THE WORKS OF AKUTAGAWA RYUNOSUKE
LECTURES ON POE AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of the Ohio State University

by

Lori Dianne Hitchcock, B.A.

*** *** ***

The Ohio State University
1981

Master's Examination Committee:
James R. Morita
Yung-Hee Kwon

Approved by

Adviser
Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. James R. Morita for his insight, guidance, and patience throughout the research. Thanks go to Dr. Yung-Hee Kwon, the other member of my advisory committee, for her valuable comments and suggestions. Gratitude is expressed to Dr. Richard Torrance for his thoughtful comments on the manuscript, and to my fellow students for their encouragement. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Ivana and my parents for their constant moral support.
VITA

October 19, 1968 ............... Born - Lubbock, Texas

1988 .................................. B.A., Kenyon College,
Gambier, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: East Asian Languages and Literatures -
Modern Japanese Literature
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................. ii
VITA ...................................................................... iii
INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1

CHAPTER  .................................................................. PAGE

I. POE IN JAPAN ......................................................... 5
II. AKUTAGAWA'S INTERPRETATION OF POE ............... 17
III. THE APPLICATION OF AKUTAGAWA'S LECTURES TO HIS WORKS .................. 33

CONCLUSION ............................................................. 51

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................... 53
INTRODUCTION

Existing on the periphery of literary traditions on an almost universal scale is an element belonging to the grotesque and perverse. This manifests itself in numerous ways, from the sensational to the sublime; yet, despite whatever literary quality such writings might demonstrate, they are generally barred from serious academic consideration by virtue of their very nature. Only the most exceptional of these writers have managed to break the constraints of convention and achieve a degree of respect within scholarly circles, but even these are generally considered as anomalies, rather than as members of the literary mainstream.

Within the Japanese literary tradition, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927) is perhaps the most noteworthy example of this type of macabre artist. His tales, writes Donald Keene, "have acquired the status of classics, and are read in the schools and frequently reprinted;"1 however, although esteemed as one of the principal figures of modern Japanese literature, the strangeness of his works, as well as his enigmatic life and suicide, have cast Akutagawa in a weird, abstruse light. An "ironic and ultra-grotesque"2 quality
characterizes his works in a manner more reminiscent of Western Gothic and fin de siecle writers, such as Charles Baudelaire, Anatole France, and Oscar Wilde, than of contemporary Japanese authors. Indeed, Akutagawa was known for having been well-read in not only Chinese and Japanese classics, but also in those of Europe and America.

Among the Occidental writers whose works Akutagawa is known to have admired and emulated, those of the American short story stylist, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), are of particular interest. At first glance, the tales of Akutagawa are thematically reminiscent of Poe's, both sharing a fascination with the morbid and grotesque, as well as exhibiting a certain dark, almost cynical humor. Yet, such similarities between the works of Akutagawa and Poe are comparatively superficial when contrasted to the more fundamental technical and ideological parallels demonstrated between these two bodies of fiction.

The importance of Poe's influence on the works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke should not be underestimated, as it constitutes not only an additional literary source for his tales, but also one of the essential elements of Akutagawa's development as a writer of short stories. In this paper, I will discuss the nature of Akutagawa's interest in Poe, as both a conscious literary craftsman and as a "somber and desolate talent," exploring the ways in which this interest
has manifested itself in Akutagawa's own works of literature and criticism.
NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION


3Ibid.
CHAPTER I
POE IN JAPAN

The works of Edgar Allan Poe, were among the first examples of American literature to be introduced into Japan. By as early as 1888, only twenty years after the "reopening" of Japan to the West, two of Poe's tales, "The Black Cat" and "Murders in the Rue Morgue," had been translated into Japanese;¹ and this at a time when the American short story was eclipsed in Japan by the "more enlightening writings"² of such men as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Benjamin Franklin. Supported in the English literature classrooms of Tokyo Imperial University by admirers of the calibre of Lafcadio Hearn, who described him to students as "a most consummate artist,"³ and Hearn's successor, Natsume Sōseki, Poe's fame and popularity spread among both Japanese students and writers.

Hearn, as an ex-Cincinnati journalist, was in a rather unique position of influence with regard to the introduction of Poe in Japan. Having worked in the United States in this literary capacity for a number of years, he was undoubtedly familiar with Poe's reputation for having been an eccentric drunkard, which had rather obscured the consideration and
interpretation of his works in the United States. However, Hearn, in his capacity as chair of the department of English Literature at Tokyo University from 1896 to 1902, presented to his Japanese students an author and poet of remarkable genius, rather than discussing Poe in terms of this apparent moral degeneracy.

In 1891, Hearn gave a lecture entitled "Poe's Verse" in which he praised the ingenuity of rhythm, vocabulary, and theme utilized by Poe, asserting,

We can find traces of Poe in almost every one of the greater poets of our time. One of the reasons for this influence was certainly that wonderful sense of the values of words, of their particular physiognomy, so to speak, which Poe shared with the greatest masters of language that ever lived. His instinct in this direction led him especially toward the strange, the unfamiliar, the startling; and he was able to produce effects of a totally unexpected kind.

Not only did Hearn devote serious attention to Poe's literary skill, but, here, even went as far as to attribute his characteristically unusual compositions to the influence of this skill. Rather than approaching the typically bizarre and fantastic nature of his works as further proof of Poe's personal impropriety, Hearn instead regarded such motifs as indicative of literary sensitivity. Such unprejudiced consideration of Poe during this early period of his introduction in Japan helped to distinguish his literary techniques, style, subject matter, and even principles as being worthy of emulation.
The most significant recognition of Poe during this period was, however, made by the celebrated author Natsume Sōseki, Hearn's successor at Tokyo University. Prior to the 1910 publication in Eigo Seinen magazine of an article entitled "Pō no sōzō" (Poe's Imagination),7 Sōseki had twice mentioned and discussed Poe and his works: the first of these references appeared in his 1886 essay, "Jinsei" (Life), and the second, solely devoted to the discussion of Poe, appeared in the preface of a 1908 collection of Western tales translated by Honma Hisashirō.8 In "Pō no sōzō," Sōseki continued the discussion of Poe's skills of literary craftsmanship begun in his previous essay, admiring the nature of his imaginative skills for their "constructive" and "scientific" qualities. He compared Poe to Jonathan Swift, analyzing the "mathematical" means by which both structured and told their respective stories:

Poe is more exact [than Swift], laying out his design as a skilled engineer might. This is scientific imagination. Such accurate imagination is impossible without a Mathematical, clear head; seen from this perspective, Poe far surpasses Swift. Therefore, more than wonder that he could imagine such things, we wonder that he imagined them so precisely and mathematically.8

Calling Poe the "founder of the short story,"10 Sōseki expressed his regard for the careful construction of Poe's tales, appreciating the juxtaposition of structure and creativity. In doing this, Sōseki helped to propagate such
methods of structure in the Japanese short story. Noriko Lippit notes that, "Sōseki's essays on Poe, although they are brief, may well have been as influential as Hearn's lectures in their positive appraisal of Poe's short stories of fantasy and the grotesque, for they were written in Japanese for a wider audience of readers of literature, while Hearn's lectures were delivered in English to a small, elite group of students of English literature." The serious discussion of Poe by a native Japanese author as respected as Sōseki cannot but have contributed to the overall favorable reception of his short stories and poetry, as well as his critical works.

By the time when Hearn was lecturing on the literary qualities of Poe's work, modern Japanese literature had already begun to evolve as an exercise of the opposite variety, namely Naturalism. Being "the logical extension of the impulse toward realism in fiction that had first been generated in 1885 by Tsubouchi Shōyō in The Essence of the Novel," Naturalism had become the predominant school of literary thought by 1906,13 and, beginning with the appearance of Tayama Katai's work Futon (The Quilt) in 1907, a somewhat more indigenous variation of Naturalist literature was created in the form of the I-novel.

Tsuruta Kinya describes the I-novel as being characterized by the "conspicuous absence" of distance between the author and his work, by its material - "always
drawn form the author's limited environment" - and by its style, "in the tradition of the ancient essay...often long-winded and rambling."¹⁴ Practitioners of the I-novel, among them Shimazaki Tōson and Shiga Naoya, saw in this form a means of discovering and exposing the truth of their lives; a pursuit which, Tsuruta notes, ultimately compelled the critic Itō Sei to characterize the Japanese literary world as existing in an environment of "Let's see who lives more truthfully and confesses more truth."¹⁵

Within this dominantly Naturalist literary environment, the highly imaginative and blatantly fictional short stories of Poe could have potentially been anathema: his florid, nearly superfluous use of language, exotic motifs, and ingenuity of plot stood in stark contrast to the Naturalist ideal of straightforward verisimilitude. But, instead, Poe's works received attention from Japanese writers and critics largely as the result of the reactionary creation, by those disillusioned with Naturalism, of a more aesthetic, fictional variety of literature. Members of the aesthetic school cited Poe, among other Western writers, as having been influential in the development of their own craft. As Lippit notes:
In the Taisho Period (1912-1926) writers who were "influenced" by Poe began to reflect his influence in their works. This period was one of reaction to Naturalism and to the confessional I-novels. ...Perfection in a work of art, together with or in place of philosophic depth, was a professed goal of most of the writers of this period; this was especially true of the writers of the aesthetic school who were most strongly influenced by Poe. Among them, Satō Haruo, Hagiwara Sakutarō, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Tanizaki Junichirō openly acknowledged their indebtedness to Poe, and their works show the depth of his influence.18

Although not strictly associated with the Aesthetics, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shared certain of their literary ideals, including a strong distaste for Japanese Naturalism and, in particular, the I-novel. According to Tsuruta,

A confessional element is a vital ingredient of the I-novel, and the confession must be bold, frank and honest. Akutagawa flatly rejected this by claiming that 'to be honest, or not to deceive others is not an issue of any literary law but simply a question of moral code (V, 63).' Akutagawa defined an I-novel as a 'novel with a certificate saying "this novel is not a lie"'...17

Akutagawa, in contrast to the Naturalists, perceived literature more as a canvas for the examination of the nature of beauty and art, than as a forum for unsolicited confessions.

This relatively unpopular and (contemporarily) unorthodox approach to writing was the result of Akutagawa's early exposure to a wide variety of inventive literature. As a youth, Akutagawa read Japanese and Western authors known for their often darkly imaginative works, such as Mori
Ōgai, Izumi Kyōka, Anatole France (whose Japanese introduction Akutagawa is credited with), Baudelaire, and Poe. Knowledge of such works he affixed to his already comprehensive understanding of Japanese and Chinese classical literature to form the basis of his literary vocabulary.

In particular, the young Akutagawa, as evidenced in a passage from a 1928 "special edition" of his semi-autobiographical work, "Daidōji Shinsuke no hansei," exhibited an early interest in the short stories of Poe:

He would translate one page a day of Poe's short stories. His primary intention in doing this was, more than perfectly translating Poe, to first study the composition of a story, and, secondly, to study the construction of his sentences in this hidden manner. Cultivated by such study, Akutagawa's earliest compositions reflect his interest in not only the fantastic, but also in story composition, as demonstrated in "Shisō" (The Shadow of Death, 1909 or 1910). This is the story of a young man informed by a fortune-teller that he will die prematurely, when "The sun grows dark during the daytime...and...the petals of the sunflowers...fall and scatter." Hearing this prediction, the young man begins to lavish attention on the sunflower in his garden, scrutinizing it for any sign of its demise. Eventually a day arrives when the sun is eclipsed and the petals of the sunflower begin to drop, "one by one," to the ground. The end of the story finds the
young man awaiting the fall of the last few petals and his own death. Although a somewhat immature work of fiction, lacking the three-dimensionality and psychological depth of later pieces, the forebodingly enigmatic quality of "Shisō," as well as its attention to the building of narrative suspense through careful plot construction, reflects the literary influence of Poe, anticipating the mature Akutagawa.

As a student of the English Literature Department of Tokyo University from 1913 to 1916, Akutagawa maintained and amplified his interest in Western, and particularly English, literature and criticism. In addition to submitting his own original compositions to a Tokyo University journal entitled Shinshichō (New Thought), he also contributed his translations of various foreign works. However, as Beongcheon Yu has noted,

Of Akutagawa's early writings, only a handful - translations of France and Yeats, and pieces like "The Old Man" (written in 1914) and "Youths and Death" (1914) - appeared in the third New Thought. None of these writings attracted critical attention; nor did his more ambitious "Rashōmon" (1915), which he managed to place in another little magazine. Even "The Nose" might have suffered the same fate but for Sōseki's personal blessings.23

The notice of "Hana" (The Nose, 1916) by Sōseki marked a turning point in Akutagawa's fledgling literary career. Praising the tale for its humor and style, the elder writer advised Akutagawa to "produce twenty or thirty stories like
this one," and arranged for its reprinting in *New Fiction*, an influential literary magazine.\(^{24}\)

"Hana," and other stories which followed soon afterward, created a niche for Akutagawa in the Japanese literary world. His works were entirely unlike any others being produced at the time: they conformed to no one ideal, but, rather, exhibited both the characteristics of a wide variety of fiction, as well as Akutagawa's own unique sense of style and motif. The influence of his well-read literary background was apparent in these short stories:

According to Yoshida Seiichi's investigations, at least sixty-two of Akutagawa's stories reveal a varying degree of indebtedness to his known literary sources, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Western. His Western sources in particular show a wide range - the Bible, Caxton, Swift, Defoe, Goethe, Poe, Bierce, Browning, Butler, Gogol, and Dostoyevsky, as well as Flaubert, Regnier, Merimee, Loti, Strindberg, France, Synge, and others...it was assumed [that] Akutagawa's art was bookish, and his originality, if any, was only in form, not in content.\(^{25}\)

Akutagawa's habit of literary borrowing was, at its worst, little more than plagiarism; however, such instances were not only relatively scarce, but gradually diminished as his career progressed.\(^{26}\) Of more interest is the manner in which Akutagawa adopted not only the stories, but also themes and literary techniques, of other writers to augment and illustrate his own ideas. As Keene writes, "Even when a scholar has identified to his own satisfaction the origins of some section of an Akutagawa story, there is generally no
question of direct imitation."^27 In the case of Akutagawa's emulation of Poe, this holds particularly true; despite technical, stylistic, and thematic parallels between the works of both authors, the undeniably unique ideas of Akutagawa are apparent throughout his tales.

It is by means of an examination of this phenomenon that the influence of Poe on Akutagawa can be documented. Such study is aided by Akutagawa's own writings on Poe, in the form of lecture notes from two discussions of the writer. The manner in which he chose to describe and analyze Poe reveals those aspects of Poe's works which Akutagawa most esteemed. Through the more accurate understanding of this admiration, made possible, in part, by these notes, a more precise examination of its manifestation in Akutagawa's works of fiction comes within reach of the researcher.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I


6Hearn, 150.

7Lippit, "Natsume" 34.

8Ibid., 33.


10Lippit, "Natsume" 33.

11Ibid., 32-33.

12Keene, 221.


14Ibid., 22.

15Ibid., 19.


17Tsuruta, 22.


Keene, 557-564.

Yu, 15.

Ibid., 16.

Ibid., 21.

Ibid., 21.

Keene, 565-566.
CHAPTER II
AKUTAGAWA'S INTERPRETATION OF POE

Sadoya Shigenobu writes that, in Japan, "It was Akutagawa who introduced the literary style and theory of Poe's short stories." Akutagawa accomplished this largely through his two lectures given on the subject of Poe: the first, entitled "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" (Poe as a Short Story Writer), was presented in May 1921 at a conference held by the English Literature Department of Tokyo University. "Pō no ichimen" (One Aspect of Poe), the second of these, was delivered only a few months prior to Akutagawa's death in 1927, at Shinseki Senior High School. "Pō no ichimen," although predated by his 1921 address, thematically prefaces Akutagawa's later discussion of Poe as a writer of short stories in "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō."

Although somewhat cryptic in form, his lecture notes establish, by means of Poe's own observations and notions on the nature of both verse and prose, a framework in which Akutagawa examines Poe's personal applications of such ideals.

"Pō no ichimen," possibly in consideration of its high school audience, provides a general overview of Poe's life
and literary, and, in particular, critical, career. Akutagawa determines in Poe's writings two general trends, namely "specific and abstract." The former he describes as manifested in Poe's general condemnation of poor writing (particularly, in the misuse of superlatives). Akutagawa cites, as examples of this "specific" variety of criticism, two reviews produced by Poe: most notably, the second example, in which he disparages the works of a William Ellery Channing, is representative of Poe's exacting nature 3 (Akutagawa also mentions that Poe was known for the abundance of his insults, and, as if more interested in this exacting aspect of the writer, dwells on such examples of Poe's criticism).

Discussing this "specific" quality, Akutagawa cites Poe's censure of the unoriginality of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the plagiarism of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as being of significance. He observes that Poe's criticism of Hawthorne's excess of imagination is the most famous of these, by reason of the intrinsically similar natures of both Poe's and Hawthorne's works. In his review, Poe notes that the fantastic and imaginative quality of Hawthorne's tales, untempered by logic, makes the writer a wonderful "mystic," 4 but no short story writer. 5

From his discussion of the "specific" Akutagawa proceeds to his examination of the "abstract" trend of Poe's critical writings. According to him, this trend, towards
which Poe increasingly turned later in his life, is reflective of Poe's overall aesthetic sense. Akutagawa identifies three works by Poe, "Letters to Mr.____" (1831), "The Poetic Principle" (published in 1850 from lecture notes), and "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) as demonstrative of this. All three are primarily concerned with poetry - its creation, purpose, and nature - although Akutagawa applies the literary principles delineated within these works to his own examination of Poe's short stories.

Akutagawa, referring to ideas proposed in "Letters to Mr.____," clarifies the nature of Poe's sense of poetic beauty as being "that which brings tears, which is, moreover, melancholic." He defines this melancholy as a mixture of "beauty and strangeness." This is determined as characteristic of not only Poe himself, but of his works as well. Contrasting Poe's theories concerning poetry and the short story, Akutagawa observes that, for Poe, "Truth interferes with the rhyme of a poem; terror, passion, sarcasm, and humor are all the intention of the short story," and that "beauty cannot be the only aim" of the short story, ideals reflected in both Poe's and Akutagawa's works of prose fiction.

From this, Akutagawa discusses Poe's own interpretation of the general nature of poetry, as outlined in "The Poetic Principle." In this lecture, Poe distinguished long poems, described as "a flat contradiction in terms," and short
poems. Akutagawa notes that Poe considered the interruption of continuity in the reading of a given poem as anathemantic and intrusive in the maintenance of that poetic beauty discussed earlier. The idea of lengthy, and therefore unsuitable, poetry Akutagawa contrasts with prose, in which, he notes, length is somewhat more "forgivable." 10 Akutagawa observes that the preservation, by means of a "totality of effect," 11 of that poetic beauty proposed in "Letters to Mr.____" is among Poe's chief aesthetic concerns. This analysis can be applied in a broader sense to encompass not only the poetic form, but also, as relates more specifically to Akutagawa, the short story. That is to say, Akutagawa here maintains that sustaining the totality of effect, most fully realized in concise literature, is desirable in any literary creation; if one reads any long work in a single sitting, the impact of that work on the reader is not as concentrated as in the case of the short story.

Akutagawa's discussion of Poe's theories concerning poetry appear, at first glance, to be somewhat irrelevant to his personal interest in the writer, as Akutagawa was known more for his short stories than his poetry. However, examined in light of the literary theories propounded in his treatise, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" (Literary, too Literary, 1927), Akutagawa's ideally poetic short story is thus illuminated. In identifying Poe's poetic aesthetic, Akutagawa reveals his own, characterized by this melancholy
beauty. By means of his analysis of Poe's poetic theories, Akutagawa's own opinions on the general nature of literature, and, in particular, the short story, are revealed and substantiated.

In "Pō no ichimen," Poe's essay entitled "The Philosophy of Composition" is seen by Akutagawa as being especially indispensable in probing the issue of the "abstract" aspect of Poe's criticism, by virtue of its comprehensive nature. The primary goal of this essay is the dispelling of an idealized perception of the poet as being gifted with some obscure, inspired genius; an aim achieved by means of Poe's demonstration of the painstakingly deliberate process of poetic composition. Akutagawa questions this highly studied method of writing: "Whether Poe wrote in this way or not is unclear. I think it something of an exaggeration."\textsuperscript{12} However, despite the disputability of Poe's professed technique of composition, Akutagawa continues,

But on this point alone I will not budge. Namely, that Poe was keenly attentive to the craftsmanship of his works.\textsuperscript{13}

He supports this assertion with an untranslated citation from Poe's own \textit{Marginalia}:

It is the curse of a certain kind of mind, that it can never rest satisfied with the consciousness of its ability to do a thing. Not even content with doing it, it must both know and show how.\textsuperscript{14}
Akutagawa's admiration of this constructive element of Poe's fiction seems at odds with those opinions on the nature and purpose of the short story postulated by him in "Bungeiteki...," in which he argues with Tanizaki against the necessity of architecturally structured plots. His actual works, including those stories of the latter period of his career characterized by their "formless" quality, disprove his professed literary ideals.

Concluding this discussion, Akutagawa briefly cites certain of Poe's prose works - The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, "A Descent into the Maelstrom," and others - as exemplary of Poe's concern for and difficulties with verisimilitude in the writing of his short stories. This aspect of Poe is, as evidenced by "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō," perhaps the most relevant to Akutagawa. The highly imaginative aesthetic qualities observed in the literature of Poe he justifies by this attention to realism, or verisimilitude. Similarly, in examining Akutagawa's own writings, the effect of this attention to realistic detail can be gauged.

Akutagawa finally notes that Poe's critical remarks are unfailingly constructive, and of a predominantly instructional nature; moreover, he observes, Poe was himself faithful to the methods of literary composition expressed in his reviews and theoretical writings. As a result,
Akutagawa claims that the best introduction to an analysis of Poe's works is by means of his literary criticism.

Akutagawa's more specific lecture, "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō," continues and elaborates his discussion, introduced in "Pō no ichimen," of Poe as a writer of short stories, delving into Akutagawa's interpretation of Poe's struggles with plot construction and verisimilitude. Thematically, "Tanpen sakka toshite no Pō" is an almost literal continuation and development of Sōseki's "Pō no sōzō." In his essay, Sōseki advanced the notion of Poe's "clear," "amazing and precise," and "exact" imagination; Akutagawa, as one of the most famous of Sōseki's "literary disciples," was almost certainly aware of, and influenced by, this interpretation of Poe's creative attributes, and examines, in a more precise manner, the nature of this imagination as seen through Poe's short stories.

Akutagawa prefaces this lecture by clarifying that,

The purpose of this lecture is not to explore the differences between Poe, the short story writers, and as seen from other perspectives (poems, Ureka [sic], criticism, lectures), but to discuss the nature of Poe as perceived by a writer of the short story.

Here, and in the earlier passage from "Daidōji Shinsuke no hansei," Akutagawa demonstrates his desire to learn from Poe's literary example. His decision to open such a discussion with *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) is interesting, as this was easily the longest work of
fictional prose ever produced by Poe.\textsuperscript{17} However, Akutagawa is not so much concerned with the overall structure of Poe's tales as with certain literary characteristics which consistently appear throughout his entire body of short stories.

Briefly introducing this early novel, Akutagawa first notes Poe's use of what he calls "realistic writing": he illustrates Poe's use of "dull" details with passages of nautical history and navigational information, which were intended to enhance the overall vraisemblance of the narrative. Akutagawa here compares Poe's manner of realistic writing to that of Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), using the opening paragraphs of each work to demonstrate the similarity between them.\textsuperscript{18} Although acknowledging the resemblance of tone, style, and even theme apparent both in these passages and throughout the two works, Akutagawa states that, "Even if this [similarity] is the case, it cannot be said that Poe is completely influenced by Defoe."\textsuperscript{19} Akutagawa provides as proof of this assertion two different passages from *Pym*: it is the second of these, translated by Akutagawa, which reveals not only Poe's stylistic prowess, but also a key characteristic of his literature, namely, his use of psychological realism:
Shortly after this period I fell into a state of partial insensibility, during which the most pleasing images floated in my imagination; such as green trees, troops of cavalry, and other phantasies. I now remember that in all that passed before my mind's eye motion was a predominant idea. Thus I never fancied any stationary object, such as a house, a mountain, or anything of the kind, but windmills, ships, large birds, balloons, people on horseback, carriages driving furiously, and similar moving objects presented themselves in endless succession.\textsuperscript{20}

Poe here, Akutagawa explains, far surpasses Defoe in exceeding the limits of mere physical description to portray the inner world of the mind. He singles out Poe's idea of motion, as opposed to stasis, for its revelatory nature. Whereas Defoe faithfully represents the external occurrences affecting Crusoe, Poe just as faithfully attends to those affecting the psychology of Pym, carefully depicting his inner turmoil by means of this "motion."

This introduction to and discussion of Pym and its degree of indebtedness to Crusoe leads into the body of Akutagawa's argument. Akutagawa, recognizing both the presence of certain stylistic and thematic similarities between the two works, as well as a considerable number of undeniably original sequences in Pym, suggests that it only stands to reason that Poe's study of Defoe was conscious. This being the case, one might, he suggests, consequently suppose that those places where Poe resembles Defoe are those in which he intentionally aped - that is, copied or even plagiarized - the latter, whereas those which do not
are unique to Poe. It is suggested that this perception of Poe as an occasional plagiarist has been a common one. Akutagawa's interest in deflecting criticisms of plagiarism, demonstrated both here and in his discussion of Poe's review of Hawthorne in "P5 no ichimen," is revelatory of his own sensitivity to such charges, and Akutagawa goes to pains to clear Poe of such accusations.

In doing this, Akutagawa proposes an alternative explanation of Poe's apparent interest in and utilization of Defoe's works and style, asserting that Poe studied Defoe for the sake of studying him; that is, for the fundamental reason that, as Defoe appealed to him, he wished to learn from his literary example. Akutagawa again translates a particular passage from Poe's January 1836 review of *Crusoë*, in which he analyzed those aspects of the work of personal interest to him:

Men do not look upon [Robinson *Crusoë*] in the light of a literary performance. Defoe has none of their thoughts - Robinson all. The powers which have wrought the wonder have been thrown into obscurity by the very stupendousness of the wonder they have wrought! We read, and become perfect abstractions in the intensity of our interest - we close the book, and are quite satisfied that we could have written as well ourselves! All this is effected by the potent magic of verisimilitude.22

Akutagawa claims that Poe rightly admired this verisimilitude, which was demonstrative of Defoe's nonchalant attitude towards literary technicalities,
esteeming both Defoe's realistic rendering of such romantic, even fantastic, material as well as its critical appraisal by Poe. Indeed, it is this realistic aspect of Poe's own works, experimented with in ways untried by Defoe, about which he is most enthusiastic.

Akutagawa admits that, at first glance, this coexistence of realism and fantasy is an apparent contradiction in terms, as if two unrelated sides of the same coin were being considered. However, he proposes that it is precisely this contradiction which is of particular appeal to the literary student, asserting that the growth and development of Poe as a writer of short fiction arose out of his attempts to achieve an accord between what Akutagawa terms "realistic method" and "romantic material." As he writes, "In other words, [Poe] endured difficulties in alchemizing his analytical intellect and his poetic temperament."23

Akutagawa returns to the previously cited shipwreck episode in Pym in order to illustrate this, observing that Poe here turns his attention from the outer realm to the inner; Poe's descriptions of turmoil progress from the physical violence of the hurricane to the disorder of Pym's mind. Thus, in this early illustration of Poe's own realistic method, "external realism" gives way to "psychological realism."24 Turning to a number of Poe's later works, Akutagawa demonstrates the enduring presence of
this realistic method; stories such as "The Imp of the Perverse," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Black Cat" are all considered by him to be particularly noteworthy examples of this literary style. In each, painstakingly plotted murder is the end result, but Akutagawa's chief interest lies in the abnormally confessional psychology of the murderer.

Akutagawa is careful to note that such tales are not "detective stories," in which rationality is not complicated, or complemented, by emotion. Describing Poe's works as more of a "weird combination of passion and intellect," he cites Baudelaire, from among the many European literary figures influenced by Poe, as having been particularly affected by this quality. Akutagawa identifies a certain common sagacity between both Baudelaire and Poe which, he notes, should withstand fantastic delusions, but finally determining that both are of too desolate a nature not to be but so deluded. He concludes that, despite their native rationality, Poe and Baudelaire are both ultimately melancholy dreamers. Quoting the poetry of both, Akutagawa substantiates this assertion:

revés, toujours revés
(dream, always dream)

All that we see or seem,
Is but a dream within a dream. 28

Akutagawa finally observes that,
It is not the case that Poe's state of mind influenced Baudelaire alone. The mental disposition of the composer of "To Helen" and the author of "The Masque of the Red Death" is also simultaneously embodied in our own attitudes. 27

"Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" is most remarkable for Akutagawa's analysis of Poe's "weird combination of passion and intellect," not only as an examination of literary phenomena, but also as it responds to Poe's detractors. Himself highly sensitive to accusations of plagiarism and unoriginality, Akutagawa shields Poe, through this approach to his short stories, from those who would denounce him for such literary transgressions. He accomplishes this defense by means of the same evidence meant to condemn Poe, turning the undeniable similarity between *Pym* and *Crusoe* to the advantages of both Poe's literary skill and Akutagawa's literary analysis. Although basing his argument on the not-universally acknowledged assumption of a writer's right to "emulate" the works of another, Akutagawa nonetheless presents Poe as more than a literary leech, succeeding in his portrayal of the writer as passionate and innovative.

Ultimately, however, it is the very proposition of this coexisting realism and imagination within the short stories of Poe that distinguishes "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō." Akutagawa, unlike Sōseki, does not simply recognize the clear, calculated quality of Poe's fantastic works. Instead, he delves into its origins and character, examining
the manner in which Poe first embraced Defoe's use of verisimilitude and then transformed it to suit the mysterious and melancholy beauty of his own tales. Akutagawa's unearthing of an "ardent aspiration" and accompanying "cold intellect" within Poe here surpasses Sōseki's admiration of his "constructive imagination."²⁸ Akutagawa justifies Poe's emulation of Defoe by describing him as a student of sorts; similarly, it is possible to regard Akutagawa himself as a literary apprentice in relation to Poe and his prose. His parting observation, that the dreamy disposition of Poe is one which is almost universally shared by writers of the short story, invites considerations of Akutagawa's own emulation of the literary characteristics discussed within both "Pō no ichimen" and "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō."
NOTES FOR CHAPTER II


2Ibid., 811.

3A representative passage from this review reads: "The utter abandon - the charming neglige - the perfect looseness (to use a western phrase) of his rhythm, is one of Mr. C's most noticeable, and certainly one of his most refreshing traits. It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this: "So in our steps strides truth and honest trust," where (to say nothing of the grammar, which may be Dutch but it is not English) it is quite impossible to get through with "step strides truth" without dislocating the under jaw." (Poe, *Essays*) 463.


5This observation is significant for its applicability to Akutagawa's own literary relationship with Tanizaki Junichirō. In Akutagawa's treatise on the short story, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na," he himself criticizes the immoderately strange and fantastic nature of the short stories of Tanizaki, which he perceives as being devoid of realism. Such criticism recalls Poe; moreover, the manner in which the works of Poe and Hawthorne are similar is almost mirrored in the same similarities between the tales of Akutagawa and Tanizaki. In the cases of both, the predominant parallels are the highly imaginative and fictional natures of their most characteristic works. Akutagawa here recognizes Poe's discrimination of the intrinsic differences between his works and those of Hawthorne largely in order to justify his own, somewhat less substantiated, analysis of Tanizaki's literary shortcomings. The close chronological proximity between Akutagawa's criticisms of Tanizaki and the presentation of "Pō no ichimen," both having appeared in 1927, substantiates this.

8Poe, *Essays* 5-94

Ibid., 91.
10Akutagawa, "Ichimen" 90.
11Ibid.
12Ibid.
13Ibid., 91.
14Ibid.
15Sōseki, 652.
18Akutagawa, "Tanpen" 83.
19Poe, *Pym* 110.
21Ibid., 201-202.
22Akutagawa, "Tanpen" 86.
23Ibid.
24Ibid., 87.
25Ibid.
26Ibid.
27Sōseki, 652.
CHAPTER III
THE APPLICATION OF THE POE
LECTURES ON THE WORKS OF AKUTAGAWA

Akutagawa's lectures on Poe do not necessarily address the analysis of his works in a completely objective manner; that is to say, Akutagawa may have built his discussion of the American in such a way as to clarify or justify certain features of his own works of fiction and philosophy of literature. Several aspects of Poe's literary expertise are presented by Akutagawa in his lectures. Of these, three are emphasized throughout both "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" and "Pō no ichimen": namely, Poe's senses of "poetic beauty" and story structure, as well as his use of realism. Akutagawa cites these qualities as specifically representative of Poe's works, both prose and verse, and in doing so reveals his personal interest in them, leaving the door open for the investigation of their effects on his own works of literature.

Although "Pō no ichimen" thematically precedes "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" - the general discussion of Poe and his works leading into a more focused elaboration of his short stories - the relevance of their chronology should not
be ignored. By the time when "Po no ichimen" was presented, Akutagawa was near the end of his career and his life. The morbid and occasionally sensational quality of grotesqueness which had characterized many tales of his "early" period had apparently all but disappeared in his later stories, dislodged by his growing interest in literature of a less fantastic variety. Yet, it was not so much the nature of Akutagawa's works which had changed, as the manner in which this nature was exhibited.

In his earliest short stories, Akutagawa demonstrates a mastery over the weird, lurid, and acrimonious, reminiscent of Poe's most notorious literary characteristics. In these tales, Akutagawa addresses such themes as obsession and evil in human nature, depicting his characters in a cynically lifelike way. The priest of "Hana," as well as the samurai of "Imogayu" (Yam Gruel, 1918), are among the representatives of this. Although the nominal protagonists of their respective stories, both are depicted as essentially ridiculous by Akutagawa, as demonstrated in this passage from "Hana":

There was nobody at Ike-no-Ō who did not know about the nose of Zenchi Naigu. It was five or six inches long and hung down form above his upper lip to below his chin. As for its shape, it was equally thick at base and tip. A long and slender sausage, so to speak, dangled from the middle of his face.
This description is directly inspired by the *Konjaku monogatari* and *Ujisui monogatari* episodes from which the tale as a whole was adopted. An element of Akutagawa's early sense of the grotesque lay as much in his selection of these classical works for his model as in his own retelling of their material.

Akutagawa's skill in portraying scenes of putrescence is equally demonstrative of his mastery of harsh and repulsive themes. His 1917 short story, "Chūtō" (Bandits), illustrates this, the author describing scenes such as those of abortion, death, and decomposition in nearly excessive detail:

A slightly built woman of about forty years of age... lay on her side and only a linen cloth about her waist covered her nakedness. Looking at her breasts and abdomen, so swollen and yellowish did they seem that only if poked with a finger they would ooze water and bloody pus...Especially where the sunlight pierced through the torn matting walls onto the flesh, there could be seen darkish spots like rotten apricots at the armpits and at the base of the neck, whence a strong smell seemed to be emitted.³

Scenes such as this are particularly reminiscent of Poe. In his more horrific tales, such as "The Black Cat" (1843) and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), Poe uses images such as a "nearly liquid mass of loathsome - of detestable putridity,"⁴ and "I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain."⁵ The sensational quality of this variety of grotesque description is among
the main characteristics of Poe's works; to a lesser degree, this is also true of Akutagawa's earliest tales. Notably, it is not this facet of Poe's literary nature which Akutagawa admires in his lectures.

Akutagawa himself recognized the excessively repulsive nature of descriptions such as these. Referring to "Chūtō," he remarked in 1917 that the work was "terrible...like a cheap picture book." and observed,

When I was sick in bed with a fever the grain of the wood of the ceiling looked like marble, but now it merely looks like wood. That's the difference between before and after writing "The Bandits."?

As his literary career progressed, the character of his own sense of grotesqueness was refined; indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that it took on the qualities of that "melancholic" "poetic beauty" which Akutagawa praised in Poe. Descriptions of such things as decay and death evident in his early short stories remained in those of his later literary career, but in a significantly subdued and polished form. More importantly, however, they were removed from the center of his tales, acting instead as one of many literary elements. In other words, Akutagawa's "grotesqueness" evolved from being the intended aim of his short stories to one means by which a more sophisticated goal was attained.

This is well-demonstrated in Akutagawa's "Jigokuhen" (Hell Screen, 1918). Whereas portrayals of death in the
earlier "Chūtō" were of a sordid and gruesome nature, in "Jigokuhen" death is depicted differently:

She lifted her pale face in the stifling smoke, and her long hair unravelled in the flames. The lovely robe with its cherry pattern had caught fire in an instant...When the breeze died down a moment and the smoke drifted off, the girl's figure stood out among the flames and the golden sparks. Biting the gag, writhing in the chain that cut into her flesh, she embodied hell itself.

This scene exhibits none of the sensational aspects of earlier Akutagawa stories. The girl's fiery death is drawn in a beautiful and even "melancholic" manner, in which lurid details of her suffering are markedly absent. Yet, none of the grotesqueness of this spectacle has been lost; it is instead manifest in the artistic detachment of its telling. The strangeness of this episode, as well as "Jigokuhen," concerns the unrelentingly exact nature of the artist. Thus, the grotesqueness of the girl's death is embodied in her own father's aesthetic appreciation, rather than paternal/human horror, of the flames which consume her.

Literary historians note the similarity between that sense of grotesqueness characteristic of a number of Akutagawa's early tales and that in the stories of Poe. However, Akutagawa's description of the girl's death reveals the manner in which he, in assimilating and conforming that same quality of poetic beauty esteemed in his lectures on Poe, surpasses the latter in his understanding and
employment of grotesqueness. Indeed, he admires this beauty more as it pertains to the poetry of Poe, rather than his short stories which tended towards the sensational. Significantly, Akutagawa's recognition of this element came at a time when he was not only himself producing short stories of a somewhat "poetic" variety, such as "Aru aho no isshō" (The Life of a Fool, 1927), but also defending those of the Naturalist writer, Shiga Naoya. Seen in this light, Akutagawa's application of Poe's poetic beauty to the short story appears both valid and demonstrative of his conscious emulation of Poe.

In "Pō no ichimen" Akutagawa, by means of his analysis of Poe's ideal goal of a "totality of effect," establishes the short story form as an exemplary means of attaining this outcome. He then acknowledges Poe's practice of painstaking story construction, noting that, in reference to Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," the latter "was keenly attentive to the craftsmanship of his works." Within Akutagawa's own works, this sense of deliberate artistry appears to have developed from an essentially straightforward application of plot construction to a more mature and involved sense of story structure.

The events of Akutagawa's early stories deliberately unfold according to the tone set by elements established at the outset of the tale. That is to say, these tales are less suggestive of spontaneity than of painstaking
intentionality. "Jigokuhen," specifically reminiscent of Poe, is an example of this. The narrator begins this tale with a depiction of the many extraordinary and exemplary acts of Lord Horikawa; the story of the hell screen is thus introduced as just one, albeit of importance, remarkable anecdote in the life of the lord. In light of ensuing occurrences within the tale, this manner of acquainting the reader with the hell screen is somewhat ironic, as it is ultimately Yoshihide, the painter of the screen, whose "triumph" the painting embodies.

The actual events, rumors, and vaguely understood occurrences described by the retainer throughout "Jigokuhen" are all intended by Akutagawa to contribute to the overall effect of the fiery climax of the tale. The narrator, a retainer of Lord Horikawa, repeatedly introduces and then vehemently refutes rumors concerning the questionable intentions of the lord towards the daughter of Yoshihide. These have the effect of gradually eroding the reader's impression of him. Similarly, the narrator's slanders against Yoshihide have the opposite effect of justifying his behavior to the reader:
At the mere mention of the man's name, Sōzu, the Abbot of Yokawa, would blanch with anger, as though he were confronting a demon. (Of course, the peasants around here say this was because Yoshihide once drew a satirical cartoon of the Abbot. But who believes them?) Inquire about Yoshihide of anyone and you would hear of his notoriety. Only a few other artists, or else those familiar with the paintings and not the man, refrained from speaking ill of him.10

Read straightforwardly, the rumors and slights introduced by the retainer appear superfluous; however, by means of such hearsay and misinformation, Akutagawa in fact builds and strengthens the ultimate perception of Yoshihide as protagonist, and Lord Horikawa as his nemesis.

Certain episodes concerning the actual painting of the hell screen also contribute to the establishment of Yoshihide's disposition. The narrator gives hearsay accounts of the painter's strange behavior, in which he appears to be almost terrorizing his assistants: demanding that they assume strange positions, unleashing wild creatures on them, and paying little attention to their sufferings, all in the interests of art. Such incidents are meant by Akutagawa to illustrate the intensely artistic nature of the painter, thus establishing a context for Yoshihide's unexpected reaction to the burning of the carriage containing his daughter.

Akutagawa reveals throughout "Jigokuhen" various anecdotes relating to the characters involved in the denouement - such as suggested illicit encounters between
Lord Horikawa and Yoshihide's daughter and the fatherly devotion of the little monkey, nicknamed "Yoshihide," to the girl - which render it both appropriate and ironic. His building of "Jigokuhen" by means of a variety of seemingly inconsequential details has the combined effect justifying the ostensibly macabre events of the tale's climax.

The obviously studied narrative framework of "Jigokuhen" is certainly reminiscent of Poe's short stories, and may be representative or expository of Akutagawa's own applications of that skill of structure which he observes in his lectures. However, among the later works of Akutagawa's literary career, the posthumously-published "Haguruma" (Cogwheels, 1927) imparts a more intrinsic, less apparently deliberate, sense of story structure.

"Haguruma" has long been perceived as one of Akutagawa's more "formless" short stories. The narrative is believably amorphous and hallucinatory; yet, it is also subtly and tightly structured, the perceptions of the narrator progressing throughout the story from the external to the internal. When the story begins, the attention of the narrator is focused solely on the world around him:

From a summer resort some distance away, taking my bag along, I picked up a car at the station on the Tokaido Line, going to attend a wedding reception for an acquaintance of mine. On either side of the road the car traveled there were only largely pine trees. It was rather doubtful about making the Tokyo-bound train in time. In the car with me was a barber. He was as plump as a peach and with a short beard.
As the story continues, the observations of the narrator are gradually drawn inward, Akutagawa juxtaposing both the external and internal experiences encountered by him:

In addition to the bag, my hat and overcoat had been deposited in the room. My overcoat hanging on the wall looked too much like my upright self, and I at once tossed it into the wardrobe in the corner. Then, over at the dressing table I looked at my face in the mirror determinedly. It revealed the bone beneath the skin. The worm had reappeared again.12

By the end of "Haguruma," the narrator can no longer comprehend anything except through the eyes of his sadly demented mind, and the tale ends in despair:

Half-transparent cogs gradually began to block my view. Fearful that my last moment was finally at hand, I walked on and kept my neck rigid. As the cogs increased in number, they began also to turn. At the same time the pine wood on my right began to seem as if seen through fine cut glass with the branches quietly intertwining.13

Akutagawa constructs his narrative in such a way that the reader is dragged into a psychological spiral of sorts, rapidly digressing from normal to insane. The final plea of the narrator, for someone to kindly kill him, is rendered all the more pathetic because of his reader's understanding of and empathy with his deteriorating mental state, generated by the inherent architecture of "Haguruma."

Akutagawa's recognition, in "Pō no ichimen," of Poe's deliberate story structuring seems somewhat critical, as though it were an immature, overly-ingenious literary
device. This is the result of an evolution in Akutagawa's own perception of the nature of story structure: from that in which events of a given tale build to a distinct, often startling climax, to that in which the ultimate goal is a more general "totality of effect." It is in his later tales, such as "Haguruma," that Akutagawa's faithfulness to this "totality of effect" discussed in "Pō no ichimen" is most strikingly manifest.

Finally, the effects of Akutagawa's interest in the aspects of realism displayed by Poe, as perceived by Akutagawa in "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō," are illustrative of an initial imitation, and eventual rivalry and refinement, of an originally Poe characteristic. The type of physical verisimilitude identified by Akutagawa, in which details are painstakingly rendered to enhance the "realism" and believability of a given tale, is seen in those same early works which exemplify his sense of grotesqueness. His skilled rendering of specific details concerning, for example, the physical characteristics of a dead body were not purely the product of an active imagination, but were researched by Akutagawa; indeed, he was even said to have made observations of corpses at the medical school of Tokyo University for the purpose of strengthening the veracity of his tales. Through his use of such unrelentingly genuine details, Akutagawa was able to enhance his short stories with a quality of honesty.
Although acknowledging Poe's use of this type of straightforward physical realism in his lecture, Akutagawa is specifically attracted to the latter's juxtapositioning of such realism and his seemingly incongruous "ardent passion." He determines in Poe's attempts to achieve a harmony between these two characteristics the nature of the American's growth as a short story writer. However, in the case of Akutagawa's own works, it is the psychological realism admired in "Tanpen sakka toshite no P5" which appears to have most influenced his own sense of verisimilitude, among the most characteristic elements of Akutagawa's short stories.

Interestingly, it is often by means of the first-person narrative voice that his probes of the psychology of his characters are most successful. The monologues of the two lovers in his 1918 short story, "Kesa to Moritō" (Kesa and Moritō), are particularly illustrative of this. Discussing a plot to kill the husband of his lover, Kesa, Akutagawa writes in the voice of Moritō,

If I were to break this impending appointment, which is to be fulfilled tonight...No, my vow forbids it. This is more than I can bear. For another thing, I am afraid of her revenge...But there is something else that prompts me to the action...I despise her. I fear her. I hate her. And yet, and yet, it may be because I love her.15
In the subsequent monologue, spoken from the point of view of Kesa, Akutagawa provides the opposite perspective of this situation:

But now, how much better it is to die even an ignominious death, than to live. Smiling a forced smile, I repeatedly promised to kill my husband with him. Since he is quick-witted, he must have sensed from my words what the consequences would be if he broke his promise. So it seems impossible that after making such a promise he should fall back on it...When I think that my afflictions from that day are at last coming to an end tonight, I feel at ease...I can only love one man. And that very man is coming to kill me tonight.\(^{18}\)

In revealing the somewhat ironic intentions of his two characters, Akutagawa portrays their hidden motives, setting the stage for the (unwritten) conclusion of their scheme. Similarly, in his famous 1921 short story, "Yabu no naka" (In a Grove), he utilizes the first-person narrative voice, in the form of affidavits, to examine and illuminate the various hidden motives of the participants in a rape and murder. In both, his treatment of the psyche is straightforward, disclosing the various aspects of one given circumstance.

In "Jigokuhen," Akutagawa's use of psychological realism is given an added dimension in his portrayal of the narrator of the tale, a retainer of Lord Horikawa. As a servant of this lord, the retainer provides a prejudiced perspective of the events surrounding the commissioning and painting of the hell screen. However, in an intriguing
twist, the narrative is established at the outset of the tale as erroneous. That is, the retainer is a perfect reverse-barometer, his words having a subjective sort of accuracy. In establishing even the personality of his narrator as consistent with his position as a servant of Lord Horikawa, Akutagawa demonstrates his sense of the three-dimensional, and thus psychologically truthful, nature of his characters.

The narrator's telling of Lord Horikawa's 'kindness' to the daughter of the painter, Yoshihide, embodies his variety of skewed elucidation. With characteristically inverted accuracy, the retainer explains,

The rumor that Lord Horikawa loved the girl spread further...I certainly don't think his lordship loved the girl and wanted her for himself. No, that's absolutely false. He was impressed by her defense of Yoshihide - there's no doubt about that. But he could not send her back to the callous father. So he...graciously allowed the girl to reside instead at his own mansion.17

A cursory reading of this particular passage would suggest that Lord Horikawa is indeed primarily concerned for the welfare of the pretty young woman; yet, its underlying implication is, in fact, the very opposite. By suggesting, and then refuting, such rumors of the lord's lecherous intentions, the narrator instead confirms them. The same effect is wrought throughout the entire narrative, Akutagawa manipulating the very psychology of his narrator to augment the conflict between Lord Horikawa and Yoshihide. In
"Jigokuhen," Akutagawa's skill in rendering a text faithful to the psychology of a character is demonstrated.

"Haguruma" serves as Akutagawa's most sophisticated application of that psychological realism esteemed in "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō." Also narrated in the first-person, this semi-autobiographical work is deliberately rambling, even hallucinatory, in parts:

By the time T. and I parted, the man in the raincoat had vanished without my being aware of it. From the train station, bag still with me, I walked over to a hotel. There were mostly huge buildings on both sides of the street. While walking I suddenly thought of pine woods. And then too there was something strange in my line of vision. Strange? There were incessantly revolving half-transparent cogwheels.¹⁸

Howard Hibbett notes that, in "Haguruma," there exist "symptoms that, except for [Akutagawa's] sharp self-awareness, might well be considered textbook delusions of reference."¹⁹ His choice of these symptoms, such as the cogwheels of the title,²⁰ lends the short story its authenticity; images of, for example, color, animals, and birds are utilized by Akutagawa in such a way that their various effects on the narrator are unmistakable and convincing.

Yet, "Haguruma" is not the result of Akutagawa's having simply recorded his own experiences and impressions, but through the more deliberate selection and juxtapositioning of effective motifs. As Hibbett states, "[Haguruma] is...
beautifully written work of art, at the opposite pole from the clinical document of schizophrenic suffering.21 The realistic, but essentially aesthetic, portrayal of madness in "Haguruma" is demonstrative of Akutagawa's surpassing of the same variety of depiction which he admires in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. Where Poe grasps a moment of mental disorder, Akutagawa sustains this theme, creating a short story which is haunting and disturbing for its authentic quality; thus, as Keene writes, making the reader "marvel that Akutagawa did not kill himself sooner."22

The temptation to regard "Haguruma" as a true account of Akutagawa's own struggles with madness is the result of his shrewd understanding and depiction of the mind. As such, "Haguruma" represents the culmination of Akutagawa's efforts at achieving not only physical, but also psychological, verisimilitude in his short stories. It is by means of Akutagawa's lecture that the idea of psychological realism is broached; the significance of Akutagawa's mastery of the psychological realism which he analyzes in "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" is realized in "Haguruma."
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1 Tsuruta Kinya recognizes four general "stages" in the works of Akutagawa: the period prior to his literary debut with "Hana," that during which he produced many of his most well-known short stories, that in which he "began to experiment with a new form," and the period of his final disillusionment with his art. (Tsuruta Kinya, "The Theme of Death in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke," Literature East and West 16 (June, 1972): 850.


5 Poe, Poe 280.

6 Keene, 561.

7 Ibid.


9 "Jigokuhen" was based in part on an anecdote from the Ujishui monogatari, in which a painter watches the burning of his own house, to the amazement of passers-by. When consoled for the loss of his property, the painter replies, "I had for years painted Fudō's flames badly. As I now look, I have understood that it is thus that a fire burns." (Yu, 126.)

10 Akutagawa, "Hell Screen" 56.


12 Ibid., 50.

13 Ibid., 79.


16 Akutagawa, "Kesa" 85-86.

17 Akutagawa, "Hell Screen" 59.

18 Akutagawa, "Cogwheels" 48.


20 Interestingly, Beongcheon Yu recognizes a parallel between the revolution of the cogwheels and the pendulum of Poe’s "The Pit and the Pendulum": "The present title is certainly more effective than either of the original titles ["Tokyo Night," "The Night"] in its suggestion of the mechanical mercilessness of cogwheels lacerating human nerves. Much like Poe’s swinging pendulum, the image has physical impact." (Yu) 97.

21 Hibbett, 447.

22 Keene, 584.
CONCLUSION

Akutagawa's interest in and emulation of Poe is a phenomenon which has been remarked upon by a number of critics and historians of modern Japanese literature. The assertion of this occurrence is supported by a variety of evidence: the influential position of Poe's works in the contemporary Japanese literary world, occasional references to Poe within Akutagawa's works, certain parallels between the short stories of Akutagawa and Poe, and to his own lectures on Poe. Of these proofs, Akutagawa's "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" and "Pō no ichimen" are by far the most substantive; yet, relatively little attention has been given to the content of these lectures. While cited as a physical manifestation of Akutagawa's fascination with Poe, both discourses have been relatively overlooked as a possible means by which Akutagawa's interpretation and utilization of certain storytelling techniques may be analyzed.

As the above discussion of "Tanpen sakka to shite no Pō" and "Pō no ichimen" reveals, Akutagawa's own understanding of Poe - both as a writer of short stories and as a poet, critic, and so on - was substantial. Akutagawa discerns in the works of Poe a wide variety of literary
techniques and styles, which, in turn, are not-coincidentally similar to those of his own literature. A close examination of his discourses on Poe evidences not only Akutagawa's comprehension of Poe and his literary works, but also offers one possible medium in which his own short stories may be unravelled and understood by the researcher.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Toyoda, Makoto. "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to Edogā Aran Pō." 

Tsuruta, Kinya. "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and I-Novellists." 

Tsuruta, Kinya. "The Theme of Death in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke." 
_Literature East and West_ 16 (June 1972): 847-866.


