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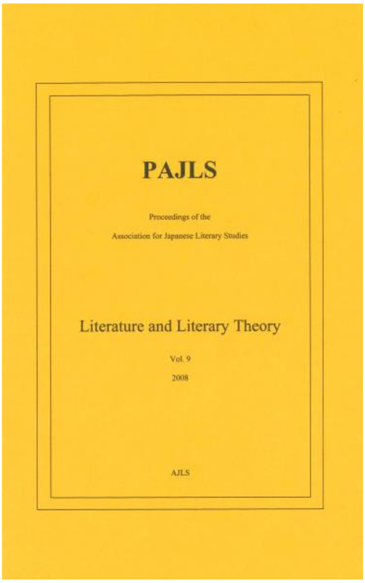
Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies 9 (2008): 222–229.



PAJLS

Proceedings of the

Association for Japanese Literary Studies

Literature and Literary Theory

Vol. 9

2008

AJLS

PAJLS 9:
Literature and Literary Theory.
Ed. Atsuko Ueda and Richard Okada.

The Language of Mourning: Miyake Kaho's Elegy for Higuchi Ichiyō and the End of Classical Literature

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The year 1896 (Meiji 29) was not a happy one for women writers in Japan. Wakamatsu Shizuko (1864-1896) passed away on February 10 of that year. The famed translator of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* into Japanese as *Shōkōshi* (The Little Lord) was only 31. Tazawa Inafune (1874-1896) passed away in September that same year at the age of 21. And near the end of 1896, on November 23, Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) died of tuberculosis at the age of 24. The hand of fate seemed to be cruelly picking off the pioneering Meiji women writers one by one, just as they reached maturity as artists. Preceding all of these tragedies, the Meiji Jogakkō (Meiji Women's School), an institution that had educated many prominent women, was destroyed by a fire on February 5. Although circumstances prevented her from attending for long, among the students who studied there was Miyake Kaho (1868-1943), or Tanabe Tatsuko, as she would have been known at the time.

A few months into the next year, 1897 (Meiji 30), Kaho published the essay "Shinobugusa" (Mourning Grasses) in two parts in the late March and early April issues of *Taiyō* (The Sun).[1] Both parts appeared in the *katei-ran*, or "Home" column of that magazine. *Shinobugusa* is an actual plant—in English, the hare's foot fern—but because of the semantic range of the verb *shinobu*—meaning both "to bear up to" or "to withstand" and also "to think fondly of" or "to recollect," with different ideographs for each semantic group—this particular plant had long served as a metaphor in classical literature for mourning or painful longing. Drawing on such connotations of the word, Kaho's essay eulogizes the losses of 1896 in the world of women's letters. Kaho does not mention the death of Inafune, but after touching on the school fire and lamenting the passing of Shizuko, the essay settles into a sustained reflection on the death of Higuchi Ichiyō and on her significance as a writer.

This is unsurprising given that Kaho and Ichiyō led intertwined professional lives. Both spent much of their formative literary years under the tutelage of Nakajima Utako (1844-1903) at her Haginoya poetry conservatory, learning the Japanese classics and the art of composing thirty-one-syllable *waka* poetry by channeling the spirit of the Heian-era masters, with Ki no Tsurayuki first among them. Kaho published her debut work of fiction, *Yabu no uguisu* (Bush Warbler in a Grove) in June 1888, and this pioneering woman's novel played a significant role in spurring Ichiyō herself onto the path of a professional writing career, for it gave the younger writer a glimpse into the possibility and the allure of writing for a living. After Ichiyō left her first literary mentor, Nakarai Tōsui, when false rumors about the two began to spread, Kaho used her connections in order to help the younger writer see several early stories into print. Later, their stories shared the pages of *Bungei kurabu* (Literary Arts Club) when its special issue devoted to women writers appeared in December 1895.[2] There was something like mutual professional respect between the two, but perhaps their social backgrounds were too different to allow for close friendship. Ichiyō, the daughter of an unassuming family who somehow scrounged up the money to purchase samurai status just as the Tokugawa *bakufu* was collapsing, lived a hand-to-mouth existence forever haunted by debt and poverty after the death of her father; Kaho was the daughter of a wealthy and respected family that was plugged into the network of power and prestige in Meiji Japan.[3] To make things more complicated, the two writers, Kaho and Ichiyō, jockeyed for fame throughout 1895 and into 1896. Whereas Kaho was the leading light among women writers even at the end of 1895, which we see, for example, in the fact that the special issue of *Bungei kurabu* in December began with her contribution, Ichiyō surpassed the older writer in fame during the course of 1896, especially with the ecstatic acclaim that greeted the completed *Takekurabe* (Child's Play, 1895-1896).

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[1] Specifically, the first part appeared in *Taiyō*, vol. 3, no. 6 (March 20, 1897) and the second in *Taiyō*, vol. 3, no. 7 (April 5, 1897).

[2] *Bungei kurabu* (December 10, 1895). The title of this issue was *keishū shōsetsu* (fiction by talented ladies of the inner chambers), with *keishū* an archaic word from Chinese. Kaho's contribution, which led the issue, was "Hagi kikyō"; two of Ichiyō's stories appeared, one, "Jūsan'ya," under the name Ichiyō joshi, and another, a

Some sentences in Kaho's elegy could perhaps be interpreted as jealousy about Ichiyō's newly won fame, but overall Kaho takes great pains to note Ichiyō's skill as a poet, as a calligrapher, and as a short story writer. Kaho keeps her remarks personal, with several anecdotes and several instances of fond recollection, and some paragraphs of "Shinobugusa" can be interpreted as Kaho's attempt to reach across class lines in an act of sympathy with Ichiyō's family, who had just been deprived of a daughter who was also the official head of the Higuchi household.

Mourning for the dead is the impetus for writing an elegy. I depart in this essay from the dominant paradigm for studying the form—the critical tradition stemming from Freud's work on mourning that approaches the elegy from the psychoanalytic linking of loss and figuration—in order to highlight the performative aspects of mourning and the problem of literary style in Meiji. I call Kaho's essay an elegy, that is, a poem for the dead, thus stretching the term beyond the strict bounds of the genre, but "Shinobugusa" is so poetic already (as I will explain) that it is an apt term.

Near the end of the text, Kaho gives us her motivation for writing, and her rhetoric certainly gives the appearance of a spontaneous outpouring of grief:

> I recall waking suddenly in the middle of the night, with an unknown voice urging me, "write, write!" Wiping away tears all the while, I let my worthless brush run as it would, never stopping to examine what I had written. Looking at it after I had finished, I felt it had no real merits, yet I sent it out as is, hoping it would be of some comfort to those longing for *her* [Ichiyō].[4]

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reprint of "Yamiyo," under her given name, Natsu. Wakamatsu Shizuko's "Wasuregatami" was included in the same issue. This issue of *Bungei kurabu* has received much critical attention, partly because it featured pictures of many women writers. In English, see Rebecca Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 215-229. In Japanese, see Kan Satoko, *Media no jidai: Meiji bungaku o meguru jōkyō* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha shuppan, 2001), 191-211.

[3] For an English-language biography of Ichiyō, see Robert Lyons Danly, *In the Shade of Spring Leaves: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyō, a Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). For an account of Kaho's life and works, see Copeland, *Lost Leaves*, 52-98. For Shizuko, see Copeland, *Lost Leaves*, 99-158.

[4] Miyake Kaho, "Shinobugusa," in Takada Chinami, Nakagawa Shigemi, Nakayama Kazuko, eds., *Josei sakka shū, Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei, Meiji hen*, vol. 23. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 286. The translations from Japanese are my own.

Spontaneity and emotional authenticity are highlighted in the image of the brush rushing forward on the page, preventing any kind of editorial consciousness on the part of the author from taking hold. The unedited work will then be sent out, against the better judgment of the writer, precisely because an unpolished, spontaneous outpouring of emotion will be the most comforting to the grieving.

However, we should not let such rhetoric prevent us from seeing how polished the elegy truly is, for it veers constantly toward the realm of poetry and flirts consistently with the conventions of classical literature. A few examples should suffice to illustrate this. While "Shinobugusa" as a whole is not written in poetic meter, alternating clauses of five and seven syllables are prominent in the opening and at other emotional moments in the essay. Native Japanese phrases and words are used to such an overwhelming extent that the few Sino-Japanese compounds used in the essay (words such as *shōshitsu* [loss by fire], *taisei no kyōiku* [Western education], and *gengo* [language]) almost leap off the page. There is a strong predilection for archaic words throughout the work (*manimani* instead of *mamani* for "as it is"). Elegant and archaic soubriquets are used when referring to people: Kaho refers to Ichiyō as "Natsuko no kimi," to Ichiyō's sister Kuniko as "imōto-gimi," and to Ichiyō's mother Taki as "haha-toji." The use of metaphors from the natural world is pronounced. There are frequent allusions to classical works. The language is highly indirect. Verbal and adjectival inflections are almost ostentatiously literary. There are many classical styles available to the Meiji-era writer, and these characteristics are the hallmarks of the belletristic *wabun* style, which is closely associated with women's literary writing.

Seemingly contrary to Kaho's account of her motivation for writing, then, the language of mourning in "Shinobugusa" is not solely a spontaneous, unedited outpouring of emotion; it is also a consciously crafted piece of neoclassical literary *wabun* prose, a stylistic tour de force, in fact, which would require much effort to achieve, even for an accomplished Haginoya alum such as Kaho. I do not mean to imply that the piece lacks emotion, for that is hardly the case. My point here is that emotion and polish are not mutually exclusive. In this case, the language of mourning, in fact, seems to require both a rhetoric of authenticity and a polished surface. Stated another way, classical rhetoric is precisely what evokes powerful emotions, and a highly polished literary language is necessary to the occasion. The death of accomplished literary women seems to summon in Kaho the urge to craft an elegant and elevated *wabun* style that pays suitable respect to the achievements of these writers.

Indeed, the style of "Shinobugusa" bears a strong resemblance to the early volumes of Ichiyō's own diary and to Ichiyō's early stories. The diary would not be made public until 1912, and there is no reason to assume Kaho had seen it. A better explanation for the similarity in style is that Ichiyō's diary and early stories and Kaho's elegy and other essays are exemplars of a kind of "Haginoya style," the characteristics of which are, as mentioned above: a tendency toward poetic meter and indirect language; a preference for native words over Sino-Japanese compounds; a predilection for natural images that function as metaphors for internal emotional states; frequent allusions to classical texts facilitated by a neoclassical, belletristic grammar. This style is employed masterfully by Kaho in her "Shinobugusa."

The inspiration for this style lies with the Heian classics, especially with the Heian *waka* tradition, and it is instructive to remember that the literary products of the world of the Heian aristocrats are just as present, alive, and vital in the mind of a Haginoya alum as contemporary works from the Meiji era. We might recall Ki no Tsurayuki's well known explanation that poetry is the expression of the powerful, spontaneous overflowing of emotion, a view of poetic composition that begins with Tsurayuki's preface to the *Kokinshū* in the beginning of the tenth century. Kaho seems to follow this model in addition to the genre conventions of Heian prose by drawing from the huge repository of rhetorical devices mentioned above and then by concluding "Shinobugusa" with a *waka* that imbeds itself in the dense, intertextual web centered on the metaphor of "mourning grasses," drawing the rest of the elegy along with it:

> We must look upon the vanished morning dew as if a jewel,
> lest the mourning grasses become sunk in unending grief.
>
> Ochichireru tsuyu o mo tama to hito wa miyo
> shinobu no kusa no shinobiamarite.[5]

The author calls for a sharp adjustment in outlook, an intentional act of sensory confusion, as a remedy for grief. To move from the metaphor of dew to that of the jewel is to move from a feeling of pure loss to an awareness of the life lived by the deceased; the replacement of one metaphor by another might also be said to mark, in psychoanalytic terms, the movement from bereavement to the work of mourning. Furthermore, given the way *shinobugusa* is a metaphor embedded in a larger network of anterior literary texts, the poem implies that the process of healing is made more effective knowing that prior generations of poets have had to go through the same process of grieving.

Given the features of Kaho's text, it might be useful here to draw on William Watkins's study of the elegy in the Euro-American tradition, in which he notes that the genre is "both a private record of the transition from the passive state of bereavement to the personal work of grief and a public, published performance of communal rituals of mourning."[6] "Shinobugusa" is also performance piece expressing an individual reaction to loss and, by virtue of being published in a widely circulating magazine, communal rituals as well. The genre creates a community united in mourning for the deceased, a group composed both of present and, through intertextual threads, past generations. Furthermore, the elegy's publication in the *katei-ran* of *Taiyō* suggests a female addressee. A glance at just a few samples of the "Home" column reveals that its contents were penned by both men and women, but that the authors assumed a primarily female readership. In other words, the *katei-ran* is gendered female. However, simply calling "Shinobugusa" a gendered performative work does not help us see that there is more at stake here. To further highlight the performative dimensions of the essay, we must locate "Shinobugusa" in a larger context.

Death is the impetus for writing, but awareness of death also seems to animate the essay on a stylistic level. "Shinobugusa" can be read as a response to certain stylistic developments in the broader literary world that probably seemed pernicious and threatening to someone like Kaho. In particular, I want to argue that Kaho is responding to the resurgence of the push toward a literary language that draws heavily from the colloquial language; that is, she is responding to the renewed push in the 1890s toward the perfection of *genbun itchi* prose. The rise of *genbun itchi* threatens literary practices with roots in a more traditional form of literary discourse, and Kaho's "Shinobugusa" can be seen as eulogizing the death of the preferred literary discourse of essentially all women writers of mid-Meiji, three of whom had passed away in one year and one of whom was widely admired in her own lifetime as the creator of a masterful neoclassical literary style.

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[5] Kaho, "Shinobugusa," 286. For a discussion and examples of the use of *shinobugusa* in Japanese literature, see Katagiri Yōichi, *Utamakura, utakotoba jiten* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1983), 206-207.

[6] William Watkins, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 6.

Despite the meaning of the characters *genbun itchi*, which read literally suggest the unification of the spoken and written words, *genbun itchi* is a new form of literary discourse that draws energy from the contemporary colloquial language; it is not merely a transcription of the spoken language, and this literary movement is certainly not the unification of pen and tongue, despite the name chosen to characterize the new style. The initial experiments with the style occurred in the late 1880s, that is, right around Meiji 20, the pioneers being Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) and Yamada Bimyō (1868-1910). While this new literary style was billed as something new and different and modern by its practitioners, it is possible to view it as the culmination of trends that were already apparent in the first half of the nineteenth century. After all, texts in early-modern genres such as the *kokkeibon* (comic fiction) and the *ninjōbon* (sentimental fiction), to name but two, consisted largely of colloquial Japanese for the dialogue and classical Japanese for the narrative discourse, but the dialogue is such an overwhelming proportion of the text, and the narrative discourse itself is so heavily impacted by the extensive passages of dialogue, that these nineteenth century works are already very close to the ideals of the later advocates of *genbun itchi*. Nor should we forget the influence of the *sokkibun*, the shorthand transcriptions of the oral storytelling performances of San'yūtei Enchō (1839-1900) in early Meiji, which were an acknowledged influence on Futabatei himself.

The new style made an appearance in the late 1880s, but was largely eclipsed by the sheer range of linguistic experimentation at the time. During the second half of the 1890s there was a powerful resurgence of interest in further developing the *genbun itchi* style. To name a few of the more prominent and influential works, Ozaki Kōyō's (1867-1903) *Tajō takon* (Much Passion, Much Grief), a major *genbun itchi* novel, was serialized from February to June of 1896 then appeared in book form. In the summer of 1896, Hirotsu Ryūrō (1861-1929) penned a number of novellas using the new style, perhaps the most well known of which is *Imado shinjū* (Love Suicide at Imado) in July. Hakubunkan published a new edition of Wakamatsu Shizuko's masterful translation of *Shōkōshi* in January 1897, presumably as a way to properly memorialize her. Near the end of this arc of new experiments with *genbun itchi* is Kunikida Doppo's (1871-1908) story, "Ima no Musashino" (The Musashi Plain Today), published in January 1898. What we see in the mid- to late- 1890s, then, is a new round of experiments with a style pioneered nearly a decade earlier. At the beginning of this arc, in 1896, there are still a number of styles from which to choose; by the turn of the century, *genbun itchi* was mandatory for any serious writer; and halfway through the first decade of the twentieth century, *genbun itchi* had largely displaced classical styles in fictional works. The conquest was rapid and thorough.

This transition looks inevitable in hindsight, but when Miyake Kaho penned "Shinobugusa" in the early months of 1897, we are at the beginning of this new round of experiments, so it is perfectly legitimate to ask, how aware of the trend was she? She never mentions such new movements in the literary world within the pages of "Shinobugusa," but I want to make the case that Kaho is responding to this resurgence of *genbun itchi* in her elegy. Admitting that such things cannot be decisively proven at the level of authorial intention, I employ a strategy of reading whereby a larger linguistic and discursive context is evoked in order to provide the details of a horizon against which the text takes shape. We will then be able to grasp "Shinobugusa" as a response to broader stylistic developments in the world of Meiji letters.

Concrete evidence for this view can be had by surveying the literary works appearing during 1896 and early 1897 in the magazine *Taiyō*, the same forum where Kaho's elegy appeared.[7] This is a journal Kaho both read and used as a vehicle to publish much of her own writing from the 1890s onward. In this survey, I use only the crudest of yardsticks for measuring the resurgence of *genbun itchi* prose: the presence of copula forms such as *da*, *desu*, and *de aru*, as well as the equivalents in the area of verbal inflections, such as *–te iru*, and such. There are, of course, problems with measuring *genbun itchi* with such reductive, un-nuanced tools, not the least of which is the danger of viewing *genbun itchi* as an uncontested, univocal language. Strictly speaking, there are potentially as many variations on *genbun itchi* as there are classical styles. But my goal here is to find a practical solution to the need to measure proportionality within a very large number of pages from one magazine. I am interested here in statistics and large-scale general trends, and copulas and verbal endings are convenient and usable in this limited way.

I begin with well-known names. While it is true that Yamada Bimyō's star was at its brightest at the end of the 1880s, with the appearance of short *genbun itchi* stories in historical settings, such as "Musashino" (The Musashi Plain, 1887) and "Kōchō" (Butterfly, 1889), Bimyō was still quite active into the 1890s. He published a number of works in the *genbun itchi* style in the pages of *Taiyō*, "Shizumiuri" (September, 1896) being only one example. What of the other pioneer? Nearly two decades separate Futabatei's *Ukigumo* and his final two novels, *Sono omokage* (In His Image, 1906) and *Heibon* (Mediocrity, 1907), but he was still busy as a translator of Russian fiction in the interval, and his translations of Turgenev were collected at the end of 1896, while his rendition of Gogol into *genbun itchi* appeared in *Taiyō* in February 1897. Kawakami Bizan (1869-1908), one of the founding Ken'yūsha members, published his colloquial "Shimada kuzushi" (Hair in Disarray) in the same March, 1897 issue of *Taiyō* in which the first part of Kaho's "Shinobugusa" appeared. The works of Bizan and Kaho share the same pages of an issue of a magazine and yet are worlds apart stylistically.

These are just a few examples from a much larger group of *genbun itchi* works appearing in *Taiyō*. There are a host of other stories in the magazine in the *genbun itchi* style, some by minor Ken'yūsha writers, others by writers who are no longer remembered. To generalize from my magazine data set, the second round of experiments with *genbun itchi* was launched by the Ken'yūsha (a group that, for some reason, is often denigrated as being old-fashioned), and such fiction by Yamada Bimyō, Hirotsu Ryūrō, Kawakami Bizan, and other Ken'yūsha writers appeared routinely in the pages of *Taiyō* during the period surveyed, that is the fifteen months between the beginning of 1896 and early 1897. These are just the most recognizable names, but by my count roughly half the stories appearing in the *shōsetsu-ran*, or "Fiction" column, of *Taiyō* during 1896 have *genbun itchi* verbal inflections, and the number of *genbun itchi* works rapidly increases as we move into 1897. During most of 1896, the *shōsetsu-ran* usually, but not always, featured two short stories, one in a classical style and one in *genbun itchi*, but in 1897, the number of classical works declines quickly. And even the works in classical styles that do appear are much simpler during this period than is typical of Kaho's many essays of the 1890s. During 1896, we even start to see *genbun itchi* in the essays published in the *katei-ran* and other non-fiction columns in *Taiyō*, though they do not constitute a majority even in early 1897.

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[7] The issues dated January 5, 1896 to March 20, 1897 constitute my data set for this essay. The magazine appeared bi-monthly, making for a total of 26 issues over fifteen months, not including special issues and supplements.

The trend here is unmistakable: in the pages of the magazine *Taiyō*, the big general interest magazine of the Meiji period, we see the balance tipping toward *genbun itchi* in the arena of fiction during this short period 1896-1897. If we insert the tendency in this widely circulating magazine into the larger narrative of the development of *genbun itchi*, the trend also looks irreversible, for by the turn of the century, those using the new literary style are in the majority. This includes enduring names in Meiji letters and writers who have been forgotten. A statistical view shows that *genbun itchi* dominates fiction across the board by 1900 and is making major inroads into non-fiction genres as well.[8]

Kaho does not mention any of these developments in "Shinobugusa," but read against this backdrop, her elegy for fallen women writers seems a conscious, even consciously obstinate effort to resist the displacement of classical language styles by *genbun itchi* prose. There is simply no other way I can account for the sheer panache of the style of "Shinobugusa" (and of her other essays in this period, in fact), which seems to reach all the way back to the Heian era for inspiration and which must have posed quite a challenge to more than a few readers of *Taiyō*.

What is also unmistakable is that the writers I have just been discussing are all men. The exception among the works mentioned here is Shizuko's *Shōkōshi*, but this is a new edition of a work originally serialized during the period 1890-1892, in the wake of the first round of experiments with *genbun itchi*. The women writers of the 1890s—usually dubbed *keishū* writers, after the title of the special issue of *Bungei kurabu* mentioned above—almost all employed some form of the classical style, either more or less ornate. Kaho's elegy helps make us aware of the fact that during the 1890s, the *genbun itchi* prose that is gaining the upper hand is fundamentally a male form of experimental literary discourse. It would be close to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century before we start to see women writers taking up the new *genbun itchi* style in any kind of sizeable numbers. The writers gathered around the revolutionary journal *Seitō* (Blue Stockings) in the first half of the 1910s are the ones who begin this transition, although they are preceded by figures such as Ōtsuka Kusuoko (1874-1910), who is a kind of bridge between the *keishū*-era writers in mid-Meiji and the *Seitō*-era writers who emerged at the very end of Meiji. The implications of women's appropriation of a male literary discourse are only just beginning to be explored in scholarship, and this short essay, which is more concerned with ends than with beginnings, will not pursue the topic. There are a number of frameworks in which this issue might be discussed, but the starting point would probably be to view the *Seitō* writers as a kind of "minority" group, who must use the language of a more powerful group or risk being dismissed and thus going unread.[9]

Given the gendered nature of *genbun itchi* prose in the 1890s, Kaho's "Shinobugusa" is both an elegy for the dead and a public exhibition of Kaho's allegiance to the feminine "Haginoya style." Returning to the issue of the female addressee of the text, given the elegy's appearance in a widely circulating magazine, it might also be read as the construction of a communal ethos about the most desirable literary style for women. One could perhaps go so far as to argue that Kaho attempts to draw a line in the sand between the literary discourse of men and women in order to recover, protect, and preserve for the latter a style threatened with extinction by the former. Kaho's text is haunted by the death of a friend and a superb prose stylist (of classical and colloquial styles and English, too), Wakamatsu Shizuko, and of one of the masters of classical rhetoric and a fellow professional writer and Haginoya alum, Higuchi Ichiyō, as well as the destruction of an important educational institution for women. "Shinobugusa" can be read as using the form of the elegy occasioned by these tragedies in order to perform or enact a certain ideal of women's literary *wabun* prose in the face of the possible end of such classical styles in Kaho's own time. In this reading, the work of mourning in "Shinobugusa" is carried out on two levels: in relation to people and in relation to the larger world of letters.

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[8] This data supports similar claims made some time ago by Yamamoto Masahide in his "Genbun itchi no hassei." Yamamoto Masahide, "Genbun itchi no hassei," in *Kokugo kaizen to kyōiku* (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan kabushiki gaisha, 1973), 172-241.

[9] Seki Reiko takes a similar approach in her ground-breaking essay on the styles employed in the first issue of the magazine. See Seki Reiko, "Bun ni okeru jendaa tōsō: *Seitō* sōkan-gō no mittsu no tekusuto bunseki o chūshin ni," in Iida Yūko, ed., Seitō *to iu ba: Bungaku, jendaa, atarashii onna* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2002), 13-52.

Looking at this moment of the changing of the literary guard at the end of the 1890s from the perspective of the present, we must surely recognize what was lost when the various classical styles were eclipsed. Indeed, so powerful is Kaho's rhetoric in "Shinobugusa" that we are likely to forget the task of reading critically and in context. From the perspective of the masters of and adherents to the older styles, the resurgence of *genbun itchi* must have seemed like the end of literature itself. But the end of one literary phenomenon always seems to imply the beginning of something new, and it is difficult to deny that the *genbun itchi* style created many new possibilities. *Genbun itchi* emerged as part of the formation and consolidation of the nation-state. In contrast to older, celebratory views of *genbun itchi*, much recent work has revealed the pernicious effects of this new linguistic creation, and we should not lose sight of the ways in which the national language is complicit with the worst excesses of nationalism. But *genbun itchi* would also shoulder much of the burden of expressing new philosophical, political, and aesthetic ideas from abroad and from within. *Genbun itchi* also allowed for the astounding flourishing of new literary writings—by Natsume Sōseki and Nogami Yaeko, by Shiga Naoya and Hayashi Fumiko—that we collectively designate the modern Japanese novel.