crackling Mountain," Dazai's three other folktales--"Urashima san," "Taking the Wen Away," and "The Split-Tongue Sparrow"--in *Otogi zōshi* are consistent with the author's project to re-interpret original tales. For example, the original "Taking the Wen Away" consists of two densely interwoven episodes (or "moves" according to Propp). In the first part of the story, a good-natured old man suffering from a big wen on the right cheek has the wen accidentally taken away by "Oni,"[7] who are pleased by the old man's dancing and need a pledge of his return. In the second part, on hearing the old man's amazing story, a wicked and disagreeable old man, who has also been afflicted with his wen for a long time, dances in front of the "Oni." He also hopes his wen will be removed. However, the "Oni" are considerably disappointed with the wicked man's dancing and put the wen taken from the first old man onto the wicked man's other cheek. Thus, the wicked old man ends up with wens on both his cheeks. This plot development, according to Propp's morphology, follows a sequence corresponding to the universal conception of folktales: a good person is rewarded for his/her respectable deeds while a malicious person is punished for his/her follies. Having successfully illustrated his cherished doctrines on "human nature" in "Taking the Wen Away," Dazai creates his original folktale-based story by intensifying "something both tragic and comical in people's very nature" (O'Brien "TWA" 218). The first old man is nothing but an ordinary tippler. His wen is far from a cumbersome object; it is

7 In his book *Japanese Folk Literature*, Algarin defines "Oni" as Japanese demons, who "often appear as horned giants with one, two, or three eyes" (196). The term "Oni" can be singular and plural in Japanese.

the old man's sole consolation: "A nuisance? Why, he (the old man) regarded the wen as a darling grandchild, the one companion who would comfort him in his loneliness" (O'Brien "TWA" 205). Therefore, there is no reason or need for him to have the wen taken away from his cheek. The other old man who has a wen on his cheek is also depicted as a mediocre old man and unlike the wicked old man in the original tale, without any vicious intentions. In contrast to the original "Taking the Wen Away," in which every narrative agent possesses distinctive characteristics, Dazai's version does not develop any emblematic relations between characters, such as the hierarchical relationship between good and evil, nor do such matters affect plot development. Even though no dramatis personae do any sinful deeds or have any intention of doing so in Dazai's story, nobody can be happy without any perceptible cause. The first old man loses his companion, the second one gets one more wen, and the "Oni"'s cheerful party is disturbed by the second old man's unskillful dancing. According to Dazai, every character's accidental unhappiness occurs because human nature can be simultaneously both tragic and comic, a philosophy that has no immediate connection with the conventional difference between virtue and vice:

> In these old tales someone who does wrong usually ends up getting punished for it. However, in this case, the second old man didn't do anything especially wrong.... And the old tippler too, as well as his family, and even the demons on Sword Mountain, didn't do anything wrong, either. Even though there's not a single episode of wrongdoing in this tale, one of the characters comes to grief. Try drawing a moral from this story and you're in real trouble. So why did I bother telling the tale? If the anxious reader presses me

> on this question, I'd have to answer that there's always something both tragic and comical in people's very nature. It's a problem at the very core of our lives, and that's really all I can say (O'Brien "TWA" 217-218).

By virtue of its identical story-line, Dazai's "Taking the Wen Away" is actually organized by elements of the traditional folktale. However, the fact that Dazai's rewriting encompasses most aspects of the original, but still ultimately creates a totally distinctive story, indicates that the structural analysis of literary works is only a first step in a continuing study and analysis. Dazai's apparent purposes in creating his own version of *Otogi zōshi* will be made more clear after a thorough analysis in the next chapter.

Narrative Levels of *Otogi zōshi*

The pervasive employment of metafiction is a product of modernism of the twentieth century, which "involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases" (Abrams 119). In Japan, the terminology "modernism" historically contains a two-fold connotation. Broadly speaking, almost all the literary works written in Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868), including realistic, naturalistic writings and "I-novels" can be characterized as "modern," as indicated by Keene. In other words, all literary works influenced by western literary modes after abrogating a national isolation policy are, on the one hand, modernistic writings because subjects treated are "recognizably contemporary," and literary techniques employed "were previously unknown in Japan" (Keene *Dawn to the West* 629). On the other hand, from the western literary perspective, modernism in Japan can be defined as a counteraction of naturalism

and "I-novel" which began in the beginning of twentieth century. Modernist movements as anti-naturalism or anti-"I-novel" in Japan are represented by the Shinkankaku ha (New Sensationalist school) and the Shinshinrigaku ha (New Psychologist school). Thus, even though Dazai is a modernist writer from Japanese literary view point, he is not generally associated with modernist movements imported from the west, as an "I-novelist." However, what he does in *Otogi zōshi* is very similar to western modernists' handling of folklore and myth in general. Numerous western writers use "the fairy tale to subvert the formal structure of the canonized tales as well as the governing forces in their societies that restricted free expression of ideas" (Zipes *Spells of Enchantment* xxv), establishing the genre called "Kunstmärchen" (artistic tales) in the modern west. Just as western modernists parody "the classical tales [which] are turned upside down and inside out to question the value system upheld by the dominant socialization process" (*Spells of Enchantment* xxv), Dazai in *Otogi zōshi* questions the traditional characters, plots, and values in a very ironic or parodic manner by metafictionally schematizing his stories in modern Japan.

Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* consists of three alternating narrative realms, each of them representing interwoven but separate levels of space and time. These narrative spaces reflect certain constituent elements of "metafiction." Metafiction is "fiction about fiction--that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and or linguistic identity" (Hutcheon 1). The father-narrator in *Otogi zōshi* archetypally bathes in the realm of fiction created by himself and simultaneously holds another position outside the fictional domain. Inasmuch as metafiction is a combination of at least two distinctive but entwined levels of space or domain, the concept or existence of metafiction cannot be discussed without examining the correlation between "life" and "art"

or "reality" and "fiction." Bearing this in mind, the narrative system of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* can be drawn as follows:

Chart 2. Narrative Levels of *Otogi zōushi*

* 1st domain--(Preface) = Dazai (the author of *Otogi zōshi*) creates a preface in this first domain.
* 2nd domain--the narrator with his family during World War II. The father-narrator creates his fictional world in this second domain.
* 3rd domain (or the space of ultimate fiction)=the four folktales

"Taking the Wen Away" | "Urashima san" | "Crackling Mountain" | "The Split-Tongue Sparrow"

The first and second levels can be said to be the "outer frame" for the central story because the narrator maintains a distinct distance from the core space where he actually enters as a commentator as well as a guide for the stories. It is in this first narrative domain that we can see the author's intention to create another fictional realm:

> His four-year old daughter starts insisting that they leave the air-raid shelter. There's only one way to calm her down, and that's to get out the illustrated book of fairy-tales and read her such stories as "Momotaro," "Crackling Mountain," "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," "Taking the Wen Away," and "Urashima." Although his clothes are shabby and his looks quite fatuous, this father isn't a nobody. He's an author who knows how to create a tale. And so,

> as he starts reading in his queer, dissonant voice, "Long, long ago..." he imagines to himself a quite different tale (O'Brien "TWA" 201).

The second level of narrative is the domain where the father-narrator is aware of his own reality in the state of war. The third level of domain is created by the father-narrator as he tells the four folktales as imagined by him.

Distinguishing the father-narrator from Dazai is required in terms of the limited degree of authority because the third domain is the father-narrator's world, not Dazai's; everything, including the characters' dispositions as well as plot development, is arranged by the father-narrator's conceptions. The analysis of the phenomena of *Otogi zōshi,* which is organized by dual fictional domains, reflects two different sorts of authorship: one is Dazai's as a general author, and the other is the father-narrator's in the third level of narrative. Japanese critics usually have a tendency to equate the narrators in Dazai's literary works with Dazai himself, and Dazai's biography also indicates the similarities between Dazai and the father-narrator in *Otogi zōshi.*

If we deliberate on the relationship between the author and the narrator not biographically or impressionistically but theoretically and structurally, it would be a mistake to identify the father-narrator with Dazai. Discussing the two different levels of "authority" or "authorship" from a linguistic perspective, which deals with "subject-object relationship," is also possible in *Otogi zōshi.* The circumstances in the first domain are presented from the viewpoint of "general narrator"[8] (or author). The first domain, for example, is defined with the third-person singular narrative: "'Ah! There they go again.' Setting aside his

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[8] In this essay, "general narrator" refers to the narrator whose function is similar to that of an omniscient narrator "zero focalizer" (Genette).

pen, the father stands up. He wouldn't bother to stop just for the sirens; but when the anti-aircraft guns start firing, he lays his work aside and gets up from his desk" (O'Brien "TWA" 200). The third-person singular narrator (Dazai?) in the first narrative domain is an extradiegetic narrator who is "not part of, [and] external to, any diegesis" (Prince *A Dictionary of Narratology* 20). By contrast, the second and the third levels of narratives are focalized by the father-narrator as the primary focalizer as well as the first-level narrator: "Here I am, squatting in the air-raid shelter with just a picture-book open in my lap. I'd better forget about these inquiries and tell the tale on my own. It will probably turn out more lively that way" (O'Brien "TWA" 202). The first-person narrator (the father-narrator) in the second and the third levels is an intradiegetic narrator who belongs "to the diegesis presented in a primary narrative by an extradiegetic narrator" (*A Dictionary of Narratology* 20). Here we see the shifts in subject-object relationship; the father-narrator is object of focalization in the first domain and subject in the second and the third domains. Therefore, in terms of the relations between Dazai and the father-narrator, the principal idea is that the father-narrator is the author of the fictions within the fiction created by Dazai.

As important in the realm of metafiction as in the sphere of hermeneutics (especially reader-response-theory) is the relationship between "the reader" and "the text." This reciprocal connection is one of the key elements establishing a clear-cut line between "life" and "art" (or "reality" and "fiction") in the field of metafiction. In *Narcissistic Narrative,* Linda Hutcheon notes the indispensable role of the reader : " All of the four types of narcissistic narrative have appeared to turn in on the reader, forcing him to face his responsibility for the text he is reading, the dynamic 'heterocosm' he is creating through the fictive referents of literary language" (138). Communication comes from the interrelated link

between the reader and the author or the reader and the product (the story told) and results in "gaps" which can be "filled" both systematically and thematically by the reader's participation in the narrative process. Although "gaps" exist in many forms, such as those between characters and the reader, between techniques of presentation and the reality presented, and so on, focusing on "gaps," which can be interpreted as the "intercommunication area in which the reader and the author (or the text) are diegetically merged," is very useful. In many respects, the "gaps" inevitably function in narrative fiction without exception--whether the author organizes the "gaps" consciously or unconsciously--because "the materials the text provides for the reconstruction of a world (or a story) are insufficient for saturation" (Rimmon-Kenan 127). Wolfgang Iser's "gap"[9] itself is a spot of indeterminacy, for if the reader's main task is "gap-filling" in the process of his/her reading, then the reader must fill the content blanks as well as the structural blanks. Iser's critical works illustrate a symbolic correlation between the reader and the narrative text: "The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader" (279). Iser goes on to say: "If the reader was given the whole story, and there were nothing left for him to do, then his imagination would never enter the field, the result would be the boredom which inevitably arises when everything is laid out cut and dried before us" (280). In contrast to the novels of Realism, in which the reader's freedom for imagination is limited, metafictional novels, in many respects, endow the reader with a productive and significant role.

9 Iser does not make a distinction between the concepts of "blank" and "gap," but generally speaking, "blank" is a textual concept while "gap" is more general and includes social communication.

Just as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is clearly explicit metafiction, Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is an example of what Hutcheon considers the classic "overtly narcissistic text" which "reveals self-awareness in explicit thematizations or allegorization of their diegetic or linguistic identity within the texts themselves" (7). The next quotations from Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* demonstrate that Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is an overtly metafictional text. The father-narrator argues in the second level of narrative:

> So why did I bother telling the tale? If the anxious reader presses me on this question, I'd have to answer that there's always something both tragic and comical in people's very nature (O'Brien "TWA" 218).

And also, "But don't worry, I've thought this problem over" (O'Brien "CM" 224). Finally he asserts that

> I've checked this out with a dependable person, and readers won't be any worse off taking my word for it. But then again, Shikishimas aren't around any longer, so younger readers won't care any way. To them, I'll just be showing off about nothing (O'Brien "CM" 243).

The dichotomy between "fiction" and "reality" is primarily dependent on the reader's ontological status. In his/her reading process, the reader has no doubt that what he/she is reading is clearly established by fictional components; it is this artificial world in which the reader is immersed. Metafictional stories and also any other literary "products" including "realistic" novels can never be isolated from the realm of "fiction" because no literary works are without fabrication. However, there is no doubt that, on the one hand, metafiction possesses more "fictionalism," which is emphasized to such an extent that it goes beyond

ordinary fictionality. This magnified "fictionalism" results because the author of a metafictional novel openly reveals his/her work's fictionalism from the beginning, as Dazai does in *Otogi zōshi:*

> I'd better forget about these inquires and tell the tale on my own. It will probably turn out more lively that way.... While he reads from the picture-book to his daughter, he ends up concocting his own version of the story. *Once upon a time.* . . . ...there was an old man who really liked to drink sake (O'Brien "TWA" 202).

On the other hand, as Hutcheon says, the reader is also paradoxically immersed in "reality" by participating in a narrative process of metafiction or communication with the author (or characters) outside the realm of "fiction." The following passage from Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" shows Dazai inviting his readers into his fictional world, asking their opinions about the badger's tragic death or the rabbit's cruel murder:

> So, what have we here? A cautionary tale on lust? A comedy scented with advice on avoiding pretty teenagers?... But no, let's not fret over what conclusions a social critic might reach. Sighing, we allow instead the last word to our badger--"What's wrong with falling in love?" That sums up, briefly and without any exaggeration, all of the world's woeful tales from the days of old. In every woman dwells this cruel rabbit, while in every man a good badger always struggles against drowning. In the mere thirty-odd years of your author's life, uneventful though they be, this had been made utterly clear. And probably, dear reader, it's the same with you. I'll just skip the rest of it, however (O'Brien "CM" 246-247).

The context of the sentence "probably, dear reader, it's the same with you" leads to the reader's participation in the narrative as well as his/her sudden awakening to the realization of his/her situation (reality).

Some readers may respond immediately to this invitation of Dazai's. For example, Yano Seiichi, a Japanese critic of Dazai, remarks in his book as one of Dazai's readers: "More precisely, I decided that the badger (in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain") was myself.... By the way, at the end of World War II, I kept company with a girl just like 'the rabbit'" (30). Yano's response fills the gap arranged by Dazai, communicating with him and giving a response outside the realm of "fiction." Dazai demands the reader's participation in his fictional world throughout *Otogi zōshi,* and we have to reply to Dazai's summons just as Yano did in his article. Here, Dazai consciously creates a communicative area (or gap) in which he anticipates the reader's (or implied reader's)[10] response to the badger's plight. As noted by McCaffery, the reader's act of reflecting upon a matter indicated by a character in fiction is affected by the domain of "reality:" "Metafictionists also frequently enjoy placing their readers in a situation once removed from the usual fictional stance by presenting and discussing the fictional work of an imaginary character..." (183). By epistemologically participating in the narrative process, the reader can be akin to the author in such a communicative area--even though there exists the clear-cut border-line between them--and can, at the same time, fill the "gaps" arranged by the author. The continuity of this duality of "fiction" and "reality" has to be recognized in the process of determining the nature of metafiction.

[10] In this essay, I distinguish between the real reader and the implied reader. The implied reader is the author's ideal reader (or narratee), while the real reader generally does not have to be an author's ideal reader (or narratee). The term "the reader" in my essay indicates the real reader rather than the implied reader.

The Japanese "I-novel" and "Metafiction

The world-wide popularity of metafiction contributes to the construction or re-construction of the concept of "self" and its reconfiguration in fiction. The following quotations are from three specialists in subjects of metafiction. Hutcheon notes:

> "Narcissistic"--the figurative adjective chosen here to designate this textual self-awareness--is not intended as derogatory but rather as descriptive and suggestive, as the ironic allegorical reading of the Narcissus myth which follows these introductory remarks should make clear (1).

Patricia Waugh argues:

> *Metafiction* is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality....novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions. In consequence, their novels have tended to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty (40).

Gerald Prince asserts that

> These self-referential aspects of narrative have attracted quite a lot of attention recently and some theorists have successfully argued that many a narrative ultimately discusses itself and actually constitutes a metanarrative ("Metanarrative signs" 56).

Even though a slight difference in expression is discernible, the three agree that the value and validity of metafiction stem from how it provides the author as well as the reader with a space where they can reflect on themselves

epistemologically. In Japan, "fiction," in a general way, has developed with the author's timeless concerns over meaning or purpose of fiction[11] no matter how much trends, styles, and themes are liable to variation. Insofar as the distinctive quality of fiction is always associated with its ontological as well as epistemological status, there may be no fiction without suggesting the act of self-reflexivity. Hutcheon's use of the term "narcissistic narrative" as a generic name for metafiction[12] precisely indicates the self-reflexive nature of metafiction. Granting the difficulty and accepting its challenge, metafictionists have attempted to delineate "self" in their fiction, which "has tended to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty" (Hutcheon 40). Just as the reader enlarges his/her self-reflective process in the act of reading through "bearing witness to the novel's self-analyzing development" (Hutcheon 9), so, too, does the author become narcissistically self-reflexive in order to express his/her world of reality in his/her fictional domain.

As long as the collective and "heterocosmic" world of metafiction is defined with regard to its degree of "self-reflexivity," the author's notion of "self" in *Otogi zōshi* is to be considered accordingly. Furthermore, just as "for centuries story tellers have retold tales in their own ways, embellishing the story line with details peculiarly representative of both the individual teller and his time" (Halden 145), so Dazai indicates the vital importance of his ideological orientations in his act of retelling traditional Japanese folktales. As Okuno Takeo indicates, Dazai regards *Otogi zōshi* as the essence of his writing as well as a masterpiece of his "self-reflexivity":

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11 See Murasaki shikibu's *The Tale of Genji,* especially the chapter "Fire-flies," in which Genji unfolds his *monogatari ron* (theories of fiction).

12 The origin of the denomination "Narcissistic Narrative" is skillfully explained by drawing upon Greek mythology.

> Dazai ... creates harmonious literary art through inserting his overall notions of "self," "life," "arts," "ethics," and "ideology," as well as reflecting upon his real experiences in his own life, and at the same time basing his remarks on stories in the picture-book "*Once upon a time....*" (341).

In the next chapter, I would like to examine more profoundly Dazai's notion concerning his sense of "self."

An author's spiritual inquiry into "self"--which is one of the most significant elements of metafiction--has been magnified in modern Japanese literature to the extent of establishing a unique genre called *watakushi shōsetsu* or the "I-novel,"[13] or "autobiographical or confessional novel."[14] Metafictional novels in Japanese literature, or at least in Dazai's literary works, have a close affinity with the Japanese "I-novel." In Japan, metafiction has been developed gradually through responding to the various controversial subjects that the "I-novel" brings forward, such as the sense of "self" and the correlation between "reality" and "fiction." Generally speaking, delineating literary genres such as "Modernism," "Decadence," "Realism" and so forth semantically or classificatory is a challenge because the semantic domain of "literature" cannot be strictly delimited or categorized. Just as the Japanese comparatist, Matsuda Jō, commented, forming a clear definition of the Japanese "I-novel" has led to endless controversy among Japanese critics (336). The "I-novel" cannot usually be discussed without biographical research on the author because the "I-novel" is a literary term for works in which the author writes of his own experiences and everyday life with as little fictionalization as possible. As indicated by Keene, the

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[13] See Donald Keene's *Dawn to the West*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, especially 506-555.

[14] See Susan Napier's *Japanese Fantastic Literature*, especially the introduction.

distinctive synthesis of artistic and literary principles by the Japanese "I-novelists" has been "self-assertion:" "As the name of the genre indicates, the creation of an individual, the 'I' of the story, was an important task of the 'I' novelist" (*Dawn to the West* 513).

The genesis of the Japanese "I-novel" can be connected to the influence of Naturalism. In the early part of the twentieth century, French naturalistic authors such as Flaubert, Maupassant, and Zola were introduced to Japanese literary circles in rapid succession. Significant in Naturalism, as in the Japanese "I-novel," is the empirical aim to depict things as they are. The act of distinguishing Naturalism from Realism has brought about various kinds of controversy. The most significant and characteristic aspect of Naturalism is found in its scientific approach to literary works by focusing on two kinds of forces, "heredity" and "environment." If that is the case, we can say that the Japanese Naturalism is closer to Realism. Japanese Naturalist writers represent life as they see it without observing the terms, "heredity" and "environment." The Japanese coined the term *shizen shugi* which literally means Naturalism, but in fact its aesthetic principles are closer to those of the nineteen-century Realism. This semantic misconception partly results from the fact that French Naturalistic novels were introduced into Japan when a mode of Japanese literature underwent a transition from Romanticism to Realism (or Naturalism). In the following discussion, I will use the notion of Naturalism according to the Japanese understanding unless otherwise indicated.

Despite the close relationship between Naturalism and the "I-novel," the Western concept of Naturalism generally carries the positive intention to ameliorate society through observing human beings (and their behavior) while the Japanese "I-novel" limits its focus to the author's way of life (Matsuda 128).

For example, Emile Zola in his work *Nana* indicates the need of social improvement, observing and depicting the dark side of life, and identifying the root of all social evils. In Japan, writers were influenced by French Naturalist authors, but restricted their focus to a self-confessional writing style without a social as well as a scientific nature. In other words, Japanese Naturalist writers, especially after Tayama Katai's *Futon (Quilt)*, applied a self-reflexive approach, confining themselves in a self-centered domain. The semantically narrowed perspective of the Japanese "I-novel" partially comes from "the inability of Japanese to accept foreign ideas," (Keene *Dawn to the West* 520) but mostly comes from the emphasis in the idea of *koten no kokoro* (the soul of classics), which values the inner spiritual approach to the hidden or the merely suggested over the obvious or the boldly exposed. Even though the Japanese "I-novel" and "autobiography" also have several points in common with each other, the subject matter as well as the meaning of depicting the author's life experience in the "I-novel" isolates it from the genre of "autobiography." For the Japanese "I" novelists, artistic creation takes precedence over personal existence. Therefore, they often feel obligated to lead decadent or deviant lives, which usually result in drinking their lives away, in order to respond to the demand of the reader and the critic for more sensational revelations.

Inasmuch as the Japanese "I-novel," which "hardly goes beyond portraying the 'I,'" (Keene *Dawn to the West* 517) is a representative fiction purporting to depict the author's real life, Dazai's literary works do, in a way, belong to the genre of the "I-novel." The fact that Dazai's early works in particular contain autobiographical elements has been brought to light by many scholars. Let me give some examples to indicate certain elements of the "I-novel" in Dazai's literary works. In "Recollections," Dazai dramatizes his traumatized childhood

and his physical and mental breakdown as follows:

> One night I had a dream that my aunt was abandoning me and leaving the house.... She whispered fiercely, "I hate you!" I pressed my cheek to her breast, sobbing and pleading desperately over and over, "No, don't, please don't!" My aunt shook me awake, and I found that I had been crying in my sleep with my face at her breast. Even after I was awake, I lay crying and sniffling for a long time, still overcome with misery. But I wouldn't tell anyone my dream, not even my aunt (Lyons 190).

Although Dazai in his other literary works borrows his characters and plots from reality or, rather, represents things as they really are as much as possible, *Tsugaru* is his "I-novel," in which his journey to Tsugaru (his hometown) is dramatically depicted. This journey illustrates Dazai's spiritual return to a past mother figure (Take, his nursemaid whom he had desperately missed for a long time) : "In touch with her way of expressing love strongly and unreservedly, I thought, Ah, how much like Take I am. I realized that the reason I alone, of all my brothers and sisters, had a coarse and crude element within me was the influence of this sad parent who had brought me up" (Lyons 385). The internal struggle in his second marriage is written about in "The Hundreds Views of Mount Fuji :" "The subject of my marriage met with a hitch at that time. Because I gradually recognized that no support from my home could be expected, I was in trouble" (75). The author, Dazai, undoubtedly aims at coordinating the "I"in the above quotations with Dazai Osamu (Tsushima Shūji), as well as other characters, such as "the aunt" and "Take," with the people who exist in his reality. One of the significant elements of the "I-novel" is that the "I" always goes back and forth between the domains of reality and fiction;

and in the narration, the "I" is usually both the subject and the object of the focalization, just like the author and the father-narrator in *Otogi zōshi*.

Another distinctive quality of the Japanese "I-novel" can be found in the inner, spiritual development of the "I" in the narrative, which is achieved by dealing with simple or trivial themes, such as the missing aunt, the return to one's native place, and the process of the second marriage. In contrast to French Naturalists who attempt to create dramatic effects through using broader themes such as social amelioration, the Japanese "I"novelists emphasize through their quests the interior, emotional approach to the hidden or the merely suggested. For example, Zola in *Nana* describes a high society prostitute's life full of ups and downs, and her dramatically tragic death. By contrast, Tayama dramatizes his real experiences and creates a fairly simple plot in *Quilt* focusing in the entire story on the sorrow of the protagonist modeled on Tayama himself. In Dazai's "I-novels," he usually makes his appearances as Dazai Osamu (the writer) as well as Tsushima Shūji (a member of the Tsushima family) and confesses his past experiences. Moreover, the contents of his three novels profoundly reflect the author's act of "self-mirroring," that is, dealing with his basic human problems. The Japanese notion of the "I-novel" results from the author's "self-reflexive" approach to his/her literary products. It is the "'end-product' of the Japanese writer's struggle for a modern identity" (Wolfe 101). The author establishes his/her ideological "self" in the pursuit of his/her identity in the modern era by reflecting upon his/her life experiences, the concept of ethics, arts and so forth. Japanese "I" novelists like Dazai are known for their insistence on the notion of the "I" and their ultimate attempts to eliminate fabrication as much as possible.

Dazai's *Otogi zōshi*, on the contrary, does not correspond to this aspect of the "I-novel" in terms of the process of artistic plot development; it cannot

belong to the genre of the "I-novel." We must remember that Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is composed by his act of rewriting Japanese traditional folktales. However, in terms of "self-reflexivity" or "self-mirroring," the "I-novel" and "metafiction" have a somewhat more explicit similarity. Just as Dazai creates "I-novels" such as "The Hundreds Views of Mount Fuji," "Recollections," and *Tsugaru*, clearly focusing on the "self," he also implicitly deepens his sense of the "I" and subjectivity in the metafictional narrative domain in *Otogi zōshi*. In Dazai's "Taking the Wen Away," for example, after depicting the scene in which the old man encounters "Oni" in the (ultimate) fictional domain, Dazai alludes to his reading of "Oni" in the second domain (the metafictional realm), temporarily escaping from his fictional world:

> As the author of this story, I must confess here that I don't really know what a demon (Oni) is. That's because I've never seen one. Granted, I've come across demons in picture-books since my childhood so often, in fact, that I'm bored by them. I've never been privileged to meet a demon in the flesh, though.... Since they're supposed to have a mean nature, we use the word demon for creatures we despise. But then again, a phrase like "the masterpiece of Mr. So-and-So, a demonic talent among the literati," will show up in the daily newspaper column on recently published books, and that really confuses things. Surely the paper doesn't intend this shady term as a warning about what a mean talent Mr.So-and-So gets crowned a "literary demon." That's such a crude term you begin to wonder just how indignant Mr. So-and So might become. But he doesn't seem to mind, and nothing happens. In fact, I'll hear a rumor that he secretly endorses the

> odd term himself. All this is completely beyond a stupid person like me. (O'Brien "TWA" 207-208)

Here Dazai explicitly reflects upon his experience in reality and implicitly parodies certain figures in Japanese literary circles. Once he parts from the fictional world and immerses himself in reality, the father-narrator is so "self-reflexive" and "self-mirroring" in his metafictional realm that the concept of "self" in "metafiction" can be ideologically connected with that of the Japanese "I-novel." In a broader sense, the Japanese "I-novel" and "metafiction" depend upon the same theme, the spiritual inquiry into "self," and share the same ideological problems, such as "What is fiction?" and "What is fiction for?" However, "metafiction," rises above the semantically narrowed realm of the "I-novel," and "metafictionists" have to possess a broader perspective because of metafiction's systematic and thematic complexity. Such a complexity results when the subjects of the reader's role are involved, and, at the same time, the act of describing reality in a fictional world reaches its limit.

I would argue that the requisite formula of the Japanese "I-novel" is creating fiction of the author, by the author, and for the author, so to speak, because the focal point of the "I" novelist is limited only to him/her self. Dazai, as the author of "I-novels," also paradigmatically and subjectively rests in the world of "self," confessing his sins, his despair and fear, and underlining his bottomless self-negation or self-destruction. As time goes by, however, Dazai's earlier self-centered writing style as an "I" novelist, and his broadened point of view--at least, he tries to expand his perspective--are successfully blended in his literary works in the middle period. Two major factors that help Dazai outgrow his former self-centeredness as a writer and enlarge his vantage point are his act of focusing on other subjects by retelling Japanese traditional tales and his

avoidance of the withdrawal into the shell of self by broadening the communication area with the reader in his fiction. Just like other "metafictionists" who "reflect their own genesis and development, challenging, this time, the period-concept of nineteenth-century realism that threatened to become entrenched into the definition of the entire novel genre" (Hutcheon 18), Dazai, who also feels the limitation of the "I-novel," writes *Otogi zōshi* as his challenge to the concept of Japanese literature as well as to himself.

The following formula delineates the relationship of "Naturalism," "the Japanese I-novel," and "Metafiction," and is also appropriate for Dazai's case:

Chart 3. The Development of Dazai's "Metafiction"

"Naturalism" + the emphasis on the author

= "Japanese I-novel" + the importance of the reader

+ the limitation of "Naturalism"

= "Metafiction"

Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* , which is "metafiction" consisting of three distinct levels of fictional worlds and which is also deeply related to the Japanese "I-novel", is a combination of the author's spiritual inquiry into self and the reader's self-reflexive process; these two elements are both reciprocally related and create infinite patterns of relationship between the reader and the author in their ontological and epistemological realms.

I would like to end this chapter by pointing out another ingenious structural device of *Otogi zōshi.* Then in the next chapter, I will indicate possible readings of *Otogi zōshi.* As I have pointed out, Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* deals with subjects

of metafiction, offering harmonious interaction between the author and the reader. Furthermore, *Otogi zōshi*'s framework may also be examined by means of a linguistic analysis. The language of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is a combination of *hiragana* (the Japanese syllabary alphabet) and *katakana* (the square form of *hiragana*). The translator of the English version of *Otogi zōshi* uses italics to translate the *katakana* parts for the purpose of distinguishing them from the *hiragana* parts. When we isolate the *katakana* parts and combine them together, the genuine folktale surprisingly appears without any of Dazai's embedded portions and is in itself a complete tale. An example of the difference is illustrated by the following, initial paragraph of the tale:

> *Once upon a time there was an old man with a large, cumbersome wen on his right cheek.* This old man lived at the foot of Sword Mountain, located in the Awa district on the island of Shikoku. That's how I remember it, but there's no way to check here in this air-raid shelter (O'Brien "TWA" 201).

For reasons of space, I have provided only the *katakana* (in italics) parts:

> *Once upon a time there was an old man with a large, cumbersome wen on his right cheek* (201). *One beautiful morning he went to the mountain to gather firewood* (204). *Suddenly the sky grew dark, the wind arose, and the rain began to pour* (205). *As he wearily waited for the evening shower to pass, the old man fell asleep. Eventually the clouds moved on, and the moon shone brightly over the mountain* (206). *Oh, what noisy voices! What a strange sight. Was he dreaming* (207)? *The old man immediately leaped out and began performing one of the dances he loved so much, and the wen on his cheek flopped back and*

> *forth in a strange and amusing manner* (211). *The demons were immensely pleased, "Come every moonlit night and dance for us. But we'll need something valuable as a pledge"*(212). *Morning. Listlessly stroking his cheek where the wen had been, the old man descended the mountain road which glistened with dew* (212). *When he* [the second old man] *heard the story the old man was overjoyed. "Well, well, then I too can surely have this wen removed"*(215). *The demons were dumbfounded. They rose one after another and fled into the depths of the mountain* (216). *So the demons attached the wen they had been keeping to his right cheek. There! The old man now had two flopping wens and they were heavy. He returned to his village in shame* (O'Brien "TWA" 217).

The above tale composed of *katakana* parts is nothing but a folktale whose characters are standardized and whose narrative process is simply and smoothly generalized without any particular contradiction. Dazai applied this device only to "Taking the Wen Away," giving up this artistic method after telling one story in this fashion. His intention of using *katakana* to correspond precisely with the story of a picture book draws a clear-cut borderline between the traditional folktale and his own creation (or imagination). His created characters and their world become more conspicuous owing to the contrast between the simple and standardized world of the folktale and Dazai's expressive as well as loquacious rendition. The (ultimate) fictional domain (the third domain) itself can be divided, therefore, into two lines of narrative process: 1) the principal story-line (traditional folktale), and 2) Dazai's artistically imaginative creation in which it is embedded. It is in this creative structure where we see Dazai's ability as an

outstanding story-teller.

Chapter 3

A Close-Reading of *Otogi zōshi*

The Desire for "Rebellion"

Some Japanese critics deny the significance of intertextual comparison between the original tales and Dazai's versions: "Trying to detect the elements of folktale in this work (*Otogi zōshi*) is totally useless, and the very act of comparing it with the original ones itself is meaningless" (Isogai 271). However, insofar as Dazai applies the structure of folk and fairy tales in his act of rewriting and engages with the collective domain of folktales, we can never ignore the thematic as well as the structural comparison between the original and Dazai's versions. The act itself of comparing makes Dazai's ideology, implied in *Otogi zōshi*, more vivid and conspicuous. For the structuralist, the significant contribution of literature has to come from the literary product itself, not the author, who is "allowed no initiative, expressive intentions, or design as the 'origin' or producer of a work" (Abrams 281). Japanese literary critics, however, sometimes allow the author too much significance; some critics actually stretch the points of their arguments, basing their remarks primarily on biographical research and giving a low priority to the product (the literary work). As Alan Wolfe states in *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan*, "Japanese criticism is disparaged by Western critics for being biographical, subjective,

anecdotal, and old-fashioned" (104). Moreover, research on Dazai Osamu is usually limited to biographical facts and frequently excludes structural analysis of his literary works.

My focus in this thesis is to establish a balance between the author and the text. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to suggest a possible reading of Dazai's act of rewriting traditional Japanese folktales through focusing on the subjects of "revolution," "the elect," "original sin," and "horobi" (ruin). In his work *Breaking the Magic Spell,* Jack Zipes stresses "revolutionariness," a universal quality folk and fairy tales possess, when taking sociological ideology and individual consciousness into account:

> This is not to say that folk and fairy tales were always developed with "revolution" or "emancipation" in mind. But, insofar as they have tended to project other and better worlds, they have often been considered subversive, or to put it more positively, they have provided the critical measure of how far we are from taking history into our own hands and creating more just societies (3).

A symbolic correlation exists between the existential world (or society) and the fictional world of folk and fairy tales: a correspondence between the material world and its reflection in the utopian (or ideal) sphere. The desire for a two-fold rebellion is well established in Dazai's *Otogi zōshi.* As Zipes indicates, one intent is rather universal and commonly social and results from the author's act of dealing with traditional folktales. The other intention of rebellion in *Otogi zōshi* is bound to Dazai's stream of consciousness.

Dazai's fiction is known for its "aesthetics of discontent"--its unreserved descriptions of his dissatisfaction with his "existence"--and its haunting

evocations of the nihilistic aura surrounding the person who feels dead although is still living. In contrast to the characters in folktales, who are the sort of people without any particular mental sufferings, the characters in Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* are spiritually separated from society or family and are mostly melancholy and pathetic. Even though Ojiisan, the old man in "Taking the Wen Away," is a man of a romantic turn of mind and is spiritually mature, he is always isolated from his family members:

> Anyway, when the old man was at home, he always looked glum.... Hoping to enliven her [his wife], the old man would occasionally say something like, "Spring must be here, the cherry trees have bloomed." "Is that so," she'd reply unconcernedly. "Move over a bit. I want to clean there." The old man would look glum (O'Brien "TWA" 203).

And Dazai continues to describe the old man's loneliness:

> The old man patted and rubbed the growth, and it got larger and larger. Finally, he laughed wistfully and declared, "Now I've got a fine grandchild." "Children are not born from the cheek," his saintly son responded in a solemn tone (O'Brien "TWA" 204-205).

Dazai's Urashima in "Urashima san" is depicted as the oldest son of an ancient and respectable family; he does not seem to feel an extensive gap between himself and his family members. However, his sense of being both different and belonging to the elite as a man of philosophy and a man of *miyabi*[1] is discernible:

[1] *Miyabi* is one of the most acclaimed Japanese aesthetic ideals, concerned with external, social, and ritualistic forms of beauty and elegance. *Miyabi* is illustrated by the Heian period (794-1185), when the aristocracy's sophisticated arts and culture reached their zenith, standardizing almost every feature of social convention.

> Urashima asked the question in an arrogant manner "Why can we not live without criticizing each other?" "Nothing--not even a *hagi* on the seashore, a crawling small crab, a wild goose resting in an inlet--ever criticizes me. Human beings should be like that. Each human being has his own creed to live by. Why can they not live by respecting each other's creed? Even though I try to live without putting others to any trouble, the world is so censorious, he sighed" (Dazai *OZ* 237-238).

The concept of "isolation" in "Crackling Mountain" is enhanced by the badger's unilateral communication; no visible mutual understanding exists between the badger and the rabbit, even though they use language to communicate with each other:

> The rabbit exclaimed, 'Oh!' and gave the badger a malicious look, but he did not catch on. To him that "Oh!" seemed a maiden's impulsive cry of surprise and delight--and her (the rabbit's) look conveyed sympathy because of his (the badger's) recent accident on Mount Roaring. The badger shuddered with pleasure and said, "I'm fine, thank you," even though he had not been asked how he felt. "Don't worry," he continued (O'Brien "CM" 239).

Finally, just as the three other dramatis personae are forced out from society--whether the "isolation"occurs on their own initiative or not--so Ojiisan in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" also has a sense of being different and excluded. Conforming to his own values, he denies standard value judgments:

> Suddenly, the sparrow on the desk utters the human words "how about you?" Unsurprised the old man says "Me? Well, I was born to tell the truth." "But you do not say anything." "Everybody in

> this world is a liar. So I became sick of communicating with them. Everybody is always telling lies. And the more terrible fact is that they don't notice their lies themselves" (Dazai *OZ* 316).

The sense of "seclusion" evokes a longing for the realm where inner spiritual and emotional hunger may be gratified. As indicated by Tōgō Katsumi, a prominent Japanese critic of Dazai, the content and feeling suggested by Dazai in *Otogi zōshi* lead to our realization of Dazai's yearning for "Shangri-La,"or an earthly paradise. For Dazai as well as for his characters, the actual journey to such a paradise can be "travel to the frontier interior of existence where the characters dream of eventual liberty" (Tōgō "*Otogi zōshi* no tōgenkyō" 210). In contrast to the original "Taking the Wen Away," in which the old man tries to get rid of his wen, Dazai's old man is described as a lonely outcast whose only comfort comes from his wen, which is synonymous with his solitude or his spiritual discontent:

> A nuisance? Why, he regarded the wen as a darling grandchild, the one companion who would comfort him in his loneliness. Washing his face in the morning, he was especially careful to use clean water on the wen. And when, as happened to be the case now, he was alone on the mountain enjoying his *sake*, the wen became absolutely essential--it was the one companion he could talk to (O'Brien "TWA" 205).

One day, the old man strays off into a mythical realm, transcending this material world. The blurring of fantasy and reality is traditional and easily perceptible in

Japanese literature. For example, in Noh,[2] the subject matter indicates that one of the crucial concerns of Japanese aesthetics is with a mythical world beyond the space/time continuum: this world results from an ambiguous border-line between reality and dream. In Noh drama, there is a symbolic correlation between reality and dream: a correspondence exists between the cosmic domain and its interaction with the individuals in the material realm. Many Japanese literary works, such as Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji,* Tanizaki Junichirō's "Ashikari," and Kawabata Yasunari's "The Izu Dancer," link the realms of reality and dream by exploring their aesthetic depth and are highly valued from Japanese religious and aesthetic perspectives.

The transcendental rather than the individual sphere is experienced by the reader partly because these works do not follow linear time but a cyclical patterns. The following poetic scene in "Taking the Wen Away" sets the scene for the appearance of the fantasy world:

> A spring moon in its final quarter floated in the watery sky--perhaps, one might add, a watery sky of pale green. Moonlight filled the woods like a shower of pine needles, but the old man slept on peacefully.... On a grassy clearing in the woods, a marvelous scene from some other world was unfolding.... *Oh, what noisy voices! What a strange sight. Was he dreaming?*" (O'Brien "TWA" 207).

The author purposely and subtly embellishes the introduction to the fantastic world in order to distinguish between the two realms, fantasy and reality. We

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[2] Japanese Noh theater is a traditional form of public entertainment. The Noh drama originated in 1374, when Zeami (1363-1443?) and his father, Kannami (1333-1384), performed Sarugaku Noh for Shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. Ashikaga Yoshimitsu was the third Shōgun, or military ruler, in Japan's feudal government of the Muromachi period (1336-1572).

feel the reality of the old man's fantastic world in his encounter with the "Oni." The noticeable fact here is that it is not his family members, but these demons--usually regarded with great aversion in Japan--that the old man considers his true companions: "Demons they surely were, but not the sort with an awful temperament--not like those 'blood suckers' or 'cutthroats.' Although their red faces were actually quite fearsome, the demons seemed friendly and guileless to the old man" (O'Brien "TWA" 201). Moreover, "he [the old man] was beginning to feel easy about the demons. And so, he broke into the circle, not the least afraid, and began the dance of Awa which he took pride in doing so well" (O'Brien "TWA" 211). The relationship between the old man and the "Oni" illustrates that "Dazai's alterations of the original tale tend to underline the theme of camaraderie" (O'Brien *Dazai Osamu* 111). The dichotomy between reality and fantasy is explicitly depicted in "Taking the Wen Away," as the old man becomes disconnected from reality and comes to value the world of fantasy as his "Shangri-La."

Dazai's other stories also profoundly and seriously deal with "escapism" and the longing for "Shangri-La." Urashima complains about the difficulties involved in living in this world as a man of philosophy as well as of *miyabi*. Urashima's voyage to the Palace of the Dragon King indicates not only his physical shifting but also spiritual movement from "discontent" to "fulfillment." This fantastically transcendental domain is the "'Utopia' that Dazai dreams of--the world where there is no superfluity, but where limitless freedom exists" (Isogai 277). In this utopia, no criticism exists, and there is the endless forgiveness that Dazai longs for. The sublimity of his utopia (the Palace of the

Dragon King) is depicted by Dazai with his notion of *yūgen*,[3] which appears to be the Japanese aesthetic ideal Dazai most respects. An impression of *yūgen* is given in the following passages:

> ... and (Urashima and the turtle) have arrived at the main entrance of the Palace of the Dragon King. That entrance is unexpectedly small. The Palace stands on the edge of a mountain composed of pearls, emitting fluorescent light.... It is twilight, and deep silence reigns over the Palace (Dazai *OZ* 252).

> The sound of the *koto* is delicately perceptible under his feet. Its sound is very similar to that of the Japanese harp. But it is less strong, more mild, transcendental, and lyrically suggestive.... "What strange music! What do you call it?" After listening to it for a while the turtle replied in one word "*Seitei*"(clear vision of destiny).... Urashima perceived the sublimity of living in the Palace of the Dragon King, which is extremely sophisticated, compared to our tastes (Dazai *OZ* 257).

The old man's discovering his "Earthly Paradise" in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" is the last example in *Otogi zōshi* illustrating the established correlation between living in a dissatisfying reality and searching for "Shangri-La" in another dimension. The old man is voluntarily secluded from society and has completely given up on communicating with his wife. We can consider him a loser rather than a hermit. His wife, who is treated with contempt and looked down on by the old man, is irritated and fitfully cuts out the tongue of the

[3] *Yūgen* means quiet beauty, elegant simplicity, the subtle and profound, transcendental phantoms, and the occult. As a figuratively subtle and nuanced term, *yūgen* cannot easily be translated into English.

sparrow, the old man's only comfort. Being perplexed by the sparrow's sudden disappearance, the old man sets out on a journey to search for the wounded sparrow and is invited into the sparrow's world, where he feels that his spiritual desires, which were unfilled in the existential sphere, are gratified for the first time: "No word is needed [between the old man and the split-tongue sparrow]. The old man drew a sigh. But it was not a sign of melancholy. The old man experienced spiritual tranquility for the first time since he was born" (Dazai *OZ* 327). Dazai embraces "Utopianism" in *Otogi zōshi.* In contrast to the characters in the original tales, where the accidental discovery of "the Earthly Paradise" has little to do with one's ordinary way of life, Dazai's male characters are approvingly described as vagabonds yearning for utopias.

Dazai's stories are clearly closer to mimesis than to myth; his literature is a mirror that he holds up to life to reflect himself. For instance, Dazai seems to cast his reflection on the characters in *Otogi zōshi,* as can be seen in the tippler in "Taking the Wen Away," in Urashima's coming from an old and respectable family in "Urashima san," in the thirty-seven-year-old badger in "Crackling Mountain," and in the third child of the wealthy family in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" (Tōgō "*Otogi zōshi* no tōgenkyō" 213). However, completely identifying Dazai with his characters destroys the semantic domain of literature and, thus, we have to say that the Dazai-like character is a "visual image (the fictionalized author's form) rather than a real image" (Tōgō "*Otogi zōshi* no tōgenkyō" 198). Therefore, Dazai's desire to construct a "Utopia" through showing the dichotomy between reality and perfectly ideal worlds in *Otogi zōshi* has to be considered accordingly.

The motif of "escapism" in *Otogi zōshi* corresponds to the dominant concept of Dazai's socially rebellious approaches. For instance, Hidaka Shōji states:

"Dazai's best resistance against the political situation during the war and Japanese literary circles can be seen in Dazai's mediocre and timid characters, especially, the 'good-natured badger'" (Hidaka 77). Inasmuch as the characters of *Otogi zōshi* are isolated from society and cannot gain spiritual salvation in this world, society itself regards them as "outsiders" and consciously or unconsciously tries to eliminate them. The existence of dual worlds, real and utopian, in Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* symbolically implies that the enormous gap between the estranged characters and society (or family) cannot be bridged. Admitting the difficulties of living in a materialistic society and considering their natural temperaments, the characters in *Otogi zōshi* spatially as well as spiritually shift from reality to utopia with the intention of "revolution" or "rebellion" against society, whose established laws marginalize them as outlaws. The rebellious undercurrent running through the stories derives largely from the connotations of "Utopia" and functions as a dominant theme in *Otogi zōshi* . The badger in "Crackling Mountain" attempts to achieve his salvation in the realistic domain through longing for the affection of his beloved rabbit. However, he also proves by his tragic death that no salvation--the element which turns the reality into the living utopia--exists in reality. Dazai was discontent with Japan's social circumstances, especially during World War II when every human ethic was regulated by patriotic nationalism. His revolutionary spirit toward the values and validity established and limited by mundane human beings enhanced Dazai's desire to create *Otogi zōshi* .

Dazai, who "was supposed to complete his *Otogi zōshi* with 'The Split-Tongue Sparrow' after rewriting 'Taking the Wen Away,' 'Urashima san,' 'Crackling Mountain,' and 'Momotarō' (The Peach Boy)," (Dazai *OZ* 307) gave up his initial plan, eliminating "The Peach Boy" from his *Otogi zōshi.* The

reason for Dazai's exclusion of the tale of "The Peach Boy" has to be examined because his psychological approach toward "The Peach Boy"is well explained. One major factor involved in his act of excluding the tale of "The Peach Boy" may be associated with his rebellious spirit. "The Peach Boy" is a folktale about a boy who was born from a peach and starts a journey to beat the evil "Oni." He is accompanied by Dog, Monkey, and Pheasant. The flag carried by the Peach Boy says "*Momotarō nihon ichi* (The Peach Boy, No. 1 in Japan)," and is presented as symbolizing the sons of Japan during the war. Dazai (or the father-narrator) explains in the metafictional narrative domain of *Otogi zōshi* about his excluding "The Peach Boy" :

> When I tried to deal with "My Tale of the Peach Boy" after finishing "Crackling Mountain," I was shocked by my extremely melancholic feelings, all of a sudden. I want to leave at least this simple tale of the Peach Boy as it is. This is not a tale any longer, but a Japanese lyric handed down in song. I don't care how many contradictions there are in the plot.... The Peach Boy carries the flag of No. 1 in Japan. The author, who has never experienced No. 2 or No. 3 in Japan--to say nothing of No. 1 in Japan--cannot describe the No.1 boy in Japan. After imagining the Peach Boy's flag of "No. 1 in Japan," I threw out the plan of "My Tale of the Peach Boy"with resignation (Dazai *OZ* 309-310).

Despite the fact that Dazai in *Otogi zōshi* may appear to the first-time reader as being patriotic, he is not jingoistic nor nationalistic. Unlike most authors who kept silence or were dedicated to politics during the war, Dazai focused on his objectives through continuing writing and avoiding being dogmatic or a supporter of the war. Dazai usually satirizes and denies didactic matters in

particular, as well as moralistic people who support the status quo, even though he superficially assumes the mask of the innocent. Dazai's literary writings generally contain cynical, sarcastic, and parodic connotations considerably deeper than their surface meanings suggest. In *Parody: ancient, modern, and post-modern,* Margaret Rose defines "irony" and "parody" as follows:

> Both irony and parody may be said to confuse the normal processes of communication by offering more than one message to be decoded by the reader and this duplication of messages can be used, in either case, to conceal the author's intended meaning from immediate interpretation (87).

Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* is full of ironic and parodic elements through concealing the author's intended implication. In "Taking the Wen Away," for example, Dazai compares senior Japanese writers to the "Oni:"

> Demons come in a variety of types, with names like "bloodsuckers" or "cutthroats." Since they're supposed to have a mean nature, we use the word demon for creatures we despise. But then again, a phrase like "the masterpiece of Mr. So-and-So, a demonic talent among the literati," will show up in the daily newspaper column on recently published books, and that really confuses things. Surely the paper doesn't intend this shady term as a warning about what a mean talent Mr. So-and-So happens to be. In extreme cases, Mr. So-and-So gets crowned a "literary demon." That's such a crude term you begin to wonder just how indignant Mr. So-and-So might become. But he doesn't seem to mind, and nothing happens. In fact, I'll hear a rumor that he secretly endorses the odd term himself. All this is completely beyond a stupid person

> like me (O'Brien "TWA" 207-208).

Here, Dazai actually mocks prominent writers through intentionally humbling himself and pretending to be a stupid person. In "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," the old man is a misanthrope and dehumanizes his wife. However, he accidentally becomes a moneyed minister of Japan, thanks to her unexpected death and her treasured casket:

> People call him the Minister of Sparrow, and talk about his success as the result of his former affection for the sparrow. However, it has been said that whenever the old man heard such a compliment, he replied "It's all thanks to my wife, I put her to so much trouble" (Dazai *OZ* 333-334).

We can find Dazai's ironic approach in the old man's allusion to his dead wife. The old man's last sentence is "a statement of an ambiguous character ... which is the concealed message of the ironist to an 'initiated' audience" (Rose 87).

The value and validity of Dazai's fiction stems from this type of artistic creation, which Dazai himself called *karumi*, meaning a parodic and ironic approach. Therefore, we have to focus on his decision to exclude "The Peach Boy" itself rather than his unreliable explanation. From another literary perspective, Dazai's refusal to rewrite the tale of "The Peach Boy" appears to be a kind of nationalism; if Dazai desired to be anti-patriotic, he could recreate the protagonist in "The Peach Boy" as a loser in a parodic manner. However, just as he applies a parodic and ironic approach to a prominent writer and the old man's wife, pretending to be innocent and stupid, he also obscures his reason for omitting "The Peach Boy," pretending to be patriotic. Four facts suggest that Dazai intentionally ironizes and parodies the reason why he excluded "The Peach Boy" from *Otogi zōshi*: 1) the tale of "The Peach Boy" provided

propaganda ammunition for nationalists during World War II; 2) Dazai had anti-war sentiments; 3) *Otogi zōshi* was written during the war; and 4) Dazai is a natural-born ironist and parodist. Though Dazai humbles himself, saying that he is not qualified to describe the No. 1 boy in Japan, abstaining from dealing with the subject of "The Peach Boy" during the war indicates nothing but his rebellious spirit. It is valid to claim that Dazai purposely eliminates the tale of "The Peach Boy" not to be nationalistic nor to affirm the war, but to reflect by his ironic and parodic approach his socially rebellious spirit toward the country of Japan itself.

Dazai, who dislikes "the closedness of [the original] *Otogi zōshi,*" (Tsukagoshi 163) endows his four stories with several interpretations of "human nature," underscoring his perception or ideology and legitimating his fairy tale world. When we compare Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* with the original versions, and decipher the messages each of them transmits, Dazai's desire for "rebellion" or "revolution" emerges in a striking manner. The meanings and the themes suggested by the original "Taking the Wen Away" can be summed up by didactic dogma: the virtuous man is always rewarded for his good behavior while the wicked man inevitably receives punishment. Dazai's "Taking the Wen Away," more or less, goes against this generalized ethical injunction, the law of cause and effect, and the systematic regulations folk and fairy tales usually possess. That is, "misfortune" inevitably occurs, even though there are no evildoers in Dazai's literary world:

> Truly a pathetic ending. In these old tales someone who does wrong usually ends up getting punished for it. However, in this case, the second old man didn't do anything especially wrong.... Even though there is not a single episode of wrongdoing in this

> tale, one of the characters comes to grief (O'Brien "TWA" 217-218).

A conventional ethical estimation of the character's action is also required to reckon with the original "The Story of Urashima Tarō, the Fisher Lad," in which Urashima, who believes that he spent three days in the Palace of the Dragon King, realizes belatedly that three hundred years have already passed. Being crushed with grief when he realizes the lapse of three hundred years, Urashima, against the interdiction of Princess Oto, opens the precious box she gave him and suddenly becomes an old man. The moral lesson of this story is as follows:

> Poor Urashima! because of his disobedience he could never return to the Sea King's realm or the lovely Princess beyond the sea. Little children, never be disobedient to those who are wiser than you, for disobedience was the beginning of all the miseries and sorrows of life (Ozaki 42).

In contrast to the original "Urashima," in which Urashima's act of opening the box is apprehended as a warning against disobedience, Dazai's "Urashima san" illustrates that "oblivion" is a synonym for "salvation." Therefore, Urashima is released from his pain by opening the box:

> Time is a salvation for human beings. Forgetfulness is a salvation for human beings.... At this junction, Urashima gained a bottomless pardon from Princess Oto.... It has been told that Urashima lived happily as a blessed old man for ten years after that (Dazai *OZ* 276-277).

Dazai favors the Greek mythology of "Pandora's Box" to the traditional tale of "Urashima." According to his interpretation, the "hope" remaining in Pandora's box indicates "a tender mercy" that is also seen in Dazai's

"Urashima."

One overall goal for a reader of the original "Crackling Mountain" is learning the lesson of the law of cause and effect because the badger's malicious behavior (cause) brings about his tragic death (effect). However, we realize that no standardized ethical doctrines are needed to comprehend Dazai's "Crackling Mountain," in which Dazai avoids being a commonsense philosopher or moralist. Dazai does not value generalized virtuous evaluation as highly as his own perception of "human nature:" "But maybe the tale is mostly humorous, merely hinting that people don't revile and chastise one another because of morality. (Actually, they do these things simply out of hatred, just as they praise others or submit to them out of affection.)" (O'Brien "TWA" 246)

Finally, in the original "The Split-Tongue Sparrow," we see the teaching of human ethics when the wife of the old man corrects her past malicious conduct after she has been frightened by monsters and demons. She and her husband spend their remaining years in comfort. The wife of the old man in Dazai's "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" is not depicted as a greedy, evil-minded woman, but is described as an ordinary, mundane person. However, thanks to her unexpected death and her treasured casket, the old man becomes a moneyed minister of Japan, who acknowledges his wife's contribution:

Dazai regards his *Otogi zōshi* primarily as a vehicle for his rebellion against hypocritical society and preconceived moral principles. Urata Yoshikazu says:

> Dazai had ruined his family by giving himself up to women and wine as *burai no sakka* (villainous author). He strongly hated antiquated authors who superficially talk about the arts and never move from their conservative homes.... For Dazai, the term "revolution" is a life-long theme, which is a never-to-be-forgotten

motif (Urata 196-197).

Just as he subconsciously (or explicitly?) denies his society through expressing his sense of "escape" and the concept of "Shangri-La," so Dazai challenges society, denying established codes of social conduct, which particularly stand out in the world of folk and fairy tales. Dazai's act of rewriting is valued and understood when we consider *Otogi zōshi*'s hidden implications:

> If we think about the allegorical characteristics of folktales, which are basically connected with the way of living in human society, there is no doubt that Dazai, who adapted the framework [of folktales], tried to create "different stories" through reflecting his reality, his sense of being different and having twisted emotions (Eniwa 247).

The significance of folk and fairy tales is double-edged in terms of ideological "rebellion" because folk and fairy tales themselves have the potential to both criticize and affirm the social system. Indeed, folk and fairy tales embrace the desire for social amelioration, as Zipes frequently points out. However, they also express the notion of social acceptance, possessing didactic and ethical potential. Folk and fairy tales, the symbol of social morality for Dazai, uniformly mirror the notion of virtue and vice in society. Detesting the idea that the standard ethical evaluation can bring any matter to a settlement, Dazai resists ready-made ideas, and in turn rebels against society itself, manifesting his own beliefs:

> Try drawing a moral from this story and you're in real trouble. So why did I bother telling the tale? If the anxious reader presses me on this question, I'd have to answer that there's always something both tragic and comical in people's very nature. It's a problem at

> the very core of our lives, and that's really all I can say (O'Brien "TWA" 218).

By creating stories in which "both the tragic and comical in people's very nature" are thematically in control, Dazai challenges the discourse on the conventional morality of folk and fairy tales. What is noteworthy here about Dazai's own ideology is that he believes that this world contains inexplicable matters, such as human nature. For example, Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" is a story in which human nature is more important than preconceived moral principles:

> But maybe the tale is mostly humorous, merely hinting that people don't revile and chastise one another because of morality. (Actually, they do these things simply out of hatred, just as they praise others or submit to them out of affection.) But no, let's not fret over what conclusions a social critic might reach. Sighing, we allow instead the last word to our badger--"What's wrong with falling in love?" (O'Brien "TWA" 246).

Concluding the story with the question "What's wrong with falling in love," Dazai deliberately abstracts the theme of "Crackling Mountain." Dazai's notion here is that human nature can be differently perceived by different people; for example, from the badger's perspective, there is nothing wrong with falling in love, while for the rabbit, there is something absolutely wrong with doing so. Even though Dazai superficially seems to embrace the existence of folktales by incorporating them into his writing, he actually ironizes their ethical viewpoints and also reveals his revolutionary spirit. Dazai's sense of both "escape" and "social rebellion" may be the eternal conflicting forces that he fostered in his life.

The above discussion gives a rough idea of Dazai's spirit of defiance through focusing on the notions of "escape" and "social rebellion." The characters of *Otogi zōshi* break away from their reality and reach their "Earthly Paradise" in accordance with their socially rebellious intention. However, why do they have to leave their "Shangri-La" and go back to the real world after all? The old man in "Taking the Wen Away," Urashima in "Urashima san," and the old man in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" all depart from their "Shangri-La" on their own initiative after enjoying "one-night-dream" experiences for a limited time. As I indicated before, blurring fantasy and reality is a characteristic of traditional Japanese literature. This trait results partly from the Japanese aesthetic of the "beauty of perishability" (Keene) which states that the more temporary something is, the more vividly or beautifully it touches the human heart. The characters of Noh dramas, of *The Tale of Genji*, of "Ashikari," of "The Izu Dancer" and so on invariably return to reality after experiencing fantastic events. These occurrences vividly and beautifully remain in the hearts of the characters as well as the reader by the impact of the contrast between the lengthy reality and the brief fantasy. The visible presence of "perishability" is an essential element in terms of Japanese aethetics. Yoshida Kenkō,[4] the author of *Tsurezure gusa (Essays in Idleness),* observes:

> If man were never to fade away like the dew of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke over Teribeyama, but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us! The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty (Keene *Essays in Idleness* 7).

4The author, Yoshida Kenkō, was a Buddhist monk, after he gave up his warrior status. This work was written in the latter part of the Kamakura era (1184-1335).

The aesthetic of "perishability," which has remained for centuries as the core of the Japanese sense of beauty, is related to *yūgen* and still noticeable in modern Japanese literature.

Dazai tries to heighten the dramatic effect creating this kind of aesthetical presentation in *Otogi zōshi*. The impact of "Shangri-La" on the old man of "Taking the Wen Away," Urashima of "Urashima san," and the old man of "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" vividly remains in the characters' hearts because of the contrast between reality and the "one-night-dream" fantasy. However, Dazai's focal point is practical and is related more to his meditative determination to survive in a materialistic society by exploring his aesthetic depths. Dazai intentionally chooses the folktales in which the god of destiny never allows the characters to remain permanently in their "Shangri-La." The old man's return to reality in "Taking the Wen Away" is such a sudden dimensional-turnabout that it leads to our understanding of his situation. Moreover, Urashima's repatriation, with his declaring, "but, I am a human being on land," (Dazai *OZ* 269) reflects his own unexpected enlightenment. There is an internally significant correlation between those who temporarily exist in "Shangri-La" and their return to their native places, between Dazai's socially rebellious attitude and its interaction with the matters of his existential sphere. *Otogi zōshi* was written by Dazai in his middle period when, as a husband and father and a widely recognized writer, his personal life was full of hope. "Creating a saintly aura of negativity" (Wolfe 81) in his early period, Dazai's real and fictional domains are both limited and restricted, confining him to an absolutely subjective world. In contrast to his early literary works, in which he never shows a flash of hope, finding sanctuary only in his narcissistically self-negative world, the several works written in his middle period realistically as well as philosophically reflect different kinds of

salvation. By mirroring himself in the characters who have to go back to their own world without staying in their "Shangri-La" for ever, Dazai grants that"Shangri-La" is, after all, a provisional dream, so drawing a clear borderline between reality and dream and realizing his destiny as a human being. In other words, the characters' returnings in *Otogi zōshi* signal Dazai's resolve to stand up to reality without taking refuge in his egocentric world. Kikuta Yoshitaka states: "even though religiously enlightened, Dazai is forced to return to this materialistic society and live his life as a human being without remaining in the stage of (religious enlightenment)" (Kikuta 135). Urashima's return to reality also illustrates Dazai's philosophy and ideological enlightenment:

> Urashima got tired [of living in the Palace of the Dragon King] before long. He may have been weary of being pardoned. He began longing for a shabby life on land. The people on land easily cry, get angry, and mind other's criticism while living in a shabby and fussy way. However, Urashima started to think that such people are lovely and even beautiful (Dazai *OZ* 269).

If Dazai had dealt with *Otogi zōshi* in his early period, being in a disastrous state of mind, this text would be completely different, and he would not be able to allude to the significance of living in this materialistic society as he does in the above passage. Dazai's lonely and estranged characters in *Otogi zōshi* are not an accidental creation for Dazai because he purposely connects the characters' intentions for escape with their yearning for the "Earthly Paradise." Blending the notion of "escape" and "social rebellion" into one ideological focus, "revolution," Dazai also recognizes the necessity to return figuratively to reality himself rather than to try to escape it.

<u>The Sense of "the Elect" as a Chosen Writer</u>

Dazai's cherished view of "the elect" seems to have been a wellspring of his creativity. In fiction, he regards this concept as one of his greatest lifelong themes, and frequently inquires into this subject. It is the connection between the notion of "original sin" and the view of "the elect" that Dazai regards as a reciprocal interaction, the basis of the ups and downs of his life, because "Dazai's self-abasement alternates with sudden manifestations of pride" (O'Brien *Dazai Osamu* 117). The well-known epigram of "Standard-bearer for the Twentieth Century," "Forgive me for having been born," tells a great deal about his sense of "original sin." Like his other literary writings in which Dazai's perception of his existence is negatively connoted or expressed, foreshadowing his inescapable ultimate destiny, so *Otogi zōshi* verbalizes the ceaseless flow of Dazai's consciousness of his sinfulness. However, the hidden and reverse side of the ideological notion of "original sin" potentially implicates the mutual relationship between Dazai's self-negation and his sense of eliteness. As previously stated, the analysis of the characters in *Otogi zōshi* makes explicit how much they are related to the idea of "escape," which is the result of their severance of social relations. The characters' estrangement may be illustrated primarily to express Dazai's mixed view of the unpardonable self and the elect in *Otogi zōshi*. Even though the characters in *Otogi zōshi* are endowed with general ideas of "escape" and "social rebellion," the slight difference among their ways of and reasons for "escape" and "social rebellion" is distinctly perceptible.

Considering all characters in *Otogi zōshi* as Dazai's own personae, we can see that his sense of being both different and elite, combined with his assumption

of his own guilt, becomes more and more marked. The old man in "Taking the Wen Away" is pessimistically conscious of his different nature, and he is never in accord with his family members, no matter how hard he tries to be in harmony with them. The discrepancy between the old man and his family results mainly from the fact that his natural character is diametrically opposed to them:

> With such a son and wife, it was no wonder that the old man's house was regarded as exemplary in local circles. All the same, the old man remained glum. Though hesitant to take a drink at home, he couldn't resist indefinitely, regardless of the consequences. Yet, when he did have a drink, he merely felt worse (O'Brien "TWA" 203).

The old man's nuanced sensitivity implies that he is always reserved in his manner toward his wife and son, and it also forces him to consider himself as a different living creature:

> When he was tipsy, the old man wanted to talk so badly that he would usually come out with some banal remark. "Spring will soon be here," he'd way. "The swallows are back already." Such a remark was better left unsaid. Both his wife and his son remained silent. Still, the old man couldn't resist adding, "One moment of spring. Ah, isn't that equal to a fortune in gold?" He shouldn't have tried that one, either. "I give thanks for this meal," the Saint of Awa (a son) intoned. "If you'll excuse me...." Having finished, he paid his respects and left. "Guess I'll have my meal too." Wearily the old man turned his cup over. When he drank at home, it usually came to this (O'Brien "TWA" 207).

Furthermore, he acts humbly before his wife:

> "The soup's gotten cold," she grumbled as she set about preparing the old man's breakfast. "Oh, that's all right. Don't bother warming it up," the old man countered. He felt small and sheepish as he sat down to eat" (O'Brien "TWA" 213).

In contrast to the old man in "Taking the Wen Away," who in self-denial recognizes his different nature and its effects on his family estrangement, Urashima in Dazai's "Urashima san" has a sense of his difference that is a synonym for his consciousness of eliteness rather than self-denial. When Urashima alludes to elegant accomplishments and philosophical ideas, he attempts to use them for his own elitism. His rather conceited sense as the chosen, partaking both of the philosopher and of *miyabi*, is clearly discernible:

> "There is a big difference between your (turtle's) destiny and mine. That was so from the beginning. It's not my fault, but arranged by heaven. But, you seem to be so mortified at this fact. You try to bring the level of my destiny down to the level of yours through pointless arguments. But heaven's decision is totally beyond human matters" (Dazai *OZ* 247).

Despite the appearance that Urashima never receives understanding or sympathy from other people because of their fault-finding nature, Urashima's insubstantial dogmatic and formalistic notions, which he twists for his own convenience, alienate him from other people.

The old man in Dazai's "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" is wealthy enough to renounce the world as an anchorite and calls himself "the old man." He also carries connotations of "the elect" that are considerably stronger than the superficial atmosphere suggests: " 'I don't know whether the time will come when I can prove my ability and value before I die. But, if that time comes, I will

work as hard as I can. I will keep silent, only reading books until that time'" (Dazai *OZ* 317). His sense of value and its validity stems from his self-centered notions, and provokes his wife's irritation and, in turn, causes her tragic death.

Using the estrangement of the old man in "Taking the Wen Away," and Urashima's and the old man's sense of severed social relations in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" respectively, Dazai delineates his original idea of "the elect" in *Otogi zōshi.* On the one hand, the depth and meaning of the old man's isolation in "Taking the Wen Away" may be apprehended as his emphasized sense of self-negation without possessing elitism. On the other hand, both Urashima and the old man in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" are well aware of their sense of being different and elite, and realize that they choose on their own initiative to be indifferent to others. When we take these two different types of "estrangement," spontaneous isolation and unavoidable separation, into consideration, Dazai's concept of "the elect" and "the sinful" is obvious. The most significant aspect of Dazai's consciousness of "the elect" is never separated from his self-negative view. There is a clear correlation between elitism and self-denial in Dazai's literature. Even though these two notions seem to be mutually contradictory on the surface, they in fact resonate with each other, and Dazai's justification for his existence would be eradicated without either of them.

Dazai describes in *Recollections* how, in a temple, he first learned of the existence of sin and its punishment by looking at a picture of the nether world:

> She (Dazai's nursemaid) would take me with her to the temple and explain all the picture scrolls of heaven and hell. They are horrible: arsonists were being forced to carry baskets on their backs with red flames shooting out from them ... and every where pale, emaciated people, their tiny mouths open, were crying and screaming. Once

> she told me, "If you tell lies, you'll go to hell, and your tongue will be pulled out like this by devils," I burst out crying in terror (Lyons 190).

Though we never know how much this drawing influenced the future Dazai as a writer, Dazai had perhaps been haunted by an invisible and indescribable sense of sin all his days. Although such an issue cannot be resolved, Dazai's fiction, especially in his early period, is undoubtedly a confession of sin; literature is a medium for Dazai to declare how sinful he is.

> Behind the temple, the ground rose to a small graveyard, and along some kind of yellow flowering hedge stood a forest of grave markers. Among them were some with a slotted groove in which was a black iron wheel about the size of a full moon. When you spun it, if it clattered to a stop and didn't move anymore, that meant you would go to heaven; but if it stopped for a moment and then clanked in the opposite direction, you would go to hell. That's what Take taught me. When she spun it, it would turn for a while, ringing clearly, and then invariably it would slow to a halt; but when I spun, somehow it would always reverse itself. One day--sometime in autumn, I recall--I went to the temple by myself; and no matter which iron wheel I tried to spin, as if by common agreement, they all clanked in reverse. Holding down the fit of temper that threatened to overwhelm me, I stubbornly continued to spin them over and over again. At last the sun began to set. I gave up in despair and left the graveyard (Lyons 190-191).

The notion of sin intertwined with on-going self-denial in Dazai's early period is shifted to one linked with the sense of "the elect" in his middle period, and,

finally, the consciousness of being the chosen one becomes more and more conspicuous in the later period. In accordance with the close correspondence between the sinful self and the elitism characteristic of Dazai's later works, the writer's use of elitism is connected to his search for salvation and is presented as symbolic of his torment resulting from his sense of guilt. Regarding himself as the elect signifies his emancipation from the feeling of oppression. Especially in later works such as *The Setting Sun* and *No Longer Human*, his concept of eliteness is heightened to such an extent that the characters, Dazai's "other selves," are religiously considered as the elect of a god. Compared with his later works in which the characters are selected as preferred human beings and afflicted with a task assigned by "the Almighty, " Dazai's *Otogi zōshi*, written when Dazai is in the process of making an ideological turnabout, is the work revealing his double-edged concept, a combination of the sense of sin (or self-negation) and the consciousness of being different. *Otogi zōshi*'s old man in "Taking the Wen Away," Urashima in "Urashima san," and the old man in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" all act as spokesmen for Dazai.

Another conspicuous aspect of Dazai's notion of elitism in *Otogi zōshi* is found in the characters' acts of discovering their "Shangri-La." The old man in "Taking the Wen Away" strays into another realm where his load of grief is temporarily relieved, and he takes pleasure in becoming acquainted with the "Oni." What is noteworthy here is that the old man is welcomed by the "Oni," while the second old man is rejected. The beauty and the magnificence of the Palace of the Dragon King, at which Urashima arrives with the turtle, is totally beyond Urashima's philosophy and *miyabi*. Finally, the old man in "The Split-Tongue Sparrow" experiences an unearthly paradise in the Sparrow Village. The fact that all three characters in *Otogi zōshi* come across the collective and

cosmic world of "Shangri-La" as if they were the elect or privileged entities makes us aware of Dazai's sense of being different. Generally speaking, Dazai's notion of the elect is rather reserved and subsumed under his self-negation. As some critics indicate, the reader taken in by Dazai's self-destructive nuances defines his writings as "rosewater philosophy" (Tōgō *Dazai Osamu jiten* 310), while other literary critics disdain Dazai's literature as *amae no bungaku* (literature of indulgence) (Isogai 120). However, my analysis of both Dazai and his literary works makes clear that Dazai does not submit tamely to his weakness and self-indulgence, but rather struggles to get free and finally finds salvation in his sense of the elect. Inasmuch as we take it for granted that the characters created by Dazai are his personae to a greater or lesser degree, examining the characters' behaviors and ideologies in *Otogi zōshi* in order to analyze Dazai Osamu is justified. My analysis of *Otogi zōshi* demonstrates the antithetical polarities between his consciousness of sinfulness and the sense of the elect. This antithetical polarity can be recognized as one major factor in understanding Dazai's writing.

"Horobi no sakka" (the Author of "Ruin")

A more ideological and metaphysical answer to questions presented in Dazai's literature may lie in the fact that Dazai and his approach to life and literature at all times directed his steps toward unavoidable ruin. In his article "Ruin" (Horobi), Sasaki Keiichi makes clear a correspondence between Dazai himself and Dazai's interaction with literature: "The characteristic of Dazai's spiritual existence is that his creation is directly connected with the concept of ruin, and he faithfully makes his own way in accordance with his genealogy of

'ruin'" (174). The biographical fact that Dazai sought death at his own hand four times and that he finally put an end to his life in 1947 makes it explicit that Dazai's inner level of intensity is intertwined with the concept of "destruction." Just as some critics use the word *horobi*, ruin, to describe the world of Dazai's literature, Dazai himself also refers to *horobi* in order to characterize his literature. Dazai deals with the phrase *horobi no yakuwari* (the role of ruin) several times in his works, which convey a general aura of decline and ruin. Inasmuch as Dazai clarifies the creative notion that "everybody has his own destiny," his concept of *horobi* is a reccurent image of what he calls *seitei*, meaning "the clear vision of destiny." Dazai is both implicitly and explicitly scrupulous about the notion of *horobi* as the chosen one and dies a martyr to his own faith.

In Japanese sociological and literary contexts, the concept of *horobi* has been emphasized and validated as a remarkable feature of Japanese ideology. In *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan*, Alan Wolfe remarks: "The text of twentieth-century Japanese history is thus highlighted by a number of suicides, each of which has been made to crystallize a particular node of signification for the Japanese modernizationist enterprise" (36). Several Japanese prominent authors, such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Mishima Yukio, Kawabata Yasunari, Arishima Takeo, and Kitamura Tōkoku, took their own lives as *horobi no sakka* (authors of ruin). They started producing a distinctively peculiar aura, being captivated by the concept of *horobi*. In his suicide note, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke says:

> Now I am living in an unsound world of spirit. That world is perfectly crystal-clear like ice.... For me (who has decided to commit suicide), nature seems to be more beautiful than it usually is. You

> would laugh at my contradiction--my love for the beauty of nature and my determination to die. But the reason why nature seems to be so beautiful is because it is viewed from my dying eyes (*matsugo no me*)(116).

Mishima Yukio explains the transcendental relationship between beauty and death: "Playing a mean trick is not allowed any longer for me. When it's neck or nothing with us, all we can do is die in battle or take our own lives. Then we can die with beauty and admirably complete our lives" (43). Finally, the Nobel-Prize-winning Kawabata Yasunari[5] also defined Japanese literature as "the literature of death" (128) and ultimately destroyed himself. Though a slight difference in expression is perceptible among these prominent Japanese authors, they reveal that *horobi* is a major aesthetic in Japanese literature.

Like other Japanese writers, Dazai Osamu deals with the subject of *horobi* as *horobi no sakka*: " I think I am *horobi no tami* (a person of *horobi*). This word has significance because of our defeat and ruin. Shouldn't our literature have that word? I think *Heike monogatari (The Tale of Heike)* is a good example of this in our literature" (57). *The Tale of Heike*, Dazai's favorite Japanese classic, begins with the following paragraph :

> The sound of the bell of the Gion temple echoes the impermanence of all things. The hues of the flowers of the Sala trees declares that they who flourish must be brought low. Yes, the proud ones are but for a moment, like an evening dream in spring time. The mighty are destroyed at the last, they are but as the dust before the wind (Keene 7).

[5] Though he had frequently criticized Akutagawa's and Dazai's suicide, saying that suicide can never be salvation, he committed suicide in 1972.

As this passage indicates, the impermanence of this world, a Buddhist concept, evokes the aura of *horobi*, creating a sense of pathos and loneliness. Just as Japanese critics use the term *horobi* in order to describe their sense of the animating force behind Japanese literature, so Dazai is also known for his inheritance of the classical concept of *horobi* and his *horobi no bungaku*--literature revealing the inevitability of decline and ruin. *Horobi* is a recurrent image in his phenomenological world: it often ushers in a mood of negative decadence, but sometimes denotes philosophical sublimity. Just as Japanese critics classify Dazai's literary works into three periods, so, too, do his creeds, viewpoints, epistemological thinking and aesthetics follow a sequence corresponding to the levels of development in his writing. Even though Dazai's later masterpieces such as *The Setting Sun* and *No Longer Human* carry connotations of *horobi* considerably deeper than his literary writings of the middle period, Dazai's modes of thinking in *Otogi zōshi* also describe the depth and meaning of *horobi*.

Compared with the three other stories in Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* , both the setting and characters of "Crackling Mountain" are more realistic and materialistic, and thus most clearly delineating Dazai's philosophy. In the process of assessing Dazai's literature, I have dealt with the subjects of "escape," "social rebellion," and "elitism," borrowing freely from the specificities of the characters in *Otogi zōshi*. The distinctiveness of "Crackling Mountain" results partly from the fact that "in contrast to the three other stories which can be classified into the group of 'ikyō banashi' (story about a strange land), 'Crackling Mountain' belongs to the category of 'dōbutsu banashi' (story about animals)" (Tsurutani 114). Therefore, we can sense that "Crackling Mountain" is different from the three other stories, and, in fact, the subjects

mentioned above make it clear that "Crackling Mountain" contrasts in a striking way with the three other stories and points towards Dazai's later masterpieces. While this term *horobi* has usually been translated as 'ruin' or 'collapse,' such renderings are apt to indicate the ordinary correlation between *horobi* and death. The middle-aged badger in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" is literally 'ruined' by the Artemis-like teenager, the rabbit:

> The oar banged mercilessly against his skull time after time. The water glistened in the sunset as the badger sank into the lake and rose to the surface over and over again. "Ouch! Ouch! Aren't you going too far? What did I do to you? What's wrong with falling in love?" he exclaimed before going under for good (O'Brien "CM" 246).

Dazai may have chosen this Japanese folktale, which recounts the destruction of a badger, in order to lure the reader into his world of *horobi*. However, Dazai's act of describing the death of the badger cannot be directly connected with his concept of *horobi*; otherwise, we would have to define every writer who depicts any kind of death as an author of *horobi*. The significance of Dazai's *horobi* lies in the fact that Dazai's sense of *horobi* is condensed into its thematical unity with the motif of salvation as well as the last resistance (or vitality) of dying characters. Tōgō Katsumi expresses a creative theory of the badger's death in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain:" "This story seems to be an atrocious vengeance-story on the surface. However, as a matter of fact, can't we say that the death in the 'water' finally saves the badger from his tragic stupidity?" (Tōgō "*Otogi zōshi* no tōgenkyō" 217). As Tōgō suggests in his article, Dazai continuously attempts in his many literary works, including *Otogi zōshi*, to use the 'water' image for ushering in the world of 'purification'

(salvation). The old man in "Taking the Wen Away" is released from his reality under "a spring moon in its final quarter floating in the watery sky--perhaps, one might add, watery sky of pale green" (O'Brien "TWA" 206-207). The watery portrayal of the Palace of the Dragon King in "Urashima san," the highlight of the *Otogi zōshi*'s unearthly world, carries connotations of the Japanese aethetics of *yūgen*. It is this Palace of the Dragon King in the sea that Urashima considers the perfect place for his *miyabi*-like taste. Dazai's artistic purpose in singling out "Crackling Mountain" in his *Otogi zōshi* is epitomized in the badger's death in the water and his possible subsequent salvation; for Dazai, the badger in the original "Crackling Mountain" may be an exemplary model-figure in need of salvation. The asininity of the badger in Dazai's "Crackling Mountain" is magnified to such an extent that it causes the rabbit to hold an instinctive grudge against him and, in turn, brings about his death. Dazai suggests the correlation between the badger's stupidity and his unescapable destiny from the beginning: "Moreover, our so-called badger is just the sort who would woo an Artemis-like teenager. That is, he's a roly-poly glutton both stupid and uncouth who cuts a sorry figure even among his cohorts. One can surmise already the wretched end awaiting for him" (O'Brien "CM" 225). The conflicts that arise are stressed by Dazai throughout "Crackling Mountain," which indicates that "the only solution for this entangled relationship (between "falling in love" and "having a dislike") can be found in death; when both of them ("falling in love" and "having a dislike") simultaneously come out from different people, they never get along well" (Kakuta 132). In order to redeem the badger from a life of misery, Dazai equates *horobi* with salvation. In other words, in a striking manner, Dazai's concept of *horobi* contains hidden, unexpressed, and original elements.

The term *horobi no bigaku* (the aesthetics of ruination) is well established in Dazai's literary world. Dazai applies the term to its full extent and develops the concept until it attains sublimity. Dazai's literary works cannot respond to passive surrender but are tinged with suggestive vitality. Though the badger in "Crackling Mountain" acts as a fool and is regarded as silly by the author as well as the rabbit, his indomitable spirit--which is illustrated by the badger's narrow escape from the badger stew, and his unbelievable return to his beloved rabbit after suffering from the pain of a burnt back spread with the pepper paste--deserves a sort of respect, and provides a persuasive reason for and a dramatic impact to, his inescapable *horobi.* Furthermore, the badger shows his last resistance or vitality, crying, "What's wrong with falling in love" during his last moments. We can see "the author's self-awareness in reality about his own destiny as a weak human being. He has an incompatible resolution to limit himself as the writer who can live only in a pure fabrication. By transforming his weak point to an advantage, Dazai decides to come out strong in his fictional world" (Tōgō "*Otogi zōshi* no tōgenkyō" 121). Just as Okamoto Kanoko, the Japanese female writer who is also called *horobi no sakka,* creates female characters whose enormous vitality prevents them from passive surrender, being never completely detached from what Okamoto calls "preparation for ruin," Dazai emphasizes his original notion of *horobi* by excessively dramatizing human nature, especially pent-up human emotions such as stupidity, self-denial, weakness, pessimism, and so forth. Moreover, the most significant aspect of Dazai's *horobi* is found in the last vitality of his characters who are destined to be ruined. Yashiro Seiichi states:

> Now I don't think that the badger is pathetic and miserable, nor the rabbit cruel and merciless at all. The badger goes to ruin

> because of his insensitivity and good nature. We can take strange pleasure in the dying badger. Such a pleasure can be comprehended only by the person who is on the brink of ruin (33).

The badger is the symbolic figure of a "loser:" he is outrageously stupid and intolerably indecent, and is miserably killed. However, as I mentioned in the second chapter, the badger archetypally receives the author's most concern and sympathy in terms of the hierarchical system of the characters. Dazai concludes the tale of "Crackling Mountain" with the following paragraph:

> "What's wrong with falling in love?" That sums up, briefly and without any exaggeration, all of the world's woeful tales from the days of old. In every woman dwells this cruel rabbit, while in every man a good badger always struggles against drowning (O'Brien "CM" 246-247).

Therefore, the badger is qualified to receive salvation and offer his last resistance as the author's most favorite character. Describing the combination of the badger's extreme stupidity and his last "resistance" is Dazai's overall goal. The "last-ditch" fight of dying characters is the symbol of Dazai's ideological *horobi no bigaku.* The badger's last cry, "What's wrong with falling in love?" may be his best and strongest defiance, which makes his *horobi* more understandable and respectable; without his last resistance, the impact of his ruin would be tasteless and less dramatic.

In *Modern Japanese Writers,* Ueda Makoto states:

> For Dazai, then, weakness is a sign of goodness, not of evil. In his view, an evil person is a man who has no understanding of, and therefore no sympathy for, human weakness. He is like the Rabbit

> in "The Rabbit's Revenge," a beautiful maiden who tortures the ugly Badger to death...(150).

A number of Dazai's main characters are weak, vulnerable, and spiritually and physically dying, so-called "anti-heroes" and "anti-heroines." Dazai's *horobi no bigaku* depicts the last resistance of dying characters and bestows salvation on them. In Dazai's later period, his act of dramatizing human nature is reflected in his sanctified characters. As Dazai's archetypal character, Naoji in *The Setting Sun* is extremely sensitive and vulnerable, and also stands on the brink of ruin. He ultimately leaves a suicide note, asserting his right to die:

> Kazuko. It's no use. I'm going. I cannot think of the slightest reason why I should have to go on living. Only those who wish to go on living should. Just as a man has the right to live, he ought also to have the right to die.... Those who wish to go on living can always manage to survive whatever obstacles there may be. That is splendid of them, and I dare say that what people call the glory of mankind is comprised of just such a thing. But I am convinced that dying is not sin (Keene *SS* [*The Setting Sun*] 153-154).

Naoji's act of taking his own life as an aristocrat, saying, "I, after all, am an aristocrat," (Keene *SS* 169) is understood as his last defiance of the society in which he inevitably has to be ruined.

Just like the badger in "Crackling Mountain," Ōba Yōzō in *No Longer Human* is destined to be ruined as a miserable character:

> I was no longer a criminal--I was a lunatic. But no, I was definitely not mad. I have never been mad for even an instant. They say, I know, that most lunatics claim the same thing.... God, I ask you, is non-resistance a sin?... Disqualified as a human being. I had now

ceased utterly to be a human being. (Keene *NLH* 112)

However, Dazai gives salvation to Yōzō through considering him a god-like figure: "The Yōzō we knew was really gentle and considerate, and if only he hadn't drunk--no, even though he did drink--he was a good boy like a god"(Keene *NLH* 154). Going to ruin as a god-like figure at the end of the story, Yōzō shows his last defiance, which makes his inevitable *horobi* more transcendental. As a "friend of the weak," (Ueda 152) Dazai Osamu created a number of characters whom he destined to be ruined because he considered weakness as the most significant aspect of human nature. We feel Dazai's "pain and grief of daringly going to 'ruin'" (Ōkubo 107) in his literary writings. Though the characters are going to ruin as *horobi no tami,* they accept their destinies and show their last resistance, just like an extremely lurid flower blooming in its terminal stage. Dazai is successful in creating his own aesthetic of *horobi,* which is enriched by his profound understating of human nature. After his lifelong inner spiritual and emotional struggle, Dazai Osamu ultimately possesses the indomitable fortitude of mind to make his own way in a glorious manner in accordance with his *horobi.*

Conclusion

My thesis has analyzed Dazai Osamu's *Otogi zōshi* by applying three different kinds of approaches: 1) biographical / historical, 2) narratological, and 3) close-reading. I have shown Dazai to be an outstanding story-teller in *Otogi zōshi* through his use of parody and irony. In this regard, *Otogi zōshi* can be described as a parodic text written by an accomplished ironist, Dazai Osamu, who imitates and criticizes the traditional Japanese folktales: "Taking the Wen Away," "Urashima san," "Crackling Mountain," and "The Split-Tongue Sparrow." Dazai covers his seriousness with his parodic attitude; he deals with subjects, such as "rebellion," "the elect," and "ruin" in *Otogi zōshi*, but he intentionally conceals these subjects through his parodic atmosphere. Dazai is usually called *dōke no sakka* (a writer of burlesque) because he dislikes describing earnest matters seriously. For Dazai, parody is a strategy to avoid creating a serious atmosphere. Furthermore, one of Dazai's artistic notions is *karumi*, literally meaning "lightness," and figuratively "a parodic (or ironic) approach towards serious matters." *Otogi zōshi*, whose parodic elements conceal serious matters, is a perfect example of Dazai's *karumi*.

Otogi zōshi's significance is also found in its metafictional framework. The phenomena of metafiction are correlated to parodic elements to a greater or lesser degree: "one of the most appropriate literary forms for the author would be the meta-fictional self-parody, in which is reflected not only his literary models, but

his own more ironic and sophisticated style" (Rose 93). As an author of *watakushi shōsetsu* (the I-novel), Dazai employs a metafictional framework primarily as a vehicle for his own self-reflection. Thus, in *Otogi zōshi* Dazai establishes his ideological "self" in the pursuit of his identity in the modern era by reflection upon his life experiences. As Okuno Takeo indicated, *Otogi zōshi* may be Dazai's greatest creative work, illustrating Dazai's distinctive, self-reflexive approach; it is in *Otogi zōshi* that we can see most clearly Dazai's notions of "self," "life," "art," "ethics," and "ideology."

However, although Okuno Takeo values *Otogi zōshi* as Dazai's best literary writing, Okuno's is not a structural analysis but focuses mainly on ethical factors and is strongly connected with biographical studies of Dazai. Japanese literary critics traditionally show a marked tendency toward the emotive rather than the explicit meaning created by a structure of a text. Nonetheless, Okuno's assertion is the opinion of a minority; Japanese critics still privilege Dazai's later literary works, such as *No Longer Human* and *The Setting Sun*, and ignore the value and validity of Dazai's writing in his middle period. The lack of enthusiasm for theoretical analysis in the Japanese literary community explains why *Otogi zōshi* is generally neglected or underestimated by literary critics. The value of Dazai's *Otogi zōshi* cannot be fairly assessed without a structural analysis since in *Otogi zōshi* Dazai creates ingenious structural constructions that blend metafictional elements and features of the "I-novel."

I have analyzed *Otogi zōshi* from a theoretical perspective and alluded to a correlation between metafiction and the Dazai "I-novel" because what Dazai Osamu research has lacked so far is a structural analysis. My focus in this thesis has been to establish a balance between the author (Dazai Osamu) and the text (*Otogi zōshi*). This I have attempted through my three approaches. In my

opinion, a structural approach is only a first step in examining literary writings. Biographical and historical studies as well as a close-reading of the text are also indispensable elements of analysis. All of these areas have been explored in my thesis. Based on these readings and my analysis, I find that *Otogi zōshi* not only demonstrates Dazai's incomparable talent as a story-teller but is also one of his greatest artistic creations.

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