

Abstract

‘Alienated People’ and “Neighborliness”

-Study on Dazai Osamu based on His Works Written during 1937 to 1948 -

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This study focuses on 「neighborliness」, a theme which is believed to have been agonized by Dazai all his life, in relation to the matter of alienation appearing in Dazai’s literature and considers the feature of 「neighborliness」. The characters of Dazai’s literature express criticism on the social order and system while taking the position as 「the weak」. As a result, such characters have been positioned as libertin by the postwar media. Moreover, during the war, Dazai mostly wrote books looking irrelevant to the period. Accordingly, his works were once regarded as literature of resistance to the age.

However, reminding of concerns on 「the weak」 and 「neighborliness」 described in his late works, this study focuses on Dazai’s love for humans. His confession that 「neighborliness is all that he has agonized over」 cannot convincingly be deemed as a separate matter from ‘weakness’ appearing in his books written during the war time. This study aims to consider the nature of the agony in his literature which is not related to the age or society but to ‘humans’ and to read Dazai’s literature in a new way.

Here are the detailed contents of each chapter. In Chapter 1 of Part 1, “*Nyozegamon*” and “*Family Happiness*” are analyzed and the Chapter shows that Dazai’s 「neighborliness」 faces the alienated people who are set away from ‘happiness’. The criticism on ‘family egoism’ shown in “*Nyozegamon*” is in the same vein as that on the ‘family egoism’ shown in “*Family Happiness*”. Both are based on the concept of 「neighborliness」.

Chapter 2 considers the meaning of 「neighborliness」 used by Dazai, based on the analysis of “*Farewell*” written during a time when the word, 「neighborliness」, was intensively used by Dazai in his literature. A alienated person, ‘I’ express 「neighborliness」 toward the alienated people like ‘I’ and feel a sense of intimacy. In addition, it is remarkable that when speaking of 「neighborliness」, an aversion to 「hypocrisy」 is also

expressed together.

Part 2 specifically studies Dazai's viewpoint on the alienated by way of figuring out the alienated people hidden in his mid-period works.

The mid-period refers to the age when the Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War occurred. During the period, a large number of people were alienated under the social system. The society was governed by ideologies of health and a happy family, and this naturally led to a lot of alienated people who were put out of the social system. Until now, there have been discussions on whether Dazai's literature written during the war time stood against or for the relevant period. However, if Dazai's literature is read according to his eyes focusing on 'humans', it may be read from a consistent perspective, regardless of the period.

Chapter 3 analyzes "*Tokyo Dayori*" and a 'girl with uncomfortable leg' where the social situations of the war time were reflected in the perspectives of 「neighborliness」. Reading the pains and alienation of 'I' hidden in "*Tokyo Dayori*", 'I' look at the girl with empathy for sharing the pain of being alienated.

Chapter 4 studies "*Story of the snowing night*", which prevails the war time situations and seems to emphasize the happy family. But Dazai's criticism over 'family egoism' from the "*Family Happiness*" is shown in this book as well. The 'story of the fisherman' from "*Story of the Snowing Night*" is very similar to the alienated people shown in the 'story of Tsushima Shuji' from "*Family Happiness*".

Next, when Dazai recreated Judas of the Bible through "*kakekomi uttae*", he described in the position of Judas that Judas was alienated from the love of Jesus. Dazai drew Judas from the Bible into an alienated person being hated by Jesus. The sense of alienation is shown in his another adapted story, "*New Hamlet*". In the process of reinterpreting and adapting the original stories, Dazai focused on the weak or the alienated people.

Part 3 studies the late works of Dazai. Chapter 6 studies a sense of alienation from the main character Yojo of "*No Longer Human*" who is totally alienated from the world. The Chapter studies how Yojo feels close with various alienated people and how he feels empathy on them. The word 'neighbor' in "*No Longer Human*" is

interpreted in various ways, but this study confirms that the 「Neighbor」 means that Dazai is an alienated person and that it refers to various alienated people shown in the book.

Lastly, Chapter 7 of this study determines that the Righteousness Dazai sought to keep for his life was 「neighborliness」 by studying domestic fictions written during his later part of life, such as “*Family Happiness*”, “*Father*”, and “*Peach*”. Each work written during his last years describes the self-deceptive and self-giving characteristics of 「neighborliness」 through the Bible verses cited in each work. As Dazai said that 「neighborliness」 was his first and last motto, he agonized over 「neighborliness」 until he met God.

As aforementioned, this study newly analyzes the alienated people portrayed in the mid-period and the late-period works of Dazai, in terms of 「neighborliness」, not from a downstream perspective. The feature of 「neighborliness」 shown in Dazai’s literature is same as the sympathy and empathy that Yojo of “*No Longer Human*” gave to the alienated people like himself. It can be referred to as 「neighborliness」 in the style of Dazai, which is different from the original meaning in the Bible. The feature of the alienated people shown in Dazai’s literature is Dazai’s own persona. Dazai portrayed 「neighborliness」 which he projected his own pain onto. Moreover, Dazai’s works written during the war period can be read in a broad context, in terms of interest in humans, rather than stance on the relevant period.

This study is meaningful since Dazai’s works having an image against the social order have been reinterpreted as literature seeking love, an essential part of a human. Although the form of love is distorted, Dazai’s works may be read as literature of salvation where he tried to give a helping hand to the alienated people like himself.