



The Saga of Dazai Osamu: A Critical Study With Translations

Phyllis I. Lyons

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In Japan, Dazai Osamu (1909-1948) is one of the most famous of all modern writers, known not only for his writings but for his tumultuous life, which included expulsion from a wealthy family, complicated involvements with many women, and several suicide attempts, the last of which was successful. Dazai succeeded in transforming the actual events of his life into deceptively simple and emotionally intense stories, and he was somehow able to make his own pain and confusion intimate to the experience of his readers. The discussion of Dazai is in two parts. Part I examines Dazai's life and some of the psychological problems that persistently haunted him. Part II studies his many autobiographical stories and novels, which are seen as belonging to one long, continuing narrative. The book concludes with translations of five of Dazai's most moving and emotionally expressive short stories, each a significant view of Dazai at a different point in his life, and a nonfiction novel, *Tsugaru*, about Dazai's return as an adult to his childhood home. These translations won the 1983 Friendship Fund Japanese Literary Translation Award, administered by the Japan Society for the Japan-United States Friendship Commission. By tracing the course of Dazai's tortured life and analyzing the distinctive qualities of his autobiographical writings, this study offers the Western reader a unique insight into Japanese society and culture.<

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