Jon Holt, Portland State University

"Clanging Bells, Clanging Words: Iwate Dialect in Miyazawa Kenji's "Changa Chaga Umako" Tanka Series"

Abstract: More than Ishikawa Takuboku, Miyazawa Kenji is Iwate's true literary son. Unlike Takuboku, who remembered Iwate from the distance in Tokyo long after he abandoned his home, Kenji remained in Iwate and when he describes its customs and speech, they reflect his genuine love of the place. Well-known now for his free-verse and children's stories, Kenji in the first decade of his literary career actually dedicated himself to writing tanka. Later 'shi' masterpieces, like the "Voiceless Grief" poems, which employ Hanamaki dialect, certainly helped cement his literary reputation, yet Kenji experimented with dialect in poetic language much earlier in his 1917 tanka series, "Changa Chaga Umako" (Clang! Clang! Pony Riders). Written entirely in Iwate dialect, these poems describe Morioka's children-and-pony festival; they signal Kenji's early interest in regional literature, a literature that prioritizes the language and culture of the region over those of the nation. These four literally, as each describes a different scene of the young riders as they cross a bridge and enter downtown Morioka with bells a-chiming. Kenji celebrates them the only way he can, by writing in dialect. Here, Kenji reveals his pride about his home, but the poems also indicate the standard Japanese in verse. This paper focuses on the festival poems in order to trace how Kenji's use of local dialect and culture in them prefigures the development of his greater aesthetic of ihatobu (Iwate) literature.

Kendall Heitzman, University of Iowa

"Tosa-ben and the Severed Self"

Abstract: As with other dialects from the periphery, Tosa-ben, the dialect of Köchi-ken, has routinely appeared in Japanese literature and film as the language of the Other, inflected in any number of culturally coded ways. It has been the dialect of country bumpkins; the ancient, mysterious language of the Shikoku pilgrimage; and—for Shiba Ryōtarō among others—the rough-and-tumble language of Sakamoto Ryouma and other Tosa samurai of the Meiji Restoration. In all of these iterations, it represents a false nostalgia for a collective Japanese past that the viewer or reader maps onto the prefecture. For Yasuoka Shōtarō, born in Köchi but raised elsewhere around the Japanese empire, Tosa-ben represents something else: not the sutureting of the collective but the self in conflict. Tosa-ben was the dialect of his family and of his ancestors, the single most obvious means of connecting to his past and "home," and yet it remained forever impenetrable—ever threatening—to him. This presentation will explore the use of Tosa-ben in both of these veins, focusing on historical fiction by Shiba Ryōtarō and family history by Yasuoka.

Guohe Zheng, Ball State University

"The Dialect Complex of Dazai Osamu as Seen in Regrettable Parting"

Abstract: It does not take a scholar to observe a sociolinguistic phenomenon: dialectal differences can be the source of humor, embarrassment, inferiority, even discrimination. Meanwhile, they can also be the source of pride and the rallying point of solidarity among people from the same dialectal region. Moreover, individuals of a dialect in an area where a socially more prestigious language is spoken may experience a combination of inferiority and pride, revealing what may be called a pattern of dialect complex. This paper examines the dialect complex as captured in Dazai Osamu's (1909-1948)'s Regrettable Parting (Sekibetsu,1944), a novel commissioned during the war and based on the Japanese experience of Lu Xun (1881-1936), the most prominent modern Chinese writer. After a brief discussion of the history of the standard language of modern Japan, the Tokyo dialect, and the linguistic differences between this language and the dialect of Japan's Northeast where Dazai Osamu was from, the paper introduces the circumstances around the commissioning of the novel in the war by the military government. Then, it goes on to analyze how the narrator of the novel, Dazai's alter ego, reveals a sense of first inferiority and then pride and how he finds himself bound closely with Professor Fujino, also from the Northeast, and Lu Xun, a foreign student and a fellow speaker of non-standard Japanese, against the aggressive but negatively portrayed Tokyo dialect speakers. Finally, based on the above analysis, it proposes that Dazai's dialect complex holds a key to an understanding of his attempts at maintaining integrity while collaborating with the authorities in "the dark valley."

Kyle Ikeda, University of Vermont

"Challenges of Representing the Polylinguality of Okinawan Literature in Translation"

Abstract: Translators of modern Okinawan literature often face the challenge of rendering in one language the polylinguality in another. In other words, the translator is faced with trying to reproduce in a single target language the appearance of Okinawan words and speech, or Uchinaaguchi, in a story primarily written in Japanese. To be sure, regional dialects appear in mainland Japanese literary works, but almost all translators of mainland Japanese literature into English render everything monolingually into "standard" English. In contrast, while monolingual translations of Okinawan literature exist, many translators of Okinawan literature have employed a variety of ways to indicate Uchinaaguchi's difference from Japanese in some way or another within their translations. This presentation begins by reviewing how existing translations of Okinawan literature into English have dealt with Okinawan literature's polylinguality, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, including the one I try in my translation of "Mabuigumi" by Medoruma Shun. Then I contextualize the issue of Okinawan language/ Uchinaaguchi use within Okinawa's history of colonization by and assimilation into mainland Japan, particularly Japanese military massacres and executions of Okinawan civilians for speaking Uchinaaguchi during the Battle of Okinawa. I argue that the variety of attempts to reproduce the polylinguality of Okinawan literature in English translation can be read as a sign of the tension between the homogenizing monolingual expectations of literary translation and the politicized meanings and importance of Uchinaaguchi's distinction from Japanese in relation to issues of identity and resistance in Okinawa.