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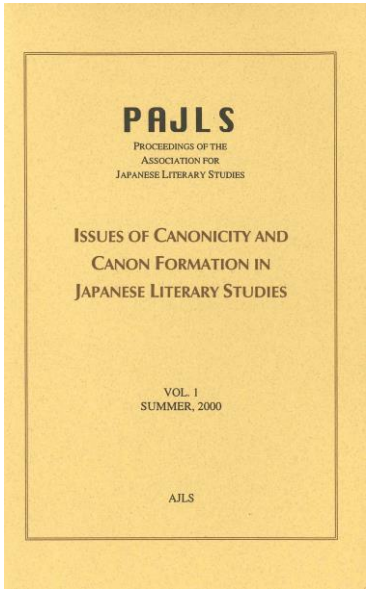
*Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 1 (2000): 47–58.




*PAJLS* 1:
*Issues of Canonicity and Canon Formation in Japanese Literary Studies*.
Ed. Stephen D. Miller.

# DILUTION OR DIVERSIFICATION— OKINAWAN WORKS AND THE AKUTAGAWA PRIZE

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When Dazai Osamu failed to win the first Akutagawa Prize in 1935, he blamed Kawabata Yasunari, one of the judges, for outspokenly criticizing the unhealthy nature of his work. Denouncing Kawabata in an open letter, Dazai taunted him by asking, "Does keeping small birds and watching dancers perform constitute such an admirable life?"[1] Although admittedly a cheap shot, Dazai's petulant remark exposes the insidious nature of a prize system operated by elitist writers who act as both the creators and arbiters of mainstream literary culture. The esteemed patriarchs of literature reaffirm their own place in the canon by perpetuating their notions of orthodoxy when awarding the acclaimed Akutagawa Prize.

When the prize committee considers the work of an author even less orthodox than Dazai, its prescriptive instincts intensify. Often these less orthodox works originate from the pen of one who is outside the bounds of the *bundan*. If the *bundan*'s cohesion is based on a shared education, geography, and aloofness from society,[2] where does the Okinawan writer who lives nearly a thousand miles from the center fit in? When Okinawan writings, far removed from Kawabata's world of precious birds and dancing girls, are worked into the canon through the bestowal of the Akutagawa Prize, what is the effect on the works themselves? If the prize represents the pinnacle of literary recognition, can receiving it be a negative thing? And what is the effect of their inclusion on the canon? Rather than championing such inclusion as either a successful breakthrough for marginal literature or a welcome diversification of the canon, I would like to question the motiva-

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[1] Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1987), 1043; Odagiri Susumu, ed., *Akutagawa shō shōjiten* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1983), 32.

[2] Edward Fowler, *The Rhetoric of Confession: 'Shishÿsetsu' in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 129.

tion and effect of such incorporation. I argue that this process of canonization entails an erasure of difference that significantly alters the original work of literature but fails to shake the nature of the canon to any great extent.

In this paper I discuss the four Okinawan works that have received the coveted Akutagawa Prize in its sixty-plus-year history. In 1967 Ōshiro Tatsuhiro became the first Okinawan winner for his novella *Cocktail Party,* with Higashi Mineo following four years later for *Child of Okinawa.* Twenty-five years passed before the next prize was again awarded to an Okinawan, Matayoshi Eiki in 1996 for *Revenge of the Pig,* followed in 1997 by Medoruma Shun for "Droplets."[3] To examine the critical reception of these works, I rely on the comments made by the Akutagawa prize committee members because they suggest possible underlying motivations *for* and effects *of* embracing regional literature on the mainland. The judges' comments, which explain their choices, appear side by side with the winning story in *Bungei Shunjū.* Admittedly, the comments vary in quality and astuteness. Nonetheless, their positioning directly following the stories and their status as often the first critical statements on the works suggest their powerful position to interpret and in effect rewrite the stories. All criticism arguably rewrites the literature it analyzes by guiding readers' responses to some degree.[4] But in the case of the Okinawan works, this rewriting consistently takes on the charged character of depoliticization.

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[3] Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's *Kakuteru paatii* and Higashi Mineo's *Okinawa no shōnen* appear in *Okinawa bungaku zenshū,* vol. 7, ed. Okinawa Bungaku Zenshū Henshū Iinkai (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankyōkai, 1990), 257-341. Translations of these works can be found in *Okinawa: Two Postwar Novellas,* trans. Steve Rabson (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1989). Matayoshi Eiki, *Buta no mukui, Bungei shunjū* (March 1996): 370-419. Medoruma Shun, "Suiteki," *Bungei shunjū* (Sept. 1997): 432-50.

[4] Such rewriting seems to occur especially when a minority literature is incorporated into the canon. Fredric Jameson comments on the danger of canonizing Third World literature as follows: "If the purpose of the canon is to restrict our aesthetic sympathies, . . . to discourage us from reading anything else or from reading those things in different ways, then it is humanly impoverishing." Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1991): 66. See also Chieko M. Ariga's article "Text Versus Commentary: Struggles over the Cul-

When the judges write about Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's *Cocktail Party*, for example, not one remarks on the quite blatant anti-mainland sentiment of the work, although they comment extensively on its anti-American stance. The novella schematically maps out the relationship between Okinawans and Americans, mainlanders, and Chinese by including representative characters from each group. The Okinawan protagonist, whose daughter is raped by an American serviceman, stifles his rage for the sake of international diplomacy. But the protagonist must similarly repress his memories of mainland Japanese wartime atrocities against Okinawans in the name of national diplomacy. For example, even when he "want[ed] to say that there were instances of Japanese soldiers bayoneting Okinawan infants inside caves where their families had taken shelter,"[5] he censors himself, limiting conversation to those topics acceptable for an "international" cocktail party.

In the second section of the novella, the narration shifts from first to second person; the protagonist attacks himself for his weakness, even employing the rough, impolite *omae* instead of the more formal *anata*. For example, the protagonist berates himself, saying, "Three hours before her ordeal [his daughter's rape] you (*omae*) had sauntered through the security gate into the family brigade [to go to the cocktail party] feeling smug because you could walk around inside without the slightest worry."[6] The self-accusatory tone of his *omae*s suggest the redirection of his rage inward, but when read, *omae* becomes a jarring direct address to the reader that challenges any position of complacent distance. Although America is also vilified in the story, the intended recipient of this criticism is undeniably the mainland reader.[7] Ōshiro himself admits these dueling intentions: "I wrote *Cocktail Party* to expose the sham of a friendship between America and Okinawa. . . . Yet while writing, I constantly felt these emotions toward

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tural Meanings of 'Woman,'" which discusses the power of commentaries to rewrite women's literature. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*, ed. Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet Walker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 352-81.

[5] Rabson, trans., 69; Ōshiro, *Kakuteru paatii,* 294.

[6] Rabson, trans., 50; Ōshiro, *Kakuteru paatii,* 274.

[7] Certainly Okinawans are also a target of this criticism, but I disagree with reading it solely as self-criticism. The content of these rebukes, the style of direct address, and Ōshiro's own remarks that follow point more convincingly to reading them as targeted at the mainlander reader.

Japan (Yamato) rather than America."[8] Interestingly, Ōshiro renders not only "America" in katakana but also "Yamato," suggesting his desire to label both countries as equally foreign and antagonistic.

Despite the obvious presence of anti-mainland sentiments, the Akutagawa judges focus exclusively on the story's anti-American stance.[9] Kawabata praises it, saying "the allegorical friendship between the Japanese, Americans, and Chinese is suitable for a story about the limits of 'international friendship' in the present Okinawan situation."[10] Importantly, here Kawabata fails even to distinguish between Okinawans and mainland Japanese, much less question the limits of their "national friendship." By erasing Okinawans from the allegorical equation, he in effect rewrites the story, rendering it politically impotent vis-à-vis the mainland but charged vis-à-vis the U.S.

This rewriting levels any distinction between Okinawans and mainlanders as political subjects, a distinction that was clearly intended by Ōshiro. Instead, the *bundan* judges posit a comforting homogeneous identity that binds Okinawans and mainlanders. Many of the judges write of the story, as Funabashi Seiichi does, that "Okinawa's pain of being under [American] Occupation rule is similar to what we (*warera*) experienced

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[8] Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, "Okinawa de Nihonjin ni naru koto," ed. Okinawa Bungaku Zenshū Henshū Iinkai, *Okinawa bungaku zenshū*, vol. 18 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1990), 54.

[9] Steve Rabson also criticizes the Japanese critics who ignore anti-mainland sentiment in favor of labeling the story anti-American. He argues that "had the author wanted to single out one country for condemnation, it seems unlikely that he would have made atrocities committed by Japanese and Chinese soldiers crucial elements in the story" (Rabson, 128) and blames such critics for succumbing to the "temptation to read too much ideology into these stories" (Rabson, 132). However, in an interesting parallel to the Japanese critics who ignore anti-mainland sentiment, Rabson discourages anti-American readings of both Ōshiro's *Cocktail Party* and Higashi's *Child of Okinawa* by asserting their universality: He asserts the stories "are compelling because they represent a particular, and to most of us unfamiliar, situation within the context of difficulties faced by people everywhere" (132). Like the judges, Rabson's move to universalize the works effectively depoliticizes them.

[10] Ishikawa Tatsuzō et al., "Dai go jūnanakai Akutagawa shō senpyō," *Akutagawa shō zenshū*, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1982), 412.

twenty years ago."[11] Kawabata similarly praises *Cocktail Party* for "succeeding in making us feel that the problems depicted extend far beyond Okinawa."[12] Here the judges pledge a sense of unity with Okinawa in the common role of victim of the Occupation. But when the critics deny the work's antagonistic stance toward the mainland, they effectively erase its regional specificity and forestall its role as social protest literature.

Why the judges depoliticize these works becomes obvious when we consider the timing of their production and reception. Ōshiro was the first winner in 1967. Higashi Mineo won just four years later, sharing the prize with the first resident Korean recipient.[13] During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Okinawa's relationship with both America and mainland Japan was being redefined. On the mainland, Okinawa occupied center stage amidst escalating protests by anti-Vietnam war groups over the U.S. military's continued use of Okinawa as a base of operations for the war in Southeast Asia. The shared desire to oust the U.S. military from Okinawa provided a platform of possible unity between Okinawa and the mainland. However, fierce debates also raged at the time over the promised reversion of Okinawa to Japan, which was effected in 1972. The coexistence of these two movements suggests how Okinawa was teetering between the poles of national cohesion on the one hand and a separatist regional movement on the other. Could this

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[11] Ishikawa et al., 409.

[12] Rabson, trans., 127; Ishikawa et al., 412.

[13] Ri Kaisei [Yi Hoesong] was the first resident Korean author to win the Akutagawa prize for his story "The Woman Who Fulled Clothes." Ri Kaisei, "Kinuta o utsu onna," *Akutagawa shō zenshū,* vol. 9 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1982), 7-31; trans. Beverly Nelson, "The Woman who Fulled Clothes," *Flowers of Fire: Twentieth-Century Korean Stories,* ed. Peter H. Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1974), 344-74. Both of the winning stories address the social problems experienced by Okinawans and resident Koreans respectively through the voice of a child narrator. Not surprisingly, many of the Akutagawa judges downplayed the political content by praising the narrators' non-offensive, conciliatory tone and labeling both works as universal coming-of-age stories. In addition to depoliticizing the works in this way, several judges denigrated the quality of both works; for example, Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke writes, "I didn't think any one work was strong enough to win but that it would turn out that two works would share the prize." See the judges' comments in Inoue Yasushi et al., "Dai rokujūrokkai Akutagawa shō senpyō," *Akutagawa shō zenshū,* vol. 9 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1982), 347-55.

explain the motivations for rewriting the threatening anti-mainland sentiments of the works into a reassuring and unifying anti-American sentiment? Perhaps the very awarding of the prizes at these moments represents a mode of incorporation that coopts in an attempt to assimilate.

Although the awarding of the prizes coincided with a time of extreme political uncertainty centering on Okinawa, the judges go to great lengths to deny any ties between politics and literary value. For example, when discussing *Cocktail Party,* Nagai Tatsuo insists, "I want to make it abundantly clear that the current problems [in Okinawa] and the value of this work are entirely different things."[14] Kawabata similarly attests that "although this work is about the Okinawan issue, I did not recommend it because of its subject matter or because I sympathize with Okinawa."[15]

Perhaps the judges are interested in denying any political motive in order to uphold notions of *junbungaku* as "pure" (i.e. apolitical) literature. But rather than elevating the works to the lofty status of *junbungaku*, this insistent denial effectively removes the literature from the politicized context of its production and reception.[16] Film scholar Fernando Solanas notes how institutions strip potentially dangerous cultural products of their political efficacy: "Neocolonialism makes a serious attempt to castrate, to digest, the cultural forms that arise beyond the bounds of its own aims. Attempts are made to remove from them precisely what makes them effective and dangerous, their *politicization.*"[17] These politically charged Okinawan works of the late 1960s and early 1970s are first digested by their incorporation into the canon and are then castrated by the rewriting of their content and removal of their context.

At another highly charged political moment precisely twenty-five years later, the prize was conferred on two more Okinawan authors, Matayoshi

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[14] Ishikawa et al., 407.

[15] Ishikawa et al., 411.

[16] Although apolitical readings of these works are certainly possible and valid, after rejecting anti-mainland political readings, many of the judges decry the Okinawan authors' lack of technical prowess. Plots and endings are criticized as unbelievable and style and diction are pronounced immature and inferior. In this way, the judges both disallow the works their political import and their aesthetic merit.

[17] Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino, "Towards a Third Cinema," *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 49.

Eiki in 1996 for his novella *Revenge of the Pig* and Medoruma Shun in the following year for his story "Droplets."[18] This time Okinawa had made the headlines for the kidnap and rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan girl by American servicemen. The rape incited protests in Okinawa and the mainland against the continued U.S. military presence. The awarding of the prizes again coincided with a moment when many Okinawans and mainlanders were united in their desire to oust the foreign presence. Many in the press interpreted the rape as a metaphor for the economic and cultural exploitation of Okinawa by the U.S. However, anti-mainland sentiment also resurfaced after this incident, likely because Okinawans were reminded how Japan had, in effect, forfeited their land to the U.S. as the "spoils of war."[19] As in the case twenty-five years earlier, the conferral of the Akutagawa prize, by encouraging a "you are one of us" mentality, functions in part to effect assimilation (*dōka*) as an antidote to the potentially dangerous separatist movement for dissimilation (*ika*).

Although the prize was awarded to Okinawans at politically similar moments, these later stories seem to have engendered a quite different form of rewriting by the critics. For the works of the 1990s, exoticization replaces the depoliticization of the earlier works. In Matayoshi's 1996 *Revenge of the Pig*, a young man returns to the island of his birthplace after a twelve-year absence to bury the bones of his father. Unlike the other stories that thematize traumatic war memories, Matayoshi's contains only one passing ref-

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[18] Ironically, some critics argue that the consecutive awarding to Okinawan authors proves the literary merit of the works and rules out any political agenda in the awarding. See a discussion of this view in Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, "Introduction," *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, in press).

[19] See for example Koji Taira, "Troubled National Identity: The Ryukuans/Okinawans," *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity,* ed. Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge, 1997), 171-73. In support of such a reading, both *Cocktail Party* and "Droplets" thematize the resurfacing of repressed memories that threaten the protagonists' hard-won sense of peace and complacency. The possible danger arises when these memories force the protagonist (and perhaps the reader) to question the charade of easy friendship between Okinawa and both the U.S. and the mainland: As the angry protagonist of *Cocktail Party* declares, "It isn't just the crime of one American that I want to indict, but all the pretense of the cocktail party" (Rabson, trans., 75).

erence to the war. *Revenge of the Pig* seems to require no depoliticized readings because the judges label and even praise it for being apolitical from the start. For example, Ishihara Shintarō commends it for depicting "the different essence of Okinawa [and for] separating itself from Okinawa's politicalness and instead stepping into the starting point of Okinawa—its culture."[20] The story is heralded as paradoxically both the essence of "Okinawan" in terms of culture and "non-Okinawan" in its absence of a political message.

In praising it for breaking with the political, critics exoticize Okinawan culture. But rather than read exoticization as a celebration of Okinawan culture, we must realize that it comes at the same price as depoliticization. In a series of essays entitled *Yaponesia*, Shimao Toshio comments on the harmful nature of such appropriation. Philip Gabriel summarizes Shimao's interpretation: "Mainlanders' reactions to things Okinawan . . . is twofold—either they attempt . . . to suppress any discourse about Okinawa (speaking of it only in 'whispers') or they appropriate it, wrench it from its cultural context and exoticize it."[21] As this quotation illustrates, although exoticization would seemingly mark the works as indelibly Okinawan, it instead results in an erasure of the works' cultural specificity. For the critics, since the aesthetic and apolitical aspects of Okinawan culture seem easily detachable from their Okinawan context, the work can even be triumphantly labeled un-Okinawan. For example, Judge Hino Keizō compliments *Revenge of the Pig* for "not grieving and yearning for the past. . . . This work is not even vaguely Okinawan."[22] Judge Kōno Taeko too praises the erasure of Okinawanness in literature: "In works by Okinawans, many of them give me the feeling that they are demanding a special understanding since they are Okinawan, but I don't get this feeling at all from *Revenge of the Pig*. Writing about Okinawa, Matayoshi surpasses Okinawa. It might be impolite to even call this work Okinawan literature."[23] These comments betray the

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[20] Miyamoto Teru et al., "Dai hyakujūyonkai Akutagawa shō senpyō," *Bungei shunjū* (March 1996): 363.

[21] *Yaponesia* is a series of more than 150 essays written by Shimao Toshio from the 1950s to the 1970s on the relationship of Okinawa to the mainland. Philip Gabriel, "Rethinking the Margins: Shimao Toshio and *Yaponesia*," *Japan Forum* 8.2 (1996): 208.

[22] Miyamoto et al., 364.

[23] Miyamoto et al., 363. Although *Revenge of the Pig* does not contain overt references to the effects of the war or Occupation on Okinawa, many critics would

critics' desire to erase all traces of Okinawa's unpleasant history in literature to the extent of erasing the very category of Okinawan literature.

At the same time that the critics attempt to eliminate difference, the judges of these later works proudly adopt them as saviors who can rescue the stagnant mainland literary culture by infusing it with the exotic and diverse. For example, Ishihara writes of "Revenge of the Pig," "The promise . . . of the Okinawan region lies precisely in its un-uniformity. . . . In the midst of the state of Japan's bleached-out culture today, Okinawa's promise is that it produces reverence of culture."[24] Hino too claims that Matayoshi's work is "in direct contrast to Tokyo's hollowing out of the center."[25] These remarks echo those of Shimao Toshio, who used the metaphor of a blood infusion to describe how Okinawa could revitalize the stifling conformity of the decaying mainland culture. But as noted above, the critics first dilute this Okinawan blood, either by depoliticization (in the case of the earlier works) or exoticization (in the case of the later ones), before infusing it into the languishing mainland body. So although the critics rejoice at the revivification of a canon that embraces diversity, the resulting canon is merely a homogenized, diluted version.

But it is not just the critics who conspiratorially dilute the Okinawan works; the authors often also participate when they court the mainland. The omission or modification of dialect represents one clearcut example of the concessions made by the authors with an eye to the mainland. Of the four prizewinning works, none uses dialect in both dialogue and prose. Only Higashi's *Child of Okinawa* and Medoruma's "Droplets" consistently use dialect in the dialogue. But even these do not employ true Okinawan dialect. Instead they alter it into a form that is more easily comprehended by mainland readers. Even the authors admit that they must alter their literature to gain entry to the mainland canon. Medoruma justifies such modifications,

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argue that it is distinctly "Okinawan" in its emphasis on the theme of *yuta*, or Okinawan shamanesses. I am grateful to Yonaha Keiko for this observation. However, my argument is not whether a work can or should be labeled Okinawan but rather that the critics' label of non-Okinawan threatens to de-localize a work. At the same time they deny it any regional specificity, the critics exploit its non-native origins to assert the diversity of the body of prize-winning works in self-congratulatory tones.

[24] Miyamoto et al., 363.

[25] Miyamoto et al., 364.

saying, "If I use Okinawan words in my works, it's really difficult to get people to understand. So I use kanji and put in kana glosses."[26] Despite such extensive accommodations, the critic Takii Kōsaku complains of *Child of Okinawa* that "the dialect is used skillfully and although it does keep you reading, I had the feeling that it was a bit inconsiderate."[27] Criticism for even a modified form of Okinawan dialect suggests the impossibility of the success on the mainland of a work purely in dialect. Certainly for the Okinawan author, not to court the mainland audience is economic suicide since Okinawans represent less than one percent of the country's population. Although necessity may dictate that the authors make such concessions, they join the critics in stripping the works of their regional specificity.

As Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson note in *Southern Exposure,* the Okinawan authors face the "quandary of how culturally particularistic to make their literature: on the one hand, any work laden with unexplained references to Okinawa's landscape, religious practices, or historical events, not to mention any work written with long passages in regional dialect risks alienating mainland Japanese readers; on the other hand, writers who appear too conscious of their mainland readers (as manifested in self-exoticism or didacticism) risk alienating their Okinawan readers."[28] In a 1996 roundtable discussion, Ōshiro, Matayoshi, and other authors discuss the risks of incorporating dialect and other aspects of Okinawan culture in their fiction. They are torn between a desire for authenticity on the one hand and marketability on the other; they want to diversify the existing canon of Japanese literature but are wary of self-exoticization. Ōshiro repeatedly warns young authors like Matayoshi against the trend of using Okinawan culture, especially dialect, as mere window dressing.[29] In the end, however, all the panelists, including Ōshiro, advocate modifying Okinawan dialect to make it both comprehensible and digestible for the mainland critics and readers. The panelists

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[26] Medoruma Shun, "Jūsho no kotoba," *Bungei shunjū* (Sept 1997): 424.

[27] Inoue et al., 408.

[28] Molasky and Rabson, "Introduction," *Southern Exposure* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, in press), 8. I thank Mike Molasky for directing me to look at the ways the Okinawan authors tailor themselves, often through self-exoticization, when courting the mainland critics and audience.

[29] Ōshiro Tatsuhiro et al., "Okinawa bungaku no kōmyaku: atarashii fuhen e," *Bungakukai* 51.4 (1997): 216-37. See especially 232-35 for a discussion of the incorporation of dialect.

believe that an altered form of dialect is one way to interject their culture into the mainland, arguing that a modified dialect that can be absorbed by the mainland is preferable to one that is authentic and thus incomprehensible. Interestingly, the authors tout the merits of using an altered form of dialect, arguing that not only will it to facilitate comprehension but also potentially change the standardized language itself to include Okinawan dialect. Panelist Hino Keizō urges Okinawan authors to "use words from their own regions to create a new standardized language and shake up the Japanese language"; Ōshiro believes that only then will "Okinawan expressions be incorporated into Japanese."[30]

But if this dialect is a modified version, what is being absorbed by the mainland as authentic Okinawan dialect is actually one that has been tailored to the mainland. How much do the Okinawan authors' concessions in terms of dialect leak over to other stylistic and even thematic compromises in the hopes of gaining entry to the mainland canon? If, as the optimistic Okinawan authors hope, their modified forms of dialect can alter the standardized Japanese, perhaps they also believe that the watered-down forms of literature can alter the canon of Japanese literature. And if these already diluted works are embraced by the mainland only to be further attenuated, how diverse is the resulting canon?

Rather than simply celebrating the critical acceptance of Okinawans' works as either a successful breakthrough for the marginal or as a true diversification of the canon, it is crucial to recognize the accompanying erasure of difference effected by both the critics and authors. This results not just in a flattened canon but in a flattened literary historiography as well. Since the judges' comments are often the first critical statements on the works, they shape subsequent discourse. Seen in this context, the Akutagawa prize can be interpreted as a microcosm of the formation of the canons of both literature and literary criticism—ones that define what constitutes Japanese literature, the interpretation of these works, and their place in the literary canon.

In the case of the Okinawan works, when canonized they are depoliticized and exoticized by the critics' readings, decontextualized by their publication in a mainland journal, and even further stripped of their specificity through their subsequent placement in the voluminous *Akutagawa zenshū*. Although the smoothing out of difference when a regional literature is incorporated into the canon is obvious, what happens to the works of unorthodox

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[30] Ōshiro et al., "Okinawa bungaku no kōmyaku," 235; 232.

mainland authors like Dazai? And what happens when the difference between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy is even more subtle? At a basic level, the very operation of canon formation decontextualizes a work, wrenching it from its original socio-political context, in favor of placing it within a body of treasured literary works that are at once timeless and universal. In this way, leveling the fields of specific cultural production and reception threatens to render both the works and the resulting canon innocuous in their timelessness and anonymity.