

**EDITORS' INTENTIONS AND AUTHORS' DESIRES:
HOW *JUNBUNGAKE* AFFECTS THE AKUTAGAWA PRIZE AND
JAPAN'S COMMERCIAL LITERARY WORLD**

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore the current literary culture of Japan by examining the commercialization and politicization of *junbungaku*, “pure” literature. In particular, I focus on the most prominent award for new authors, the Akutagawa Prize, which is widely acknowledged as authoritative. My intention is to shed some useful light on the role of publishing company editors as the masterminds of the publishing industry.

Chapter One provides an overview of issues surrounding *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* (“mass-oriented literature”). At present, *junbungaku* is defined in opposition to *taishū bungaku*, but ambiguities and boundary issues remain. This survey will enable us to identify the situations where the notion of *junbungaku* is defended as authoritative and how its relationship with the Akutagawa Prize increases its legitimacy.

Chapter Two examines the origin and history of *junbungaku*, and discusses how the notion has changed over time. I also address questions such as what *junbungaku* is and how it can be defined, and uncover how *junbungaku* came under question as the Akutagawa Prize became more successful and began to overshadow *junbungaku* itself.

The ultimate purpose of the Prize is to sell books and magazines; this affects not only literature but to some extent Japanese society as a whole. Chapter Three therefore deals with the Akutagawa Prize and *junbungaku* as a business. I examine the “Akutagawa Prize industry” led by the editors and Bungeishunju Ltd., including the nomination, selection, and announcement processes; distribution and sales; winning works; and judging. I analyze the process from the viewpoint of the publishing houses and editors.

Finally, in the Conclusion I argue that the Akutagawa Prize endangers the very concept of pure literature by tying it to a commercial enterprise, compromising writers by making

them dependent upon the financial goals of a corporation, which trains a reading public conditioned to accept the Prize as authoritative to receive the work in particular ways through the process of commercialization and commodification. As a result, “amateurization” is inevitable. I also examine the implications of this project for future research on Japanese literature and on the intersections of Japanese literary culture and commercial literary awards.

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Glossary

Akutagawa Prize (芥川賞 Akutagawa *shō*)

One of the two most prestigious Japanese literary prizes (of a total of about 260, as of 2011), officially for *junbungaku* short stories (*junbungaku tanpen*) though in reality short novels/novellas win most often. Founded in 1935 by Bungeishunjū Ltd. to commemorate the death of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. The prize has been given semi-annually (January and July) to emerging writers of *junbungaku* for seventy-seven years.

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (芥川龍之介 1892-1927)

A noted writer who was considered the “father of the Japanese short story,” he committed suicide in 1927. Known for classics such as “Rashōmon” (1915), “Yabu no naka” (In A Grove, 1921), and “Kappa” (1927).

Bundan (文壇)

The literary world of writers, critics, and editors. The word has strong connotations of exclusivity and elitism. *Kōdansha Encyclopaedia of Japan* defines *bundan* as “a small, exclusive community of professional writers” and says *bundan* is “dedicated to the ideal of pure literature.”

Bungei (文芸)

This word refers to literature (poetry, novels and/or plays) in general; however, when it is used in terms such as “*bungei shuppansha*” (literary publishing company) or “*bungei zasshi*” (literary magazine), *bungei* refers specifically to *junbungaku*.

Bungeishunjū (文藝春秋)

An exceptionally successful monthly general interest magazine that has been published by Bungeishunjūsha since 1923. Winners of the Akutagawa Prize are announced and their works published in this magazine.

Bungeishunjūsha (Bungeishunjū, Ltd. 文藝春秋社)

The publishing house established by Kikuchi Kan in 1923. A mid-sized publishing company with 365 employees as of 2010.

Chūkan shōsetsu (中間小説)

Literally, “in-between literature.” The literature situated between *junbungaku* which has artistic value, and *taishū bungaku*, which has entertainment value. The works are often written by *junbungaku* authors. The term was used from the post-WWII era through the 1960s and early 1970s.

Junbungaku (純文学)

Literally, “pure literature.” Commonly understood as works with purely artistic rather than commercial value. At present, it is considered to be the counterpart of *taishū bungaku*, or “mass-oriented literature.” *Jeī* (J) *bungaku*, an abbreviation of *junbungaku*, was used for a while in literary magazines to refer to *junbungaku* as opposed to

Entāteinmento shōsetsu (entertainment novels) or *entame shōsetsu*, in order to attract young readers; however, the term has largely fallen out of use.

Kikuchi Kan (菊池寛 pen name of Kikuchi Hiroshi, 1888-1948)

A novelist, playwright, journalist and entrepreneur who founded Bungeishunjū, Ltd., the magazine *Bungeishunjū*, and the Akutagawa Prize.

Naoki Prize (直木賞 Naoki *shō*)

A literary prize also founded in 1935 by Bungeishunjū Ltd. in commemoration of novelist Naoki Sanjūgo (pen name of Uemura Sōichi, 1891-1934). This award is given to promising writers of *taishū bungaku*.

Shishōsetsu or *watakushi shōsetsu* (私小説)

Psychologically realistic “personal novels,” “confessional novels” or “I-novels.” The term *shishōsetsu* will be used throughout this thesis. Based on the assumption that realism in novels can only be achieved through writing authentic personal experience, this form was highly valued as the purest narrative form in the early twentieth-century. Some critics have identified the *shishōsetsu* as a synonym for *junbungaku*.

Taishū bungaku (大衆文学)

Literally, “mass-oriented literature.” In the 1920s the term *taishū bungaku* was introduced to differentiate these works from *junbungaku* with the emergence of mass print production, commercial print media and the rising middle class. *Taishū bungei* (大衆文芸) and *taishū bungaku* are synonymous.

Tankō-bon (単行本)

A book that stands alone and is not part of a series. Similar in meaning to “monograph,” but can be used for novels and other types of books, not just scholarly works.

Proto-*junbungaku*

The current form of *junbungaku* did not exist prior to 1918; therefore, I use the term proto-*junbungaku* to refer to early works to distinguish them from *junbungaku*. The same is done for proto-*taishū bungaku*.

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Finally, I owe special thanks to my *senpai* Nick Hall who helped me with proofreading the whole thesis, and to long-time friend Tara Helfer, who gave me many helpful technical suggestions.

Dedication

For my husband, Georges

And for my brother's family in Matsumoto, Japan

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 *Junbungaku* in Contemporary Japan

The phrase *moe junbun-kei misuteri* (*moe*¹ and pure literature-type mystery) appeared in the April 9th, 2009 issue of *Mefisuto* (Mephisto), a literary entertainment magazine for young people, to describe the characteristics of a new story in the magazine. The phrase reflects the breakdown of the story according to the percentage of each of its constituent elements: mystery, 50%; *junbun*, 20%; and *imōto* (sister) *moe*, 30% (“Kanmatsu zadankai” 1010). *Junbun*, an abbreviation of *junbungaku* (pure literature), is employed here to describe the protagonist’s true feelings of affection towards his sister. This illustrates the casual interpretation of *junbungaku* in a contemporary literary magazine in 2009.

In fact, this description is not a traditional definition of *junbungaku*, but it is not as easy as one would think to locate the term in the present publishing industry. When browsing the online shop of Junkudō Co. Ltd., the biggest bookstore in Tokyo, one finds that it does not have a *junbungaku* section,² although *junbungaku* shelves were standard in bookstores about twenty years ago. According to one commenter, these days sales of *bungei* (literature) have

¹ *Moe*, literally the budding of a plant, is a Japanese slang word referring to obsessive interest in an ideal fictional character in manga and video games.

² I searched for the so-called “god of *junbungaku*” Shiga Naoya (1883-1971), who is known as the “best *junbungaku* writer” (Seidensticker 174). Junkudō’s online search returned 101 titles (as of August 2011) by Shiga as author, categorized as “literature” (*bungei*), “Japanese literature” (*Nihon bungaku*), or “modern literature” (*kindai bungaku*). A search for Asada Jirō, a contemporary and popular *taishū bungaku* author, revealed that the majority of his works are also categorized in either “literature” (*bungei*) or “Japanese literature” (*Nihon bungaku*). The online catalogue did not distinguish between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* (Junkudō).

declined and the category of *junbungaku* itself has disappeared.³ This gives us an insight into the minds of distributors and also provides a useful starting point. From this situation, I draw the tentative conclusion that the concept of categories is less important on the front-line—in the minds of bookshop management and customers—at least at present. The term *junbungaku* seems to have lost significance.

This thesis will, I hope, contribute to a better characterization of the canonical status of Japanese modern literature—namely *junbungaku*—and the Akutagawa Prize, which have a symbiotic relationship. My motivation for pursuing this research comes from my experience working as an editor and a journalist for both weekly and monthly magazines at a Japanese publishing company during the 1980s and 1990s. It was widely acknowledged in Japan at that time that the authors were considered to be as much of a commodity as their literary works themselves. It is my impression, however, that in North America, where I have studied modern Japanese literature, this unique aspect of the Japanese publishing industry is not often acknowledged. From a business perspective, the quality of a given product is often less important than the quality of its advertising. I argue that the Akutagawa Prize, which is legitimized by the authority of *junbungaku*, actually represents a successful advertising strategy designed to sell books and magazines. This opening chapter provides the background for the formation of the Akutagawa Prize with *junbungaku* as its basis. It also

³ The following comment was posted on a discussion site for small local bookshop owners and managers; the contributor is longing for the “belle époque” (This and all translations from Japanese sources are mine unless noted):

“When I started working at the bookshop in 1980, many *tankō-bon* (books) sold well. The shelves of literature were packed and was categorized as historical sword-fighting novels (*jidai shōsetsu*), war stories (*senki*), crime/detective novels (*suiri*), science fiction, *junbungaku*, *taishū bungaku*, female writers (*josei sakka*), foreign literature (*kaigai bungaku*), current topics (*jiji*), reportage, non-fiction . . . After while, the sales of books in general dwindled. And the shelf devoted to *junbungaku* disappeared. Eventually, the distinction between male and female writers was gone and everything was combined into one *bungei* (literature) shelf, and the order of the books became alphabetical” (“Shotenjuku dayori”).

introduces the difficulties in trying to define *junbungaku*. It questions why the Akutagawa Prize holds so much literary force although *junbungaku* itself does not hold commercial value.

1.2 The Akutagawa Prize: Japan's Most Prestigious Literary Award

It is generally acknowledged that World War I (1914-1918) had a favourable impact on Japanese economic development. At this time the industrial population grew as did the book market. The reason for this was the boom of the *enbon* (the unprecedentedly cheap one-yen book) in the late 1920s, which was a “great revolution of the publishing industry.” It is cited by literary and cultural critic Maeda Ai as the event that launched “the establishment of publishing capitalism” and “the appearance of an enormous general public” (207-8).

In 1935, publishing house Bungeishunjūsha established two literary awards: the Akutagawa Prize for *junbungaku* (pure literature), and the Naoki Prize for *taishū bungaku* (mass-oriented literature).⁴ Both were announced in the December 1934 issue of *Bungeishunjū*.⁵ The article about the establishment of the Prizes is titled “Be delighted, rising writers! The gateway to success is open!” and freely praises the founding of the

⁴ The word *taishū bungaku* was first used in a magazine advertisement in 1921 and slowly gained prominence through the prosperity of *jidai shōsetsu* (historical sword-fighting novels based on imaginary characters). In the 1920s, as noted above, with the expansion of readership and the achievement of mass production, the price of books dropped dramatically. In the 1930s, magazines kept increasing in size to accommodate demand: one women's magazine became so large that a single issue weighed over two pounds. After WWII, with the diffusion of newspapers, *taishū bungaku* permeated the nation. In a brief period of two decades, the impetuous nature of powerful new readers redefined *taishū bungaku*. Gradually, the preferred subject of the readers changed from life-affirmation to the sentimental and then to novels that reflected “social mores” (Tsurumi 195).

⁵ According to the declaration for establishing the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes by Kikuchi Kan, the Akutagawa prize is given to “an individual for the best *sōsaku* [literally meaning creation but in this case referring to *junbungaku*] work by an unknown or rising author,” whereas the Naoki prize is given to “an individual for the best *taishū bungei* (or *taishū bungaku*) by an unknown or rising author” (Kikuchi, “Akutagawa Naoki shō seitei sengen” 64).

Prizes.⁶

As of August 2011, there have been 148 Akutagawa Prizes awarded to 109 men (including one who declined the Prize in 1940⁷) and thirty-nine women (including one transgender woman) ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-two years old.⁸ Four ethnic Korean residents of Japan and one Chinese author have won the Prize.⁹ The award is intended to be given to “short stories of new writers” (Hino Ashihei et al. 348) although the majority of winning works are novellas; however, the length of each work varies; the shortest is only twelve pages long whereas the longest is 138 pages.¹⁰

Notable Shōwa-era writers such as Abe Kōbō (pen name of Abe Kimifusa, 1924-1993, won in 1951), Matsumoto Seichō (pen name of Matsumoto Kiyoharu, 1909-1992, won in

⁶ The winners of both awards were given memorial clocks and five hundred yen. Moreover, the whole prize-winning work appeared in the magazine (the Akutagawa Prize-winning work in *Bungeishunjū*, the Naoki Prize-winning work in *Ōruyomimono*) as a privilege. The prize money has since increased to one million yen. The first winner, Ishikawa Tatsuzō, recently explained the monetary value of the prize in an interview: “I was staying [in a four and a half *tatami* room] which included breakfast and the rent was fifteen yen. About forty yen was the monthly cost of living, so five hundred yen was quite a helpful prize at the time” (“Kikuchi Kan’s kimoiri”).

⁷ Takagi Taku, (1907-1974, writer, scholar of German literature and Kōda Rohan’s nephew) declined the eleventh Prize in 1940, stating that his work, *Kaze to mon no tate* (Shield of wind and gate) was unworthy. Kikuchi interpreted this as a criticism of the judges’ abilities. Indeed, he was so offended by Takagi’s blunt refusal that he said, “if he did not want to be praised by others, he should not have published his work” (Kikuchi, *Kikuchi Kan* 256). Instead of awarding the Prize to the runner up, the award was cancelled, the only time this has happened in Akutagawa Prize history.

⁸ The reasons for the discrepancy between the number of authors (or works) and the number of prizes is that on some occasions, there is no award given, and there are sometimes two winners in a given award season.

⁹ Ri Kaisei (Lee Hoesung, b. 1935) was the first ethnic Korean resident of Japan to win the prize in 1971. Another ethnic Korean, Lee Yangji (1955-1992), won the prize in 1988; Yu Miri (b. 1968) won in 1996; and Gengetsu (b. 1965) in 1999. Yang Yi (b. 1964) became the first Chinese author as well as the first non-native Japanese speaker to win the prize in 2008.

¹⁰ These page numbers are based on the complete works of the Akutagawa Prize, which are published in nineteen volumes (the first to 125th work). The shortest work is the 28th winner, “Sōshin” (Absentmindedness) by Gomi Kōsuke (pen name of Gomi Yasusuke, 1921-1980). The longest is the 9th winner, *Asakusa no Kodomo* (Children of Asakusa) by Hase Ken (pen name of Fujita Masatoshi, 1904-1957).

1952), Ishihara Shintarō (won in 1955) and Nakagami Kenji (pen name of Nakae Kenji, 1946-1992, won in 1976, the first author from the “discriminated community,” or *buraku*) received the Prize in the early stages of their careers. Although the Akutagawa Prize is awarded to rising authors, it immediately gives them privileged status and more opportunities to publish, launching them into an elite literary world. As a result, it is the literary award most coveted by new writers: winning the Akutagawa Prize is like hitting the jackpot. Winners receive great attention and respect from the media. Even being merely nominated results in instantaneous credibility and recognition. In order to maintain the highest profile, first-rate writers are invited to serve as judges; for example, Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), the first Japanese recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature (1968), was on the judging panel for thirty-five years from the Prize’s inception in 1935. Another Nobel Prize winner, Ōe Kenzaburō, won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 and sat on the judging panel from 1976 to 1995.

For seventy-five years since the two prizes were established (except for the years 1945-1949¹¹) Bungeishunjūsha has successfully managed its award business and the report of the prize selection which is always the centre of media attention.¹² The establishment and success of these prizes meant that a line had been drawn between *junbungaku* and *taishū*

¹¹ Bungeishunjūsha was dissolved in 1946, right after WWII, but was immediately reestablished as New Bungeishunjūsha by a group of former editors. Kikuchi Kan’s name was removed from the cover of the magazine, which meant that he had no direct ties to the new company. However, the strong image of the founder has remained with the company.

¹² The Kikuchi Kan Prize for both individuals and groups honors achievement in all aspects of Japanese culture (established 1953, winner announced every year in the December issue of *Bungeishunjū*); the Ōya Sōichi Nonfiction Prize (est. 1970, winner announced in the June issue of *Bungeishunjū*); and the Matsumoto Seichō Prize for high quality full length entertainment novels (est. 1994, winner announced in the June issue of *Ōruyomimono*.) Previously, the outcome of the Naoki Prize was announced in the same issue as the winner of the Akutagawa Prize in *Bungeishunjū*, but currently it is announced in the March issue of *Ōruyomimono*.

bungaku. Interestingly, even though the line remains hard to define, this does not seem to have been a particular concern. However, for some, such as Hirano Ken, literary critic, it was a strict distinction (Hirano, *Junbungaku ronsō igo* 24-5),¹³ as it has been for authors and presumably their editors, and for judges, as can be seen from examining their selection comments.¹⁴ According to Edward Mack, the Akutagawa Prize “rapidly became the most important award in the literary establishment and then in Japanese society as a whole” (“Accounting for Taste” 339). This is partly due to the extensive media coverage given to the Prize and the idolization of its recipients, particularly those who are young and attractive. On one hand, the Akutagawa Prize inherited and was built upon a rich literary tradition; on the other, the commercialization of the award has turned literature into a commodity for the purpose of generating profit.

The assumption I work from is that there must be a conscious effort made by the editors of the magazines who manage the Akutagawa Prize and/or those in the literary establishment to put winners on a pedestal. The reason for this assumption is that, although it is still widely acknowledged as canonical, unlike the Naoki Prize the Akutagawa Prize is awarded to *new* authors, usually on the basis of a single (often their first major) work. Moreover, there is credible evidence that shows the difference in ability between Akutagawa and Naoki Prize recipients. Asada Jirō (pen name of Iwato Kōjirō, born 1951), winner of the 117th Naoki Prize as well as one of the most popular contemporary *taishū bungaku* writers, compares *taishū bungaku* and *junbungaku* writers respectively to adults and children in terms

¹³ Hirano Ken explains the distinction in his terms as “*taishū bungaku* writers who take profits over reputation and *junbungaku* writers who take reputation over profits.”

¹⁴ In the complete works of the Akutagawa Prize, which currently comprises nineteen volumes (up to the 125th Akutagawa Prize-winning work), the selection comments are also included as well as the author’s winning speech and autobiography.

of their writing abilities, life experiences and the hardships they face. Although Akutagawa Prize winners generally make sensational debuts, many of them are unable to live up to the expectations created by winning the award (Asada, personal interview).¹⁵ Therefore, by and large, they become “one-hit wonders” (*ippatsu-ya*), and their careers do not survive beyond their first works in terms of the level of attention they receive, because their subsequent efforts rarely live up to the hype generated by their winning the prize (Dodo 158). In contrast, the Naoki Prize takes into account the writer’s entire career including her or his future prospects. This has given rise to all sorts of speculation about the supposed superiority of *junbungaku*, and therefore, about the Akutagawa Prize itself.

Critic Nakamura Mitsuo (pen name of Koba Ichirō, 1911-1988)¹⁶ claims that the appeal of the Akutagawa Prize is that a new writer administers “a fresh blow” to the literary world. One of the most important elements of the Akutagawa Prize, compared to other literary prizes, is that the award is given not just to new writers but also, in principle, to a single piece of their work. According to Nakamura, “the quality of the work is all we care about, even if it is the only work of the writer. That is the way a *junbungaku* piece should be valued” (*Kindai no bungaku to bungaku sha* 16). As a result, he concludes that it is inevitable that some winning writers will only produce one award-winning piece in their lifetimes. I will argue that because what is important for the Akutagawa Prize is a single work by a previously unknown author rather than a writer’s entire corpus or future prospects, it is

¹⁵ On May 3, 2010, Asada was in Vancouver for a literary event called “Canada Meets Japan: A Conversation of Authors,” presented by Simon Fraser University in association with PEN Canada, Japan PEN and the Vancouver International Writers Festival. After the event, I had a chance to speak with him about his view of *junbungaku*. Asada has been a judge on the judging panel of three major *taishū bungaku* awards for many years. He himself is the winner of two of the three, including the Naoki Prize.

¹⁶ Nakamura is the only critic to have served as a judge on the Akutagawa selection panel for thirty years. Since his resignation, the panel has consisted only of eminent writers.

possible that editors collude to create winning works. Due to the three major requirements of the works considered for the Akutagawa Prize (short story; only one piece of work; and a new author), it seems plausible that a winning work can be manufactured within a general framework when combined with idea or talent. I return to this issue in Chapter Three.

1.3 “Catch 22”

The line between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* was, as time went on, increasingly hard to define and started to be questioned. During the 4th Akutagawa Prize selection, one of the judges mentioned the “vulgarity” of the winning work, Tomizawa Uio’s *Chichūkai* (the Mediterranean Sea, 1936), yet the judge defended this vulgarity as “not vile vulgarity but sort of necessary and reasonable to a degree” (Ishikawa Tatsuzō et al. 354). In the 10th Akutagawa Prize selection comments, Samukawa Kōtarō’s winning work *Mitsuryōsha* (The poacher, 1940) was evaluated as “having adopted techniques of historical novels [= *taishū bungaku*]” and “passing through the domain of vulgarity and coming close to a high-ranking work of Romanticism” (Hino Ashihei et al. 392-5). The need for more concrete criteria was mentioned again in the selection comments; however, without being formally discussed, this problem remains unsolved to this day.

Kasai Kiyoshi (b. 1948), a writer and critic, has defined *junbungaku* as “works that have appeared in *bungei-shi* [*junbungaku* magazines], and *bungei-shi* as *junbungaku* magazines that carry *junbungaku*” (85). In other words, *junbungaku* is what is in *junbungaku* magazines. This is clearly problematic. According to Kasai’s definition, *junbungaku* and *junbungaku* magazines go hand-in-hand, and one cannot exist without the other; in fact, the only characteristic that defines a given work as *junbungaku*, according to Kasai, is that it has

appeared in a magazine devoted to the genre. This definition allows potentially any work of literature to be classed as *junbungaku* and fails to allow the notion of *junbungaku* to function as a meaningful term for differentiating between pure literature and mass-literature.¹⁷

In Japan it is often assumed that authors usually specialize in particular genres, giving rise to the terms “*junbungaku sakka*” (*junbungaku* author) and “*taishū bungaku sakka*” (*taishū bungaku* author). The terms demonstrate the deep psychological division between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* writers, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter. When in 1998 Kurumatani Chōkitsu¹⁸ (pen name of Shatani Yoshihiko, born in 1945 and known as a *junbungaku* writer) won the 119th Naoki Prize and Hanamura Mangetsu¹⁹ (pen name of Yoshikawa Ichirō, born in 1955 and known as a *taishū bungaku* writer) won the 119th Akutagawa Prize, these crossover wins were widely reported precisely because of the perceived rareness of an author straying from his genre.

If it is difficult to define *junbungaku*, it is equally hard to define *junbungaku* writers. For example, was Natsume Sōseki (pen name of Natsume Kinnosuke, 1867-1916) a *junbungaku* writer, as the term is understood today? While his works are often considered canonical, the majority of them were originally serialized in newspapers (which is common for *taishū bungaku* stories) and not in *junbungaku* magazines, so by Kasai’s definition they

¹⁷ However, the definition resonates with the historical role of the *bundan* (which I discuss in the next chapter) and with George Dickie’s institutional theory of art. Dickie defines art as follows: “A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artefact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) (34).”

¹⁸ Kurumatani Chōkitsu won the Naoki Prize for *Akame shijūya-taki shinjū misui* (Attempted suicide at the forty-eight falls of Akame).

¹⁹ Hanamura Mangetsu won the 119th Akutagawa Prize for his short novel *Gerumaniamu no yoru* (Germanium nights). This story is about an orphan who is brought up in a monastery. He returns to the monastery after he commits a murder in order to escape punishment. He behaves as if he enjoys blasphemy. Hereafter, I provide a brief summary when I introduce important works in my discussion.

must be *taishū bungaku*. “Newspaper novels,” which are written for the general public, are destined to be *taishū bungaku* in which “social consciousness and the aspects of entertainment should be included” (Seki 37). Suzuki points out that from the 1890s on authors who contributed their works to *junbungaku* magazines started rejecting those who contributed their works to newspapers as a different class (Suzuki, *Nihon bungaku no seiritsu* 93).

How about Murakami Haruki (b. 1949)? He has been critically acclaimed, has won numerous Japanese and international literary awards,²⁰ and has taught at Ivy League universities in the U.S., but his 1987 novel *Noruei no mori* (Norwegian Wood) sold millions of copies and turned him into a national celebrity among young people, suggesting that it is a pop culture, and therefore mass-oriented, work.

The struggle to identify *junbungaku* writers as such is not new. In a 1918 round table discussion, Sugiyama Heisuke (1895-1946), a leading critic in his time, declared that the word *junbungaku* had taken hold without him noticing, and that he did not know how it should be defined. Sugiyama posed the question of whether Ihara Saikaku (pen name of Hirayama Tōgo, 1642-1693) or Chikamatsu Monzaemon (pen name of Sugimori Nobumori, 1653-1725) were *junbungaku* writers; no one was able to answer (Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo Kangaeru* 40). Here and now, to the best of my knowledge, Japanese *Wikipedia* is the only “primary” source that categorizes particular authors as *junbungaku* writers.²¹ The

²⁰ Murakami won the *Gunzō Magazine*’s Newcomer Prize in 1979, the Noma Prize in 1982, and the Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Prize in 1985 (all of above are for *junbungaku*) as well as numerous awards. He has also been given international recognitions by winning the Franz Kafka Prize in 2006 and Jerusalem Prize in 2009 among others. However, he did not win the Akutagawa Prize although he was nominated for the prize twice in 1979 and 1980.

²¹ Other websites often quote Wikipedia as their source for this same information. There is also a book information site that lists 254 *junbungaku* writers; however, according to the website manager, the initial

deciding factor seems to be whether or not a writer has been nominated for or has won the Akutagawa Prize. Here again the vague definition of *junbungaku* as “works that have been nominated for or won the Akutagawa Prize” can be seen.

According to Kikuchi Kan, who founded the Akutagawa Prize²² and was himself a popular *taishū bungaku* writer who was originally known for *junbungaku*, “*junbungaku* is what the writer wants to write whereas *taishū bungaku* is concerned with pleasing the readers” (Sakai 9). Osaragi Jirō (pen name of Nojiri Haruhiko, 1897-1973), a noted *taishū bungaku* writer, seems to echo Kikuchi’s view: “*junbungaku* is literature for oneself while *taishū bungaku* is made for both the writers and the readers. *Taishū bungaku* does not accept self-satisfactory expressions. It comes to fruition only when it is read by the masses” (Ozaki 6). For both Kikuchi and Osaragi, it seems that the deciding factor is not a question of genre, or aesthetic characteristics, but rather the writer’s attitude towards his or her own work. The aforementioned examples illustrate the obscure nature of *junbungaku* as well as revealing the elusive and permeable nature of the boundary between *taishū bungaku* and *junbungaku*. Mack points out that “the distinction [has] remained desperately unclear” right from the beginning (“The Value of Literature” 316). As Edward Seidensticker put it in 1966, “the expression *junbungaku* is as shifty and elusive as most critical terms, but it obviously has reference to something admired by the critic who makes serious use of it” (175).

There is ample evidence to show that even as an intangible literary genre, *junbungaku*,

categorization was based on Japanese *Wikipedia*.

²² Kikuchi announced the establishment of both the Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes in 1934. The Naoki Prize was named in memory of Naoki Sanjūgo, a great *taishū bungaku* writer, who had died just a month before. The idea of giving a literary award to a rising author of *taishū bungaku* in Naoki’s name came first, right after Naoki’s death, while the Akutagawa Prize came seven years after the death of its namesake. As Kikuchi himself was a popular *taishū bungaku* writer, it is reasonable to assume that *taishū bungaku* was a priority over *junbungaku* in Kikuchi’s mind.

in association with the Akutagawa Prize, has retained a successful and influential position in the literary world of Japan. In the next chapter, I consider the origin of *junbungaku*, on one hand, and the nature of *junbungaku* on the other. I also discuss the significance of the disruption of the *bundan*, which was replaced by the media/publishing houses and the rise of media-dependent literature.

Chapter 2: *Junbungaku*: The Significance of Obscurity

2.1 The Worship of “Purity” and the Origin of *Junbungaku*

Scholars often state that it is meaningless and futile to attempt to distinguish who is a *junbungaku* writer and who is not, and therefore no attention at all has been paid to this issue. In this chapter, I challenge this notion, showing instead that *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* have specific and differing qualities, such as maintaining the legacies of the advocates of *junbungaku*; being identified with certain philosophies; being categorized as *shishōsetsu*; having “pure” artistic value; or being associated with members of the *bundan*.

If, as is often observed, Japanese culture privileges purity, *junbungaku* gives it a commercial value. Kaneko Katsuaki (b. 1930), editor of *Bungeishunjū* from 1953 to 1990, commented:

The Japanese people love purity: pure heart [純情 *junjō*], physical purity [純潔 *junketsu*], pure wool [純毛 *junmō*], and pure cotton [純綿 *junmen*] are considered the most valuable. The words *junnama* [純生 draft beer] and *junmen* [純麵 pure noodles] have also been created. *Junbungaku* [純文学 pure literature] is regarded definitely as high-class. (64-5)

Thus, the Japanese character 純 (*jun*), meaning pure, innocent, or genuine, gives the term *junbungaku* a certain exclusive or superlative quality.

The first academic references to *junbungaku* occur in December 1891 in an essay by Mori Ōgai (pen name of Mori Rintarō, 1862-1922) criticizing Yamada Bimyō’s use of the word in his *Nihon inbunron* (Japanese verse theory, 1890-91) (Mori 277).²³ Soon after this,

²³ The original text of *Nihon inbunron* was initially serialized sporadically in a highly influential periodical called *Kokumin no tomo* (The nation’s friend) from October 1890 to January 1891. I searched an obtainable text which was reprinted in *Bimyō senshū* (The selected works of Bimyō) for the word *junbungaku*; however, oddly enough, the word cannot be found anywhere in the text (Yamada 1025-1092). Therefore, I consider this as Ōgai/Bimyō’s initial usage.

in 1892, literary critic Uchida Roan (Uchida Mitsugu, 1868-1929) used the word *junbungaku* in his essay *Bungaku ippan* (Literature generally) (27). There is also a theory that the term originated with poet and literary critic Kitamura Tōkoku (pen name of Kitamura Montarō, 1868-1894), or Tsubouchi Shōyō (pen name of Tsubouchi Yūzō, 1859-1935), who first used it in an essay in 1893.

According to Seidensticker, in the initial stage, purity was defined as the “modern” and “non-didactic”—that is, anti-feudal—by Tsubouchi Shōyō and Kitamura Tōkoku:

For [Tsubouchi Shōyō] the distinction between the pure and the non-pure seems to [be the same as] between the modern and the non-modern, the non-didactic and the didactic ... For [Kitamura Tōkoku] the pure had reference to literature whose purpose was to satisfy the demands of self-awareness, without reference to the practical or ethical. In opposition to it stood the popular, the *tsūzoku* [popular/common], which category in Tōkoku’s day included principally domestic and historical novels of considerable domestic intent, ancestors of the newspaper serial. Tōkoku and Shōyō were thus at one in their rejection of Tokugawa didacticism, and Tōkoku pointed the way to later theories of purity with his emphasis upon the self. To each critic the pure seems to have been generally synonymous with the modern. (175-6)

However, it was not long before an abundance of “modern” and “non-didactic” literature made these definitions of *junbungaku* obsolete; these definitions have not been used since.

Suzuki Sadami, a scholar of modern Japanese literature, has been the main contributor to the study of *junbungaku*, and has done extensive research on the origin of the term as well as the development of the genre, particularly the notion of *junbungaku* as the opposite of *taishū bungaku*. In his three main works on modern Japanese literature,²⁴ he argues that the concept of Japanese “literature” (*Nihon bungaku*) was established for the first time in Japan

²⁴ *Nihon no bungaku wo Kangaeru* (Considering modern Japanese literature), 1994; *Nihon no “bungaku” gainen* (The concept of “literature” in Japan), 1998; *Nihon bungaku no seiritsu* (The establishment of Japanese literature), 2009. For a detailed discussion on the definition and formation of “Japanese literature,” refer to these works.

in the early Meiji era. Roughly speaking, “literature” then referred to works in three categories: philosophy, history, and “linguistic art” (*gengo geijutsu*), the last of which included poetry, novels, plays and reflective essays. Thus, “literature” was used in a broad sense as almost a synonym for “humanities.” In order to distinguish linguistic art from the other two categories, the terms *bibungaku* (beautiful or elegant literature) and *junbungaku* (pure literature) began to be used. As Suzuki argues, “the word *junbungaku* as used in the Meiji era referred to linguistic art that was distinguished from humanities in general [i.e., philosophy and history] and it did not contain any pure artistic value in itself” (*Kangaeru* 79). As Suzuki states, in order to distinguish linguistic art (that is, poetry, novels and plays) from humanities in general, the prefix *jun* (pure) was added; however, from about 1904, people started understanding that “literature” (*bungaku*) referred to linguistic art even without the prefix *jun* (*Nihon no “bungaku” gainen* 244). Although the prefix *jun* was once dropped, it was later readopted in response to the rise of the idea of purity in literature.

The dominant paradigm in the categorization of Japanese fiction has been the dichotomy between pure literature and “non-pure” or mass-oriented literature. A division between high and low literature has been traditionally maintained in Japan. Of course, this does not simply differentiate between high and low,²⁵ but implicitly devalues low literature.

2.2 Modernization in/of Literature

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan underwent a period of “intensive, thoroughgoing, self-conscious modernization, attempting to catch up as quickly as possible with the other nation-states of the modern world (which at the time meant exclusively the

²⁵ See Appendix, Table 6 for more explanation about the transition of divisions between “high” and “low” literature.

Anglo-European world),” and achieved “the elite status of full ‘modernity’ by the end of [Emperor] Meiji’s reign in 1912” (Orbaugh, “Historical Overview” 21). Yanagida Izumi, a specialist in the literature of the Meiji period, when the notions of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* did not yet exist, gives a clear idea of the fluidity of “proto-*junbungaku*” and “proto-*taishū bungaku*”:

Ue no bungaku (upper-class literature) and *shita no bungaku* (lower-class literature) had traditionally existed in Japan, but when Japan experienced the Meiji Restoration, a liberation was seen in the field of literature and there was an opportunity for these two categories to blend. . . . It seemed that there was a natural course that would lead to the birth of “national literature,” but in the event this was not completed. On the other hand, [Tsubouchi] Shōyō instigated the birth of modern Japanese literature that was influenced by formal Western literature and this literature has become *bundan* literature [*junbungaku*]. The literature which was supposed to be developed as “national literature” turned into *taishū bungaku* [“non-*bundan* literature]. (485)

Tsubouchi Shōyō initiated the development of modern Japanese literature, extolled Western Realism, and criticized the established literary practices of Japan (such as *gesaku*), but the concept of *junbungaku* was not formulated solely with Tsubouchi Shōyō’s or with Western influence. The Ken’yūsha (1885-1903), the first formal literary group in the world of modern Japanese literature, took a strong stance against “Westernization” (thus initiating Japanese Neoclassicism), although they found greater favour with Realism. Their literary magazine, *Garakuta bunko* (Rubbish heap library), is commonly regarded as the first *junbungaku* magazine²⁶ (Suzuki, *Kangaeru* 102). Due to the dominance of the Ken’yūsha, the ideology of “art for art’s sake” became influential and created an atmosphere in which political, domestic, and adventure novels written for the masses were seen as “low literature” (Suzuki, *Kangaeru* 108). The ideology of “art for art’s sake” clearly originated from

²⁶ “*Junbungaku*” in this context is not as it is used today. *Garakuta bunko* was a general literary magazine containing a variety of types of literature.

Tsubouchi Shōyō,²⁷ with his critical essay *Shōsetsu shinzui* (The Essence of the Novel); however, the success of the Ken'yūsha gave it legitimacy. Here, the borderline between the categories of *kōkyū mono* (high-value items) and *teizoku mono* (vulgar items) or *tsūzoku mono* (popular/common items) emerged.

In addition to Realism, *junbungaku* as it is used today was coloured by Romanticism (for example the early work of Mori Ōgai), and Naturalism (such as the work of Shimazaki Tōson and Tayama Katai); all these originated in literary genres imported from the West during the Meiji era. According to critic Kawamura Minato (b. 1951), who wrote an exposition on Karatani Kōjin's *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* (Origins of Japanese Modern Literature, 1980), "Japanese modern literature originates in Western modern literature" (Karatani 252). Since this initial Japanese modern literature was considered to be *junbungaku*, it is therefore often argued (for example, by Yanagida and Itō Sei) that *junbungaku* is Western in origin.

2.3 "Large Masses" and "Small Masses"

The development of the concept of *junbungaku* as it is known today depended to a great extent on its perceived counterpart: around the end of the Meiji era, when *taishū bungaku* had reached its height via mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, the concept of *junbungaku* was solidified as competition for *taishū bungaku* (Yanagida 481). To what, then, does *taishū* refer? More specifically, who were the *taishū* (the masses)? The "Freedom and People's Rights" movement emerged among the elites as early as 1874, and *minshū undō*

²⁷ Art for art's sake, which Tsubouchi advocated was to view "beauty" as expressed by Realism as the purpose for writing novels; however, Naturalism converted the purpose of writing from "beauty" to "truth" (Suzuki, *Kangaeru* 110-1).

(movements of the masses; *minshū* is a synonym for *taishū*) intensified around 1907 along with the development of heavy and chemical industries. By the 1920s, as Japan progressed towards a democratic system of government, the masses started to gain political power (Suzuki, “Taishū bungaku no tanjō” 187).

The “*taishū*” in *taishū bungaku* surely refers to these early twentieth-century people, but “literature for the masses” has existed in Japan since as early as the tenth century. Naoki Sanjūgo (1891-1934), who won fame for his historical novels and after whom the Naoki Prize was named, defined *taishū bungaku* in his well-known essay “Taishū bungei sahō” in 1932. According to Naoki, *taishū bungaku* is literature that “engages readers’ interest in plain language or popular style.” Naoki argues that *Taketori monogatari* (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, around the 10th century) and *Uji shūi monogatari* (Gleanings from The Tale of Uji, around the 13th century) were considered to be “*taishū bungaku*.”

In more recent years, for example, in the Edo period, Naoki claimed that what is now labelled *taishū bungaku* fell into ten categories:

- (1) war accounts (*gundan-mono*)
- (2) political stories (*sei-dan*)
- (3) swordsman stories (*kenkaku-mono*)
- (4) revenge stories (*adauchi-mono*)
- (5) succession dispute (*oie mono*)
- (6) the stories of daily life and pleasure quarters (*ninjō/sharebon mono*)
- (7) biographical writings (*denki-mono*)
- (8) ghost stories (*kaidan-mono*)
- (9) instructive stories (*kyōkun-mono*)
- (10) playful fiction (*gesaku*).

According to Naoki, under the firm control of the Edo feudal regime, the common characteristics of these *taishū bungaku* sub-categories were conventional, moralistic and not critical, in addition to being poor in fantasy and imagination. At the end of the Edo period, Naoki points out that because of these drawbacks and the state of confusion in the last days

of the Tokugawa regime, Edo *taishū bungaku* became “depraved.” Then, in the Meiji period, a large amount of Western literature was translated into Japanese and published in newspapers and magazines. Naoki deduces that translators such as Yanagida Izumi and Tsubouchi Shōyō discovered something in Japanese novels that was lacking and, driven by ambition, they began writing new stories such as detective, mystery, and adventure stories. These stories inspired confidence in writers who wrote juvenile literature and historical novels and, thus, *taishū bungaku* was at the height of its popularity around 1900. Naoki is very emphatic that in those days nothing but *taishū bungaku* existed in Japan; soon, however, Tsubouchi Shōyō and other critics began to promote the development of “*junsui bungei*” (pure/genuine literature, i.e. *junbungaku*). The literary world had taken a new turn. Before long, only *bundan* literature (*junbungaku*) was valued and *taishū bungaku* was despised. As Naoki states, in those days, “if you were not supporting Naturalism,” which is to say *junbungaku*, “you were not a writer” (17).

2.4 *Junbungaku* Disputes

Junbungaku has been the subject of many controversies in the history of modern Japanese literary criticism. In this section, my focus is on the disputes as a source of determining what *junbungaku* is. Through the investigation of *junbungaku* disputes, the actual conditions of *junbungaku* will be revealed. The essentials of the disputes are presented in the following table:

Table 1 Three *Junbungaku* Disputes²⁸

First open debate on <i>junbungaku</i> (1927): <i>Shōsetsu no suji ronsō</i> (The debate over the novel's plot or the debate over <i>junbungaku</i>) ²⁹				
Advocate	Contention	Concept of “ <i>junbungaku</i> ”	Definition/metaphor for describing what <i>junbungaku</i> is	Example of “good” literature
Akutagawa Ryūnosuke	-Considers the significance of truth to be greater than that of imagination in fiction. Thus, “personal truth” should be emphasized over plot.	-Novels are a serious form of literature, capable of expressing profound aspects of human life, not simply trivial entertainment.	-An ideal fiction is “as near as possible to poetry” written with “observant eyes” and “a sensitive heart” (Akutagawa 204)	-Shiga Naoya's short work “Takibi” (Night Fires, 1920) has poetically simple language and a less obvious plot.
Tanizaki Jun'ichirō	-Fiction should be gnarled and twisted in order to let the readers enjoy its artifice.	-The novel is a literary genre that is uniquely effective for making maximum use of plot, ‘architectural beauty’ or ‘lies.’	-The building with “structural beauty” or “architectural beauty”	- <i>The Tale of Genji</i> is the greatest work that has “structural beauty” (Tanizaki, “Shōsetsu no suji ronsō” 156) - <i>Chanbara</i> (swashbuckling historical fiction)
Second open debate on “ <i>junbungaku</i> ” (1960s): <i>Junbungaku henshitsu ronsō</i> (The debate on the transformation of <i>junbungaku</i>) ³⁰				
Advocate	Contention	Concept of <i>junbungaku</i>	Origin	
Hirano Ken (critic)	-“ <i>Junbungaku</i> is a historical concept” and that <i>junbungaku</i> had changed its nature and is in danger of becoming extinct.	- <i>Junbungaku</i> [as a synonym for the <i>shishōsetsu</i> (personal novel)] is restricted to the period between 1922 and 1935.	-The concept originates in Arishima Takeo's (1878-1923) “Sengen hitotsu” (A Manifesto),” 1922.	
Itō Sei (novelist, critic and poet)	- While Itō was surprised by the change (great mystery /crime story writers came to the fore) which occurred in <i>bundan</i> in the past year, he writes, “in the present circumstance of the 1961 <i>bundan</i> , the distinction between <i>junbungaku</i> and <i>taishū bungaku</i> is unreal” (S. Itō, “Junbungaku wa sonzai shiuru ka” 462)	- The <i>suiri shōsetsu</i> (mystery /crime novels) materialized two ideal goals of <i>junbungaku</i> : depicting social ills of Capitalism and blazing a new theme which previously <i>junbungaku</i> (= <i>shishōsetsu</i>) did not deal with. In other words mystery was foreign to the <i>shishōsetsu</i> . ³¹	-“When Shōyō wrote <i>The Essence of the Novel</i> , the concept of <i>junbungaku</i> was established ...and it is undeniable that <i>junbungaku</i> has its origin in modern novels in Western Europe” (S. Itō, “Junbungaku wa sonzai shiuru ka” 466).	

²⁸ I compiled all tables including appendices using accounts from a variety of important Japanese critics described in this thesis.

²⁹ Orbaugh, “The Debate Over Pure Literature” 132-3. The contents of this part of the table are based on this reading. Please note that each table has slightly different headings, due to the nature of the arguments.

³⁰ Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo Kangaeru* 32-5. The contents of this part of table are based on this reading unless stated otherwise.

³¹ Itō explains that the two great *suiri sakka* (mystery /crime story writers), Matsumoto Seichō (who won the Akutagawa Prize in 1952 and was an established *taishū bungaku* writer in the 1960s) and Minakami Tsutomu took over *junbungaku*'s ideal goals within a framework of *suiri shōsetsu* (mystery

Advocate	Contention	Concept of <i>junbungaku</i>	Origin
Takami Jun (novelist and poet)	-Accused Hirano of a “crusade against <i>junbungaku</i> ” -Shows some concern about the transformation of <i>junbungaku</i> into the <i>shishōsetsu</i> .	- Since the Meiji era <i>junbungaku</i> functioned as the opposite of <i>tsūzoku bungaku</i> (popular/common literature). It is <i>not just</i> a synonym for the <i>shishōsetsu</i> .	-The word <i>junbungaku</i> is derived from Tōkoku’s “Jinsei ni aiwataru to wa nan no iizo” (T. Kitamura)
Third open debate on “ <i>junbungaku</i> ”(1990s): <i>Junbungaku</i> dispute ³²			
Advocate	Contention	Reasons for contention	Suggestions
Ōtsuka Eiji (critic, manga editor and professor)	-“Literature (<i>junbungaku</i>) sales theory” (what does not sell is of less value)	-The readership of <i>junbungaku</i> magazines is about three hundred (therefore, <i>junbungaku</i> is not widely read).	-Reduce the costs of production and change the circulation system (i.e. to something like <i>Komike</i> ³³).
An anonymous Journalist of <i>Yomiuri newspaper</i>	-Recent <i>junbungaku</i> works are dull.	- <i>Junbungaku</i> books do not sell. -Trust toward <i>junbungaku</i> is lost, and the expectations are reduced.	-Abolition of the <i>junbungaku</i> category - The Akutagawa Prize should be merged with the Naoki Prize.
Shōno Yoriko (<i>junbungaku</i> novelist)	- Fight against the media’s repeated criticism of <i>junbungaku</i> ’s poor sales	-The media’s criticism is mainly based on sales.	- <i>Junbungaku</i> is a concept that functions as the suppression of “media-fascism” that considers only the market values. ³⁴

Several interesting facts emerge from Table 1. First, in the major dispute in 1927, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965) appear to represent *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* writers respectively. Here Akutagawa argues that *junbungaku* refers to a work that depicts personal and quotidian matters. Second, in the next debate in the 1960s, *junbungaku* is equated with *shishōsetsu* as well being considered opposite to *taishū bungaku*, although there were differing views on the matter in the period. Third, the 1990s dispute concerned the commercial value of *junbungaku*. I return to the issue of the commercialization of *junbungaku* in Chapter Three.

/crime novel, which is categorized as *taishū bungaku*). What both Hirano and Itō were concerned about was that the transformation of *junbungaku* into the *shishōsetsu* had had destructive effects on *junbungaku*.

³² Shōno, *Don kihōte no ronsō* 10-11. The contents of this part of table are based on this reading.

³³ *Komike* is an abbreviation of Comic Market. *Comike* is Japan’s (also the world’s) biggest self-published comic book fair with over 35,000 sellers, held twice a year in Tokyo.

³⁴ Shōno, *Don kihōte* 74.

The dispute between Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō in 1923 is known as a disagreement over the principle of the purely artistic novel, which is to say *junbungaku*. My intention in examining this dispute is to find a definition of *junbungaku* at its earliest stage. While Akutagawa argued for serious, artistic literature aimed at a serious readership (Akutagawa 149-50), Tanizaki argued for exciting and entertaining stories (Tanizaki, “Jōzetsu roku” 141). It should be noted at this juncture that although both men are now generally considered to be *junbungaku* writers, there is, I argue, little concrete justification for this classification; indeed, from the position he took in the dispute with Akutagawa, Tanizaki could be understood as promoting *taishū bungaku*. In fact, Tanizaki had a reputation as being heretical, and the more he emphasised plot the more his works were seen as *taishū bungaku*, because they contained too many “stories” (M. Nakamura, “Chūkan shōsetsu ron” 1369). We will return to this point shortly.

Tanizaki's dissatisfaction with his contemporaries' writings about their daily lives and personal affairs, due in part to his anti-Naturalistic bent, triggered the dispute with Akutagawa. He had lost interest in unembellished “true” stories, and placed a special emphasis on plot and structure. While Akutagawa saw his art as independent from his life, and believed in art for art's sake, Tanizaki asserted that literature should be fictional, perverted, intricate, and tangled. As John Luchsinger observes, “In taking such a position Tanizaki was clearly attacking the conventional sense of what constitutes purity in literature” (33). At the time, purity in literature was thought to be exemplified by the personal novel, confessional writing, or what Japanese writers more generally call “*shishōsetsu*.” Tayama Katai's *Futon* (The Quilt, 1907) is considered to be the first example of the *shishōsetsu*,³⁵

³⁵ In *Futon*, a middle-aged writer (presumably the author) lets a female student live in his house. She

although this work was described by some critics as lacking artistic value (Hijiya-Kirschner 109). Itō Sei explains that the “*junbungaku* quality” of this autobiographical confessional novel was “the establishment of self through total individualism” without regard for tradition, dignity, or his family (“*Junbungaku no suii*” 498-506). At that time, in the early twentieth century, this seemingly irreverent attitude had artistic value. The Taishō era (1912-1926) and the early part of the Shōwa era (1926-1989) were the times when the *shishōsetsu* was regarded as “the genre closest to poetry.” Also it was identified as the most truthful and realistic form of literature and “the *shishōsetsu* was placed in the highest sphere of *junbungaku*” (Hijiya-Kirschner 219). In fact, in 1925 critic Kume Masao (1891-1952) asserted that the *shishōsetsu* was “the foundation, true path and quintessence of Japanese literature” (548).³⁶ Tanizaki’s criticism was aimed precisely at this conjunction between literary purity and personal truth in works that failed to employ fictional devices such as plot. Tanizaki affirmed the contemporary literary trend, probably a Japan-only phenomenon, as the lingering bad influence of Naturalism. It was the poor habit of praising cheap confessional stories as sophisticated and serious (Tanizaki, “*Jōzetsu roku*” 156).

What does the 1960s debate on the transformation of pure literature teach us about *junbungaku*? The aforementioned criticism of the *shishōsetsu* has re-emerged in this dispute. However, in this period, the genre lost popularity due to its transformation from firm self-

brightens up his boring life. He has a secret and sordid sexual desire for her but her boyfriend gets in the way.

³⁶ Due to admiration of the genre among literary circles, the *shishōsetsu* holds an established position as *junbungaku*, according to Hirano Ken (pen name of Hirano Akira, 1907-1978); however, this “*junbungaku* = *shishōsetsu*” equation was valid only for the specific period between 1910 and 1935 (“*Bungei zasshi no yakuwari*”). Tanizaki did not complain about *junbungaku* but rather about the *shishōsetsu* and journals lacking creativity and imagination. Some objections have arisen against the intensity of this equation and period; however, the point I am making here is that the evidence shows that the definition has changed over time.

conscious expression characterized by “art for art’s sake” to the new method that recognizes the “second-self” by realizing the fictional nature of self-descriptions; consequently, the *shishōsetsu* had lost its primary attraction of being a window into the author’s life (Hijiya-Kirschner 154). As a result, some scholars and critics thought this was the end of the *shishōsetsu* and therefore the end of *junbungaku*’s credibility. It must be noted that there were several new factors that created the impetus for this dispute: the popularization of *junbungaku* (=the prosperity of *chūkan shōsetsu*, see Appendix, Table 7, Row 6); the improvement of the quality of *taishū bungaku*; and the prevalence of *suiri shōsetsu* (mystery /crime novels). Nakamura Mitsuo points out that the Shōwa literary world progressed much more in the direction Tanizaki advocated than the direction Akutagawa did. Nakamura writes,

It was a matter of course and an outcome of the authors’ instinctive impulse with which they try to find a way out of the deadlock of the *shishōsetsu* ideology where the quest of “purification” and modernization of Japanese literature drove authors to deny novels of their defining characteristics and therefore authors began to redeem novels to be a “healthy and wild state.” (“Chūkan shōsetsu ron” 1370)

In the 1960s dispute, with the loss of popularity of the *shishōsetsu*, it seemed *junbungaku* had nothing more to offer and thus was in a very insecure position. Although a group of new authors called *daisan no shinjin* (the third new generation)³⁷ and the postwar-generation (including Ōe Kenzaburō, who won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958) had appeared, their impact on *junbungaku* had not yet been recognized and could not hold up an ideal of *junbungaku*.

Shōno Yoriko (b. 1956), a contemporary *junbungaku* writer who has won all the major *junbungaku* prizes including the Akutagawa Prize, was the sole defender of *junbungaku* in

³⁷ The Akutagawa Prize winning authors such as Yasuoka Shōtarō, Endō Shūsaku and Yoshiyuki Junnosuke are categorized in this group.

the 1990s *junbungaku* dispute. The dispute had already raged for fourteen years when Shōno published a book titled *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori: jitsuroku junbungaku tōsō jūyo 'nenshi* (Complete resistance! A forest of writers: a true account of fourteen years of the *junbungaku* battle) in 2005. She directed her criticism mostly at Ōtsuka Eiji (b. 1958), a critic, manga editor and professor who claimed in 1991 that there were few readers of *junbungaku* in Japan (Ōtsuka, “Urenai bungakushi no fushigi”). Shōno defended *junbungaku* from what she perceived as “attacks” and against “*junbungaku muyō ron*” (redundancy theory), and by so doing she was well aware of putting herself in a very unfavourable position. She writes:

The reason for this is that the majority of people in the *junbungaku* industry do not openly discuss *junbungaku*. Even they are unwilling to use the term. If someone uses it, there is the possibility of receiving a condescending laugh. One reason for this is that its academic definition is aged and ambiguous. As a result, one cannot accurately discuss it from an expert standpoint. Moreover, somehow, some people avert grappling squarely with the problems. ... Another reason is that *junbungaku* is excessively diverse and changes with time, so it is difficult to define at each moment. (*Don kihōte no ronsō* 19)

Shōno’s accounts are probably accurate considering the present condition of *junbungaku*.

She rejects Ōtsuka’s claim that “*junbungaku* is a baseless concept.” Shōno argues that the term *junbungaku* has been used in the current literary scene, pointing out that both Nakagami Kenji and Ōe Kenzaburō professed themselves to be *junbungaku* writers (*Don kihōte* 101).

Although she was right, Shōno’s argument is not persuasive because she did not provide sufficient evidence but rather simply listed two unquestionably *junbungaku* writers as evidence of the existence of the contemporary prominence of *junbungaku*. In the next chapter, I discuss the certainty that these two authors are *junbungaku* writers.

According to Shōno, *junbungaku* is not a category of literature but rather a principle of anti-commercialism, anti-capitalism, anti-consumerism and anti-globalism: “*Junbungaku* is like the lodestar of the compass. While changing its definitions, it keeps a safe distance from

the principle of unquestioning commercialism” (*Don kihōte* 27). For Shōno, the importance of *junbungaku* does not seem to lie in the category itself, but rather in the writers’ personal attitudes or principles towards their work.

Since this dispute, the circulation figures of *junbungaku* magazines and sales of *junbungaku* books have been a subject of discussion among contemporary critics, giving rise to the new literary theory that the value of a novel corresponds directly to its sales. The fact that *junbungaku* cannot sell well and is always “in the red” (*akaji*) has been a defining characteristic of the category from the beginning. The reason why this has suddenly become a point of criticism since the 1990s is due to the financial burden which *junbungaku* creates for other divisions of publishing companies, which is why recession-hit publishing business can no longer afford to make the sacrifices they used to.

2.5 “Artistic Vulgarly” Versus “Poetic Purity”

Junbungaku: the case of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō

Being praised as a *bungō* (literary master) (Kōno 36) or “*Ō*-Tanizaki” (“Great” Tanizaki) (Mishima, “*Ō*-Tanizaki” 250) and having a “*junbungaku*” award named after him suggests that Tanizaki was a *junbungaku* writer. However, until right after the Second World War, Tanizaki was known as a writer of erotic and grotesque stories, and *Sasameyuki* (translated as *The Makioka Sisters*), one of his best-known novels, is often categorized as *taishū bungaku* because of its subject matter: it can be described as *fūzoku shōsetsu* (manners and customs novel), *ren’ai shōsetsu* (romance novel) or *katei shōsetsu* (household or domestic novel) (Sakai 140).³⁸ According to Nagai Atsuko, curator of the Tanizaki

³⁸ Tanizaki was born in Tokyo but after the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923, he moved to Kyoto and

Jun'ichirō Memorial Museum of Literature in Ashiya, Hyōgo, Tanizaki was “without a doubt considered to be a *junbungaku* writer from beginning to end” (Nagai).³⁹ Nagai remarked that although *Sasameyuki* was one of his masterpieces, it is quite unlike Tanizaki's other work. Moreover, Nagai pointed out that Tanizaki was also interested in *taishū bungaku*, of which his *Rangiku monogatari* (The Story of the Disordered Chrysanthemum, 1930) is an example (Nagai).

Certainly, during my research on *junbungaku* and Tanizaki, I have not once seen an account that states he was a *taishū bungaku* writer, but in some ways he anticipated vulgarity by having plots and avoiding confession in his works. In the following table I summarize the reasons why Tanizaki could be placed in either the *junbungaku* or *taishū bungaku* categories. As we see in Table 2, Tanizaki was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1958, and was the first Japanese writer to be honoured with a membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and letters in 1964. He also published several translations of *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) into modern Japanese. Although these facts do not determine whether he was a *junbungaku* or *taishū bungaku* writer, the international world takes his work to be very serious, and “seriousness” is part of the definition of *junbungaku*.

eventually to Hyogo prefecture. Itō Sei suspected that Tanizaki's move to Kyoto was because his writing style was not welcomed by the Tokyo literary establishment. Tanizaki was called a writer of “meaty works” and did not follow the trend of the *bundan* of writing confessional pieces, so Itō suggests that “Tanizaki could not live in Tokyo” (S. Itō, *Shōsetsu no hōhō* 7).

³⁹ Nagai explains that in 1927, *taishū bungaku* had just started taking root in the *bundan*. However, at that time *taishū bungaku* referred particularly to period novels, so Tanizaki's work did not fit the category. Also, *chūkan shōsetsu* (literature between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*) emerged after WWII, so according to Nagai he was neither a *taishū bungaku* writer nor a *chūkan shōsetsu* writer, and therefore he was a *junbungaku* writer.

Table 2 Reasons for Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Being Considered a *Junbungaku* Writer or *Taishū Bungaku* Writer

Date	A <i>junbungaku</i> writer	A <i>taishū bungaku</i> writer
1900s	-Founds and participates in a <i>junbungaku</i> coterie magazine, <i>Shinshichō</i> (New thought tides, 1908)	-Is considered a <i>tanbi-ha</i> (school of aesthetes) and epicurean writer, as well a writer of erotic and grotesque stories
1910s	-Writes “Shisei” (The Tattooer, 1910), a “febrile fantasy” (K. Itō 116). This work is published in a literary coterie magazine; based on this fact, we can assume that the work was considered <i>junbungaku</i>	-His work is labelled as anti-naturalist (opposing <i>junbungaku</i>). -Is interested in the movie industry and wrote an essay on it (Kōno 54)
1920s		-He becomes a film script advisor in a movie company and writes a comedy (1920) (Kōno 56). -Writes <i>Chijin no ai</i> (Naomi, 1925). This work is serialised in a newspaper, therefore, it can be considered <i>taishū bungaku</i> . -Prefers story-telling and fictionalization -Writes influential detective novels -Tanizaki debates “the novel’s plot” with Akutagawa. Tanizaki appears to take a position as a “ <i>taishū bungaku</i> ” writer (1927).
1930s	-His name was on the list of the Akutagawa Prize selection committee from the 1 st to the 10 th as a judge; however, he never submitted the selection comments nor attended selection meetings. -His income tax payment was 136 yen, which was the average for <i>junbungaku</i> writers (1935).	-“Experimentally” writes <i>Rangiku monogatari</i> , which is considered <i>taishū bungaku</i> (1930) (Nagai, “Junbungaku sakka/Taishū bungaku sakka”) -He states clearly in his essay that he is writing “ <i>taishū bungaku</i> items” (Tanizaki, “Taishū bungaku no ryūkō ni tsuite” 291) -Moves to Kyoto and is outside the <i>bundan</i> (1932)
1940s		-Writes “great and ideal <i>taishū bungaku</i> piece,” <i>Sasameyuki</i> (1942-1948) (Sakai 140-1)
1950s	-In 1953, <i>Tade kuu mushi</i> (Some Prefer Nettles) and in 1957, <i>Sasameyuki</i> (The Makioka Sisters) are translated into English. -He was nominated for the Nobel prize in literature (1958). It is believed that he was nominated for <i>Some Prefer Nettles</i> .	
1960s	- He was the first Japanese writer to be honored with a membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1964). -The Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize, a <i>junbungaku</i> prize, which is named for him, is established (1965).	

Building on examples such as these, in Table 2 I show that Tanizaki could convincingly be labelled both a *junbungaku* and a *taishū bungaku* writer. Although Tanizaki’s major works can often be categorized as *taishū bungaku*, he nevertheless seems to be considered a *junbungaku* writer. One gets the impression that for some in the literary world there is a determination to label Tanizaki a *junbungaku* writer no matter what. The

essence of the problem remains the ambiguity of the term and the difficulty in classifying authors as *junbungaku* writers.

Tanizaki defended “popularity” and “vulgarity” in the dispute with Akutagawa in 1927:

Since novels are intended for many readers, it is acceptable that they have an “interesting plot” which is understood by and attract laymen. As long as the novel has artistic value, it is better that the work is understood by laymen than if it not understood by them. I agree with what someone who said that you should not disdain *tsūzoku* (popularity or commonness). (“Jōzetsu roku” 146)

Soon after the dispute, in 1930, Tanizaki wrote an essay titled “Regarding the trend of *taishū bungaku*.” The essay states that in the Edo era, because *nanbungaku* (literally, soft literature, such as works of Ihara Saikaku and Chikamatsu Monzaemon; see Appendix, Table 6, Column B at Row 3) was degraded by the educated high class, their works could really engage the masses and become great art. He asserts:

Confessional novels and *shinkyō shōsetsu* (state-of-mind novels)⁴⁰ are considered to be “high-class” literature, but I believe these are not the mainstream of novels. Novels should contain structures and arrangements and be for the masses as it was in the days of the Edo era. The prosperity of Naturalism and *shinkyō shōsetsu* of the past years are just the chrysalis of today’s *taishū bungaku* era. (Tanizaki, “Ryūkō” 290-1)

Tanizaki explains that he does not deny *shinkyō shōsetsu* at all, but rather he recognizes genuine *shinkyō shōsetsu* or any other great high class literature which requires dignity, talent, insight and discipline. In fact, it is dependent on mental training more than technique. He mentions that at this point (in 1930) he is delighted by and is himself writing *taishū bungaku*: “since the Edo era, the main current of Japanese literature is coming back to the right way” (Tanizaki, “Ryūkō” 290-1).

Mishima Yukio (pen name of Hiraoka Kimitake, 1925-1970) describes Tanizaki’s

⁴⁰ Both *shishōsetsu* (confessional novels) and *shinkyō shōsetsu* (state-of-mind novels) were a part of *junbungaku*.

unshakable dominance in the literary world: “until the end of WWII, it appeared that the most respected author was Shiga Naoya and the most loved author was Tanizaki. Because Shiga was an unprolific writer, after the war Tanizaki had the respect and love all to himself.” Mishima Yukio, who read Tanizaki’s works voraciously, was influenced by and imitated his writing when he was young, and was one of the five people who recommended Tanizaki be considered for the Nobel Prize (“Tanizaki Jun’ichirō gojūhachinen nōberu shō kōho Mishima Yukio ga suisenjō” 1). Mishima comments that Tanizaki, who is completely lacking the poetic talent that turns reality into fiction, has an original aesthetic. He introduces the key to understanding Tanizaki: “Tanizaki literature,” Mishima writes, asks us what is fundamentally more important for human beings, the half century of political upheaval in Japan or the resplendently tattooed back of the female protagonist in *Shisei* (The Tattooer, 1910)⁴¹ and the delicate foot of the daughter-in-law of the old man in *Fūten rōjin nikki* (Diary of a Mad Old Man, 1961-2).⁴² Mishima assures us that such an absurd question could have been possible in art history but never in literary history. He believes that Tanizaki had considered that the workaday world, politics or even the entire universe were no more important than a tattooed woman’s back:

The aesthetics in *The Tattooer* is not the intentional aesthetics of the tattoo artist’s spirit; the story is about the tattoo, which actually became part of the woman’s flesh, denying the will of the master. The defeated artist must worship her on his knees. Her wicked power becomes the essence of beauty, and the fate of a beauty that took shape in reality. In later years, Tanizaki’s aesthetics stubbornly adhered to objectivity caused by the loss of this kind of intention, nonsense like the woman’s body in *The Tattooer*. The most magnificent result of this is *The Makioka Sisters*. (Mishima, “Tanizaki

⁴¹ *The Tattooer* depicts a young tattoo artist whose desire is to engrave his masterpiece on a perfect female body. When he finds the ideal woman, he drugs and tattoos her, but she ultimately overpowers him with sheer brute female strength. Mishima refers to this work as a “work of a genius.”

⁴² In *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, an old man who has suffered a stroke enjoys his remaining years by observing his daughter-in-law, who used to be a dancing girl. The old man occasionally indulges in his foot fetish with her. Mishima applauds this as a “complete masterpiece.”

Jun'ichirō" 249)

Tanizaki's works cannot be vulgar, although they appear to be "vulgaristic" (*tsūzokuteki*). Kōno Taeko, who sat on the Akutagawa Prize selection committee from the 97th to the 136th award seasons, and who was an admirer of Tanizaki, states in her 1993 book *Tanizaki bungaku no tanoshimi* (The Pleasure of Tanizaki's Works) that "Tanizaki can only write 'high quality artistic fiction' or 'artistic fiction that fails to be high or fails to be strong,' but not vulgar fiction" (95-6). The artistic aspect and values are emphasized by two noted authors and on the basis of these observations we can conclude that Tanizaki himself was in pursuit of a style unique to himself, making no distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. More precisely, Tanizaki was a "proto-*chūkan shōsetsu*" writer. However, the reason everyone wants to call him a great *junbungaku* writer, especially after his death, is the manifestation of the obstinate mentality which elevates him to the status of a *junbungaku* writer.

Junbungaku: the case of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

Akutagawa argued that plot is inconsequential when considering artistic value, and that a novel without plot is the purest (Akutagawa 150). Accordingly, he saw Shiga Naoya as the purest writer of his day.⁴³ Akutagawa gives two examples of works that do not have typical storylines: the novel *Le Vigneron Dans Sa Vigne* (Grape-making in the vineyard, 1894) by Jules Renard (1864-1910), and the short story "Takibi," (Night Fires, 1920) by Shiga Naoya. Shiga was widely respected for the "purity" and "sincerity" of his work, and was praised as

⁴³ Akutagawa was famous for being an ardent admirer of Shiga. In "Haguruma" (Cogwheels), known as Akutagawa's *shishōsetsu* and his final work before committing suicide, there is a scene in which he reads Shiga's *An'yakōro* (A Dark Night's Passing) and weeps as he feels inferior to the protagonist.

“a master of the *junbungaku* tradition” and as “*shōsetsu no kamisama*” (the god of the novel)⁴⁴ (Orbaugh, “Structure and Stylistics in the Short Works of Shiga Naoya” 139).⁴⁵ In his last reply to Tanizaki, Akutagawa emphasized again the point that “a work’s value is determined only by whether it is pure or not” (Akutagawa 159); ultimately the dispute was left unresolved because Akutagawa committed suicide about a month later.⁴⁶

Shiga’s works provide us with a useful starting point for answering the question “what is *junbungaku*?” Edward Fowler observes that,

In the Taishō *bundan*’s heyday, when *shōsetsu* [fiction], the *shishōsetsu* and *junbungaku* were practically synonymous among *junbungaku* writers, Shiga was the reigning deity of prose “fiction,” a reputation he earned by writing stories that are for the most part so purely autobiographical that critics rely on them heavily when chronicling his biography. (186)

Thus, Shiga’s “purity” and “sincerity” were the epitome of *junbungaku*. As Akutagawa argued, *junbungaku* works were plotless, undramatic, and simple, and therefore did not appeal to a large audience. Indeed, Orbaugh observes that Westerners sometimes “complain that [Shiga’s] stories are shallow and boring, and hardly qualify to be considered as fiction” (“Structure and Stylistics” 3). The implicit understanding that “high-quality literature” does not sell well is common to most scholarly and literary experts in Japan.

⁴⁴ In fact, there are at least four “*kamisama*” in modern Japanese literature. Besides Shiga, they are Uno Kōji (pen name of Uno Kakujirō, 1891-1961), the “god of personal novels” (*shishōsetsu no kamisama*); Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947), the “god of literature” (*bungaku no kamisama*); and Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983), the “god of criticism” (*hyōron no kamisama*) (Miyake 141). In addition, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke is known as the *father* of short stories.

⁴⁵ “Kinosaki ni te” (At Kinosaki), Shiga’s best-known short story, is a good example of *junbungaku* written at the zenith of his career. The largely plotless story recounts Shiga’s experience after a train accident, when the main character goes to a famous hot spring for rejuvenation, and begins to feel at peace with the idea of a lonely but quiet death.

⁴⁶ It was rumored that Akutagawa killed himself because he was losing the dispute with Tanizaki. Tanizaki wrote in a farewell essay for Akutagawa published 1927 that “despite not knowing Akutagawa’s mental state, I thought that I had found the best opponent with whom to debate even though it was not like me to do so.” From this statement, it can be concluded that at least Tanizaki was not hostile towards Akutagawa. Instead, he enjoyed having a worthy opponent (Tanizaki, “Itamashiki hito” 227).

By the end of the dispute, although the argument had started over plot, Akutagawa had shifted his focus to *shiteki seishin* (poetic spirit), rather affectionately commenting: “Tanizaki knows my whip does not have ‘prickles.’” He continued, “what I expect from Tanizaki is this poetic spirit. Tanizaki was a poet when he wrote *Shisei*; however, unfortunately, he was not one when he wrote *Aisureba koso* [Because of love, 1921]” (Akutagawa 152).

2.6 Rich Authors/Poor Authors

Until the end of World War II, there was a tendency for writers to keep to their specialties and confine themselves to a single genre. One of the things that this reveals is categorization, which was decided by the writer, not the work. On the other hand, despite this general trend of categorization, some writers did succeed in writing across genres. As a notable example, in the Taishō era, Kikuchi Kan converted from *junbungaku* to *taishū bungaku*. He claimed that he started his career with *junbungaku* in 1916, but switched to *taishū bungaku* several years later for the better pay.⁴⁷ He had no intention of being tied to *junbungaku* because the whole reason that he wrote novels was, according to him, to make money (Kikuchi, *Kikuchi Kan* 507).

The descriptions by Kaneko below show conclusively that *junbungaku* had no commercial value, and therefore, *junbungaku* authors made the least money from the 1930s—when Kikuchi Kan and Funabashi Seiichi (1904-1976) were in their heyday—until

⁴⁷ In 1938, Kikuchi defended his conversion from *junbungaku* to *taishū bungaku* by responding to criticism that this had hindered the true development of *junbungaku*. He stated, “if I am a hindrance for *junbungaku*, that means I am an influential writer, and that *junbungaku* is too vulnerable.” He suspected that the criticism probably came from the fact that “even the monthly income of *junbungaku* writers falls short of my single manuscript fee.” Thus Kikuchi was acknowledged to be a *taishū bungaku* writer. However, it did not mean Kikuchi declared he was against the *junbungaku* tradition (Kikuchi, *Kikuchi Kan* 198-199).

1991, Kaneko's time:

Inevitably, *junbungaku* magazines are not profitable; they are, rather, in the red. That is why these magazines are given some sort of divine status. In a sense, the more popular the novelists, the more inclined they are to write for *junbungaku* magazines in order to "expiate their sins." Funahashi Seiichi once told me that, "I do not write a story for entertainment magazines if it pays little. But for *junbungaku* magazines, I'll write no matter how low the pay." This simply shows the novelist's honest feelings towards *junbungaku*. In fact, although they cannot make their living as a *junbungaku* writer, what they achieve is to be respected as an artist in the *bundan*. Kikuchi Kan wrote, "I received more payment when I wrote for entertainment magazines. It makes sense to me because I am sacrificing my integrity as a *junbungaku* writer." (Kaneko 66)

The following is a table of income tax amounts paid by writers in 1935. Miyake Shōtarō, the editor of *Yomiuri shinbun* presents the list as proof that *junbungaku* writers were underprivileged in terms of income (65). It should be noted, however, that *junbungaku* writers and *taishū bungaku* writers did not produce the same volume of work due to differences in demand for the two genres.

Taishū bungaku writers:

Kikuchi Kan ⁴⁸	4832 yen
Mikami Otokichi (1891-1944)	2215 yen
Yoshikawa Eiji	2190 yen

Junbungaku writers:

Shimazaki Tōson	196 yen
Tanizaki Jun'ichirō	136 yen
Tokuda Shūsei (1872-1943)	59 yen

As is apparent, *taishū bungaku* writers made considerably more than *junbungaku* writers. The widespread belief was that if one chose to be a man of letters, not including *taishū bungaku* writers in the given context, one was assured to be poor. This was commonplace before WWII: generally speaking, literary men were not expected to make a

⁴⁸ By 1935, Kikuchi was already a successful *taishū bungaku* writer as well as an entrepreneur, and he therefore had multiple sources of income.

decent living or to have an ordinary life (Ōkubo 218-31).⁴⁹

As a result, Kikuchi clearly stated that he exchanged his integrity for money and became a *taishū bungaku* writer. Table 3 lists Kikuchi's major works. This table demonstrates the meaning of Kikuchi's conversion from *junbungaku* to *taishū bungaku*.

Table 3 Differences between Kikuchi's *Junbungaku* and *Taishū Bungaku* Works

	Title	Themes	Category	Publication
1916	“Okujō no kyōjin” (Madman on the roof)	-Being a mad man might be happier than being normal. Scepticism and irony	Play	<i>Shin-shichō</i> (literary coterie magazine)
1917	“Chichi kaeru” (The father returns)	-His wife and children accept a “deadbeat father” with complex feelings 20 years after being abandoned.	Play	<i>Shin-shichō</i>
1918	<i>Mumei sakka no nikki</i> (Diary of an unknown writer)	-The life of the writer since his days at Kyoto university	Autobiographical novel	<i>Chūōkōron</i> (literary magazine)
	“Tadanao kyōgyōjō ki” (The conduct of Lord Tadanao)	-Lord Matsudaira Tadanao keeps himself above all his vassals and is sceptical of their loyalty. He behaves with extreme cruelty towards them.	Historical novel Based on a real person	<i>Chūōkōron</i>
1919	“Onshū no Kanata ni” (Beyond love and hate)”	-A priest embarks on the dangerous construction of tunnel in atonement for the sin that he committed in the past.	Historical novel Based on a real story	<i>Chūōkōron</i>
	“Tōjūrō no koi” (Tōjūrō's love)	-In the name of research, an actor practices his role in a love affair with a woman who is faithful to her husband. Tragedy follows.		Serialized in Newspaper
1920	<i>Shinju fujin</i> (Madame pearl)	-A beautiful noble woman who has fallen on hard times is forced to marry a moneylender although she has a lover. She starts to have vengeful thoughts.	Full length novel <i>Fūzoku shōsetsu</i>	Newspaper
1925	<i>Dai ni no seppun</i> (The second kiss)	-A second man gets involved in a pre-existing love triangle and makes the relationship all the more complicated, and thus fatal.	Full length novel <i>Fūzoku shōsetsu</i>	Newspaper

First, he began publishing in newspapers with high circulation instead of literary coterie magazines, where *junbungaku* authors usually contributed their works. Second, his medium

⁴⁹ Being a *junbungaku* writer, according to the conventional view, meant accepting poverty. Shiga, however, was not poor. On the contrary, he was born into a wealthy samurai family and completed his early education at Gakushūin (The peers' school) where the offspring of the Imperial Family have traditionally studied. Indeed, his wealth was probably a major reason that Shiga was able to pursue his writing. Furthermore, suicide (from which Kitamura Tōkoku, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Dazai Osamu, Mishima Yukio, and Kawabata Yasunari died) and tuberculosis— from which Kunikida Doppo, Mori Ōgai and Kajii Motojirō suffered; it was the second leading cause of death for writers from the Meiji era onward (E. Kitamura 22) — are often associated with *junbungaku* authors.

changed from single episodic stories to long serialized ones with more complex plots.

Finally, his themes shifted from psychologically complex realism to melodrama. These were conspicuous steps to demote oneself to the “lower league.”

During the Taishō and Shōwa eras, *taishū bungaku* authors were treated as lesser writers in the literary world because there was a prevailing view that *taishū bungaku* was inferior. Not only among the few concerned, but also among the masses, the practice of *junbungaku* worship was evident. The note of sophistication in the word “*junbungaku*” also appealed to the expensive tastes of the well-to-do. It would take a lot to make a writer change his literary allegiance, but occasionally the distance between *junbungaku* writers and *taishū bungaku* authors narrowed. When, for example, *junbungaku* authors fell from their readers’ favour, they sometimes turned to writing *taishū bungaku* (i.e. *chūkan shōsetsu*). Some turned back to *junbungaku* while others remained on the course Kikuchi was determined to take.

The rise of *taishū bungaku* in the 1920s and 1930s corresponds with the changing income of *taishū bungaku* authors. There is evidence to indicate how popular *taishū bungaku* was in 1950; Yoshikawa Eiji (pen name of Yoshikawa Hidetsugu, 1892-1962) was the third-highest-paid *taishū bungaku* writer in 1935 according to income tax records, and had the highest income not only among authors but among all entertainers, including movie stars and singers (Tsurumi 198). Miyake witnessed the entire process by which Yoshikawa became the most popular *taishū bungaku* writer of all time, a position he maintained until the end of his life.⁵⁰ Miyake was not surprised by his popularity because Yoshikawa’s attitude

⁵⁰ Indeed, Yoshikawa’s historical fiction was often studied for hints on how great historical figures managed their lives: “Writing *taishū shōsetsu* [“mass novels”] is fearful. In some cases my novel affects someone’s destiny. Businessmen and executives read my novels and make their decisions” (Miyake 172-

towards his work was sincere: Yoshikawa was “always with the *taishū* and situated his writing desk among them” (172). Although he was the top-selling writer, the works he produced were “*taishū bungaku*,” which at that time was not even considered “*bungaku*”; this distinction bothered him. Miyake recalled Yoshikawa’s acceptance of his inferior position: “even though I situate my desk among the masses and write the words of the masses, my work is not considered to be ‘*bungaku*’... There is nothing I can do about it” (178). In those days, *taishū bungaku* was seen as offensive, especially by the competitors. Although he was the king of the entertainment world at this point, Yoshikawa felt that he was unworthy.

2.7 The Role of the *Bundan*

Although I have been using the word *bundan* throughout this discussion, here it requires additional explication. *Bundan* has been used in two rather different ways: on the one hand, it referred to literary circles in a broad sense, and could include anyone who wrote or criticized literature; on the other hand, it referred in a narrow sense to specific literary people, and *bundan bungaku* refers exclusively to works produced by this group. Like *junbungaku*, *bundan* is an elusive term whose meaning must be grasped by gathering fragmentary information from different time periods.

From the end of the Meiji era to the beginning of the Taishō era, *junbungaku* was called *bundan shōsetsu* (novels of the literary circle) or *bundan bungaku* (literature of the literary circle).⁵¹ Kaneko Katsuaki, a former editor at Bungeishunjū Ltd., asserts that “*junbungaku* is *bundan* literature.” He explains that the deep impression of

3). Thus Yoshikawa was very influential in Japanese society at large.

⁵¹ For more about *bundan*, see Appendix, Table 6 and 7.

junbungaku/bundan literature is formed by the combination of authors' lives and their novels.

The novels were appreciated mainly in the literary circles in which the authors travelled, since it was impossible for readers who did not know the details of a writer's life to fully appreciate or understand the context of his novels (62). Kaneko explains the *bundan* system from an editor's point of view. The *bundan* from the Meiji period to the beginning of the Taishō period was communal in nature. When the members recognized a work as good, it would be read by many people. Publishing houses accepted the assessment of the *bundan*, and would publish even if a work did not have commercial value. Thus, acceptance by the *bundan* virtually guaranteed that a work would be published.

In 1926, Ōya Sōichi (1900-1970) called the *bundan* a "guild" that was loosely based on an apprentice system; this "*bundan* guild" was derived from the Ken'yūsha, specifically Ozaki Kōyō as a central figure (121). Ōya explains that "one must have either senior authors or friends who support and promote one's work in the *bundan* in order to have a praiseworthy novel." Despite the difference of opinion among its masters, the *bundan* were quick to unite against outsiders in order to protect their interests. Similarly, members stood in the way of amateur authors in an attempt to filter out those who did not cultivate relationships with the group. Established members praised and promoted each other for the purpose of maintaining their "fame" (122). In order to be accepted as a member of the *bundan*, it was common practice in the Meiji period for novice writers to implore an established writer in the *bundan* to be their master,⁵² and sometimes their work was published under that master's name. If the circumstances allowed, the disciples would lodge

⁵² The deprecatory *bundan* term "*shujin motchi*" (having/serving a husband) which described the relationship between a writer and his or her master; it implied that the writer had to be unquestionably devoted and even subservient.

in their masters' home, in exchange for which they filled the role of secretaries and helpers.⁵³ Futabatei Shimei, for instance, studied under Tsubouchi Shōyō and his first novel *Ukigumo* was published under the former's name. In return, Tsubouchi received half of the royalties. Having a close relationship with a master ensured one's survival in the *bundan*.

As I have already noted, around the 1890s when the Ken'yūsha seized control of the literary scene, its members began taking a strong stand on art for art's sake. As a result, the *bundan* solidified its position as a hierarchical and exclusive organization. The following account by Sakai summarizes the establishment of the *bundan*:

For the most part, it was the writers in the Ken'yūsha who materialized Tsubouchi Shōyō's ideal through their works. The Ken'yūsha was established in 1885, but it was also the emergence of the *bundan* that would play an important role in literary history. The Ken'yūsha was the first recognized, formal organization for writers. (Sakai 100)

Katsumoto explains the reason that two great authors, Natsume Sōseki (whose portrait appeared on a Japanese banknote from 1984-2004) and Mori Ōgai, were alienated from the *bundan*: their writing approaches were different from those of their contemporaries. Sōseki's literary style in his early phase was called "*yoyū-ha*" (a group of people whose literary philosophy is based on peaceful ways of life keeping aloof from worldly affairs), and since Ōgai's principal work was being a medical officer in the Imperial Army, his writing practice was seen as his avocation, although Ōgai is known now as a pioneer *junbungaku* writer (Sakai 52). In the eyes of the Ken'yūsha, who were proud professional writers, these authors may not have appeared serious enough to tackle solemn literature. In the Meiji era, a professional writer was someone who had joined the *bundan*, had had his fiction serialized in newspapers or preferably magazines, and had been paid for writing. Due to their attitudes

⁵³ Tayama Katai's *Futon*, which is an overtly autobiographical novel, depicts a middle-aged male writer's affection towards a young female disciple who lives in his home.

towards their literature, both Sōseki and Ōgai were considered “anti-Naturalists,” and this was one of the reasons why they were not welcomed into the *bundan*.

Moreover, several years later, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke made a strong protest against vulgar novels by “non-*junbungaku*-oriented” writers that appeared in a literary magazine where he served as a regular contributor (Ōkubo 114).⁵⁴ In an essay in 1953, Itō Sei gives an example of exclusiveness in the *bundan*: “those whom we call *junbungaku* writers do not acquaint themselves with *taishū bungaku* writers. The two groups write for different magazines and different publishing companies” (S. Itō, “Taishū bungaku to junbungaku” 209).⁵⁵ These attitudes have slowly changed but even today have not completely died out. The *bundan* was also a closed community from which women and those from other regions or local towns were often excluded. In the Meiji era, the cultural gap between Tokyo and local areas or other municipalities widened. Where an author had been raised was taken into account when considering him for membership the *bundan*, although not all members of the *bundan* were born in Tokyo. Thus, the *bundan* functioned as a closed and self-regulatory organization for *junbungaku* writers. The theory that the dissolution of the *bundan* meant the end of *junbungaku* is therefore entirely plausible.

One point to be noticed about the *bundan* is that although Kikuchi was a writer in the

⁵⁴ Akutagawa stated, “I refuse to contribute to *Chūōkōron* magazine if my name and work will be listed side by side with Muramatsu Shōfū” (pen name of Muramatsu Giichi, 1889-1961, regarded as a *taishū bungaku* writer) (Suzuki, *Kangaeru* 211). However, Akutagawa underwent a total shift in his attitude towards *taishū bungaku* writers in “Mata issetsu?” (One more opinion?, 1926), where Akutagawa sent a message to *taishū bungaku* writers, saying they had better “make their way into the novelists’ territory openly. Otherwise, we the novelists, without neglecting the dignity of the story, will cut into the *taishū bungaku* territory” (165). In any case, by observing this, we learn that he considered himself to be a *junbungaku* writer and his attitudes toward *taishū bungaku* writers softened over time.

⁵⁵ According to Itō, this continued until the establishment of *chūkan shōsetsu* (novels in between). When *junbungaku* writers started writing *chūkan shōsetsu*, *junbungaku* writers bridged the gap between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*.

taishū bungaku category, he was known as “the dean of the *bundan*” (Shōgakukan, ed.).

With his clear perspective over the publishing industry and abilities as a popular writer, he was able to found a publishing company. Hence, Kikuchi created a home ground for writers’ activities and ensured a means of living for both *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* writers. Thus, even as a writer of “low” literature, by publishing magazines and establishing major literary awards, Kikuchi enjoyed a position of respect and influence. As a result, Kikuchi emerged as the central figure at the intersection of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*, balancing artfully both the *junbungaku bundan* and the “*taishū bungaku bundan*.”

From 1934, Kikuchi carried on the *bunshi geki* (writers’ theatre) originally organized by the Ken’yūsha and made it a successful annual custom which continued until 1977.⁵⁶ The event was for the editors of his magazines to show their gratitude to readers for their loyalty, and also functioned as a mutual thank-you party and bonding opportunity for writers and publishers. In 1959, *The Bungeishunjū sanjūgonen shikō* (the thirty-five-year history of Bungeishunjū) was published containing photographs of major writers acting out plays at the Kabuki-za, the famous kabuki theatre in Tokyo. In one of the pictures appears newly award-winning *junbungaku* writer Ishihara Shintarō (born in 1932, he has served as governor of Tokyo since 1999), playing the lead role in *Botchan*, based on the novel by Natsume Sōseki. Another photograph shows influential *taishū bungaku* writer Kawaguchi Matsutarō (1899-1985, the first Naoki Prize winner) playing the role of a swordsman in a historical tale (Bungeishunjū shinsha, ed.). From 1952 to 1954, young Mishima Yukio performed as a supporting actor (Mishima Yukio Bungakukan Organizing Committee, ed.).

⁵⁶ Today *bunshi geki* is still observed. For example, in Morioka city, “*bunshi*” consists of local news casters, reporters, writers, and celebrities.

2.8 The Rise of Japanese Modern Publishing Capitalism

By the Taishō period, the publishing houses began to assert more control: whereas previously the members of the *bundan* assessed the artistic value of a given piece of literature, now the publishers assumed the role; unless a work was accepted by the publishers, it would not be published. This meant that for the first time the less *commercial* value a story had, the less *artistic* value it was granted/assumed to have (Kaneko 180-1). The primary reason for this change was, as journalist Ōya Sōichi argues, that the *enbon* boom in the late 1920s provided a boost to the Japanese publishing industry. The *enbon* boom also allowed literature to spread all over Japan and removed it from the hands of the intellectual elite and made it a regular household item for ordinary people (125). As a consequence, publishing companies started to control the literary market and the competition among them intensified. This phenomenon reached its peak in the Shōwa period, especially after WWII. Effectively, publishing houses (the promoters) wrested power over literature from the *bundan* (the producers) and became the final arbiters of both artistic merit and commercial worth.

Indeed, Ōya asserts that the disruption of the *bundan* in the 1920s allowed more vulgar works to be accepted. Cheap books and wide distribution created a literature boom and made authors rich which attracted and made it easier for amateurs to enter the field. As a part of this amateurization,⁵⁷ in Ōya's opinion, proletarian literature suddenly gained popularity. The consequences of the disappearance of the *bundan* allowed media and its readership to develop a tendency towards “newness,” which was appealing and created more publicity.

⁵⁷ Ōya expresses amateurization as “the invasion of amateur (*shirōto*) into the *bundan*.”

2.9 “*Junbungaku*-ism”: Philosophy and Technique

The following are the manifestations or qualifications of the “philosophy” of *junbungaku* in the early phase that I have discussed so far (note that not all the qualifications must be fulfilled in order to be considered *junbungaku*):

- Succeeding in Tsubouchi Shōyō’s or Kitamura Tōkoku’s literary legacies
- Being identified with Naturalism, the outgrowth of Realism, which was inspired by Western literature
- Being categorized as *shishōsetsu*
- Having “pure” artistic values (i.e. Akutagawa’s notion of poetic spirit)
- The author being a member of the *bundan*
- The work having appeared in *junbungaku* magazines

Editor Ōkubo Fusao (b. 1921) explains that no matter matter how many times the debate was brought up, he believed that people still felt the distinction between the two categories. Ōkubo claims that whether good or bad, the distinction clearly appears in the writing of both genres. The most distinguishing characteristics are the use of onomatopoeia, idiomatic expressions, clichés, and punctuation such as brackets, question marks and exclamation marks; these rarely appear in *junbungaku* but are common in *taishū bungaku*. In *junbungaku*, writers avoided onomatopoeia because it was regarded as immature. Ōkubo had often heard criticism of stories with “immature” writing techniques, which were characterized as “writing with half-hearted ease” or “writing without the power of persuasiveness,” and eventually such writing fell into the category of “lowbrow novels” or *taishū bungaku* (23-4).

Tsurumi Shunsuke (b. 1922) explains the style of *taishū bungaku* as fairly easy but with “long-winded sentences with timely pauses” (9). Although difficult *kanji* are often used, they are not a serious impediment to reading because they are not used at critical points, so they can function almost in the same way as a comma or a grammatical pause. On the

contrary, *junbungaku* does not have a free and easy tone. It is fussy and anxious, and “we cannot read it if we don’t concentrate. There is no rhythm” (10).

Tsurumi also claims that *junbungaku* is not appropriate for recitation, but *taishū bungaku* has inherited a rhythmical quality from traditional commoners’ arts such as *kabuki*, *rakugo* (comic story-telling), *kōdan* (historical narratives) and *naniwa-bushi* (narrative singing) (10). It is important to note that opinions differ considerably regarding the quality of *junbungaku*, which Akutagawa compared to poetry (see Table 1). Furui Yoshikichi (b. 1937) states that in writing *junbungaku*, removing the commonness and vulgarity of the wording is part of the revising and polishing process. *Junbungaku* has been regarded as free from stereotypes and having a singularity within the genre which should be left untouched. Moreover, Ōkubo proceeds to explain the differences between the qualities of the two categories. It is true that there are some indistinct novels that elude categorization. However, there are also clear examples of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. One of the required qualities of *junbungaku* is newness of the narrative logic, aesthetic sense, writing style or characterization. No matter how elaborate the disguise, old concepts/ideas will be regarded as *taishū bungaku*. The *bundan* did not allow new writers to appear without introducing something new, such as a writing style or new type of character (Ōkubo 98). Ōya explains in depth that “genuine newness” was supposed to be the product of improving of one’s life and the revolution of personality. “New” (新 *shin*) could be not just a veneer of “new” but also “deep” (深 *shin*) and “genuine” (真 *shin*) (124). Ōya’s explanation of “newness” gives a better understanding of the importance of “newness” in *junbungaku*. “Genuine newness” is not only a special emphasis on the unconventional and peculiar.

In this chapter, I have outlined the formation of *junbungaku* and Japanese writers’

inclination towards *junbungaku* despite economic temptations which sometimes led writers to convert to *taishū bungaku*. Although the birth of *junbungaku* was Western in origin, it had been quite canonical and had the power to attract authors (not readers); however, it was fragmentary and fragile. Shiga Naoya's writing is the epitome of *junbungaku*, but Tanizaki Jun'ichirō blurred the lines. Also, the *bundan*, once the foundation of *junbungaku* and a small community which “fostered” new authors by rejecting “invasion,” gave way to mass journalistic media: magazines, newspapers, and publishing companies. In the next chapter, I examine how the Akutagawa Prize with *junbungaku* as its main attraction has been handled by Bungeishunjūsha. I also examine publishing houses that create instant award-winning authors by promoting them, and speed up the “amateurization” (in contrast to professionalism) of modern Japanese literature.

Chapter 3: Publishing Houses and Editors

3.1 *Junbungaku* Utopia: *Kakioroshi*

Kōdansha, the biggest Japanese publishing company, celebrated its centennial in December 2009. As a grandiose commemorative project, in November 2008 the company temporarily revived the *kakioroshi* (special books that are published as special stand-alone works and not serialized), and started a “two-year thank-you campaign” during which it published one hundred volumes. *Kakioroshi* was formerly used to distinguish an original novel from a less valued serialized novel published in a magazine or newspaper. Therefore, *kakioroshi* is suitable for *junbungaku* but not ideal for *taishū bungaku*. Publishing a work as *kakioroshi* implies that it is a writer’s tour de force, because a *kakioroshi* must be good enough to stand alone.⁵⁸

Readers are not usually concerned about the style of publication, whether it be *kakioroshi* or serialized novel. However, one important aspect of recent literary trends should be noted: in the industry it is widely recognized that publishing companies can no longer afford *kakioroshi*.⁵⁹ Whereas the common publishing strategy is to sell a given work in at least two different formats (first as a magazine or newspaper series, and later as a book),

⁵⁸ In general, serialized stories do not lend themselves to the creation of great pieces of literature due to the fact that in order to hold the readers’ attention throughout the serialization and constantly attract new readers the story is made up of numerous individual sub-stories, each of which must subtly reintroduce the characters and contain a build-up and climax which are not pertinent to the core of the story. A good example is *Kotō no oni* (The demon of the lonely isle) by Edogawa Ranpo (pen name of Hirai Tarō, 1894-1965), which was serialized in 1929-30. This story is of the detective/science fiction genre, making the superficial elements overtly obvious.

⁵⁹ Asada Jirō recently had a talk with celebrated Canadian writer Margaret Atwood (b. 1939) for a newspaper article when she visited Japan for the International PEN Congress in 2010. Atwood explained that she first writes a rough draft and revises it after having done research, whereas Asada typically writes three or four serialized novels simultaneously, is under constant pressure from his editors, and does not have the luxury to rewrite his stories (Asada, “Monogatari to jijitsu... kyori wa?”).

kakioroshi are exclusive because they are sold in only one form and therefore do not provide publishers opportunities to maximize their profits. Selling in multiple formats is lucrative for both the writer and the publisher, as well as for the magazine or newspaper in which the novel first appears. Royalties multiply as the work is reproduced in a variety of forms—so much so that in order to attract famous writers, publishing companies have to arrange a better “set deal.” Serializing novels is more profitable for writers and editors, because they can make ongoing changes according to reader feedback, while publishers enjoy reduced production costs, and guaranteed marketable content. Even more money can be made if a work is successful enough to be adapted as a manga and/or a film or television program.

Given all these factors it is not unreasonable to assume that for publishers the longer a novel is, the greater the profit potential. As we know, however, the Akutagawa Prize is given for a short piece and the Naoki Prize for both short and long pieces. For publishers, a *junbungaku* story is suitable for *kakioroshi* but not likely to be profitable unless it is very popular. In other words, like any other commodity, literary works must succeed within a complicated and multi-faceted capitalist industry; to do so they require the prestige associated with winning major awards, and the label of *junbungaku*, “high class” literature. As previously discussed, the term “*jun*” attracts readers who are oriented towards “high class” and “intellectual” tastes. The disappearance of *kakioroshi* publishing reflects the commercialization of literature, the increasing intervention of editors and, I would argue, a lowering of the quality of literature.

Kaneko believes that the *bundan* perished when *junbungaku* lost its predominance (63). However, the *bundan* consciousness has remained among editors and the notion of *junbungaku* is maintained through such marketing efforts as Kōdansha’s *junbungaku*

kakioroshi series. Kaneko explained to me that *kakioroshi* has a special meaning to editors: producing a masterpiece (i.e. *junbungaku*) as *kakioroshi* is a source of great pride and prestige for an editor. It is also prestigious for the publishing company, because it confirms the company's credibility, financial power, and the quality of its editor and his or her connection with the author (Kaneko "Re: Kakioroshi"). The cachet of *junbungaku* is thus deeply engrained among editors and publishers. For the sake of respectability, publishing companies, especially those that promote themselves as *bungei shuppansha* (literary publishing company), like Bungeishunjūsha, Shinchōsha, Kōdansha and others, promote the idea of *junbungaku*.⁶⁰ In reality, they cherish the term *junbungaku* because it sounds more distinguished and stylish than *bungaku* (literature), and because *junbungaku* is associated with value and sophistication. The *kakioroshi* method therefore not only increases the prestige of publishers and editors (as well as authors), but also elevates the status of *junbungaku* as a notion.

3.2 Contemporary Japanese *Junbungaku*

What is *junbungaku* in contemporary Japanese literature? Since the Akutagawa Prize is given to the *junbungaku* work of a newcomer, the answer must now be found in recent winning works. Chino Bōshi (pen name of Iwamatsu Masahiro, b. 1965), critic and scholar, examined the selection panel's comments in *Bungeishunjū*, which announced the winning works, and found that "the final clincher" would be "*shinsensa*" (literally, freshness) and

⁶⁰ The expression *bungei shuppansha* (literary publishing company) is used to differentiate it from *kyōiku tosho shuppansha* (educational book publishing company) (i.e. Shōgakukan), *goraku zasshi shuppansha* (entertainment magazine publishing company) (i.e. Shūeisha) and *manga shuppansha* (comic book publishing company) (i.e. Akita shoten).

“*nanika*” (indistinguishable “something” or *je ne sais quoi*) of the work (Chino 100-5).⁶¹

On July 15, 2010, the 143rd Akutagawa Prize was given to Akazome Akiko (b. 1974), a thirty-five year-old who had left a doctoral degree program in German literature at the University of Hokkaido to become a writer. She won for her novella *Otome no Mikkoku* (The anonymous tip of a maiden). *Otome* (maiden) in the title refers both to the female students at a university of foreign language studies who frantically memorize the German text of *Het Achterhuis* (The Diary of Anne Frank⁶²) as an assignment for a German speech contest, and to Anne Frank herself. Mikako, the protagonist, always stumbles at the same part and the loss of words brings her real anguish. A central theme of the novel is the fear of being labelled as “other”: not included as *otome* in the case of Mikako, and being Jewish in the case of Anne. Being a lover of gossip and having no interest in the truth are two of the important characteristics of an *otome* in modern time. In the story, the lives of two “*otome*,” a female university student in 2010 and Anne in the 1940s, elaborately synchronize and reveal a universal truth. Although three of the nine Prize judges declared themselves to be against, the story won. *Otome no Mikkoku* has a unique twofold structure: the world of Anne Frank and present-day female students in peaceful Japan, but the mechanism of discrimination is essentially the same in both worlds. “Akazome extracts the core of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and places it in the right position among the Japanese female student” (“Akutagawa shō senpyō” 372-82). She also made the work a humorous caricature. The

⁶¹ All five of the nominated works of the 143rd Akutagawa Prize appeared previously in *junbungaku* magazines such as *Shinchō* and *Bungakukai*; therefore, the works are already proved to be “*junbungaku*.”

⁶² The name Anne has sexual overtones in Japan. In 1961, Anne Corporation was established and began selling and advertising a disposable sanitary napkin called “Anne napkin.” The company’s name was derived from *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which includes a section in which Anne goes through puberty and looks forward to having her period. Thus Anne was a symbol of becoming a woman in Japan. “Anne” referred to both menstruation and the napkin.

“unique” combination of Nazism and flippant Japanese girls is “*shinsensa*” and Akazome’s humorous touch is “*nanika*.” I would argue that this unique combination coupled with a surprising twist (*igaisei*) is the key to winning the prize.

3.3 The Horizontal Distribution of Winning Works

On July 2, 2010, about two weeks prior to the selection, Akazome Akiko was officially nominated for the Akutagawa Prize; *Otome no Mikkoku* had first appeared in the June 2010 issue of the literary magazine *Shinchō*, which went on sale on May 7. The committee in the second half of 2010 considered works that had appeared in publications from December 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010. Six works passed the preliminary stage and were sent to the nine judges prior to the final selection meeting. Conventionally, the meeting starts at five o’clock, and around nine o’clock the winner is informed by phone. Intense media coverage starts at the moment of this phone call. Reporters who have personal or official connections with nominated writers stand by and wait for the crucial moment alongside the author.⁶³

Otome no Mikkoku was published as a *tanko-bon* (“monograph”) by Shinchōsha on July 26, 2010, only eleven days after the Akutagawa Prize announcement. The reason for this incredibly fast turnaround time was that Akazome had previously won the Bungakukai Prize for New Writers for *Hatsuko*, and this made her new novella, *Otome*, publishable as a *tanko-bon* and a strong candidate for the Akutagawa Prize. Akazome’s editors knew that she had a good chance of winning, so her work was already in the process of publication even

⁶³ I was at the home of Kurumizawa Kōshi (pen name of Shimizu Shōjirō, 1925-1994) when he won the Naoki Prize on July 14, 1983. It was, he said, the best night of his life, and he enjoyed his party surrounded by many of his editors and friends. Kurumizawa’s sole aim in life had been to win the Naoki Prize. He even acquired a grave right next to Naoki’s, and declared that if he could not win the Prize, he would engrave on his headstone “here lies one with no name and many resentments.” Of course I wrote an article around this quote.

before she was nominated for the Prize. The work chosen to win the Akutagawa Prize is usually shelved at the front of bookstores with its full cover on display. Therefore, these books are easily accessed by passersby who recognize them as Akutagawa Prize-winning works. In a market in which book sales are constantly declining, these works are an important part of publishers' marketing strategies.

Akutagawa Prize-winning works are often distributed in magazines at least twice (in the case of Akazome, *Otome* appeared first in *Shinchō*, then was reprinted in *Bungeishunjū* as a prize-winning work), and as a *tanko-bon*. If a work's popularity continues to grow or even level off, it will be reprinted in *bunko-bon* (inexpensive small-format paperback books) format. Finally, they are published in *Akutagawa shō zenshū* (the complete collection of Akutagawa Prize winning works).⁶⁴ This horizontal distribution of works utilizes various media, which has the ability to attract different audiences and is one of the characteristics of Japan's publishing industry. If authors take a firm hold as celebrities in the media, this distribution system produces maximum profits. Often those who promote the authors as celebrities and those who produce magazines and books are the same people, rotating from one position to another within publishing companies. One possible explanation, among some of which spring to mind, is that the magazines, which are, in the broad sense, the media (in most cases a part of publishing companies and newspaper companies), do not just offer a place for cultivating literary works and authors but actually exploit writers for the sake of business.

According to the Japan Magazine Publishers Association (JMPA), the circulation of *Bungeishunjū* magazine averaged 588,000 issues per month for the period of April 2011 to

⁶⁴ Presently there are nineteen volumes.

June 2011. The runner-up, with 344,867 copies sold, is a magazine issued by a company related to the religious organization Sōka Gakkai (“JMPA Magazine Data”). Generally thought of as a centre-right-wing magazine, *Bungeishunjū* is known for serious reporting, such as the story that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (1918-1993) in 1974. This kind of non-fiction reporting and the hosting of the Akutagawa Prize made the magazine number one in terms of circulation. Although issues containing important political scoops sell very well, the circulation of issues in which the Akutagawa Prize-winners are announced outsell all others. According to *Bungeishunjū no hachijūgonen* (Eighty-five years of Bungeishunjū), the best-selling issue in the company’s history, which sold a total of 1,185,000 copies, was the one containing the works of 2004 Akutagawa Prize winners Kanehara Hitomi and Wataya Risa (pen name of Yamada Risa, b. 1984). This impressive number was achieved solely by attracting a new and young readership who were only interested in the two Prize winners, and the circulation of the next issue returned to normal levels (Bungeishunjū, ed. 123-4).⁶⁵ In fact, all of the issues dealing with literary prizes have seen increased circulation numbers. Even when no award was given, for example the 142nd Akutagawa Prize in 2009, the best nominated work, *Bicchi Magunetto* (Bitch magnet) by Maijō Ōtarō (b. 1973) appeared in *Bungeishunjū*. The best nominated work is not as good as a winning work in terms of commercial value, yet the readers’ anticipation of the winning work drives their curiosity to discover the nominated work which failed to be chosen.

Besides the Akutagawa Prize, there are at present two major *junbungaku* awards open to all writers, not just to newcomers: the Mishima Yukio Prize (established 1988, managed

⁶⁵ According to a former editor of *Bungeishunjū*, until about twenty years ago, it was customary for the issues in which the Akutagawa Prize winners were announced to have a circulation on average approximately ten percent higher than usual.

by Shinchōsha); and the Noma Prize (established 1979, managed by Kōdansha).⁶⁶ Three major publishing houses are thus in competition for the *junbungaku* market, but Bungeishunjūsha surpasses all of the others because of its long history and well-established publishing strategy and reputation. The Akutagawa Prize remains the top literary prize in Japan in terms of social recognition and commercial value, but besides the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes, Bungeishunjūsha hosts three other major literary prizes.

3.4 A Purely Commercial Endeavour

As mentioned, the biggest event in Akutagawa Prize history was in 2003 (the 130th Akutagawa Prize),⁶⁷ when the two youngest-ever female winners, nineteen year-old Wataya Risa⁶⁸ and twenty year-old Kanehara Hitomi,⁶⁹ were at the centre of media attention. In the ceremony, Shiraishi Masaru (b. 1939), the chief director of Nihon Bungaku Shinkō kai (Society for the promotion of Japanese literature)⁷⁰ openly expressed his satisfaction at the outcome (*Yomiuri shinbun*, ed.). He told the media that he had received letters from

⁶⁶ This prize was established in memory of Noma Seiji (1878-1938) who established Kōdansha, the biggest publishing company in Japan.

⁶⁷ This *Bungeishunjū* issue (March 2004 issue) sold 1,185,000 copies, had to be re-printed several times, and set a sales record. The promotional subheading in the table of contents was enthusiastically highlighting the recipients' age by saying, "19 and 20 year-olds, the birth of the youngest Akutagawa Prize winners!"

⁶⁸ Wataya Risa, a second-year student at Waseda University, won for *Keritai senaka* (The back I want to kick). The story deals with the friendship between two classmates, Ninagawa (a boy) and Hatsu (a girl). His fixations on a fashion model, which spawned their relationship, frustrate her and make her question his obsession.

⁶⁹ Kanehara's *Hebi ni piasu* (Snakes and Earrings) may be partially autobiographical. It follows the disaffected main character Lui, who struggles with issues of identity and individuality and becomes obsessed with the culture of body modification such as tongue splitting and tattooing. She struggles with a love triangle and the violence that ensues.

⁷⁰ The Society for the Promotion of Japanese Literature is the house organization that hosts the five literary awards of Bungeishunjūsha.

bookshop owners nation-wide who reported a miracle: a stream of customers were flowing into the bookstores to get the issue of the magazine that contained the two winning works.

The *Yomiuri shinbun* reported the after-effects of the media commotion regarding the two young winners of the 130th Akutagawa Prize: other literary awards for new writers were recording an unprecedented number of entries. Both the Shinchō Emerging Writer Award and the Subaru Literary Award received about two hundred more entries than in the previous year, and *Bungei Shō* (The Japanese literary award) received a record-high two thousand submissions (*Yomiuri shinbun*, ed.). These literary awards are hosted by different literary magazines other than Bungeishunjūsha, and they often function as a screening system for the Akutagawa Prize.⁷¹ Ultimately, the Akutagawa Prize is more respected than the other literary awards, although the purpose is the same. The difference between the Akutagawa Prize and the other literary awards is that authors submit their own creations to the latter, while they must first be published and then wait to be considered for the former. In other words, without going through this preliminary screening system, the works will not be noticed by the judging panel members of the Akutagawa Prize and *Bungeishunjū* editors.

Japan has been described as an “excessively media-saturated society,” but the Akutagawa Prize relies so heavily on topicality (*wadasei*) or newsworthiness that it sometimes attracts criticism. Topicality in commercial journalism includes accidents, disasters and human interest stories; in the context of the Akutagawa Prize, it refers to details about the authors and their lives, such as their genders, ages, and backgrounds, details that often receive more attention even than their work. There is no such thing as bad publicity, as the cliché goes. In terms of the Akutagawa Prize, this *succès de scandale* effect is

⁷¹ Shinchōsha and Kawadeshobō shinsha host these three literary awards.

particularly pronounced: a young woman with a shocking private life is an ideal winner, as I will show in my discussion of Kanehara Hitomi below. In the Japanese media there is a tendency to report on what everyone else is reporting, which is one reason why Akutagawa Prize-winning writers can be transported literally overnight from obscurity to celebrity. It is important to note, however, that the organizer of the Prize and numerous magazines that report on it are all part of the same publishing company, so reporting by the company and its subsidiaries in effect drives the wider media coverage and ultimately the success of the writer, the work, the company, and the Prize itself.

3.5 Literary Award Culture

Kanehara Hitomi was an attractive winner for four reasons: she is pretty; at only twenty years old she was the second-youngest recipient of the Prize ever (the youngest being nineteen year-old Wataya Risa, who won in the same year); her semi-autobiographical fiction featured shocking and titillating subject matter such as body modification, kinky sex, and murder; and she had dropped out of school at the age of fifteen. The media and many Japanese critics praised her for achieving success in spite of being a high school dropout (in fact, she even refused to go to elementary school), while consumers were fascinated by her private life and the outrageous subject matter of her writing. I would argue that these very details should make Kanehara a surprising candidate for a *junbungaku* prize. But of course her unconventional life is “topical,” and she and her work are therefore very alluring for the media.

In fact, Kanehara Hitomi is a child of the literary award culture. She is the daughter of Kanehara Mizuhito (b. 1954), a translator and expert in children’s literature and professor of

Sociology at Hōsei University. He has served on the panels of several literary awards, such as the Kōdansha Jidō Bungaku Shinjin Shō (Kodansha children's literature newcomer award) and the Jaibu Shōsetsu Taishō (Jive, Ltd. fiction grand award).⁷² When Kanehara Hitomi first refused to go to school at the age of nine, her father invited her to attend his university seminar on creative writing. Kanehara stated in a media interview that her father was tolerant of her youthful mistakes; even when she ran away from home she would send him her stories via email, and he would correct them for her. In this way, father and daughter actively communicated through her fiction without ever discussing her actual life. Kanehara wrote thirty to forty short stories in seven years, and began to consider becoming a novelist. When she started writing her first published work, *Snakes and Earrings*, her boyfriend suggested that she should submit it to a literary competition. The work won the 2003 Subaru Literary Award and was short-listed for the Akutagawa Prize (Kanehara, “Futōko to pachisuro no hibi ni chichi wa” 320-4).

Amano Hirofumi (b. 1986) wrote his 160-page Subaru Literary Award-winning work in bed on his mobile phone. Like Kanehara, he was an unemployed high school dropout (Kanehara, “Taidan: shōsetsu wo kakitsuzukeru tameni” 169). In a magazine interview, Amano said that the first work he ever read was *Snakes and Earrings* (he also revealed that his editor recommended that he buy a computer with the prize money—not to write his next work, but for communicating with the editor). Kanehara's and Amano's stories both demonstrate the influence of literary awards on youth and the media coverage they generate. Literary award competitions function to create the next generation of authors, and such

⁷² Mizuhito's own translation was nominated for the Sankei Jidō Shuppan Bunka Shō (Sankei, Ltd.'s children's literature publication cultural award) in 1993, and was listed as one of the recommended works of the year.

contests become a vehicle for young Japanese to present their issues through literature. For some young people who cannot adapt to social demands, literary competitions function as an outlet and a path to legitimacy. The existence of this safety net or loophole is well known due to the amount of media coverage given from a wide range of media.

3.6 The Selection Process

Details of the Akutagawa Prize selection process were revealed for the first time in 1978 by Ōkawara Hideyo (b. 1931), an editorial staff of the 79th selection committee, in an interview. The process has remained the same since the beginning of the Prize. Usually, around the beginning of March, twenty-four editors, all staff of Bungeishunjū Ltd., are chosen to sit on the twelve-member selection committees for the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize. Twelve editors are chosen from the book publishing division, and twelve from the literary magazine division; they will serve for six months. They receive an official written appointment and a small allowance known as a *yomidai* or “reading fee.” For the 79th Akutagawa Prize, Ōkawara acted as head of these committees. First, he collected about 1300 qualified works from sixty general commercial literary magazines and 410 *dōjin* magazines (non-commercial literary coterie magazines) published during the previous six months. Meanwhile, the general editorial affairs department of Bungeishunjū Ltd., sent out a survey to approximately five hundred literary experts, including the ten judges,⁷³ asking for recommendations of works written in the previous six months. Thus, each editor was assigned to read about sixty works in addition to their regular duties. However, they were

⁷³ The ten judges for the 79th Akutagawa Prize were Niwa Fumio (1904-2005), Nakamura Mitsuo, Ōe Kenzaburō, Kaikō Takeshi (1930-1989), Yasuoka Shōtarō (b. 1920), Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (1924-1994), Maruya Saiichi (b. 1925), Takii Kōsaku (1894-1984), Endō Shūsaku (1923-1006) and Inoue Yasushi (1907-1991).

allowed to recommend the works of their own clients as prospective winners. Once a month the members had a meeting in which they eliminated those works that did not fit the criteria (Ōkawara 78-79).

Then, as now, the final nomination list was determined via discussion, coordination and debate among panel members. The 79th Akutagawa Prize survey had a response rate of sixty percent. If a judge recommended a particular work, it would remain on the final nomination list. Eventually, seven finalists were chosen and were sent to the ten judges prior to the final selection meeting. On the day of the final meeting, at five o'clock, the judges and several committee members gathered at Shinkiraku, an exclusive traditional Japanese restaurant in Tokyo. The meeting was off-limits to the media. All committee members were sworn to secrecy. By the time the winner was selected, a frantic crowd of photographers and reporters filled the large banquet room awaiting the announcement by a representative of the selection panel.⁷⁴ Traditionally, if the winner resides in the vicinity of Tokyo, he or she is invited to a press conference held on the same night in the board room at Bungeishunjūsha. The prize ceremony follows about a month after. On the night that the winners are announced, as well as the day when they officially receive the prize, there is tremendous media coverage.

3.7 Simmering Resentment

The Akutagawa Prize is so important and so potentially transformative for an author's career that not winning is often devastating. For example, Dazai Osamu (pen name of Tsushima Shūji, 1909-1948), one of the foremost *junbungaku* writers of the twentieth century, was nominated twice, in 1935 and 1936, but failed to win both times. He wrote an open

⁷⁴ If no consensus can be reached no prize is given. So far, this has occurred thirty-two times.

letter of bitter complaint to judge Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) in a literary magazine after his first loss, and another begging for the prize after his second nomination (this letter, dated June 29, 1936, was evidently sent personally; it was discovered in Kawabata's residence after his death in 1978). The first open letter begins: "You wrote bad things about me." From there Dazai goes on to threaten Kawabata, "I'll stab you! That is what I was thinking. I thought you were an utter scoundrel!" The second letter was a 4.3 meter-long scroll with beautiful strokes in vivid black ink begging Kawabata to give him the Akutagawa Prize as a reward for not committing suicide and give him hope ("Seikatsu ku setsusetsu to uttae" 23).

Often those who are left out of the final selection keep silent, hoping that they may be chosen the next time. However, there are more than a few who object to the whole literary award machinery. Poet Kitagawa Tōru (pen name of Isogai Kiyoshi, b. 1935) wrote in a magazine:

Some of my collections of poems were nominated for several literary awards over the past years, but I have never won. It happened that without informing me at all, the committee made an arbitrary selection and decision, and finally the result was announced. The judge said how poor my work was and how unworthy of the prize it was. Of course, the first and decisive reason for not winning the prize, although my works were nominated many times, was that my work was not mature enough to be chosen. However, my inner thoughts told me that if I lose this immaturity, my strategies of writing poems and even reasons for creating poems would disappear. I would like to say that the further from the awards I am, the better the environment I am in. (139)

Matsuura Hisaki (b. 1954), the 123rd Akutagawa Prize winner, also criticized the system:

As you know, not only with the Akutagawa Prize, and no matter whether it is a Japanese award or a foreign award, there are quite hopeless judges on the selection committees. As a result, it happens on a daily basis that insignificant works win prizes or great works lose the opportunity to win. Literary awards have nothing to do with literature. In fact, literary awards are just one of the many entertainments in society. Kafka, who was not interested in any social entertainments, of course, appeared indifferent to any literary awards, while Proust had an unconcealed aspiration for the Prix Goncourt, one of the most well-

known French literary awards. Finally, Proust won the prize for *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* [In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower] in 1919. However, does the award affect their masterpieces? Does the award matter to us who are reading their works now? (142)

Nakamata Akio (b. 1964), a freelance editor and writer, remarked on the discernible trend for increasingly younger Akutagawa Prize winners. According to Nakamata, the major Japanese awards have lost their meaning, because great authors are not fairly assessed or rewarded. Literary awards, in his view, are now meant only to show off the prosperity of the “*bundan*” (not the traditional *junbungaku bundan*, but writers in general). The purpose of literary awards is not to attract current readers of literature, but rather to appeal to those who do *not* read regularly. Fundamental problems with the awards cannot be blamed on the capability of the recipients, but rather on the capability of the judges.⁷⁵ Nakamata insists that only assessment of the work itself should be important, and that only judges who themselves have superior literary ability can make proper assessments. He cites the fact that judges failed to award prizes to prominent authors of the 1980s, such as Murakami Haruki, Takahashi Gen’ichirō (b. 1951) and Shimada Masahiko (b. 1961). In fact, Japanese million-seller writers Murakami Haruki⁷⁶ and Yoshimoto Banana (pen name of Yoshimoto Mahoko,

⁷⁵ It is important to note that the final decision never rests solely with the judges, but includes the input of Bungeishunjūsha. The Akutagawa prize as well as all the literary prizes in Bungeishunjūsha are managed by Bungei shinkō kai (Society for the promotion of Japanese literature) which is a part of Bungeishunjūsha. Actually, the editors of the company create the short/final list of the Akutagawa Prize and 65% of the winning works have been published in Bungeishunjūsha (Sōma 328).

⁷⁶ There is even a book called *Akutagawa shō wa naze Murakami Haruki ni atae rarenakatta ka* (Why the Akutagawa Prize was not given to Murakami Haruki, 2010). In *1Q84*, his most recent bestseller in Japan, one of Murakami’s characters is a writer whose editor encourages him to aim for the Akutagawa Prize, citing its social rewards (making the headlines in the newspapers and the TV news). In this novel, Murakami uses the phrase “the Akutagawa Prize” three times in as many sentences suggesting that the Prize is an unavoidable subject for anyone who wants to be a novelist in modern Japan (or perhaps evidencing Murakami’s irritation).

b. 1964) were both nominated twice for the Akutagawa prize, but did not win.⁷⁷ This is often criticized as a lamentable oversight. Nakamata claims that the literary award hierarchy, with the Akutagawa Prize at the top, has completely collapsed, and confusion over the literary awards has been the basic problem for the last two decades (155).

Nakamata suggests that the reason for the change in nature of the literary awards is the fact that the novel, originally part of elitist culture, has metamorphosed into pop culture. It is possible now for almost anyone to be an author, without specialized training. New authors often cite the desire to read what they want as their motivation for writing. They no longer have to follow traditional models of writing or apprenticeship. The pivotal feature of the literary award system is the role of non-professionals in the deciding of winners (157). Nakamata's arguments prove persuasive when we observe how the Akutagawa Prize has transformed over the past few decades. The reputation of the Prize has remained strong despite the claim that *junbungaku* does not sell well. Amateurization of the literary profession has broken down the barriers between the author and the reader.

3.8 The Role of Editors

Very little has been written on the role of editors in the production of literature in Japan. There is, however, a rather interesting piece written by a chief editor of Bungeishunjūsha, in the 2010 company guide for job-hunting students, which is intended to give hints for new recruits about being an editor, which I paraphrase below:

One day, about thirty-five years ago, when I was an apprentice, I saw my senior editor and a novelist waiting for the results of the Naoki Prize in a bistro. After a very long wait, the novelist received word that he had not won. When he told his

⁷⁷ Murakami is published by Kōdansha and Shinchōsha, while Yoshimoto is published by Shinchōsha and Kadokawa shoten, outside of the influence of Bungeishunjū, Ltd.

editor the news, the editor shouted out with tears in his eyes, “How can such a great work not win the prize?” The novelist went on to win the prize in the next competition. This story displays the deep relationship and partnership between editors and authors. I assure you that this job of being an editor is fascinating. You will not find such an interesting job elsewhere. Good editors are expected to be rather sentimental and cannot be entirely businesslike in their approach towards their authors. (Matsui 4-5)

In other words, in order to cultivate close relationships with authors, editors must have both editing and interpersonal skills.

Being hired by a publishing house does not mean becoming an editor, however. The publishing companies have many divisions, and by shuffling and reshuffling, aim to eventually put each person in the right post. Bungeishunjūsha has 359 employees (as of April 2011),⁷⁸ of whom approximately seventy are editors for magazines and thirty are editors for book publications.⁷⁹ As the previous quotation suggests, a great many of those who apply at publishing companies initially hope to be editors; indeed, they often have a literature background and hope (or once hoped) to be writers. From the companies’ point of view, a good editor is one who contributes to the prosperity of the business; in the case of magazine editors, they must consider both readers and advertisers, because magazine income is derived from both advertising and magazine sales.⁸⁰ However, in the case of books, income is derived only from book sales unless a particular work becomes very successful

⁷⁸ According to the general affairs department of Bungeishunjūsha (Inada).

⁷⁹ Since the general affairs department of Bungeishunjūsha refuses to release the specific numbers of editors, this estimate is from Kaneko, a retired editor of Bungeishunjūsha (Kaneko “Re: Bungeishunjūsha”)

⁸⁰ In fact, there are two major spheres in a publishing company. The editors have pretensions to be “star players” because they are making “products (books and magazines)” from scratch (they call themselves “intellectual-blue collar” workers because of their heavy workload and irregular schedule). On the other hand, the staff in the advertisement department believe that they are “star players” because they secure the income from advertising (they consider themselves “white-collar” workers because they are dealing with top-ranking companies with enormous advertising expenses).

(and is sold in multiple formats or made into a film or TV show) or an author wins a prestigious prize. This puts considerable pressure on book/literary editors.

Kenjō Tōru (b. 1950) is the most famous editor in Japan today in terms of producing million-seller books and having a strong connection with very popular authors, and so he is greatly influential in the industry. He confesses in his book *Henshūsha to iu yamai* (The disease called “editor,” 2007) that ever since the first book he edited became a best-seller he is not satisfied if a book he produces does not sell well (11). Akutagawa Prize-winning author Murakami Ryū (pen name of Murakami Ryūnosuke, b. 1952) personally promised him to write *kakioroshi* every two years—something honourable for the editor, because writers tend to look for set deals in order to maximize their profits—and Ishihara Shintarō gave unconditional support⁸¹ to Kenjō, saying: “if there is something I can do for you, I will do anything—no matter what” (296). Just as most editors do, Kenjō has formed lasting relationships with authors by having daily “*nommunication*”—a compound word created from the Japanese verb to drink, *nomu*, and the English word communication—and discussing publishing plans.

Nakagami Kenji, Takahashi Michitsuna (b. 1948), Murakami Ryū, Mita Masahiro (b. 1948), and Miyamoto Teru (b. 1947) are all contemporary Akutagawa Prize winners who are known to have been regularly entertained by Kenjō. Since Kenjō is able to charge such expenses to his business,⁸² he sees such entertainment as his responsibility and as an

⁸¹ Kenjō had been a fan of Ishihara since he was a high school student. When he met Ishihara for the first time Kenjō presented him forty red roses wishing to make his first book as an editor with Ishihara. Within a few months while they had a long walk at the seaside, Ishihara discussed everything from anguish of heart to his sense of inferiority to young Kenjō (71).

⁸² Business entertainment expenditures, known as *keihi* (経費, literally, company expenses), which include money spent at restaurants, bars and hostess clubs, have traditionally been a major expense for Japanese companies, partly because they are 100% tax deductible. Companies therefore tend to spend

investment in their talent (260). His abilities as a million-seller editor are a magnet not only for authors but also for investors. Upon resigning from his position as an editor, he established his own publishing company, Tōgensha, which regularly produces best sellers and holds an established position.⁸³ Muramatsu Tomomi (b. 1940), known as a *taishū bungaku* author, appreciated Kenjō's contribution to his work, which won the 87th Naoki Prize. He described their relationship as a “death match” (Kenjō 274-5). Kenjō thoroughly edited the work with extremely detailed suggestions: “this kind of person does not have sex this way”; “this kind of woman does not smoke Seven Stars cigarettes but Highlight”; and “this kind of person does not run away in this way.” However, Kenjō's detailed contributions were not intended to help sell the book but rather to help it win a literary prize, because judges, rather than readers, are concerned with such details. On the other hand, with *junbungaku* writers Kenjō does his best to “make an environment in which the authors can go comfortably on with their work” (127). Some writers, especially *junbungaku* writers, do not allow editors to make even slight adjustments to their works.

As I have shown, editors are expected to work extremely closely with authors and often to act as a combination of support system, advocate, boss, assistant, manager, private secretary and friend—Kanehara Hitomi even married her editor (“Akutagawa shō sakka Kanehara Hitomi ga gokuhi shussan!?”). Saitō Dōichi, a veteran journalist, claims in his book that it is an open secret that Murakami Ryū's novel *Almost Transparent Blue*, which won the 75th Akutagawa Prize, was actually the result of a collaboration between the author

generously, and in some cases this functions as an alternative way for companies to provide benefits, mostly to their male employees (for more information on some of the ways Japanese companies in the 1980s used *keihi* expenses to reward their male employees, see Anne Allison, *Nightwork*). Kenjō admits that he was the biggest spender of *keihi* expenses at his publishing company, but at the same time he was also the biggest money maker, with the most successful writers (150).

⁸³ Kenjō deals with not only literary works but also so-called “*tarento-bon*” (celebrities' books).

and his editor at *Gunzō* magazine, in which the work first appeared. The work was carefully tailored by adding nuances that would make it suitable for the Akutagawa Prize and Bungeishunjū in order to win the Prize (Saitō 94). Also Saitō heard that Tanaka Yasuo's *Somewhat Crystal* was vastly improved by his editor (Saitō 94, Dodo 76). Whether or not this is true, it is undeniable that editors in Japan work extremely closely with authors and if they are allowed to intervene in the authors' work, the editors have remarkable influence over their writing in the name of maximizing sales.

In industry jargon the relationship of an author to her or his publishing house is termed *kakoikomi* (literally, enclosure) or *senzoku* (exclusive). This reflects the authors' supposed sense of obligation or loyalty to the publishing house for being chosen to have their work published in its literary magazine, and for their editors' assistance. The "enclosure" is sometimes literal. For example, an author who has been assigned to write a novel is often isolated in a hotel paid for by the publishing company, a practice known as *kanzume* (literally, being canned or bottled). The ostensible reason for this is to allow the author to concentrate, but an equally important factor is to prevent the author from prioritizing other ongoing projects for different publishing companies (Hanada 44) or being contacted and perhaps lured by other publishing companies. Authors under *kanzume* are also accessible to their editors at all times, creating a unique environment of isolation yet intimacy.

Even though the publishing companies are in the business of celebrity gossip, surprisingly, by and large they do not expose their own authors. Authors' photographs are chosen carefully, and their profiles are deliberately crafted to be interesting without going into too much detail unless the authors have already exposed themselves. For example, the fact that Kanehara was a high school dropout has been very widely reported; however, this

fact was positively expressed in the media because her masterpiece would not have come into existence had it not been for this experience. However, both the potentially big news of Kanehara Hitomi's marriage to her editor and the news of the birth of their children were covered by just a single media source, and Shūeisha, the company that publishes her books and where her husband works, declined to comment despite the reporter's repeated efforts ("Akutagawa shō sakka Kanehara Hitomi ga gokuhi shussan!?").

3.9 Male Editors and Female Authors

The unparalleled success of the March 2004 issue of *Bungeishunjū*, as discussed above, was due to the popularity of Wataya Risa and Kanehara Hitomi. Yamada Eimi (pen name of Yamada Futaba, b. 1959), another popular female author, who was on several selection committees for various literary awards including the Akutagawa Prize, has stated that an editor who had influence on one of the selections preferred to choose a young female winner for the award; Yamada decided not return to that committee ("Ken'i niwa ikenie ga hitsuyō" 178). Indeed, I would argue that there is a tendency for literary prize committees to favour young female authors in order to appeal to the male-dominated media.⁸⁴ This claim is supported by the fact that, despite the excessive media coverage of Wataya and Kanehara, comparatively little attention was paid to their writing, and they were treated more like *tarento* (mass media personalities who are often famous for being famous) than winners of a highly respected high-literature award.

Uchida Shungiku (pen name of Uchida Shigeko, b. 1959), a popular manga writer,

⁸⁴ For example, as discussed above, the winner of the 143rd Akutagawa Prize was a woman, but her advanced academic background coupled with her age (thirty-five) and lack of sex appeal generated far less excitement among the media.

essayist and novelist, published an essay collection titled *Sakka wa henshūsha to nerubeki ka* (Should authors have sex with editors?) in 2007.⁸⁵ The title and cover illustration (a large drawing by the author of a woman masturbating) are deliberately designed to shock. The book concerns a writer's experience of sexual harassment by her editor. Uchida casually lists the "sexual incidents" of her successive editors⁸⁶ and their attempts to seduce her, often using alcohol. Since she was a writer of erotic comics, editors felt that could treat her as sexual object. Uchida also revealed that she was raped by a young editor while they were both deeply intoxicated. Consequently, she almost died after contracting a sexually transmitted infection, suffering an ectopic pregnancy and post-traumatic stress. She did not file a police report, and when the president of the publishing company came to apologize to her, she claims, she sent him away (67).

As these accounts suggest, despite the recession Japanese corporate culture continues to engage in business in restaurants and bars, especially in the media industry. In a very real sense, drinking with authors is part of an editor's job. Drinking together is thought to deepen and cement relationships between authors and editors (and by extension publishing companies); unsurprisingly, this form of bonding also sometimes leads to unprofessional romantic relationships. Uchida's accounts reveal how the balance of power and personal and professional relationships between editors and authors can shift and blur. There is possessiveness involved in the relationship especially between male editors and female authors. Indeed editors can exert a shocking degree of control over authors and their works.

⁸⁵ Uchida was nominated for the 112th Akutagawa Prize in 1995, for which no winner was chosen. She was nominated for her novel *Kiomi*, which concerns a couple who struggle with infidelity. She was also nominated for the 110th Naoki Prize in 1993 for her first novel *Fazā Fakkā* (Father fucker). In this autobiographical novel, she recounts being raped by her stepfather with her mother's tacit consent.

⁸⁶ Manga editors are also employees of publishing companies. Until they find the area of their expertise, the personnel often rotate positions.

According to Uchida, until her boyfriend moved in with her, she was annoyed by a senior editor who frequently assigned the young male assistants to her. Female authors are typically assigned “young handsome male editors,” and male authors are assigned “young beautiful female editors.”

Hayashi Mariko (pen name of Tōgō Mariko, born 1954), the 1986 Naoki Prize-winner, wrote about her view of editors who took charge of her work in her essay *Shōwa omoidashi warai* (Shōwa era laughing at her memories, 1992). In the 1980s, although she was already a popular and profitable novelist, she had no influence over the selection of her editor. She described editors as being like “a friend, mentor, elder sibling, or a lover without having sexual intercourse.” When she was a newcomer in the field, the editors even acted as her managers controlling and arranging her schedule. She emphasized that she was closer to her editors than her own family (139).

While Hayashi was being spoiled by her editors’ attention, 1994 Akutagawa Prize-winning author Shōno Yoriko was still trying to find commercial success, although she had won *Gunzō Magazine*’s Newcomer Prize thirteen years previously. Shōno looks back on her relationship with her editor at *Gunzō* magazine as unsuccessful. She viewed herself as an author who pursued the feeling of malaise (*iwakan*) and discrimination felt by women because of their gender. She writes,

...[my] editor totally misunderstood this. All he wanted was for me to be a single mother and to write about the experience. Also he wanted me to think why the rich exist and to criticize the bourgeois. The editor’s favourite story was about a girl prostitute living in a slum, by Takahashi Kazumi. In my case, he only praised the scenes of an elementary school girl wetting her pants. This is described in three lines of my 240-page story which was thrown into the trash by him. (Shōno, *Tettei kōsen! Bunshi no mori: jitsuroku junbungaku tōsō jūyo’nenshi* 27)

The shift in power between the editor and the author is described by newspaper editor

Miyake Shōtarō. Miyake met famous female author Hayashi Fumiko (1904-1951) in 1931 and again in 1948. The first time, Miyake recalls, Hayashi bowed deeply and formally and begged to be allowed to serialize a novel in Miyake's newspaper; the second time it was Miyake who was "down on my knees asking her to write for us" (76-77).

Practically, in commercial publishing market economics, authors are "sellers" and editors (or publishing houses) are "buyers." A clear dominant-subordinate relationship is inevitably established. As the previous episode suggests, at the beginning, in most cases, it is an "editor's market." In the editor's market, authors may have to accept lower pay, even though they have great potential, and may have to accept editors' intervention in the work. However, changes in the market occur, for example, when the authors win literary awards and/or write a best seller, the demand suddenly rises. In the "author's market," the authors will often see publishing houses competing to sign a deal which offers generous pay, a set deal, a brilliant editor, *kanzume* in a first-class hotel and/or un-questioned expenses for the creation of a new work.

Certainly, the "author's market" does not last forever. If authors want to keep their privileged status, they have to continue producing excellent work. There is a constant drive to push authors and intensify the pressure on them, and this is an important issue concerning the quality of literature. Also, the relationship between editors and authors raises the question: are editors taking away ownership of or authority over authors' writing? Much work remains to be done on this question. Editors obviously share the same goals: to find a new writer and train him or her to be famous so that the editors can have control. For editors it is much easier to establish a relationship with authors while they are young or unknown. The award business is a perfect opportunity for finding candidates from among the nominees

and to create such relationships. The contests also function as the place where new writers' abilities are tested.

This chapter has dealt with the subject matter of the recent Akutagawa Prize-winning works and examined how they meet the most important requirement to be eligible for the prize: “*shinsensa*” (literally, freshness) and “*nanika*” (an indistinguishable “something” or *je ne sais quoi*), although these simple qualities differ greatly from the original qualities of *junbungaku*. Also in this chapter, we have considered the creation of the Akutagawa Prize as well as examined the relationship between authors and editors. This chapter was devoted to exploring the mechanisms of the Akutagawa Prize and how it generates profits, the impact of the Akutagawa Prize for authors and society, and the role of editors as the key to the entire Akutagawa Prize business. Authors' observations and experiences with their editors provide insight into the relationship between creators/authors and producers/editors.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Junbungaku's emphasis on "newness" or "innovation" reminds us of the avant-garde movement of the early 1900s. "Avant-garde" refers to experiments or attempts in expression not influenced by established concepts or forms in artistic movements. *Junbungaku* was an outgrowth of modernism at its birth and originated in Western literature, as I mentioned in the previous chapter. Kawanishi Masaaki, a former editor and a critic, categorizes well-known contemporary *junbungaku* writers such as Abe Kōbō, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Nakagami Kenji as vanguard (avant-garde) and experimental writers (Kawanishi 239). "Avant-garde and Kitsch" is an influential work of art criticism written by Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) in 1939. The avant-garde (i.e. "'abstract' or 'non-objective art'") and kitsch or "rear-guard" (i.e. "popular, commercial art") have a similar relationship to that between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. While strongly influenced by 1930s Marxism and socialist ideas, Greenberg observed that the rise of kitsch was a result of the industrial revolution, capitalism and universal literacy of the masses who discovered a "new capacity for boredom" and looked for a "kind of culture fit for their own consumption," whereas avant-garde was a manifestation of the resistance to cultural "dumbing down" by artists who sought a "path along which it would be possible to keep culture in the midst of ideological confusion and violence" and "a new kind of criticism of society" (27-8).

Greenberg asserts that the avant-garde emerged as a means of protest against political and commercial art. He goes on to explain that the mechanism of commercialization caused the "obesity" of the industry and the deterioration of quality of art:

Because it can be turned out mechanically, kitsch has become an integral part of our productive system in a way in which true culture could never be, except accidentally. It has been capitalized at a tremendous investment which must

show commensurate returns; it is compelled to extend as well as to keep its markets. While it is essentially its own salesman, a great sales apparatus has nevertheless been created for it, which brings pressure to bear on every member of society. Traps are laid even in those areas, so to speak, that are the preserves of genuine culture. ... Kitsch's enormous profits are a source of temptation to the avant-garde itself, and its members have not always resisted this temptation. Ambitious writers and artists will modify their work under the pressure of kitsch, if they do not succumb to it entirely. And then those puzzling borderline cases appear, such as the popular novelist, Simenon, in France, and Steinbeck in this country. The net result is always to the detriment of true culture in any case. (32-3)

This explains well the impact of commercialization and commodification of art. The problem is when either kitsch or avant-garde is taken into the gigantic mass production system, it requires substantial production in order to turn a profit, making the production of small quantities unprofitable. As I have shown in this thesis, the same can be said for commercialization and mass production of *taishū bungaku* and its financial consequences for *junbungaku*. As a result of the pressure from this mechanism, publishing companies begin *aota-gai*, literally “buying blue rice,” which means the “buyer” purchases products which are not ready to be consumed.

The following is an eloquent testimony to the current publishing companies’ struggles towards their survival and their growing impatience to secure potential bestsellers. Through the examination of these accounts, one can see the current trends of *junbungaku* and the influence of the Akutagawa Prize which concisely contains the elements previously discussed.

Here we will also look at “amateurization” in literature from a slightly different angle: “the moment when a common man becomes an author,” as is stated in Bungeisha’s advertisement on the website of one of the top circulation newspapers which invites people to apply for “publishing awards.”

Bungeisha, not to be confused with Bungeishunjūsha, is a relatively new publishing company which is trying to scout for talent/a best-seller book through the system of *jihi shuppan* (literally, “you-pay” publishing or vanity press) and it has proved successful.⁸⁷ According to the advertisement, the two winning works of the “publishing award” each month will be published for “free.” Bungeisha offers several attractive incentives for *jihi shuppan*: three hundred nationwide bookstores will store “your book” and a one-year display on the book shelf is guaranteed from which, according to Bungeisha, a bestseller could be expected. The book release will be announced to over a thousand media and this will provide opportunities such as media interviews and TV drama and/or movie offers. The “how to write seminar,” which invites famous contemporary authors (including *junbungaku* writers) and experts (i.e. editors) who will answer the participants’ technical questions. The consultations will be regularly held in bookstores in every corner in Japan. A free guide, materials and a DVD which contains the complete sets of instructions is available. All genres, incomplete manuscripts or even just a proposal are welcome (“Bungeisha”).

This new publishing approach provides useful information for our discussion in three ways: first, curiously enough, this advertisement discloses the current book distribution structure and ideal advertisement strategies, which the general audience usually would not know. In this context, this information release is inevitable because, in a way, the publishing company is publicly looking for business partners/capital as well as publishable works or

⁸⁷ From the 1990s, some established publishing companies embarked upon *jihi shuppan* (vanity press), besides normal *shōgyō shuppan* (commercial publishing) and from around the 2000s, *kyōdō shuppan* (collaborations publishing) which publishing companies offer their distribution system to sell the *jihi shuppan* books. As Bungeisha advertises, their most successful “you-pay” publishing is *Instruction Manual of B-Blood Type People* (B-gata jibun no setsumeisho, 2007), this book became a bestseller, adding *A-Blood Type People*, *AB-Blood Type People* and *O-Blood Type People* as a series, selling over 5,500,000 copies in total. *Jihi shuppan*, which used to be stigmatized as the system for dealing with non-publishable/profitable books, now comes back as a way to bring funds into the market.

ideas. However, a second look at this approach reveals the blurring of the line between the book producer/professional and consumer/amateur. Second, “Anyone can write” is the fundamental idea behind this approach. The Japanese are quite positive about the notion that “everyone has at least one great story to tell.” This belief has a close relationship to the casual perception of the *shishōsetsu* (personal novels, in some context, it is a synonym for *junbungaku*) and its familiarity (although to say everyone’s personal matter could be turned into *junbungaku* is stretching the meaning of “*junbungaku*” considerably). Third, through the “you-pay” publishing system the publishing company can deal with tens of thousands of authors without financial risk. Bungeisha’s advertisement tries to reach out to potential candidates before other publishing companies get access to them through, for example, the literary prize mechanism. The reason why publishing companies have been so eager to get their hands on potential bestseller authors is, as already discussed, that the bestseller business is extremely lucrative and therefore full of competition. In this context, the role of an editor is to be a “talent scout.”⁸⁸

Advertisements encouraging amateurs to write are so prevalent that related industries have flourished in Japan. In fact, in the March 2011 issue of *Bungeishunjū* on the pages where the Akutagawa Prize winning works appeared, two out of the three advertisements, each taking up one third of the page, are for Bungeisha’s “you-pay” publishing and Ōsaka Bungei School, a writing school associated with several famous authors.

The important point, as has already been pointed out in the previous chapters, is that the pursuit of profit through the creation of profitable literature is a natural inclination, but

⁸⁸ Furui who sat for twenty years as a member of the Akutagawa Prize selection panel, once gave testimony that choosing a winning work in the Akutagawa Prize selecting committee was rather like being a “talent scout” than a judge. The implication of his comment is that a judge is suppose to simply look at the work itself whereas a talent scout is looking for a hidden potential within the writer (“A Sacrifice is Necessary for Authority” 169).

what comes next? Is there any room for conscience and philosophy in creating literature? Especially in the current Japanese context, maximising potential profit is the greatest, and perhaps only, concern. The Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most prestigious literary award, with *junbungaku* as its canonical base, facilitates the pursuit of profit. As we have seen, traditionally *junbungaku* kept its distance from the commercial world. It should therefore be inconceivable that an author like Kanehara Hitomi has become the object of national attention. Of course, it is the publishing companies that control most of the media and try to make authors, as much as their work, into commodities. In Kanehara's case, the labels "Akutagawa Prize winning author" and "*junbungaku* author" are attached to her like expensive price tags.

Japan is widely perceived as a society that emphasizes uniformity and homogeneity, and this is particularly prevalent in the media. "Topicality" (*wadasei*) in media, like trends in the fashion industry, is the powerful driving force behind Japanese society and economy. For this reason, Japan has a lucrative market in which popular items get more popular and famous people get more famous via avalanches of media coverage. Usually the campaign cycle is intense but short-lived. The "ignition" is topicality and newsworthiness. "Akutagawa Prize winner," "greatest author," "*junbungaku* piece," and "the purest literature," are well-established notions with solid commercial values. On top of these notions, the media adds more value with labels like "the youngest winner," "shocking and controversial work,"⁸⁹ "most unexpected winner," and "the cutest"—the latter may not be

⁸⁹ Sometimes in the selection panel, there is heated debate over the pros and cons of the candidates. For example, in 1955, Ishihara Shintarō's winning work, *Taiyō no kisetsu* (Season of the Sun) was strongly rejected by two judges. The judges criticized the work as not being the "creation of a literary man" and being a "vulgar work" while others said he is a "typical new writer" and "he tackled the purest 'pleasure' squarely." In the story, a pleasure-seeking high-school student, whose sexual hunger, open-mindedness, and lack of inhibition was symbolized by piercing his penis through the Japanese paper

explicitly expressed, but it is evident in the size of the author's photograph and how frequently and in what manner it is used. These are the elements of the "good selling points" highlighted in the news by editors. Thus, ultimately, the single most important reality is that literature has been strongly influenced by publishing companies' economic manipulation.

Junbungaku is prestigious when it is combined with the Akutagawa Prize, but when it stands alone it receives far less attention; the result is a hierarchical division in which "the best *junbungaku*" is framed as worth reading but *junbungaku* in general is not. For most Japanese, their first encounter with *junbungaku* is in the form of works by famous authors, such as Dazai Osamu, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Natsume Sōseki in school textbooks which present them as serious literature that "every student should read and study." Similarly, Akutagawa Prize-winning works are positioned as something "every adult should know," just as they should know who is the current prime minister of Japan. In other words, *junbungaku* is "what one *should* read" rather than "what one *wants* to read."

Junbungaku itself has been the focus of literary criticism since as early as 1926. While the Akutagawa Prize has flourished, the popularity—according to some, the very existence—of *junbungaku* has been dwindling. Between the 1960s and the 1990s alone, *junbungaku* had been predicted to "become history" (Hirano, *Junbungaku ronsō* igo 79); described as "ephemeral" (Seaman 11); seen as an "illusion" (Watanabe 186); and expected to "die out" (Kasai 85). As Table 4 suggests, *junbungaku* has been pushed to the sidelines each time its counterpart gained power or questioned the existence of *junbungaku*.

In the end, it is a question of popularity.

screen that portioned off the room where his girlfriend was waiting. He regards his girlfriend as a nuisance, and he sells her to his older brother.

Table 4 *Junbungaku* in Jeopardy

	Date	Advocator/article or essay	Contention	Major factor causing <i>junbungaku</i> 's downfall
1	1926	Ōya Sōichi/"Bundan girudo no kaitai-ki" (The collapse of the literary guild)	-The business of <i>junbungaku</i> magazines is in bad shape. -Amateur writers with a slipshod piece of work are accepted by newspapers and magazines (Ōya 122-3).	- <i>Taishū bungaku</i> and proletarian literature rises. -As writers status rise, the quality of their works falls.
2	1935	Yokomitsu Riichi/"Junsui shōsetsu ron" (Essay on the pure novel)	-The pure novel should have both <i>Junbungaku</i> and <i>taishū bungaku</i> elements (Yokomitsu).	- <i>Taishū bungaku</i> and proletarian literature prosper. -Mass journalism flourishes.
3	1961	Hirano Ken/ "Bungei zasshi no yakuwari" (The role of literary or <i>junbungaku</i> magazines)	-Newspapers replace literary magazines as the primary publishing source for literature (Hirano, "The Role of Literary Magazines").	- <i>Chūkan shōsetsu</i> gains popularity.
4	ca. 1993	Kasai Kiyoshi/ "Soshite junbungaku wa shōmetsushita" (<i>Junbungaku</i> has, then, disappeared)	-The decline of <i>junbungaku</i> is generational and a necessary consequence (Kasai 111).	-The popularity of "entertainment" such as mysteries and sci-fi novels become a social phenomenon.

In fact, the Akutagawa Prize has turned out unquestionably great *junbungaku* authors such as Nakagami Kenji and Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō. What makes them *junbungaku* writers is their chosen topics: for Nakagami, *roji* (literally, alleyway, referring to the disadvantaged communities he came from) and his brother's suicide by hanging; and for Ōe, *tanima no mura* (ravine village, as his microcosm), WWII, the emperor system and his disabled son. Iguchi explains:

Both Ōe Kenzaburō (who came from a small mountain village in Shikoku, studied French literature at Tokyo University, and has risen to be a "world class" author) and Nakagami Kenji (who came from a community that suffered discrimination and acquired "literary language" [*bungaku gengo*] ⁹⁰ in 1960s Tokyo) are prominent writers of the post-war period. They were both influenced by the enormous transitions and internal struggles and contradictions they experienced. (212)

In both cases there is no entertainment and no room for frivolity.

⁹⁰ Iguchi mentions Nakagami's comment that "the fact that a novel was born from "*roji*" was like "a bolt from the blue" (*seiten no hekiireki*) (Iguchi 213).

Another undoubtedly *junbungaku* author, Furui Yoshikichi, who quit the Akutagawa Prize selection committee in 2005 and declared his refusal to accept any literary awards in 2000, estimates in a newspaper interview that there are “seven thousand to eight thousand people” who look forward to his new works (Katō 9). Ōe responded to Furui’s estimation in a book signing event surrounded by about 100 fans, when he launched *Suishi* (Death by water, 2009), one of the 100 *kakioroshi* books:

I got a deep impression from Furui’s comment. In the world, not many literary authors can say that they can sell seven thousand to eight thousand copies of their books. Especially among *junbungaku* writers in Japan, it’s very few. I don’t have confidence to say that. Even in the US, only a few believe that they can sell that much. *Junbungaku* readers are supposed to be very limited, and yet, even if five hundred or one thousand people believe that the author is great, his work will survive in literary history. (Ōe)

From the beginning, when the literary coterie magazines were organized by groups of interested writers, it is a fact that *junbungaku* did not sell well. Despite the success of the Akutagawa Prize, which has given the impression that *junbungaku* is specially favoured, in relation to the popularity of other categories such as mystery, *junbungaku* looks stagnant. When we compare the aforementioned undoubtedly *junbungaku* authors’ works and, for instance, Akazome’s 143rd Akutagawa Prize winning work, *Otome no mikkoku* (The anonymous tip of a maiden), the latter does not appear to be serious nor amusing. Had she not won the Prize her work would likely have remained mostly unknown.

It is assumed that authors are already interwoven in the award business culture. Takami Jun lamented in the early stage of the Akutagawa Prize history that “some authors time the completion of their work around the Akutagawa prize candidate selection, and it is needless to say that they intentionally insert favourable elements for the Prize into their work” (193). The winner receives not only the prize and money but also a form of “symbolic

capital.” Edward Mack, who also examines the Akutagawa Prize in relation to the role of Japan’s publishing industry in the “manufacturing” of modern Japanese literature, writes:

This symbolic capital resembles other forms of capital, for which it can often be exchanged, and takes the form of benefits usually grouped under the rubric of canonization: legitimacy, as the works and authors are recognized as appropriate objects of serious academic attention; publication (and attendant income), as publishers flock to the recipients with requests for manuscripts; a place in cultural memory, as the writers are added to dictionaries and anthologies of modern Japanese literature; and a vastly expanded readership, as the publishing industry makes authors and their works into objects. (*Manufacturing* 183)

The effective mechanism of literary awards is well established in the Japanese publishing industry, and the Akutagawa Prize is inseparable from the term *junbungaku*. *Junbungaku* and the Akutagawa Prize have in common that their “brand name” carries weight: both have established reputations and commercial value in the Japanese literary market. Consumer society always needs attractive commodities, including consumer-oriented literature. This consumer-oriented literature is not *junbungaku* but evidently *taishū bungaku*.⁹¹ As Mack suggests, *junbungaku* has been defined and maintained by the Akutagawa Prize which is, therefore, moulding the future of *junbungaku* (*Manufacturing* 185). Those who aim to win the Akutagawa Prize easily fall under the power of publishing houses and editors; modern Japanese writers are thus inseparable from publishing houses and their editors. On the other hand, the growing literary prize culture has a firm hold on the Japanese media/literary world, causing the amateurization of the literary profession. However, the amateurization of Japanese literature is a controversial issue and should be studied at greater length in the future.

⁹¹ Karatani Kōjin points out that the Akutagawa Prize was given for “*junbungaku*” works for a limited period after the war. By taking a closer look at the Akutagawa Prize winning works and at their authors in general, it is undeniable that the Prize was intended for *junsui shōsetsu* (see Table 4, Row 2), which contains both *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* elements, but in practice, the Prize has been given for *tsūzoku shōsetsu* (popular/common works) (Karatani, *Shūen* 186).

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Appendices

Table 5 Initial Appearances of the Word, *Junbungaku*, in the Academic Writings in the Meiji Era

Date	Author	Text/Essay	The definition of the word “ <i>junbungaku</i> ” or the way the word is used in the text ⁹²
1890-91	Yamada Bimyō	<i>Nihon inbunron</i> (Japan’s verse theory) ⁹³	-Mori Ōgai writes in his criticism on Bimyō’s essay: “Bimyō gave <i>shi</i> , that is to say poesy, ⁹⁴ the name <i>junbungaku</i> ” (Mori 277).
1892	Uchida Roan	<i>Bungaku ippan</i> (Literature generally)	-“ <i>Junbungaku</i> , namely <i>shi</i> , which is poetry in English. Not only Chinese poetry and waka but also Imperial orders, Shintō prayers, Noh farces, Noh songs, Jōruri, Kabuki scripts, nonofficial history are all the ‘products’ of the poetry world” (R. Uchida 27).
1893	Tsubouchi Shōyō	<i>Bijikōron</i> (Theory of beautiful words)	-“ <i>Junbungaku</i> is not only expressing feelings but also thoughts in general” (Tsubouchi 113).
1893	Kitamura Tōkoku	<i>Jinsei ni aiwataru to wa nan no iizo</i> (What does it mean to commit to life?)	-Written in response to Aizan’s essay: “[Aizan] tries to attack the <i>junbungaku</i> territory taking up a ‘hammer’ of historical theories” (T. Kitamura).

Table 6 Historical Roots of the Division between “High” and “Low” Literature

	Date	Column A “High” literature	Column B “Low” literature
1	1603-1867 The Edo period	- <i>Ue no bungaku</i> (high class literature) applies to <i>kanbungaku</i> (Chinese literature), <i>kokugaku</i> (Japanese classical literature), <i>kanshi</i> (Chinese poetry) and <i>kōshōgaku</i> (historiography). These categories represent literature for the ruling classes (Yanagida 10). - <i>Gabungaku</i> (elegant literature) ⁹⁵ or <i>hare no bungaku</i> (formal literature) ⁹⁶ applies to traditional literature such as <i>waka</i> , <i>renga</i> (collaborative poetry) and <i>kanshi</i> .	- <i>Shita no bungaku</i> (low class literature), <i>gesaku bungaku</i> (popular fiction) (Yanagida 11) or <i>fūryū no bungaku</i> (tasteful literature) (Suzuki, <i>The Concept</i> 32) applies to <i>gesaku</i> (playful fiction in the Edo era) <i>gikyoku</i> (plays), and <i>shiika</i> (poetry). Literature for the masses (Suzuki, <i>The Concept</i> 154). - <i>Zokubungaku</i> (civil/popular literature) or <i>ke no bungaku</i> (casual literature) applies to the “new” literature that has been established during the medieval period such as kabuki, <i>jōruri</i> (vocal narrative), <i>ukiyo-e</i> or <i>kana-zōshi</i> (writings of the floating world), <i>haikai</i> and <i>kyōka</i> (comical or social satirical poetry) (Nagashima).

⁹² The contents of this table also include contemporary interpretations.

⁹³ Yamada 1025-1092. However, the word, *junbungaku* is not found in an obtainable original text.

⁹⁴ Words shown in bold in the table were written in English in the original text.

⁹⁵ There are no entries of *gabungaku* and *zokubungaku* in the Japanknowledge+ database; however, *gago* (elegant words) and *gagen* (righteous words) are listed. Both refer to righteous and sophisticated language such as words used for Japanese poetry in the Heian era (794-1185). The opposite terms are *zokugo* and *zokugen*.

⁹⁶ During this period, the traditional object is commonly regarded as *ga* (elegance) which embraces authority, and the new object as *zoku* (civil/popular) which contains practical amusement or instructive

	Date	Column A “High” literature	Column B “Low” literature	
2	To 1884 (Meiji 17)	- <i>Bushi/samurai no bungaku</i> (literature for the samurai class) (Yanagida 6) or <i>daiichi bungei</i> (first/primary literature) refers to <i>kanshi</i> , <i>kanbun</i> and <i>waka</i> based on the ideology of <i>Shushigaku</i> (the school of Zhū Xī/Japanese philosophy) and Confucianism.	- <i>Chōnin no bungaku</i> (literature for townspeople) or <i>daini-bungei</i> (secondary literature) refers to <i>gesaku</i> , <i>haikai</i> and <i>jōruri</i> .	
3	ca. 1890 (Meiji 23)	- <i>Kōbungaku</i> refers to philosophical novels, <i>kanshibun</i> (Chinese poetry and writings) and <i>hōgo</i> (Buddhist Preaching) (Shōgakukan, ed.). Literature that concerns the nation, society and history is also included in this category (Suzuki, <i>The Concept</i> 159).	- <i>Nanbungaku</i> applies to literature that deals with love and romance such as <i>ukiyo-zōshi</i> , <i>sharebon</i> (Edo-period novels that deal with matters of the pleasure quarters), <i>ninjōbon</i> (Edo novels that concern daily life) (Sakai 98), sometimes written by <i>gesaku</i> writers) <i>Ren'ai shōsetsu</i> (romance novels) and <i>gikyoku</i> (Suzuki, <i>Establishment</i> 230).	
4	ca. 1890 (Meiji 23)	- <i>Kabungaku</i> and <i>Ribungaku</i> refer to the writings of history, philosophy and <i>shisō</i> (ideologies) that concern reason or principle (Suzuki, <i>Considering</i> 78). ⁹⁷	- <i>Bibungaku</i> and <i>junbungaku</i> are used for <i>genko geijutsu</i> (linguistic arts) such as novels, poetry, plays and essays, (Suzuki, <i>Considering</i> 76) distinguishing it from <i>bungaku</i> in general or the humanities.	
			Column B.i “Low-high” literature	Column B.ii “Low-low” literature
5	ca. 1907 (Meiji 40)	→Academia	- <i>Kōkyū mono</i> (high value items) refers to <i>geijutsu</i> (art), <i>sōsaku</i> (creation) and work by Naturalists, otherwise known as <i>Bundan shōsetsu</i> (novels of the literary circle) (Suzuki, <i>Considering</i> 112).	- <i>Tsūzoku mono</i> (popular/common items) refers to primarily <i>shinbun shōsetsu</i> (newspaper novels) and <i>zasshi shōsetsu</i> (magazine novels).
6	ca.1926		→ <i>Junbungaku</i>	→ <i>Taishū bungaku</i> or <i>taishū bungei</i>

information. (Y. Nakamura 9)

⁹⁷ Both *kabungaku* and *ribungaku* are translations of the German term “wissenschaft literatur” (scientific literature). According to Suzuki Sadami, neither of these Japanese translations is seen as often as their counterpart, *bibungaku* (Suzuki, *The Concept* 219). Indeed, the Japanknowledge+ database contains no entry for either *kabungaku* or *ribungaku*.

Table 7 Shift in Definitions of *Junbungaku* and *Taishū Bungaku*

	Date	Literary World	
1	1885- (Meiji 18)	- <i>Shōsetsu shinzui</i> (The Essence of the Novel, 1886, critique) and <i>Ukigumo</i> (Drifting Clouds, 1887) are published.	-The first “ <i>junbungaku</i> ” or “general literary magazine” <i>Garakuta bunko</i> (Rubbish heap library) by the Ken’yūsha starts (Yanagida 59). Representatives of this group are Ozaki Kōyō and Yamada Bimyō. Their ideologies include Realism, Neoclassicism, and art for art’s sake. This group marks the threshold of the <i>bundan</i> , (Sakai100) but dissolves in 1903.
		Column A / Proto- <i>Junbungaku</i>	Column B / Proto- <i>Taishū bungaku</i>
2	1905- (Meiji 38)	- Influenced by French Naturalism, Japanese Naturalism rises. Representatives are Shimazaki Tōson and Tayama Katai who focus on the “confessional” novel. Group becomes a major force through journalism by condemning the Ken’yūsha movement as being vulgar and criticized their works as the continuation of “Edo literature” and popular novels. Japanese Naturalists start focusing on “raw confessions of their own base desires and actions” (Orbaugh, “The Problem of the Modern Subject” 31). -In 1910, The <i>Shirakaba-ha</i> (White birch group, including Shiga Naoya) is formed. They publicly opposed the writers of Naturalism as “too narrow and confessional” (Orbaugh, “Shiga Naoya and the Shirakaba Group” 122).	-Izumi Kyōka (pen name of Izumi Kyōtarō, 1873-1939) who advocates romanticism and works against Naturalism is expelled from the <i>bundan</i> and so is Natsume Sōseki. Both are seen as <i>tsūzoku</i> or popular writers (Suzuki, <i>Considering</i> 108-14).
3	Ca. 1918 (Taisho 7)	- <i>Junbungaku</i> or <i>bundan bungaku</i> (Yanagida 495) refers to the works written by the members of Japanese naturalism.	-The term <i>taishū bungaku</i> appears. - <i>Taishū bungaku</i> or <i>taishū bungei</i> generally refers to historical sword-fighting novels.
		Column A / <i>Junbungaku</i>	Column B / <i>Taishū bungaku</i>
4	1926 (Taishō 15)	-From the era of Naturalism on, <i>junbungaku</i> was almost a synonym for the <i>shishōsetsu</i> . Hirano Ken defines this period from 1910-1935. (Hirano, “The Role of Literary Magazines”). How close to a synonym it is, and how long the period is, however, are under debate. - <i>Shinkyō shōsetsu</i> (state-of-mind novels) describes deep emotions of one’s daily life.	- The 21st day club, the first <i>taishū bungaku</i> writers’ club, is established. -The first <i>taishū bungaku</i> magazine <i>Taishū bungei</i> starts (Sakai 33). ⁹⁸ -Proletarian literature becomes popular. -“Since 1928, the definition of <i>taishū bungaku</i> as all novels except ‘artistic novels’ [i.e., <i>junbungaku</i>] was widely accepted” (Sakai 35).
5	1935 (Shōwa 10)	-The Akutagawa Prize for the best <i>junbungaku</i> piece is established. ⁹⁹ The first winner is Ishikawa Tatsuzō (1905-1985).	-The Naoki Prize for the most promising writer of <i>taishū bungaku</i> is established. The first winner is Kawaguchi Matsutarō.

⁹⁸ Previously, the range of *taishū bungaku* was limited to historical sword-fighting novels but around this time, various novels emerged and the rapid expansion of the *taishū bungaku* category was seen. Around this time, the framework of *taishū bungaku* (the prosperity of magazines and book series, and the establishment of writers’ association) is completed.

⁹⁹ The establishment of the Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes enforced the binary system, and by and large, the division is accepted.

	Date	Column i <i>Junbungaku</i>	Column ii <i>Chūkan shōsetsu</i> (in-between literature)	Column iii <i>Taishū bungaku</i>
6	1947 (Shōwa 22)	-Dazai Osamu's (pen name of Tsushima Shūji, 1909-1948) <i>Shayō</i> (The setting sun, 1947) was the top seller in 1948 (Japanese Book promote center). ¹⁰⁰	- <i>Chūkan shōsetsu</i> magazines appear. ¹⁰¹ - <i>Chūkan shōsetsu</i> refers to detective/mystery stories, periodical stories, and contemporary <i>fūzoku</i> (manners and customs) stories (Shōgakukan, ed.).	- <i>Taishū bungaku</i> refers to almost everything except <i>junbungaku</i> and <i>chūkan shōsetsu</i> including <i>short short stories</i> , and <i>Science fiction stories</i> (Suzuki, <i>Establishment</i> 96)

Table 8 Some Reasons Why the Five Primary Authors (Tsubouchi Shōyō, Futabatei Shimei, Yamada Bimyō, Ozaki Kōyō and Kōda Rohan) Might be Considered Proto-*Junbungaku* Writers

	Author	Principle/ Affiliation	Works	Evaluations of his works/contributions	Score
1	Tsubouchi Shōyō	-Realism	<i>Shōsetsu shinzui</i> (The Essence of the Novel, 1886, critique) <i>Tōsei shosei kishitsu</i> (Portraits of contemporary students, 1885)	-Generally agreed to be “The first work that called for the production of the modern novel” with “ <i>Kindai jiga</i> ” (Modern self) (Ueda 62). -His first attempt to write modern Japanese literature; however, he himself admits failure. - <i>Gesaku</i> 's (playful fiction in the Edo era) influence carries weight with his work.	□
2	Futabatei Shimei	-Realism	<i>Ukigumo</i> (Drifting Clouds, 1887)	-Considered the first modern Japanese novel. -The story materializes Shōyō's recommendations of “internal human suffering” in a novel (Ueda 64).	□
3	Yamada Bimyō	-Realism -The founder of the Ken'yūsha	<i>Nihon inbunron</i> (Japan's verse theory, 1891)	-An advocate of the vernacular-writing movement -His contribution to modernization was how to write rather than what to write.	×
4	Ozaki Kōyō	-Realism -The founder of the Ken'yūsha	<i>Konjiki yasha</i> (Golden demon, 1887)	- The work was praised as “the first great modern <i>taishū shōsetsu</i> (popular novel)” (Sakai39). -Although Kōyō is influenced by Shōyō, his work is viewed as “a step backward” (Compernelle 67).	×
5	Kōda Rohan	-Realism -Neoclassicism	<i>Tsuyu dandan</i> (Dewdrops, 1889)	-Rohan is also affected by Shōyō but his work focuses on Chinese and Japanese classics.	Δ

¹⁰⁰ Dazai Osamu was considered to be a *junbungaku* writer due to his publisher and the evaluation of his work. His *Gyakkō* (Regression, 1935) was nominated for the first Akutagawa Prize. It consists of four short stories, “Chōchō” (Butterfly), “Tōzoku” (Bandit), “Kettō” (Duel) and “Kuronbō” (Negro), dealing with issues of self-consciousness, inferiority, vanity and timidity respectively.

¹⁰¹ *Nihon shōsetsu* and *Shōsetsu shinchō* are *chūkan shōsetsu* magazines. The appearance of *chūkan shōsetsu* magazines created a third category and more clearly divided the already established categories of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. The literature of *chūkan shōsetsu* fills the gap between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* for those works which are not too vulgar or too sophisticated and is often written by *junbungaku* writers (Matsumoto 289).