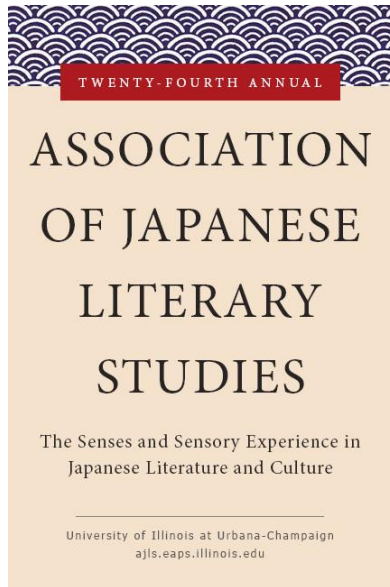


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DAZAI OSAMU'S SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

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Even though he died 67 years ago, Dazai Osamu (1909-1948) still has a cult-like following in Japan as an outcast, heavy-drinking whoremonger, drug addict, repeated participant in "love suicide," but above all the writer who wrote about it all.¹ In the West, Dazai is known mainly as "a decadent writer,"² "lacking in political reliability or even citizenly virtues."³ The image of Dazai in such receptions, however, is one that most readers will find difficult to relate to. In this paper, I propose to present a Dazai that readers can relate to by analyzing his sense and sensibility.

Let us first consider Dazai's notion of sense. The word "sense" in this paper refers to Dazai's judgment of sincerity, integrity, appropriateness, or pretentiousness in human interactions. Dazai's judgment on such matters is perhaps best revealed by the word *kiza*, a characteristic adjective favored by him. Reading Dazai Osamu, one cannot help but notice the high frequency with which he uses the word *kiza*. A quick survey indicates that he used this word in all of his major works produced between 1935 and 1948, a period spanning his entire career as a professional writer, sometimes multiple times in a single piece.⁴

The word *kiza* derives from the compound *kizawari*, which, in turn, derives from the phrase *ki ni sawaru* meaning "to touch someone's nerve," or "to rub someone the wrong way" and by extension "to cause irritation or otherwise unpleasant feelings." The word *kiza* has a derivative of its own, *kizattarashii*, an emphatic version of *kiza*. Depending on the context, the word may be translated as "affected," "conceited," "in bad taste," "pretentious," or "pedantic." The full range of these meanings is seen in Dazai's use of the word. In this sense, *kiza* is truly a key word that reveals Dazai Osamu's nature as a writer.

That the word *kiza* conveys Dazai's notion of sense can be demonstrated in the different ways he uses the word. First of all, he used the word to criticize himself for his inappropriate language or behavior. For example, "One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji" (*Fugaku hyakkei*, 1939), a short story that reflects on his own life as well as his arranged dating with Ishihara Michiko, his future wife, contains the following conversation which takes place between Michiko and Osamu after the formal *miai* at Michiko's home.

On my way back, the girl walked me to the bus stop.

"Well, what do you think? Would you be willing to continue the relationship a bit longer?" –Oh, what an *affected thing* for me to say to her!

¹ Osamu Dazai, *Self-Portraits: Tales from the Life of Japan's Great Decadent Romantic*, translated and introduced by Ralph F. McCarthy (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International: 1991), 9-10.

² See the title of Ralph F. McCarthy's above translation.

³ Donald Keene, "The Artistry of Dazai Osamu" *The East-West Review* I: 3 (Winter 1965): 250.

⁴ The word is used 9 times, for example, in *Tsugaru* (1944) and *Regretful Parting* (Sekibetsu, 1945).

“No, I’ve had too much of it,” she said, laughing.

“Do you have any questions about me?” This question was even more stupid.

“Yes.” She said.

I decided to try to tell the truth, simple and straightforward truth, in answering whatever question she might ask me.⁵

Another example is seen in *Tsugaru* (1944), a novel about a tour he took around his homeland in the Northern tip of Honshu. One of the people Dazai meets in his hometown is T, a person about Dazai’s age who used to be a servant in Dazai’s family. In the following scene, the reader finds Dazai regretful that he failed to treat T with sincerity.

The main topic of our conversation was still about the days when the two of us were playing together at my father’s Kanagi mansion.

“But I have always considered you a close friend of mine, you know.” –Oh, what a hypocritical, *insincere*, and rude thing for me to say! I must have sounded ridiculously arrogant, disgusting, and condescending to him, like some line from a cheap drama! As soon as I uttered the words, I felt the agony of having committed a sin of insincerity. Wasn’t there a better way to convey my feelings to him?⁶

Sometimes Dazai uses the word to create a rhetorical humor. Again in *Tsugaru*, we have the following description of a river in Aomori, followed by Dazai’s comparison of himself to the river.

And then, there is a big river running through the eastern part of Aomori City that resembles the Sumida Rive in Tokyo. Called the Tsutsumi River, it flows into Aomori Bay not far from the city. At a point right before it merges into the sea, the flow of the river oddly hesitates and slows down, making it look as if it were running back upstream. I would gaze long at the slowed-down current. *To use a pretentious metaphor*, my own youth has also reached the point right before it enters adulthood, just as the river right before it flows into the sea. For that reason, my four years in Aomori were so unforgettable to me.⁷

Another example of rhetorical humor is seen in *Regretful Parting* (Sekibetsu, 1945), a novel that tells about the friendship between the narrator, a student from

⁵ Dazai Osamu, *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989), 223. Here as well as in all subsequent examples cited in this paper, the key part containing the word *kiza* is italicized. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

⁶ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 167.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

Tōhoku, and Lu Xun, modern China's most prominent writer when he was studying medicine in Sendai in 1904-5. The following passage is about the narrator's view of his own Tōhoku dialect.

People from Sendai also speak with quite a heavy Tōhoku accent. When it comes to my country accent, it is hopelessly worse than theirs. It is not that I cannot speak the Tokyo dialect if I try hard enough. But with my rural origin being public knowledge, it is really embarrassing to *be pretentious and try to use the prestigious language*. But that is the sort of psychology only people from the countryside would understand. Therefore, I ended up finding myself in a situation in which I would be laughed at if I put on full display my countrified accent, but I would be laughed at even more if I tried to use the standard speech. The only option left for me was to shut up and keep quiet.⁸

More often, however, Dazai uses the word to judge people's sincerity, including his own. For example, in "Hometown" (1943), a short story about his second trip home in more than ten years to visit his mother lying on her deathbed.

I paced around the room, struggling to keep myself from crying, telling myself: If you shed a single tear now, it's a lie; if you cry, it's a lie. Here we have this tender-hearted son, lost in thoughts of his mother, off by himself into the Western-style room to weep for her. *Pretentious!* He really thinks he's great. Just like some cheap movie. What's this, our sweet, gentle thirty-four-year-old Shūji? Stop this sentimental playacting. You're not likely to become the filial son at this late date.⁹

Another example is seen in *Shin hamuretto* (New Hamlet, 1941), one of the few plays that novelist Dazai wrote, which is loosely based on Shakespeare's tragedy. When the new King Claudius asks Hamlet not to go to university but to stay in Denmark to assist him, Hamlet turns to Laertes and starts talking insinuatingly. This leads his mother Gertrude to reprimand him.

Claudius: I want you to assist me. Please forget about going to the University.

This is my request to you as your father. If you're not around, the Queen will also feel lonely. Moreover, you seem physically weak too...

Hamlet: Laertes.

Laertes: Yes, Sir.

⁸ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 14.

⁹ Translated by Phyllis I. Lyons, see *The Saga of Dazai Osamu: A Critical Study with Translations* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985), 257.

Hamlet: You are fortunate in having a good father.

Gertrude: Hamlet, what a thing for you to say! I can only think of you as ill-humored for saying that. *Stop that disgusting innuendo of yours.* If you don't like something, speak out like a man. I hate the way you make oblique accusations of people.¹⁰

Since the word *kiza* is rather negative, it is natural that Dazai also uses the word to portray negative characters. For example, in *Regretful Parting*, a pretentious student union officer interferes in the friendship between the narrator and Lu Xun. Here is an account of the narrator's first encounter with the officer.

“Hey, you there,” someone called out to me from behind. When I turned around, I saw a tall student grinning at me. He had a big nose and a greasy face *giving one an unpleasant impression.* He was the first nuisance to the friendship between Shū-san [namely Lu Xun] and myself. His name was Tsuda Kenji.¹¹

Later in the novel, another student union officer wrote an anonymous letter to Shū-san accusing him of obtaining test questions from the professor before the test, which accounts for his good grade, an accusation that infuriated the narrator. Again, Dazai uses the word *kiza* to describe the author of the anonymous letter.

“Hey, something bad has happened.” So saying, he [Tsuda Kenji] took a letter from his pocket and showed it to me. The letter was addressed to Mr. Zhou Shu-ren [Lu Xun's real name]. The sender was Chokugen Sanjin, or Mr. Blunt Speech. “This is an anonymous letter,” I was irritated and started to read it. The content of the letter was even more irritating to me. Even the handwriting appeared to be in a wicked style, reeking an oppressive odor.

“Repent!”

The letter opens with this imperative in oversized characters. I shuddered at the arrogant tone of the letter. I've always hated *such self-important prophet-like language* and I hate it now.¹²

Conspicuously, he also uses the word in protesting against Japan's pompous literary establishment. For example, in “So Have I Heard” (Nyoze gamon, 1948), Dazai decided to release his anger at the literary establishment even at the risk of himself being viewed as pretentious (*kiza*), as is seen in the opening lines of the series.

Starting from this month's issue of *Shinchō Magazine*, I will publish my protest against the literary circle, a protest born of my

¹⁰ Dazai Osamu *zenshū*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989), 132.

¹¹ Dazai Osamu *zenshū*, vol. 7, 53-54.

¹² *Ibid.*, 88-89.

anger that I have tried to control for the past 10 years. The time has finally come for me to openly express my protest even if some people dislike it, frown upon me, break off ties with me, or accuse me of being exaggerating, or *pretentious*. I will publish my protest in full knowledge of all of that.¹³

Now, let us consider Dazai's sensibility. As used in this paper, this term refers to the acuteness and intensity of his emotional reactions. Dazai's sensitivity can be seen in many of his works, but nowhere is it better revealed than in "Tazunebito" (Looking for a Person, 1946), Dazai's little studied short story based on his experience of evacuation from Tokyo to his hometown shortly before the end of the war.

The story of "Tazunebito" takes the form of a public notice sent to a literary magazine in search of a young woman, presumably a resident in the Sendai area. Towards the end of the war, the narrator was twice the victim of the Tokyo air raids. As the war continued making it likely that he and his family would die at any time, he decided to take his wife and two children to his hometown to prepare for the worst. They board a train from Tokyo to Tsugaru with thousands of refugees like them. Aboard the crowded train, Dazai reflects on the conditions of his family going through the evacuation. Due to malnutrition of his wife when pregnant with his son and then nursing him, the 2-year old boy is "merely a creature moving around." His 5-year old daughter, while physically stronger, is suffering from severe pink eye. "Uncapped and unkempt was the father. The woman with disheveled hair and a face covered with soot was the mother. In anyone's eyes, ours was unmistakably a family of beggars."¹⁴ His wife tried to calm down the son by breast-feeding him, but no milk came out of her. A young mother with a baby of her own offered to nurse the boy. Soon, "the poor boy fell asleep holding in his mouth the breast of someone who was not his own mother." Before long, however, a new anxiety seized them, about food. The daughter presents a scene unbearable for the father to see when she stares at people around them who were eating their bentō lunch. The father becomes philosophical.

Oh, how unfortunate it is that human beings must eat to survive!

"Honey, I will give up living on if the war gets even more ferocious and people start fighting each other for a rice ball in order to survive. I will surrender my right to join the fight. It is cruel for me to say this but, at that time, you must also be prepared to die, with the kids. That is the only dignity I have left at such a time." I had made this declaration to my wife some time before. But now that time seemed to have arrived.¹⁵

Soon, however, another woman gives them some 10 peaches and tomatoes. Dazai's grateful wife tries to pay the lady. A bill is handed back and forth between

¹³ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 10, 330.

¹⁴ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 214.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

the two until the lady bursts out: “Humanitarian!” The exclamation startles and troubles the narrator.

With the peaches and tomatoes, there is no worry about food for the daughter for the rest of the day. But by then, the boy is about to wake up and there is no more milk, nor any soft food for him. The boy is going to die. “I wish we had steamed bread or something...” As the father thinks aloud wistfully, “an incredibly soft whisper was heard from the heaven.” “Are you talking about steamed bread? I have some...” When the father looks up, he sees a young woman standing behind him reaching up to her bag on the luggage rack. Before he knows it, steamed bread starts piling up on his lap: “These were cooked around noon and should still be fresh. And here is steamed rice with red beans... and here are eggs.” The sun begins to set at the time and the train reaches Sendai Station. Before the narrator and his wife have a chance to thank her, the young woman gets off the train. —That is the person the narrator is looking for. The public notice ends with this statement: “I want to meet her, and say this to her, and say it with a sort of curse: ‘Ojōsan (young lady), you saved our lives that day. The beggar that day, was me.’”¹⁶

“Tazunebito” is a little studied piece. Among the few studies published on this piece, three are noteworthy. The central issue in all of these studies is how to interpret the phrase “with a sort of curse” by the narrator, and each study lends evidence for Dazai Osamu’s sensitivity.

For example, Izutsu Mitsuru argues that it is misguided to read too much into the “curse” by the narrator. He claims that the story “was a heart-felt appreciation expressed by the self-conscious narrator to someone who was like a kind neighbor.”¹⁷ This reading of the piece can be justified because, after all, the statement expressing appreciation appears three times in the story and only the last appearance, at the end of the story, is preceded by the phrase “with a sort of curse.” Moreover, knowing neither the name nor the address of his benefactor, the narrator fully realizes that he has little chance of finding her.¹⁸ This analysis emphasizes the intensity of the narrator’s gratitude—thus his sensitivity, as seen in the repetition of the appreciation to the young woman and his decision to publish the notice even if he may never find her. However, this analysis offers no explanation about why the narrator only tries to find the last benefactor instead of all three.

In contrast, Nishida Motohisa’s paper draws a distinction between the first two benefactors and the last one. Moreover, his paper regards the “curse” as an essential part of the story and tries to answer the question of why the narrator feels so compelled to look for the last benefactor only to thank her “with a sort of curse.” Nishida’s analysis has a strong religious color. To Nishida, “the only dignity left” in the narrator comes from his regarding life as the original sin of human beings—one has to eat to survive. Therefore it takes a super being, a goddess in this case, to judge him, deprive him of his last dignity and save him from the dilemma between dying with dignity and living a sinful life to fulfill his responsibilities as a husband and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

¹⁷ Izutsu Mitsuru, “Dazai Osamu ‘tazunebito’ no inshō no tsuiseki” *Bungaku to kyōiku* 180 (March, 1996): 17-31.

¹⁸ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 8, 212.

father. That is why the sentence “an incredible soft whisper was heard *from the heaven*” (Italics mine) is used in the story, in contrast to the more objective descriptions of the help by the first two women, which, in Nishida’s view, is within human capabilities. It is this deprivation that explains why the narrator holds a grudge against the last benefactor alone.¹⁹ If we accept this analysis, we would agree that it takes a rather sensitive writer to create a super being to set the narrator free of his dilemma and then have him blame the goddess for setting him free.

A much more elaborate analysis of the story is by Suzuki Kunihiko. Like Nishida, Suzuki also makes a distinction between the first two benefactors and the last one. Unlike Nishida, however, who takes a religious approach, Suzuki regards the story as Dazai’s criticism of writer Shiga Naoya (1883-1971) for his lack of respect for the dignity of the poor, as revealed in his short story “The Apprentice’s God” (Kozō no kamisama, 1919).

“The Apprentice’s God” tells the story of Senkichi, an apprentice working in a shop that sells scales and how one day he is treated to sushi, his favorite food, by a customer and how he tries to understand the unexpected favor. One day, Senkichi overhears a chat between two clerks about a good sushi restaurant in Kyōbashi and wishes that one day he can visit a sushi restaurant whenever he wants to, like the clerks. A few days later, he is sent on an errand to Kyōbashi. When the errand is over, he walks into a restaurant and timidly picks up a piece of tuna sushi. However, he is forced to put it back right away when told that the sushi is more expensive than the train fare that he has saved. A, a member of the House of Peers who happens to have witnessed the scene, is sympathetic and, encouraged by his colleague, B, treats him later at the restaurant that the clerks gossiped about, by chance, after he happens to see Senkichi again at his store while shopping for a scale for his child. Wondering why A knows of both his embarrassing experience and the restaurant gossiped by the clerks, he tells himself that A must be a god who will bestow upon him more unexpected favors in the future.

The point of departure for Suzuki’s argument is what Dazai calls Shiga’s “cruelty towards people who are poor.”²⁰ Suzuki supports his argument in several ways. First, “The Apprentice’s God” shows writer Shiga Naoya’s cruelty to Senkichi in the story. The boy was so embarrassed by his experience at the restaurant that he must have felt that he had lost his dignity for he not only “said nothing,” but “seemed unable to move” for a moment before he “summoned his courage and walked out the stand.”²¹ However, Shiga keeps an emotionless gaze at him through the process and exposes his humiliating experience in great detail. His gaze shows no understanding of the humiliation felt by the apprentice.

Similarly, B’s following encouragement of A to treat Senkichi shows the cruelty of the upper class toward the boy. “Why didn’t you treat him? Think how happy

¹⁹ Nishida Motohisa, “Dazai Osamu ‘Tazunebito’ ron” *Nishōgakusha daigaku jinbun ronsō* 67 (October, 2001): 177-190.

²⁰ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 10, 355.

²¹ Translated by Michael Y Matsudaira, see Richard N. McKinnon, compiled and edited, *The Heart Is Alone: A Selection of 20th Century Japanese Short Stories* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1957), 77.

you would have made him, if you had told him to eat as much as he wished.”²² As Suzuki argues, both A and B believe that Senkichi belongs to a class different from their own, and they take it for granted that, if you treat someone from that class, he is bound to be grateful and happy. They would never even think of the humiliation and shame that the other party might feel as a human being—in the eyes of A and B, people like the boy don't belong to the same species of human beings as them.²³

In fact the following scene presents Senkichi not even as a different species of human being, but as a sub-human, in the description of the way he consumes the sushi, prepaid to the proprietress of the restaurant by A without Senkichi's knowledge: “Senkichi made short work of the three servings of sushi. *Like a starved dog that had stumbled onto some food most unexpectedly, he gulped it down in no time at all.*” (Italics mine)²⁴

As Suzuki points out, Senkichi displays his lack of manners behind closed doors and under the assumption that he is alone. But he is not alone, since he is being scrutinized by the writer who describes his manner vividly and exposes it to the public. In Suzuki's words, Senkichi is presented here not just “like a starved dog,” but as an actual dog. This expresses cruelty to poor people, something that Dazai Osamu finds unacceptable.²⁵

Second, “The Apprentice's God” also shows A's cruelty towards the boy in the “melancholy feeling” he feels after treating Senkichi.²⁶ As Suzuki argues, that feeling is caused only by his inability to find the internal “happiness” and “satisfaction” he thinks he deserves after performing what seems to him a virtuous action. The “melancholy feeling” is never caused by his attempts to understand how *Senkichi might feel about this favor*—after all, the boy belongs to a different species of human beings. Sure enough, “A was almost cured of his melancholy [later that day].... As the days passed, the strange feeling of melancholy gradually left A until not a trace of it remained.”²⁷

What is most unacceptable to Dazai is perhaps the caricaturization of Senkichi as someone lacking a sense of shame in the story. Trying to understand why he is given such unexpected favor, he even begins to worship A as a god, as seen in the passage below.

Gradually he came to feel that the customer was no ordinary mortal. He knew about my humiliation; he knew what the clerks were saying, and above all, he even read my mind, and treated me to a splendid meal. This couldn't possibly be the act of a mortal. He

²² Richard N. McKinnon, 78.

²³ Suzuki Kunihiko, “Dazai Osamu's ‘Tazunebito’ and Shiga Naoya's ‘Kozō no Kamisama’,” *Numatsu kōdō senmon gakkō kenkyū hōkoku* 25 (January, 1991): 109.

²⁴ Richard N. McKinnon, 80-81.

²⁵ Suzuki Kunihiko, 110.

²⁶ Richard N. McKinnon, 81-82.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 82, 84.

might have been a god, or a wizard, perhaps. Maybe he was O-Inari, the god of harvest!²⁸

The creation of a shameless apprentice is simply unacceptable to Dazai. In due time, he launched a counter attack against “The Apprentice’s God” by writing “Tazunebito.” In “Tazunebito,” Dazai creates Ojōsan as the counterpart of A, and turns himself into the counterpart of Senkichi, not the shameless boy in “The Apprentice’s God”, but the Senkichi who, when his dignity is hurt, rises to express his indignation, publicly. The above, in short, is Suzuki’s reading of “Tazunebito.”

Suzuki’s analysis of “Tazunebito” is intriguing. It also lends strong evidence for Dazai’s sensitivity, in particular his sensitivity to how the poor are treated by the rich and powerful and his belief in how the poor should react when treated without respect. However, Suzuki’s analysis risks diminishing the significance of Dazai’s story in relating “Tazunebito” only to Shiga Naoya and his “The Apprentice’s God.” It reduces the work to the level of a personal grudge without broader appeal. Moreover, his analysis completely ignores the historical background against which the story of “Tazunebito” unfolds: the most difficult time for civilians in Japanese history. A more balanced reading of “Tazunebito” must take into consideration the ordeal that all refugees went through towards the end of the war. If we read the piece with this background in mind, the poignancy of the story—and thus Dazai’s sensitivity—emerges, with universal appeal.

First, Dazai’s evacuation takes place in the last days of Japan’s losing war. One can easily imagine that his family was merely one of the millions of Japanese families suffering unspeakable hardships. It takes a sensitive writer, however, to capture that suffering based on his own experience and observations. The following line, for example, is his reflection on the state of his family going through the grueling evacuation: “In anyone’s eyes, ours was unmistakably a family of beggars.” If the reflection shows his concerns about the appearance of the family, the following observation expresses his gratitude towards the young mother who nursed his son and saved them from a crisis: “the poor boy fell asleep holding in his mouth the breast of someone who was not his own mother.” This, however, is not just pure and simple gratitude. It is gratitude mixed with mortification—the boy would sleep with the breast of his own mother in his mouth if it were not for the war. Then, when the second woman helped them and refused to take his wife’s bill citing her “humanitarian” feeling as the motive, the narrator says to himself: “Of course, it is not that I do not appreciate her kindness. I do. But, deep inside me, I also feel troubled [by her humanitarianism].”²⁹ Again, the narrator’s gratitude is mixed with mortification. The story reaches a climax when the narrator tells about his last dignity: “I will give up living on if the war gets even more ferocious and people start fighting each other for a rice ball in order to survive. I will surrender my right to join the fight. . . That is the only dignity I have left at such a time.” Obviously, he is talking about suicide. It is not hard to imagine that many refugees towards the end of the war contemplated suicide at one point or another. In this sense, Dazai’s last dignity must have resonated with all contemporary readers,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

²⁹ *Dazai Osamu zenshū*, vol. 8, 219.

the generation that went through the same ordeal not too long ago—thus the broad appeal of the piece. In fact, it resonates with today’s readers too, in the same way that 1988 Studio Ghibli animation *Grave of the Fireflies* (Hotaru no haka) does, an animation based on Nosaka Akiyuki (1930-2015)’s award-winning 1967 short story of the same title. Reading “Tazunebito” in this light, Dazai’s following reflection is poignant. It is a reflection about his son’s being bound to die of starvation and the fact that there is nothing he can do about it as a father: “I have lived a life of 36 years and have tasted my share of hardships. When I look back, it was 36 years of little worth.”³⁰ Clearly, the “worthlessness” in his reflection refers to his helplessness in going through all the hardships. But whose fault is it? He, like all the refugees, lived in a time in which there was nothing individuals could do to change their circumstances. It is in this context, I believe that the phrase “with a kind of curse” in the last statement of appreciation should be read as a statement of gratitude, but gratitude mixed with hurt dignity and mortification as a human being reduced to a beggar by the times. No reader would have difficulty relating to Dazai’s gratitude, hurt dignity and mortification because of the universality of such sensitivity.

This paper starts with the observation of an apparent contradiction between the image of Dazai as received in Japan and the West and the difficulty most readers have in relating to that image. This contradiction makes Dazai’s popularity a puzzle. It is perhaps safe to say that Dazai as a writer is not popular because of his decadence or scandals but because of something else. What is that something else? This paper provides one answer: It is Dazai’s sense and sensibility. Dazai’s sense and sensibility make him easy to relate to for readers because pretentiousness, represented by Dazai’s characteristic word *kiza*, is no virtue for anyone but a sense of gratitude, dignity and mortification, as presented poignantly in his short story “Tazunebito,” is, for all.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.