



Dazai Osamu's Literary Works

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Abstract. This study explores Dazai Osamu's writing style to discover what sets him apart as a writer. His distinctive approach to literature has greatly influenced Chinese and Japanese writers, and he adopts a descriptive style that is emotionally loaded to connect with his audience. His literary works depict the anxiety he has struggled with in his personal life. He uses these pieces to explore different social issues and to make social commentaries on themes like family. What distinguishes his writing style is how emotive and emotionally captivating his stories are. Dazai's works cover serious topics, such as mental health and self-enlightenment; he has also written witty pieces that are full of humor. Dazai's versatility helps him tackle a range of topics effectively while maintaining his authenticity as a writer. What sets his literature apart and gives it a distinct taste is the use of the possessive pronoun to tell the story. By using the pronoun, *I*, Dazai takes command of the story and gives it authenticity while creating a connection with the reader. Unlike other Japanese writers, Dazai was more interested in expressing himself. Despite being born into a well-off family, Dazai still writes great literature for the proletarians and effectively captures their struggle by focusing on challenges that cut across the social classes, such as the emotional struggles that the protagonists in his stories have to contend with.

Keywords: Dazai Osamu · Japanese literature · the possessive pronoun

1 Introduction

Dazai Osamu was raised in one of the richest from a young age and did not suffer from material lack. Despite coming from a wealthy background, Dazai was not convinced that happiness lay in material possessions. His struggle to find the key to happiness gives his writings flavor as he focuses on exploring emotional themes. Dazai shows empathy toward the plight of the poor in his writings and does not come off as condescending. This has helped him reach a wider audience because of his empathetic nature.

What sets apart Dazai Osamu's literature and gives it a distinct taste is the use of the possessive pronoun to tell the story. By using the pronoun, *I*, Dazai takes command of the story and gives it authenticity while creating a connection with the reader. Unlike other Japanese writers, Dazai was more interested in expressing himself. The drive toward individualism and rediscovering what it means to be happy gives writings by Dazai a unique appeal [1]. Dazai's work carries a rich struggle for identity and explores diverse themes as the writer struggles to find his own identity through writing. His earlier works

are bleaker, reflecting the personal struggle that the writer was going through. This changes gradually as the writer finds a more fulfilling life. Dazai was brought up as one of the richest from a young age; the writer did not suffer from material lack. Despite coming from a wealthy background, Dazai was not convinced that happiness lay in material possessions. His struggle to find the key to happiness gives his writings flavor as he focuses on exploring emotional themes. Dazai shows empathy toward the plight of the poor in his writings and does not come off as condescending. This has helped the writer reach a wider audience because of his empathetic nature.

The later works by Dazai cover more hopeful themes and positive ideals as the writer focus on virtues such as kindness and love. The literary works of Dazai are worth exploring because of how he studies human nature in his stories and his honest depiction of his characters. Writers like Dazai set the pace for individualistic thinking when setting and telling a story. As a literary icon, Dazai opened the room for discussion on social themes such as family and virtue. His writings carry depth in them and explore social challenges in a way that compels readers to keep reading. The diversity in themes in Dazai's work shows his mastery of writing and his creativity in putting his characters in different situations as part of his storytelling.

Although there are a great number of researches analyzing Dazai Osamu and his works, it can be seen a lack of comparison of his influence between Japan and China. Therefore, this paper explores different writing styles used by Dazai in storytelling and the themes covered in his stories, and the main objective of this paper is to detail the literary styles used by Dazai in his literature and how they have influenced storytelling in China and Japan. This paper explores different writing styles used by Dazai in storytelling and the themes covered in his stories. Generally, Dazai's writing style is simple and sincere, as he tends to stick to plain and catchy descriptions in developing his stories.

2 Background and Literary Works of Dazai Osamu

Readers can see versatility in Dazai's writing style as he takes on the persona of a female character with ease. Exploring his works takes a reader into a world of different perspectives as the writer walks the reader through the point of view of different characters. Dazai's work clarifies a man who is comfortable with his sexuality as he approaches both sexes with respect. There is no gender bias present in his writings, as he seems to value female characters and treats them with a level of reverence in his writings. The use of a female character as the story's main protagonist shows the writer's versatility and his level of empathy.

Dazai effectively develops the character while using the first person. The ability to take on different personas and effectively develop them makes Dazai a compelling storyteller. He can walk a reader through the struggles of different characters making his stories richer. By taking on the persona of a female character, Dazai demonstrates his empathy for his female readers and that he has a grasp of what they have to contend with. Using creativity to depict a female character's life shows the writer's vivid imagination and how it comes into play in telling his stories. Multidimensional writers are more compelling to readers since they share many perspectives. Dazai has capitalized on versatility, which can be seen in the different themes he pursues in his literary works.

The writer uses this as a strength and shares the stories of different characters while maintaining his personal touch. This has helped his audience identify with his writing style as it is unique.

In *Onna No Ketto* (Women's Duel), Dazai appears unexpectedly in the book. Appearing in his novel is unconventional and is part of the literary flair of Dazai. This unique style shows how comfortable Dazai is in his writing and his bold and experimental approach to writing. In his storytelling, the writer does not work with a conventional approach that ties him strictly to a world of fiction. He effectively borrows from his personal life and experiences to develop his stories. This style of blending experience and fiction gives his stories an edge of sincerity. By appearing in the novel, Dazai introduces his readers to a chaotic plot that blends fiction and reality. This adds to the thrill of reading his stories because they have a refreshing approach that is not tied to the rules of conventional storytelling. A flexible approach to writing has made it possible for Dazai to maintain a fresh approach when developing the plot for his stories. The disregard for conventional approaches towards developing the theme is part of the appeal of Dazai's literary works. He takes on the guise of a cultural rebel when telling his stories. By posing as a cultural rebel, Dazai has the platform to challenge cultural norms and start a conversation around existing social challenges.

In *Doke No Hana* (A Clown Star), Dazai uses similar expressions to ground the readers' imagination. By using similar expressions, Dazai establishes a rhythm with his readers. The easy breakdown of his prose gives his work a poetic touch making it more powerful and memorable to the readers. Dazai sticks to using plain and witty language to connect with the reader. This approach makes his work more appealing as it comes off as light literature that is more entertaining than informative. As a writer, Dazai does a spectacular job at engaging his audience through lighthearted remarks and good humor to develop his stories. Using a repetitive expression to build rhythm in narration shows that Dazai takes on a flexible approach when telling his stories and is not affixed to writing a series of events that follow a chronological pattern as the standard for developing his plots. In Dazai's work, the protagonists speak directly to readers in his novels written in the first person. By speaking directly to his audience, the stories are viewed with more authenticity as the writer is keen on honesty and sincerity in his depiction of events as they unfold in the stories.

While Dazai was born into a well-off family, this does not mean he did not have his fair share of challenges weighing him down. The literary works of Dazai go to prove that problems go beyond material needs. Despite being born into a wealthy family, the writer has to struggle to find his happiness. The writer uses his stories to explore human nature and takes a simple approach that borrows heavily from his experiences. At the offset of his career, Dazai went through a series of tragic events that drove him to suicide four times. His struggle with mental health can be seen in his earlier writings that are gloomy and reflective of a reflection of his struggle [2]. Due to his guilt over the tragic death of his lover in an attempted double-suicide, he referred to the Bible in many of his works written immediately after the incident. Biblical allusion shows a reflective phase during the writer's life and diverges from widespread practice by Eastern writers. Unlike other Eastern writers who borrow heavily from Buddhism and Taoism, Dazai chose to make Biblical allusions in his storytelling as part of his writing style.

However, Dazai's life stabilized when he married. This enabled the writer to work on encouraging stories of hope, such as *Fugaku Hyakkei* (Changing Scenery of Mt. Fuji). Dazai's stories reflect what he was going through in his personal life. The most significant contribution that Dazai has to offer is an honest insight into human nature and the lessons the writer has drawn from his experiences. The later books are full of hope and virtues such as kindness. They reinforce the belief of the writer that life is a beautiful experience that ought to be enjoyed. These books mark a transition into a happier phase that sees Dazai write more positive books from his renewed faith in humanity and the possibility of a happier life. Dazai's books can be used as a self-help guide that aids the readers in rediscovering themselves and what life means to them. The later additions in Dazai's literary works carry a more positive outlook on life and touch on hope and the pursuit of happiness as the main themes covered.

After WW2, the economy of Japan took a massive blow after it lost against the allies [3]. The years after the war were marked by financial struggle. By impersonating a one-hundred-yen bill, Dazai effectively discusses socio-economic challenges that plague Japanese society from a satirical point of view that gives the story its witty appeal. Impersonating money is a creative twist that shows Dazai as a writer employing all the storytelling tools at his disposal in telling his stories. Impersonating an inanimate object is a catchy way of writing fiction that tosses the readers into an exciting world of make-belief where infinite possibilities exist.

Ningen Shikkaku (No Longer Human), Dazai uses decadence to woe readers. Throughout his works, Dazai shows a keen mastery of a dark image that he has carefully grown as part of his artistic expression [4]. In the stories, Dazai uses language flamboyantly and shows a rich, unique style. This element in his writing is referred to as decadence. Through decadence, Dazai creates a personal style of writing that makes his work exciting to read as it has a unique individual touch that was masterfully applied. Dazai's mastery of words helped him play around with his plot and how he told his story to avoid becoming a boring writer. Dazai viewed his use of decadence as his way of showing readers affection as a writer.

3 Themes Covered in Dazai's Literary Works

3.1 Mental Health

Dazai wholesomely explores human nature by tackling topics that were considered taboo, such as suicide [5]. He uses his writing to discuss a social issue he has been struggling with. The books he wrote detailing his grief and isolation during this period give valuable insight and serve as a guide in his journey to self-discovery. By tackling a taboo topic such as suicide, Dazai is one of the earliest writers of the 20th century to start the conversation around the meaning of life and how to achieve fulfillment. The theme of mental health takes center stage in Dazai's writings, as his work focuses on establishing the key to happiness and finding fulfillment. Most of his stories explore human nature as his characters try to achieve enlightenment and fulfillment. The focus on mental health primarily identifies joy in life's little things.

3.2 Fidelity

When his wife cheated on him with his best friend, he attempted suicide before divorcing her. Dazai sunk into alcoholism and women shortly after, events he covers in his book *Vision no Tsuma*. It is about a poet, perhaps himself, who continues his work after abandoning his wife. Dazai does not share the societal view that love is a binding arrangement that cannot be dissolved. He tends to prioritize happiness in marriage over being in the marriage itself. In his stories, the protagonists find redemption after they have dissolved their marriages. This view is contrary to the Japanese culture that prides itself on family and loyalty to the family. From his personal experience, Dazai has been hurt by love through what he considers a betrayal by his former wife and best friend. The event dented his faith in relationships and pushed him to the edge, almost leading him to suicide. Dazai uses his literary works to explore controversial topics to which he has a connection. He uses his stories to reflect on the institution of marriage and what binds it together. From his books, it is clear that Dazai does not view marriage as a life and death arrangement but rather a union between two people that can be dissolved if it no longer serves its purpose.

3.3 Patriotism

Dazai's writings reflect patriotism for his country. During WW2, Dazai sided with his country and was in support of the emperor during the war. After losing the war, Dazai accurately captured the plight of his compatriots to tell their side of the story [6]. He gave the war a more explicit depiction by giving a platform to the losing side to express itself. His undying loyalty to his country can be seen in his writing. Though Japan was going through a trying time, Dazai still sided with his country and wrote of it with love and pride. He also expressed his loyalty to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito at the time [7]. Despite his effort to show support for his country during the war, he was not viewed favorably by the rest of the Japanese, who did not feel he was equally vested in the war due to his indulgent behavior. Most Japanese readers felt his stories were not rooted in reality as he did not share some of their essential beliefs. Dazai stands as a controversial writer who was too far ahead of his time to be accepted in a postwar Japan that was still reeling from the effect of losing a World War.

3.4 Marxism and Leftism

Dazai expressed his affinity for leftist ideas, which was frowned upon in Japan at the time. He tended towards ideologies of societal equality due to the inequalities he had witnessed growing up in a wealthy Japanese home. His grandfather had grown up a peasant and slowly worked to build his wealth. His father, who married into the affluent Tsishuko family, continued this trend. Dazai likely understood his family's history and the challenges of being poor in Japan, thus repulsing the stifling rightist ideologies that were the norm then. Although Dazai was born into a wealthy family, he had witnessed the struggle that poverty posed to those that did not have the means. He was against the system that had put him at an economic advantage. Dazai was more in tune with a

system of wealth distribution that divided wealth on a similar line. From his writings, it is clear that the accumulation of wealth is not something that he prioritizes.

Dazai's stories are filled with the protagonist fighting an emotional challenge. He is more concerned with exploring human nature as opposed to exploring financial struggles. His leftist ideology did not sit well with the Japanese, who considered themselves a capitalistic society. Dazai was viewed as a writer stuck in utopian thinking that did not prioritize hard work [7]. His family did not consider his success because of his leftist view and his lack of ambition to continue generating family wealth. At the time, the prevailing financial struggle made readers frown on his stories due to their utopian nature and avoidance of the topic of capitalism as the ideal driving force. When it comes to seeking happiness through the accumulation of wealth, Dazai believes that material possessions are not enough to guarantee a person happiness. He uses his stories to show that there are different challenges, and poverty is just one of them. Dazai's struggle with suicide and how he breaches the topic in his stories is an excellent example of a social problem that cannot be resolved with money.

4 Dazai's Writing Style

4.1 Watakushi Shosetsu

This writing style refers to the use of possessive pronouns and first-person narration. Dazai effectively makes a compelling argument in his stories while maintaining his authenticity. The first-person narration gives his stories authenticity as it allows him to share his personal experiences with the reader. This sincere approach helps in creating a bond with the readers. By developing the idea of the self, Dazai makes a decisive contribution to Eastern literature by alienating himself from a collective identity. Dazai can be considered a trailblazer in introducing individualism in Eastern literature [8]. Individualism encourages self-expression and self-enlightenment. By encouraging individualism, Dazai goes against societal norms since he comes from a culture accustomed to a collective identity. Dazai uses literature to effect social change by subtly challenging the status quo while proposing a different way of defining self. Using an autographical style in narration makes the story richer since it comes off as more sincere. A first-person narration endears Dazai to his readers as they feel that they know the man behind the stories and his struggles.

4.2 Wit and Humor

Another characteristic of Dazai's writing is the use of sharp wit. Dazai uses humor and wit when making satirical remarks about social issues. When approaching more serious topics, Dazai relies on his wit and humor for icebreakers when introducing controversial topics. The use of wit helps the writer tackle sensitive topics without offending his audience. By using humor in the stories, Dazai is in a better position to command the attention of his fans. The use of witty remarks makes his work fun to read and more memorable because of how seamlessly he stitches light moments into more serious topics. By effectively using humor, Dazai ensures that he does not write stories that

are boring to his audience. Sarcasm is used to make witty social criticism in his stories without risking appearing overly offensive or disrespectful. Apart from informing an audience, a writer must entertain his readers. By using humor and wit, Dazai creates vivid and compelling literary works that are captivating to members of the audience.

4.3 Proletarian Literature

Although Dazai was born into a wealthy family, he is more familiar with the plight of the low-class members of society. His characters and the stories he chooses to tell are about the middle and lower classes of society as the focus point. Dazai identifies with the poor in society instead of the wealthy class he belongs to. Despite not being a member of this social class, Dazai empathizes with and understands what these people have to endure. By writing captivating stories about this social class, Dazai can effectively tackle social challenges that face this group which makes up the bigger percentage of the society [9]. By focusing on proletarian literature and simple representation, Dazai resonates with members of this social class as they feel that he understands their struggles and what they are passionate about, compelling them to read his stories since they get the feeling that he is one of them or that he at least understands what they go through.

4.4 Hostility Towards Female Characters

Dazai gives women a prominent role in the development of his stories. Japanese society is patriarchal and tends to leave its women in the shadows. Dazai goes for a more sincere depiction of society by acknowledging women's role in society. He uses empowered female characters playing pivotal roles in his life to bring about the theme of conflict by showing how these women betrayed or let him down. In the storytelling, Dazai plays victim while his female victims bear the brunt of his wrath as he paints them as the villain in his stories. This can be interpreted as an underlying hatred from broken expectations [10]. How the writer approaches the topic of women is greatly influenced by his troubled relationship with his past lovers, his mother and the wet nurse. Dazai has a conflicted relationship with the women in his life.

5 Dazai's Influence

5.1 Influence on Popular Culture

The biggest influence that Dazai's literary works have had on pop culture is the growth of the self-awareness movement. Millennials and younger generations identify with the notion of individualism as opposed to collective thinking [11]. Without writers like Dazai setting the pace for such change, it would be hard to encourage individualism. Pop culture is built around the need to craft identity; Dazai's writings serve as a blueprint of sorts and offer great insight into self-enlightenment and its journey. Dazai encourages individualized thinking in his stories, as depicted by his characters who challenge the status quo in pursuing their personal development. Individualism was frowned upon in Eastern culture as it was viewed as a selfish way of defining self [12]. Currently, individualism has taken root in Japan as more people strive to craft their personal identity on their terms as they try to find what makes them feel happy and fulfilled.

5.2 Influence on Chinese Culture

Dazai challenges the view that happiness can be achieved through the accumulation of material possession. The writer views a capitalistic society as a vain outfit that is out to resolve its superficial wants while ignoring more basic needs. Dazai uses his stories to explore the value of happiness and highlight the beauty of the world [13]. As a writer, he is genuinely concerned with entertaining his audience while pushing them towards greater self-awareness by exploring the value of virtues such as kindness and honesty. Through his social; commentaries, Dazai crafts an ideal of a virtuous man for his readers to emulate.

5.3 Japanese Culture

Dazai's fascination with indulgent acts such as drinking is seen in his stories. He chooses to use this style of building up his characters into the villain of the stories by exploring their darker pleasures and what drives them. By glorifying drinking, Dazai attracted a public backlash since the Japanese culture frowns on drinking as a retrogressive habit. By glorifying vices such as drinking, Dazai attracted the ridicule of his audience, who viewed his work as immoral. When Dazai introduces his characters, they closely reflect his drinking habits. He does not view indulgence as an addiction but rather as a part of who the characters are. In the literary works of Dazai, he approaches social drinking as a fun exercise. This rebellious representation of his characters challenged the notion of what was culturally considered proper. In Dazai's stories, he proposes a counter-culture that is more liberal and is not overly tied to societal expectations of conduct [14]. From his stories, the reader is introduced to carefree characters that are liberal in their thinking and full of individualism. Dazai challenges the status quo on individuality versus societal expectations by making his main characters free thinkers who chase after what excites them.

6 Conclusion

Dazai represents a fresh approach to Japanese literature; he is an example of a writer who challenges society by boldly taking on issues that society considers taboo, such as suicide and divorce. Despite being born into a well-off family, Dazai still writes great literature for the proletarians and effectively captures their struggle by focusing on challenges that cut across the social classes, such as the emotional struggles that the protagonists in his stories have to contend with. Dazai has greatly influenced Eastern literature as his characters are freethinkers, mostly searching for happiness and fulfilment. As a writer, Dazai is creative and talented; this can be seen in how he uses his words to make a connection with his audience. The reliance on an autobiographical narration style serves as an additional flare to his work and gives it authenticity. Writers like Dazai are responsible for promoting the idea of individualism in Eastern literature.

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