“From the Margins of the Canon: Kikuchi Yūhō and the *Katei Shōsetsu*”

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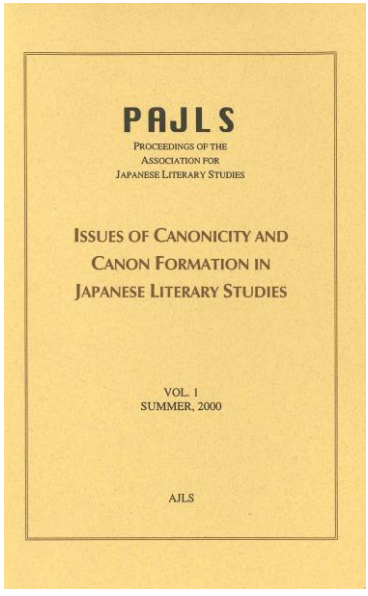


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# FROM THE MARGINS OF THE CANON: KIKUCHI YŪHŌ AND THE *KATEI SHŌSETSU*

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Like many of the other presenters at this conference, I believe that the issue of canonicity is most productively viewed not so much as a binary structure consisting of the canonical and the non-canonical, but as a varied and shifting set of relations. At points throughout these relations, there are localized nodes of contestation and negotiation where texts jockey for readers and recognition. This recognition can be achieved not only through deliberate gestures toward a high culture, but through nuanced and complex negotiations to open a specific cultural site. The issue of genre, as Alistair Fowler has noted, plays an important role in cultural positioning. My effort here today is to examine how one genre of writing, the *katei shōsetsu*, or "home fiction" of the Meiji thirties, seeks to position itself precisely at the margins of high culture. I use "margin" here to mean an edge, a position of adjacency, a point on a shifting border.

I want to emphasize this definition of the margin because the most typical approach to the *katei shōsetsu* places it totally outside of the borders of modern Japanese literature: Senuma Shigeki, its best-known commentator, begins his study by noting "that from the period around the Sino-Japanese War, modern Japanese literature clearly developed a branch of popular fiction called the *katei shōsetsu* that *lay beyond its own boundaries*" (*Nisshin sensōgo kara, Nihon no kindai bungaku wa, sono kengai ni, hakkiri to katei shōsetsu to iu tsūzoku shōsetsu no bun'ya o bunki shiteiru*).[1] Perhaps, in thinking about what happens at the margin, I'm simply extending the hidden logic of Senuma's rather odd sentence. For the flow of his logic raises questions about whether something can establish a branch of itself that lies outside of its own boundaries. There is also a related and important question of literary history: What did *Nihon no kindai bungaku*, or "modern

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[1] Senuma Shigeki, "Katei shōsetsu no tenkai," *Meiji katei shōsetsu shū*, Vol. 93 of *Meiji bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969), 421.

Japanese literature," mean in the Meiji thirties, a period running from the mid-1890s to the middle of the next decade? This is a question I can't fully answer at the moment, but I do know that we shouldn't read backward to that period through the *kindai bungaku* that came to exist after the onset of Japanese Naturalism. Finally, there is the question of agency. In Senuma's formulation, *Nihon no kindai bungaku* is the acting agent that divides *katei shōsetsu* off of itself. As I've looked at my material, I've begun to have doubts about this kind of paradigm.

In recent years, Kaneko Akio has done some very interesting work problematizing the idea of canonical exclusion as it applies to the *katei shōsetsu*.[2] My paper today carries on this kind of project, but I want to do so by re-examining a key document that's cited by nearly everyone who studies the *katei shōsetsu*. In fact, Senuma quotes this document just before he passes his judgment that the *katei shōsetsu* lies outside *Nihon no kindai bungaku*. The document I have in mind is the "Preface" appended by Kikuchi Yūhō to the book version of his work, *Katei shōsetsu: Chikyōdai*,[3] when it was published by Shun'yōdō in 1904. What I want to show is that the "Preface" gestures not so much toward a place outside "modern Japanese literature" but toward a boundary that Yūhō constructs between the *shōsetsu* and a plebeian form of oral narrative with roots in the Edo period.

First, let me say a few words about the *katei shōsetsu*. Although the *katei shōsetsu* has been now virtually forgotten, this category of writing had a vibrant presence in the literary marketplace of the Meiji thirties: *katei shōsetsu* were serialized in the major newspapers, became bestsellers, and were adapted into *shinpa* plays. Although *katei shōsetsu* often thematized conflicts within the home, this was not necessarily the reason for its label. The *katei* in *katei shōsetsu* referred to a locus of reading; this was fiction expressly designed to be read in the *katei*, a domestic space that had been first created in the middle of Meiji, when the word *katei* began to be used as a translation for the English word "home." To call a work a *katei shōsetsu* signalled the work's contents, touted to be edifying and appropriate for con-

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[2] Kaneko Akio, "'Katei shōsetsu' to yomu koto no teikoku," *Media, hyōshō, ideorogii: Meiji sanjūnendai no bunka kenkyū*, ed. Komori Yōichi (Tokyo: Ozawa shoten, 1997), 131-57.

[3] In the Japanese title, "*katei shōsetsu*" appears as a *tsunogaki* subtitle, set in smaller type above the specific name of the novel.

sumption in the home; its targeted readership, which was predominantly female; and its mode of narration, designed to be easily apprehensible. Many of you will be familiar with Kathy Ragsdale's fine article on this category of Meiji writing.[4] Ragsdale analyzes the ideological implications of a genre of literature for women written exclusively by men and gives special emphasis to the commercial or publication contexts of the genre. She skillfully excavates the relationship between Kikuchi Yūhō, a writer who had established himself as a leading exponent of the *katei shōsetsu* with his enormously popular *Ono ga tsumi* (1899-1900), and the *Osaka mainichi shinbun*, which had cultivated a female audience while he served as its fiction editor.

*Chikyōdai* (Sisters Suckled at the Same Breast), serialized in the *Osaka mainichi shinbun*, August-December 1903, succeeded in drawing even more attention than the earlier novel. The work is a melodramatic potboiler whose fictional rhetoric of excess involves a superabundance of orphans, adoptions, and mistaken identities. It focuses upon the transgression of class lines, the ideology of blood lineage, and the relations of both to gender. I won't go into the novel itself except to briefly mention that the plot centers upon a young woman of aristocratic birth and a nursemaid's daughter who, for certain reasons, are brought up together as sisters. Raised as the adoptive daughter of her nursemaid, the young woman of noble blood is ignorant of her own lineage. The nursemaid's daughter finds out about this first, assumes the identity of the aristocratic girl, plots to have herself discovered as a long lost Matsudaira child, and scores a glittering debut in Tokyo *kizoku* society. This kind of treachery cannot go unpunished, and the nursemaid's daughter ends up being murdered by a former lover, whom she had rejected for being far below her newly-acquired place in the world.

Nearly every study of *katei shōsetsu* quotes from the "Preface" that Yūhō prepared for this novel because it contains a succinct statement on the key elements of the genre. The most often-quoted sentences refer to the aims and restrictions that Yūhō, speaking as both a newspaper editor and a writer, ascribed to *katei shōsetsu* generally and to *Chikyōdai* in particular:

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[4] Kathy Ragsdale, "Marriage, the Newspaper Business, and the Nation State: Ideology in the Late Meiji Serialized *Katei Shōsetsu*," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24.2 (Summer 1998): 229-55.

> I wanted us to carry something that was a bit more accessible and a bit less affected than the general run of current novels, yet something that was tasteful and refined. I had been wanting to write something that could be read in the bosom of a happy home, be easily understood by everyone, cause no one to blush, contribute to harmony in the home, and assist in nurturing taste.[5]

Yūhō, then, defines the *katei shōsetsu* as being both popular and polite, a kind of fiction that could be enjoyed without embarrassment in the home and would also contribute to its happy functioning.[6] The reference here to something a "bit more popular than the general run of current novels" (*ima no ippan no shōsetsu yori wa mō sukoshi tsūzoku ni*) provides evidence for commentators like Senuma who place *katei shōsetsu* outside of the realm of "modern Japanese literature." But we can gain a better understanding of Yūhō's efforts at cultural positioning by approaching the preface as what Gérard Genette would call a paratext.[7] If Yūhō's preface seeks, as all paratexts do, to gain a more pertinent reading for the work to which it is attached, it is also itself a text that displays its own patterns of rhetoricity.[8] Rather than flatly accepting Yūhō's statements as a valid definition of the *katei shosetsu*, as so many studies do, it might make sense to ask what the preface seeks to gain and how it does this. What I want to show today is that, when we approach the "Preface" in this manner, it quickly reveals a persistently doubled rhetoric that works to position *Chikyōdai* squarely upon the margin between the high and the low.

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[5] Quotations from the "Hashigaki" are taken from Kikuchi Yūhō, *Katei shōsetsu: Chikyōdai*, in *Meiji katei shōsetsu shū*, Vol. 93 of *Meiji bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969), 89. Further quotations from the preface will be taken from this edition.

[6] In specific reference to *Chikyōdai*, we might immediately question the claims to refinement of a story that leads to an enfevered moment when one of its heroines is stabbed through the heart ("The flash of a blade falling like lightning! The gush of blood!" [235]).

[7] Gérard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22.22 (Spring 1991): 265.

[8] Ibid., 262.

The first thing to be observed regarding the preface's rhetoric is that the preface is unusual in form. Rather than taking the most common approach for an author's preface, in which the author writes a statement addressed to the reader, Yūhō chooses to quote at length from a lecture on *Chikyōdai* that he was requested to give before a "certain gathering of ladies" (*aru kifujin no shūkai*). This idiosyncratic choice foregrounds certain characteristics of the narratee as she is constructed in the lecture and in the novel, as well as some related issues of language. To begin with, Yūhō's strategy allows him to clearly mark his reader as female, but a female of a specific type: a respectable woman with the social status that would earn her the appellation of *kifujin*. As most of you know, this term was used, during the Meiji period, as a translation for the English word "lady." *Kifujin* shared with "lady" both a specific aristocratic reference and a more generalized application in which it referred broadly to women with social status. In accordance with this designation, Yūhō's language is respectful, with auxiliary verbs tending to use the relatively polite *-desu* and *-masu* forms. Yet this respect is clearly not aimed at the intellect or experience of the reader, for Yūhō's conversational style and diction consistently avoid anything that might sound too difficult or literary. The "lady" to whom he speaks is hardly well read. We should also note that quoting from a lecture given to an audience of fans allows Yūhō to construct his narratee as someone who already knows about *Chikyōdai* and is interested in learning more about it. To put this a bit differently, Yūhō's rhetorical strategy allows him to present his own book as being socially current and popular.

This aim was clearly important, for Yūhō spends the first third of the preface beating his own drum. The anecdotes he conveys about the popularity of *Chikyōdai*, however, have the effect of complicating his representations regarding his readers. It quickly becomes clear that his novel was popular well beyond the "ladies" to whom he addresses his lecture/preface. Yūhō says, for example, that a representative of the *Osaka mainichi*'s marketing department had recently returned from a visit to the islands of Shikoku and Kyushu with the news that "in places with a thousand families or so, subscribers anxious to read *Chikyōdai* gathered at the distributors when issues arrived, thus reducing the need for delivery" (89). He also notes that "there were many teahouses in the South and North licensed prostitution districts where they waited awake for morning editions carrying the novel to be delivered around three in the morning" (89). While the definition of who or what constitutes a *kifujin* can be broad, it would generally not in-

clude most female residents of provincial towns and would certainly not apply to women who worked in teahouses. This brings us to the observation that narratees are not necessarily the same as actual readers; Yūhō's comments suggest that, despite (or perhaps because of) his choice of narratee, his novel appealed to a broad range of readers, representing differing regional, class, and occupational demographics.

Having established the popularity of his work, Yūhō spends much of the rest of his preface explaining that its favorable reception can be attributed to its generic status as a *katei shōsetsu*. It's in this context that he makes the statement, already quoted, in which he defines the genre as one that is accessible yet tasteful. A few further comments are in order here, however, regarding the paragraph in which this statement appears. Most scholars who quote from Yūhō's preface slide over the fact that the writer begins his discussion of *katei shōsetsu* by saying that he wanted the *Osaka mainichi* to "gradually stop carrying *kōdan*, and that in order to do this there needed to be an appropriate replacement" (89). Yūhō's comments here are being made from his position as the *Mainichi*'s fiction editor, that is, as a cultural gatekeeper, and they work to establish a difference between his new type of newspaper fiction and the kind of oral storytelling called *kōdan*.

The importance of the contrast that Yūhō seeks to draw with the *katei shōsetsu* lies in the fact that *kōdan* was an older and plebeian narrative art.[9] Like its more humorous cousin *rakugo*, *kōdan* had come to maturity in the

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[9] *Kōdan* had its beginnings in the oral recitation of incidents from the fourteenth-century martial tale the *Taiheiki* and in stories of samurai vicissitudes, particularly of the sort known as *oiesōdō*, which dealt with the succession struggles in the great clans. *Kōdan* also developed a side that dealt with the lives of commoners (*sewa kōdan*) which included stories about criminals and thwarted lovers, vendettas, and ghosts. In the Meiji period, *kōdan* raconteurs began to find subjects for their narrations in current events, even fashioning stories out of the Satsuma Rebellion. With the development of Japanese shorthand in the 1880s, *kōdan* published in transcribed form gained enormous popularity. The *Yamato shinbun* became the first newspaper to serialize these transcribed stories in 1886, and thereafter *kōdan* became a regular feature of many newspapers. See the entries for *kōdan* in *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1960), 444-46, and *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*, Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 145.

Edo period as an oral narrative form aimed at commoners. Not only did *kōdan* retain its audience in the early Meiji period, it had gained even more fans through the advent of Japanese shorthand, a new technology of reproduction that made oral narrative available to a mass print audience beyond the theater. In the 1890s and the early years of the century, *kōdan* narratives—which were mainly stories of samurai valor and tales of *daimyō* family succession struggles of the sort called *oiesōdō*—were a mainstay of newspaper fiction. Although Yūhō makes it sound as though replacing the *kōdan* with *katei shōsetsu* was an easy progression, this was not at all the case. In 1903, *kōdan* was still a force to be reckoned with, and it couldn't be easily dismissed by a newspaper concerned with circulation. A few weeks ago, I was able to read the *Osaka mainichi* in the original at the Dōshisha University library. One of the interesting things I found was that for nearly the entire run of *Chikyōdai* the *Mainichi* had also carried *kōdan*.[10] In fact, the *kōdan* had pride of place as far as fiction was concerned. *Kōdan* transcriptions were usually carried on page four, just after the world and national news and before the business coverage. *Chikyōdai* was generally buried on page eight, among what we would think of as "lifestyle articles." While there were certainly gender politics at work in this arrangement, with women's fiction being pushed to the back, what I want to note now is that the *kōdan* wasn't so easily supplanted. Yūhō was seeking to open a cultural site in a space already occupied by an older, popular form. And he was attempting to do this with something designated as a type of *shōsetsu*. He was trying to elevate and modernize the fiction carried in his newspaper by moving it closer to the kind of writing associated with the emergent category of *bungaku*.

These instincts were very much connected to Yūhō's knowledge of Western fiction. The paragraph of the "Preface" that begins by abjecting the *kōdan* ends by connecting *Chikyōdai* to a Western work.

> While reading various foreign novels (*gaikoku no shōsetsu*) with this in mind, I came upon a short piece written by a woman called Bertha Clay, with a somewhat amusing story. It came to me that I might succeed at writing something to replace the

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[10] *Chikyōdai*'s run in the *Osaka mainichi shinbun* largely overlapped the serialization of *Kōdan: Date hyōjō* by Koganei Bakin.

> *kōdan* if I used a plot like this as the foundation and made up something a bit more complex. This was the beginning of my taking up my pen to write *Chikyōdai*, and thus this novel owes a great deal to Bertha Clay. (89)

The name Bertha Clay won't mean much to the current reader of fiction in English, and it probably didn't mean much to most of the readers of the *Osaka mainichi* beyond the fact that it belonged to a female and a Westerner. But it's worth noting here that in the early twentieth century "Bertha Clay" was a literary brand name attached to hundreds of novels.[11] These novels weren't all written by the same person. Initially, Bertha Clay was a pseudonym for Charlotte Mary Brame (1836-1884), a popular British writer of what one critic calls "mushy love stories for the English lower classes."[12] Brame's novels were later acquired by Street and Smith, the preeminent American publishers of dime novels, who subsequently instituted a "Bertha Clay Library" and put out over five hundred novels attributed to Clay, including some written by male authors.[13] As far as I can ascertain, *Dora Thorne*, the work that became the basis for *Chikyōdai*, was one of the "original" Clay works written by Charlotte Brame. That a Western novel written by a popular female writer became the "foundation" for a *katei shōsetsu* shows something of the mixed motives behind Yūhō's wish to write something to replace the *kōdan*. On the one hand, Clay (or Brame) did write "novels." She was an appropriate source to mine if one's purpose was to produce a *shōsetsu* that could be edifying to women. On the other hand, Clay was an unabashedly popular writer who produced commodity fiction. Replacing the *kōdan* clearly did not mean entirely foregoing its low-brow

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[11] For information on Bertha Clay and Charlotte Brame, I have relied on Arlene Moore, "Searching for Bertha Clay: Problems in Researching the Topic and Areas for Further Study," *Dime Novel Roundup* 60.1 (February 1998): 10-14; Nakano Kii, "*Konjiki yasha* no hikaku bungakuteki ichikōsatsu: Bertha Clay to kanren shite," *Eibungaku to eigogaku* 24 (1987): 5-20; and Shōwa joshidaigaku kindai bungaku kenkyūjo, eds., "Suematsu Kenchō," *Kindai bungaku kenkyū sōsho*, Vol. 20, 40-49.

[12] The descriptions of Brame's writing are quoted in Moore, "Searching for Bertha Clay," 11.

[13] Moore, "Searching for Bertha Clay," 11.

audience. What had caught Yūhō's attention about the Clay novel was "a somewhat amusing story"; he was keenly aware of the entertainment quotient of the novel that he was adapting. It's in this context that we must understand Yūhō's statement that he wanted to "carry something that was a bit more popular and a bit less affected than the general run of current novels." The readers that Yūhō wanted to reach were people who were not entirely comfortable with the literary experience of the *shōsetsu*.

Yūhō's preface, then, both conceals and reveals certain social dynamics with which *Chikyōdai* negotiated. If, on the one hand, the address to "ladies" sought to delimit the narratee of the preface and the work, the mention of provincial women and teahouse workers said something about its actual readership. The stated intent of replacing a *kōdan* with a Western-inspired *shōsetsu* signalled a modernizing stance, yet there was a need to appeal to a popular audience still used to older forms of narrative.

A similar doubled rhetoric is evident in Yūhō's comments on language, in which he attributes a large part of *Chikyōdai*'s popularity to the fact that it was written in "extremely easy and polite *genbun itchi*" (89). The *genbun itchi* movement initially consisted of two interconnected but distinct branches. On the one hand, *genbun itchi* had an extremely utilitarian side, as a language of mass education necessary for the nation-building process. On the other hand, it had an elite appeal, as the experimental language used by Futabatei Shimei and Yamada Bimyō in avant-garde fiction aimed at a relatively small educated audience. By 1903, this kind of distinction was breaking down. Yamamoto Masahide, the dean of *genbun itchi* studies, has compiled some stunning figures on the penetration of vernacular-based style into the writing of fiction: he says that *genbun itchi* pieces constituted 24 percent of published fiction in 1896, 57% in 1899, 78% in 1904, and 100% in 1908.[14] Even if one considers that the vast variety of writing placed under the rubric of *genbun itchi* makes speaking categorically a tricky business, these are still impressive statistics; they show that, in the realm of fiction, vernacular-based writing overwhelmed classical styles in a little over a decade.

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[14] These figures appear in "Genbun itchi," in Vol. 4 of *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*, ed. Nihon kindai bungakkan (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 141, and *Kindai buntai hassei no shiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo, Iwanami shoten, 1965), 51.

It is in such historical contexts that we must understand Yūhō's decision to write in *genbun itchi*. Although, interestingly, he does not mention it in his preface, he had, in fact, written *Ono ga tsumi*, the career-making novel that he serialized in 1899-1900, using classical grammar and syntax in the narrative portions. Thus he was departing from a proven formula by writing his next novel, *Chikyōdai*, in *genbun itchi*. At the same time, by choosing *genbun itchi*, Yūhō was voting with the majority. By 1903 the vernacular was no longer the province of the literary vanguard but rather an overwhelming presence on the literary scene.

Having made the choice to write in *genbun itchi*, Yūhō needed to negotiate with some of the associations of the vernacular language, particularly as these associations had to do with social hierarchy. In commenting upon the broad comprehensibility of his language, Yūhō assumes a tone of ingratiating humility: "As I have said before, I have made my style as explicit as possible, in order to make it extremely accessible and easy, and so I cannot help thinking that it has become utterly devoid of suggestiveness" (90). Here, the writer gestures toward the utilitarian and mass-market orientation of his prose. He has deliberately chosen to write plainly in order to appeal to his broadly-based female audience, knowing full well that he has abandoned what he considers to be artful and elegant. At the same time, however, Yūhō cannot leave behind the fiction of writing for a genteel audience, and this side of his orientation comes out in his discussion of the politeness of his prose:

> Moreover, I had felt from before a discomfort with using rough language . . . in the narration of a piece designed as reading matter for the home. I felt as though I would be committing a breach of etiquette against the ladies and gentlemen (*shinshi shukujo*) who were going to read this. And so, I used polite diction as the basis for my narration. Fortunately, this too was greatly welcomed. My feeling is that, from now on, when I write things for the home, this is the kind of prose I want to use. (90)

Here again, there is the ambivalent camouflage. Yūhō is anxious to defend the rhetorical position of a writer addressing "ladies" (he has now even added "gentlemen" to his fictive audience), who will be reading his novel in the bosom of a *katei*. God forbid that any "rough language" (*zonzai na kotoba*) should enter such gentle premises. Yet we must remember that

Yūhō's discussion is keyed upon the broad popularity of his novel and that he has already explicitly acknowledged tailoring his prose to meet some rather low common denominators. Yūhō, then, is working to construct the *katei*, the locus of reading for his text, as much as he strives to construct his narratee.

Having briefly examined some of the linguistic politics coursing through Yūhō's preface and novel, we can now return to the issue of the *kōdan* and Bertha Clay. We have already observed that the choice of Bertha Clay as an alternative to the *kōdan* did not necessarily mean a rejection of the latter's wide appeal. A consideration of the relations of the *kōdan* to issues of language reinforces our reading of this equivocality. For the *kōdan*, like transcribed *rakugo*, was a broadly disseminated example of vernacular prose fiction in an age when writers were making the transition to *genbun itchi*. In effect, by turning to *genbun itchi*, Yūhō was seeking to replace one form of vernacular fiction with another. Although I would not make the argument that Yūhō directly modeled *Chikyōdai* on the *kōdan*—because by 1903 *genbun itchi* fiction was available everywhere—it is worth noting that some of the features of his writing in the novel are similar to those of transcribed *kōdan*. For example, in carrying out his aim to write in genteel *genbun itchi*, Yūhō ends his sentences using the polite auxiliary verbs *-desu* or *-masu* and their past tenses *-deshita* and *-mashita*, rather than the more direct *-ta* or its past tense *-da*, which were more popular in the literary vernacular of the time. While *-desu* and *-masu* are also found in some examples of literary *genbun itchi*, it so happens that these two auxiliary verbs were favored by *kōdan* narrators, who treated their audiences with verbal respect. Another feature of Yūhō's text, the way he sets off dialogue, is also reminiscent of the transcribed *kōdan*. In *Chikyōdai*, each passage of dialogue is marked at its beginning with a character taken from the speaker's name. This kind of marking is rare in *genbun itchi* fiction, but it is the rule in *rakugo* and *kōdan* transcriptions, where speaker identification is repeated in metronomic fashion, despite the fact that in actual performances all the parts are being performed by a single narrator.[15] There is, then, evidence to suggest that Yūhō was writing in ways that would be friendly to the audience of tran-

[15] This kind of speaker identification is also common in late-Edo and early-Meiji *gesaku* fiction.

scribed oral literature. Replacing the *kōdan* did not mean rejecting it, but rather repeating some of its key features.

The issue of repetition brings us back to the form of the preface itself. We have already noted that the strategy of quoting from his speech allowed Yūhō to engage in a transparent rhetoric that constructed his readers as "ladies." Considering Yūhō's attitudes toward *kōdan* leads us to see another level of ambivalence in the preface's narrative structure, for his use of the extended quotation replicates the narrating situation of published *kōdan*. In effect, Yūhō presents a "transcribed" version of his own oral performance. He prefaces his novel in a way that privileges the illusion of the spoken voice. All the while that he is speaking to his "ladies," Yūhō is engaging in a narrating situation familiar to the plebeian readers of *kōdan*.

This kind of doubling signals the specific qualities of the cultural site Yūhō attempts to construct for his *katei shōsetsu*. Straddling the high and the low, the new and the old, the *shōsetsu* and the *kōdan*, Yūhō places himself and his genre not outside of *Nihon no kindai bungaku* but at its margins.