Introduction

Osaka as an Idea

Any city comprises manifold cities. Social class, race and ethnicity, age, gender, personal history, and other considerations help determine the city that we come to know. And we know a city in manifold ways. We inhabit it as a collection of spaces: streets and alleys, waterfronts and canals, neighborhoods and squares. We traverse it as a set of itineraries: commutes, after-dinner strolls, convenience-store runs, and subway rides. We experience it, too, as a sensorium of voices and noises, tastes, smells, sights, and touches. We encounter it as a series of individuals who belong to populations and types characteristic of cities or of that particular city. Above all, we know a city as a set of practices that subsume these other knowledges as we catch a taxi or jaywalk or carry a police whistle or join a festival crowd. Time multiplies these knowledges. The city changes constantly, and memories of the city last week or last year lend depth to our fresh impressions as we judge this city, today, against those earlier cities of memory.

In addition to such immediate knowledge, we also come to know cities through the mediation of cultural production. Novels, films, television programs, and songs either set in a city or about someone who has come from a city or longs to get to a city help shape our knowledge of that place, whether we live there or have never even visited. Sporting events, news stories, advertisements, and more ephemeral media also contribute to this knowledge. The same considerations that shape our knowledge of the physical city also delimit this imagined city. Whether we recognize a city described in a novel or a film—that is, whether we find it authentic—depends on how we have come to know it. Like the physical city, the
imagined city is subject to constant change. New ideas come to dominate while others recede, reflecting changes in the physical city as well as the waxing or waning influence of various social groups.

In the process, certain ideas condense and gain sway within social imaginaries, including both national and local urban imaginaries. That is, these ideas of the city contribute to “the way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations,” in Charles Taylor’s words. These communal ideas, which are “both factual and normative” and neither exclusively materialist nor idealist but “both at once,” help shape “a common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” at both the local and national level.1 In this way, they “solicit recognition of membership in a collectivity,” as Chris Berry has argued.2 And these ideas of the city can be deployed to serve various ends and interests, including both national and local interests. They can also function, in Arjun Appadurai’s words, as “a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.”3

The idea of Osaka that arises from the present study will depend in part on how we approach that city. We might start out from the old capital of Kyoto to the east and travel in the genteel comfort of the Keihan Railway, with its well-upholstered seats, pleated curtains, and a pretty framed print at the front of each car. We could switch to a local train and get off at Nakanoshima, come up to street level, and find ourselves by the river. The light off the water, its smell, and the sound of a passing bateau-mouche all remind us that this was once, and in certain spots remains, the mizu no miyako, or “capital on the water.” Or we might approach from the cosmopolitan suburbs of Kobe to the west and ride the Hankyū Railway, full of bourgeois charm, with its distinctive maroon cars and green-velvet benches. We would arrive at the grand terminal of Umeda, one of Osaka’s commercial hubs, where a succession of retail developments, each one more immense than the last, continually alters the cityscape. Or perhaps we should approach from the capital, Tokyo. Disembarking from the bullet train at Shin-Osaka Station, we leave behind the bland efficiency of Japan Rail and step onto the platform and into the swirl of the colorful Osaka dialect. Riding the escalator, we recall (or are brusquely reminded) that here we must stand to the right, not the left as in Tokyo—a small
manifestation of Osaka’s obstinate contrariness. Each approach ushers us into a different city.

This book approaches Osaka through the literature and cinema of the transwar period, from the 1920s through the 1950s, and examines one persistent idea: of the city as treasonous. This idea echoes through the history of the city and the Japanese nation, but it takes on special resonance in the transwar period. Influential works of literature and cinema produced in this period imagined Osaka as a distinctly local order—of space, language, everyday life, gender, and more—alternative to the national order. Cultural production in modernity fosters national identity by promoting a narrative of the heterogeneous and fragmentary local incorporated within the unitary nation. This narrative presents the nation as an order that contains and transcends the local. Consider, for example, how a national language first codified at the turn of the century and based on the idiom of the capital became standardized, and how other local idioms were then redefined as “dialects” of this new “Japanese.” Such processes of containment and transcendence are fundamental to Osaka’s modernity, and many novels, films, songs, and other works set in the city uncritically illustrate and reiterate them. However, cultural production can also work to undermine that narrative. By thematizing the negotiation between local and national forms, certain works call attention to those processes of containment and transcendence, betraying the economic, political, and cultural interests that inform them. This is the treasonous potential of Osaka—a potential that the works examined in the following chapters variously exploit and constrain.

Osaka in History

The area around what is now called Osaka has been a destination and a transit point for immigration and trade since the beginning of Japan’s recorded history. According to the ancient chronicles, Jimmu, the leader of the Yamato clan, sailed from Kyushu in the seventh century BCE to claim domain over the Japanese islands and first stepped ashore at the mouth of the Yodogawa, at a place he named Nami-haya, or Naniwa, meaning “swift waves.” After vying with rival clans for several centuries, the Yamato eventually achieved dominance, and sometime around the turn of the fifth century CE their leader, Nintoku, established his headquarters at Naniwa and built his palace there.4 Over the following century and a half,
Introduction

Naniwa hosted envoys and delegations from the continent, representing the kingdoms of Kudara (Paekche), Shiragi (Silla), and Kôkuri (Koguryô) on the Korean peninsula, as well as Sui China. In 645, after one faction in the Yamato court asserted its hierarchy over the other clans in the Taika coup d’État and moved toward unification and centralization of governance, the new tennô (emperor), Kôtoku, located Japan’s first “imperial” capital at what then became Naniwa-kyô. The capital was moved less than fifty years later, however, and Naniwa-kyô declined.

In the eleventh century, the nearby port of Watanabe no tsu emerged and gradually came to dominate shipping in central Japan. Meanwhile, the nearby religious complexes of Sumiyoshi Taisha and Shitennôji, two of the oldest and most historically significant shrines in Japan, had become important pilgrimage sites, and market towns had grown up around them. In the Muromachi period (1336–1573), the nearby city of Sakai, an autonomous trading port led by merchants, became one of the richest cities in the Japanese archipelago, its prosperity and independence attested by Catholic missionaries, who compared it with Venice.

The ruins of Naniwa-kyô were resettled at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The site was selected as a new center for the Jôdo Shinshû sect of Buddhism, whose temple in Shiga, near Kyoto, had been destroyed by a rival sect. Construction of this center, the Ishiyama Honganji, began in 1532, and the area around it developed into a sizable community. It was around this time that the name “Ôsaka” (great hill) gained currency. Eventually, Osaka’s strategic location and its growing political power drew the attention of the warlord Oda Nobunaga, who had begun the process of unifying Japan’s domains under his authority. Nobunaga led a campaign against the Ishiyama Honganji in 1570, eventually laying siege to it. Ten years later, he captured and destroyed the complex.

Osaka became the political capital of a newly unified Japan at the end of the sixteenth century. After Oda Nobunaga’s suicide in 1582, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who had risen from humble beginnings to become one of Nobunaga’s top generals, took power. The next year, Hideyoshi began building Osaka Castle, by far the largest castle in the land. From his seat at Osaka, Hideyoshi completed the process of unification that Nobunaga had begun, bringing all the daimyô under his command. After Hideyoshi’s death in 1598, however, Tokugawa Ieyasu moved to take power. In 1600, at the Battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa forces defeated those loyal to Hideyoshi’s son, Hideyori; and in 1603, the Tokugawa shogunate was
established with Edo as its political capital. Lingering resistance was defeated in 1615, and Osaka Castle was burned down.7

The Tokugawa leadership recognized Osaka’s usefulness to them even after this shift. They quickly rebuilt the castle and reorganized the city’s merchant quarters. Governed by local representatives of the central government, the city became the shogunate’s administrative center for western Japan.8 The shogunate granted Osaka’s great merchant houses a license to lend money and to oversee the shogunate’s finances; these houses would become the foundation of the modern nation’s banking industry. The shogunate permitted local merchants to repair and expand the city’s canal system, which won Osaka the epithet “Capital on the Water.” The products that these canals carried earned Osaka another epithet—“the Nation’s Kitchen,” or tenka no daidokoro—as it became the western hub for trade headed east to Kyoto and Edo. The merchant class thrived despite its low status within the strict social system enforced by the shogunate, and it underwrote a flourishing urban culture. At its height, Ihara Saikaku (1642–93), the most renowned prose author of the Edo period, and Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725), Japan’s great playwright, both took as their subject the people and concerns of the city’s merchant and licensed quarters, making Osaka the setting for some of the most popular and enduring literary expressions of early-modern urban life.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Edo became Tokyo, the capital of the new nation-state, and Osaka was increasingly subordinated to state authority by the administrative centralization characteristic of modernity. This process was not entirely steady; at various times Osaka, along with Kyoto and other large cities, was granted some degree of political self-determination. However, as historian Kurt Steiner has noted, policing and education remained within the purview of national authorities, and local government was “entangled in a mesh of restrictive legislation, financial disability, and social inferiority.”9 Central control loosened somewhat in 1926, when city assemblies were granted power to elect their own mayor instead of having one appointed by the governor, and elected heads of towns and villages were no longer subject to ratification by the governor. The war, however, brought increased centralization and the disempowerment of local assemblies.

Despite its administrative subordination, Osaka remained Japan’s preeminent city in other senses well into the modern era.10 It ranked first
among prefectures in industrial production through 1930, becoming known as the “Smoky Capital” (Kemuri no Miyako) and the “Manchester of the East” (Tōyō no Manchesutā). It remained a cultural capital, too. Many of the emblematic phenomena of Japan’s modernity developed there first, before being exported to Tokyo. It was in Osaka that Japan’s jazz scene first flourished and Japan’s film culture first put down roots. It was in Osaka that the Hanshin and Hankyū corporations pioneered a new mode of suburban life, perfecting in the Hanshin-kan area west of the city a model of development that would later be exported to the capital. And it was in Osaka that the café was transformed into a critical space of modern life and the café waitress into its emissary.

The city’s preeminence peaked in the age of Dai-Ōsaka, or “Great Osaka.” On April 1, 1925, under the leadership of a progressive new mayor, Seki Hajime, the city expanded to absorb several villages on its outskirts, increasing the city’s area from 56 to 181 square kilometers and its population from 1,430,000 to 2,210,000 to become Japan’s largest city—larger than Tokyo, and the sixth largest city in the world. Meanwhile, Tokyo was struggling with the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, which had devastated the capital and surrounding areas, killing more than 100,000 people and driving many more from the city, along with much of its economic base (including the film industry). By 1932, however, Tokyo, having significantly recovered from the quake, reasserted its preeminence by expanding its own boundaries in turn, absorbing five counties and eighty-two towns to become Dai-Tōkyō, thus usurping Osaka’s position.

The transwar period accelerated and confirmed Japan’s political and economic centralization and cultural homogenization, as well as Osaka’s concomitant subordination. Encompassing militarization, total war, occupation, and recovery, the term “transwar” calls attention to continuities from the prewar to the postwar; one such continuity was this centralization. As the nation moved toward total war, the state government in Tokyo asserted its power over all aspects of life, appropriating political authority from other localities. A revision of basic laws in 1943 gave the home minister and the centrally appointed governor the power to dismiss municipal officials who were considered unfit for office, and local government was increasingly understood to serve as an organ of the state. The wartime control economy seemed to deprive Japan’s “merchant capital” of its raison d’être. After the war, U.S. occupation forces attempted to slow or reverse aspects of this centralization, but Japanese officials worked to
frustrate those efforts and, once the occupation had ended, energetically pursued recentralization.

The Local City

Cities are both local and national. Our firsthand experience of a city calls on local knowledge and helps cultivate that knowledge as we navigate the city’s spaces, observe its codes, and speak its languages. Media representations of our hometown, or of any town with which we claim a connection, may appeal to our distinctly local sensibilities and to our sense of identification with that locale and, at the same time, help produce them. On the other hand, cities have served as critical sites in the development of the modern nation-state and of national identity. The key factors in these developments—the rise of capitalism, industrialization, and the growth of mass culture—have played out in cities. As they did, literature and cinema of the city helped constitute the experience of a modern life that was, to a large degree (though not exclusively), perceived as national life (however far it might have been from lived reality in most corners of the nation-state). Inevitably, these two senses of the city—as local and national—diverge. The gap between them produces the resentment that locals may feel, for example, when we see our city’s spaces chopped up and rearranged for a film, its culture caricatured, and its accent mangled. Voicing that resentment, we complain that the representation is “inauthentic.” Often this sense of inauthenticity links to a deeper suspicion that the city, our city, is being oversimplified or distorted to serve the purposes of national media and to answer the needs of a national audience—an audience of outsiders.

Its combination of historical preeminence and growing subordination, together with its persistent cultural influence, make Osaka a privileged site for examining the tension between the idea of the city and that of the nation. Influential works produced during the transwar period responded to the war and its aftermath by celebrating Osaka as Japan’s most recalcitrant locale. Some of these works imagine Osaka from the outside and for outsiders, in a manner that fits the city into a national narrative of modernization. Other works, however, imagine the city from the inside, observing it at ground level and close-up, rather than from above and at an observational distance. They record the spaces, the idioms, and the daily life of the city with geographic specificity. And they assume a
degree of local knowledge on the part of their audience, rather than translating every custom, every expression, every neighborhood and landmark, into terms that a national audience might understand. Such works exploit Osaka’s potential through their emphatic locality.

This sense of locality differs fundamentally from regionalism in the sense that some have characterized it as ethnic nationalism writ small. The region is typically understood to be rural, provincial, a protonational space not yet debased by industrialization; Raymond Williams, for one, noted the overlap between “regional” and “provincial” in contrast to “metropolitan.” Transwar literature and film, however, present a thoroughly industrial and metropolitan Osaka that remains indelibly local. Williams further notes that the word “region” and its derivatives connote a sense of subordination that, I will argue, certain transwar works of Osaka resist.

This distinctly local—which is to say non-national—quality demands our attention. Tokyo has preoccupied scholarship on the Japanese city, particularly in English. Like Paris for France or Berlin for Germany, Tokyo became a metonym of the modern Japanese nation. But precisely because it is a capital, Tokyo cannot tell us everything we want to know about the city per se. In his seminal essay on the Japanese city, Henry D. Smith wrote that although he was choosing to focus on Tokyo as a “starting point,” his underlying interest lay in the city more generally, adding, “I recognize that this bias [toward the capital] obscures the unique character of other large Japanese cities, particular Osaka, which both as a distinctive cultural tradition and as a major economic force was in certain ways critical in molding ideas of Tokyo.” In fact, many of the ideas of Tokyo that Smith identifies in his essay might be called, with at least as much validity, ideas of Osaka. As the preceding summary of its history suggests, Osaka signified “the city as power” well before Edo did. The idea of “the city as prosperity” certainly describes the merchant capital of Japan in the Tokugawa period. Osaka, like Tokyo, inspired concerns about “the city as problem” in the early modern era, and Osaka’s interwar mayor, Seki Hajime, was prominent among the urban planners who pioneered the discourse of the “large city,” or daitoshi, in response to those concerns, as Smith notes.

However, Osaka also differs fundamentally from Tokyo. One idea of Tokyo that Smith identifies in his essay is that of miyako. This word can signify a large city generally but more precisely connotes the seat of the imperial court: the capital. Smith suggests that while this idea attaches
Introduction

primarily to the premodern capitals Heijō-kyō (present-day Nara) and Heian-kyō (present-day Kyoto), some sense of miyako transferred to Edo when it became the seat of Tokugawa political power. Later, with the emperor’s relocation from Kyoto at the time of the Meiji Restoration, Tokyo came to be styled the teitō, or “imperial capital.” As noted, popular discourse has identified Osaka as a kind of capital, too: “the Capital on the Water” (Mizu no Miyako) and later “the Smoky Capital” (Kemuri no Miyako). Such epithets play on an awareness of what sort of capital Osaka is not: the official capital, the imperial capital. While brilliantly cataloging Tokyo as an object of intellectual inquiry, Smith’s essay also points to Osaka’s significance, both for what it is and for what it is not. As the capital, Tokyo is anomalous. Its image and its interests can hardly be separated from those of the state and nation. Tokyo’s spaces become national spaces; its idiom becomes the national language; and stories set there become national stories, written about national subjects, addressed to a national reader. A fuller understanding of urban space and life as distinct from the national begins with Osaka.

The Treasonous City

Although we tend to imagine the local—local space, of course, but also local accents, local cuisines, local customs, and more—as a constituent part of the national, contained and transcended by it, literature, cinema, and other popular media have consistently associated Osaka with the excessive, the excluded, and the treasonous in a way that refuses such containment. The association with excess dates back at least as far as the Tokugawa period, when the expression “Ōsaka no kuidaore”—conveying the notion that Osakans will bankrupt themselves over food—marked the city as a space of excessive appetite and expenditure. Those particular excesses constitute an important trope in transwar fiction and cinema, and continue to define Osaka today. The city has also long been linked with comedic excess, including the narrative exaggeration and linguistic elaboration of traditional rakugo comic storytelling and manzai team comedy, and more recently the slapstick skit comedy of the Yoshimoto Shinkageki theater. Such has been the success of these forms—and of the corporate institutions that developed and marketed them—that (a stylized, show-business version of) Osaka’s distinctive dialect has become the default language of Japanese comedy nationwide. The strength
of that association is evident at the local level, too, in the success that comedians have enjoyed in Osaka politics: Yokoyama Knock, a former manzai comedian, was elected governor of Osaka Prefecture in 1995, and the comedian Nishikawa Kiyoshi served in the upper house of the Japanese Diet for eighteen years. Excess figures, too, in the stereotype of Osakans’ taste for flashy fashion—a stereotype that the author Tanizaki Jun’ichirō repeatedly endorses, as we shall see. Finally, postwar popular culture has marked Osaka as a setting for violent criminal excess. One of the most sustained examples is the popular and long-running film series Akumyō (Bad reputation), produced by Daiei throughout the 1960s and based on a novel by Kon Tōkō, set among the criminal underworld in the Kawachi area of Osaka. Later works reiterated the association, including Izutsu Kazuyuki’s minor classics of gang life, Gaki teikoku (Empire of brats, 1981) and Kishiwada shōnen gurentai (Kishiwada young thugs, 1996), as well as Miike Takashi’s early video and film productions.

Osaka has also become identified in popular culture as a home to various groups marginalized in Japanese society. These include several significant immigrant communities. Of course, some works feature characters who are born-and-bred Osakans with deep roots in one of the old downtown neighborhoods; the Osaka equivalent of Tokyo’s Edokko, or “children of Edo,” they are heirs to the venerable “Kamigata” culture influenced by the ancient capital, Kyoto. Osaka is better known, though, for those who were not born but who made themselves Osakans. Since the 1920s, the largest community of zainichi (Japan-resident) Koreans has resided more specifically in Osaka; fully one-third of all zainichi Koreans lived there in the 1930s. The city is also home to the largest community of Ryukyuans outside Okinawa. In addition to such migrant communities, Osaka is home to the largest urban population of hisabetsu burakumin—ethnic Japanese whose ancestry links them to feudal-era outcaste groups. Osaka is particularly associated with economic outsiders, too. The largest population of marginally employed day laborers in Japan is found in the city’s Kamagasaki neighborhood.

Excess and outsider status characterize cities generally, of course. What lends these tropes an edge in Osaka literature and cinema is the added idea of treason. I borrow this term (in a slightly motivated translation) from an essay by Sakaguchi Ango, one of the most representative writers of the immediate postwar era. Ango wrote the essay “Ōsaka no hangyaku” (Osaka’s betrayal/treason) to honor his close friend, the writer
Oda Sakunosuke, after his untimely death. Ango’s title alludes to a strategy in the chess-like game of Go used by the Osaka master Sakata Sankichi, who challenged the Tokyo masters with his unconventional play. Oda himself opened his famous essay on “Kanōsei no bungaku” (The literature of potentiality) with a moving account of Sakata’s career and his daring style of play. In Sakata, Oda found inspiration for his own challenge to the “lethargic orthodoxy” of the Tokyo literary establishment, manifested in the solipsism of the I-novel (watakushi-shōsetsu/shi-shōsetsu)—a form of prose narrative that purports to present the author’s direct experience in a confessional mode and that preoccupied Japanese letters in the 1920s and after. The idea of “Osaka’s treason” also cites a local history of antagonism toward central authority dating back to 1600. “Treason” continues to frame popular images of Osaka, as demonstrated recently by the success of Makime Manabu’s novel Princess Toyotomi—a DaVinci Code-style mystery that imagines an independent “Osaka Nation” and the plot to betray the secret of its existence.

The five chapters that follow examine several examples of the deployment of Osaka’s locality and how it links to ideas of the city’s betrayal—both how certain ideas of the city betray imperial discourses and how certain works betray the idea of the city. Each chapter focuses on a work of popular fiction, the fifth also including several film adaptations. The discussion takes in a variety of other cultural forms as well, including radio, television, popular music, and stand-up comedy. And each chapter introduces a key aspect of Osaka’s locality as it operates in these works.

Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s novel Manji (1928–30), examined in chapter 1, stages a contest for control of the local voice. The first of Tanizaki’s novels set in Kansai, written after he moved from his native Tokyo to escape the destruction caused by the earthquake of 1923, Manji concerns a treacherous love affair between Sonoko, a bourgeois housewife from the suburbs of Osaka, and a younger woman from the downtown merchant quarter, Senba. Organized as Sonoko’s confession to a diegetic auditor whom she calls “Sensei,” Manji tells its story through two competing narrations: one “spoken” in the first person, in Osaka’s distinct dialect, and another “written” in the third person, in the national standard language. I read Manji’s doubled narration as dramatizing strategies of citation and containment—of oral performance by writing, of queer female desire by straight male desire, and of the local language by the national. I also discover within the narrative the potential subversion of this strategy. I then examine critiques of Tanizaki made by several Osaka writers, and weigh
their assertions of local authenticity against his claim to an ethnographic mastery of the local.

Chapter 2 concerns an archetype of local Osaka masculinity, the bon-bon, and his local practice of expenditure and play, as celebrated in Oda Sakunosuke’s Meoto zenzai (Sweet beans for two, 1940). “Bonbon” refers to the spoiled, lazy, pleasure-seeking young man of Senba, who had been a fixture of the city’s literature since the seventeenth century. The bonbon resurfaced in Oda’s story as the Pacific War loomed. Oda grew up in the age of Great Osaka, but he pursued his brief career under militarization, wartime, and postwar occupation, as centralization subordinated his hometown to Tokyo. In that context, he produced stories of emphatic locality. This, his best-loved novel, tells the story of Chōko, a hardworking geisha with aspirations to respectability, and her irresponsible lover, Ryūkichi, who spends money faster than she can save it. While the state promoted “rational consumption” in support of a war that would demand the catastrophic and irrational expenditure of lives and material wealth, Oda’s novel details a practice of gourmandise and play, presented not as irrational but as rational within a different order of logic: a local order.

In Waga machi (My town, 1942), Oda traces the flows that link his local Osaka to the far-flung corners of Japan’s empire. After 1900, Japanese workers began migrating to the Philippines in growing numbers. At first, they went to work for the U.S. colonial authority alongside Chinese and Filipino workers, building the Benguet Road through the jungle to the new summer capital. Later, they found jobs in the booming Japantown of Davao. This population became one rationale for Japan’s invasion of the Philippines in 1941. Oda’s novel begins in the Philippines, where its protagonist, Takichi, joins a crew on the Benguet Road. After returning to Osaka, Takichi works pulling a rickshaw through the city’s streets and dreams of returning to the Philippines. Chapter 3 details how Waga machi illustrates the allure of empire as a transcendent form that unites all locales: “the eight corners of the world under one roof,” as one wartime slogan put it. At the same time, it argues that Oda’s novel betrays the reality masked by this notion—of a hegemonic form that subordinates one locale to another—and offers as an alternative a vernacular cosmopolitanism rooted in Osaka and embodied in Takichi.

Chapter 4 maps local and national vectors of nostalgia and futurity, diseased and healthy bodies, in Sasameyuki (Fine snow, 1943–48). Tanizaki’s great novel concerns the four daughters of a Senba merchant family in decline. Japan’s imperial project interrupted the production of the novel
and constantly intrudes at the edges of its story. I read *Sasameyuki* against the productivist and reproductivist ideology of imperialism. The bonbon appears here in the figures of the sisters’ dead father, who destroyed the family business through his extravagance, and of the youngest daughter’s lover, who draws her into inexorable decline. Tanizaki contrasts the bonbon with the two married sisters’ husbands, who trade Senba and its merchant economy for the suburbs and the modern work of the white-collar executive. Like Oda, Tanizaki presents the bonbon as unproductive, but where Oda explores the potential of his inutile expenditure, Tanizaki mourns him as an anachronism unequal to the demands of imperial expansion. The bonbon becomes the fatal link between Osaka’s old merchant quarter and the cosmopolitan suburb of Ashiya, imagined as a space of disease, filthiness, and failed reproductivity. Tanizaki’s ironic presentation of this space serves as an excuse and a consolation for the impossibility of narrating his historical moment.

The 1950s produced a string of films set in Osaka that participated in the postwar reassessment of Japanese values and institutions and helped reconstruct Osaka’s image for a postwar audience. Novels and stories by Tanizaki and Oda provided the source material for several of these films; another important source was a new literary voice, Yamasaki Toyoko. Chapter 5 examines this group of film adaptations, focusing on Yamasaki’s 1957 novel *Noren* (The shop curtain) and Kawashima Yūzō’s film adaptation, released the following year. Both novel and film recount the careers of a father and son as one builds and the other revives an Osaka family business, tracing historic shifts from merchant house to corporation, affiliative to filial succession, connoisseurship to consumerism, and regional market to national. This final chapter explains how film adaptations refit local stories into a conventional narrative of the city’s decline. It then analyzes the performance of locality by the actors who regularly appeared in these Osaka films—most notably Morishige Hisaya—and details how, through gesture and voice, such performances haunt the conventional narrative, reminding the viewer and auditor of what has been lost.

**Osaka Literature and Minor Literature**

The three authors at the heart of this study—Tanizaki, Oda, and Yamasaki—produced some of the most influential stories of Osaka in the transwar period, stories that continue to shape the idea of the city in
the Japanese imagination. They are very different writers, but all three are popular writers who fit awkwardly, if at all, within the Japanese literary establishment centered in Tokyo. Tanizaki is certainly the best known and the most “establishment” of the three. He enjoyed great success during his lifetime and maintains a reputation today as a giant of Japanese and world literature. Indisputably canonical and major, he is generally counted as a junbun gaku author, on the side of “pure literature” and opposite mass literature in the division that defined the Japanese literary world through much of the modern era. This characterization, however, has more to do with Tanizaki’s stature than the nature of his works; while he may be called a junbun gaku author, it would be difficult to describe him as an author of junbun gaku, and the novels discussed in this book hardly belong in that category. Tanizaki turned his back on Tokyo, the city of his birth, after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, relocating to Kyoto and then to Kobe. Oda Sakunosuke, Osaka’s favorite son, is also a canonical writer in Japan, but he is a stubbornly local one. For that reason, he remains minor in national terms, though no other figure is more important to modern Osaka letters. Oda moved to Tokyo at the beginning of his career but soon returned to his hometown. Before his death at the age of thirty-three, he was hailed as the heir to Saikaku and to the tradition established by that early modern author: that of a realism concerned with the lower classes and infused with earthy humor. Yamasaki Toyoko, another Osaka native, was until her death in 2013 one of Japan’s best-selling and most widely adapted post-war authors. Despite, or perhaps in part because of, this success, she remains almost ignored by scholarship. A concern with the world of business and with broad social issues places her novels at the furthest remove from “pure literature.” Nevertheless, she played a primary role in imagining Osaka for readers in the 1950s, as Tanizaki did from the 1920s through the early 1960s, and as Oda did in the 1940s.

Along with the physical distance they maintained from Tokyo and their stylistic distance from the “pure literature” of the Tokyo literary establishment, these three authors share a fascination with the speech of Osaka and a facility for rendering it on the page. More than any narrative description of local places, events, customs, or atmosphere, the written approximation of characters’ local speech produces the idea of Osaka in literature (as the recorded voice does in cinema). Should we wish to catalog an Osaka literature, such use of local language would certainly be the primary criterion for identifying its constituent works (and its
representative authors would include, in addition to Tanizaki, Oda, and Yamasaki, such predecessors and early contemporaries as Uno Kōji and Kamizukasa Shōken, and such successors as Miyamoto Teru and Tanabe Seiko. These authors inscribed the local idiom onto a “standard” Japanese that had been derived from the speech of Tokyo and had come to dominate prose narrative around the turn of the century.

This use of local language encourages us to consider these works as a minor literature in the sense that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have described it, as “that which a minority constructs within a major language.” The use of local language, especially when conceived and deployed not as a substitute grammar but as a potentially infinite and ungrammatical variation, exploits the “internal tensions” of the national language to effect a deterritorialization of language. While such a deterritorialization based on regional identity may often be immediately accompanied by a reterritorialization, certain texts indicate a line of flight out of national configurations of periphery and margin toward another, alternative configuration identified as immanent to the local. Osaka’s treasonous potential is critical to understanding how these works might (or might not) constitute a minor literature, for although treason may often be committed in an attempt to substitute one authority for another, the term connotes at its root a betrayal or a breach, a violation of sovereignty, a surrender. It is therefore worth asking not so much whether a particular work is or is not “minor” but to what degree and in what ways it manages, while fostering a sense of the local as minor, to maintain a skepticism toward its institutionalization—a skepticism that guards against any easy reterritorialization of the city.