

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC 259

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism



Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 259

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Volume 259

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

Kathy D. Darrow
Project Editor



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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." TCLC "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

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TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

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Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Gale Literature Product Advisory Board xiii

Akutagawa Ryunosuke 1892-1927	1
Japanese short story writer, novelist, and essayist	
Amy Lowell 1874-1925	46
American poet, critic, and essayist	
Fyodor Sologub	130
Russian novelist, poet, short story writer, playwright, and fairy tale writer	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 323

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 443

TCLC Cumulative Nationality Index 463

TCLC-259 Title Index 469

Akutagawa Ryunosuke

1892-1927

(Born Niihara Ryunosuke; also transliterated as Ryūnosuke) Japanese short story writer, novelist, and essayist.

The following entry provides an overview of Akutagawa's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *TCLC*, Volume 16.

INTRODUCTION

Akutagawa is an early twentieth-century Japanese short story writer and novelist who is considered one of the foremost authors of Japan's modern era. Widely known as the author of *Rashōmon* (1916; *Rashomon, and Other Stories*), which was adapted by Akira Kurosawa into the landmark film of the same name, Akutagawa utilized elements from Eastern and Western literature throughout his brief career to create a distinctively modern form in Japanese literature. Drawing from historical, folkloric, and autobiographical sources, the author explored various themes in his writings, including issues of doubt, morality, the ironies of human existence, the transcendent nature of art, and the inexplicability of truth. Despite his relatively short life, which ended by suicide in 1927, Akutagawa had a significant impact on the development of twentieth-century Japanese fiction; today he is appreciated as a formal innovator and a master of the short story genre. Noted Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges described Akutagawa's books as "enchanting and sometimes terrifying," concluding that while "extravagance and horror" are in the author's work, they are "never in the style, which is always crystal-clear."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Akutagawa was born Niihara Ryunosuke on March 1, 1892, in Tokyo, Japan. Shortly after his birth, his mother lapsed into a schizophrenic state which persisted for the remaining years of her life. The author was eventually adopted by his maternal uncle and given the family name, Akutagawa. Often described as a morbid, sensitive child, Akutagawa was fascinated with books at an early age and instilled with a reverence for Japanese literary traditions. He was particularly interested in ghost stories and tales of the grotesque, which influenced his later writings. The author attended elementary and secondary schools in Tokyo where he familiarized himself

with European literature, including works by Henrik Ibsen, Rudyard Kipling, and Anatole France. Akutagawa later attended Tokyo Imperial University, where he began producing short stories. Upon graduating with an English degree in 1916, Akutagawa taught part-time at the Yokosuka Naval Academy and continued to write, publishing stories in various magazines. One of these tales, "Hana" ("The Nose"), caught the attention of the elder Japanese author Natsume Sōseki, who told Akutagawa that if he could write twenty or thirty such stories he would be unrivaled in Japan. The young author followed this advice and published two collections in quick succession, *Rashomon*, and *Other Stories* and *Tobako to akuma* (1917). In 1918, Akutagawa married Tsukamoto Fumi, the niece of a childhood friend, and also entered into a contract with *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*, a Japanese newspaper, which offered him a stipend and commission in exchange for exclusive publishing rights to his stories.

In 1921, *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* sent Akutagawa to China as an "overseas observer." Already weakened by poor health, the author suffered various illnesses during his travels and his mental health deteriorated as well, partly as a result of fears that he had inherited his mother's mental illness. Akutagawa's writing also evolved during this time. While he had drawn almost exclusively from history and legend for his stories in the past, the author became increasingly introspective during the 1920s and began using material from his own life in his writings. He published several short stories during this time, as well as another collection, *Jigokuhen* (1921; *Hell Screen, and Other Stories*). Many of Akutagawa's writings from this period, including his only novel, *Kappa* (1933), reflect his growing pessimism and reveal his preoccupation with death, as well as his fear that he was on the verge of insanity. According to some sources, the author contemplated suicide for over a year and carefully considered the method he would employ to kill himself. Following the mental breakdown of one of his close friends, Akutagawa committed suicide on July 24, 1927, at the age of thirty-five, by taking an overdose of drugs. He left a number of stories, along with his novel *Kappa*, unpublished at the time of his death, most of which have been issued since.

MAJOR WORKS

Akutagawa is primarily remembered as the author of *Rashomon*, and *Other Stories*. In the title story, which

portrays a crucial moment in the life of a male servant recently dismissed from service, the author explores issues of human morality. Confronted with the violent realities of twelfth-century Kyoto torn apart by plague and anarchy, Akutagawa's protagonist struggles to find an honest way to survive, but after witnessing an old woman stealing hair from a corpse in order to make a wig, his morals are shaken. When she explains that her survival depends on stealing, the servant turns her rationalization against her and steals her kimono, fleeing into the night. In "Yabu No Naka" ("Within a Grove"), another pivotal story from the collection, Akutagawa addresses the illusive nature of truth. In this work, three witnesses testify at a judicial hearing regarding the circumstances of a death. The witnesses offer different accounts of the event, and at the end of the story the reader is no closer to understanding the truth. *Hell Screen*, considered one of Akutagawa's most complex and important works, examines moral themes and the transcendent quality of art. The story features Yoshihide, an artist and father, who is commissioned by Lord Horikawa to paint a screen depicting hell. Yoshihide forces his assistant to endure acts of torture so that he can faithfully recreate the scenes, but the final element of the screen involves a beautiful woman in a burning carriage. When Yoshihide insists that he must see the scene before painting it, Lord Horikawa grants his request by placing Yoshihide's daughter in the carriage. While Yoshihide is horrified at first, his artistic drive takes over, and he completes the painting while his daughter is burned alive. Scholars have suggested that Akutagawa drew inspiration from several sources for his novel, *Kappa*, including *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. In Akutagawa's novel, the protagonist is transported to the land of the *kappa*, grotesque amphibious creatures that exhibit the shortcomings and idiosyncrasies of human beings. Despite their similarities, there are also stark differences between the human and *kappa* civilizations. Women pursue men in the *kappa* world, and infants, who are able to foresee the horrors of existence, can choose not to be born. Scholars have observed that Akutagawa satirizes human experience and contemporary Japanese society in the work, offering bitter treatments of capitalism and morality, as well as the concept of tainted heredity.

Akutagawa also published numerous individual stories throughout his life. In "The Nose," the author presents an ironic tale of a Buddhist priest who endures painful treatments in an effort to reduce his enormous nose to a normal size, but considers reversing the effects when his new nose elicits repeated comments from others. Akutagawa presents similar ironic reversals in other stories, such as "Imogayu" (1922; "Yam Gruel") and "Sennin" (1915; "The Immortal"). In "Yam Gruel," an ineffectual court official with an insatiable craving for yam gruel is promised all that he can eat, but after consuming massive quantities of the meal, he is disgusted,

an experience that leaves him wiser at the end of the story. "The Immortal" relates the tale of a Taoist who exchanges places with a poor wandering Chinese man in an effort to escape the monotony of immortality. Another tale, "Kumo no ito" (1918; "The Spiderthread"), explores issues of human egoism. In this story, the Buddha, while walking in Paradise, observes the horrors of hell below him and offers mercy to a thief named Kandata by lowering a spider thread for him to ascend. Believing that this salvation is intended only for himself, Kandata kicks at the sinners that begin to climb after him, at which point the thread snaps, plunging them all back into hell. The story ends with the Buddha sadly contemplating human selfishness. Akutagawa also wrote several historical stories, including "Chutō" (1917; "The Robbers") and *Aruhi no Ōishi Kuranosuke* (1921). "The Robbers" is a long narrative, set in the Tokugawa Period, which explores the theme of sexual jealousy, while *Aruhi no Ōishi Kuranosuke* features the leader of the forty-seven rōnin, or masterless samurai, from Tokugawa history and speculatively examines the doubts he might have faced in carrying out a vendetta. Doubt and skepticism are the primary themes of "Saigō Takamori" (1917), in which the validity of historical truth is called into question for a university student after he encounters a stranger on a train. In one of his last stories, "Haguruma" (1927; "Cogwheels"), Akutagawa explores themes related to death and madness. In this tale, the protagonist, a writer, is plagued by disturbing images and thoughts during his visit to Tokyo. Obsessed with his work, the writer spends much of his time in a hotel where he has visions of turning cogwheels and is haunted by the memory of a past event involving a raincoat, which seems to foreshadow the suicide of his brother-in-law.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Akutagawa launched his literary career during the 1910s, with the publication of short stories in various literary magazines and newspapers, and his debut collection, *Rashomon, and Other Stories*. By 1916, the author had won the praise of figures such as Natsume Sōseki, the leading Japanese novelist of the Meiji period, and was widely acclaimed as one of the brightest newcomers on the literary scene. During the 1920s, Akutagawa's reputation grew as his supporters emphasized his stylistic expertise, subtle characterizations, and linguistic virtuosity. Some contemporary critics questioned his originality, however, observing that much of his work was drawn from other literary sources, while others criticized his stark prose, suggesting that he privileged modes of expression over content. Akutagawa openly objected to this idea, arguing that, for him, form and content were inseparable and equally essential to the realization of artistic achievement. The author participated in other contemporary critical debates, includ-

ing a mild and inconclusive dispute with novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichiro over the necessity of plot within the novel genre. Although his views were sometimes opposed by his literary peers, Akutagawa's dedication to the restoration of rigorous critical discussion in Japanese literature garnered respect from many quarters. After 1927, the author's suicide was a primary consideration for many scholars, who equated his death with the end of the intellectual elitism of the Taishō Period in Japan. As Seiji M. Lippit [see Further Reading] observed, a number of critics "interpreted his death as marking the defeat of an intellectual (or aestheticized) literary practice disengaged from historical and social reality," and they transformed his demise "from a personal, private catastrophe into a general historical allegory, an empty vessel into which a variety of narrative interpretations could be projected."

After several decades of neglect, Akutagawa's writings began attracting critical attention again during the latter half of the twentieth century. The author's influences and source materials prompted studies by scholars such as Beongcheon Yu, Carole Cavanaugh, and David Rosenfeld. Yu focused particularly on the "question of imitation" raised in previous scholarship and emphasized the methods by which the author transformed other literary materials into highly creative, original works of art, while Cavanaugh, in studying his Western influences, suggested that "Akutagawa's subjective response to the writing of others was the process through which he achieved subjectivity in writing about himself." Other commentators, including Florence Goyet, Sarah Halperin, and Haruki Murakami [see Further Reading], have concentrated on Akutagawa's innovative formal strategies. Goyet identified the hybrid nature of the author's writings, which she described as a mixture of Japanese and European literary styles, and argued that his stories "could as well be conceived as the diverging paths of the genre itself, short stories divided between narrative and non-narrative texts." Halperin, however, described some of Akutagawa's central works as modern versions of the so-called "rashomon" genre, a literary form that offers multiple, conflicting versions of the same event. Seiji M. Lippit addressed questions regarding Akutagawa's place within Japanese literary history and, in the process, reconsidered his relegation to the Taishō Period. Writing in 1999, the critic maintained that the "questions of subjectivity, representation, and cultural identity" that pervade the author's late works were directly connected to the concerns of the subsequent modernist literary period, and he suggested that "Akutagawa, in his late writings, defined the outlines of an intellectual crisis that would haunt Japanese writers and thinkers over the coming years." Although recent critical examinations of Akutagawa's various literary achievements have not been exhaustive, the author has been increasingly viewed as a pivotal figure in Japanese literature, whose themes and innovations

helped shape the development of later fiction in that country. Today, critics generally agree with Haruki Murakami, who praised the "excellence" of style and "sheer quality" of Akutagawa's language, and asserted, "Akutagawa Ryunosuke stands as an illuminating presence in the history of Japanese literature."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Rashōmon* [*Rashomon, and Other Stories*] (short stories) 1916
Tobako to akuma (short story) 1917
Hana (short story) 1918
Aruhi no Ōishi Kuranosuke (short story) 1921
Gesaku zanmai (short story) 1921
Jigokuhen [*Hell Screen, and Other Stories*] (short stories) 1921
Imogayu (short story) 1922
Jashumon (short story) 1922
Harugi (short story) 1923
Kōjakufu (short story) 1924
Akutagawa Ryunosuke. 8 vols. (short stories) 1927
Saihō no hito (short story) 1927
Shuju no kotoba (short story) 1927
Tales Grotesque and Curious (short stories) 1930
Kappa (novel) 1933
Three Treasures (short story) 1951
Japanese Short Stories (short stories) 1961
Exotic Japanese Stories (short stories) 1964
Fool's Life (short story) 2007
Mandarins (short stories) 2007

CRITICISM

Beongcheon Yu (essay date 1972)

SOURCE: Yu, Beongcheon. "The Flight to Parnassus." In *Akutagawa: An Introduction*, pp. 15-42. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972.

[In the following essay, Yu examines a number of Akutagawa's stories written during the first phase of his literary career, focusing especially on "the question of imitation" and the author's "dependence on history" in these narratives, and highlighting the ways in which he transformed his source material into highly creative, original works of art.]

1

Of Akutagawa's early writings, only a handful—translations of France and Yeats,¹ and pieces like **"The Old Man"** (written in 1914) and **"Youths and Death"** (1914)—appeared in the third *New Thought*. None of these writings attracted critical attention; nor did his more ambitious **"Rashomon"** (1915), which he managed to place in another little magazine. Even **"The Nose"** might have suffered the same fate but for Soseki's personal blessings. Upon reading this story in the first issue of the fourth *New Thought*, Soseki at once wrote a congratulatory letter to the young author: "I found your piece very interesting. Sober and serious without trying to be funny, it exudes humor, a sure sign of refined taste. Furthermore, the material is fresh and eye-catching. Your style is well-polished, admirably fitting." The elder novelist did not forget to add a word of advice: "Go on and produce twenty or thirty stories like this one. You will soon be incomparable in literary circles. 'The Nose' alone may not attract many readers. Even if it does, they may let it pass quietly. But without worrying about it, you must go on. Ignore the crowd—the best way of keeping your integrity." Through the arrangement of one of Soseki's disciples, the story was reprinted in the May issue of the influential *New Fiction*, making Akutagawa's first success all the more secure.

Set in ancient Japan, the story portrays a Buddhist priest of great renown and piety who suffers, not knowing what to do with his six-inch long nose. Although outwardly indifferent, he is much mortified, feeling that his concern about such a mundane matter does not become his priestly dignity. (He can never be a Cyrano de Bergerac who knows how to capitalize on his grotesque nose.) While searching for precedents in scripture, he subjects himself to all sorts of cures, such as boiling and stamping, and finally succeeds in shrinking his nose, but his success merely redoubles his embarrassment and shame as he now attracts even more attention. Then, much to his relief, sheer chance restores it to its original size. "Now, no one will laugh at me any more," he mutters to himself as he enjoys the breeze of an early autumn morning.

"The Nose" is based mainly on an episode about the famous long-nosed priest, found in the *Konjaku* and *Ujishui*,² two ancient collections of stories and tales; in psychological treatment it was inspired by Gogol's story of the same title. Yet Akutagawa's story retains nothing of the crudely simple narration and earthy humor of the original anecdote; nor does it echo the bizarre twist and sardonic laughter of the Russian writer. Sober and serious, as Soseki said, the tone is ironic, and this sense of irony derives from the author's angle of vision, the uncertainty of being human in a fickle world. The story revolves around the very attitude of the author who nei-

ther condemns nor condones. Using the human nose as a focal point Akutagawa pits his protagonist against the world and shows that neither side wins or loses completely. While his clear-eyed intelligence does not miss the slightest shade of psychological tension, his subtle comic sense contemplates human frailty with serene pity.

Already apparent in **"The Nose"** are three motifs: the manipulation of the absurd; the uncertainty of being human; and the morbidity of obsession. Each of these motifs is carried further in Akutagawa's later stories. The first motif is evident in **"Lice"** (1916), which concerns solemn-faced samurai warring over lice, and **"The Dragon"** (1919), in which the credulous masses gather to witness the ascent of a dragon. The second motif appears in **"The Wine Worm"** (1916) and **"The Dream of Lusheng"** (1917), both of which suggest the futility of attempting to change what one is born with, and the third in **"Yam Gruel"** (1916), which exposes the extremity of a human obsession fearful of its own realization.

Uniquely Akutagawa, **"The Nose"** refuses classification with any of the three literary schools that dominated the contemporary literary scene: naturalism, aestheticism, and idealism. Like **"Rashomon,"** it was written in an effort to get over a recent disappointment in love, and Akutagawa meant to be pleasant and remote from reality. Fresh in conception, dexterous in execution, and cumulative in effect, the story both puzzled and delighted the reading public.

2

Although **"The Nose"** made Akutagawa famous virtually overnight, he was too ambitious an artist to merely indulge in his first success. His literary activities during the next few years fully indicate his ability to turn his sudden fame into something more solid and permanent. The period 1916-1919 marked in many ways perhaps the happiest years of his life, resulting in three collections of short stories, *Rashomon*, *Tobacco and the Devil*, and *The Puppeteer*.

The thirty-odd stories collected in these volumes are typical of Akutagawa, rich in variety and impressive in scope. In addition to conventional short stories, there are dramas, satires, fairy-tales, prose poems, and sketches—set in Japan, China, India, and imaginary lands. The Japanese stories, for instance, range from remote antiquity to the contemporary world, from the early Japanese Christian to the Edo period. Depending on his subject matter his narrative form is varied—dramatic, epistolary, allegorical, and objective—as is his style—pseudo-classical, early Christian, Chinese, and modern. Fantastic in imagery, tender in sentiment, biting in ridicule, and startling in direction, these pieces

are all experimental, demonstrating the author's determination to explore and exploit different genres. Some are perhaps precious but none amateurish. Whether precocious or mature, they all attest to a high degree of literary intelligence at work.

Contemporary critics, sympathetic or hostile, quickly noted Akutagawa's intelligence and craftsmanship. One critic, designating the essence of Akutagawa's art as a combination of intelligence and humor, stressed his pose as a detached outsider observing the kaleidoscope of life. While regretting that Akutagawa's analytical power sometimes failed to go beyond common sense, the critic nonetheless lavished praise on the author's artistic integrity and his unerring sense of language. All in all, Akutagawa seemed to him to be the kind of writer who would proceed from emphasis on form to concern with content. Another critic found one of Akutagawa's central themes to be the sense of fear that inevitably follows our fulfilled expectations; he pointed out the author's capacity for perfect form, contemplation, and aesthetic distance, all of which combined to make his art unique in contemporary literature. A third critic suggested that Akutagawa's primary virtue was the purity of his aesthetic contemplation, apparent in the best of his stories, and that these stories were often almost too pure to excite the general reader long spoiled by impure works—works immature in aesthetic contemplation. Probably for this very reason his works appeared to lack in raw strength, what the critic called the throbbings of life. Despite their varied observations the critics concurred on one point: perfect form compensates for insufficient content.³ Whatever the validity of such a verdict, it was the view generally shared by Akutagawa's contemporaries since they were prompt to label him a neo-intellectualist, neo-classicist, neo-mannerist, and the like.

Akutagawa rejected such labels designed only for the convenience of reviewers and critics because they were all too neat and simple to characterize what he was trying to do. He took every opportunity to clarify his intent: to go his own way as best he could—the only sure way of growing. In reply to the question, "Why do you write?" he said he wrote neither for money nor for the public but because something vague and chaotic within himself demanded a certain form which was at once clear and precise. Declaring that art is, first of all, expression, he challenged the general critical assumption that a writer starts with content and then frames it in some sort of form, as though there were two separate and separable processes. The common critical clichés, "stylistic obsession," "too deft" or "too dexterous," were meaningless to Akutagawa. Form, he said in effect, does not wrap content in a neat package; form lies in content, and *vice versa*. To one who cannot understand this basic truth, art will forever remain another world. Art begins and ends in deliberate expression.

Write with your soul or with your life—all these gilded sermons had better be addressed to high school students. All creative activities, even those of a genius, are conscious; he is perfectly aware of what effect his single touch, his single stroke will create; if not, then he is no better than an automaton.

In Akutagawa's view, then, it would be a mistake to assume the primacy of either form or content. In the same reflections on art he in fact warned that stressing form would be equally harmful, and that in practice it might be even more harmful than stressing content, a warning apparently against a typical Japanese tendency toward the decorative or a refined preciousness. The point here is Akutagawa's passion for perfection, the quality which struck the three critics referred to above. The artist, in Akutagawa's view, must strive to perfect his work; otherwise his devotion to art amounts to nothing. For moral exaltation the reader might as well turn to sermons, but for aesthetic pleasure he must go to a work of art. And to secure this pleasure the artist must pursue his dream of perfection. It was in this vein that Akutagawa also wrote: "There is in the kingdom of art no room for the unperfected"; "A work of art, when perfected, becomes timeless"; and "In the religion of art self-reliance is the only key to salvation."

"One who has a correct view of art does not necessarily create a better work. Such a reflection makes me sad. Am I the only one in this? I pray this is not the case"—so Akutagawa wrote in "Art, etc." The truth is that Akutagawa not only had a "correct" view of art but also wrote "better" works because of it. In reference to Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" he observed that the American poet wrote his poems and stories just as a brick layer would go about his job.⁴ Then turning to his own manner of writing, Akutagawa said in the preface to *Tobacco and the Devil*:

To speak of my feelings while I am at work, it seems like growing rather than making something. Every phenomenon, human and otherwise, follows its own unique course of development in that it happens in the way it must. So as I write I proceed from point to point, from moment to moment. If I miss one step, then I am stuck. I can not go even one step further. If I force myself, something is bound to go wrong. I must always be alert. No matter how alert, it often happens that I miss it. That is my trouble.

This, according to Akutagawa, explains why a work of art in progress sometimes refuses to follow the artists' own plan, however well calculated, "just as the world may have gone out of God's hands, much as he tried to adhere to his original plans of creation." Thus, despite his insistence on conscious intelligence, Akutagawa recognized that the artist was fallible, but this human frailty was no excuse for not striving for perfection.