THE EARLY YEARS OF BUNGEI SHUNJū AND THE EMERGENCE OF A
MIDDLEBROW LITERATURE

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the complex relationship that existed between mass media and literature in pre-war Japan, a topic that is largely neglected by students of both literary and journalist studies. The object of this examination is Bungei shunju (Literary Times), a literary magazine that played an important role in the formation of various cultural aspects of middle-class bourgeois life of pre-war Japan. This study treats the magazine as an organic unification of editorial strategies, creative and critical writings, readers’ contribution, and commercial management, and examines the process by which it interacted with literary schools, mainstream and marginal ideologies, its existing and potential readership, and the social environment at large. In so doing, this study reveals how the magazine collaborated with the construction of the myth of the “ideal middle-class reader” in the discourses on literature, modernity, and nation in Japan before and during the war.

This study reads closely, as primary sources, the texts that were published in the issues of Bungei shunju in the 1920s and 1930s. It then contrasts these texts with
other texts published by the magazine’s peers and rivals. Third, it takes up the literary works in the magazine and reads them in the context of creative and critical works that appeared in other media and have been given a place in literary histories.

This study draws attention to the important literary figure Kikuchi Kan, the creator of *Bungei shunjū*, and to the popular middlebrow literature that has been forgotten. Its conclusion emphasizes the complexity of *Bungei shunjū’s* encounter with politics, economics and culture of its time, and the active role, both positive and negative, it played in the history of modern Japanese literature and in the history of modern Japan in general. Through this study, the conceptions of literature, modernity, and nation are further clarified.
To my father
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INTRODUCTION

New Trend in Literary Studies

In his influential work *The Mirror and the Lamp* published first in 1953, M. H. Abrams proposes in literary study a framework comprised of four elements—universe, work, artist, and audience—which “in the total situation of a work of art are discriminated and made salient, by one or another synonym, in almost all theories which aim to be comprehensive.” Consequently he classifies literary theories into four groups: mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective. According to Abrams, mimetic theories deal with the ontologically tainted problem of how literature represents reality; pragmatic theories with either entertaining or didactic effects on the audience; expressive theories focus on authorial subjectivity from a more epistemological perspective; and, finally, objective theories regard literary works as autonomous and self-sufficient in a linguistic way. Abrams also argues that from Plato on, different times placed emphasis on one or another of these different theories, and the history of literary criticism can be divided generally into four phases corresponding to the four theoretical categories in the temporal order of mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective.

Even though Abrams mostly limits his theory to the history of English poetry criticism, and his effort of matching each theoretical category with the temporal phases of history seems problematic to many, his fourfold division of possible literary perspectives proves to be valid and helpful in many ways. For example, the theory of objective orientation, which was listed as the last of the four both in terms of the length of time it was dominant and its importance relative to the other three, was obviously in dominance in postwar literary criticism until the 1960s, at least if one agrees that Structuralism and New Criticism are representative of objective theories in Europe and the US.

However, starting in the late 1960s, literary studies proceeded in a new direction which broke with expressive and objective approaches and turned to historical, social or cultural orientations. Though in Abrams’ formulation, contemporary approaches in literary discourse correspond to a mirror which reflects the world, these would appear to go beyond his static model. In summarizing the development of Marxist literary criticism in the latter half of the 20th century, Raymond Williams claims, “The crucial theoretical break is the recognition of ‘literature’ as a specializing social and historical category.” This is true not only in terms of the New Left criticism but also in terms of the literary studies at large in recent decades.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the “field of cultural production” is an influential and important component of this trend in literary studies. Bourdieu believes that “any

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social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields.  
Each of these fields, such as the field of economics or the field of education, is
structured by the positions that agents occupy in that field, and each operates by its
own laws. Therefore, “literature” becomes the “literary field,” which is a crucial part
of the field of cultural production. The structure of this “literary field” is determined
by the positions that various agents occupy in the field. Consequently, the study of
literature has to involve the agents and their positions within the literary field. These
agents within the literary field include, but are not limited to, writers, literary societies,
readers, publishers, and so forth. In other words, all aspects of the production,
circulation and consumption of “literature” as “symbolic goods” are subjects of study
within the field.

The Relationship between Literature and Mass Media

Bourdieu’s theory of the literary field and other contemporary theories concerning
modern literary production shed light on the relationship between literature and mass
media, a relationship which is crucial to the production, circulation, and consumption
of literature in modern times. Defined by the term “mass,” these media are based on
mass production and mass consumption in the modern age. As research into media
history demonstrates, whether it be printed media, such as books, newspapers and
magazines, or electronic media, such as radio, TV, and the internet, each medium
experienced an explosive expansion during certain periods of its development within

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the modern nation state. How this expansion occurred, of course, varies according to the social environment of a particular nation or of a particular time. For example, in a nation with a capitalistic system, the rapid expansion of modern mass print media in print is likely a result of a mass-marketing strategy undertaken by the entire publishing business, while in a socialist nation, propaganda is considered to be the major catalyst. Whichever the case, it is undeniable that the rapid popularization of mass media, especially of mass print media, played an important role in the historical development of literature—both creative and critical writings—and in the formation of commonly held conceptions of literature. In fact, the very existence of “modern literature”—an entity whose concept may vary but which is normatively understood by the great majority of us at the present time—depends on mass print media prior to the establishment of electronic media. In Bourdieu’s terms, modern mass print media, especially newspapers and magazines, played an important role in the structure and operation of the literary field.

Through an examination of publishing activities of Kikuchi Kan, this study aims to clarify the relationship between literature and mass media in light of Bourdieu’s theory of the literary field.

**Studies on the Relationship between Literature and Mass Media in East Asia**

Several works in modern Chinese literary studies since the early 1980s have examined or reexamined neglected aspects of literary activities in Republican China. These works tend to focus on Chinese literary journals and magazines as the
publicizing agent of literature as well as commercial enterprises. They clarify how modern Chinese literature, or the literary field of modern China, was affected by competition within the field between various agents, such as an overarching political agenda of national salvation and the commodification and popularization of literary periodicals.\(^5\)

However, the relationship between literature and mass media in modern Japan has been little studied. Perhaps this is because the close relation between literature and the mass media in modern Japan is so obvious that it has become invisible. Another cause may be the fact that literary study and mass media study have become institutionalized as separate categories of research, and they are confined to their own highly specialized fields. In any case, a focused, systematic, and detailed study of the relation between literature and journalism in the context of modern Japan is called for.

**Modern Japanese Literature: A Case Study**

This dissertation deals with the early history of *Bungei shunjū* (Literary Times), a Japanese magazine created in 1923. It examines the roles this journal played in the formation of various cultural aspects of middle-class bourgeois life during the Taishō and Shōwa periods, including the popular notions of modernity and the nationstate.

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This study views *Bungei shunjū*, the leading literary and general-interest magazine in modern Japan, as a case study that sheds new light on the relationship between modern literature and journalism, and the publishing industry that made possible.

Japan has a long history of book production. Manuscript scrolls—the earliest form of book in Japan—first appeared in the Nara period (the 8th century). At around the same time, printing technology was also introduced from China, though it did not replace manuscript production as the dominant bookpublishing method until the 17th century.\(^6\) In contrast, Europe did not produce woodcut and block-print books until the 14th century.\(^7\) England and many other European countries did not acquire printing technology until the 15th century. Even if one considers the 17th century (i.e., the beginning of Edo period) as the time when commercial book publishing first emerged, Japan was not far behind major Western nations in terms of book publishing.\(^8\)

However, compared with some Western nations, Japan lagged far behind in terms of print journalism in the second half of the 19th century. The prevailing view among Japanese scholars of modern journalism has established the first decade of the Meiji period (which starts in 1868) as the time when Japanese periodicals (both newspapers and magazines) emerged. *Yokohama shinbun* is considered the first modern


\(^8\) Refer to Chapter XIII of *The Book in Japan*. 
newspaper and Seiyō zasshi the first modern magazine. In contrast, England published its first newspaper in 1641, and by 1709, London had many periodicals that were entertaining, informative, and educational.

Similarly, the modern concept of literature was also a later development in Japan. The present Japanese equivalent of the English term “literature” is bungaku, which originated in Chinese classics from Chunqiu period (the Spring and Autumn period) to refer to scholarly knowledge. Then in the Weishu (A.D. 550) which records the history of Wei period from 386 to 556, the term started to refer to writing poetry, essays, and other genres. It is only in the last century that the meaning of the term came to signify the “language arts,” specifically works of the imagination.

The relatively late beginnings of both the development of printed mass media and the formation of the common notion of literature in Japan enables the two to advance in a more parallel fashion than their Western counterparts. This parallel development enables students of mass media and modern literature to unravel, with more ease and to a fuller extent, the intricate relations between mass media and literature in the maze of the modern history of Japan, this with implications for the study of other modern nations.

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9 Yokohama shinbun was created in 1871, and Seiyō zasshi in 1868. For details see Nishida Taketoshi, Nihon jīnarisumushi kenkyū (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1989).
12 For definitions and examples of the usage of the term bungaku, see Morohashi Tetsuji, Daikanwa jiten, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Daishūkan Shoten, 1984) 565-566.
This dissertation focuses, for the most part, on the interwar period, particularly the late Taishō and early Shōwa periods, when magazines and newspapers showed an amazingly rapid expansion in Japan. This also was the time when literature (bungaku) became a notion constantly discussed and commonly understood by Japanese readers. More importantly for the purposes of this study, this is the period when literary production and mass media began to establish vital relationships with each other. The career of Kikuchi Kan and early history of Bungei shunjū together embody all of these trends.

**Bungei shunjū and Kikuchi Kan**

Of the thousands of the new magazines established in Japan during the Taishō period, the choice of Bungei shunjū as the focus of this study is, as suggested above, neither random nor arbitrary.

First, Bungei shunjū is a magazine coherently related to literature. In 1923, Kikuchi Kan—one of the most popular writers of his day—created the magazine as a coterie journal for his fellow writers and himself to be able to “say whatever was in our minds with free heart, without worrying about readers or editors.”\(^\text{13}\) Even after it was reformatted into a sōgō zasshi, or general-interest magazine, in 1926, literary writings (both creative and critical) were still an indispensable part in the magazine’s content.

Second, *Bungei shunjū* is one of the few magazines that was created before World War Two, survived the wartime decades, and is still published to this day. Though the first issue of *Bungei shunjū* sold only about three thousand copies, its circulation grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s. By its tenth anniversary, the magazine had reached 250,000 in circulation and had become one of the most widely recognized magazines in Japan.\(^\text{14}\) During the postwar years, *Bungei shunjū*’s reputation as a leading molder of public opinion remained the same. In terms of circulation, the monthly *Bungei shunjū* has consistently occupied the top position of all general-interest magazines since the late 1960s. It often makes the top-ten list of the largest magazines in Japan, surpassed only by TV guides, women’s magazines, and fashion magazines. *Shūkan bunshun*, a weekly publication by *Bungei shunjū*’s publisher Bungei Shunjūsha also is one of Japan’s most popular weeklies.

Although the circulation of *Bungei shunjū* has dwindled from a million in the early 1970s to about half of a million in recent years, *Bungei shunjū*, as the leading general-interest magazine, remains very influential in the formation of mainstream public opinion in Japan. Its influence can be demonstrated by the appearance, in 1982, of a book titled *Ayaushi?! Bungei shunjū* (In Danger?! Bungei shunjū), which harshly criticizes *Bungei shunjū* for its shaping public opinion toward the right. As will be demonstrated later in this study, the magazine became one of the first magazines to target a middlebrow readership in the late 1920s and during the pre-war period it took the lead in cooperating with the military and promoting a militarist ideology.

\(^{14}\) *Bungei shunjū sanjūgo-nen shikō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū Shinsha, 1959) 73.
Finally, Kikuchi Kan, the magazine’s founder and editor-in-chief during the pre-war period, played an important role in the development of not only the magazine but also the Japanese bundan (literary world) at large. He was not only a serious/popular writer, a playwright, and a publishing industry entrepreneur, but he was also a patron of young writers and a promoter of writers’ rights and welfare. His influence over the pre-war bundan was so pervasive that people called him ōgosho, or grand authority, of the Japanese literary world at the time.

This study treats Bungei shunjū as an organic unification of editorial strategies, creative and critical writings, readers’ contributions, and commercial management. It examines the process by which the magazine interacted with literary movements, mainstream and marginal ideologies, its existing and potential readership, and the social environment at large. It will show how the publication collaborated with the construction of the myth of “ideal middle-class reader” in the discourses on literature, modernity, and nation in twentieth century Japan, especially before and during the war.

The first chapter introduces and analyzes several facts concerning the creation of Bungei shunjū in order to clarify the often disputed “coterie journal” categorization of the magazine. It argues that during the first year of its existence, Bungei shunjū demonstrated a unique mixture of characteristics of both commercial magazines and coterie journals. These mixed characteristics foreshadowed the future development of the periodical as a commercial general-interest magazine.
As background to the formation of Bungei shunjū, the second chapter concerns the changes in Japanese reading modes and patterns from the late Meiji period to the early Shōwa period. It will next examine the interaction that took place between the editors and readers of the magazine in 1923. I will then show how this interaction, along with other factors, facilitated the expansion of Bungei shunjū to become a general-interest magazine in 1926.

The third chapter describes the role that Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū played in the development of Japan’s professional literary world. It does so through the chronicling of the early careers of two young writers: Yokomitsu Riichi and Naoki Sanjūgo. It describes how these two writers established personal connections with Kikuchi Kan and how the publication of their works in the magazine changed their trajectories in the literary field. It also compares the success story of Yokomitsu to that of Naoki in order to display the hierarchy of literary genres and complexity of the concept of literature.

The fourth chapter deals with the development of Bungei shunjū in the late 1920s. It examines how the magazine catered to a readership that was rapidly expanding after the Great Kanto Earthquake, and how it made efforts to solidify its position in the highly competitive magazine publishing business. New periodical publications such as Bungei kōza and Bungei jidai, their influence in literary circles, and their relationships with Bungei shunjū will be introduced. In so doing, a detailed account is presented on how Bungei shunjū was transformed from a small literary journal to a leading general-interest magazine.
The final chapter will briefly introduce the challenges that Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunju* faced in the 1930s and 40s. It describes the establishment of the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes and discusses the effects that these two literary prizes had on the literary and political discourses at the time. It also examines the complicated relationship between the magazine and increasingly tightened censorship, and argues that the magazine’s shifting ideological perspective was due to the desire to maintain popularity and keep up with the demands of its readership and the currents of the times. It explains the magazine’s effort to both detach and involve itself in the propaganda of the military government of Japan through literary works and activities, often inspired by the founder Kikuchi Kan.

The epilogue reviews *Bungei shunju*’s complex encounters with the politics, economics, and culture of its time, and the active role, both positive and negative, it played in the history of modern Japanese literature and in the history of modern Japan in general.
CHAPTER 1
THE FACTS CONCERNING THE CREATION OF BUNGEI SHUNJÛ

Around December 20, 1922, on the streets of Tokyo, people saw the inaugural issue of a new journal titled Bungei shunjû (文芸春秋, Literary Times). Copies of the journal were placed side by side with dozens of magazines and newspapers with which Tokyo readers were already familiar. Compared with the other magazines, this new journal appeared rather simple—no photographs, no paintings or illustrations, not even much adornment in fonts and boarders. On the cover, the only thing that would attract people’s attention besides the title was the table of contents in which names of such literary celebrities as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Kikuchi Kan were listed. The majority of those people that stopped by at the bookstores or newsstands probably barely noticed the journal. Some 2,900 people, on the other hand, did pay attention and actually spent ten sen and purchased a copy of what they thought would be a new coterie literary journal.15 This was the humble start of Bungei shunjû. In the next two years, however, the journal would experience a transformation into a commercial

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15 The term “coterie journal” will be defined below.
periodical. And by its fourth anniversary, the magazine would reach 150,000 in
circulation—one of the highest among its peers. It would go on to become a mighty
force in the Japanese publishing business before and during World War Two.

How did Bungei shunjū achieve such popularity within such a short period in
1920s Japan when publishing was already a highly competitive business? In order to
answer this question, I examine two aspects of this phenomenal success of the
magazine—production and reception. In the process, I answer two critical questions:
(1) exactly what kind of periodical was it in its early years, or more specifically, to
what kind of readership did it cater? (2) how did contemporary readers receive the
periodical, or more accurately, why did its readers choose it over other periodicals. I
answer the first question in the present chapter and the second in chapter 2.

As regards the production of the magazine, I first establish my criterion of
categorizing periodicals generally as coterie or commercial. Second, I will introduce
facts that both support and question the established categorization of Bungei shunjū as
conceived as a coterie journal. With regards to the reception of the periodical, I
outline the historical process by which its potential readership was prepared in terms
of literary and reading habits. Then, I describe how the magazine interacted with its
existing and potential readers to maintain and expand its popularity. During these

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16 Both circulation figures (of the inaugural issue and of the fourth anniversary issue) are cited from
17 In post-war Japan, the monthly Bungei shunjū had even greater commercial success. Its circulation
constantly topped other monthly magazines and peaked at one million in September 1977. The
publisher Bungei Shunjūsha also published many other popular periodicals and is one of the top five
book publishers in Japan at present.
inquiries, certain aspects of the historical background and some key facts concerning
the magazine’s creation and early development are described, and a new perspective
of looking at contemporary Japanese literary periodicals will be proposed.

1.1 Commercial Magazine or Coterie Journal?

Modern periodical publications can be divided roughly into two very general
categories—commercial and non-commercial. This was as true in 1920s Japan as it
was in the West. With the emergence of gigantic daily newspapers such as Osaka
asahi shinbun (大阪朝日新聞, Osaka Asahi) and Osaka mainichi shinbun (大阪毎日
新聞, Osaka Daily) in the late 19th century, the world of Japanese newspaper
publishing was dominated by commercial newspapers. Non-commercial newspapers
were very much limited temporally and spatially—many lasted only one year or two
and circulated only locally. Situations in magazine publishing were different yet
similar. Magazines that targeted women readers, such as Shufu no tomo (主婦の友,
Friends of Housewives) and Fujin kurabu (婦人倶楽部, Woman’s Club), and
magazines that were entertainment-oriented, such as Kōdan kurabu (講談クラブ,
Story-Telling Club) and Kōdan zasshi (講談雑誌, Story-Telling Magazine), topped
the charts of various reading surveys conducted at the time.18 Both of these types of
publications were thought to be tailored toward middlebrow and lowbrow readers by

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18 For details of how these two types of magazines performed in various reading surveys in the 1920s,
see Nagamine Shigetoshi, Zasshi to dokusha no kindai (Tokyo: Nihon Editāsūkūru Shuppanbu, 1997)
critics and scholars in part because of their simplistic contents. The so-called general-interest magazines such as Chūō kōron (Central Review) and Kaizō (Reformation) were very influential in forming public opinion among intellectuals. They were commercial undertakings, even though they appeared to be serious in their themes and their circulation figures were relatively small. Non-commercial magazines, the majority of which were coterie journals or organs of certain social institutions, were rather marginalized like their newspaper counterparts. Many creators and readers of these coterie journals were often influential figures in the literary, philosophical, and/or political fields. Nonetheless, their celebrity was often not enough to sustain the small journals.

Each and every magazine and journal is, of course, unique. The complexity of their contents, styles, readerships, editing, and managements defies any easy categorization. Even though I will attempt to establish the concepts of “commercial magazines” and “coterie journals” in the following paragraphs, I do not intend to oversimplify the complicated situation of any periodical publication. The discussion of Bungei shunjū will stress its complexity. The purpose of establishing these concepts is to find a starting point from which the complexity of Bungei shunjū can be explored.

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19 Nagamine Shigetoshi considers the entire Taishō period as the time when womens journals and magazines were competing to attract readers of lower social classes, and he lists both Shufu no tomo and Fujin kurabu as the winners of this battle. See Nagamine Shigetoshi, Zasshi to dokusha no kindai (Tokyo: Nihon Editasukūru Shuppanbu, 1997) 172-194.

20 The Japanese equivalent is 総合雑誌, or sōgo zasshi, which some translated as “quality magazines.” I prefer “general-interest magazines” and I keep this translation throughout this dissertation.
By “commercial magazines,” I mean the magazines that sustain their own survival and development in market competition by various commercial activities, most important of which is selling copies of their products and publishing advertisements. Many of these journals existed to forward social, political, or religious agendas, but the editors discovered that financial profit was also possible. Eventually, financial profit became a major motivation for publication. Nonetheless, these journals supported some broader ideological aims often explicitly. Commercial magazines in Japan existed without significant support from religious, governmental, or political institutions in the form of financial favor, political privilege, or any other types of sponsorship. In terms of historical development, commercial magazines are the products of modern society where education, literacy, communication, technology, and other factors made possible a mass readership, mass production, and mass distribution of periodical publications.

For entrepreneurs of commercial magazines, their critical task is to learn what the targeted readers are reading, what they want to read, and how they read. Needless to say, the reader is vitally important to the survival of commercial magazines as a consumer is to any commercial corporation. In order to understand any particular commercial magazine, one must look from the perspective of readership into the particular situations of the time when the magazine was published and sustained. Examining magazines from the perspective of readership requires answers to the following sorts of questions: What kinds of people comprised the readership, that is, what were the readers’ economical, political, and educational positions in their
societies? How did the periodical publishers perceive the readers’ needs? How were these perceptions carried out in publications? What were the readers’ reactions? How did all of these features of magazines and their readerships change over time?

Coterie journals (dōjin zasshi 同人雑誌), on the other hand, are much less reader-oriented than commercial magazines. As defined in the authoritative Nihongo daijiten, it refers to “the non-commercial magazines that are written, compiled, edited, and published by a coterie, i.e., those people who have the same goals in terms of literature, thoughts, tastes, and so forth. Many are in the field of literature and art.” These journals are usually created by an exclusive circle of people who share the same opinions on certain issues and who want to publicize their thoughts. Such publications are often funded by members of the circle. Monetary profit is usually not on the top of the list of goals, if it makes it onto the list at all. It is the acquirement and accumulation of “symbolic capital” that is the ultimate goal of a coterie journal publication. Coterie journals are often introverted or even self-absorbed. They show indifference or even contempt for commercial practices in publishing. Their readerships are often very limited. This is particularly true in the case of coterie journals in the literary field. In some cases, they exist for the purpose of promoting communication between members of the exclusive coterie rather than between coterie members and outsiders.

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22 The term “symbolic capital” is borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu. He defines the concept as “forms of knowledge, an internalized code or cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts.” For details, refer to Pierre Bourdieu, In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology, trans. Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) 22-111.
In the Japanese literary world of the 1920s, the distinctions between commercial magazines and coterie journals often implied an opposition between the elite and the masses, highbrow and lowbrow, or serious literature and popular writing. As titles of such popular commercial magazines as *Shufu no tomo*, *Nogyō sekai* (農業世界, Agriculture World), and *Shōtenkai* (商店界, The Shopowner’s World) suggest, they are often associated with social groups such as housewives, farmers, urban low-income laborers who contrast with elite groups—students, government employees, male white-collar workers, and so forth. It was these elite groups, especially college students, that the coterie journals were often created by and/or for. The elite groups were highly educated and concerned with social issues. Instead of leisure entertainment or tools for everyday-life, they pursued metaphysical questions in literature, philosophy, and art. In this sense, Bourdieu’s description of the 19th century French literary world as the “economic world reversed” seems to be valid when applied to Japan in the 1920s.23

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23 From his observation of 19th century French literature, and in his effort to eschew subjectivism and objectivism in cultural studies, Pierre Bourdieu developed two concepts: “habitus” and “field.” “Habitus” refers to the system of “durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.” “Field” refers to “a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force independent of those of politics and the economy, except, obviously, in the cases of the economic and political fields.” A series of fields, such as economic field, educational field, and cultural field, are organized in a certain hierarchy to form the society. Therefore, Bourdieu deems the cultural field, especially the literary field, as the space where an autonomous principle (a high respect to symbolic capital) and heteronomous principles (which are exerted by external factors, such as economic consideration) act out against one another. In most literary fields, the autonomous principle is dominant and economic gains usually mean loss in symbolic capital. In this respect, literary field is an “economic world reversed.” For details of Bourdieu’s argument on this topic, see “Part I The Field of Cultural Production,” Pierre Bourdieu, *The
However this literary-world-as-economic-world-reversed model is far from being perfect in describing the magazine publishing business of the Taishō and Shōwa periods due to the economic, political, and cultural differences existing between 19th century France and 20th century Japan. For example, such general-interest magazines as Chūō kōron and Kaizō were able to achieve both relatively large circulations and high prestige as opinion leaders in contemporary politics and serious literature.

*Bungei shunju* also contradicts the Bourdieu model. First, it is difficult to situate *Bungei shunju* on the spectrum from lowbrow commercial magazine to highbrow coterie journal. Was the magazine a Grub Street-type commercial magazine or an ivory tower coterie journal? Did it possess the qualities of the general-interest magazines or the entertainment-oriented ones? Did the qualities that it possessed at birth change in later years? If so, how did they change?

Literary histories and dictionaries do not address these questions. Most simply categorize the magazine as “a journal of literary essays.” Many hold the opinion that this magazine, like many other Taishō literary magazines, was first created as a coterie literary journal. The latter idea was explicitly forwarded retrospectively by the publisher Bungei Shunjūsha. To celebrate the magazine’s seventieth anniversary, Bungei Shunjūsha published, in 1991, a two-volume company history. In the preface, Kanbayashi Gorō, the president of Bungei Shunjūsha, cited Kikuchi Kan’s famous “Creation Announcement” and claimed that Kan, together with his friends, “published

Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature, ed. and tran. Randal Johnson (Columbia University Press, 1993) 27-141. The two concepts introduced above are cited from Randal Johnson’s introduction of this book, page 5 and 6 respectively.

the coterie magazine *Bungei shunjū.*”^{25} Similarly, *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten,* which is perhaps the most authoritative and comprehensive reference concerning modern Japanese literature, also claims that *Bungei shunjū* was created by a group of writers who were closely associated with Kan as a coterie. According to this company history, this entry in *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten,* and many other narratives concerning the creation of the magazine, it was only in later years that the coterie system was abolished in the process of the journal’s transformation into a commercial enterprise.

In the following discussion, I explore the evidence that supports the argument concerning the creation of the magazine as a coterie journal and the evidence that problematizes the current orthodox perception that *Bungei shunjū* was a coterie journal at its birth.

### 1.2 *Bungei shunjū* as a Coterie Journal

First, *Bungei shunjū* was not created by a social institution, such as a commercial publisher, a religious school, a political group, or with family-capital. It was created by a single human being—Kikuchi Kan, who was a writer and literary critic and who had not much background in periodical publishing. This fact fundamentally distinguished *Bungei shunjū* from most of its peer publications, both commercial and coterie. This distinction is particularly marked if we compare the magazine with the

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already established literary/general-interest magazines Chūō kōron and Kaizō. The choice of these two magazines for comparison is appropriate because both were often grouped with Bungei shunjū as the leading general-interest magazines of the 1920s and 1930s.

Chūō kōron was the earliest one to be created among the three. At its beginning, the magazine was titled Hanseikai zasshi (反省会雑誌, The Temperance) and founded by a group of students in Kyoto in 1887.26 The students were enrolled in a Buddhist middle school which was affiliated with Nishi Honganji.27 They formed a religious group called Hanseikai (反省会, Society of Introspection) and created the journal as the society’s bulletin to promote morality among Buddhist believers. In 1892, the title of the magazine was changed to Hansei zasshi (反省雑誌, Introspection Journal) and the publisher from Hanseikai to Hansei Zasshisha (反省雑誌社, Introspection Journal Press) due to the fact that its publication focused more on the topics of social and political issues rather than Buddhist themes. By 1899, when the title “Chūō kōron” was adopted, the journal had been redirected as a politically charged magazine of general interest. Especially in the heyday of the Taishō Democracy movement, the magazine became the center stage for political debates, and this assured its status as the premier periodical in Japan’s social and political life.

In 1914, the publishing house had grown into such an independent enterprise that it changed its name from Hansei Zasshisha to Chūō Kōronsha (中央公論社, Chūō

26 The Temperance was the English title that appeared in the first issue of the magazine, though I think a more accurate English translation of the Japanese title is Society of Introspection Journal.
27西本願寺, Nishi Hongan Temple.
Kōron Press). This symbolized the final institutionalization of Chūō kōron’s publisher as one of the most influential commercial presses at the time. Starting January 1916, Chūō Kōronsha began to publish another magazine Fujin kōron, which targeted female readers. In 1919, the two magazines had reached a combined circulation of 150,000.\(^{28}\) In short, Chūō kōron was already transformed into an independent commercially operated publishing enterprise by early Taishō despite its origin as a bulletin of a religious group.

The birth of Kaizō and its publisher Kaizōsha (改造社, Kaizō Press) is quite another story. It was created in 1919 by Yamamoto Sanehiko, one of the most legendary publishers in modern Japanese journalism. Sanehiko started his career in journalism right after college graduation as a reporter for Yamato shinbun (やまと新聞, Yamato). Also active in politics, he became a city municipal councilman of Tokyo in 1913 and was able to collect enough funding to buy Tokyo mainichi shinbun (東京毎日新聞, Tokyo Daily) which was having trouble in business at the time. Sanehiko worked as the president of the paper for four years and sold the newspaper in 1917. After a brief adventure in Siberia in 1918 when Japan dispatched troops there during the Russian Revolution, he received an investigation fee in the sum of 60,000 yen from a Japanese mining company which was involved in the military presence of Japan in Siberia.

\(^{28}\) Chūō kōron sold 120,000 and Fujin kōron sold 30,000 in 1919. These figures and other facts concerning the creation and development of Chūō kōron are drawn from Chūō kōron nanajū-nen shi (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1955), and from Keiko Otsuka, “The Development of the Quality Magazines in Taishō Japan: the Founding of the Central Review,” MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1977.
Upon his return from Siberia, Sanehiko had meetings to plan his reelection with a group of his *Tokyo mainichi shinbun* employees. During one of the meetings, he decided to start a magazine, which he defined as a general-interest magazine for commercial sale instead of merely a personal pamphlet tailored for his own political agenda. In 1919, *Kaizō* was created. Sanehiko invested 25,000 yen out of the investigation fee in the magazine, though most of the publishing work was done by his subordinates from *Tokyo mainichi shinbun*. However, the investment was almost all lost in the publication of the first three issues which had a return rate of more than 60% due to uncharacteristic editing. Disappointed by the circulation figures, Sanehiko decided to change the direction of the magazine. The fourth issue came out as a special edition on the then-popular topics of socialism and proletariats. It was an instant success. As its fame rose, *Kaizō* also attracted literary celebrities such as Shiga Naoya, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to publish their works in the magazine. Eventually, the magazine established its status as the main stage for discussion of socialism and serious literature and as the primary rival to *Chūō kōron*.

*Bungei shunjū* was created by Kikuchi Kan in a manner different from the other two journals. First, the objectives for its founding seemed to be neither commercial nor political, as they were for *Chūō kōron* and *Kaizō* respectively. Moreover, Kan single-handedly created the periodical. In this respect, it is often considered as Kan’s personal journal instead of a coterie journal.29

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29 *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* claims that *Bungei shunjū* can be viewed as Kikuchi Kan’s “watakushi zasshi (my journal)” or “uchiwa zasshi (private journal).” *Nihon Kindai Bungakkan* ed., *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977-1978) 381.
In the Japanese literary world in 1923, the name of Kikuchi Kan was far more significant than it is today. As a writer of popular literature, Kan had already published simultaneously in *Osaka mainichi shinbun* and *Tokyo nichinichi shinbun* (東京日々新聞, Tokyo Everyday) such serialized novels as *Shinjū fujin* (真珠婦人, Madam Pearl, 1920) and *Hibana* (火華, Spark, 1922), both of which were instant hits. As a successful playwright, he had already staged in 1920 the sensational *Chichi kaeru* (父帰る, Returning Father, 1917) for which he is probably best known. As an active critic and writer of pure literature, he had won praise from senior writers, and he had been involved in highly publicized debates with established literary figures such as Satomi Ton. As an enthusiastic participant in literary activities, he had been involved in the famous *Shin-shichō* (新思潮, New Trend of Thought) journal and had befriended Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Kume Masao. As an avid supporter of new literary schools and writers, he had sponsored in various ways such promising young writers as Yokomitsu Riichi and Kawabata Yasunari, who would soon become the new stars of the literary scene.

In short, Kikuchi Kan had, by this time in his career, accumulated enough capital—both economic and symbolic—to single-handedly create a literary magazine. So he did. He financed the publication with his own money, invited contributions from writers, edited the drafts, and designed the format.

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30 For further information of Kikuchi Kan’s literary career, refer to my MA thesis “Kikuchi Kan’s Literary Ideas and Practice,” The Ohio State University, 2001.
In *Bungei shunjū*’s tenth anniversary issue published in January 1932, Sasaki Mituzō³¹ remembers how Kikuchi Kan asked him about the idea of creating a magazine in 1922, “[Kikuchi Kan] asked me in a soft and gentle voice, ‘In any case, two hundred yen or so from my pocket will do it, right? Well, I will put the money down. How about the title *Gajō* (牙城, Stronghold)? Tell me. What do you think?’”³²

This anecdote reveals the fact that Kikuchi Kan did have the intention to use his own money to start the periodical. Whether he did so or not requires further investigation. There is evidence that Kikuchi Kan did finance the magazine for the first five years. As he confessed in the “Postscript from the Editor” in the February issue of 1928, “My personal income and expenditure and those of the magazine are all mixed up. Some people told me to change the magazine to a stock company, at least in form, to clarify the income and expenditure of it. I am thinking over this issue now.”³³ It seems certain that *Bungei shunjū* was indeed financed by Kikuchi Kan’s personal resources.

However, the two hundred yen that Kikuchi intended to invest turned out to be insufficient. In the August issue of 1923, Kikuchi Kan published the magazine’s first account of profit and loss in which he gave financial details of the first four issues. According to this account, the first issue cost a total of 374.98 yen, which included paper (70 yen), cover paper (14.7 yen), printing (50 yen), binding (15 yen), manuscript...

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³¹ Sasaki Mituzō (佐々木味津三, 1896-1934): novelist. He graduated from Meiji University and was a member of *Bungei jidai* coterie. He debuted as a serious writer but soon switched to popular novel. His works include *Umon torimonochō* (右門捕物帖, Detective Memoirs of Umon), *Hatamoto taikutuotoko* (旗本退屈男, Hatamoto Taikutsuotoko) and others.


and editorial payment (120 yen), and newspaper advertisement (105.28 yen). This amount almost doubled the two hundred which Kikuchi Kan had considered sufficient to start the magazine. However, this does not necessarily mean that Kikuchi Kan received funds from others. And, in fact, there appears to be no evidence that there were other funding sources for the first two years of the magazine.

Many writers have remembered the simple manner in which Kikuchi Kan asked for contributions to the magazine. Uno Kōji is one of them. In January of 1923, Uno was visiting Eguchi Kan at Nasu hot-spring resort. At this time, the first issue of Bungei shunjū was already on the market and Kikuchi seemed to be in the middle of collecting manuscripts for the forthcoming issues. Uno sent a greeting card to Kikuchi Kan with the joint signature of Eguchi. In reply, Kikuchi wrote,

Dear Kōji and Kan, thank you for the card. Would both of you contribute to Bungei shunjū for sure? Would you write something between two and five pages just the way you would write a reply to this letter? Manuscript fee is uniformly ten yen (regardless of length). Please. I think you might have time, so please write for me. Whatever you write is fine. Please reply immediately.

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35 Uno Kōji (宇野浩二, 1891-1961): novelist. He became noticed in 1919 with the publication of Kura no naka (蔵の中, In the Storehouse) and Ku no sekai (苦の世界, The World of Misery). Along with Kawabata Yasunari, Kobayashi Hideo, and Hirotu Kazuo, Uno created the journal Bungakukai. He was also active in literary criticism and children literature.
36 Eguchi Kan (江口渙, 1887-1975): novelist, critic, poet and social activist. He left Tokyo University right before graduation and started to publish works in various periodicals. From 1925 on, he became more drawn toward Marxism and became an important member of proletarian literature. His works include Koi to rōgoku (恋と牢獄, Love and Prison), Mitsu no shi (三つの死, Three Death) and others.
37 This letter is cited and translated from Uno Kōji, “Omoidasu mamani,” Bungei shunjū Nov. 1955: 100.
Due to a schedule conflict, Uno could not write an essay on Kikuchi Kan’s request. But Eguchi did. And both were very much impressed by the way Kikuchi asked for a contribution.

Even though the covers of all the issues of the magazine in its early years said “Kikuchi Kan henshū” (Edited by Kikuchi Kan) above the title, Kikuchi Kan did not actually edit all of the draft manuscripts by himself. The magazine, in its first year, had increased its pages from 32 for the first issue to 82 for the July issue, and to 126 for the November special issue. It is not plausible to assume that Kikuchi Kan was able to accomplish all the editorial work by himself. Sasaki Mitsuzō recalled once that Kikuchi Kan asked him to proofread some works to be published in the first issue. In November 1923, right after Nakagawa Yoichi became enlisted as a coterie member of Bungei shunjū, he started editing for the magazine. According to Nakagawa, “There was no such thing as editor, an official position for which someone was chosen and assigned.” However, there is no doubt that Kikuchi was responsible for choosing the editorial board and for the final edited products. In other words, he was the editor-in-chief.

In the company history, there are many anecdotes concerning the one-man creation of the periodical by Kikuchi Kan: how he took the title Bungei shunjū from the name of a literary column that he hosted in Shinchō (新潮, New Tides), one of the major literary journals at the time; how he decided on the unique quadruple column setting,

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38 For details, see Bungei Shunjūsha, ed., Bungei shunjū rokujū-nen no ayumi (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 1982) 9.
the black print all through the entire issue, the rough paper, and the pragmatic
minimalist style in decoration; and so forth. All these fairly personal aspects of the
magazine in its early years distinguish it from most other commercial magazines and
many coterie journals.

One person does not make a coterie. The second fact relevant to Bungei shunjū’s
coterie-journal categorization is that Kikuchi Kan was closely associated with a group
of writers. The same fact also decisively distinguishes the periodical from Chūō kōron
and Kaizō.

In his earlier career as a rising young writer, Kikuchi Kan was already
participating in literary groups. In 1910, he was admitted to First Higher School in
Tokyo, and he got to know Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Kume Masao, who would
become his life-long friends and colleagues in the literary world. While enrolled in
Kyoto Imperial University, Kikuchi Kan was involved in 1914 in the third Shinshichō,
which was created by Akutagawa, Kume, and several others including Matsuoka
Yuzuru, Naruse Shōichi, and Yamamoto Yūzō. Then in 1916, right before
graduation, he created the fourth Shinshichō along with Akutagawa, Kume, Matsuoka
and Naruse.

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40松岡譲 (1891-1969): novelist and literary critic. He was a classmate of Kikuchi Kan at First High
School. He debuted as a promising novelist but eventually transferred to the study of Natsume Sōseki
from creative writing after his troubled marriage to Natsume Sōseki’s eldest daughter. 成瀬正一
(1892-1936): scholar, translator. He was also Kikuchi Kan’s classmate at First High School. He
advanced his career mostly in academia and became a professor and translator of French literature.山本
有三 (1887-1974): novelist and playwright. He graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1915 and
debuted as a playwright. In 1926, he serialized a novel titled Ikittoshi ikeru mono (いきとし生けるも
の, All the Things that are Alive) in Asahi shinbun and eventually established his fame as a writer.
Shinshichō is one of the most widely known coterie journals ever published in the history of modern Japanese literature. It was created, discontinued, reestablished, and re-discontinued more than a dozen times. The first four Shinshichō are generally regarded as the most influential ones. Kikuchi Kan contributed seven creative works to the magazine—three in the third and four in the fourth. Even though the first five pieces were published under a pseudonym, the name Kikuchi Kan was closely related to Shinshichō magazine ever since the publication of these works. Moreover, the seven works include some of Kikuchi Kan’s best plays such as Chichi kaeru and Okujō no kyōjin (屋上の狂人, Madman on the Roof, 1916).

In addition to the Shinshichō coterie, Kikuchi Kan was also associated with a literary coterie named Bungei Shunjū, after the title of the group’s periodical. Kikuchi Kan probably instituted this practice himself. As early as in the February 1923 issue, Kikuchi was already using dōjin, or coterie member, to refer to the people who had been involved in the publication of the magazine. In the “Postscript from the Editor” of this February issue, Kikuchi Kan tried to dismiss some rumors that were circulating in the bundan. “This time, I made the people, who are listed below, coterie members. They are the ones I asked to help edit this magazine. They are neither my subordinates nor my disciples.”

The list was published in a small box titled “Henshū dōjin” (Editorial Coterie). The coterie is comprised of fourteen members including Kawabata Yasunari, Yokomitsu Riichi, Kon Tōkō, and Sasaki Mitsuzō. In the next

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42 今東光 (1898-1977): novelist. As a member of the so-called Neo-Sensation School, he was involved in the publication of the sixth Shinshichō and Bungei jidai. In 1929, he left the school and became a
issue, Kikuchi Kan notified his readers that Sasaki Mitsuzō had just published a book and he referred to Sasaki as “honshi dōjin,” or “a coterie member of this magazine.”

The practice of defining the periodical as a coterie journal was immediately picked up by others, both contributors and readers. For example, in the fourth issue of 1923, Oka Eiichirō published an essay titled “Jōgo,” or “Redundancy.” He addressed the essay “To Bungei Shunjū coterie and contributors.” Ten years later, to celebrate its tenth anniversary, the magazine published some letters from its readers. In one of the letters, a reader listed Akutagawa, Kume, Kikuchi, and several others as the “ex-coterie members.” This indicates that by the year 1932, among common readers of the magazine, it was recognized that Bungei shunjū was a coterie journal in its early years and that it had changed to a commercial, general-interest magazine only later. Students of modern Japanese literature also accept this idea. The notion that Bungei shunjū was a coterie journal is widely recognized in the scholarly literature.

During the first years of its existence, Bungei shunjū was created solely as a literary journal and was intended to be solely a medium for literary matters. Compared with Chūō kōron and Kaizō, the journal lacked comprehensive coverage of contemporary social and political issues. Kikuchi Kan never stated on any occasion

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44 岡栄一郎 (1890-1966): playwright. He graduated from Tokyo Imperial University and published several historical plays. He was also active in theater criticism and novel-writing too.
that the reason he created the magazine was to gain economic profit. His motivation for founding the magazine seems to have had nothing to do with making money.

In the “Creation Announcement” published on the first page of the first issue of *Bungei shunjū*, Kikuchi wrote as follows:

> I am tired of being requested to say something. I would like to try, with liberty, saying things that are on my mind. I would like to try saying them without regard for the feelings of reader or editor. Many friends of mine perhaps have the same thoughts. Moreover, among the young people that I know, there are many who are on the verge of saying things that they can not hold within themselves.

> I decided to start this small magazine partly for myself and partly for these other people.

Judging from this statement, we can see that Kikuchi Kan was trying to create a medium through which he, his friends or coterie, and young promising writers could freely express their opinions on literary issues. With a journal of their own, they need not worry about editors or readers. It is plausible that Kan was honestly expressing his intention in the “Creation Announcement” simply because he was already one of the best paid writers of the time and as a business, publishing a literary magazine was more risky than many other kinds of enterprises due to fierce competition and censorship. Moreover, this intention appears to be in the same vein as some of Kan’s ideas about literature and life in general. These ideas can be illustrated through a brief account of a famous debate that Kikuchi Kan was involved in 1920.

At the time of the debate, Kan was still a relative newcomer to the literary field. The debate was on the topic of the evaluation of literary works. And Kan’s opponent
in the debate was Satomi Ton, who was already a literary veteran. Satomi Ton had been writing a series of critical essays titled “Bungei kanken” (Immature Ideas on Literature, 1920) in which he supported the idea of _geijutsu shijō-shugi_, or “the doctrine of art for art’s sake.” Expressing a different viewpoint about the same issue, Kikuchi Kan replied with an essay entitled “Bungei sakuhin no naiyō-tekikachi” (The Content-Derived Value of Literary Works, 1920). First, he argued against the slogan of “art for art’s sake”: “Some people say that no value exists in literary works other than artistic values. I do not agree… I think that a kind of value does exist that is totally different from artistic expression.” He listed evidence to show art’s non-artistic value—that it has the power to move the human heart—and he created a phrase of his own to describe it: _naiyō-teki kachi_, or content-derived value. The phrase defies easy translation, but in explaining his definition, he wrote, “This [content-derived value] is a phrase that I use for convenience. I think it is good to describe its power as the value of life because it resounds within our lives. I also think it is good to divide it into the value of morals and the value of ideas, if we classify it in detail.” In the end, Kikuchi Kan wanted literature to be more closely related to life. At the conclusion of another essay, he coined the famous saying, “*Seikatsu daiichi geijutsu daini*,” or “Life first, art second.” This statement has led many to label him a “pragmatist.”

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47 As the youngest of the “Arishima brothers,” Satomi Ton participated in the creation of the journal _Shirakaba_ in 1910. In 1914, he serialized a novel titled _Haha to ko_ (母と子, Mother and Child) in _Tokyo asahi shinbun_ under the recommendation by Natsume Sōseki and established his status in the Japanese literary field.


49 Ibid, 231.
Related to this idea of content-derived value, Kan also paid attention to the didactic function of morality in literature. Even before his debates with Satomi Ton, he had written a short piece titled “Jinsei no tame no geijutsu” (Art for Life’s Sake, 1920). In the essay, he stated that even those artists who believe in art for art’s sake and create works only for the realization of their artistic ideals, are actually providing human beings with “more innocent and higher moral characters.” In this regard, it appears that Kan defined content-derived value from a more morally nuanced perspective. For Kan, the content-derived value in literature lies in the fact that literary works contribute to making human beings more human. This morally pedagogic function is not necessary for literary works to be art, but it is important if the works are to be great art. Moral enlightenment seems to be the ultimate goal of great literary works. Consequently, naiyō-tekki kachi becomes a major criterion for evaluating literature. A literary journal where Kan and his friends could write what they wanted to write was seen as beneficial to literature and human life at large.

Kikuchi Kan’s debate with Satomi Ton might have been a direct impetus to the creation of Bungei shunjū. It is obvious that Kan wanted to have control over the medium through which his ideal of a morally educational literature that possesses content-derived values would be realized.

The intention to control the medium of the message could also have been the result of Kan’s dissatisfaction toward literary publishing in Japan. As an aspiring literary youth, Kikuchi Kan had encountered restrictions that had been imposed by editors and

50 Ibid, 223.
publishers upon him. Even before the debate with Satomi Ton, Kan had published creative works that deal with the problem of literary youth trying to get recognized by publishers and by the literary field. In these works, Kan expressed the confusion, disappointment, and even despair that young writers often shared, and he criticized indirectly those editors, publishers, and writers who were ignorant of the misery of youth. This is probably why Kan mentioned young people toward the end of the “Creation Announcement.”

Representative of these works about confused literary youth is “Mumei sakka no nikki” (Dairy of A Unknown Writer), which was published in the July 1918 issue of Chūō kōron. It was considered by Kan's contemporaries as an autobiographical short story. As the title indicates, the story was written in a diary style, which instantly ensures readers’ identification of Kikuchi as the first person narrator and draws attention to similarities between the life of the protagonist and the life of Kikuchi Kan. “I” (ore), the protagonist of the story, is depressed since his two classmates created a coterie journal and achieved fame in the literary field. He is upset because he was excluded from the journal. And “I” is enraged by one of his classmates who requested that he contribute but then refused to publish his manuscript. Except for the use of fictional names, the outline of the novel matches Kikuchi Kan's personal life almost perfectly. It is likely that two classmates in the story correspond to Akutagawa and Kume in real life. The coterie magazine seems to be the Shinshichō. Even though
Kan was indeed included in the editorial committee of Shinshichō, and he did publish several works in it, he was unable to gain critical praise from influential literary figures as Akutagawa or Kume did.\footnote{For more details of the short story and its resemblance to Kikuchi Kan’s real life, refer to my thesis, page 7-11.}

Literary critics and literary journals and magazines were criticized more directly in Kan’s critical essays. In a 1919 essay titled “Inshō hihyō no hei” (Drawbacks of Impressionist Criticism), Kikuchi Kan generalized the situation of literary criticism as follows,

> Recent literary criticism—especially criticism of creative writing—has no authority at all. It merely changed literary magazines and literary columns in newspapers into entertainment-reading materials. It is often rewarded with sneers by writers. There is nothing that contemporary criticism can teach the literary world.\footnote{Kikuchi Kan, “Inshō hihyō no hei,” Kikuchi Kan zenshū, vol. 14 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1938) 213.}

Even though the piece is mostly focused on Japanese critics’ indulgence in impressionist criticism, Kikuchi Kan forthrightly criticized Japanese literary publication and the mass media in general. According to Kan, the impressionist critics often based their evaluation of a literary work on their general impressions whether that piece of writing was interesting or not. Partly due to this impressionist criticism, literary magazines became entertainment-oriented, or yomimono-like. In Japanese, the term of yomimono often connotes reading materials whose purpose is to entertain a lowbrow readership. Kikuchi Kan seems to suggest that this yomimono publishing was not beneficial to the Japanese literary world. His creation of Bungei shunjū three years later was probably an attempt to rectify such yomimono publishing.
In addition to his questioning of the attitudes in literary periodicals, Kikuchi Kan’s anti-proletarian stance was probably also a crucial motivation in the creation of Bungei shunjū as a coterie journal. In the early 1920s, proletarian literature had become the most debated literary phenomenon in the Japanese literary field. Kikuchi Kan had publicly expressed his disenchantment with the school in Bungei shunjū and some other media. Kan’s attitude probably had bestowed the periodical with the image of a highly bourgeois, highly artistic, and highly modernist publication. This image also contributed to the periodical’s categorization as a coterie journal.

Even though Kikuchi Kan’s ideas resemble some tenets of Marxist theory, Kan disagreed with the Japanese literary adoption of Marxism, namely, “puroretaria bungaku” (proletarian literature). First of all, Kan did not think that art is necessarily related to the class struggle. In an essay titled “Geijutsu puropaa ni kaikyū nashi” (There Are No Classes in the Arts Per Se, 1922), Kan argued, “The essence of the arts is not the theme, ideas, or emotions which are depicted in works, but the ways in which [writers] observe, feel, and depict these themes, ideas and emotions.” Kan admitted that the settings and characters of any literary work will unavoidably take on the colors of its time. However, he argued strongly against the proletarian group, who

53 Most students of modern Japanese literature agree that the creation of the journal Tane maku hito (種蒔く人, The Sower) in February 1921 is the hallmark of the establishment of Japanese proletarian literature, either as a concept or as a literary school. Some trace the beginning of Japanese proletarian literature further back to Miyajima Sukeo’s novel Kōfu (坑夫, The Miner), which was published in 1916. Some even take 1912, or the first year of Taisho period as the beginning. Nonetheless, by the year of 1923, proletarian literature, as a rival of the Naturalist school, had developed into one of the most important phenomenon in the Japanese literary field. For a brief account of various theories concerning the beginning of Japanese proletarian literature, refer to Asukai Masamichi, Nohon puroretaria bungaku shiron (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1982).

maintained that a work is not art if it does not manifest class-consciousness. He believed that the essence of art does not change over time and has no relation with class struggle at all.

Second, Kan viewed with contempt the idea of the proletarian literature group that literature should be used for the purpose of popularizing proletarian ideas about political evolution. He even stated that those arts used for the utilitarian purpose of solving social problems are degenerate. Thus, while he sought to enlighten in his own literature, he criticized proletarian literature from the standpoint of the importance of social harmony and he takes a constructive approach, which is different from the combative ideas of radical proletarian theories.

Moreover, he was dissatisfied with the literary techniques of proletariat literature. In the lecture “History and Trends of Modern Japanese Literature,” he criticized the proletarian literature group’s use of literature to bring about social upheaval. Then he concluded retrospectively, “As proletarian literature became a formula—repeating the same purpose, the same theme, and the same characters—the reading public began to lose interest, and with the interference of the State, it faded into a pale shadow of its former self.”

If one takes into consideration Kan’s anti-proletarian ideas, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that he had the intention to establish a bulwark against social realism. And in this bulwark, those writers with similar anti-proletarian ideas were able to take

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55 Ibid, 248.
a stand against the proletarian school and were free to express their sentiments. And actually many writers did so. A survey of the works published in the inaugural issue of Bungei shunjū indicates that the periodical was generally supportive of criticism directed toward proletarian literature.\(^{57}\)

In sum, the facts discussed above support the claim that Bungei shunjū was created as a coterie journal. First, it was financed, edited, formatted, and designed by Kikuchi Kan. There is no evidence that the periodical was sponsored by any social institution that had a political, religious, or ideological agenda. Second, Kan had been associated with the prestigious literary coterie Shinshichō. After the creation of the periodical, Kan and other contributors called themselves “the Bungei Shunjū coterie” and they have been identified as such by numerous writers, critics, publishers, and scholars. Third, Kan explicitly stated in the “Creation Announcement” the he created Bungei shunjū for the purpose of allowing expression about literary matters. There is no evidence that Kikuchi Kan was motivated by the hope of financial or political gain. His motivations were the belief that literature should function for moral education. He also was dissatisfied with the existing literary magazines of his time in terms of their function and their editing. And finally, Kan was disenchanted with proletarian literature, and he probably created a journal so that he and his colleagues would be able to publish freely their anti-proletarian literary ideas.

\(^{57}\) In the first issue, at least three essays deal with the topic of proletarian literature, and they are all critical of the school. Two of the writers used their real names. One was Yokomitsu Riichi, the other was Suzuki Shikō.
In the end, it is valid to say that Kikuchi Kan created his *Bungei shunjū* primarily for the purpose of setting up a forum for himself and his colleagues to express and clarify their literary ideas and thoughts. In this respect, the periodical possessed key qualities of a coterie journal in its first years. It is different from both *Chūō kōron* and *Kaizō* because the latter two were created primarily for the purpose of expressing religious or political ideas respectively, and they both had already developed, by the year of 1923, into fully commercial enterprises aimed primarily at financial profit. Kikuchi Kan’s goal in creating *Bungei shunjū*, on the other hand, seems to be anything but lucrative gain. His expressions of his ideals for literature, his dissatisfaction with contemporary literary periodicals, and his disenchantment with Japanese proletarian literature all demonstrate that he was motivated by his concerns with literary matters to create *Bungei shunjū* as a forum on literary topics.

1.3 *Bungei shunjū* as a Commercial Magazine

In this section, I entertain an alternate reading of the creation and early years of *Bungei shunjū*. This reading emphasizes the commercial motivations that are apparent in the magazine’s early years, and foreshadows the sharp turn in its development after about two years. It reveals the complex nature of the periodical, its creator, and its time.

It is the contents of *Bungei shunjū* that best demonstrate the magazine’s commercial motivations. Two dictionaries, *Kōjien* and *Nihongo daijiten*, defined

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58 The development of *Bungei shunjū* in 1924 and 1925 will be introduced in Chapter four.
Bungei shunjū as “a magazine of literary essays.” Indeed, in its early years, Bungei shunjū published mostly essays written on literary matters. The essays more or less followed the tradition of zuihitsu, often translated as “random jottings.” As the name of the genre suggests, these essays were very diverse in terms of topic, length, and style. With a few exceptions, they share certain qualities: miscellaneous themes, sensational titles, gossipy content, exaggerated diction and a lively, animated style. In this respect, Bungei shunjū can be distinguished from most other literary coterie journals whose pages are occupied primarily by serious literary critiques and imaginative/creative literary works such as poems, short stories, and plays.

A survey of the works published in the inaugural issue of the periodical clearly reveals the natures of these essays and therefore, of Bungei shunjū in general.

In addition to the “Creation Announcement” and the “Postscript,” twenty titles were published in a total of twenty-seven pages of the inaugural issue. These twenty titles can be divided roughly into two categories: essays on a single theme and the assembly of miscellaneous commentaries.

There are thirteen works that can be viewed as essays on a single theme. The style of each of these essays is consistent. They usually do not have any internal division.

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59 In May 1923 issue, Bungei shunjū had its first “sōsaku” (creative work) section where short stories, plays and poems were published. But it was only from June of 1924 that this section became permanent. Moreover, the section takes up far fewer pages than the essays.

60 This fact will be demonstrated easily by a comparison between Bungei shunjū and the journal Shirakaba, which was one of the most influential coterie journals in the literary world of its time. I will list the content of the January 1923 issue of Shirakaba later in this chapter.

61 It is very interesting to observe that on the cover of the inaugural issue, only 19 titles were published. Kikuchi Kan did not publish Sakai Mahito and his essay titled “Sunetaru mumei sakka” (An Obstinate Unknown Writer) on the cover. If this mistake is purely by accident, it makes a very good demonstration of an infamous quality of Kan: “mutonchaku” or “carelessness.” Along with other errors in the same issue, it also implies that the inaugural issue might have been put in print in haste.
The only exceptions are two longer pieces, which are divided by either Arabic numbers or circle marks, though these two are still as integrated as the others in terms of logic, theme, structure, and style. The following are the titles and authors of these thirteen essays in the order that they appear in the issue:

“Hoshi” (Stars) by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

“Shingeki no rikiryo” (The Power of New Theater) by Kikuchi Kan

“Kafū no koto” (Things about Kafū) by Nakatogawa Kichiji

“Hōgenreki” (Almanac of Careless Remarks) by Kon Tōkō

“Rin Kinka no yūutsu” (Melancholy of Rin Kinka) by Kawabata Yasunari

“Jidai wa hōtōsuru” (The World Dissipates) by Yokomitsu Riichi

“Shōfukumon” (Good Fortune Laughing Gate) by Koyanagi Hiroshi

“Jidai wa utsuru” (Times Change) by Suzuki Shikō

“Naimenteki ketugō” (Internal Binding) by Saitō Ryūtarō

“Ii hyōronka” (Good Critics) by Minami Yukio

“Sunetaru mumeisakka” (A Disgruntled Unknown Writer) by Sakai Mahito

“Moero gekijō yo” (Blaze! Theater) by Seino Chōichirō

“Rojō sunago” (Gritty Words on the Road) by Naoki Sanjūni

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62 This essay appeared in a column titled “Shuju no kotoba” (Words of a Dwarf), which was hosted by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke from the inaugural issue to the July issue of 1926. In August 1926, the title of Akutagawa’s column was changed to “Tsuioku” (Remembrance).

63 The title in kanji is 笑福門. This term seems to be a creation, perhaps by Koyanagi, from the famous saying: “Warau kado ni wa fuku kitaru,” or “Good fortune comes to the door of those people who smile.”

64 “Ii hyōronka” is the title published on the cover of the inaugural issue. However, the title in the page becomes “Hyōronka” (Critics). Simply another error in editing.
Within this essay category, there is still much diversity. First, even though they all are supposed to be non-fiction essays concerning literature, the twelve works vary much in their content. Almost two thirds of the essays are critical pieces that deal with various issues and problems in the contemporary literary world: “The Power of New Theater,” “The World Dissipates,” “Good Fortune Laughing Gate,” “Times Change,” “Internal Binding,” “Good Critics,” “Blaze! Theater,” and “Gritty Words on the Road.” As shown by some of these titles, the arguments cover a variety of topics in literature such as the status of theater and the morality of literary critics. Two out of the thirteen are about literary celebrities: “Things about Kafū” and “Almanac of Careless Remarks.” The former is an anecdotal remembrance of, of course, Nagai Kafū. And the latter is a rather harsh criticism of Masaki Chitomo as both a scholar and a writer.65 The remaining three are essays that do not concern literature at all: “Stars,” “Melancholy of Rin Kinka,” and “A Disgruntled Unknown Writer.” All three seem to be the mixture of facts and observations that are based on the authors’ own experiences. They are informal in style and concern metaphysical, sociological, or emotional subjects. Compared with the other essays that introduce or discuss literary matters, they are more like a hybrid of expressive essay and descriptive narrative. Rather than being about literature, they are themselves works of literature.

The thirteen works also differ markedly in length. As mentioned earlier, Bungei shunjū used a unique quadruple column setting. Each page is divided into four columns from top to bottom. Within each column, characters are usually arranged

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65 正木千幹 (1776-1823), a poet in Edo period and a scholar who was dedicated to studies of Manyōshū.
vertically in 24 rows, each of which consists of about 13 words. Therefore, each
column contains about 312 words, including punctuation marks. The shortest piece of
the thirteen essays is “The Power of New Theater,” which is merely 300 words long
and takes up only one column. The longest is “The World Dissipates,” which takes up
about eight columns. The rest occupy anywhere from two to seven columns.

Third, the styles of the essays are various too. Some are written in plain
vocabulary displaying a serious attitude. “The World Dissipates” is one good
example. Yokomitsu uses strictly regulated grammar, plain kanji compounds, and the
formal “de aru” ending throughout the piece. Dealing with the serious topic of
proletarian literature, and exhibiting an austere tone in the argument, the essay almost
reads like a scholarly study. On the other hand, some are written with rather florid
phrases in sensational tones. Take “A Disgruntled Unknown Writer,” for example.
The sentences in the essay end with “da” in place of “de aru.” Sakai, the author, used
even more kanji than Yokomitsu does, but his vocabulary includes many
scientific/technical terms and four-character phrases, which results in many verbose
sentences. He also takes liberty in grammar and utilized such writing techniques as
juxtaposition of kanji compounds and long clauses. The entire piece is sensational in
style, which actually matches the theme of the essay well. However, it has to be
pointed out that content does not always guarantee a certain style. Many of the critical
pieces have serious topics, yet they are expressed in a casual style with informal
sentence endings, colloquial diction, and fragmentary structures.
The other seven titles, categorized here as “assemblies of miscellaneous commentaries,” are truly “random jottings.” They are organized under the names of their authors, and each is given only one title. However, all of them have internal divisions which are demarcated by either circle marks or sub-titles. The topics and themes of the comments or notes within each assembly can be as diverse as cheese and chalk. The comments and notes are generally short in comparison with the essays. In accordance to the order that they appear in the journal, the titles and authors of these “random notes” pieces are as follows:

“Gokugetsu sōhen” (Fragments of Thoughts in December) by Suzuki Hikojirō

“Hyakurei hi-sake hi-gyōji” (None of the Hundred Rituals Count as Success without Wine) by Sasaki Mituzō

“Jogo” (Garrulous Words) by Oka Eiichirō

“Mimibukuro” (Ear Muffs) by Kojima Masajirō

“Sesō zakkan” (Miscellaneous Impressions of Society) by Kikuchi Kan

“Mō damatte wa orarenai” (Can not Keep Quiet Any More) by Funada Kyōji

“Shōshintei zatsuroku” (Miscellaneous Records at Pavilion of Timidity) by Mikami Otokichi

Due to the wide range of topics, lengths, styles, and the sheer amount of the commentaries, it is not possible to give a satisfactory generalization of this category of eight titles without literal translations of each. Most of them focus on literary matters.

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66 “Mimibukuro” literally means “ear bag,” used to protect ears from the cold. It is also the title of a ten-volume collection of zuihitsu. Negishi Yasumori (1737-1815) collected talks, stories and anecdotes from the streets and compiled them in Mimibukuro which was finished in 1814.

67 This is a column that Mikami hosted for only five months.
There are gossipy discussions of various phenomena in the literary world (“Fragments of Thoughts in December”), introduction of the personal matters of the author (“Garrulous Words”), elaboration of certain chapters of western literary works (“Ear Muff’s”), translations of fable and satire of ancient philosophers (“Miscellaneous Records at the Pavilion of Timidity”), and so forth. A few are discussions of the economic dimensions of issues (“Miscellaneous Impressions of Society”), or notes on things of foreign origin, such as the gondola (“Ear Muff’s”). Several pieces are no more than one hundred words, and a few are more than a thousand. The styles of the pieces in this category are as various as the essays on a single theme are. Some have sensationalist titles or subtitles such as “Can not Keep Quiet Any More” and “The Seven Wonders in the Literary World” (a subtitle under “Miscellaneous Records at the Pavilion of Timidity”). Some of the commentaries are essays with regulated grammar, common vocabulary, and the consistent formal sentence-ending “de aru.” Some are much more prone to the usage of rare diction, fragmentary phrases, and mixed sentence endings of “da,” “ya,” and “de aru.”

In sum, the content of what was published in the inaugural issue of Bungei shunjū was truly miscellaneous in terms of topic, form, and style. The combination of all these features was unique among its peers of literary coterie journals and the general-interest magazines. As a point of comparison, the literary contents of the January 1923 issues of Shirakaba, Chūō kōron, and Kaizō are listed in the table below. All titles are arranged in the order of their appearance in each issue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shirakaba</th>
<th>Chūō kōran</th>
<th>Kazō</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Ōkuninushi no Mikoto to sono kyōdaitach” (Ōkuninushi no Mikoto and his Brothers) by Kondo Eiichi</td>
<td>“Abe maria” (Ave Maria) by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō</td>
<td>“Kami no gotoki hitobito sake no gotoki kūki” (Men Like Gods) by H. G. Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Chōbohei” (The Enlistee) by Misuno Akira</td>
<td>“Nozarashi” (A Weather-Beaten Skull) by Toyoshima Yoshio</td>
<td>“Zenshū” (The Odor of Zen) by Okamoto Ippei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Geite to no taiwa” (Dialogue with Goethe) by Kameo Eishirō</td>
<td>“Musu Take ibun” (The Lore of Musu Take) by Satomi Ton</td>
<td>“Jijoden” (Autobiography) by Ōsugi Sakae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Aketawase” (The Evacuation) by Takamura Mitsutarō</td>
<td>“Bōfu no jōnin” (The Lover of My Deceased Husband) by Masamune Hakuchō</td>
<td>“Kirishitan yawa” (Christian Night Talk) by Sasaki Mitsuzō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yoru no wagaya” (My Home at Night) by Ozaki Kihachi</td>
<td>“Gi gunkoku bidan” (A Commendable Anecdote of Pseudo-Militaristic Nation) by Kikuchi Kan</td>
<td>“Bungaku igai?” (Beside Literature?) by Tsuji Jun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Waga seikatsu to musō” (My Life and My Dreams) by Yamamura Takashi</td>
<td>“Shi no kai no koto” (Notice of Poem Meet) by Ozaki</td>
<td>“Nan’ō no sora” (The Sky of Southern Europe) by Yoshie Kogan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Risei satsuei” (Random Songs at Risei) by Kinoshita Rigen</td>
<td>“Rokugo zakki” (Miscellaneous Notes at No. Six) by Mushanokōji Saneatsu</td>
<td>“Sono tokidoki” (Those Times) by Mushanokōji Saneatsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ichinichi” (One Day) by Inukai Takeru</td>
<td>“Cheihofu dansoroku” (Records of Fragmentary Thoughts about Chekhov) by Yamamura Takashi</td>
<td>“Waga ie” (My Home) by Saijō Yaso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Namī” (Waves) by Nagayo Yoshiro</td>
<td>“Shi no kai no koto” (Notice of Poem Meet) by Ozaki</td>
<td>“Tabi” (Trip) by Wakayama Bokusui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tanbun nijūsan’” (Twenty-Three Short Essays) by Mushanokōji Saneatsu</td>
<td>“Rokugo zakki” (Miscellaneous Notes at No. Six) by Mushanokōji Saneatsu</td>
<td>“Seidō no kirisuto” (Bronze Christ) by Nagayo Yoshiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Chūō kōron”</td>
<td>“Geite to no taiwa” (Dialogue with Goethe) by Kameo Eishirō</td>
<td>“Sokaku” (Alienation) by Kamichika Ichiko</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Abe maria” (Ave Maria) by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō</td>
<td>“Anya kōro” (A Dark Night’s Passing) by Shiga Naoya</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Musu Take ibun” (The Lore of Musu Take) by Satomi Ton</td>
<td>“Hitotsu no shashin” (One Photo) by Kume Masao</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bōfu no jōnin” (The Lover of My Deceased Husband) by Masamune Hakuchō</td>
<td>“Botsuraku” (Decline) by Kawahigashi Hekigotō</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1  Contents of January 1923 Issues of Three Magazines (Continued)
Table 1.1: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Koi no su” (Nest of Carps) by Satomi Ton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Osei” (Osei) by Kasai Zenzō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ainaki hitobito” (People with no Love) by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 Contents of January 1923 Issues of Three Magazines

Of the thirteen titles in this issue of Shirakaba, there are five translated works that include one novella, one poem, one critique, and two anecdotal essays. They take up almost half of the 134 pages. Six are creative works including three poems, one novella, one essay, and one column with poems and short comments. There is also one announcement and one postscript. In the issue of Chūō kōron, all the eight literary works are creative productions, and they belong to only two genres: seven are short stories and one is a play. In the table of contents, all the eight titles are listed under “Sōsaku.” On top of the titles, each is marked with either shōsetsu or gikyoku (play) according to their genres. It is interesting to observe that the January 1923 issue of Kaizō also has a Sōsaku section which also included seven short stories (or installment of novels) and one play. However, Kaizō did not simply imitate Chūō kōron. It includes more literary works of more genres: there are a “shi” (poetry) section in which three poems are published; a full-length translation of a chōhen shōsetsu (long novel) by H. G. Wells which took up the first 127 pages of the issue; there are also one autobiography, two critical essays, and two essays that are listed with other articles—mostly about politics—without any categorization.

Compared with the three periodicals that published the works above, the inaugural issue of Bungei shunjū is a unique combination of all kinds of tidbits about literature.

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68 This number excludes the paintings that were published in the issue.
It did not have a sōsaku section. However, the pieces by Akutagawa, Kawabata, and Sakai Mahito are closer to being creative in their nature, though the works are very short: the three works take up little more than four pages. Literary criticism, such as reviews of literary works, debates over literary issues, explanation of literary allusions, and introduction of writers, took up much of the space. Yet, Bungei shunjū’s criticism is not as consistent or reasoned as the critical essays published in the other literary periodicals in terms of topics, structure, and style. Bungei shunjū expends a great deal more space on fables, anecdotes, and gossip, much of which masquerades as serious commentary on literary issues, moral discourse, or discussion of terms and allusions from literary classics.

For many of its contemporary readers, Bungei shunjū must have been very informative in at least three senses. In the first sense, there are discussions and introductions of terms, allusions, and stories from Chinese, Japanese, and Western literatures and histories, and readers can actually obtain some knowledge—however basic it might have been—from these discussions. In the second sense, Bungei shunjū was informative because its readers could grasp in accessible form the situations of the contemporary literary world through the discussions, comments and critiques of literary matters that were dealt with in more complex terms in other literary and general-interest periodicals. In the third sense, the fables, the anecdotes, and even the gossip in Bungei shunjū might have been particularly informative for many readers who were not familiar with, but interested in knowing about the literary world.
The format and the content of *Bungei shunjū* provided new perspectives on literary matters for those readers, such as the literary youth, who were already reading the literature published in other coterie journals and general-interest magazines. More importantly, *Bungei shunjū* opened the possibility of providing interesting information concerning writers and the literary world to those who had had restricted access and limited interest in literature, particularly “pure literature.” With the information provided in *Bungei shunjū*, writers became human beings; works became interesting production, and the bundan became an accessible network of anecdotes, allusions, and stories.

Being informative means *Bungei shunjū* was enjoyable in terms of content. The philosophy of the founder of *Bungei shunjū* led him to create content consistent with the middle class values of many readers. The content was serious but also entertaining, difficult but not as serious as *Kaizō* or *Chūō kōron*. Therefore, it is not practical to label the journal as high-brow or low-brow due to the complexity of its nature. It was actually on the intersection of high and low literatures and of coterie and commercial publications. This formulation laid the foundation of the commercial success of the journal in the coming years and makes it difficult to classify the journal unequivocally as a coterie journal or a commercial magazine.

Any periodical has to be materially printed with ink on pieces of paper, and it has to be materially distributed by vendors, bookstores, or distribution companies to its
readers. Therefore, when re-examining the categorization of *Bungei shunjū* as a coterie journal, one has to take into consideration the key aspects of printing and particularly, distributing.

All the printing companies that *Bungei shunjū* hired were commercial enterprises. However, this fact does not distinguish the journal from its coterie peers. This is because, first of all, the Japanese printing business was already in a mature stage thanks to the bourgeoning giant publishers of books and periodicals. By the year of 1922, there were 405 printing companies in the nation and 98 were located in Tokyo.\(^{69}\) The total revenue of the printing business was close to one hundred million yen, and it employed over fifty thousand workers.\(^{70}\) Large firms printed for both the commercial magazines and the coterie journals, even the highly privileged and exclusive ones. For example, *Shirakaba* was printed by Sanshūsha, which was one of the major commercial printing companies at the time.\(^{71}\)

What distinguished the newly created *Bungei shunjū* from other coterie journals was the frequency with which it switched its printing companies during its first year. The first four issues of *Bungei shunjū* were printed by Tōsandō. From the May issue on, the printer became Kyōeisha. After the Great Kanto Earthquake, Shūeisha took over the job. Dai Nippon Insatsu, the name of Shūeisha’s printing plant, appeared in the November issue as the printer. There is no clear explanation given by Kikuchi


\(^{71}\) There is not much information found concerning the printing company. It was listed as a member of the Kanda branch of Tokyo Insatsu Dōgyō Kumiai (Tokyo Printing Guild) among many other small companies in *Insatsu sangyō sōran*.  

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Kan as to why he switched printing companies so frequently. The luck of Shūeisha in surviving the earthquake without too much damage might have been a major external reason. However, the desire to drive down rising paper costs, to meet increasing orders, and to maintain a competitive price might have been other motivations. In the postscript of the April issue of 1923, Kikuchi Kan gave a brief report on the finances of the third issue. He had a loss of 280 yen. Out of the total expenditure of 700 yen, paper cost took up 250 yen, and Kikuchi Kan complained that this paper cost was almost twice what he expected. He then announced that he had decided to raise the price of the April issue to twenty sen and he planned to print 10,000 copies. The May issue kept the twenty-sen price. But it was a special edition, which had 104 pages compared with the 65-page April issue. As a result, he said he requested the printing company use cheaper paper. From the beginning, then, Kikuchi Kan showed an entrepreneurial concern with practicalities of keeping his magazine competitive. This demonstrates that Bungei shunjū was more of a commercial undertaking than many coterie journals, which displayed little concern for such practicalities as circulation numbers, costs, and prices.

72 According to the company history of Dai Nippon Insatsu, the main printing plant of Shūeisha had only minor damage during the earthquake and the fire while most other printing companies had lost almost all their printing abilities. In the “Postscripts” of the November issue of Bungei shunjū, which was the first issue after the earthquake, Kikuchi Kan did mention that all copies of the September issue were destroyed by the fire, and that he was sorry for the distributor Shun’yōdō, which was burned down too. However, he did not say anything as to how badly Kyōeisha was damaged. For the company history, see Nanajūgo-nen no ayumi: Dai Nippon Insatsu kabushiki kaisha-shi, Shashide miru nihon no monotsukuri Ser. 8 (1952; Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2003).
73 Kikuchi Kan, postscript, Bungei shunjū April, 1923: 65.
74 Kikuchi Kan, postscript, Bungei shunjū May, 1923: 104.
75 For example, Shirakaba never published any financial reports or circulation numbers in its 160 issues. There were only couple of comments about pricing during its 13 years and 4 months life. And its price was high compared with major commercial magazines. For example, the January 1923 issue was 134
The relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and its distributor is perhaps more revealing of the periodical’s characteristics than its relationship with its printing contractors. It is rather obvious that, generally speaking, a periodical’s distribution company has much more influence than a printing company on that periodical’s strategy in terms of content, format, and marketing. The more commercial a periodical is, the more audience-oriented it is. And the more audience-oriented it is, the more the periodical is prone to listen to what its distribution company has to say and to cooperate with the distribution company.

Compared with its coterie peers, *Bungei shunjū* had a very powerful distributing company—Shun’yōdō—and the periodical seemed to have maintained a close relationship with the company in its first years.\(^{76}\) This close relationship is demonstrated by Kikuchi Kan’s obvious intention to publicize and emphasize the fact that the magazine was distributed by Shun’yōdō. This intention can be read through a series of changes in the format of the cover pages of the journal. On the cover of the inaugural issue, the name “Shun’yōdō” was arranged as the *hatsubaimoto* (distribution company) under the table of contents and the price. The three kanji for Shun’yōdō

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\(^{76}\) The kanji name of the distributor is 春陽堂. *Shirakaba* was distributed by Tōkaidō (東海堂) and the fourth *Shinshichō* by Tōkyōdō (東京堂). Both were major magazine-distribution companies at the time. Compared with Shun’yōdō, both were focused on distribution business and both had little to do with book publication. I have not found comparable data as to which of the three had larger magazine-distribution ability. However, it is clear that Shun’yōdō was much more influential than the other two in terms of publishing (both books and periodicals) and book distribution in the literature field. Starting June 1926, Bungei Shunjūsha replaced Shun’yōdō as the distributor of *Bungei shunjū*. 

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and the three for hatsubaimoto were in bold, but the size of the former was larger than the latter. However, they were smaller than the huge title Bungei shunjū and the issue number “Ichigatsu sōkango” (January Inaugural issue). On the cover of the second issue, the format of the cover page changed a little: the price was printed vertically and moved to the right side; “Kikuchi Kan henshū” (Edited by Kikuchi Kan) was added to the top of the table of contents; and “Shun’yōdō hatsubai” (Distributed by Shun’yōdō) was still on the bottom of the page, but all five kanji were enlarged to the same bold font as the issue number. Then from the third issue on, the cover design seemed to be finalized: “Edited by Kikuchi Kan” was moved to the top of the cover page and it was changed to black ink; the issue number was right below the huge title; and “Shun’yōdō hatsubai” was kept on the bottom of the page with an even larger font than the issue number. After the journal title and the editor’s name, “Distributed by Shun’yōdō” appears as the most striking lettering on the page. Although it is said that three people designed the cover pages of the three issues, it most likely was Kikuchi Kan who made the final decisions on the designs.77

Kikuchi Kan had many reasons to make efforts to emphasize the fact that his journal was distributed by Shun’yōdō and to take pride in this fact. First of all, as a publishing house, Shun’yōdō had established its reputation as a superpower of literary publishers in the Meiji period and was considered one of the major sponsors of modern Japanese literature at the time. Founded in 1878 by Wada Tokutarō,

77 The cover of the inaugural issue was perhaps designed by Kikuchi Kan. And according to the annual chronicle attached to Bungei shunjū nanajū-nen shi, the February issue adopted a design from one of the readers whose name was Yoshimura Jirō (吉村二郎). And then, Onchi Kōshirō (恩地孝四郎) designed the cover of the March issue, which became the “face” of the periodical for the next ten years.
Shun’yōdō started out as a small bookstore. It began to publish *ezōshi* (picture books) around 1882 and translated works two years later. In 1887, Shun’yōdō published *Shinshō no kajin* (The Ladies of New Style) by Sudō Nansui and embarked upon the publication of literature. In 1889, the publisher also created a literary journal *Shinshōsetsu* (新小説, New Novels) which would become the “tōryūmon” (the gateway to success) for writers in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. From 1890, Shun’yōdō established contacts with many Ken’yūsha writers who were in dominance in the literary world and published many major works by group members, such as Ozaki Kōyō, Yamda Bimyō, and Izumi Kyōka. In so doing, the publisher achieved fame as the powerhouse of literary publication, and it expanded its selection of writers and works. Through booklets, books, periodicals and collections, Shun’yōdō also published works of influential writers including Tsubouchi Shōyō, Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, Kōda Rohan, Nagai Kafū, Takayama Chogyū, Takahama Kyoshi and many others. It became the publisher of literature during the latter half of the Meiji period and early Taishō period. By the year 1923, overshadowed by its powerful rivals such as Hakubunkan and Shinchōsha, Shun’yōdō had gone past its

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78 和田篤太郎.
79 須藤南翠.
80 The first period of *Shinshōsetsu* was terminated in February 1890 and the second started in July 1896.
prime. Nonetheless, it remained a major player in literary publication and it still owned two of the major literary magazines of the time: *Shinshōsetsu* and *Chūō bungaku* (中央文学, Central Literature).  

In the late Taishō period, Shun’yōdō was also trying to keep up with the publishing of a younger generation of writers, including Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kume Masao, and particularly, Kikuchi Kan. Even though Kikuchi Kan made his debut in *Chūō kōron* as a serious writer and *Shinchō* published many of his early works, Shun’yōdō was the publisher of many of his early collections and anthologies. As early as August 1918, only one month after Kikuchi Kan published his debut work “Dairy of A Unknown Writer” in *Chūō kōron*, Shun’yōdō published a collection of Kikuchi Kan’s short stories as volume 11 of its *Shinkō bungei sōsho* (Series of the Emerging Literature). By 1923, the publisher had already published, in book form, many works by Kikuchi Kan: four titles in its *Besuto pokketo kessaku sōsho* (Vest Pocket Series of Masterpieces), two novels [*Doku no hana* (Poisonous Flower) and *Jihishinchō* (Bird of Benevolent Heart)]\(^{82}\), six collections of short stories, essays and

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\(^{81}\) *Chūō bungaku* was created in 1917 mostly as the Shun’yōdō counterpart of Shinchōsha’s *Bunshō kurabu* (Literature Club). It targeted mostly the literary youth and published many reports on the literary world. More details concerning these literary magazines will be introduced later in this section.

\(^{82}\) *Jihishinchō* or 慈悲心鳥 is also called ジュウイチ, whose name is *Cuculus fugax* in Latin and Fugitive Hawk Cuckoo in English. The naming of it came from its chirping with sounds like *jihishin*, which has the Buddhist connotation of “benevolent heart.”
plays, one translation, and four volumes of complete works. With a close relationship like this, it is not surprising that Kikuchi Kan chose Shun’yōdō as the distributor of the newly created Bungei shunjū.

The exceptionally close relationship between Kikuchi Kan and Shun’yōdō only complicated the characteristics of Bungei shunjū. On the one hand, the reputation of Shun’yōdō as one of the top publishers and sponsors of literature and its close relationship with established serious writers—dead and alive—had to encourage the expectation that the journal would be literary—perhaps high-brow and serious—like a coterie magazine.

On the other hand, Shun’yōdō was a commercial enterprise after all. As one would expect of a commercially oriented publication, Bungei shunjū was influenced in marked ways by its publisher/distributor Shun’yōdō. Shun’yōdō brought substantial advertisement to the periodical. For example, there were 15 pages of commercial advertisement attached to the inaugural issue, which was only 28 pages long itself. And out of the 15 pages, 6 were for books published by Shun’yōdō; 8 pages were a “Shuppan geppō” (Monthly Report on Publication) from Kinseidō; and the back cover was a toothpaste commercial. Shirakaba also had 15 pages of advertisement in its January 1923 issue. However, as was noted previously, this issue has 134 pages with

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83 The statistics here are by no means complete. They are derived from the advertisements that were published in the first five issues of Bungei shunjū, from the very informative Taishō no bungei sōsho (Literary Series of the Taishō Period) by Kōno Toshirō, and from Shun’yōdō Shoten hakkō tosho sōmokuroku (Complete Catalogue of Books Published by Shun’yōdō Bookstore).
84 金星堂. Similar to Shun’yōdō, this publisher also had a close relationship with Bungei shunjū. Kōno Toshirō called the three mitsudomoe (three comma-shaped figures forming one circle). However, since it was never listed as the distributor of the periodical, I will limit my discussion here only to Shun’yōdō. For Kōno’s comments, see Taishōki no bungei sōsho, 68-72.
8 extra pages of paintings. Moreover, only one page was for its distributor. *Kaizō* had only 14 pages of advertisement in its 743-page January issue. And 9 pages were for books from Kaizōsha. *Chūō kōron* had 34 pages of advertisement in its January issue of 789 pages. Only 5 pages of advertisement were related to Chūō Kōronsha. Neither *Kaizō* nor *Chūō kōron* published any advertisement for their distributors. In comparison, *Bungei shunju* not only had the highest percentage of advertisement page, it also had the most pages for its distributor.

The relationship between *Bungei shunju* and Shun’yōdō was by no means a one-way affair. The distribution company also put in much effort to market the periodical in rather commercial ways. According to the company history of *Bungei shunju*, Shun’yōdō had a history of sending cards to its *aidokusha* (avid readers and subscribers) and it sent cards to many readers in the name of Kikuchi Kan and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke toward the end of 1922. In the card was the following message:

> We are tired of writing as others request. We would like to express freely what we are really thinking. Therefore, we are creating the magazine *Bungei shunju* at this time. Though the cover price is ten sen per issue, a one-year subscription costs one yen, which includes postage. Those who agree to subscribe, please apply for the one-year subscription if possible.85

This bold large-scale marketing promotion with the backing of a major publisher like Shun’yōdō and the commercially-oriented attitude of Kikuchi Kan was definitely not typical of a coterie journal.

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Both Shun’yōdō and Kikuchi Kan, whether consciously or not, promoted Bungei shunjū as a coterie literary journal and at the same time, improved the publicity and accessibility of the periodical through modern marketing strategies. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that prior to the creation of Bungei shunjū, there was an aborted collaboration concerning magazine publication between Kikuchi Kan and Shun’yōdō. Yokoseki Aizō, who was the editor-in-chief of Tokyo mainichi shinbun and Kaizō, remembers that in 1921, Kikuchi Kan had worked out plans for the magazine Chūō bungaku, which was a major holding of Shun’yōdō.

To improve this magazine [Chūō bungaku], Kikuchi Kan wanted to print in red the names of ten first-class writers as the advisory editors on the cover page, which would have been very stylish and innovative at the time. By including such subjects as “Introduction to the Novel,” and “How to Write a Novel,” he wanted to make it interesting, rich, and unique as a literary journal. . . [I]n the end, this plan for Chūō bungaku was not realized. However, this plan for a mass-oriented yet serious magazine was created by Kikuchi Kan and it makes one wonder if it was not the foundation of Bungei shunjū.86

Chūō bungaku was founded in April 1917 by Shun’yōdō as an attempt by the publisher to compete with its major rival, Shinchōsha, which had two well-received literary periodicals: Shinchō and Bunshō kurabu. Shinchō was, of course, one of the major commercially-operated, serious-literature-oriented magazines at the time. Bunshō kurabu was more or less the junior version of Shinchō. It was created in 1916 mainly as a contributory magazine in which casual essays about contemporary writers

and the literary world were often published along side short stories and poems. Kōno Toshirō described the two magazines as “two sides of the same coin, or two sisters.”

Shun’yōdō had been publishing Shinshōsetsu, which rivaled Shinchō. But it lacked something that was similar to Bunshō kurabu, which targeted literary youth.

The creation of Chūō bungaku was expected to fill in this stall in Shun’yōdō’s stable. However, the magazine was discontinued in December 1921, four months after Kikuchi Kan was asked to plan for the magazine’s renovation. It is unclear why Kan’s plan was not put into effect, and why Shun’yōdō stopped publishing the magazine. However, it is clear that during its four year and eight-month lifespan, Chūō bungaku indeed focused on providing interesting information about the literary world and vivid descriptions of writers’ lives in addition to short stories.

Judging from the formats of Chūō bungaku and its rival literary magazines such as Bunshō kurabu, Kikuchi Kan’s plan for Chūō bungaku’s renovation suggests that by publishing Bungei shunjū, Kikuchi Kan and Shun’yōdō had the intention of achieving what they had not achieved with Chūō bungaku. Clearly, the contemporary periodical publication business played an important role in Bungei shunjū’s creation.

Shun’yōdō had good reason to choose Kikuchi Kan, from among the writers closely associated with Shun’yōdō, as a suitable collaborator. First, the decision was good timing. As noted above, Kan was one of the most active members of the


Japanese literary world during the three years between 1918 and 1921. He published two short stories—“Mumei sakka no nikki” and “Tadanaokyō gyōjōki” (The Account of Lord Tadanao’s Conduct)—in the eminent Chūō kōron in July and August of 1918. Both were praised by senior writers such as Masamune Hakuchō, and Kan established his reputation as an emerging writer of serious literature. From January 1919 to January 1921, he published eight pieces in Chūō kōron, three in Shinchō, three in Shinshōsetsu, and thirteen stories and essays in other literary magazines. He also had two novellas serialized in Osaka mainichi shinbun. Two of his short stories and one play were staged at major theaters such as Osaka Naniwaza and Tokyo Shintomiza with the eminent kabuki actors Nakamura Ganjirō and Ichikawa Ennosuke. All the plays were instant and sensational successes. Another hallmark of Kikuchi Kan’s successful career came in the latter half of 1920, when he published his first long novel Shunjū fujin simultaneously in Osaka mainichi shinbun and Tokyo nichinichi shinbun. It was received with great favor by readers of the newspapers. In 1922, Kan’s works constantly appeared in such major magazines as Chūō kōron, Kaizō and Shinchō. His second long novel Hibana was serialized simultaneously in Osaka mainichi shinbun and Tokyo nichinichi shinbun for almost five months. In short, Kikuchi Kan was one of the few writers who had won great popularity both from mass readers and from elite critics and writers. For Shun’yōdō, whose intention was to attract literary youth and to promote literature among the general public, there was perhaps no more suitable candidate than Kikuchi Kan at the time.

For a brief story line of the novel and its popularity, please refer to my MA thesis Literary Ideas and Practices of Kikuchi Kan.
Second, Kikuchi Kan’s ideas about literature were consistent with gaining both a mass readership and critical acclaim for a magazine. Kikuchi Kan believed that great art must possess “content-derived value.” He also believed that great literature had to be morally didactic. Moreover, Kikuchi Kan had egalitarian ideas about literary production. In his debut work *Mumei sakka no niki*, Kan depicts the desperation of a literary youth who aspires to be a successful writer but does not have the chance. In later critical essays, he expands on this topic and proposes “sakka bon’yō shugi” (theory of writers with mediocre talents). He believes that everyone should have the right to express him/herself and to enjoy the pleasure of literary creation, and he states that it is possible for ordinary individuals to acquire skills of observing and describing human life. “At the same time that there are geniuses who are able to depict their extraordinary imaginations, there are also ordinary people able to describe their own imaginations, ordinary perhaps but shared by millions of other people nonetheless.” This idea allows for the possibility of a literary periodical that is popular in the sense of providing an introduction to literature and a forum for younger writers, literary youth, and common readers to express themselves, a literary periodical such as *Bungei shunjū*.

Kan’s famous slogan—“Life first, art second”—is also consistent with a magazine with mass appeal and serious literary purpose and corresponds to his theory of content-derived value. “Life first, art second” means that literature should better

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90 Refer to my MA thesis for detailed discussion of Kikuchi Kan’s literary ideas.
human life morally and aesthetically. Ultimately, Kikuchi Kan’s pragmatism and belief that literature should be of moral use led him to the conviction that literature should be popular and profitable.

Kikuchi Kan started to write popular novels soon after he made his reputation as a serious writer. For him, making a living was the prerequisite of being a man, and therefore, essential to becoming a writer: “From the first, I did not intend to stick to serious literature. I write novels in order to make a living. I was brought up in poverty. Though I am only the third son, I still feel the responsibility of doing something to reverse the declining fortune of my family. ... All my life, I have never been content to create great works while living in honest poverty.” Kan never stated that creating a magazine was also a means of making a living. However, considering the attention he paid to the finances of Bungei shunjū, one can conclude that, consciously or unconsciously, he may have embarked on magazine-publishing as a way of earning a living, not only for himself, but also for the contributors and the staffs of the magazine.

Kikuchi Kan, as a successful writer, was very conscious of the existence and the needs of the readership of his time. In a passage that precedes a translation of a English short story, Kan explains why he thinks less lengthy novels are winning more popularity:

People's lives have become busy. The population with the leisure time to indulge in reading novels while seated in a rattan chair is in gradual decline. As a result, long novels, which people have to read

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92 As quoted in Matsumoto Seichō, Keiei: Kikuchi Kan to Sasaki Mosaku (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1982) 64.
continually for five days or a week, have gone out of vogue. So it is probably inevitable that shorter novels, which are able to give definite impressions in a short time, are destined to prosper.\textsuperscript{93}

Kan thinks that writers should produce literary works accordingly: “At any rate, rather than making unreasonable demands on readers' patience with tedious long novels of two hundred or three hundred pages, it is better to write short novels which will not bring suffering upon the reader, even if short novels are mediocre in comparison.”\textsuperscript{94}

This kind of literary consumerism was elevated into his general evaluation of literature. Kan regards readers as the ultimate determinants of a literary work’s quality. This is apparent in an essay titled “Hihyōka no kengen” (The Competence of Literary Critics), in which he criticizes the irresponsibility of some contemporary literary critics and argues that it is readers and the public that have the ultimate right to evaluate literary works rather than professional literary critics. This emphasis on readership is demonstrated very clearly in many aspects of \textit{Bungei shunjū}: the price of the periodical was 10 or 20 sen, which was significantly lower than most other journals and magazines; the adoption of a cover design from a reader for the February 1923 issue; the publishing of numerous letters from common readers of the magazine.\textsuperscript{95}

With the backing of Shun’yōdō, then, Kikuchi Kan created in \textit{Bungei shunjū} a periodical that was a commercial operation with non-elitist, miscellaneous content oriented toward a middlebrow audience.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, 365.
\textsuperscript{95} The second half of Chapter two will deal with the interactions between \textit{Bungei shunjū} and its readers.
To summarize, from its inception, *Bungei shunjū* displayed unmistakable signs of being both a coterie journal and a commercial magazine. On the one hand, *Bungei shunjū* proclaimed itself to be a coterie journal. Most of the main figures who, with Kikuchi Kan, were listed as members of the coterie emerged from the most famous of coterie journals, *Shinshichō*. Much of the reading public identified the magazine as a coterie journal, and its origins were more similar to other coterie magazines rather than the general interest magazines it came to resemble. It was funded in the beginning by members of the coterie—largely, Kikuchi himself—and it had no connection with or support from religious or political institutions.

On the other hand, as we have seen, Kikuchi Kan had almost complete control over the journal, and, consciously or unconsciously, from the beginning, he was preparing the ground for the transformation of the journal into a commercial magazine that would reflect his ideas about literature, ideas that were consistent with a publication that would appeal to a mass readership. Kikuchi’s personal theory of literature, his concern for the responses of readers as critics, his close relation with Shun’yōdō, his impoverished family background, his literary reputation, his friendship with a number of writers, and his personal ambition combined to create a periodical that appeared at a juncture in history when an expanding readership for literature found *Bungei shunjū*’s projections of middle class morality to be particularly attractive.
The next chapter of this study will examine in greater detail this expanding readership, including the changes in its reading habit, housing condition, and education. It also will describe the interactions between the producers and the readers of the magazine in an attempt to discern the appeal for this readership of the “middlebrow literature” Bungei shunjū was so effective in fostering.
CHAPTER 2
THE CHANGES IN MODERN JAPANESE MODES OF READING
AND THE FIRST YEAR OF BUNGEI SHUNJÛ

The mid to late Taishō period was a time when economic, political, and social changes were taking place rapidly in Japan. One aspect of these changes was the emergence of a “new middle class” with a strong desire to read literature. Meeting this demand with extraordinary success was Kikuchi Kan’s Bungei shunjû. In this chapter, I will explore the growing readership for “middlebrow literature” that was the hallmark of Bungei shunjû.

What were people reading? How and where did they read? How did reading preferences change during the Meiji and Taishō periods? In exploring these questions, I limit the discussion to Tokyo and vicinity, since this was the area where Bungei shunjû was created and where it had its heaviest concentration of readers. Moreover, previous research and study related to this topic have generally focused on Tokyo. One should bear in mind, however, that Japan was not a small country in

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96 Reading activities can be either mandatory or voluntary. This study does not intend to discuss mandatory reading activities, such as the reading of a math textbook that a middle-school student is required to do despite the fact that he dislikes it totally. On the contrary, it deals with reading activities that are voluntarily conducted.
terms of population and territory in the 1920s and 1930s. From late Meiji to early Shōwa, Japan was not as homogenous as many have assumed. Reading activities varied among people of various classes and regions at any given time.

Exploring these readerships is difficult, first because there are still many questions to be answered concerning reading activity from the perspectives of behavioural and cognitive sciences, psychology, and linguistics. Moreover, it is often difficult for an individual reader to provide his or her motivations for reading, to say definitely, for example, that he or she reads a novel only for entertainment and not for cultivation, or how much (in percentage terms) he or she reads at home and how much on a commuter train.

Second, there are few concrete statistics that record people’s reading activities in general. This is due, of course, to the often ambiguous nature of reading activities. It is also because studies on readers and their reading activities were not considered a legitimate subject for academic research until recent times. However, in the case of Japan, there exists a number of dokusho chōsa (reading surveys) from the pre-war period. These together with recent research and other materials enable us to form a rough idea of pre-war modern practises, at least in Tokyo. Below, I first provide a general overview of recent scholarship on reading in Japan, and second I relate this scholarship to the specific subject of this chapter: the readership of Bungei shunjū.
2.1 How Did People Read?

Recent research into reading in Japan has attempted to resolve the question whether most people read aloud or silently. The Japanese equivalent of “read” is usually rendered as *yomu* in present day Japan.\(^{97}\) For most adult Japanese readers today, *yomu* is likely to refer to a series of activities: holding a piece of writing in script, moving eyes along with the flow of the characters, decoding the information incorporated in the script and understanding it. As Kōjien defines, *yomu* is to “look at letters/characters · a piece of writing, decode the meaning and go forward.”\(^{98}\)

However, this interpretation of *yomu*, which most of us take for granted, ignores an important aspect of reading activity: vocalization. Actually some say vocal reading might have been the dominant reading mode in ancient times. Robert G. Crowder, a leading psychologist and scholar of learning and human memory, claims that “in earlier days, people would not have questioned that talking is inherently linked to reading because silent reading, as such, was not common….The fact remains that silent reading in [St.] Augustine’s time was an accomplishment worthy of mention.”\(^{99}\) Some believe the same can be applied to the case of Japan, and there is the argument that the adoption of silent reading took place much later in Japan than in Europe due to the structure and transcription of the Japanese language.\(^{100}\) Whether these theories are

\(^{97}\) *Yomu* can be written down in two kanji: 読む and 詠む. Both kanji have *gonben*, the radical that implies vocal articulation, words, phrases, and talks. The first kanji was often opposed to *miru*, which meant to read silently. The second kanji is rather irrelevant to this chapter since it signifies both vocal and/or silent composition of poems, including *uta* (Japanese poetry) and *kanshi* (Chinese poetry).


\(^{100}\) For details, see Paul Saenger, introduction, *Space Between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 1-17. This assumption is countered by the fact that there
valid or not, it is undeniable that reading aloud made up a large part of reading activities in Japan from ancient time to the modern era. To read, chant, or recite aloud printed materials seems to be the original meaning of yomu. Actually, the authoritative Daikanwa jiten lists the following definition as the first meaning of yomu: “to chant books vocally.” Kōjien also gives a similar definition of yomu, “to recite essays, poems, sutras, and so forth, aloud and word by word.”

A better Japanese term to refer to this vocal reading mode is “ondoku.” Maeda Ai perhaps was one of the first people to point out that ondoku was practiced widely in the early and mid Meiji period. According to Maeda, the prevalence of ondoku in the early Meiji period can be attributed to such factors as the lack of privacy in daily life, the poor literacy of the masses, the folk-performatative characteristics of gesaku bungaku (lowlowbrow literature), and the traditions of the educated who valued appreciation of classics and other serious essays as an important means of self-cultivation.

Maeda’s book on the reading modes of modern Japan is a milestone in the study of Japanese literary history, and it lays the foundation for further exploration into audience studies of both Japanese literature and mass media. On the basis of this
work, Nagamine Shigetoshi conducted a study of the changes in reading in modern Japan in order to explore readers’ reception of print media. This study provides more detailed information, a broader scope, and a more audience-oriented perspective. In his *Zasshi to dokusha no kindai*, Nagamine describes the actual situations of ondoku in the early Meiji period. In this description, he distinguishes two types of ondoku, i.e. collective and individual.

In his *Kindai dokusha no seiritsu*, Maeda Ai had previously argued that vocal reading dominated in Japan: “At the beginning of Meiji period, when Confucian ethical codes were strictly enforced, fiction was looked down upon as the same as ‘toys.’ In fact, such kinds of writings as *kusazōshi* (illustrated story books) were read as indoor games which all family members enjoyed.”¹⁰⁶ Not only were *kusazōshi* read aloud within families, other sorts of printed literature were also read by literate people to those who were illiterate within certain communities. One literary genre specifically mentioned by Maeda was ninjōbon (love stories of commoners). He argues that such gesaku bungaku as ninjōbon created a readership that was larger than just the literate population. This is because publishers of gesaku bungaku were able to circulate a large number of books through kashihonya (renting bookstores). Many of these gesaku bungaku works, especially the ninjōbon, were created within the oral literary tradition and were enjoyed through visual and vocal performance.

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There was another collective reading tradition, which was aimed at achieving cultivation. This kind of reading was done primarily by students. The reading material was mostly of a highbrow nature: Chinese classics, *yomihon* (novels with few illustrations), editorials of serious newspapers, or *seiji shōsetsu* (political novels). Students read these materials aloud and collectively to acquire knowledge of Japanese and Chinese languages, rhetoric and writing techniques, and literary/historical/cultural cultivation.

Maeda also points out that this kind of collective vocal reading not only helped the students at the time to achieve self-cultivation, but also functioned as a “catalyst” of the formation of a group consciousness. Be it based on birthplace, age, or school, this group consciousness played a role in such movements as the People’s Rights Movement.

Nagamine also documents the tradition of collective reading aloud, and he further stresses the importance of *yomikikase* (reading-to-others). It was widely practiced between family members, friends, and colleagues at home, in shops, and on the streets. The central and local authorities also encouraged this *yomikikase* by establishing systems such as the Shinbun Kaiwa-kai (Newspaper Explication Society).

Another type of vocal reading Nagamine found was individual reading performed by one person without an audience. Drawing on examples from literary works and contributions from readers to magazines, he discovered that readers in the Meiji period...

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108 As one can see from the description of the collective vocal reading, it was either done by a collective of multiple readers or by one reader to an intended audience.
tended to read aloud when their emotions were stirred by the reading material. Some people found reading aloud more enjoyable and efficient than silent reading. In conclusion, Nagamine states, “More than we can imagine today, the readers in the Meiji period enjoyed reading aloud. They were fond of it and were moved by what might be called a ‘vocal reading impulse.’”¹⁰⁹ In contrast to collective vocal reading, which took place mostly in homes and public spheres, much of this individual vocal reading was done in private spaces. However, there were also many cases in which people read aloud for themselves in public. Trains, prisons, and newspaper-reading facilities are examples of public settings where people vocalized personal reading.

The studies of Maeda and Nagamine demonstrate convincingly that reading aloud was deeply rooted, wide spread, and practiced daily in the early Meiji period. It coexisted with silent reading and played an important role in the development of modern Japan.

At the same time, both Maeda and Nagamine argue that starting in the late Meiji period, vocal reading became increasingly unwelcome and *mokudoku*, or silent reading, eventually became the dominant reading mode in the late Meiji period. According to both scholars, this transition was due to many factors. First of all, there were strict regulations against reading aloud in public spaces. Libraries and school dormitories were the most notable cases. Nagamine states that the first ban against reading aloud was found at Shosekikan, which was founded in 1872 as the first

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government-established library in Japan.¹¹⁰ From then on, almost all libraries in Japan – whether public or private, large or small – posted clauses in their regulations to ban reading aloud. These regulations continued well into the early Shōwa period. In many school dormitories in the Meiji period, reading aloud was permitted only during a certain period of the day. Many schools created “ondokushitsu,” a study room specifically designated for vocalized reading. Needless to say, these regulations also created silent reading spaces where readers were forced to adapt silent reading, and they helped to popularize and foster silent reading. Moreover, since many libraries were government sponsored institutions, the regulations regarding reading method implied the authority of law.

There was also an increasingly negative attitude toward vocalized reading during the late Meiji period. Many Japanese considered reading aloud in public uncivilized. Nagamine cites a proposal from Fūzoku Kairyō Kai (Society of Better Public Manners) in which the ban on vocal reading was listed as one of the means to improve morals.¹¹¹ Moreover, starting in the 1900s, many intellectuals started to talk about vocalized reading. Many thought reading aloud was disturbing, slow, energy-consuming, and distracting. Therefore, even in the case of private reading, reading aloud was viewed as inferior to silent reading.

People’s attitude toward printed materials changed as well. By the late Meiji period, books were much more accessible and affordable to readers. Newspapers and magazines were even more accessible. People did not have to share reading materials

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 50.
as much as they once had to, and people who had not been able to buy books started to buy them and read more. These changes naturally brought the silent reading mode into dominance. Eventually, printed materials lost their sacredness, which had been, to a large extent, due to their rareness. Many were reading not to appreciate the classics, cultivate knowledge of literature, or ponder serious issues. On the contrary, they were reading simply to acquire information or to be entertained.

Nagamine concludes, “After the fourth decade of Meiji, mokudoku clearly was becoming the mainstream of reading modes… Although there were time lags that resulted from differences in region, class, and educational level, the habit of vocal reading is thought to have gone into permanent slow decline from the Taishō period through the Shōwa period.”

In other words, both Maeda and Nagamine found that a vocal-to-silent transition in Japanese reading habits took place during the Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa periods. This theory won praise from some, but it raised eyebrows among others. Obviously, one major problem of the theory is that it is too absolute. Even though the concepts of vocal and silent reading appear to be given, they are not definite in terms of behavioral science, psychology, and linguistics. For instance, scholars have distinguished silent reading from the concept of “silent speech,” which refers to a kind of speech that involves movements of the muscles of the speech mechanism but no vocalization. Does this silent speech count as silent reading? It is silent, but despite the absence of

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112 Ibid, 72.
113 For a pioneering work of silent speech, see Ake W. Edfeldt, Silent Speech and Silent Reading (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
vibration of the vocal cords, it is virtually identical to vocal reading. There is also a linguistic theory that treats all writing systems, including Chinese characters, as phonographic scripts which represent sound only.\textsuperscript{114} It is very difficult to make a judgment whether this linguistic theory is valid because it requires as prerequisite an impossible task: reliable analysis and convincing demonstration of how the human mind works while one is reading. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that one’s reading activities have to involve a process of decoding phonetic symbols and perhaps forming an invisible and silent speech in the mind. Whether the reading is silent or vocal only depends on whether this speech in the mind is articulated through speech mechanism or not.

If silent and vocal reading are distinguished simply by whether there is audible voice, then the two reading methods often coexist in our reading activities. Do people pay attention to how much they read vocally and how much they read silently? Is there any means to obtain statistics to establish the one over the other? Such questions would have to be answered before one could begin to make a definite statement concerning silent and vocal readings of the Japanese people during the Meiji and Taishō periods.

It is actually more reasonable to assume that both silent reading and vocal reading coexisted during the Meiji and Taishō periods and that both experienced rapid increase when reading activities increased at large. Though silent reading perhaps became more prevalent than vocal reading by the beginning of the Shōwa period, it is perhaps

\textsuperscript{114} For details, see John DeFrancis, \textit{Visible Speech: The Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems} (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).
an overstatement that there was a major transition in reading modes from vocal to silent. Suzuki Sadami lists several facts to demonstrate this problem in Maeda and Nagamine’s arguments. First, there had been publications in the Tokugawa period that were meant for visual/silent and consumerist reading. Second, there had always been silent reading from ancient to modern times in Japan. Third, even in postwar Japan, children were required to read vocally through much of their elementary school years. Finally, Suzuki points out that the opposition of vocal reading versus silent reading is itself “a derivative of the romantic myth of ‘modernization’ which equals the establishment of a modern, i.e., individual ‘inner self.’”

To summarize, both silent reading and reading aloud coexisted in the Meiji and Taishō periods and both experienced impressive increases thanks to the expansion of print media and readerships. Even though silent reading might have been practiced more than vocal reading from the late Meiji on, there is no solid evidence that there was a major transition from vocal to silent reading habits. Both reading methods probably existed in all classes of society through the decades. In any case, it is undeniable that reading activities in general expanded during the Meiji and Taishō periods, and silent reading perhaps increased the most.

The expansion of reading activities, particularly silent reading, helped form in the 1920s Japan a large readership, which demanded larger volumes of reading materials of various natures. The early Bungei shunjū issues provided the kind reading materials for those readers who enjoyed silent reading of interesting matters about

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literature and the Japanese literary world. These interesting contents such as gossips and anecdotes were often not suitable for public reading practice. Therefore, another question is to be asked: where did people read?

2.2 Where Did People Read?

Where did the Japanese people read during the Meiji and Taishō periods? There is little solid and direct evidence to support a definite answer to this question. There are no reading surveys found in the Meiji and Taishō periods that address directly the question of the location of reading activities. However, there are some statistics concerning housing, libraries, and infrastructures that one can combine with individual anecdotes to form a general idea. It is probably the case that the Japanese in the late Meiji and Taishō periods had greater possibilities to read in private settings when compared with the early Meiji and pre-Meiji periods.

Generally speaking, both public and private spaces where people practiced or performed their reading activities in the late Meiji and Taishō periods expanded rapidly. First, as described in Maeda and Nagamine’s works, both vocal and silent readings were conducted in public settings through much of the two periods. These public settings include state-sponsored or private libraries, schools, transportation

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116 Even in the influential reading survey conducted by Mainichi shinbun after WWII, there was no direct question asking where people read. The only exception was in a special reading survey in 1971. This survey was special because it concerns not the content, but the time, location, and other minor aspects of reading. According to the results, 82% of the readers surveyed said they read books at their own houses. This figure could have been lowered had the survey included newspaper and magazine reading. For details, see Mainichi Shinbun-sha, Dokusho yoron chōsa sanjū-nen: senso nihonjin no kokoro no kiseki (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun-sha, 1977), 102-104.
vehicles and vessels, and newspaper-reading facilities. Proportionate to the impressive development of Japanese modernization, the sheer number of these institutes and facilities also showed an impressive increase. According to the *Historical Statistics of Japan*, the total length of railways increased from 29 kilometers in 1872 to 15,066 in 1922. The total number of passengers jumped from half a million annually in 1872 to 2.2 billion in 1922. The total number of schools of all kinds increased from 12,646 to 45,064. Libraries increased from 1 to 2,390. Newspaper-reading facilities are perhaps the only public reading space that decreased in quantity due to improved literacy and the expansion of newspaper publication. One can only assume that with such increases as these, the Japanese people must have conducted more readings at these public settings in the late Taishō period than in the early Meiji period. And this assumption most likely is a valid one. For example, according to some statistics from the 1920s, total visits to libraries in Japan increased from 163,308 in 1899 to 3,954,148 in 1912, and then to 10,901,889 in 1923.

On the other hand, the development of modernization and especially the improvement of the economy also meant that people had better and more affordable

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117 In fact, these public settings include virtually any location where public reading were performed. However, it will be impossible to measure numerically how such locations as streets in the cities and the field patties in the country experienced changes. Therefore this study focuses merely on the countable facilities.
119 Due to the decline of the Freedom and Civil Right Movement, the increasing literacy of readers, and the better affordability of periodicals, newspaper-reading facilities became less prevalent toward the end of Meiji period. For a brief account of these newspaper-reading facilities in the Meiji period, see Yamamoto Taketoshi, *Kindai Nihon no shinbun dokusha-zō* (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1981) 204-210.
and thus more available private space than ever before. The Tokyo-fu Shakai-ka (Social Department of Tokyo Prefecture) conducted a survey on the housing condition of middle-class households in Tokyo Prefecture: Tokyo City, towns, and villages. According to this survey, the index of rent rose to 253% in 1922 over the 100% base of 1914. Compared with the 235% of retail price, it was higher. However, from 1914 to 1921, the retail price had been topping rent index by large margins.\textsuperscript{121} It was only in 1922, when both retail and wholesale prices suffered a sudden and sharp decrease from the previous year, that the consistently rising rent took the lead. This sharp rise in rent was attributed primarily to the sharp rise in retail and wholesale prices.\textsuperscript{122} Therefore, it can be said that in Tokyo and its vicinities, houses were more affordable in the 1910s when compared with other commodities.

At the same time, residences in Tokyo became more private in the late Meiji and early Taishō periods. First of all, the average size of households had decreased due to the emergence of more nuclear families. Tokyo-shi Shakai-kyoku (Tokyo Social Service Bureau), in August 1922, conducted research on the problems of housing shortages in the city. According to the statistics cited in the research, the population of Tokyo metropolis more than doubled in less than thirty years: from 885,445 in 1892 to 1,626,641 in 1909, and then to 2,377,884 in 1920.\textsuperscript{123} Construction of residential

\textsuperscript{121} For instance, in 1920, the rent index was 167 and the retail price index was 281. Even the wholesale price index was 272, more than 100% over the rent index. For details see “Yachin chingin bukka nenbetsu kötei suhyō,” Tokyo-shi oyobi kinsetsu chōson chūtō kaikyū jūtaku chōsa, Tokyo-fu Shakai-ka, ed. (Tokyo: Tokyo-fu Shakai-ka, 1923).

\textsuperscript{122} In 1921, the retail price index was still higher than that of rent, though the former had a 33% decrease while the latter rent rose 46%. For brief explanation of the rising rent, see “Kijutu-hen,” ibid, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{123} There are four sets of statistics concerning Tokyo population that appear in the research. The
houses did not keep up with the population increase and therefore created a housing shortage: the size of housing per capita dropped from 3.64 tsubo (about 12 m²) in 1909 to 3.06 tsubo (about 10 m²) in 1920. However, this drop in size does not necessarily mean that Tokyo residents had less private space to live in. From 1892 to 1920, the total number of households in Tokyo showed a 262.33% increase: from 237,270 to 622,432. This means that the average size of households dropped from 3.73 residents per household in 1892 to 2.61 in 1920. In other words, the average Tokyo family in 1920 was 1.12 people smaller than in 1892 – a rather rapid decrease within three decades.

Moreover, the majority of these smaller households lived in independent houses instead of sharing with others. The survey by Tokyo-shi Shakai-kyoku shows that only about 24.3% of the total households shared houses with other households in 1920. The Tokyo-fu Shakai-ka survey shows that only 22% of the surveyed households shared one house with two or more other households.

Even for these house-sharing families who were the most disadvantaged economically, their living space was becoming more and more private. Nakagawa Kiyoshi conducted a brief study on the living conditions of lower-class people in Tokyo from late Meiji to late Taishō from the perspective of the relationship between

\[\text{numbers here are from the set based on public record of Resident Registration which has the longest time span.}\]


\[\text{124 Ibid, 63-65.}\]

\[\text{125 And half of these house-sharing households are single people living all by themselves. Ibid, 80-81.}\]

family and housing arrangement. According to this study, many lower-class people of different households shared units in kichinyado (flophouses) or nagaya (terraced/tenement housing) in the 1890s. Some families even shared one room.\textsuperscript{127}

This situation started to change in the first two decades in the twentieth century. Nakagawa observes that in the 1910s,

Flophouses and terraced houses, which had been prevalent until then, died out. Flophouses became places where only single males resided. It became the mainstream for a low-class household in the city to live in one room in a common terraced house without having to share with other families. In each of these rooms, there were sinks and toilet installed. Electrical lights and tatami came into wide use, and people had meals at shabby dining tables. This became the standard life of low-class households around 1920.\textsuperscript{128}

There is no comparable data found as to how the housing conditions were for those of upper-class and middle-class Tokyo households in the early and mid Meiji period. Nonetheless, these changes in the housing conditions of lower-class families makes it plausible to assume that upper and middle class families in Tokyo enjoyed larger and more private housing during the same periods. Mariko Inoue claims that the upper-class in the Meiji period had already integrated both Japanese and Western features in their houses and “the most notable change was the addition of a Western-style room which … served as a space for the head of the household to receive guests or conduct business and as his study.”\textsuperscript{129} In the mid-Taishō, magazine and newspaper


\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 343.

articles described the “housewife’s study,” a private space for the housewife. As early as 1905, a housing-specific journal Jūtaku (House) was created as the organ of Jūtaku Kairyō Kai (Society of Housing Improvement). Several other organizations also promoted westernized or “civilized” (such as the so-called bunka apāto, or civilized apartment) housing, which was mostly targeted at the newly emerging middle-class families. Therefore it is legitimate to say that, despite the drop in the average size of housing per capita in large cities, Japanese families enjoyed more private spaces in the 1920s than in the late 19th century.

There is anecdotal evidence about where people read. Nagamine mentions that in the 1900s, some published articles criticize the so called “degeneration of reading.” Examples of bad behavior included reading on a futon, reading while lying down, and reading while in a hammock. In a later example, a female Tokyo bus attendant testified how she enjoyed the magazine Kingu: “It is close to 10pm when I get home after being rattled all day long. I am exhausted and I feel like I am going to fall down. But it is my only comfort to hold the beautiful Kingu and have my nose in it for about one hour before bed.” Through these examples, one can see that reading at home in a rather relaxed manner already existed in the late Meiji period.

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130 Ibid, 96.
131 For brief account of the history of this housing-improvement movement, see Uchida Seizō, “Jūtaku kairyō undō nituite,” Shoku · jū, Kindai Nihon shokumin seikatsu-shi Ser., vol. 6 (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1987) 558-562.
133 Unidentified source, as cited in ibid, 221-222.
There are also some statistics available through which a more solid argument about private reading can be made. Even though some of these statistics cover only certain groups of readers at certain locations and some are even from the post-war period, they strongly suggest that the Japanese readers read more in private spaces in the 1910s and 1920s.

One set of these statistics is from a survey conducted in the late 1930s on the topic of “reading,” or dokusho. Some results of the survey appeared in a volume of a book series titled Student Series. The survey received replies from 259 students majoring in both humanities and science at the Preparatory Department of Tokyo Imperial University. Table 2.1 gives the result of the students’ library use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Go to libraries for the purpose of study</th>
<th>Go to library for other purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>every day</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students:</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage:</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1  Library Use of 259 College Students in Tokyo

As can be seen, 14.5% of all the students did not go to libraries at all. Close to half went to libraries rarely. Only about 20 to 25% of the students went to libraries

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134 This volume of the series was published in December, 1938. There is not indication as to when the survey was conducted. However, in the “Introduction,” the chief editor of the series said that they published some raw statistics from a recent survey simply because they did not have time to work on the numbers yet. Therefore, it is assumed that the survey was done in 1938. See Kawai Eijirō, introduction, Gakusei to dokusho, ed. Kawai Eijirō (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōron-sha, 1938) 3.
often or everyday. The survey does not specify how much time the students spent in the libraries, but it shows that a student from the same school did his reading at home for 1.48 hours each day on average.\textsuperscript{135}

The same preference to read at home can be observed consistently in the post-war period. Mainichi Shinbunsha started a reading survey in 1947. In the questions of the 1950 survey, there is one asking in what ways the readers obtain and read certain books. A mere 3.9\% of the readers surveyed said they read the books at libraries.\textsuperscript{136} An extremely low percentage of people reading books at libraries in the 1930s and in the years that followed the end of Word War Two strongly suggests there is a high possibility that people in the mid 1920s perhaps also did not read much at libraries.

Moreover, if one accepts the theory that there had been a relative decrease in vocal reading, both the collective and individual kinds, it is plausible to draw the conclusion that the Japanese read more in private spaces than in public settings in the late Meiji and the Taishō periods. Silent reading meant the elimination of vocal articulation in the reading process. And vocal articulation is the one and only means through which people could convey the content of their reading to others, whether literate or not.\textsuperscript{137} When one does vocal reading, there always are two possibilities: an audience is intended or is not. However, when one does silent reading, it can only mean that there is no audience intended at all. Therefore, silent reading necessarily means that the

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, appendix, 431. Due to the fact that only 20 to 25\% of the students used the libraries everyday or often, it is not plausible to assume that the average time the students spent on reading in the libraries would exceed the 1.48 hours they spend on reading at home.


\textsuperscript{137} There surely are other means such as sign languages and Braille. However, both require literacy acquired only through a learning process the same as any vocal language.
possibility of an intended audience is also eliminated along with the vocal articulation. This elimination of a listening audience decisively terminated the function of reading as a communicative method, and reading activities become merely private.

A decrease in collective vocal reading means that reading in modern Japan functioned less and less as a communication and participatory-entertainment tool. With the improved privacy in housing, the increasing accessibility of printed media, the rising literacy and the appearance of other family entertainment choices, it is likely that Japanese readers conducted collective vocal reading less frequently in the late Meiji and Taishō periods. Even in families, the smallest social unit of any given society, preference of private reading can be seen. As Makiko Inoue describes in her article, the head of a middle-class family in Tokyo in the Taishō period often had his own study where he “could meet in private with guests or enjoy his own time in his own space, with the door closed to interruptions from the rest of the family,” and the wives started to also have their own spaces that enabled them “to enjoy a sense of freedom and privacy.”

Compared with the early Meiji period, when the head of the family read newspapers to his wife and children, the Taishō period saw a change toward preference for privacy in people’s reading habits.

Cognitively speaking, any reading behavior – either vocal or silent – is private and introverted by nature. Where the reading is conducted has nothing to do with this nature of reading. This is because, obviously, the recognition and intake of information from reading materials has to be processed within the body of that person.

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who is reading. However, vocal reading that functions as a means of communication or participatory entertainment often makes this innately introvert and private process extrovert and public. This is obvious in the practice of reading aloud in the early Meiji period, especially during the People’s Rights Movement. Yamamoto Takekoshi cites a letter to the newspaper Yūbin hōchi in 1878 to illustrate how newspaper-reading facilities were received:

> Everyone was allowed to read newspapers [at the facility]. Moreover, on the fifth or the sixth day of each month, [the readers] followed the model of speech meetings and gathered people – young and old, men and women – from the neighborhood. Because these readers kindly explained things that were easy to understand in newspapers and magazines, the audience enjoyed it very much and they even waited, counting the days.

140 The reading activities at these facilities were not private and introverted. They became a tool of literacy education, ideological propaganda, and social interaction. The literate readers at these gatherings seemed to hold certain political or social agendas; their readings were accompanied with annotations and explanations. This intention of the readers and the willingness of the audience created a psychological sphere where a public and extroverted kind of reading was possible.

However, in the twentieth century, the preference for silent reading marked a return to psychological introversion in reading behaviors, or as Nagamine calls it,

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139 I used the phrase “intake of information” in place of “comprehension” because there still is no definite concept of “reading,” and whether comprehension should be considered as a part of reading is open to debate. See chapter 7, Robert G. Crowder, The Psychology of Reading (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 116-143.
“naishōka.”\textsuperscript{141} Therefore, there was no psychologically created public sphere where a public and extroverted kind of reading was possible. Reading became an entirely private activity on the psychological level.

2.3 Why Did People Read?

Judging from the available sources on the kinds of texts that were published, one can distinguish three types reading among the general public from late Meiji through the Taishō period: reading for practical instruction, reading for self-cultivation, and reading for entertainment or pleasure. Of course there is overlap between these categories. Articles on cooking, for example, could also be entertaining for some people. Works of literature could serve as entertainment, a means to self cultivation, and a source of instruction—mystery fiction, for example, providing instruction on forensic science. However, for the purpose here of outlining the readership of Bungei shunjū, one can discern a general trend in growth in the numbers of people reading for pleasure during the period under discussion. Having established this trend in the general population of the Tokyo area, the study will next turn to examine the available evidence concerning the specifics of Bungei shunjū readers such as their literacy levels.

Student enrollment at various schools in Japan increased from 1,332,220 in 1873 to 11,049,382 in 1922.\textsuperscript{142} However, matriculation rates are not the best indicator of

\textsuperscript{141} Nagamine Shigetoshi, Zasshi to kokusha no kindai (Tokyo: Nihon Editāsukāru Shuppanbu, 1997) 75.
people’s literacy. As Yamamoto Taketoshi has pointed out, “It is dangerous to conjecture on the level of literacy, and especially, the scale of newspaper readership on the base of the statistics for enrollment rates.”\textsuperscript{143} This is because: first, graduation from elementary school does not necessarily mean that one was literate enough to read newspapers; and second, people’s reading abilities change rapidly depending on if one made an effort to improve one’s reading skills.

A more reliable source in the case of Japan is the results of tests given to the conscripts that were conducted between 1899 and 1937. According to the results of the tests in 1901, of all the males who reached the age of twenty in Osaka Prefecture, 24.24\% were illiterate; 20.63\% had a little reading and math abilities; 53.13\% graduated from elementary schools or higher elementary schools, or can read and do math at this level. And only 2.03\% of all the conscripts possessed literacy higher than elementary education, whereas the national rate was a moderate 3.5\%.\textsuperscript{144} In other words, only half of all the conscripts were likely to be regular readers of printed materials at the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, in 1925, 88.68\% of the conscripts graduated from an elementary school or a higher level institution.\textsuperscript{145} And many of these conscripts demonstrated reading

\textsuperscript{144} The figures are from Okubo Toshiaki and Kaigo Tokiomi, eds., “Meiji 34 nendo Osaka-fu sōtei futsū kyōiku teido chōsahyō,” \textit{Sōtei kyōiku chōsa gaikyō}, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Senbundō Shoten, 1973) 42. The national figure is calculated from the \textit{Historical Statistics of Japan} on the same formula as stated in the previous paragraph.
\textsuperscript{145} “Taishō jūyon nendo sōtei kyōiku chōsa gaikyō,” ibid, vol.1, 4-6.
ability higher than their education levels in their performance in the *kokugo* (Japanese language) section of the test.\(^{146}\) This rapid increase in literacy surely corresponds to an expansion of the readerships of various printed media.

Reading for self-cultivation, without doubt, saw a huge rise in the wake of the rapid expansion of the educational system. This is due primarily to the rapid expansion in the number of students who were forced to read for moral betterment or read voluntarily for self-cultivation. However, at the same time, reading for entertainment seems to have undergone an expansion that was proportionate to, or even greater than, the expansion of reading activities at large. This expansion of entertainment-oriented reading activities is implied in the change of the contents of various print media that were created to meet public demand.

The demand for entertainment and stories can be seen most conspicuously in the proliferation of novels, poetry, and traditional tales in the pages of the national and regional papers at the time.\(^{147}\) The preference for entertainment-orientated materials can also be observed in magazine publication, especially in the Taishō and Shōwa periods. One example is the magazine *Kingu* from Kodansha, the top publisher of magazines at the time. Created in January 1925, *Kingu* is said to be the first national magazine targeting a mass readership in modern Japan. It was the hallmark of commercialism in pre-war Japanese magazine publishing in terms of advertisement,

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\(^{146}\) For example, more than 40% of those who did not graduate from elementary schools achieved more than 7 points in the kokugo test and they were considered by the compilers of the data to have a reading ability close to those who graduated. And the compilers claimed that they are very happy with the conscripts’ performance in the reading test. For details, see “Taishō jūyon nendo sōtei kyōiku chōsa gaikyō,” ibid, vol.1, 8 and 31.

marketing, editing, printing, circulation, and reader response. Despite its obvious commercialism, the magazine claimed that its real goal was to be “the textbook for the Japanese nation,” and that this goal was motivated by “the purest and most righteous faith of serving the nation.” This goal was to be achieved through the magazine’s “provision of mental consolation that is as indispensable as sunshine” to everyone in the nation. Consequently, the magazine had to provide interesting reading materials to its readers. Noma Seiji, the creator of Kondansha and Kingu, stated this very straightforwardly, “[Kingu] has to be interesting, very interesting to both the elderly and youth, both men and women. It has to be the magazine that scholars, entrepreneurs, company employees, working woman can not help but want to read…”

This enthusiasm of the producers of Kingu to make the magazine interesting was welcomed by readers. The popularity of the magazine suggests that there were a great many readers who were reading for entertainment more than anything else. Though less than Kondansha expected, the first issue of Kingu sold about 740,000 copies, an unprecedented number in the magazine business. It reached its goal of a million copies per issue within two years. Various reading surveys demonstrate that readers of Kingu read the magazine because it was interesting. Nagamine cites a

150 Ibid, 3.  
152 The circulation numbers are from Satō Takumi, Kingu no jidai (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002) 10-11.
reading survey conducted in 1928 among 522 readers from a local Young Men’s Association, or Seinendan. 89 readers said they chose to read Kingu, a commanding lead over the second most read magazine’s 23. As shown in the table below, at least 30 out of the 89 readers specified “interesting” or similar answers for the reason they read the magazine (reason f, g and h). Only 19 clearly state they read Kingu for educational purpose (reason a, c and i).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. To acquire new knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Because you like to read novels and kōdan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. For cultivation purpose</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. No particular reason</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Because Kingu is abundant in stories and news</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. To be entertained</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Because Kingu is interesting</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. For leisure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. For the fostering of common knowledge</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Because Kingu is beneficial</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Because Kingu has many writings from celebrities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Because Kingu has many success stories</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Because Kingu is cheap in price and rich in content</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Local Young Readers’ Reasons to Choose Kingu, 1928

A similar preference for reading for pleasure can be observed in surveys that include various other magazines that had different contents. One such reading survey was conducted from December 1924 to January 1925 at Tokyo Asakusa Public Library. General-interest magazines and magazines that were intended for entertainment/leisure reading topped the most popular list by a large margin.
Table 2.3  Numbers of Magazines Checked out at Asakusa Library in 1924 and 1925

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine Title</th>
<th>December 1924</th>
<th>January 1925</th>
<th>Total Check-Outs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kōdan kurabu</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendai</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninjō kurabu</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chūgaku sekai</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juken to gakusei</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yūben</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōdan zasshi</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunrei kurabu</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitō</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chūō kōron</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibai to kinema</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kūraku</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geki to eiga</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engei gahō</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingu</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference for entertainment-oriented materials is also shown in book publication, which was proliferating in the mid-Taishō period more than ever before.

The expansion of book publication is demonstrated by the numbers of both the titles published and the copies sold annually. According to Nihon teikoku tōkei nenkan (The Almanac of Japanese Imperial Statistics), about 2,575 titles of books were published in 1881. In 1922, the total of book titles, including those published by the government, reached 26,810.153 Shuppan hanbai shōshi (A Minor History of Publication and Circulation) attempted to record the total circulation of publications in modern Japan.

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153 Only estimated total numbers of publications in book form were available from 1881 to 1917 due to the ambiguous categorization of all printed materials in the statistics. Makino Masahisa conducted a very detailed study on these publication statistics and the numbers of titles published here are drawn from his article. Makino Masahisa, “Nenpō Dainippon teikoku naimushō tōkei hōkoku naka no chūpan tōkei no kaiseki jō: Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa (zenzen) ki no bunyabetsu chūpan tensū no suii,” Nihon shuppan shiryō: seido, jittai, hito, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Editāsukūru Shuppanbu, 1995), 18-19.
The figures are based on records of Keihōkyoku (Bureau of Police) at Naimushō (Ministry of Internal Affairs). According to these figures, the total circulation of books and periodicals jumped from 2,500,000 in 1881 to 180,000,000 in 1926.\textsuperscript{154}

There are few extant records that show exactly which books were bestsellers during the Meiji and Taishō periods and how many copies of these bestsellers were sold. However, there exists evidence that suggests some titles were more popular than others, and that many of these contemporary bestsellers were mostly oriented toward providing entertainment, rather than education, to readers. The most conspicuous examples of these entertainment-oriented bestsellers during the Taishō period were those titles included in \textit{Tachikawa Bunko} (Tachikawa Paperback Series).\textsuperscript{155} Osaka-based publisher Tachikawa Bunmeidō revolutionized the traditional \textit{sōki kōdan} (short-handed record of kōdan) into \textit{kaki kōdan} (written kōdan), and published \textit{Shokoku manyū: Ikkyū Zenji} (A Tour of Countries: Master Ikkyū), the first title in the series. By November, 1924, a total of 193 titles were published.\textsuperscript{156} Many titles, such as \textit{Shokoku manyū: Ikkyū zenji} and the Sarutobi Sasuke series, were extremely successful.\textsuperscript{157} It is estimated that \textit{Shokoku manyū: Ikkyū zenji}, which was the first title published in the series, sold 67,000 copies by 1921, and that \textit{Sarutobi Sasuke} sold

\textsuperscript{155} The title of the series originally was called Tatsukawa Bunko, but Tachikawa is perhaps more accepted at present.
\textsuperscript{156} Tatsukawa Bunmeidō published the series’ last new title in November 1924, though it continued republishing and reprinting many titles that already had been published in the series. For more detailed information of the series’ brief history, see Ozaki Hotsuki, and Adachi Kenichi, \textit{Kaisetsu: Tatsukara Bunko} (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974), and Scott Langton, “A Literature for the People: A Study of \textit{Jidai Shōsetsu} in Taishō and Early Shōwa Japan,” diss., The Ohio State University, 2000.
\textsuperscript{157} Sarutobi Sasuke is a fictional ninja.
200,000 copies.\textsuperscript{158} Works in this series are deemed harbingers of an emerging popular literature, which is often opposed to pure literature. Whether or not this kind of distinction/categorization is valid and useful, it is without doubt that works in Tachikawa Bunko are of entertaining natures. Its readers were teenagers, mostly male, of upper, middle and lower-class birth. Most of them did not have a chance to get education beyond elementary school. Many were apprentices, interns, office boys, and waiters. They read the series during leisure time simply to be entertained. Ozaki Hotsuki argues that the appeal of the series to its readership lies in an anti-establishment spirit that was displayed by many heroes of the stories.\textsuperscript{159} It is this spirit that made the Tachikawa Bunko antithetical to both fine-arts books and the \textit{kyōyō}, or human cultivation texts.

Another piece of evidence that testifies to the popularity of reading for entertainment is \textit{Toshokan ni okeru dokusho keikō chōsa} (the Reading Tendency Survey at Libraries), one of the first efforts to examine reading activities in modern Japan. It was conducted by \textit{Nihon Toshokan Kyōkai} (Japan Library Association) in 1934. Even though the data reflect the situation almost a decade into the Shōwa period, it is plausible that people’s reading habits remained consistent, and the survey in 1936 holds some validity for the 1920s as well. The survey was conducted on January 24, 1934 at six public libraries in Tokyo: Teikoku, Hibiya, Surugadai, Kyōbashi, Fukagawa, and Ōhashi. Since it was conducted in January, which was the

\textsuperscript{158} Ozaki Hotsuki, and Adachi Kenichi, \textit{Kaisetsu: Tatsukara Bunko} (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974) 211-212. To figure out the total of copies sold for each title, Adachi multiplied the times that each title was reprinted by one thousand that is the estimated number of copies for each reprint. He did not specify whether the sale of \textit{Sarutobi Sasuke} is for one volume, or the entire series.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 7-13, 25-33.
time to prepare for final examination of the school year, students made up 57.6% of the 3,078 readers that returned answers. Nonetheless, it covers various classes of society, including government employees and army personnel, workers in agricultural, industrial and service sectors, students, and people without employment.

The survey asks three questions: what kind of books do you find interesting to read, what books do you read, and what books do you want to read. Answers to these questions were sorted into nine categories. The table below combines the answers to all three questions and shows the percentage each category occupies in the total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Books</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Philosophy, psychology, ethics, religion.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. History, biography, topography, travelogue.</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Politics, laws, economics, sociology, education, military.</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Science, engineering, medicine.</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Industry.</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Fine arts, crafts.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Literature.</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sports, games, entertainments.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Textbooks</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Book Reading Tendencies at Tokyo Public Libraries, 1936

Though these categories of books do not correspond perfectly to purpose for reading, it is reasonable to assume that the readers at these Tokyo public libraries read textbooks mostly for the exams (instruction or cultivation) and literature mostly for entertainment. If one proceeds according to this assumption, then the data show that

160 The compiler of the survey mentioned that there was a hike in the numbers of student attendance to the libraries due to the examinations.
there existed a much stronger preference for reading literature than textbooks, and suggest that people were reading books more for entertainment than for either instruction or self-cultivation. Since more than half the respondents were students in middle schools, higher middle schools, or college, we can assume that this sample was weighted toward those reading for education and that the average Japanese reader would be even more inclined to read for enjoyment. Taking these facts into consideration, we can probably conclude that contemporary Tokyo readers read books more for entertainment than for education.

A similar trend can be observed on the local level as well. In 1930, Dai-Nippon Rengō Seinendan (United Young Men’s Association of Japan) conducted a survey on what kind of books and magazines its 16,000 branches owned and lent to members. The ranking of books is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Titles</th>
<th>Number of Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shūyō zenshū</td>
<td>1,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kōdan zenshū</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Taishū bungaku zenshū(^{161})</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eiyū taibō-ron</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sekai taishū bungaku zenshū</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Shūyōsho</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nikudan</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Taiken wo kataru</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Meiji taishū bungaku zenshū</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5 Books Owned by Local Branches of United Youth Association of Japan, 1930


\(^{161}\) It is most likely that this zenshū is actually Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū published by Heibonsha in 1928.
It is not surprising to see that *zenshū* (complete works) occupied 5 places in the top 6 because the peak of *enpon* (one-yen-book) boom had just passed its high point, and all four of these *zenshū* were successful *enpon* publications.\(^{162}\) Even though cultivation-oriented *Shūyō zenshū* tops the list by a rather large margin, the next three are all literary collections and their combined ownership doubles that of the leader. Moreover, *Shūyō zenshū* has only 12 volumes, while the other three combined had about 100 volumes by 1930.\(^{163}\) It is not possible to state definitely whether members of the association read these literary complete works, or whether they read the works, especially the more serious-literature-oriented *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū*, for the purpose of entertainment. Nonetheless, the dominance of literature of both pure and popular natures is clearly demonstrated. This dominance suggests that entertainment-oriented reading activities was practiced more frequently and more widely than educational reading.

To summarize, various entertainment-oriented publications including newspapers, magazines, and books topped the reading lists of a rage of social groups in modern Japan. And entertainment-oriented reading activities were widely practiced at least in the area of Tokyo if not all over the nation. Compared with the pre-Meiji and early Meiji periods, both readerships and publication of printed materials expanded rapidly. Accordingly, reading activities in general also flourished in the late Meiji, Taishō and

\(^{162}\) A more accurate translation of the term *zenshū* here would be “anthologies.” There is no possibility for anyone to publish real complete works of, say, *gendai Nihon bungaku* (modern Japan literature).

\(^{163}\) It is not clear whether the ownership in the survey meant the ownership of the entire collection of each *zenshū*, or just part of the *zenshū*. By 1930, *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū* has published 43 volumes, *Kōdan zenshū* the entire collection of 12 volumes, and *Gendai Taishō bungaku zenshū* 45 volumes.
Shōwa periods. At the same time, evidence shows that people tended to read more silently than vocally, more in private spaces than in public settings, and more for entertainment than for education. Reading activities were by no means universal among all social classes or in all regions. Nonetheless, such facts provide an overview of how a potential readership was formed for Bungei shunjū.

In the next section, through surveys of articles, editor’s notes, and readers’ letters that were published in Bungei shunjū in its early years, the interaction of production and reception of the periodical will be discussed.

2.4 A Potential Middlebrow Readership

The difficulty of the contents and style of Bungei shunjū’s first issues required its readership be comprised mostly of people who possessed a literacy-level of secondary education level or higher. Reading surveys of students have shown that Bungei shunjū was read much more by college students and middle-school students than by elementary school students. For instance, a survey conducted among elementary school students in Kyoto in 1926 shows that children’s magazines topped the list and Bungei shunjū was not on the list at all. In another 1926 survey conducted with 579 middle-school students in Hiroshima, the magazine rose to 5th place with 14 votes. This was a very good result compared with Chūō kōron and Kaizō, both of which received two votes respectively. The survey was also broken down by age. Except for one vote by a 26 year-old student, the other thirteen votes of Bungei shunjū were from

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164 Kyoto-shi Shōgakkō Kyōin-kai Kenkyū-bu, Jidō yomimono no kenkyū (Kyoto: Kawai Shoten, 1926) 20-36.
students aged 17 and 20. A third 1926 survey conducted among 716 students at Tokyo Business College (Hitotsubashi) put *Bungei shunjū* on the top of the leisure reading list with 182 votes. Even though the magazine did not make it to the academic reading ranking, it was still in 3rd place in the combined result. The differences between regions surely had an impact on the results. Nonetheless, it is probably the case that students who received secondary or higher levels of education read *Bungei shunjū* more than their less-educated peers.

The number of higher-educated people experienced a rapid increase during the Meiji and Taishō periods. Judged from the improvement of literacy, this increase was obviously faster than the expansion of the general readership of all printed materials. It is estimated that toward the end of Meiji period, no more than 10% of Japanese children aged between fifteen and nineteen received a secondary education. Even though there are no available matriculation rates for secondary educational institutes in Japan during the Meiji and Taishō periods, there is evidence concerning both the population of various age groups and the enrollments at all kinds of schools in the *Historical Statistic of Japan*. By dividing the total enrollments in secondary schools with the populations of 15-19 and 20-24 age groups, one is able to produce a rough but rather reliable matriculation rate for secondary and higher education. According to the

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165 The objects of this survey were *yakan tsūgaku seishōnen rōmusha*, those young workers who worked during the daytime to support themselves and commuted to schools at night for study. Hiroshima-shi Shakai-ka, *Yakan tsūgaku seishōnen rōmusha seikatsu jōai* (Hiroshima: Hiroshima-shi Shiyakusho, 1926) 61-68.
166 “Aidokusho chōsa hōkoku,” *Hitotsubashi shinbun* 1 Dec. 1926: 2; 15 Dec. 1926: 3. The first and second places were *Kigyō to shakai* (*Enterprise and Society*) and *Kaisō*.
Historical Statistics of Japan, Japan had 9,204,212 people between age 15 and 24 in 1913. The enrollment at schools higher than elementary ones was 921,914. The matriculation rate for 1913 was 10.02%. The literacy test of Osaka conscripts displayed similar results. In 1913, only 5.74% of all the conscripts demonstrated literacy higher than that of elementary education.

It was in the Taishō period that secondary education made a great leap forward. In 1925, the national matriculation rate of secondary and higher schools of Japan was 20.88%, twice of that in 1913. And the rate of male conscripts in Osaka who possessed literacy higher than elementary education rose to 13.4%, more than double that of 1913, and almost 6 times that of 1901. The national rate is at an even higher 18.94%, also 6 times that of 1901 and twice that of 1913. In other words, during the first decade of Taishō period, the number of those who constitute the majority of Bungei shunjū’s potential readers had more than doubled.

However, a potential readership does not automatically transform into an actual magazine readership. This transformation only became possible through the dynamic and complicated interaction that took place primarily between Bungei shunjū and Kikuchi Kan, on the one hand, and the magazine’s existing subscribers and potential

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readers, on the other. This interaction can be observed most clearly through communications between the two sides concerning the pricing and the content of the magazine in its first year.

2.5 Low Prices

As discussed in the previous chapter, Kikuchi Kan had demonstrated great concern for readers in his literary criticism in terms of the concepts, purpose, and evaluation of literature. The same concern was displayed also in his management of the magazine during the first year. He frequently explained the pricing policy and constantly introduced the financial situation of Bungei shunjū. The following are four notes that Kan published in the inaugural issue. Two of these four notes discuss the motivations behind the creation of Bungei shunjū. The other two deal with the financial future and manuscript fees, which would become constant topics in the postscript.

△ When reading the magazine Kyokugai that was created by Takabatake Motoyuki and his followers, I found myself wanting to publish a simple magazine like that. But I found it was not really simple when it was published in the end.

△ Since this journal was created on a mere whim from the beginning, there are no fixed views and opinions in it at all. In case I can not collect enough manuscripts, it might be discontinued next month. On the other hand, if it sells well, I might expand it, add creative works, and make it a magnificent literary magazine.

172 Similar notes would become “Henshū kōki” (Postscript) in later issues
173 Kyokugai 局外, or Outside, was created in October 1922. For unknown reasons, Kikuchi Kan wrote the name of Takabatake Motoyuki 高畠素之 as Takayama Motoyuki高山素之. 高畠素之 (1886-1928): social activist and socialist thinker. He is the translator of the first complete Japanese version of Karl Marx’s Das Capital.
Last year, I usually kept silent when hearing the bad mouthing of many people. This is because I regard it to be childish to take over the literary columns—the ones I usually do not write to—and argue there. However, from this year, I think I will answer those attacks and accusations at least in this magazine.

Some words to those who write for this journal. As for manuscript fees, I will pay as a general rule. In particular, I definitely will pay the people who make their living only by their pens. However, when paying the fees, I would like to be given a free hand. Depending on the months, the fees will fluctuate. So, I will publish the contributions of those who understand about the fees. I also will publish words of unknown people if they are interesting. But I, the editor of this journal, would like to have the absolute right to make the selections.

The first and the third notes obviously are attempting to find some legitimate reasons for the creation of the magazine. More interesting are the second and the fourth notes. In the second note, Kikuchi Kan expresses his concern over the future of the magazine in a seemingly indifferent tone. And underneath this seemingly indifferent tone is the fact that he cleverly marketed the magazine as unorthodox and broad-minded. He also implies between the lines that the fate of the magazine was to be determined merely by the sales of the magazine. Should the magazine receive enough support from its readers, he would reward the readers by making the magazine bigger, nicer, and more interesting. In the fourth note, he talks mostly about manuscript fees and displays his willingness to help out those writers who made their livings solely by writing. Any reader with common-sense would understand that if he/she liked the writings of these writers, his or her subscription to the magazine was actually doing something to help them. In other words, the readers of the magazine are encouraged to continue buying the magazine since they actually were helping their favorite writers. At the same time, Kikuchi Kan also encourages readers to contribute
to the magazine too. He does not specify whether the “unknown people” were limited to writers, or if it included contributing readers. In this sense, Kan implies that any reader could also write for the magazine and get paid, though the warning of fluctuating fees appeared to be discouraging.

For its first three issues, *Bungei shunjū* was sold for ten sen, which was an exceptionally low price compared with the magazine’s peers, which were sold usually for eighty sen or more. Kikuchi Kan seems to have taken much pride in the inexpensive pricing and he had been emphasizing this fact in many of the later issues. In the postscript of the February issue, Kan cites a reader’s contribution letter in which the reader claims himself to be a proletarian, and expresses his appreciation of *Bungei shunjū*’s low price. On the other hand, Kan also reveals in the same postscript the fact that he lost about two hundred yen in the publication of the inaugural issue. “I would like to raise the price,” he continues, “but it will cause resentment [among readers] if I do so from the February issue. So I will try my best to bear the loss. On the other hand, my readers, please do not feel shocked if I set the price at 15 sen.”174 Since Kan was able to keep the price at ten sen for both February and March issues, he had to show off his pride in the March issue of 1923:

▽ This issue has become fifty six pages. Since I am selling it at ten sen, even those opponents of *Bungei shunjū* probably will not say that it is expensive. It sounds like I am blowing my own horn by saying that the magazine is cheap. But it is cheap in fact, and I can not help but to do so.

▽ Although it is not the case that I do not want to raise the price, I am putting up with it for the time being because it also is a little pleasure for me to keep it at ten sen. At the same time, I would like

those people who feel sympathy for this magazine to become our year-
long direct subscribers. That is one way to support this magazine. In
return, we will not raise the price during the period of subscription
even in case there is a price increase for other readers.
\[ The inaugural issue had a print of 3,000 copies, the February issue
had 4,000. I intend to print 6,000 copies of this March issue. Even if
it sells 10,000 copies, I will not make any profit. Though, I will
appreciate it if the income balances the costs.

The readers of *Bungei shunjū* indeed appreciated the very affordable price and
the loss that Kan was willing to endure. Besides the letter that Kan cited in the
February issue, a very short contribution letter from a reader named Itō Michio was
published in the March issue. In the letter, Mr. Itō wishes *Bungei shunjū* prosperity
and agrees with the magazine’s position in the debate about bourgeois and proletarian
literatures. As for the price, he also feels ten sen was reasonable: “it is all right for me
if you raise the price to fifteen sen.” “However,” Mr. Itō continues, “a price higher
than fifteen sen will be a severe blow to proletarians and farmers such as me.”\(^{175}\) In
one of the contribution letters that appeared in the April issue, a reader named Ōtani
Chūjirō expresses his satisfaction of the magazine. “I am very sorry to intrude on your
precious time. I am a worker. Yet, I can read rather fluently. So, I have been reading
*Bungei shunjū* since its creation. It is very interesting and educational. It is cheap too.
It has become something that I can not live without.”\(^{176}\)

Unfortunately, the severe blow that Mr. Itō worried about came right away.
Kikuchi Kan had to raise the price of the April issue to twenty sen. Knowing what
this price hike meant to the readers, Kan tried to explain the reasons in the postscript:

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△ What I want to resist the most is to raise the price. I thought that the paper cost of the March issue, similar to that of the January issue, would be 120 or 130 yen at most. But it turned out to be 250 yen. The account of the March issue is as follows:
  Expenditure: about 700 yen.
  Itemized costs: a. paper-250 yen; b. print-150 yen; c. manuscripts and editing-300 yen.
  Income: about 420 yen.
  a. sales (in the case that all 6,000 copies were sold)-420 yen; b. advertisement-100 yen.
△ I want to keep publishing the magazine without financial lost. Some of my friends said, “it is actually improper that you set the price of the magazine at ten sen. You are supposed to sell it for what it is worth. You should sell it as much as it can sell and pay us more for our manuscripts!” Therefore, I changed the price to twenty sen for this month only. Also I decided to print 10,000 copies and see how it goes. Even with the price set at twenty sen per copy, I definitely will not be able to make any profit. I just want to go as far as I can without losing money.
△ As I said in the past, direct subscribers pay ten sen as before. Those who sent applications directly to us also pay ten sen.

It is interesting to see that Kan juxtaposes Mr. Itō’s letter, in which the reader warns against a price higher than fifteen sen, in the same issue, in which he published this postscript. In so doing, he is implying that he knows about readers’ preference for a lower price, and that he raised the price because he had no other choice: one, he had to avoid financial loss in order to continue publishing the “educational and interesting” magazine; and second, he was requested by his friends/contributors to pay higher manuscript fees. Citing the words of unidentified friends, Kan also implied that even at the price of twenty sen, the magazine was worth what readers were paying.

In May, Kan broke his promise to sell only the April issue for twenty sen. The May issue was also on the market for the same price. Kan did not elaborate much, as
he did in the April issue, on the reasons. Instead, he emphasized that a section of creative works was added to the May issue, and the writers of these creative works were young and promising. Then he says, “This issue, with the creative work section and main texts, seems to add up to 120 pages. Try as I might, I can not do the math [of the magazine’s finance]. Well, I do not want to do the math. I’ll just try to do as I see proper.”\textsuperscript{177} Kan also promises to reduce misprints.

Obviously, rather than finding legitimate reasons for the hike in price, Kan was trying to make the readers feel that the magazine was worth the higher price. A more interesting note in the postscript is Kikuchi Kan’s elaboration of the direct subscriber discount.

I have said that for those who had paid in advance, I will sell for ten sen even when the cover price goes up to twenty. This is limited only to the subscribers who subscribed directly through our company. It does not apply to the subscribers of Shun’yōdō. Shun’yōdō is a bookstore that is oriented to profit-making. Should Shun’yōdō have the discount, other bookstores will complain to me. It is bad taste to talk about this small money. The direct subscribers of our company come and buy the magazine, which is ten sen, at ten sen. When readers subscribe through bookstores, the bookstore will come and buy the ten-sen magazine at seven sen. This is why we gave the discount only to the direct subscribers.

In this message, Kan describes Shun’yōdō and other bookstores as “oriented to profit-making” and therefore, implicitly distinguishes the distributors from the magazine’s publisher Bungei Shunjūsha, which intended to publish a literary coterie journal. This way, he sends the readers the message that a large part of the price hike would be going to the bookstores’ pockets, and that Bungei Shunjūsha was not

\textsuperscript{177} Kikuchi Kan, postscript, \textit{Bungei shunjū} May. 1923: 104

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intended for profit, and was indeed not making a profit. Moreover, all the distributing bookstores would complain to him should he dare to give the discount to Shun’yōdō, and the magazine itself was innocent in this respect, unable to help poor readers because of the distributors’ greed. Writing the note, Kan might have been simply trying to answer questions from subscribers who were confused about the two kinds of subscriptions. But he might have been also trying to draw the readers closer to Bungei shunjū by positioning the magazine in opposition to the profit-minded distributors.

It seems that Kikuchi Kan also tried to play down the readers’ concerns with possible price rise. Consistent with the previous issues, he published in the May issue two letters from readers. Both letters display positive feedback, and both readers claim that they are so-called proletarians. One reader, whose last name is Yoshida, says he received an allowance of 1.5 yen and became an annual subscriber with 1 yen from the allowance. Then he adds, “I do know that the magazine is very inexpensive. But I also hope that you will not raise the price above 30 sen.”178 Interestingly enough, the price hike limit that a reader could tolerate was raised up to 30 sen from 15 sen in the March issue. The other letter from a person who only identifies himself or herself as “one reader,” simply expresses his or her dissatisfaction with books that were too expensive, including those by the self-claimed proletarian writers. Nothing was said about the price rise of the magazine.

178 Yoshida, letter, ibid, 15.
In the June issue, Kikuchi Kan seems to intend to finalize the pricing policy. He set the price of this issue back to 10 sen. Accordingly, the pages were reduced to 66, which was only one page more that the April issue, though Kan claims in the postscript that he would try to enrich the June issue more than the April one. Finally, Kan announced his decision on prices of later issues:

From this issue on, I will set the price of special issues at 20 sen, and other issues at 10 sen. Consequently, the advance payment for a one-year subscription will be 1 yen and 50 sen, and for six months 80 sen. As for the advance payment that we have received so far, we follow the policy from the past. So please feel free to extend your subscription as you wish.

The July issue, a special issue of creative writing was priced at 20 sen in accordance with the policy. Neither worry nor concerns about the price or possible price hike from readers was published. On the contrary, the only letter from a reader published in this issue stresses once again the fact that *Bungei shunju* was inexpensive. In fact, because the magazine was inexpensive, this anonymous reader took out two subscriptions and even expresses his or her sympathy toward the magazine. Moreover, several miscellaneous comments and notes by the editors were published to emphasize the fact that *Bungei shunju* was really inexpensive. One of these notes was titled “Senji ichirin” (Thousand Characters Per Rin).179 “The May issue of *Bungei shunju* had 131,792 characters, and the June issue 87,948. Divided by 20 sen and 10 sen respectively, it is a little less than 659 and 879 characters per *rin.*”180 About thirty pages later, Tsunoda Kō also wrote an anecdote in which he

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179 One *rin* is one tenth of one sen.
found the first three issues of *Bungei shunjū* being sold at a used bookstore for full price.\textsuperscript{181} Tsunoda wanted to buy the issues but they were already sold out. He confirmed the fact that they were sold for full price. The answer was yes. And people bought the issues at full price because even the full price was cheap. Tsunoda commented, “At present, the first issues of *Bungei shunjū* are being sold for full price. This is very rare in the magazine publishing business.”\textsuperscript{182} In the postscript, Kan does not talk much about the affordable price of the magazine. But he does mention that he had a loss of one hundred yen for the June issue despite the fact that this issue sold well. At the same time, he asked readers to be optimistic because the loss was balanced by the profit from the April and May issues.

However, it turns out that this optimism was short lived. The price for the August issue rose to 15 sen from 10. As mentioned in Chapter one, Kan published a detailed financial account in this issue. Right after this account, he showed off how well the previous issues of *Bungei shunjū* had sold, and at the same time, how he had lost money in June. Therefore, he said, he decided to set the price at 15 sen. As in the June issue, he announced yet another pricing policy: “Anyway, from now on, I would like you to know that the price of the magazine will fluctuate between 10 and 20 sen. But it definitely will not be raised to more than 20 sen.”

\textsuperscript{181} 角田恒 (1899-1938): also named Tsunoda Sosui (角田蒼穂). Poet. He also writes novels, plays and critiques.

\textsuperscript{182} Tsunoda Kō, “Mumeian zatsugo,” *Bungei shunjū* Jul. 1923: 34.
This promise was also broken due to the loss of September issue in the Great Kanto Earthquake. The November issue was priced at 25 sen and Kan explained that this is because it combined September, October, and November issues.

Starting in the second year, the price of Bungei shunjuū had been fairly stable and low. Among the eleven issues published, only the February issue was priced at 15 sen, all the others were sold for either 20 or 25 sen. There prices were a little high compared with those in the first year. However, nine issues included sōsaku sections and they were named “special supplement issue” or “one-act-play supplement issue.” This way, Kan was able to keep the readers thinking that the relatively higher prices were “special.” And to be fair, the price of 20 or 25 sen was still very low compared with other general-interest or literary magazines.

Through these interactions between the readers and Kan, the manager/editor of the magazine, some characteristics of both the production and reception are apparent. The commercially adept mind of Kan was demonstrated clearly in the repeated explanations about pricing, estimate of sales, publication of financial accounts, and choice of readers’ contribution letters. Even though his concern for readers was demonstrated through the down-to-earth and frank statements that were hallmarks of his personalities, Kan had emphasized several times that the magazine could not go on should it lose money. This emphasis is consistent with his “life first, art second” motto and it again reveals that from the beginning, Bungei shunjuū was not exactly a literary coterie journal. And in a sense, Kikuchi Kan had become primarily an

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183 The May issue was not printed due to the large-scale strike by the workers at printing companies.
entrepreneur rather than a coterie member after he created the magazine. In navigating readers’ opinions about the cover prices and the real literary value of the magazine, he actually displayed great creativity, amazing flexibility, and the skills of a superior entrepreneur with good conscience as he tried to balance two needs: one, to run the magazine without financial loss; and two, to award the readers with good price and worthy content.

Kan also tried to keep the magazine running in order to support writers, especially the young and unknown ones. This is most obviously shown in the postscript of the May issue of 1923, where he suggests that readers were helping young and promising writers by paying a higher price for the sōsaku section. Kan himself experienced hardship as a young unknown writer and was sympathetic to young writers. This effort to improve both the financial independence and social status of writers in Japan was continued in Kan’s later career when he established literary awards, organized writers’ associations, and even collaborated with the militarist government during the war.

On the other hand, readers seemed to have welcomed the magazine’s low-pricing policy. And the contribution letters reveal the fact that many of the magazine’s readers were in fact those with lower income. They were mostly students, or young workers who, although educated to certain extent, were in a disadvantaged position both economically and socially. They subscribed to Bungei shunjū because it was much more affordable than other similar magazines. The characteristics of the
magazine and the needs of its contemporary readers made for a very good match in
the case of Bungei shunjū. This partially explains the great success of the magazine
in its first year, and the transformation that it would undergo in the near future.

2.6 Interesting Contents

Another important point made in many of the readers’ responses is that they
thought Bungei shunjū was interesting. This is in keeping with the finding in the
previous section that people in the late Meiji and Taishō periods read more for
entertainment than for cultivation. But was there any negative criticism toward the
content of the magazine? And how did Kikuchi Kan react to reader response?

There were fairly critical comments against Bungei shunjū right after the
inaugural issue was put on the market. Due to the general anti-proletarian-literature
stance that Kikuchi Kan and other writers associated with Bungei shunjū took, it is
not surprising to see that those negative, sometimes harsh, criticisms came from the
group of so-called “proletarian writers.” As soon as on January 12 and 13 in 1923,
someone using the pen name “ABC” published a two-part article titled “Futatsu no
shinjinyō” (Two New Teams) in the literary column of Yomiuri shinbun. In the first
part of the article, this anonymous writer describes the creation of Bungei shunjū as
“opening a door to one of the two most interesting issues in the literary field.”
“Anyway,” the writer concludes the article, “Since Kikuchi Kan, who created this
magazine and who likes to coherently reason problems out, is in the vanguard now, I think the two sides [proletarian and bourgeois writers] will be realigned and divided clearly.”

This predication was realized one and a half months later. Toward the end of February, Maedakō Hiroichirō, one of the leading socialist activists/proletarian writers of the day, published a three-part article in the same column of *Yomiuri shinbun*. In the article titled “Yuganda sentōsen” (Distorted Battleline), he talks about his concern for the problems within the proletarian writer group and warns his comrades: “Taking advantage of these internal problems in our group, it is pathetic the gang at *Bungei shunjū* is trying to have the last word. This speaks of the fact that the situation of the [class] struggle is deteriorating.”

In the next installment, Maedakō mostly criticizes Kikuchi Kan’s idea of “compromise with the capitalist society.” In response, Kan published a short defensive comment side by side with Maedakō’s article on Feb 27. The words of both sides read like a theoretical/critical debate, with a strong cynical tenor.

Published in the May issue of *Tanemaku hito*—the stronghold of proletarian writers—was a rather disparaging satire of *Bungei shunjū*. The satire was published in “Shōnin-ran” (Frightening Column), and it was titled “Bundan goma no hae sōbatsu (daiichi): *Bungei shunjū*-za” (Subjugation of the rogue in the literary world

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185 前田河広一郎 (1888-1957): novelist. He studied under Tokutomi Roka after he dropped out of middle school. In 1907, he went to the US and grew familiar with socialist thoughts. In 1920, he came back to Japan and became an active member of the proletarian writer group. His major works include *Santō senkyaku* (*Third-Class Boat-Passenger*), *China (China)* and others.
186 Maedakō Hiroichirō, “Yuganda sentōsen,” *Yomiuri shinbun* 24 Feb. 1923, early ed.: 7. The article was broken into four parts and serialized from Feb 24 to 28.
(part one): the *Bungei shunjū* coup). The author, Mokukō Kanja, obviously a pseudonym, uses the metaphor of *goma no hae* to describe the group of writers associated with *Bungei shunjū*. 187 *Goma no hae* refers to a rogue who often targeted and cheated travelers out of their money on the Tōkaidō road. At the beginning of the article, the Bungei Shunjū coterie is described as *goma no hae* in the literary world. “[the *goma no hae* in the literary world] wrote the fill-ins in *Bungei shunjū* and they were exposed to public ridicule. Were I their parent, I might still say they are cute in one way or another. But they are so lame that their parents, if they have any, will be sighing somewhere in a corner.”188 Then Mokukō lists Koyanagi Hiroshi, Sasaki Mitsuzō, Kon Tōkō, and Kikuchi Kan, and ridicules them one by one. There is nothing new in this article in terms of facts, but it is filled with satire, irony, and even personal attack to an unparalleled extent. For example, Koyanagi is called “a white radish,” Sasaki is accused of holding a grudge against Masamune Hakuchō due to a harsh review by the latter, and Kon Tōkō is described as “a literature student with erupting pimples.”

Of course, Kikuchi Kan and the “rouges” at *Bungei shunjū* fought back with similar offensive articles that were mostly published in *Bungei shunjū*. The debates and attacks between the two groups did not even stop after the Great Kanto Earthquake, and they were certainly major events in the literary world at the time. On

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187 沐猴冠者. This name was derived from a five-character phrase from Chinese classic *Shiji*. It originally means monkeys who bath, wear hats and pretend to be men. And it was used to refer to people who have bad tempers like monkeys. This name somehow explains the exceptionally sharp satire in this piece of writing.

the other hand, some contemporary literary critics who were not necessarily
associated with the proletarian writers also expressed their dissatisfaction with what
was published in *Bungei shunjū*. Their critiques were not as satirical and ideological,
but rather moral. It was not necessarily the case that these critics thought the
inexpensive price meant cheap content, but they did feel that some of the materials
published in *Bungei shunjū* were gossipy, scandalous, and cheap.

One of these critics was Nanbu Shūtarō. He published a lengthy article in the
influential literary column of *Jiji shinpō* and criticized *Bungei shunjū* of being overly
*bundan-kusai*, or smelly of *bundan*.  

*Bungei shunjū* is not supposed to be a so-called commercial magazine
that is published by a profit-oriented publisher. Instead, it is supposed
to be a literary journal that a man of letters creates for the purpose of
his “isms,” opinions, or even of his hobby, along with other similar
aims. Since I myself have wanted to create a journal like this for a
long time, I expected *Bungei shunjū* to be refined, elevated, and
pleasant. … However, except for two or three pieces, most of the
articles really are filled with the *bundan* stink that echoes the
disgusting trend in the literary world nowadays.

In the March issue of *Bungei shunjū*, even Kan chose to publish a negative review
of the magazine. The article titled “Zakkan” (Miscellaneous Comments) was by Kiso
Koku, a young literary critic.  

I read the February issue of *Bungei shunjū*. It is a really interesting
magazine. But there is one thing I do not understand. Most of what

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189 南部修太郎 (1892-1936): novelist. After graduating from Keio University, he worked at the editor-
in-chief of *Mita bungaku* for nine years. At the same time, Nanbu published short stories and critical
pieces.


191 木蘇穀 (1893-?): critic and translator. Kiso graduated from Waseda University. He worked as
editor for several literary journals and magazines. Active as a literary critic, he published mostly
critical pieces.
was published followed too much of a format, in which they talked about things always with a set mentality. And in this mentality they include too much of the so-called consciousness of the *bundan*. On the one hand, the magazine is filled with violent rusticity, vitriolic attacks, and the complaints of mediocre men. On the other hand, it is lacking in refined taste, serious criticism, and metaphysical thinking.\(^{192}\)

The fact that this criticism was published in the March issue proves that Kikuchi Kan was fully aware of this kind of discontent among some readers. In fact, in the postscript of the February issue, Kikuchi Kan already proposed a couple of changes in the policy concerning the content of the magazine. One was that he would be more cautious in publishing “articles that talk about personal affairs.” The other was that he would consider adding “research and criticism that are more universally appealing.”\(^{193}\)

It is likely that both proposals were initiated directly in response to reactions of readers. The first was the result of an incident that originated in an article published in the inaugural issue. The article was “Jogo” (Garrulous Words) by Oka Eiichirō. In the article Oka gives a brief account of a personal incident. He was introduced by Yamamoto Yūzō to a job. He finished it, but did not get paid, and Oka was angry about the fact that Yamamoto did not want to get involved with the problem and told Oka not to be so naive. This published account of the incident, of course, enraged Yamamoto. He came to protest at *Bungei shunjū*: “It is not right for *Bungei shunjū* to publish this article that talks about personal matters such as this incident.”\(^{194}\)

Obviously, Kikuchi Kan did not want things to escalate. “Since I feel distressed when

\(^{194}\) As cited in the postscript, ibid, 38.
a fight occurs between friends due to Bungei shunjū, I will pay more attention to the articles from now on.” On the other hand, Kan was not willing to forgo the gossipy/scandalous/personal materials in the magazine. “In Japan, nobody ever criticizes the newspapers that proudly publish personal and private affairs. And we should not just criticize Oka Eiichirō for what he wrote.” In other words, Kikuchi Kan was willing to be more alert to using sensitive materials that might cause problems among his friends and coterie members, but he would continue to publish personal matters just as the newspapers were doing.

There is no direct evidence showing what prompted the second proposal. But Kan stated that he thought Bungei shunjū, focusing too much on the bundan and its inside stories, perhaps did not measure up to expectations of readers in the provinces. So, it might have originated from undocumented complaints from readers who lived in the provinces and were not familiar with the bundan centered in Tokyo. In any case, Kan once again demonstrated his concern for readers and his desire to reach more readers, even those in the provinces.

In addition to these two proposals, Kikuchi Kan repeatedly expressed his willingness to elevate the magazine’s content and image in the first six months. For example, in the postscript of the April issue, Kan states that he would avoid disparaging quarrels and eventually make the magazine refined, vivacious, and innocent. At the same time, he tried to defend his stance of publishing trivial things about the bundan. In the March issue, Kan himself published a short piece, in which

195 Ibid, 38.
196 Ibid, 38.
he questions a critic named Hayashi Masao. Hayashi had previously published an article in the literary column of Miyako shinbun and used a subtitle “Bundan-ura no ura” (The Inside of Bundan’s Inside) to describe the content of Bungei shunju. Kikuchi Kan was obviously not happy with the subtitle: “What on the earth is ‘the inside of bundan’s inside?’ Everybody is saying frankly what they want to say without any compromise. In this sense, it is Bungei shunju that makes ‘the outside of bundan’s outside’ [bundan-omote no omote].”

Starting with the June issue, these arguments concerning the tabloid quality of Bungei shunju began to quiet down. Kikuchi Kan stopped repeating the promise to elevate the magazine, and he stopped defending the publication of gossipy materials. This is mostly due to the fact that Kan started to publish creative works, or sōsaku, in the May issue. This inclusion of creative works might have been planned for a while. As introduced above, in one of the four notes that Kan wrote at the end of the inaugural issue, he had already mentioned that should the magazine sell well, he would be willing to add creative works. Appearing to be a response to this note, the reader Ito Michio, whose letter was published in the March issue, also requested that the magazine publish creative works: “A silver vase looks more spectacular if plum flowers are added. So would be Bungei shunju if you were to publish poetry and creative works.” Kikuchi Kan followed up on this issue and stated in the postscript of the same March issue, “There have been many wishes expressed that creative works

197 林政雄. It appears to be a pen name. No writer under this name was found in Nichigai database.
be published in Bungei shunjū. But this magazine would end up being another
ordinary literary magazine if we publish creative works. Instead of doing so, we
probably will publish special issues of creative works when this magazine is more
established.”

In the April issue, a contribution letter from what appears to be a group of nurses
also asked for a special issue of creative works: “We request earnestly that you realize
the plan to publish a special issue of creative works, and that you serialize ‘Bundan
hyakunin isshu.’” A rather quick response to this request, the May issue included
12 pieces of creative writings that occupied 48 of the total 104 pages. In the postscript
that followed these creative pieces, Kikuchi Kan gives a very general and simple
explanation.

This time, I decided to publish this special issue of creative works. Being able to assemble as many as a dozen pieces, I think I have
included the best of the rising writers. In contrast to those works from the established writers who wait until the last minute to write under
pressure from the publisher, these works by young writers surely are
much more energetic. In this sense, I think the creative works in this
May issue of Bungei shunjū are by far better than those in May issues
of other magazines.

Pages earlier in the issue, Kan also states that he would run this special issue of
creative works every other month if this first try turned out well. It did turn out to be a
success. In the July issue, a letter from an anonymous reader was published. In the

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200 Kikuchi Kan, postscript, Bungei shunjū Mar. 1923: 56.
201 Kangofu-sai (Association of Nurse), contribution letter, Bungei shunjū Apr. 1923: 30. “Bundan
hyakunin isshu” was published in the February issue. It is formatted like the tradition of “one hundred
poems by one hundred poets.” But all the poems were actually written by an anonymous author to
mock the celebrity writers in bundan.
202 Kikuchi Kan, postscript, Bungei shunjū May. 1923: 103.
letter, the reader states, “I enjoy reading each issue of Bungei shunju very much. … I totally admire the plays and essays.”

Kikuchi Kan himself was very positive about the special issue. In the first note of the postscript in the June issue, Kan claims, “The May issue of creative works was well spoken of in many respects. And it was welcomed also by our readers. Critiques of these creative works were published in the literary columns of all newspapers.”

In fact, this special issue did draw a lot of attention. Newspapers carried information about the content of the issue and some contemporary critics published critiques.

Though some of this criticism was not necessarily in praise of the works or the special issue, it is undeniable that the inclusion of creative works did raise the reputation of the magazine and attracted more readers. Encouraged by this success, Kikuchi Kan kept his promise to have a special issue of creative works every other month until “Creative Works” became a permanent feature, which started in June 1924.

The events that evolved around the issues of price and content of Bungei shunju are proof that from the first issue on, very complicated interactions took place between the production and reception of the periodical. The interactions happened, first of all, between the men of letters that shared the same bundan. When involved with gossip,
affairs, or scandals, these interactions could be very personal. They could also be very political and ideological, though many did take place between individuals who were not necessarily opponents on literary, political, and ideological issues. For example, Oka Eiichirō and Yamamoto Yūzō did not have much conflict in what they thought about literature, and both were affiliated with Kan and the other so-called bourgeois writers. Their sour relationship was solely due to the job incident. Even though these kinds of personal fights were reduced by the editorial policy change that was proposed by Kan, they still could be observed in later issues due to the marketing strategy of the periodical.

Embodied in the debates and arguments between individuals, such as the articles that were written by Maedakō Hiroichirō and Kikuchi Kan in Yomiuri shinbun, the interactions between different literary groups and schools can be clearly observed. There were many criterion to group writers into distinctive schools. What drew the line between the two sides in the case of Bungei shunjū in 1923 were views of literature. The proletarian school stated that they represented the proletariat, that they wrote for the proletariat, and wrote to mobilize the proletariat. Their purpose was to revolt against the capitalist world through class struggle. Literature should serve this purpose and this purpose only. On the other hand, the bourgeois school saw literature as art which does not belong to any particular class, and which was supposed to be interesting, creative, and elevating. Writers and proletarians can improve the capitalist society without having to resort to violent revolution. Therefore, the proletarian writers accused the bourgeois writers of cooperating with evil capitalism, and the
bourgeois writers criticized the proletarian writers for writing works that were neither interesting nor affordable for the real proletarians. Which side possessed the truth, or who eventually won this debate, is rather irrelevant. What matters are the facts that both sides expanded their influence in the literary field, which was experiencing great changes at the time, and that the newly created Bungei shunjū was able to build a certain kind of reputation—which would become a solid base for its future development—among men of letters in the literary field and among common readers.

The name of Bungei shunjū was mentioned in other magazines and journals, as well as in many newspapers. Whether the reputation was good or bad, or whether the reviews were positive or negative, most people who had contact with these mass media eventually got to know that this new literary magazine called Bungei shunjū was created by the famous writer Kikuchi Kan and staffed with many other bundan celebrities, such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Kume Masao. Some of the readers would also learn that Bungei shunjū was amazingly inexpensive, interestingly gossipy, and uniquely stylish. Some would even know that Bungei shunjū and its affiliated writers were the so-called bourgeois school and they were in hot debate with the so-called proletarian school, which was part of the socialist movement permeating the entire society. This way, the periodical accumulated a certain amount of cultural capital that aided the magazine in gaining a readership and defining the direction it would later take.

The interaction that took place between readers and Bungei shunjū’s producers appears to have been less in volume compared with the debates between the two
groups of writers. However, it played an equally or even more important role in the future development of the periodical. Neither ideological nor metaphysical, the interaction mostly concerned the price and content, the most basic elements of a magazine in the market. Needless to say, a typical consumer surely considers how much he/she pays for a commodity and what he/she gets for that price. The fact that Kikuchi Kan continued to emphasize the inexpensive price and the good sales record of the periodical suggests that Kan had a firm understanding of this consumerist psychology. He tried his best to control the cost and the price of the publication and established the value-based image of the magazine. Therefore, from the beginning, readers felt that *Bungei shunjū* was reasonably priced. Even though Kan could not really control what people thought about the content of his magazine, he surely could suggest that the content was worth the price by frequent reference to the ever improving sales record. This reinforced the readers’ feeling that they were getting a good deal. When Kan eventually added creative works, as many of the readers requested, and finally made creative works a permanent feature, readers had to feel that they got even more for their money. This pricing policy also killed two birds with one stone: on the commercial competition front, Kan was able to win over readers that, as he saw, were in need of cheap and leisurely reading material, and sustain the development of the periodical; on the literary debate front, he could play the card that he was serving the proletariat with an affordable and attractive publication.

Of course, this is not to say that Kikuchi Kan based his pricing strategy entirely on shrewd commercial considerations. As introduced in the previous chapter, he believed
that literature should have content-derived value and serve life. He demonstrated great concern for his readers. And he was a very practical person with very good commercial sense and instinct. All these traits had to have played a certain part in this interaction that was staged in the pages of *Bungei shunjū*. And it is at this point where many elements converged: the general tendency of the contemporary readers to practice more private and entertaining reading; the situations in *bundan* where the scenes was changing fast and proletarian thoughts were being opposed by writers of the Bungei Shunjū coterie; the unique composition of Kan’s ideas about literature, his concerns for readers, his abilities to see the needs of this potential readership; and finally his natural inclination to not get “hung up” on ideology and to be carefree and practical. It was the convergence of all these elements that made *Bungei shunjū* a unique publication.

Much of the interaction introduced above was concerned with literary issues and the management of *Bungei shunjū*. When social and political problems were added in later years, especially after Bungei Shunjūsha acquired the license to report on political topics in 1926, the interactions between the production and the reception sides of the magazine became more intense and complicated. Chapter 4 examines these later interactions. The next chapter, instead, focuses on two young writers—Yokomitsu Riichi and Naoki Sanjūgo—and some of their creative literary works that were published in the issues of the magazine in 1923. By the description and analysis of how the literary careers and personal lives were changed by their friendships with
Kikuchi Kan and their publications in *Bungei shunjū*, the chapter demonstrates how the magazine was tailored to meet the needs of a middlebrow readership, and what conceptions of “literature” existed in the contemporary literary circle.
CHAPTER 3
YOKOMITSU RIICHI, NAOKI SANJGO AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO BUNGEI SHUNJŪ

This chapter examines two writers who were identified closely with Bungei shunjū in 1923 and 1924: Yokomitsu Riichi and Naoki Sanjūgo. In order to clarify the important role Bungei shunjū played in advancing the careers of these two writers, a brief introduction of their early lives and a close reading of their works is presented. Prior to 1923, both writers were acquaintances of Kikuchi Kan. However, both were unknown youth who had aspiration and talents for writing. The creation of Bungei shunjū provided the young writers opportunities to achieve their goals: Kikuchi Kan included Yokomitsu as a coterie member and Naoki as a contributor. In the 1923 Bungei shunjū issues, Yokomitsu published several creative pieces of a modernist nature while Naoki produced many miscellaneous essays. Thus, both young writers drew attention from the literary world and eventually established themselves as important new writers. In the next decade, both Yokomitsu and Naoki became very active and extremely popular literary celebrities, and they remained close friends with both Bungei shunjū and Kikuchi Kan. A close examination of their lives and their
relationships to the magazine and Kikuchi Kan in the early 1920s, answers the questions of how *Bungei shunjū* worked to transform the *bundan* and how it facilitated the establishment of the concepts of pure and popular literatures.

3.1 Yokomitsu as an Aspiring Literary Youth

An obvious choice to view *Bungei shunjū*’s influence on Japanese literature in the 1920s is Yokomitsu and his works. First, Yokomitsu was one of the writers most closely associated with Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*. Second, the career of Yokomitsu as a writer took off in 1923 and 1924, precisely the years when *Bungei shunjū* was created and expanded rapidly. Third, Yokomitsu was considered as the representative of the Shin Kankaku-ha, or New-Sensation School, the most important literary movement of the 1920s. Finally, Yokomitsu was a writer who had controversial ideas about literature, modern society, and the nation of Japan, and he enlivened the literary scene and did much to determine *Bungei shunjū*’s political stance in the war years and after.

Yokomitsu Riichi and his works have been studied exhaustively. There are more than fifty book-length studies in Japanese dedicated to this important writer and his works. However, a satisfactory literary biography of Yokomitsu Riichi has not yet been produced. Information concerning Yokomitsu’s life, especially the period

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206 In a bibliography of Yokomitsu Riichi studies in Japanese language, fifty books and hundreds of articles, special editions of magazines, conversation meetings (zadankai), and pamphlets were listed. Inoue Ken, Kamiya Tadataka, Hatori Tetsuya, eds., *Yokomitsu Riichi jiten* (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2002) 498-542. No updated bibliography in English and other languages is found.

207 Among these fifty books, the ones that most resemble a biography are *Yokomitsu Riichi* in the *Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu* series and Dennis Keene’s *Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist*. The former
prior to his 1923 debut, is scattered among hundreds of books and articles. The following description of Yokomitsu’s personal life is based on the fragmentary information found in these resources.

Yokomitsu was born in 1898 in Fukushima prefecture. Due to his father’s work as an engineering contractor, young Yokomitsu moved around in the country with his family until he was admitted to an elementary school in Mie prefecture. In 1911 he went to No.3 Public Middle School of Mie Prefecture, where his interest in literature was fostered. In 1916, he started the preparatory course at Waseda University only to quit at the end of the same year due to problems with roommates, with city life, and with the death of a girl whom he envisioned as his ideal. He spent a year in the Yamashina district of Kyoto. This year of quiet life further advanced his interest in literature, and he wrote several short stories, two of which were selected in writing contests. In 1918, Yokomitsu went back to Waseda and resumed his course of study as a first year student.

During the next four years, the aspiring youth experienced difficulties in both his private life and his literary career. In 1919, Yokomitsu fell in love with Kojima Kimiko. Through the year of 1920, discord prevailed in this relationship due to the conflicting personalities of the two lovers and a refusal to recognize the match by Kojima Tsutomu, who was the elder brother of Kimiko and a close friend of

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is a brief introduction of Yokomitsu’s life in chronological order with a large amount of illustrations, and the latter is a well-constructed comparative literature work on Yokomitsu’s early writings with a twenty-page introductory appendix about Yokomitsu’s life.
In 1921, Yokomitsu was expelled from Waseda University because he could not pay tuition and did not attend classes. Then, in late August 1922, Yokomitsu’s father passed away suddenly in Korea. This not only caused emotional pain in the family, but also left Yokomitsu and Yokomitsu’s mother with no income.

Yokomitsu did not publish much during the four years from 1918 to 1922. He had published only four short stories and one critical essay in obscure coterie journals such as *San’esu* (San’esu), *Machi* (Streets), and *Tō*. He also had two entries selected in two writing contests sponsored by *Bunshō sekai* (World of Literature) and *Jiji shinpō* (News of Current Topics). But these works won him little notice. After his expulsion from Waseda and his father’s death, his failure to establish a literary career only made Yokomitsu’s more depressed.

Yokomitsu seemed fated to become another unknown yet aspiring young writer living in poverty. But in fact, he was at the threshold of success and fame as a rising star in the *bundan*. The indispensable catalyst that would prove critical for the development of his talent was his 1919 meeting with Kikuchi Kan, who had himself just debuted as a promising young writer the previous year. This meeting was perhaps the decisive event that would influence the life and works of Yokomitsu in both positive and negative ways.

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208 小島勗 (1900-1933): novelist and playwright. While studying philosophy in Waseda University, Kojima was a member of *Tō* (Tower) coterie. In 1925, he joined *Nihon puroretaria bungei renmei* (the League of Japanese Proletarian Literature) and started to publish novels and plays of proletarian literature.

209 The title of *San’esu* came from the pen maker San’esu. It was originally intended as a publicity magazine for the pen maker but was altered into a literary magazine by its editors.
There are differing accounts as to how Yokomitsu come to know Kikuchi Kan. Both Hoshō Masao and Inoue Ken, two prominent Yokomitsu specialists, suggest Sato Ichiei and Fujimori Junzō—two of Yokomitsu’s classmates at Waseda and comrades in literature—introduced Yokomitsu to Kikuchi Kan. Yokomitsu describes the first meeting differently in a short self-introduction published in *Yomiuri shinbun* on January 21 1924.

The first time that I wrote something and got in touch with someone in the bundan was when the publisher of *Jiji shinpō* was inviting contributions for a short story contest. My work was selected by Satomi Ton and Kume Masao. Through the introduction of Kume Masao, I visited Kikuchi Kan’s house. I think this was the beginning of my connection with Kikuchi.

Whatever the case, it seems certain that the first meeting resulted in Kikuchi Kan’s recognition of the talent of the young man. Yokomitsu, for his part, admired Kikuchi Kan as a mentor and thought highly of Kan’s literary works. He retained this admiration and respect for the rest of his life.

Yokomitsu began to meet and befriend other young writers through the introduction of Kikuchi Kan. The most influential of these was undoubtedly

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210 佐藤一英(1899-1978): poet and critic. He dropped out of Waseda University and was involved in the founding of several poetry journals and associations of poets. He was also active in studies of meter of Japanese poetry and children literature. 藤森淳三(1897-?): novelist and critic. He was also a dropout of Waseda University and a member of the coterie journal Machi. He has published several collections of fictions and literary critiques. For Hoshō and Inoue’s account, see Hoshō Masao, *Yokomitsu-shō* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1980) 134; Inoue Ken, “Hyōden: Yokomitsu Riichi,” ed. Inoue Ken, *Yokomitsu Riichi*, Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu Ser. 43 (Tokyo: Shinchō-sha, 1994) 22.


212 In May 1924, Yokomitsu dedicated *Onmi* (You), the second collection of his works to Kikuchi Kan. In the opening page of the collection, it reads: “Dedicated to Kikuchi Kan, my mentor.”
Kawabata Yasunari, who would prove to be Yokomitsu’s closest friend and his most faithful supporter in years to come. The two met in 1921 at Kikuchi Kan’s home. In a 1934 memoir, Kawabata recalled how he first met Yokomitsu.

It was also at Kikuchi’s house in Nakatomizaka area that I was first introduced to Yokomitsu. I remember that evening, we left the house and Kikuchi treated us to a sukiyaki meal at Restaurant Echikatsu located at Hongo Yumi-chō. For some reason, Yokomitsu left his food mostly untouched. While talking about some plots of novels [after dinner], he started to raise his voice and walked briskly up to roadside show windows. Then, he collapsed along the window glass as if he were a sick person collapsing along a wall in a hospital room. These two things were my first impressions of him. In Yokomitsu’s manner of speech, there was an indication of his combined fervent, strong, and innocent personalities. After Yokomitsu left for home, Kikuchi said to me: “He is a great man. You must make friends with him.” … At this time, I had never heard of him.213

Yokomitsu was indeed unknown to the literary world at the end of 1922. As mentioned above, the four short stories published in the minor coterie journals and the two entries selected in the two writing contests attracted little attention. Even “Nanboku” (South and North), the first piece that Yokomitsu published in an influential literary journal in February 1922, did not make a name for the young man.214 What distinguished Yokomitsu from other young writers of the time was the unfailing support of Kikuchi Kan, who was preparing for the initial issue of Bungei

214 Inoue Ken conjectured that Kikuchi Kan might have played some roles in the publication of “Nanboku” because Kume Masao, a very close friend of Kikuchi Kan, was one of the editors of Ningen (Humanity). Inoue Ken, “Hyōden: Yokomitsu Riichi,” ed. Inoue Ken, Yokomitsu Riichi, Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu Ser. 43 (Tokyo: Shinchō-sha, 1994) 30.
shunjū at the end of 1922. By 1923, Yokomitsu was able to use his association with Kikuchi Kan as a kind of cultural capital, and with his talent and hard-work, he was able to establish himself as a major writer.

Another advantage that Yokomitsu gained by knowing Kikuchi Kan is that he was able to publish quite frequently in Bungei shunjū. He was probably the person Kikuchi Kan had in mind when Kan wrote in the “Creation Announcement” of Bungei shunjū, “The purpose of this magazine is to gave voice to young people who are on the verge of saying things that they can not hold within themselves.” Even though at the beginning, Bungei shunjū was simply one of many small humble periodicals, it assembled some of the best known names in the bundan and it was backed up by several of the most powerful literary publishers. In this sense, it is very different from Tō, Machi, or San’esu. As a coterie member, the unknown Yokomitsu published frequently in Bungei shunjū during its first year. In the inaugural issue, he published “Jidai wa hōtōsuru,” in which he criticized proletarian literature writers for lagging behind the new demands of the time. In the March issue, his “Atarashiki mittsu no shōten” (New Three Focal Points) was published, more or less as a follow-up to “Jidai wa hōtōsuru.” Both were largely neglected perhaps because they were rather typical art-for-art’s-sake arguments from a young and unknown writer. The real turning point of Yokomitsu’s literary career came in May 1923, when he published a short story “Hae” (Fly) in Bungei shunjū and a novella Nichirin (The Sun) in Shinshōsetsu, both of which immediately aroused praise and criticism and later were recognized as Yokomitsu’s debut works.
It is not surprising that the publication of Yokomitsu’s debut works has been attributed to Kikuchi Kan. Kan made the final decisions as to what to publish in the magazine. Even though this May issue of Bungei shunjū was the first one to include a creative-work section, Kan made the decision to publish works from young writers instead of those by established ones. This decision might have been derived from Kan’s shrewd business sense that new works from new faces might be able to attract new readers. It also must have been derived from Kan’s strong faith in the young writers in Bungei Shunjū coteries. While promoting the creative works of these young coterie members in the postscript of the May issue, Kikuchi Kan listed Yokomitsu as one of the promising writers that “Bungei shunjū proudly possesses.” Then he wrote one paragraph, in particular, to recommend Yokomitsu’s works: “Yokomitsu’s novel Nichirin is going to be published in Shinshōsetsu in May. It took two or three years of hard work to finish. Those people who read ‘Hae’ in this issue and recognize his talent, please make sure you read Nichirin too.”

This faith in young writers, especially in Yokomitsu Riichi, was also demonstrated in Kikuchi Kan’s recommendation of Nichirin to Shinshōsetsu, the established literary magazine that Kan was closely affiliated with. Kan once remembered vaguely some details of the time when he asked Shinshōsetsu to publish Nichirin:

I think it was in 1921 that Yokomitsu first came to my house. I do not remember whether he came with the already completed manuscript of Nichirin or he wrote Nichirin during the time he frequented my house. Anyway, since he said that he got some kind of hint from Shinjū fujin while writing Nichirin, I think it was in 1921 that he wrote this work. Nichirin was published in Shinshōsetsu in May 1923, and I think it

215 Kikuchi Kan, postscripts, Bungei shunjū May. 1923: 104.
might have been six months from the time I requested Shinshōsetsu [to publish Nichirin] to the time of publication. It might have been longer than six months.  

3.2 “Hae,” the Short Story

What qualities of Yokomitsu’s works did Kikuchi Kan find fascinating? It is impossible to know exactly now. However, a close reading of “Hae” may reveal some answers to the question. Moreover, an examination of the short story and its publication will reveal, in detail, how Yokomitsu’s life was changed, and how his career was advanced thanks to Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū. It also demonstrates how the appearance of the short story, along with later works of Yokomitsu and other young writers, affected the existing order in the bundan that was still under the dominance of Japanese Naturalists. I choose the short story over Nichirin for several obvious reasons: “Hae” first appeared in Bungei shunjū, which is the focus of this study; it was the first short story that Yokomitsu finished; it is widely considered as one of the best works of the writer; and it is much shorter than Nichirin in length and therefore much simpler to discuss.

“Hae” was published in the creative-work section of Bungei shunjū in May 1923. This creative-work section, as mentioned above, was the first ever for the magazine. Even though Kikuchi Kan, as the editor-in-chief, did not give any notice about the forth coming creative-work section in his postscript of the April issue, in both March

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217 Even though “Hae” was published in May 1923, Yokomitsu put in a note at the end of the story that it was finished in 1921. He once said that among his early works, “Hae” was the first one he wrote. Yokomitsu Riichi, “Kaisetsu ni kaete,” Sandai meisaku-shū: Yokomitsu Riichi shū (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1941) 409.
and April, he did publish letters from readers who requested special issues of creative works in both March and April, and he did say in both the January and March issues that he might publish creative works.

Yokomitsu’s short story was the fourth work listed and published in the section. There seems to have been no rule on the order in which the creative works appeared. It occupies about three and half pages, neither the longest nor the shortest of the creative works included. The only characteristic by which it stands out, in terms of appearance, from the other works is that it looks sparser. This was first due to the fact that it has ten sections marked by numbers. Only two other short stories have sections like this, but they only have three and four sections, respectively. “Hae” looked sparser also because it includes more single-sentence conversations and short paragraphs than the other pieces. Although there is no evidence of how the contemporary readers felt, this sparse formality might have set it off as different from the others.

There is no English translation of “Hae” published. The following is a brief introduction of the plot. It follows the divisions of the original text and tries to transfer somewhat the stylistics of the original language.

1. In the height of summer, the post town was vacant. A big-eyed fly escaped from a spider web in a murky stable. It dropped on the ground, flew back up and climbed onto the back of a horse.
2. Chewing a piece of hay, the horse is looking for the old humpback coachman. The coachman was in the steamed-bun shop next door. He lost three Japanese chess games straight and asked for the fourth.

3. A farmer woman ran into the vacant yard of the post town. Early that morning, she received a telegram and found out that her son, who works in the city, was critically ill. She had run seven and half miles to the post town to ride the coach to the city. When she heard there was one that just left, the woman burst into tears and started to walk toward the city. Then the coachman told her that his coach was the next to depart. The farmer woman started to ask if the coach would depart soon and how long it would take to get to the city.

4. Out of the hazy heat at the end of the field, a young man and a girl were hurrying toward the post-town. The girl asked if the baggage was too heavy for the young man, whispered that the coach might have left, and then wondered if someone was already coming after them and if her mother was crying. The young man did not say much. Finally, he said they would have to run away again should they get caught.

5. Sucking his thumb, a little boy was led into the yard of the post-town by his mother. He ran toward the stable and looked at the horses from a distance. Mimicking the horse, he tapped the ground with one leg and tried to move his ears.

6. A country gentleman arrived at the post town. After years of hard work, he had finally saved eight hundred yen the night before, and he kept the money with him all the time. The farmer woman told the country gentleman why she had to get to the city as soon as possible. She also told the young man and the girl, who just entered the
yard, that she has been waiting for the coach for two hours and that they might not be able to make it to the city before noon. She went to ask the coachman when the coach was to depart. The coachman lay down and asked the hostess of the steamed-bun shop: “The buns still are not done, are they?”

7. No one knows when the time of departure is. But if anyone knows, it is the buns that have started to swell in the steamers.

8. The clock struck ten. The steamers started to give off steam. The coachman was cutting hay and the horse drinking water.

9. The coach was ready. The farmer woman was the first to climb in the coach. While the other five passengers were boarding, the coachman put the freshly cooked buns in his waistcoat, honked, and cracked the whip. The big-eyed fly left the horse and rested on the top of the carriage. The coach passed fields and entered the forest.

10. The country gentleman had already made friends with everyone. The little boy kept looking at the fields outside. The farmer woman looked at the gentleman’s watch and worried if it was already noon. The coachman, after eating all the buns, started to doze off. The fly looked at the surroundings while the coach climbed up along a cliff-side road. Among all the passengers, only this fly saw the coachman was nodding off.

The coach reached the top of the cliff. The horse started to turn following the road. However, it could not calculate the width of its body and the carriage. Suddenly, the horse was pulled back by the falling carriage. The fly took off from the
horse and looked at the horse, the carriage, and the passengers falling off the cliff. The wreckage under the cliff was silent and motionless. On the other hand, the big-eye fly flapped its wings and leisurely flew off into the blue sky all alone.

The earliest reviews of “Hae” were mostly positive. The most notable ones were found in Jiji shinpō and Asahi shinbun. On May 6, someone using the pseudonym Kōgaisei published the first piece of a literary review series titled “Gogatsu geppyō” (Monthly Review of May), and commented on three short stories, all of which were published in the May issue of Bungei shunjū. He harshly criticized “Hitorigoto o iu otoko” (The Man who Talks to himself) by Miyachi Karoku, and praised with a little reservation “Shun’ya” (Spring Night) by Miyake Ikusaburō. The third work he reviewed was “Hae.”

This work also is very different. The author has an extremely striking and concise pen, and he painted an impressive picture of the story fairly efficiently. It is, so to speak, a good short story that is rather pretty—so pretty that one wants to hold it on one’s palm and read. The story goes like this: several passengers come and ride the coach for various reasons, but the coach falls into the bottom of a valley due to the coachman’s carelessness; a fly was arranged to see this and to fly away leisurely. It is arguable how suggestive this fly is. Nonetheless, it is beyond doubt that this is a very good story even if one regards the fly as something suggestive. The only defect, if anything, is that it reads a little stiff. Perhaps this is the result of over-elaboration.

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218 公外生. The reading of this name and true identity of this person are yet to be discovered. Jiji shinpō mokurōku listed the name under the section of Pen-names and Pseudonyms in its index, and this series of literary reviews appears to be the only publication from this pseudonym in the history of the newspaper.  

219 宮地嘉六 (1884-1958): novelist. Although he had a tough time in his youth laboring in various factories, Miyachi managed to debut in early Taishō as a young writer of rōdō bungaku, or worker’s literature.  三宅幾三郎 (1897-1941): novelist and scholar of British literature. He was involved in a couple of literary coterie journals, and debuted as a member of the New-Sensation School. Later in his life, he was focused on translation of British literature.  

Five days later, in *Asahi shinbun*, Maedakō Hiroichirō published his review of “Hae,” which is a little less supportive than the one above.

Yokomitsu’s depiction is powerful and vivid. In terms of state of mind, the farmer woman whose son is on his deathbed is totally different from the coachman who is playing chess in the steamed-bun shop. I thought this contrast was very interesting. At the end of the story, the coach fell from the cliff due to an accident, and only a fly witnessed all this from high above. This made me feel that the story has gone too far on a wrong course of literature and it was not humane at all. In the final analysis, where does this writer go after the departure from the cruelty of the nature?²²¹

In questioning the story’s theme, Maedakō surely displays his stance as a proletarian writer/critic. Some later reviewers ignore the theme, which Maedakō deemed as problematic, and instead, target the writing skills that both Maedakō and Kōgaisei had appraised highly. In the June issue of *Shinchō*, six established writers and critics co-hosted “Sōsaku Gappyō” (Joint Review of Creative Writing), a column of the magazine that invited men of letters to meet and review recent literary works. In addition to Tokuda Shūsei, Kubota Mantarō, Kume Masao, Mizumori Kamenosuke, and Nakamura Murao, Kikuchi Kan also attended the meeting.²²² Two works of Yokomitsu Riichi (i.e., *Nichirin* and “Hae”) were listed and reviewed along with

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²²² 久保田万太郎 (1889-1963): novelist, playwright and poet. He published many novels and plays starting in the late Meiji period. He was also active as an actor. 水守亀之助 (1886-1958): novelist. He was a pupil of Tayama Katai and worked fro Shunyōdō and Shinchōsha. He published many works of children literature. 中村武羅夫 (1886-1949): editor, novelist and critic. He was the editor of *Shinchō* in the Taishō period and created several journals and magazines. He also published popular literature in the 1930s and he was active as an executive of Nihon Bungaku Hōkokukai (Association of Patriots in Japanese Literature) during the Word War Two.
thirteen other creative works from such prominent writers as Masamune Hakuchō, Tokuda Shūsei, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Kikuchi Kan. Much of the discussion of the two Yokomitsu works was focused on Nichirin. Kubota and others thought it was a respectable effort, but they criticized the work in terms of settings, theme, and style. Kikuchi Kan seemed to have been the only one defending Yokomitsu, something he continued when the topic was switched to “Hae.”

Nakamura: Well, what do you think of “Hae” published in Bungei shunjū?
Kubota: I saw an Izumi Kyōka quality in “Hae.”
Nakamura: But, I felt that the method of the writing was not justified.
Kikuchi: The writer of “Hae” is upright and serious in writing. This piece is a sketch.
Kubota: I do not think it is a sketch.
Nakamura: I think Yokomitsu should not have tried to put such an ambitious amount of content into such a short story. Among the three or four pieces that I read in Bungei shunjū, I think Nakagawa Yoichi’s “Aru shinkonsha” (Newly-Weds) is the best. I think that work is, as I call it, an ‘upright’ product of a writer. Compared with that work, Yokomitsu’s “Hae” is really not upright. Sometimes, it is like Yokomitsu unreasonably filled a three-jō room with things that require the space of a twelve-jō room. It is just not right somehow.  

These brief comments are rather impressionistic and random. The accusation that Yokomitsu did not carry out the story in an upright way somehow resonated with the Maedakō’s criticism of the story “going on a wrong course of literature.” Both were saying what Yokomitsu did in “Hae” was not the right direction for literature. The only difference is that Nakamura was talking about the form of the short story while Maedakō was talking about the content. These negative criticisms must have been

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discouraging to Yokomitsu as an aspiring literary youth. They are perfect examples of some of the difficulties that a new-comer would have to face while trying to bring something new to the established bundan. One can imagine that many young writers fell into a state of anxiety, confusion, and discouragement when faced with such comments.

But Yokomitsu was fortunate to have Kikuchi Kan, Bungei shunjū, and a group of friends/colleagues who were supportive of his literary activities. As noted above, Kikuchi Kan promoted Yokomitsu’s works in the postscript of the May issue of Bungei shunjū, and he also defended Yokomitsu in the joint review in the June issue of Shinchō. Moreover, Kikuchi Kan also arranged a series of reviews that provided positive feedback for Yokomitsu’s works in later issues of Bungei shunjū. And many of these reviews were written by Bungei Shunjū coterie members. The first of such positive reviews appeared in June. Minami Yukio published a short essay titled “Gokushin-tei mango” (Random Words in Gokushin Pavilion).224 Rather than reviewing Yokomitsu and his works, Minami was actually arguing against the literary theories of the proletarian writers. Nichirin was taken as an example of good and real art, which the proletarian writers could not produce, and Yokomitsu was praised as

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224 南幸夫 (1896-1964): novelist. He graduated from the English department of Tokyo Imperial University and he was involved in literary journals such as Kumo and Bungei jidai. When Bungei jidai was discontinued, he retired from literary activities and worked for the postal service of Japan.
talented. About thirty pages later, Tsunoda Kō published “Zengō sōsaku tanpyō (Short Reviews of the Creative Writing in the Previous Issue) and commented on “Hae” as follows:  

This way of writing a short story is interesting. With a fatalistic point of view, it looks down on everything from above, and it suggests the mystery of destiny. Compared with Nichirin, “Hae” is inferior in terms of the beauty of style. But it is not difficult to imagine that the writer does have a good mind. On the other hand, I still feel more interested in “Jidai o hōtō suru” than this one.

This passage seemingly takes a negative attitude toward the style of the short story. Yet, it implicitly promoted Nichirin and explicitly praised Yokomitsu’s ability as a writer. Straightforward praise came in the July issue, in which Matsumoto Junzō published an essay titled “Usō zakkan” (Rain on the Window: Miscellaneous Impressions). “Among the many short stories published last month (May) in Bungei shunjū, I was moved only by Yokomitsu Riichi’s ‘Hae.’ How superb the setting is! How skillful the expression is! Moreover, because of its crisp style, it was one of the few works worth reading.” Matsumoto Junzō was known as an anarchist in his early life and was involved in proletarian literature too, so these remarks show his belief that true art transcends the distinction of bourgeois or proletariat, and he

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225 角田恒. There is no entry found in either Nichigai or Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten. He could be Tsunoda Ōsui 角田蒼穂 who was a poet and close friend of the more famous Hagiwara Sakutarō and Hagiwara Kyōjirō.


227 松本淳三 (1894-1950): poet. He was members of several leftist organizations and a coterie of Tanemaku hito. Later in his life, he was mostly active in politics.

even asked: “Why can not the youngest group in the proletarian literary school write a beautiful work like ‘Hae?’” This praise, without any reservation, from a proletarian critic was surely a very effective promotion of “Hae” and its writer.

Not all the comments and reviews of “Hae” published in Bungei shunjū were as positive as the ones from Minami and Matsumoto. In the August issue, Kawabata Yasunari published an essay titled “Bungei shunjū no sakka” (Writers of Bungei shunjū). In this essay, he reviews recent works by Sasaki Mitsuzō, Naitō Tatsuo, Minami Yukio, Nakagawa Yoichi, and Yokomitsu Riichi. He calls two works by Sasaki “failures,” and he regards two works by Naitō as “nothing to admire.” He does not say much about Minami because he confesses he knew little about the writer. But he praises two works by Nakagawa as successful though he said he would like to see more of the writer’s personality. The last one third of the essay was about Yokomitsu. Kawabata thinks Yokomitsu was a writer who should be both praised and criticized, and a writer who was energetic and impressive. He praises Yokomitsu’s works for their unique sensation and the queer fantasy derived from the sensation. “However,” Kawabata adds, “perhaps because they are newly attracted to this fantasy, readers could not feel the emotion that accompanies the story.” He also says that Nichirin was not a success, though part of the work glittered with brilliance. On the other hand, Kawabata defends Yokomitsu. He claims that among the unpublished works by Yokomitsu, there are outstanding full-length novels, and that it was not right to criticize Yokomitsu as a writer just by the three works this writer had already

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229 Ibid, 16.
published. In the end, Kawabata concludes, “[I]t is not the case the Yokomitsu lives only in a high-brow world. He also tries to write about the purity and ideal that are based in the reality of life.”

*Bungei shunjū*, then, was instrumental in founding Yokomitsu’s early career. It not only published “Hae,” but was also the stage on which much of the critical activities surrounding the short story were performed. Reviews in the newspapers were not all positive. The discussion in *Shinchō* column was rather harsh, though Kikuchi Kan held different thoughts and tried to defend Yokomitsu. It was in *Bungei shunjū* that Yokomitsu and “Hae” received the most support. This might have been an elaborate act of commercial strategy to promote the magazine—simply another case of Kikuchi Kan’s blowing his own horn. Yet, it also is highly possible that Kikuchi Kan indeed appreciated the talent of Yokomitsu and the quality of “Hae” so much that he naturally tried to help promote the young writer. And it might have been a little of both cases. Whatever the true motivation was, Kikuchi Kan’s efforts were effective, and Yokomitsu soon rose to be the star among new writers.

### 3.3 Yokomitsu as the Rising Star of Newly Emerged Writers

The fact that “Hae” received both negative and positive reviews was a good indicator of the diversity of people’s literary views, and perhaps of the mixed nature of

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231 Ibid, 61.
the work. However, instead of an aesthetic evaluation of the short story, this section is intended to examine what happened in Yokomitsu’s literary career after the publication of this short story in *Bungei shunjū*.

Thanks to this positive and negative publicity surrounding “Hae” and *Nichirin*, the name of Yokomitsu started to be associated with interesting plots and striking style. This perhaps is why in the August 1923 issue of *Bungei shunjū*, an avid reader/contributor named Nagi Shunsei lamented that the July issue, especially the creative writing section, was dreary without Yokomitsu’s work. And in the same issue, Yokomitsu was called “*shinshin sakka no urekko*,” or “the newly emerged writer who sells well” by an anonymous *Bungei shunjū* colleague.

With the Great Kanto Earthquake, Yokomitsu had to wait until November to publish in *Bungei shunjū* a second short story and an essay in remembrance of the earthquake. Another half year past before his work appeared again in the June issue in 1924. However, he was not simply idling his time away. On the contrary, he published quite frequently in other media: from July 1923 to May 1924, Yokomitsu published two works in *Shinshichō*, two in *Shinchō*, and one in *Shinshōsetsu*. Another of his short stories also was included in *Sōsaku shunjū* (Age of Creative Writing), a collection compiled by Bungei Shunjūsha.

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232 南木春生. This perhaps is the only extant reader’s feedback of “Hae” that was published in *Bungei shunjū*. No further information concerning this reader is found. In the essay, he identified himself as someone who was going to graduate from a private college in Tokyo. Nagi Shunsei, “Ippitu keijō,” *Bungei shunjū* Aug. 1923: 55-56.

233 『Bundan mirai unki handan,” *Bungei shunjū* Aug. 1923: 44. The author of this list that tells fortunes of various writers is unknown, yet, it is likely to be Naoki Sanjūgo.
On 21 January 1924, Yokomitsu published a short essay titled “Mokuji no peiji” (Pages of the Revelation) at the top of the literary section of *Yomiuri shinbun*. To the right of the essay were a self-introduction and a photograph of the writer. Under the photo was written, “Shinshin sakka no hanagata: Yokomitsu Riichi” (The Star of the Newly-Emerged Writers: Yokomitsu Riichi). Despite having published very little, with the backing of *Bungei shunjū*, Yokomitsu was transformed into a star of the mass media. Yokomitsu was called *hanagata* (“the star”) instead of *urekko* (“the best-seller”) of newly-emerged writers. Even though the naming in August was rather prankish, it did help more or less to establish the reputation of Yokomitsu as a popular new writer. In five months, Yokomitsu has been elevated from *urekko* to *hanagata*.

Another symbolic event that can be interpreted as Yokomitsu’s official admission to the *bundan* took place in March 1924 when *Bungei nenkan* (*Year Book of Literature*) was published. In this influential year book, which surveys the annual Japanese literary production, the name Yokomitsu Riichi was mentioned for the first time as one of the most remarkable writers in the *bundan* and he was listed in the *Bunshi-roku* (Records of Men of Letters).234

On May 18, Yokomitsu published his first book. It was a collection of four works and Shun’yōdo titled it after the novella *Nichirin*. Merely two days later, a second collection was published by Kinseidō. It was titled *Onmi* after a novella in the collection. Yokomitsu also changed the title of a very short essay that was published in *Shinshichō* in the previous October to “Onmi” and used it as the preface. This

second collection included all of the four works that appeared in the first one and added twelve short stories and plays, most of which had been previously published. There is no record as to what role Kikuchi Kan played in the publication of these two collections, but it is not unreasonable to assume that Kan did somehow facilitate publication. After all, he had close relationship with both of the two publishers, and he had been promoting Yokomitsu. It is, therefore, no surprise to see “Dedicated to Kikuchi Kan, My Mentor” on the dedication page of Onmi.

Within only a time span of one year, then, Yokomitsu was able to publish first works in prominent literary magazines, win both praise and criticism, establish his reputation as a promising young writer, and have two anthologies published. This exceptional achievement of course had to be attributed to Kikuchi Kan, Bungei shunjū, and the coterie members. Without the opportunities and the support that they provided, Yokomitsu’s works might have been ignored and his talent wasted. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the talent of Yokomitsu as a writer was also a key element to his success at his time. This talent was displayed in some interesting qualities of “Hae.”

Compared with many of Yokomitsu’s later works, especially the full length novels, “Hae” has been less discussed and studied by both pre-war and post-war critics. However, it has been included in many anthologies of modern Japanese literature and collections of Yokomitsu’s works. Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten lists “Hae” as one of the eight major works of Yokomitsu Riichi that deserve a special introduction at the end of the entry of the writer. Moreover, among all works of
Yokomitsu, “Hae” is the one that has been included the most frequently in various versions of middle-school and high-school kokugo (Japanese Language) textbooks in post-war Japan. According to Yokomitsu jiten, there were altogether seventy six inclusions of Yokomitsu’s works in the middle-school and high-school textbooks surveyed. Out of these seventy six cases, thirty six were inclusions of “Hae.” And the dominance of the short story in these statistics was particularly notable in the Heisei period that started in 1989. Of a total of thirty one cases, those of “Hae” occupied nineteen. 235 Judging from this, it can be said that “Hae” is more or less established as a work in the canon of modern Japanese literature, and it is one of the most recognized works by Yokomitsu in Japan today.

This increased usage of “Hae” in textbooks could be attributed to the phenomena of “Yokomitsu boom” in the study of modern Japanese literature, a boom which started in the late Shōwa period. On the other hand, it also is attributable to certain qualities of “Hae,” which still hold appeals for readers in the present. And these appealing qualities are consistent with what one can consider middlebrow literature.

It can be easily discerned that “Hae” is serious literature. First, the theme of the story is metaphysical. People have had different thoughts as to what is the theme of the story, and how the theme should be evaluated. For example, Maedakō Hiroichirō, as a proletarian writer and critic, thought the story simply depicted the cruelty of nature and that this depiction is too dark. No matter what Yokomitsu intended to tell through the story, or how one interprets the theme, it is certain that the story does not

235 For detailed list of Yokomitsu’s works used in textbooks, refer to Inoue Ken, Kamiya Tadataka, and Hatori Tetsuya, eds., Yokomitsu Riichi jiten (Tokyo: Ōfū, 2002): 543-545.
include any of the self-confessional elements that often dominated the works of Japanese Naturalism. The story transcends everyday life and focuses on philosophical, ethical, and social issues such as death, destiny, and human desires. The themes are opaque enough to make the story difficult to understand for many contemporary readers. But it is precisely the thought-provoking quality in combination with a relatively simple, vignette-like form that made the story accessible to an educated middle-class readership.

The structure of “Hae” makes it easy to follow and entertaining. It begins and ends from the fly’s perspective. Tension is maintained by the depiction of the eager and worried passengers only to be eased down by the coachman leisurely waiting for his steamed-buns. When the coach finally departs and the reader feels a little released, the tragedy happens. Many later critics have commented on the efficiency of the story’s structure. *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* expresses the consensus with its comments on the “superlative symbolic compositional arrangement.”

“Hae” has a unique and powerful style. Yokomitsu applied techniques such as changing narrative perspective, short sentences, parallel phrases, and personification in his writing. He also used many Chinese character compounds, which resulted in energetic and vivid descriptions. These stylistic features, which yield a challenging yet ultimately accessible story, explain to a great extent why “Hae” was chosen to be included in so many *kokugo* textbooks. It is typical of middlebrow literature in being

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difficult but not too difficult, thematically serious, transcendent, and seemingly important, but in the end, removed from any sort of challenge to the existing order.

The early career of Yokomitsu was intimately connected with the establishment and the development of the New-Sensation School. In October 1924, Yokomitsu Riichi, along with several Bungei Shunjū coterie members including Kawabata Yasunari, Kon Tonkō, and Suzuki Mitsuzō, created their own coterie journal *Bungei jidai* (Literary Age). In the inaugural issue, Yokomitsu published the short story “Atama narabi ni hara” (Heads and Stomachs), the beginning of which became the hallmark of the striking expressions and novel images that are typical of New-Sensation School style.\textsuperscript{237} Then, in November, Chiba Kameo named the group of writers of *Bungei jidai* as “Shin Kankaku-ha,” and this term for the group soon became popular. By the end of the year, it can be said that *Bungei jidai* writers had, with the backing of Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*, already emerged as a new force to stimulate the stagnant literary activities and Yokomitsu, with the particular patronage of Kikuchi Kan, had established himself as the leading figure of the modernist movement.

On the one hand, these early works by Yokomitsu established his reputation as a writer at the forefront of the New-Sensation School. On the other hand, Yokomitsu

\textsuperscript{237} The beginning of the short story goes as follows: “It is midnight. A special express train, with each and every car packed, was galloping in full speed. Small stations along the railway were ignored like stones.” This is my translation and I have found no translation of the short story in the handful anthologies of Yokomitsu in English. The original text is taken from Yokomitsu Riichi, “Atama narabini hara,” *Yokomitsu Riichi*, ed. Kuritsubo Yoshiki, Kanshō Nihon kindai bungaku Ser. 14 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1981) 69.
obtained a readership of decidedly middlebrow cast, as symbolized by the consistent inclusion of his work in textbooks. In short, through the support of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū, Yokomitsu was able to establish himself as a writer of both the avant-garde and as a popular saleable writer.

“Hae” also possesses certain qualities of the kind of literature that appeals middlebrow readers. In terms of the theme of the story, Kawabata already commented that the story was difficult even for higher-educated women readers who were cultivated in literature. It is true that there are philosophical, ethical, or social issues involved in the story. And Yokomitsu has not tried to convey articulately any clear messages to readers. Yet, it is this ambiguity that permits each individual reader to understand the story from his perspectives. In this sense, it surely appeals to the middlebrow audience, who were educated and tended to think for themselves more than the mass readership. They enjoyed the liberty to interpret the story any way they liked. It could be taken as simply an example of how fate can bring death to people of various backgrounds, or as a consolation of how blessed or is to be alive, or as a lesson of human desires, and so forth.

Moreover, the story is interesting. Various types of characters are staged and the narration is so concise that much in the plot is left for the readers to fill in with their own imagination. What is killing the son of the farmer woman? Are the young man and the girl eloping from the girl’s family? What is the country gentleman going to do
with the large amount of money? Does the coachman have an affair with the hostess
of the steamed-bun shop? Money, power, love and sexual desire are all present in the
story. And all these are appealing topics to middlebrow readers.

In terms of structure, the story also has a popular edge to it. The fly that appeared
in the beginning and the end of the story is often taken as a metaphor of the author’s
point of view, which naturally translates into the readers’ perspective. It becomes a
camera that observes all the happenings in the story, and narrates one by one in a
montage-like fashion. One surely can enjoy this arrangement in aesthetic terms as
 techniques of pure literature, as Kawabata did. One also can read the story as if
watching a movie, which was a very popular entertainment enjoyed by middlebrow
audience in major Japanese cities. Moreover, this structure also adds a sense of
suspense. The introductory scene of the fly leads the story to the stable, the horse and
the post-town. The passengers come for the coach ride only to wonder, along with the
reader, what time is the departure. It is not revealed until section seven that the
coachman is waiting for the buns. When the coach full of passengers finally departs
and the readers finally feel a little at ease, the wreck takes place. Komori Yōichi
claims, “The most fascinating aspect of ‘Hae’ lies in the fact that it is a drama that
marvelously structured the transition and interplay of tension and relaxation, shot size
and viewpoint.” This skilled usage of tension, suspense, and viewpoint add much
entertaining glamour to the story.

238 For instance, by 1922, there were already 112 movie theatres in Tokyo and its vicinity and 17.4
million visits to these theaters. That is more than 5 visits per capita annually. These statistics are drawn
The style of the short story also has certain appeal for middlebrow readers. First of all, it reads differently from popular novels such as *jidaimono* (historical popular fiction) or *katei shōsetsu* (family-themed fiction) whose expressions were often formulaic. It is also different from the mainstream serious writings such as I-novels, whose expressions were mostly simplistic. The heavy usage of Chinese character compounds causes difficulty in comprehension for some Japanese readers, though it also brings vivid images and striking expressions. Yet, the sentences and paragraphs are rather short. As long as one gets the compounds, one does not have to struggle to figure out the structure of clauses and passages. Moreover, even without understanding all the difficult Chinese characters, one can still understand the simple plot, enjoy the vivid description, and not worry too much about the theme of the story.

In sum, “Hae” stands out among the other stories as striking and interesting. Besides its serious-literature characters, it also has elements that are more popular and less elite, more entertaining and less serious in terms of theme, structure, and style. In fact, it is more suitable to say that many appealing features of the story’s theme, structure and style can be interpreted in both serious and popular literature terms. In this sense, the short story foreshadows the later development of Yokomitsu’s literary ideas, which would be showcased in the famous “Junsui shōsetsu-ron,” or “Theory of Pure Novel.” It also matches the mixed characteristics of *Bungei shunjū*, the medium where it was published and praised.
With help from Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*, the course of Yokomitsu Riichi’s literary career was changed dramatically during a very short period of time. This sudden escalation to literary fame and success did not happen to most other younger writers, including Naoki Sanjūgo.

3.4 Naoki Sanjūgo in His Early Career

Naoki Sanjūgo is yet another of the many interesting writers whose personal lives and literary careers shed light on the complexity of *Bungei shunjū* in its early years and on some key concepts of modern Japanese literature. This is not only because Naoki contributed to *Bungei shunjū* frequently in 1923 and 1924, because he was a close friend of Kikuchi Kan, and because the Naoki prize was created in his memory. It is also because he struggled to make a living as a professional writer during much of his adult life, because his works won great popularity in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, because he claimed that he was a Fascist, and because his sudden and youthful death caused a shock in the *bundan* and a craze in mass media, much as the death of Akutagawa did.

Despite all these facts, students of modern Japanese literature in the west seem to have totally ignored this writer. No translation or research about Naoki is to be found in English or any other western language. This lack of academic attention is probably due to the fact that Naoki is labeled a writer of popular literature, and he is judged to be not as worthy an object of study as Yoshikawa Eiji or Nakasato Kaizan, who are the two most prominent popular writers in pre-war Japan, and who have had their
works translated into English and other languages. However, some Japanese critics think differently. Tada Michitarō, a literary critic and specialist in French literature, writes, “Frankly speaking, I think that Naoki’s *Nankoku taiheiki* (The Great Peace of the Southern Country, 1926) is superior to even Yoshikawa Eiji’s *Miyamoto Musashi* (Miyamoto Musashi, 1935-1939). In terms of the sharpness of writing and its appeal to popular emotions, *Nankoku taiheiki* is by no means inferior to *Miyamoto Musashi*.”\(^{240}\) However, it is not the purpose of this study to argue for the aesthetic value of Naoki’s works. Instead, the following section attempts to reveal some facts concerning Naoki’s early career when he was most closely related to *Bungei shunjū* and to illuminate some of the characteristics of the writer, the magazine, and the *bundan* at the time, characteristics that the case study of Yokomitsu Riichi does not reveal.

Compared with the serious personality of Yokomitsu, Naoki Sanjūgo was much more relaxed and playful. The most widely known demonstration of his nature is Naoki’s choices of his pen names. Sanjūgo means thirty-five, and Naoki started using this name in 1926 when he was thirty-five years old. This unique way of naming was initiated in 1919 when the writer was thirty one. With the passage of time, Naoki used Sanjūni (thirty-two, 1922) and Sanjūsan (thirty-three, 1923). However, he kept Sanjūsan for a couple of years and did not use Sanjūyon (thirty-four). In a 1925 essay titled “Kaimei hirō sono ta” (Announcement of Name-Change and the Like), Naoki

explained as follows, “When I changed my name from Sanjūichi to Sanjūni and Sanjūsan, I was asked to ‘give up the clumsy joke.’ So I stopped at Sanjūsan. But it is said the double san is very inauspicious as a name, and it seems to be true. I have been in poverty for too long. … This is the reason why I skipped Sanjūyon and changed my name to Sanjūgo.”

In addition to this “age series,” Naoki had as many as seventeen other pen names. In fact, even his surname “Naoki” was made up by the writer.


241 This number is from the chronicle of Naoki Sanjūgo’s works in Kindai bungaku kenkyū sōsho, vol. 36 (Tokyo: Showa Joshi Daigaku Kindai Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1972) 219-234.

242 Uemura is written in two Chinese characters as 植村. The first can be taken down as two ideographs: 木 and 直す. These two were reversed and they make the common last name Naoki 直木.

Naoki Sanjūgo was born as Uemura Sōichi in Minami district of Osaka in 1891. When he started to write for the literary column of Jiji shinpo in 1921, he dissected the two radicals of the first Chinese character of Uemura and cleverly created the surname Naoki. His father owned a small used-clothing business. Sōichi attended local elementary and middle schools. Due to difficulty with math and English, the young man skipped the high-school entrance exams and went for a boat ride. Therefore, instead of studying in high school, he had to work as a clerk at a drug store and then as a substitute teacher at a rural elementary school. At the age of twenty, he studied in the preparatory course of the English department of Waseda University, and in 1912, was admitted to the undergraduate course in the same department. However, after only one semester at the English department, Naoki was forced to transfer to the Higher Normal department in March 1913. The only reason for the transfer was
tuition fees. The monthly tuition fees of the Higher Normal Department were four yen, fifty sen cheaper than those of the English Department. At the time, he lived on a monthly allowance of about twenty-five yen sent by his father, who earned, at best, sixty or seventy yen a month from the used clothing business. Moreover, in the summer of 1911, Butushi Sumako—the future wife of Naoki—came from Osaka to live with Naoki in Tokyo. Naoki had to move out of an apartment he shared with another student, find a new place for him and Sumako, and pay close to five yen in rent. This difficulty with money was only the prelude to a decade long struggle with poverty.

Not long after Naoki transferred to the Higher Normal Department, he stopped paying the tuition fees. He needed the money to live with his lover. But he planned to keep going to classes pretending he was officially registered and learn what the other students were learning. He was not worried about graduation or a degree but he was concerned that his parents, who had been working very hard to send him an allowance, might discover his plan. Therefore, when his plan was indeed successfully carried out for the next three years and everyone else in his “class” was graduating, he needed some proof to show to his parents that he was graduating with a diploma too. The proof turned out to be a counterfeit graduation picture: while the graduation pictures were being taken, Naoki hid behind his “classmates” and suddenly showed his face in the last row when the cameraman pushed the shutter. He sent this graduation
picture home and his parents never suspected that their beloved son had not actually graduated from Waseda University. This anecdote became one of the many legends of the playful Naoki Sanjūgo.

Due to the difficult job market in 1915, Naoki could only find a translation job that brought in about forty four yen. The monthly allowance was discontinued, and Sumako gave birth to their first child in March 1916. This was perhaps the hardest time in his life. Things turned better when Sumako worked as a female reporter for eight months and Naoki got a job as a secretary for half a year. Late in 1917, Naoki started to work as an editor of Shinkō bijutsu (New Art). In 1918, he collaborated with two friends and started two small publishing companies, whose offices were combined. In April 1919, he created a journal titled Shuchō (Main Currents) and worked as its editor-in-chief. However, these operations turned out to be disastrous.

Due to reckless spending and other problems, one of Naoki’s friends/business partners broke with him in 1919. He kept the work at the other publisher until July 1921 when he took over Ningen from Satomi Ton, Kume Masao and others. Then he once again recklessly used the money from the publishing company to cover his personal expenses such as an expensive geisha in Kyoto. Therefore, this second friend/business partner, who later became another popular writer, Washio Ukō, also broke with Naoki.²⁴⁴ Ningen did not survive for long either. When it was discontinued in 1922, Naoki was at a new low in his life. The only income he had was from the articles he

²⁴⁴鷲尾雨工(192-1951): One of Naoki’s classmates at Waseda, and perhaps Naoki’s best friend until their friendship was torn up in the publishing business. After several difficult jobs, he returned to the bundan in 1935 and published several popular historical novels. One of these novels, ironically, won Washio the Naoki Prize in 1936.
wrote for the literary column of *Jiji shinpō*. He had lost several friends who could have helped him financially. Worst of all, he owed money (perhaps tens of thousands of yen) to paper suppliers, printers, and many others. Despite all this adversity he had to face, he playfully created the pen name Naoki Sanjūichi in December 1921 when he started contributing to *Jiji shinpō*.

### 3.5 The Playful Writing of Naoki

From the way Naoki had performed in college and in the publishing business, one might judge him to be a flamboyant playboy who was irresponsible and reckless. Surprisingly, however, he was a man of few words, and many remembered that Naoki had a unique charisma that drew them closer to him despite his often embarrassing reticence and other defects in his personalities. Kikuchi Kan was one of these many people.

It was in late November of 1920 when Kikuchi Kan and his friends, including Akutagawa and Kume, first met Naoki (still Uemura Sōichi at the time). In his autobiography, Kikuchi Kan remembers that meeting.

Naoki Sanjūgo showed up before us unexpectedly. At that time, he had taken the painter Yano Kyoson into the publishing business and was managing a firm called Shuchōsha in Osaka.²⁴⁵ He came [to Tokyo] to take us out for a lecture to raise publicity for Shuchōsha. Standing outside the entrance, Naoki said “Please be assured that the train tickets will be covered, and we also will pay [lecture fees] out of our gratitude.” This way of negotiation was quite blunt, but right to the point. … When we arrived at Osaka, Naoki took us directly to a

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²⁴⁵ 矢野橋村 (1890-1965): Born in Ehime prefecture, Yano learned painting from Nagamatu Shūyō. He was an important figure in nanga in the twentieth century, and was involved in the creation of several nanga associations and schools.
teahouse at Horie instead of the hotel, and gave us a hearty welcome. We totally liked the distinctive ways he dealt with things during the stay, and we started to think that he was really something. From that time on, he became one of my good friends.\textsuperscript{236}

The people who were invited to Osaka include Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kume Masao, Satomi Ton, Kikuchi Kan, Uno Kōji, and Tanaka Jun.\textsuperscript{247} Uno Kōji had a more vivid and detailed account of the trip to Osaka in his memoir of Akutagawa.\textsuperscript{248} Kume and Satomi were taking a later train and the rest of the lecturers left Tokyo with Naoki. It seems that Naoki had been silent most of the time and nobody was talking much either. Since Naoki was the one in charge of the trip, everyone else simply followed him the way a herd of lambs, in Uno’s metaphor, follow a sheep dog. Therefore, when Naoki got off the train at Kyoto instead of Osaka, everyone got off without asking any questions. Then Naoki led the group and started to walk around in the Higashiyama area at five o’clock on a misty morning. Except for a light breakfast in Higashiyama park and a tea break at a café in Teramachi, the group walked continuously for more than four hours. Akutagawa whispered to Uno that Naoki was quite a strong walker and was quite tough. Finally they took the train to Osaka at about ten o’clock. After the lectures in the afternoon, Naoki took the writers to a grand reception party that Shuchōsha held for them in the Horie district, an entertainment quarter in Osaka. While Kikuchi, Kume, and Satomi were enjoying the

\textsuperscript{247} 田中純 (1890-1966): novelist and critic. Born in Hiroshima, he was a classmate of Naoki at Waseda. He worked as the editor-in-chief of \textit{Shinshōsetsu} and was one of the coterie members of \textit{Ningen}. He might have been the connection though which Naoki was able to invite Akutagawa, Kikuchi, and Uno to deliver speeches.
\textsuperscript{248} The following account of the lecture trip is based on this memoir. For details, see Uno Kōji, \textit{Akutagawa Ryūnosuke} (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967) 5-19.
drinks and dozens of geisha, Akutagawa and Uno conversed about Naoki. Both agreed that Naoki was quite a wheeler-dealer to get Yano, the head of Shuchōsha, to pay for everything. At this time, Naoki came to them and offered to take them to a serene place, which turned out to be a teahouse on top of Mount Ikoma. After they arrived, Akutagawa and Uno were given separated rooms to rest and Naoki simply disappeared. Then Uno realized he and Akutagawa were left behind in the teahouse so that the other folks—including Naoki and Yano, both of whom had geisha lovers at Horie—could have a good time at the party.

It is likely that both Akutagawa and Uno enjoyed their stay at the Mount Ikoma teahouse. And Kikuchi Kan probably enjoyed the “hearty welcome” very much too. Uno remembered that many geisha wanted to meet Kikuchi whose sensationally successful Shinjū fujin was being serialized in Osaka mainichi shinbun and staged in Naniwaza theater in Dōtonbori at the time, and that Kikuchi was talking to sixteen or seventeen geisha at the dining table. What happened after this first encounter between Naoki and Kikuchi is still a mystery. It appears that neither Kikuchi nor Naoki ever wrote about their relations in 1921 and 1922. Uemura Tomone, Naoki’s biographer, simply claims that after the Osaka trip, “Naoki gets on much closer terms with Kikuchi.”

This is very possible if one takes into consideration the facts that both men were of the same age, had similar backgrounds in terms of family and education, and shared similar interests in Japanese chess and women. At any rate, by the end of

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1922 when the first issue of *Bungei shunjū* was about to be published, Naoki had won enough recognition, trust, and friendship from Kikuchi Kan to write for the periodical.

Even though he was not listed as a member of the Bungei Shunjū coterie, Naoki had been important to the survival, the development, and the success of the periodical. This is first evidenced by the number of his contributions to *Bungei shunjū*. In each and every issue of *Bungei shunjū* in 1923, Naoki published at least one essay under the Naoki pen names; he also published several pieces under other pen names. Although his frequency of contribution dwindled in later years, Naoki continued publishing often in *Bungei shunjū* until December of 1933, about two months before his death.

Kikuchi Kan obviously appreciated this fact. When the magazine celebrated its tenth anniversary in January 1932, it published a “*Bungei shunjū* shippitsu kaisū banzuke,” or “Ranking of Contributions to *Bungei shunjū*.” The list was made to resemble the real banzuke, which is the ranking of sumo wrestlers, and the writer/contributors were crowned with titles such as “yokozuna” (grand champion) and “ōzeki” (second prize). Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, already dead at the time, was awarded “haridashi yokozuna,” or Additional Grand Champion. Mushanokōji Saneatsu was Yokozuna of the east division and Naoki that of the west division. Naoki had sixty-six works published in the magazine—the most of all the contributors in the ranking.\(^{250}\)

Second, Naoki was important to *Bungei shunjū* because he had contributed many ideas in regard to the format, contents, and style of the works published in the

\(^{250}\) “*Bungei shunjū* shippitsu kaisū banzuke,” *Bungei shunjū* Jan. 1932: 193. The number of Naoki’s contribution includes only those titles that were published under the Naoki pen names. It could have been significantly higher if the pieces published under other pen names were also counted.
magazine. Uemura Tomoe states in his biography of Naoki that the writer “made many plans, and Kikuchi Kan realized these plans one after another in Bungei shunjū,” and that “many of Bungei shunjū’s new departures originated with Naoki.” Uemura does not elaborate on this point, and no example is given to support the statements either. Moreover, there seem to be few records from other sources—such as autobiographies of either Naoki or Kikuchi—that can demonstrate exactly what roles Naoki played in the editing and marketing of the magazine. However, there is one substantial piece of evidence that can support the important role played by Naoki in the formation of Bungei shunjū in the first couple of years of its existence—the essays that Naoki contributed. Many of these essays are playful, sarcastic, and gossipy, all of which were the hallmarks of the Bungei shunjū style. Due to the sheer number of Naoki’s contributions, this study will limit the reading of his texts to those published in 1923, when Naoki had few literary activities other than contributing to Bungei shunjū.

In fact, it is not exactly accurate to define as “essays” all of Naoki’s Bungei shunjū contributions in the nine 1923 issues. They were published under at least five pen names, and they are of a great variety in terms of theme, genre, and style. Two titles were published under the pen name Naoki Sanjūni, eight under Naoki Sanjūsan, three under Takebayashi Kenshichi, one under Kitagawa Chōshichi, and one under

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Katōan.\textsuperscript{252} And Naoki did not stop here. In addition to these fifteen works, there are nineteen pieces that the compilers of \textit{Kindai bungaku kenkyū sōsho} considered Naoki’s.\textsuperscript{253} Since these nineteen pieces are very miscellaneous, this study will focus on the fifteen works that can be judged with certainty to be written by Naoki.

Of all the fifteen works, only one is a short story titled “Ichirei,” or “One Example.” Published in the Creative Works section in the July issue, it was about three and half pages long—by the standards of the magazine, neither long nor particularly short. Naoki used the pen name Kitagawa Chōshichi for this perhaps his first published creative work. The narration begins with an introduction of a theory concerning a child’s death. A foreign medical doctor by the name of Kamion Kūperu spent eighteen years collecting statistics on the deaths of children under the age of ten, and found no evidence of suicide in any of the cases.\textsuperscript{254} So Dr. Kūperu concluded that even those seeming cases of suicide were actually accidental, and that children under ten do not have the agency to plan and commit suicides.

Then the narration switches abruptly to the story of a fourth-grade boy named Egami Rinkichi. Rinkichi lives in a house owned by the father of Kimi, who is Rinkichi’s junior in elementary school and a good friend. The “I” narrator is Kimi’s tutor and he is an admirer of Kimi’s older sister. “I,” also a teacher of Rinkichi, has been joking with the boy by saying that Rinkichi would marry Kimi in about ten years.

\textsuperscript{252} Besides the Naoki pen names, the other three are written in Chinese characters as follows: 竹林賢七, 北川長七, and 夏冬庵
\textsuperscript{253} Shōwa Joshi Daigaku Kindai Bungaku Kenkyūshitu, \textit{Kindai bungaku kenkyū sōsho} (Tokyo: Shōwa Joshi Daigaku Kindai Bungaku Kenkyūshitu, 1972) 220-221.
\textsuperscript{254} The name of the doctor was written in katakana. No record was found related to either Kamion Kūperu or Camion Cúper, which is perhaps the original name.
But “I” feels awkward when he and Kimi, hand in hand, run into Rinkichi on the way back from a movie. There is gossip that Kimi would marry “I” because Kimi’s older sister is already engaged. One day, Rinkichi’s father is fired from his work. He gets drunk and starts to beat Rinkichi’s mother. Rinkichi takes a bite at his father’s wrist. Being chased by the father, Rinkichi rushes out of the house and is killed by a car passing by.

“How” believes that this tragedy is a suicide planned by Rinkichi because the boy is suffering the agonies of a disappointed love, a dysfunctional family, and he has shown unusual interest in the big car that passes by regularly. Consequently, “I” questions the validity of Dr. Kūperu’s theory.

The language is fairly bland. The entire narration is carried out with “ta” and “de aru” endings except for a few conversations in colloquial Tokyo dialect. There are no particular rhetoric devices applied to give the piece a stylistic feature. The theme is as simple as the title: just “one example” proves the invalidity of a medical authority. The writer seems to be more concerned with proving the invalidity of the theory than the tragedy of Rinkichi. The structure of the story is somehow confusing. The narration does not follow a chronological order and memories of earlier events are told more or less in the fashion of “stream of consciousness.” But since the point of the story is the certainty of “I,” this stream-of-consciousness narration is ineffective.

Consequently, the story did not attract much attention. No reviews of the work could be found in the literary columns of any contemporary newspapers and magazines. No readers mentioned that Kitagawa (Naoki)’s work was particularly
interesting as some did of Yokomitsu’s “Hae.” In the postscript of the July issue, Kikuchi Kan mentions five writers that published creative works in the issue. He praises Suga Tadao for good works published in *Mita bungaku*; he encourages Nagai Tatsuo to cultivate his talent more; he expresses his appreciation of Mikami Otokichi being willing to publish in *Bungei shunju* as a rising writer; and he says he was sorry that Mizumori Kamenosuke and Oka Eiichirō could not make the deadline since both younger writers have a kind of youthful courage. However, no other writers or works in the creative work section were commented on. Similarly, Kawabata Yasunari evaluated works of Sasaki Mitsuzō, Naitō Tatsuo, Minami Yukio, Nakagawa Yoichi and Yokomitsu Riichi in his “*Bungei shunju* no sakka tachi” and Naoki’s “Ichirei” was not included. This silence toward the short story is the best testimony that it was a failure despite the fact that it perhaps was the first attempt of Naoki to write serious literature.

The failure in one genre of literature does not necessarily translate into the conclusion that Naoki was lacking in talent in writing other genres. On the contrary, he demonstrated talent in writing short essays and lines of comments that were often filled with gossip and caricatures. The fourteen essays that Naoki wrote for *Bungei shunju* in 1923 will be surveyed briefly and several works will be taken as examples of Naoki’s talent in this kind of not-so-serious literary writing.
Of the fourteen pieces, ten were published under the Naoki pen names, and these ten pieces are more suitable to be called essays in terms of content, structure, and style. The titles, time of publication, and length of the pieces are listed as follows.

“Rojō sago” (Sand Words on Road), January 1923, 1 page.

“Teigen futataba” (Two Suggestions), February 1923, 1.5 pages.

“Taishu ni naru na” (Do not be My Rival), March 1923, 1.5 pages.

“Kengen sōgo” (Clamourous Talks), April 1923, 2.5 pages.

“Kaiten gohirō” (Announcing the Store Opening), May 1923, 2 pages.

“Onko ronshin” (Review the Ancient and Discuss the New), June 1923, 2 pages.

“Shōgo” (Words about Business), July 1923, 3 pages.

“Zatsu hachidai” (Eight Miscellaneous Topics), August 1923, 2 pages.

“Esugo, hatsugen, zuihitsu” (Esperanto, Discovery, and Essay), November 1923, 2.5 pages.

“Raihan riyū” (The Reasons of Coming to Osaka), November 1923, 1 page.

The titles of all but one essay are in Chinese character compounds. They are supposed to be read in onyomi, or Chinese reading. And at least two of the titles are likely to be derived from Chinese idioms and allusions.\(^{255}\) This obvious preference for Chinese style titles probably was intended to arouse the expectation in the reader of

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\(^{255}\) “Onko ronshin” seems to be created from onko chishin, or “review the ancient and know the new,” a proverb from Confucius. “Kengen sōgo” is likely to be made up from the idiomatic formula “~gen~go” which can be rendered into many idioms such as kyōgen kigo (verbose words), taigen sōgo (big talks), and ryūgen higo (rumors).
serious content to follow. However, most of the essays betray this expectation. As
some of the titles suggest, the contents of the essays are often as trivial as a grain of
sand and the styles as noisy as a clamour.

The miscellany and trivia of the topics of these essays are best exemplified in
“Zatsu hachidai.” Rather than an integrated essay, this piece is comprised of eight
sections that are divided by small black triangle marks. The longest section is about
three columns and the shortest merely a half of a column. The contents of the sections
are summarized as follows. The first persona is kept intact in all sections.

Section 1: Reading the shorthand kōdan scripts is not as fun as listening to kōdan
performance. Similarly, tsūzoku shōsetsu works will be more attractive to mass
readers if they quickly go to the development of the story and skip background
introduction.

Section 2: Although the death of Arishima Takeo was a pity, I feel more sorry
about the death of Hatano Akiko, who was a great beauty. I have neither good
things nor bad things to say about Arishima, and I hope Arishima’s disciples will not
hold a grudge toward me for this.

Section 3: I was amazed how good a Bunraku puppet show in Osaka was and I
would be glad to give some donation to support it if I had any money. Such a waste of
money perhaps will irritate the proletariats.

Section 4: The ancient capital Nara never seems to change.

256 波多野晶子 (1894-1923): She graduated from Aoyama Gakuin University and worked at Fujin
kōron as a reporter. While married to another men, she was involved in an affair with Arishima Takeo,
and they committed a double suicide in 1923.
Section 5: The *bundan* is running out of issues. It is stupid for people to fuss over the joint review in *Shinchō*.

Section 6: Kikuchi Kan said I have a “publisher’s nature.” So I will ask for a 10%, or even 1% raise in royalties from him.

Section 7: We playboys feel more at ease after Arishima, the so-called moralist of the *bundan*, committed a double suicide. When will a nurse or someone kill Kurata Hyakuzō with a razor and make us feel really relieved?257

Section 8: One hugs those people of different opinions who are too strong to fight against. I got a bird cage with twenty-four birds in it from a loan shark who seized my assets. Perhaps this is proof of my “publisher’s nature?”

The nine other essays typically have one or two topics, while “Zatsu hachidai” covers almost all the themes that are constantly present in these essays. The most noticeable one is about finance, either personal or corporate. Naoki’s own financial situation, especially the poverty he suffered during the two years prior to 1923, made good material for self-parody. Therefore, the brief story of the loan shark is told in section eight as proof of his so-called “publisher’s nature.” Similarly in “Kaiten gohirō,” Naoki states, “Perhaps nobody knows, but this Naoki Sensei is wanting in today’s food. I have not paid the rent for seven months and I am told to have broken the record for overdue rent payment in Tokyo.”258

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257 藤田百三 (1891-1943): Playwright and literary critic. He studied philosophy and religions earlier in his life and published a novel titled *Shukke to sono deshi* (The Priest and His Disciples), which was a bestseller. Then he indulged mostly in philosophical thinking to find a rational way of life. He also created several journals.

Although self-ironic, Naoki did not seem to feel shamed or embarrassed by his poverty-stricken life. On the contrary, he seems to have taken pride in it. The reason for this pride is elaborated also in “Kaiten gohirō.”

I am by nature a loafer. I do work when I work, but I like the people who had so-called hermit-like thoughts, people such as Meikei, Ji Kang, Confucius, and the fisherman at Miluo river. Rather a loafer, I am a man who enjoys the lifestyle that was popular in medieval China, and that is best described by the word “indolent.”

In “Onko ronshin,” Naoki introduced in detail the story of Ji Kang who refused an offer to work as a senior official in the government. Ji Kang did so because he had “Seven Unbearables,” which includes “not able to sleep in,” “not able to take a long walk,” “having to sit still for a long time,” “having to write reports,” and the like. Naoki thinks these are very reasonable reasons, and he takes Ji Kan as one of his mentors of indolence.

The association with Ji Kang and other indolent literati explains to a certain extent why many called Naoki “kijin,” or “eccentric.” In addition to this indolence Naoki took pride in, there was another aspect of his personal life that he seemed to be eager to flaunt: his fondness for women. As noted above, Naoki started living with Butsushi.

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259 明恵 (1173-1232): a Buddhist monk of Kegon sect in Kamakura period. He is known for his revival of the sect, his poems, and his dreams. 嵗康 (224-263): A Chinese man of letters in the Three-Kindom period, and a member of the Seven Saint in Bamboo Forest. He is famous for his skills of Chinese zither. 峽羅の漁夫: a figure in the legend of the great Chinese poet Qu Yuan. Qu had a conversation with this hermitical fisherman at Miluo river (or Bekira kō in Japanese) before he threw himself into the river.


261 For example, Ao’no Suekichi who was a classmate and close friend of Naoki at Waseda University said “Naoki was a man who was very eccentric in terms of personality.” Ao’no Suekichi, “Naoki no ningen to geijutsu,” Naoki Sanjūō zenshū geppō No. 5, in Supplementary volume of Naoki Sanjūō zenshū (Tokyo: Shijinsha, 1991) 35.
Sumako in 1911, and the two got married in 1919. However, it was also in 1919 that Naoki, working at the two small publishing houses, start to go to geisha houses. And by 1920, as Uno Kōji remembers in the account of their lecture trip to Osaka, Naoki was already taking geisha lovers in Osaka. In 1922, Naoki met Kōzai Orie, a geisha working at a teahouse in the entertainment quarters of Tokyo. The two had an affair and became lovers for the rest of their lives. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that in seven of the ten essays, Naoki discusses his appreciation of women. For example, in “Rojō sago,” Naoki states that Japan was a boring nation because one could not talk to women freely outside of the entertainment quarters. “I heard that Uno Kōji likes literature and mountains as well as women, but folks like me, we like nothing else but women. Make money by playing cards, and go and have fun with women! Is not this the ideal life?”

On the other hand, Naoki also wrote about relatively more serious topics such as the publishing business, literary criticism, and proletarian literature. For example, in “Shōgo,” Naoki brings up the news that an American publisher spent three million dollars and built a ten-story plant, which was capable of publishing and printing a hundred thousands books a day. He compares it with Bungei shunjū and other Japanese publishers and works out an eight point to-do list for Bungei shunjū to achieve the same scale as the American publisher did.

In “Kengen sōgo,” Naoki expresses his dissatisfaction toward some phenomenon in the bundan.

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I felt something strange recently. Those people who are writing trashy novels and plays deal with those who write only miscellaneous essays and reviews as if the latter are outcasts. These writers of novels and plays show their contempt in each word and sentence toward the writers of essays and reviews, and they always address issues from a higher ground. Moreover, no one in the bundan feels suspicious.²⁶³

He criticizes the trashy novel/play writers as incompetent and conceited and describes them as carts loaded with night soil, coaches overturned in a muddy ditch, or a jalopy fallen in the river.

This kind of relentless ridicule is most explicitly demonstrated in Naoki’s comments on proletarian writers. In “Taishū ni naru na,” he expresses his willingness to be as bourgeois as he wished, and he questioned the proletarian writers.

It has been one and half years since proletarian writers advanced in the world. Aged between thirty six or seven and forty, they have produced only the same kind of work. How on the earth are these proletarian works supposed to be the rising literature of the future?

However harsh his ridicule was, Naoki had the good sense to avoid being overly personal or derogatory. On the contrary, he made an effort to show that he was open-minded enough to express his appreciation of some of the proletarian writers. In “Onko ronshin,” he discusses about Aono Suekichi, who was a major figure in the proletarian group.

Aono Suekichi and I have been friends for more than ten years. Both of us lived with women when we were a little over twenty. … Even after he became the great leader of the proletariat and went about doing admirable deeds, and I became the target of contempt as a small fry of the declining bourgeois class, we still drink and talk happily when we meet. It is just the same as before. …

We have different attitudes toward this world. They are the fighters of the real life, and we are the ascetics of the true arts. Even if the two sides have to be distinguished as enemies and friends, there should be mutual respect between them, and a beautiful friendship should be born when they mingle. As long as we and they are human beings, this should happen.\textsuperscript{264}

Consistent with the content, Naoki wrote these ten essays with a blunt, sharp, or ironic style. He used many Chinese compounds and short sentences. Rhetoric devices such as parallelism, imperative sentences, allusions, and rhetorical questions are frequently employed. These characteristics and others constituted Naoki’s unique polemical and satirical style.

This Naoki style of writing is even more evident in the four titles that Naoki did not publish under the Naoki pen names in the first-year issues of \textit{Bungei shunjū}. The four titles are:

“Jirokichi okuraru” (Farewell to Jirokichi), Takebayashi Kenkichi, March 1923, two pages.

“Nezumi kozō’ ni tsuite” (About “Nezumi kozō”), Takebayashi Kenkichi, May 1923, half page.

“Kaeru meigin” (Chirping and Chanting of Frogs) Katōan, June 1923, half page.

“Ennichi” (A Fete Day), Takebayashi Kenkichi, July 1923, three pages.

Compared with the Naoki essays, these four titles are relatively shorter but more varied in terms of form and genre. The longer two pieces—“Jirokichi okuraru” and

\textsuperscript{264} Naoki Sanjūo, “Onko ronshin,” \textit{Bungei shunjū} Jun. 1923: 44.
“Ennichi”—are scripts.  “‘Nezumi kozō’ ni tsuite” is a brief follow-up comment on “Jirokichi okuraru.”  And “Kaeru meigin” is comprised of fourteen tanka, each of which jokes about one particular literary figure in contemporary Japan.

These four works are playful in content perhaps more than the Naoki essays.  This is most obviously exemplified in “Ennichi.”  The play is marked as a kaimaku-kyoku, or a curtain raiser.  The catch phrase published on top of the title reads “Summer Entertainment, Kaleidoscopic Setting.”  In the introduction, Naoki writes rather garrulously on trivial issues, such as how to rotate the stage and how to represent the masses in the fête.  Then he cast many writers and critics as vendors in the summer festival.  The cast list is as follows:

- Tayama Katai—owner of a futon shop;
- Shimazaki Tōson—clerk of a cosmetic store;
- Yoshida Genjirō—cotton candy vendor;
- Kurata Hyakuzō—salvation army (no appearance on stage due to sickness);
- Shimada Seijirō—street singer (also no appearance on stage, voice only);
- Akutagawa Ryūnosuke—secondhand dealer;
- Mushanokōji Saneatsu—seedling seller;
- Tanizaki Jun’ichirō—one-sen moving picture operator;
- Uno Kōji—old beggar;
- Satomi Ton—fortune teller
- Hirotu Kazuo—secondhand bookseller;

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265 Jirokichi is also known as Nezumi kozō.  He was a chivalrous robber in the late Edo period.  Many short stories, novels, plays and movies are based on him.
Satō Haruo—goldfish seller;
Maedakō Hiroichirō—banana seller;
Kume Masao—booth fee collector;
Kikuchi Kan—baker;
Kamitukasa Shōken—temple assistant.\textsuperscript{266}

The play starts at a temple where some geisha are paying their visits. Next door is the futon shop where the owner (Tayama) can not help but think that those are nice women. A couple of female students, a nurse and a geisha are shopping in the cosmetics store where the clerk (Shimazaki) keeps a very modest posture. Then many other characters take turns and show up on stage. The baker (Kikuchi) sells “Kikuchi bread” which focuses on content and is sold for only ten sen. The seedling seller (Mushanokōji) sells home-raised pumpkins and cucumbers. The fortuneteller (Satomi) offers free service to first-time customers and unmarried girls. The secondhand dealer (Akutagawa) is playing with dogs and a beautiful lady with flirtatious eyes looks at him smiling. The beggar (Uno) passes by holding an old samisen and singing a ballad. Then the banana seller (Maedakō) tries to lower the price of his bananas to compete with Kikuchi bread. The street singer (Shimada) is singing a song about a virgin being abducted. Then the moving picture operator (Tanizaki) is in trouble with the police (Tokuda Shūsei) because he shows nude

\textsuperscript{266} Naoki used only the last names of writers and critics in his cast. Most last names, such as Kikuchi and Kume, are easily identified while a couple of them are not. For example, the cotton candy vendor is played by Yoshida, which most likely refers to Yoshida Genjirō. On the other hand, it could refer to Yoshida Issui, a poet who also wrote children’s stories. The other not-so-definite last name was Kurata though Kurata Hyakuzō is the most likely writer referred to.
pictures. Then the booth fee collector (Kume) negotiates with the police. The secondhand dealer makes fun of the police and the same lady still looks at him. Then the salvation army shows up, singing loudly about God and the higher love. When it starts to rain, the secondhand bookseller hurries up to put the books in cases. He can not do it quickly enough and simply gives up. The fortuneteller ducks under the eaves with a waitress, and he is still talking. The baker has sold out all of his bread. He pulls the empty cart by himself and starts to run.

This is obviously more an assembly of caricatures than a play. Characters come and go. The dialogue is short and fragmentary. Explanation of settings takes up much of the space. There are no distinguishing stylistic features. However, the play is by no means uncharacteristic of Naoki. It is the content that displays Naoki’s playfulness. He was one of the few people able to accurately satirize and make fun of these serious writers, and laugh at them. The famous argument between Kikuchi Kan and Maedakō becomes the competition between the baker and the banana seller. Mushanokōji’s “New Village” experiment turns into the seedling business. The sexuality in Tanizaki’s novels is rendered as the nude moving-picture show that is almost banned. It is precisely in this playfulness that Naoki demonstrates his rather eccentric talent in literature.

It perhaps was difficult for the average mass readers to fully understand works such as “Ennichi.” Yet, college students and literary youth in Tokyo, who were targets of Bungei shunjū’s marketing, were probably familiar with all the writers who

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267 The name of the policeman was not given in the cast, but in a part of the setting explanation.
were cast in the play and with what was taking place in the *bundan*. They must have been able to enjoy the humor in the play and have a good laugh. This play and other similar writings surely stood out and provided entertainment to their readers. It is not surprising, then, that many critics and scholars have maintained that the series of essays that Naoki published in *Bungei shunjū* was one of the milestones of his career. Uemura Tomone states, “From February 1923, Naoki started to anonymously dash off gossipy stories that, in an amusing fashion, badmouthed people in the *bundan*. This made Naoki’s presence known to the public. At the same time, it contributed greatly to the expansion of *Bungei shunjū*’s circulation.”\(^{268}\) The compilers of *Kindai bungaku kenkyū sōsho* had similar comments: “After Kikuchi Kan created *Bungei shunjū* in January 1923, in each and every issue, Naoki anonymously wrote *bundan* gossip and miscellaneous notes as well as essays. The clever and sharp stroke of his pen captivated readers.”\(^{269}\) It is impossible to calculate and describe precisely how much Naoki’s writing helped the expansion of *Bungei shunjū* in the magazine’s early years, but one can assume that the tone of irreverence for literary figures helped establish *Bungei shunjū*’s reputation as a straightforward, refreshing, and entertaining literary journal.

The essays surely helped Naoki with his career as well. Although Naoki moved back to Osaka after the Great Kanto Earthquake and stayed there until 1926, he kept writing for *Bungei shunjū* fairly frequently. Moreover, he was able to find


sponsoring for yet another attempt at magazine publishing. He had letters from Kikuchi Kan, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kume Masao, and Satomi Ton giving rights for the publication of their works to Naoki. These letters facilitated greatly his admission to Puraton, a popular publisher in Kansai at the time. In January 1924, the magazine Kuraku (Joys and Sorrows) was created and Naoki became the editor-in-chief and the main contributor. For the next one year or two, Naoki made a decent living by writing for Bungei shunjū and Kuraku. However, he quit Puraton in 1925 to try the movie business. This move could have been due to his desire to achieve something big in business, or to make money from royalties, or both. In the next three years, he collaborated with some people in the movie business, created a studio, and made fourteen movies. None were successful at the box office. In 1926, the studio dissolved. Naoki moved back to Tokyo and started to concentrate on writing. He would wait for another four years to gain success in the serialization of Nankoku taiheiki in Tokyo nichinichi shinbun and Osaka mainichi shinbun. However, the support of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū was instrumental to his early success.

3.6 A Comparison

While reviewing the literary careers and personal lives of Yokomitsu Riichi and Naoki Sanjūgo in connection with Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū in 1923 and 1924, one can easily find similarities. Both were born in the 1890s to lower-middle class families. Both were educated at Waseda University. Both failed to graduate from Waseda due to their declining financial situations and eccentric behavior at school.
For both Yokomitsu and Naoki, the first several years after college were the most difficult times of their lives. Yokomitsu’s early literary works were not successful while Naoki failed repeatedly at business. Both, however, were fortunate enough to have befriended Kikuchi Kan and to have been included in the *Bungei shunjū* group. It was through their friendship with Kikuchi Kan and their subsequent connection with the magazine that their talents were recognized by readers and critics, and they established their reputations as new emerging writers in the *bundan*. Had it not been for Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*, both might have developed very different trajectories in their careers and lives, and occupied very different positions in modern Japanese literature, if they were able to obtain positions at all.

On the other hand, the nature of Yokomitsu and Naoki’s literary success was different. The most obvious difference is that Yokomitsu enjoyed a sensational debut at a much younger age than Naoki did. Even though Naoki had already published fairly unique essays from the first issue of *Bungei shunjū* and the essays were welcomed by many readers, he was not able to make a reputation as a newly emerging writer as soon as Yokomitsu did. Naoki had to wait until 1929 to be widely recognized in the *bundan* as a popular writer of historical fiction when he published *Yui kongen daisatsu-ki* (Massacre of the Yui Family). And only in 1930 was he able to become a sensation in the *bundan* with the publication of *Nankoku taiheiki*.

Naoki’s lack of early success is surely due to the poor quality of the works that Naoki produced in his attempts at serious/pure literary writing. As exemplified in the

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\(^{270}\) Yokomitsu was only 25 in 1923. In contrast, Naoki was 39 in 1930.
case of the short story “Ichirei,” these attempts often resulted in works that were judged mediocre by aesthetic standards. Being driven to achieve success in various businesses, Naoki was never able to establish himself as a writer of pure literature during or after his lifetime. And as a matter of fact, he was considered to be a sakka [writer] only after his first popular novels received positive feedback in 1925.\footnote{This suggests the possibility that people might not have treated those who focused on genres other than poetry, novels, and plays as a sakka in the mid-1920s Japan. In other words, such contemporary authors as Naoki who mostly produced non-fictional essays, reviews, and criticism were not considered “writers” by their peers and readers in the first half of the 1920s. As mentioned above, Naoki already noticed this phenomenon in the essay “Kengen sōgo” and ridiculed those writers of novels and plays who looked down upon writers of reviews and essays. It is possible that Naoki himself was treated with disrespect one way or another by those novelists and playwrights. The general readers of literature may have followed those writers of novels and plays and accepted, perhaps unconsciously, a similar distinction. Therefore, similar to the dominance of novel over other literary genres, it is likely that the contemporary conception of the writer overlapped with novelist to a large extent. Even the writers of popular fictions were named taishū sakka (popular writers). Playwrights and poets also were credited as writers, but perhaps as secondary. In contrast, authors of essays and critics were mostly ignored as serious writers.} This claim, as will be explained in this chapter, is inaccurate.

\footnote{Nichigai—the most comprehensive web-based reference of Japanese authors—states in Naoki’s biographical summary that he “was recognized as a sakka after he serialized Yui kongen daisakki in Shūkan asahi in 1929.” “Naoki Sanjūgo,” Nichigai Web Service Database, Nichigai Association Inc., 2 November 2006 <http://web.nichigai.co.jp.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/nga/jsp/login/iplogin/OSU.jsp> This claim, as will be explained in this chapter, is inaccurate.}
writers. Although Naoki’s and some others’ non-fictional essays were also targeted at middlebrow and mass readers, these writers were not considered as *taishū sakka*. Whether they were deemed serious writers at all is also doubtful. However, as the case of Naoki’s works suggests, some of these essays and reviews were actually well written, and some of the authors were talented. And they provided their readers with entertainment, knowledge, or even inspiration. Yet, the essays were marginalized as a genre and their authors as something other than “writers.” In this respect, it can be said that there existed a writer and genre hierarchy in the 1920 Japanese literary world. This hierarchy facilitated the early success of writers such as Yokomitsu Riichi and delayed, to a certain extent, the popular discovery of the talent in writers such as Naoki.

It was magazines such as *Bungei shunjū* that provided opportunities to these marginalized authors of reviews, essays, and criticism. As discussed in Chapter one and Chapter two, the magazine was never a literary coterie journal per se, and its creation and expansion has to be attributed to Kikuchi Kan, who had very pragmatic thoughts on literature, and to the increased demand of the contemporary middle-class readership. This unique configuration of the magazine rendered it possible that both promising writers of serious novels and plays [such as Yokomitsu], and the writers with talents in the writing of marginalized literary genres [such as Naoki] were able to establish literary careers. Yokomitsu would not have achieved his early success without the help of Kikuchi Kan and the magazine. Naoki Sanjūgo also enjoyed much benefit from *Bungei shunjū* in the early and mid 1920s before he became established.
and popular. With the support given by Kikuchi Kan, Akutagawa and other well-known writers, Naoki was able to land a job at Puraton and host Kuraku. And he was able to serialize ten short stories that were based on the traditional adachi (revenge) tales starting with the inaugural issue of Kuraku. These ten stories were collected and published by Puraton under the title Adauchi jisshū (Ten Kinds of Revenge Tales) in September 1924. This was the first book by Naoki. In February 1925, another collection of eleven stories by Naoki was published as Shinjū kirarazaka (Love Suicide at Kirarazaka) by Shun’yōdō. It is still unknown how the stories were received by readers. Nichigai’s claim that Naoki was recognized as a writer only after the publication of Yuikongen daisakki in 1929 seems to be inaccurate. Within the bundan, Naoki started to be recognized as a writer of popular literature by his peers in the mid-1920s. As early as April 1925, Naoki was featured in a series of reviews titled “Taishū bundan chōkan” (A Bird’s-Eye View of Popular Literature) by Kunieda Shirō. Kunieda praised Naoki for bringing a refreshingly new style to the genre of kōdan, which was trapped by stale plots and repetitive bloody descriptions. The name Naoki was listed side by side with such already-established and widely popular writers as Shirai Kyōji and Osaragi Jirō in this essay, which appeared in Yomiuri shinbun. A week later, a picture of Naoki appeared in the same literary page of Yomiuri shinbun: he was the first popular writer to be included in the series “Taishū sakka retsuden” (The Lives of Popular Writers).

272 国枝史郎(1888-1943): novelist and playwright. After he dropped out of Waseda University, he worked for Osaka asahi shinbun as a reporter and for Shōchiku-za theater as a playwright in residence. In 1920 he started to write popular fictions and plays.

These recognitions of Naoki as a popular writer took place only after he published popular fictions in book form. It testifies again to the existence of a hierarchy of literary genres within the contemporary bundan. How people treated Naoki differently before and after he started to publish popular novels deserves more detailed study. It correlates with such difficult yet important problems as the development of genres, the conception of literature, and the formation of writing as a profession in contemporary Japan. And these problems ultimately are related to the theme of this study: how literary magazines such as Bungei shunjū functioned in modern Japanese literary marketplace. These questions are addressed in the coming chapters in an attempt to apply the idea of middlebrow literature to the contents of Bungei shunjū.

In 1924 and 1925, both Yokomitsu Riichi and Naoki Sanjūgo made huge steps forward in their literary careers. Bungei shunjū, the literary magazine behind the two writers’ achievements, also was proceeding to future success, success both in the literary field and in business world. The next chapter will survey briefly the late 1920s of the magazine and will highlight some major events that had significant impacts in modern Japanese literature.
Minutes before noon on September 1, 1923, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck Tokyo and many other cities surrounding the Tokyo bay area. It caused fires all over the region, and some of the fires lasted for five days. The devastation was simply astounding:

According to estimates made at the time, in seventeen prefectures, but primarily in Tokyo, 554,000 out of 2.288 million households lost their homes; 105,000 people lost their lives; 30,000 were injured; and 250,000 lost their jobs.\textsuperscript{274}

It is doubtless that each and every business in these cities, especially those in Tokyo, suffered huge losses in the disaster. This is particularly true with the publication sector, which includes publishers, printers, distributors and retailers of books, periodicals and other printed materials. Two hundred and eleven publishers—a great majority of the Tokyo Magazine Association members—were burned down. Headquarters of several major magazine distributing companies including Tokyodō,

Tōkaidō and Hokuryūdō were destroyed in the fires. All major printing companies, with the exception of Shūeisha and Hakubunkan Insatsusho, lost their printing abilities. Nine hundred and fifty-six members of Tokyo Booksellers Association, which included about 1800 bookstores, book distributors and presses, lost everything they had. All Tokyo-base newspapers were discontinued temporarily for five days or longer. Out of the approximately 300 pre-earthquake magazines, only 50 were able to publish their October issues on time. It is therefore not surprising to see the sensationally pessimistic headline in Osaka asahi shinbun on September 8:

“Magazines Are Annihilated: Nearly All Will not Be Published in October—A Massive Blow to Print Culture.”

4.1 The Recovery from the Great Kanto Earthquake

Bungei shunjū was comparatively fortunate in the earthquake and the fires. In July 1923, Kikuchi Kan moved his home, which was also the site of Bungei Shunjūsha, to

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275 The statistics are drawn from Hashimoto Motome, Nihon shuppan hanbaishi (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1964) 283-293.
276 Hōchi shinbun was the first Tokyo newspaper to resume publication after the earthquake. On September 5, it published an announcement and stated as follows. “Luckily, this company suffered less from the earthquake. At last, we are blessed to be able to start our periodical publication today, though it might be incomplete. In fact, we are the only newspaper that is being published in Tokyo after the earthquake.” “Announcement,” Hōchi shinbun Sep 5, 1923. Reprinted in Shinbun shūroku Taishōshi, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Taishō Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1978) 336.
277 “Shuppankai mo izen Tokyo ga chūshin: Osaka idensetsu wa uwasa dake,” Tokyo nichinichi shinbun Sep. 16, 1923. Reprinted in Shinbun shūroku Taishōshi vol. 11 (Tokyo: Taishō Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1978) 376-377. Even though the theme of the article is that Tokyo managed to maintain its advantage over Osaka as the national center of magazine publication even after the earthquake, it is obvious that the losses that Tokyo magazine publishers suffered was enormous.
278 The article surveyed briefly the damage of the magazines in Tokyo and concluded that even the powerful magazine publishers would not be able to publish October issues. It is also reprinted in Shinbun shūroku Taishōshi vol. 11 (Tokyo: Taishō Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1978) 352-353. Edward Mack also gives a detailed account of the aftermath of the earthquake. For details, refer to Edward Mack, “The Value of Literature: Cultural Authority in Interwar Japan,” diss., Harvard University, 2002.
Hongō district—one of the so-called “Yama no te” (uptown) regions that were damaged the least by the earthquake. And this new home for Kan and Bungei shunjū was not affected by either the quake or the fires. None of the coterie members and frequent contributors was killed or injured in the disaster. However, all the copies of the September issue that were about to be distributed in the printing factory were lost. Even worse is the fact that the headquarter of Shun’yōdō, Bungei shunjū’s sole distributor, was burned down.

It seems that Kikuchi Kan was discouraged by the loss and started to think about moving to Osaka. On September 4, Shimanaka Yūsaku came to pay Kan a visit and requested a contribution to the October issue of Chūō kōron. Kikuchi Kan refused the request with a rather sullen tone: “Tokyo culture has already reached a dead end. Cultural institutions are likely to be moved to Osaka from now on. I also am considering relocating to Osaka soon. Nothing else is on my mind.” It is said that Kan even asked Naoki Sanjūgo to go to Osaka in advance, and this was the reason why Naoki sold everything he owned in Tokyo quickly and left for Osaka right after the earthquake.

Moreover, the disaster revealed to Kikuchi Kan the vulnerability of human lives and the superfluity of art, both of which were made apparent by this disaster. In an

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279 It is unknown how many copies were lost in the fire. In the postscript of the August issue, Kikuchi Kan mentioned that he would order eleven thousand copies for August, and that he might print fifteen thousands copies for the September issue. Postscript, Bungei shunjū Aug. 1923: 81.
280 嶋中雄作 (1887-1949): publisher. Upon graduation from Waseda University, he joined Chūō Kōronsha and created Fujin kōron in 1916. He became the editor-in-chief of Chūō kōron in 1926 and the president of Chūō Kōronsha in 1928. After the wartime oppression, he helped the reconstruction of the magazine and the company after World War Two.
essay titled “Saigo zakkan” (Miscellaneous Thoughts after the Disaster), he adopted a pessimistic stance concerning human life: “As a result of this earthquake, I now understand what the indispensable thing in a man’s life is. When one hovers between life and death, there is nothing more important than sleep and food.”

Literature and art in general became pure luxury. “When life is put under extreme circumstances, art is useless. … At any rate, I came to know the most important thing is to produce one's own food by oneself. I think those who can make their own food are the strongest human beings.”

Despite these financial adversities and emotional disturbances, Kikuchi Kan managed to stay in Tokyo, and he resumed the publication of Bungei shunju in November. In the postscript of this November issue, he mentions that after the fire destroyed all copies of the September issue and burned down Shun’yōdō, he “was in despair and thought this would be the end of Bungei shunju.” “However,” he continues, “it is delightful that the opportunity to resume the publication came unexpectedly early.”

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There is no detailed account about why and how Kikuchi Kan decided to give up the plan of moving to Osaka, to stay in Tokyo and to resume publication of the magazine. But he did mention in another essay, also titled “Saigo zakkan,” that many things contributed to this change of mind. These include the fact that the due date of his second child was in the immediate future and that Shun’yōdō was able to help with

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284 Ibid.
285 Kikuchi Kan, postscripts, Bungei shunju Nov. 1923: 125.
The company history of *Bungei shunjū* attributed Kan’s decision to Kan’s positive view of life that lay beneath his pessimism and to his sympathy toward the young writers who would suffer from the discontinuation of the magazine.\(^{287}\) It is most likely that Kan made his decision after considering all the factors mentioned above.

The special November issue with essays about the earthquake was priced at twenty-five sen and ten thousand copies were sold out within days. Even though no December issue was published, the January issue of 1924 was also well received and sold about fifteen thousand copies. The circulation number reached twenty thousands in June and twenty five thousand in January 1925. *Bungei shunjū* not only survived the Great Kanto earthquake, but was able to expand in the following year. Similar to the magazine’s revival, the entire city of Tokyo recovered rapidly from ruin.

This recovery started as early as the night of September 2 when the second Yamamoto Gonbei cabinet was inaugurated. Gotō Shinpei, who served as Tokyo major from December 1920 to April 1923, took office as “Naimu Daijin” (the Minister of Domestic Affairs). He drafted a “Plan of the Imperial Capital’s Revival” and proposed it to the cabinet on September 6. In the proposal, Kondō advised that Tokyo should still be the capital and he suggested forming an independent institute dedicated to the planning and execution of the capital’s reconstruction. Though his suggestion of buying the burned area in downtown Tokyo for the astonishing amount of five billion yen was refused, the other proposals were accepted. On September 12, the


\(^{287}\) *Bungei shunjū nanajū-nen shi* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1992) 33-34.
Taishō Emperor issued an imperial proclamation stating that Tokyo, despite the loss in the recent catastrophe, would retain its position as the imperial capital. Teito Fukkōin, or the Institute of the Imperial Capital’s Revival, was established on September 27. A reconstruction budget of 574.81 million yen was approved by the National Diet on December 10. After seven years of reconstruction, the completion of the revival plan was celebrated on March 26 1930 at a ceremony held in the outer garden of the imperial palace. During these seven years, 119 kilometers of artery roads, 139 kilometers of supplementary roads, and 492 kilometers of streets were finished. The first subway line in Japan and in Asia started its service between Ueno and Asakusa in 1927. Six large bridges were built over the Sumida River. 55 public parks were added to Tokyo’s landscape. Many schools, hospitals, and governmental offices were also built or rebuilt.  

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The reconstruction of infrastructure also facilitated dramatic demographic and administrative changes. The population of the fifteen wards in the city of Tokyo in 1922 was 2,212,156 and it dropped by one sixth right after the earthquake. In the following seven years, a slow recovery took place and the population reached 2,122,801 in 1930—still 100,000 less than 1920. However, the population in the surrounding five counties of Tokyo prefecture more than doubled from 1,487,272 in 1920 to 3,285,877 in 1932. When these counties were combined into Tokyo city to form the greater Tokyo metropolis in 1932, they brought in a population of more than

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288 These statistics concerning Tokyo’s revival after the earthquake are cited from Koshizawa Akira, Tokyo no toshi keikaku (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991) 34-86.
3.2 million.\footnote{Figures of Tokyo’s population are drawn from Japan Statistical Association, \textit{Historical Statistics of Japan}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Japan Statistical Association, 1988) 156.} Tokyo, with 5.2 million people, became the second most populated city in the world next to New York. The geographical size of Tokyo consequently expanded from 83.6 km\(^2\) to 550.8 km\(^2\).\footnote{Koshizawa Akira, \textit{Tokyo no toshi keikaku} (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991) 90. Koshizawa’s figures of Tokyo’s size and ranking are from \textit{Tokyo shisei gaiyō} and \textit{Shiseki kakuchō kinen dai-Tokyo gaikan} respectively.} Dozens of private bus lines connected the city and its suburbs. The total length of the rail network (of both public and private operations) increased more than 30\% and they transported millions back and forth between work and home.\footnote{Length of railways in Japan increased from 18,412 kilometers in 1923 to 24,847 kilometers in 1931. Specific statistics of Tokyo could not be found. But the increase in Tokyo was supposed to be larger than the national average. Nihon Kokuyū Tetsudō, \textit{Nihon kokuyū tetsudō hyaku-nen shi}, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Nihon Kokuyū Tetsudō, 1971) 60-155.} The so-called “\textit{bunka jūtaku}” (culture residence) sprouted up in the suburban communities.

The cultural changes that epitomized the entire Taishō period accelerated after the earthquake. As signified in the case of \textit{bunka jūtaku}, the most noticeable change was the mass production and mass consumption of cultural products. \textit{Osaka Asahi shinbun} and \textit{Osaka Mainichi shinbun} achieved daily circulation of one million copies in January 1924, and they expanded more aggressively into the Kanto region after the earthquake destroyed many of the Tokyo native newspapers. \textit{Kingu}, supposedly the first magazine to serve all Japanese nationals, was created in 1925 and its circulation reached 1.2 million in 1926. Kaizōsha’s \textit{Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū} series were put on the market for one yen per copy and initiated the “\textit{enpon}” boom. Radio broadcasting started in Tokyo also in 1925. Movies became the most popular entertainment among city dwellers. Asakusa, with more than a dozen movie theaters,
was the biggest attraction to movie viewers in Tokyo. Legitimate theaters staged opera, musical, and dance performances that were often inexpensive and mass-orientated. Cafes drew large crowds to the pleasure quarters of the city, primarily in the Ginza area. “Mobo” (modern boys) and “moga” (modern girls) demonstrated their sense of fashion on the streets. And “Eroguro, sometimes eroguro nansenseu,” became “the expression held to capture more than any other the mood of early Shōwa.”

4.2 Bungei kōza

The expansion of Bungei shunjū in the mid 1920s was surely related to all of these demographic, economic, and cultural changes that accelerated after the earthquake. On the other hand, it also has to be attributed to the editing staffs’ ability to grasp the social changes and to the efforts they made to attract readers. A primary example of these efforts was the creation of Bungei kōza (Literature Seminar). It was designed as a periodical publication that assembled transcripts of lectures on literature and arts by writers and scholars. In the July issue of 1924, Bungei shunjū included a two-page special advertisement insert to announce the creation of Bungei kōza. According to this announcement, the publication of the lectures would start in September 1924 and would be distributed twice a month. Readers who wanted to be a member of the lecture series needed to pay an enrollment fee of one yen. The materials of the two

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lectures each month cost one yen and twenty sen. The first page of the ad started with three introductory headlines: “The time to theoretically understand literature has come: the creation of a simple liberal arts college on paper! The publication of a high-class literary lecture series!” To the right of these headlines are the name of Bungei Shunjūsha as the sponsor, the series title in large bold font, and a brief indication of the series’ timeline. Taking up the entire half page on the left is a more detailed introduction of the series. It reads as follows.

The permeation of literature to the entire society is a huge fact of modern society. The advocacy of art education is a new call in the educational circle. Understanding of literature is the passport to intellectual life. However, generally speaking, the existing state of interest in literature is limited merely to yomimono taste and cheap blind enjoyment. This is the reason why the vulgar kinds of literature are so rampant now. In order to contribute to the advance of the righteous kinds of literature that will guide our era, we chose the most direct method and constructed this liberal arts college on paper. We will publish the most updated lecture scripts and try to provide academic background and theoretical ground to those people who pursue the intrinsic understanding of literature. No one has even been able to reach a goal like this in terms of aspiration and quality. It truly is worth the wait. We have Tokuda Shūsei, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kume Masao, Yamamoto Yōzō, Kikuchi Kan and other masters in the current bundan as the responsible lecturers. We gathered all the writers of creative writing who have had institutional education, and we hired professional scholars to supplement the insufficiencies of these writers. The lectures indeed are expected to have perfect content. Needless to say, those who aspire to be well-versed in literary theory and practice, please join the series. Moreover, those who are dissatisfied with the direction of human civilization, please refer to the rules stated in another section and join the series immediately. Begin your study with the lectures.

Then on the second page of the advertisement, appeared general rules of the enrollment, indication of an enrollment fee waiver of those who would enroll in July,
and a list of twenty lecture titles. Under each title a brief introduction about that lecture or lecturer(s) was given. A total of thirty eight lecturers were assigned to these titles.

In the postscript of the same July issue, Kikuchi Kan elaborates on the creation of Bungei kōza. He states that in addition to the motivation of creating Bungei kōza to popularize education on literature, “Another motivation is that we wish to provide more jobs to those coterie members and people related [to Bungei shunjū] who can not make a living by writing only novels and essays.” He claims that the lecturers would make the series “creative-work-oriented, academically well-founded, outstanding and serious.” He promises that Bungei kōza “absolutely will not be the kind of irresponsible magazines that would deceive young lovers of literature.” He also distinguishes the new publication from Bungei shunjū: “Bungei shunjū can do little more than treat literature as a hobby, but Bungei kōza will probably satisfy its readers to a full extent with literary scholarship and knowledge.” Finally, he encourages the readers of Bungei shunjū to enroll in Bungei kōza: “Those readers who know how rich Bungei shunjū is in terms of content, please also trust Bungei kōza the same way. … So those people who like Bungei shunjū, please become a member as if you were going to a real lecture course.”

The advertisement and the postscript cited above provide perspectives on how to view some of the characteristics of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū in its early years. The distinction and connection that Kikuchi Kan tried to establish between Bungei

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293 Kikuchi Kan, postscript, Bungei shunjū Jul. 1924: 101
kōza and Bungei shunjū sheds light on the problem of popularization of literature, and ultimately on the issues concerning the concept of “literature.” Second, Bungei kōza’s goal of being responsible, serious, and well-founded provides an opportunity to investigate the contemporary magazine publishing business, which appeared to be disappointing to Kikuchi Kan. Finally, the claim that Bungei kōza was also created for the purpose of providing more works and income to Bungei Shunjū coterie members testifies to the fact that writing as a profession was still being established.

The first problem is fundamental and complex: the concept of literature. Obviously, Kikuchi Kan was mostly concerned with literature’s “popularization.” Yet, the question needs to be asked: what is the “literature” that was to be popularized?

The Japanese term that Kikuchi Kan used to refer to “literature” was bungei, the same as in the titles of the periodicals Bungei shunjū and Bungei kōza. To today’s readers, this term is perhaps not as familiar as bungaku, which is often used as the Japanese equivalent of the English term “literature.” It was only after the Taishō period, and particularly after Word War Two, that bungaku was eventually established as the Japanese translation of “literature.” In the 1920s, bungaku and bungei were often used interchangeably, and both had several significances that were produced by the long histories of aesthetics, ideology, and politics in the East and the West. Kikuchi Kan often used both terms to refer to the same concept, which can be best understood as “literature.” For example, in a 1920 article titled “Shakai shugi-teki shōsetsu,” Kan talked about the relationship between thought and literature. “I can think of two kinds of relationship. First, a certain work of literature (bungei) is the
mother, and thought is born from this mother. Second, a certain thought is the mother, and a work of literature (bungaku) is born from this mother.”

There is no doubt that the two “literatures” used here are meant to refer to exactly the same concept. Even though he tended to use bungei much more than bungaku in most of his writings, the two seem to be identical to the writer in terms of what they signified.

However, the concept that Kikuchi intended to signify by using the terms bungei/bungaku does not necessarily equate with the English term “literature.” This is due to, first of all, the multiple meanings of both the English term “literature” and the Japanese terms. To open his book-length discussion of the Japanese concept of “literature,” Suzuki Sadami surveys the definitions of “literature” and the more-widely-used Japanese equivalent “bungaku” in several English and Japanese dictionaries. Then he concludes,

The difficulty of defining literature, whether in English or in Japanese, comes first from the concept’s vagueness of outline; second, from the various value judgments and trends of thought that encourage criteria of exclusion and internal ranking; and, third, from the way convention has rendered the issue all but invisible.

Therefore, it is risky to understand Kikuchi Kan’s “bungei” as “literature” even though

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the English term perhaps is the primary choice in the translation of the Japanese term. Consequently, a question has to be asked: what exactly did Kikuchi Kan mean by “bungei”?

According to Suzuki Sadami, *bungei* referred, in a general sense, to “arts” that included linguistic, audio and visual arts during the Meiji period. After the turn of the century, however, the meaning of the term was increasingly limited to merely “linguistic art,” which often was the signifier of “belles-lettres.” In the Taishō period, according to Suzuki, this accepted concept of *bungei* started to split, reverse, and evolve. The split, reversal, and evolution of the concept accelerated in the mid and later Taishō period mostly due to the rise of socialist ideology and the urban mass culture.

[T]he splits separating “politics,” “art,” and “entertainment,” amid the intellectual struggle between the Meiji enlightenment’s broad conception of “literature” and the narrow, modern one, brought about a reversal of values involved simultaneously with the latter’s triumph. The route followed should therefore be clear. These splits, contained for a time within “literature,” then multiplying into finer subdivisions vying with one another for rank and constantly shaken from outside by the oral performance arts and film, by the appeal of popular and mass art, and by the vicissitudes of the revolutionary movement, underwent repeated reformation.

Against the backdrop of this concept of “literature” that was experiencing both interior and exterior changes at the time, Kikuchi Kan’s usage of *bungei* had to be somewhat ambiguous. For example, he extended the definition of *bungei* to visual arts

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296 Hereafter in this discussion of concepts, the English term “literature” is to be understood as “pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems,” the first definition of the term in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

in several cases. In a 1916 essay titled “Bungei kandan” (Rambling comments about literary arts), Kikuchi Kan discusses writers such as Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Mushanokōji Saneatsu. But he also mentions anecdotes about painters such as Francisco Goya and James A. M. Whistler, and composers such as Giaocchino Rossini and Beethoven. Even though these anecdotes about painters and composers were short and took up only a small portion of the entire essay, they testify to the fact that Kikuchi Kan’s concept of bungei was much more fluid and inclusive than the English term “literature” signifies at the present.

Yet, it is difficult to deny that the term was, in most cases, used in the sense of belles-lettres. As can be observed above, Kan claimed that he would like to make Bungei kōza “creative-work-oriented, academically well-founded, outstanding and serious.” These qualities match almost perfectly the values associated with the Western concept of “literature” as belles-lettres. In many of Kikuchi’s literary critiques, bungei was one category of high arts that deserved support from the government, and works of bungei were supposed to have permanent value.

Even when the meaning of bungei/bungaku is limited to belles-lettres, divisions existed in its usage between Kikuchi Kan and his peers in regard to the popularization of this bungei/bungaku. One of the most notable divisions, which later became a primary concern of students of modern Japanese literature, was between Kan and the proletarian writers, who began to emerge in the 1910s and gained their status as one of

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298 This essay can be found in vol. 14 of Kikuchi Kan zenshū (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1935) 317-322.
299 Suzuki Sadami introduced ideas of Raymond Williams and René Wellek and briefly accounted how the values of “creative/imaginative,” “intellectual/academic,” and “scientific/serious” were added to the concept of “literature” in the West. For details, refer to The Concept of “Literature” in Japan, 33-43.
the most powerful challengers to the naturalists’ dominance over the bundan in the 1920s. For most of the contemporary socialist literati, literature had to be popularized. But the popularization of literature was meant to promote socialist political goals, which were class mobilization and proletarian revolution. This contradicted Kikuchi Kan’s intention of popularizing literature to enlighten and entertain the masses. For Kan, literature primarily was to teach people the morals of life. This was the essence of his “life first, literature second” motto. Moreover, literature’s purpose was to make people happy. Kikuchi Kan believed in an egalitarian view of literary production and consumption. As his “theory of the mediocre writer” suggested, despite the difference in people’s literary talents, each and every human being deserves the right to enjoy the pleasure of writing literary works. His repeated concern about the price of Bungei shunjū also demonstrated that Kikuchi Kan wanted to extend the pleasures of literature to a broad readership. Literature was a tool for mass mobilization and class struggle for the socialist, but a means of intellectual enlightenment and mass enjoyment for Kikuchi Kan.

In light of this view on the function of literature, Kikuchi Kan’s distinction between Bungei shunjū and Bungei kōza becomes very interesting. Although Bungei shunjū was created as a literary coterie journal, as discussed in Chapter one, it possessed many qualities of commercial magazines. After some frequent interaction among readers, critics, and editors in regard to the content of Bungei shunjū, Kan seems to have realized that there was little possibility that he and his coterie could use the magazine as a tool to teach serious literary ideas and theories to the readers. On
the contrary, readers enjoyed the magazine mostly because it was informative, varied, gossipy, sensationalist, satirical, and interesting. This is perhaps why Kan claimed that *Bungei shunjū* “can not be much more than a literary hobby,” a tool for entertainment rather than education. In contrast, *Bungei kōza* was imagined as “a liberal arts college on paper.” It was designed to provide intellectual enlightenment and literary education for readers, and it was expected to “satisfy its readers to a full extent with literary scholarship and knowledge.” This differentiation between the two periodicals shows that Kikuchi Kan’s view of literature in terms of concept and function was polarized. “Bungei” as “belles-lettres” can be diverse in quality. Both the blatant gossip in *Bungei shunjū* and the academic lectures in *Bungei kōza* are works of *bungei*. They educate readers. They also can entertain readers. And often, they can do both. The two periodicals were created and developed to function in different ways. This distinction might have led Kan to understand that the *bundan* was divided into “junbungaku (pure literature),” “taishū bungaku (popular literature),” and “puroretaria bungaku (proletarian literature).” It also foreshadowed his creation of the Akutagawa prize for *junbungaku* and the Naoki prize for *taishū bungaku*.300

The second problem was the contemporary situation of magazine publishing. Kikuchi Kan in particular said that *Bungei kōza* would not become yet another irresponsible magazine “that would deceive young lovers of literature,” and he promised that the editors would create *Bungei kōza* as “creative-work-oriented, academically well-founded, outstanding, and serious.” It is not clear which

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300 The creation of these two prized will be introduced in Chapter five.
irresponsible magazines” Kan had in mind when he wrote this. However, it is clear that there were many literary magazines that targeted literary youth and readers of various social classes at the time, and that Bungei kōza would encounter much competition. According to the Historical Statistics of Japan, there were 4,592 periodicals being published in the year of 1923 and 5,854 in 1924, figures that include both newspapers and magazines. It is estimated that close to 10,000 magazines were published at the end of the Taishō period. This estimated number by no means suggests that Taishō readers would see all of these 10,000 publications at their neighborhood newsstands and bookstores. Most of these publications were institutional organs, coterie journals, and PR material of companies, all of which were not seen in retail outlets. To arrive at an understanding of the approximate number of real magazines in commercial circulation, Hashimoto Motome calculated the numbers of magazines that Tokyodō—one of the largest magazine distributors at the time—circulated during much of the Shōwa period. The earliest available figure is 683 in 1928, and it peaked in 1937 at 1017. It is obvious that only a fraction of all the magazines registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs were being commercially distributed. The figure in 1924 is still unknown. A reasonable conjecture is about 450.

301 Hashimoto Motome, Nihon shuppan hanbaishi (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1964) 383.
302 Ibid, 383.
303 According to Historical Statistics of Japan, 8,445 periodicals were published in 1928 and 13,268 in 1937. It can be estimated that about 8% of all the periodical publications were commercially distributed during these years. Calculation based on this ratio makes the figure of commercially distributed magazines in 1924 around 450.
It also is unknown how many of these 450 magazines the newly created *Bungei kōza* would have to compete with. Kikuchi Kan was shrewd enough not to position *Bungei kōza* in direct competition with the literary sections of the authoritative general-interest magazines such as *Chūō kōron* and *Kaizō*, or with the leading highbrow literary journals such as *Shinchō*. Instead, he announced that this new periodical publication was to cater to young people who wanted to learn about the basics of literature. However, there were already plenty of competing magazines that also targeted this potential readership. Although Kan did not specify which magazines were being irresponsible, the most likely ones were the mass-oriented magazines that provided rather lowbrow forms of literary entertainment to their readers, which were comprised of large numbers of young workers and students. They were the ones that published “yomimono and cheap blind entertainment.” These mass-oriented magazines include kōdan magazines such as *Kōdan zasshi*, general literary magazines such as *Bungei kurabu* and *Bunsho kurabu*, and age or gender-specific magazines such as *Shōnen kurabu* and *Shufu no tomo*. Even though many of these magazines were not dedicated specifically to literary matters, they did include literary columns and publish literary works to attract readers.\(^{304}\) As can be seen in contemporary reading surveys, these various mass-oriented magazines often topped the chart and some of them reached circulations of more than 200,000 copies.\(^{305}\)

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\(^{304}\) For example, *Shufu no tomo* targeted middle-class housewives with various marketing strategies. One of these strategies was to publish popular fictions. From a gender-study perspective, Sarah Anne Frederick had a detailed discussion of the magazine’s housewife-oriented strategies and the publication of such popular female writers as Yoshiya Nobuko. Sarah Anne Frederick, “*Housewives, Modern Girls, Feminists: Women’s Magazines and Modernity in Japan*,” vol. one, diss., University of Chicago, 2000, 112-185.
The journals and magazines that were created and hosted by socialist writers are also possible candidates for Kan’s “irresponsible magazines.” In previous chapters, it was established that Kikuchi Kan was disenchanted with socialist literary ideas and the kind of literature they produced. And in the advertisement, it was particularly mentioned that some kinds of literature were illegitimate and that this illegitimate literature was rampant in the bundan. The person who drafted the advertisement probably had proletarian literature in mind. Even before the Great Kanto Earthquake, several socialist literary magazines and coterie journals had been very active in the literary circle and beyond. These socialist periodicals usually had a short life span, and even the top ones, such as Tanemaku hito, Kaihō (Liberation) and Shinkō bungaku (New Literature), were selling perhaps no more than three thousand copies for each issue. However, socialist writers often published in Chūō kōron and particularly in Kaizō. Literary columns in major newspapers such as Osaka mainichi shinbun and Yomiuri shinbun also became the stages of activities related to proletarian literature. Due to the Great Kanto Earthquake and its aftermath, many of the socialist periodicals were discontinued. But starting in 1924, more were being created. The most notable one was perhaps Bungei sensen (Literary Frontline). It was created in June 1924, one month prior to the advertisement of Bungei kōza. And it soon became one of the flagship publications of the proletarian literature movement in the early Shōwa period

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305 At the time, Shufu no tomo is estimated to have had circulations of 230,000 to 240,000. Fujinkai had 210,000 to 220,000. Ködan kurabu’s figure was about 150,000.
and helped to propel the movement to its peak in the late 1920s. All these magazines targeted young workers to promote socialist agendas. This could have been the “illegitimate” use of literature Kikuchi Kan referred to.

The third topic concerns writing as a profession. To help unknown writers had been a constant topic in the postscripts of Bungei shunjū and other essays by Kikuchi Kan. Due to the ambiguity of the original language, it is difficult to know with certainty what Kan meant in the July 1924 postscript: Was it or was it not a just cause to provide more jobs for writers who were struggling to make a living? Even though this motivation appears justified or even noble to us today, it might not have been so for people inside and outside of the bundan in the 1920s Japan. Writing as a profession in Japan since the Meiji period is a topic that deserves multi-volume research. I mention it here only to indicate that this is another aspect of the complexity of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha in the 1920s. Kan stated that the creation of Bungei kōza was intended to disseminate literary education, but he also confessed it was intended to help writers in poverty. Kan also implies that this periodical would also help its elder brother Bungei shunjū attract more readers and bring in more revenue. There were always practical ulterior motives behind the elevated rhetoric that occupied the publications that Kan established. This perceived hypocrisy, which was not so highbrow or pure, aroused criticism in the bundan. However, it was this very practicality that helped Kan to promote his position within and outside of the literary circle.

Actually Kikuchi Kan was fortunate to have made his debut in the late 1910s. He was fortunate to have experienced hardship as an aspiring literary youth, established his reputation as a serious writer, and then succeeded in making money by writing popular fiction. His propositions on literature and on life at large urged him to act upon the acknowledgment that writing could be practiced as a profession by itself, and that the importance of writer’s guilds should be credited.

It was in July 1918 that Kikuchi Kan published his “Diary of an Unknown Writer” in Chūō kōron and made his name widely known in the bundan. And it was the year of 1919 that saw a surge in the amount of royalties paid by magazines. Yamamoto Yoshiaki gives a brief but useful introduction to how the “economics of literature” changed its course in 1919. He studied the incomes of Ishikawa Takuboku and Iwano Hōmei from the late Meiji to the mid-Taishō periods. Due to the huge stock market slump in 1907, Yamamoto argues, many writers—both established and unknown—suffered difficulties due to the dire conditions of the contemporary publication business. This publishing stagnation continued until 1919 when need for manuscripts increased and consequently many magazines raised their royalties. For example, Iwano’s income tripled in 1919 when compared with that of 1918. This boom in periodical publication continued in the early Shōwa period and peaked at the time of the enpon publication.307 In this respect, Kikuchi Kan was fortunate to have made his debut in 1918, and to have had publication powerhouses such as Chūō kōron, Shinchō, and Osaka mainichi shinbun to compete with one another for his manuscripts.

As a matter of fact, Kikuchi Kan was working for *Jiji shinpo* as a reporter when he published his debut work in *Chūō kōron* in July 1918. Seven months later, he resigned from *Jiji shinpo* right after the publication of his well-received *Onshū no kanata ni* in January 1919. His position at the newspaper actually gave him a fairly decent income. In *Han-jijoden* (A Half Autobiography), Kan recalled his starting salary was 29 yen a month. It was raised to 43 yen when he resigned. This amount was the second highest salary in the Social Affairs Section of the paper. Nonetheless, Kan realized that writing could be a good-paying profession once one established fame in the literary world, and he made the seemingly bold move: “I think I could have lived on my regular income as a reporter. It was only after I felt certain about the prospect of making a living as a writer that I started my career as a professional writer.” In March, he became a guest columnist with *Osaka mainichi shinbun* as a result of Akutagawa’s recommendation and started his career as a professional writer. This decision surely had to do with Kan’s pragmatic propositions concerning literature and life. It was also a result of his keen insight into the *bundan* and the publication business. His general attitude toward literature outlined above foreshadowed his swift shift from “pure literature” to middlebrow melodramatic popular fiction writing. Ultimately, this development in Kan’s profession prepared the “pocket money” that Kan used to create *Bungei shunjū* and it helped to form the unique character of the magazine in its early years.

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309 Ibid, 93.
What made Kan unique was not his transformation from being an unknown literary youth to becoming a sensationally successful writer with high pay. A few of Kan’s peers had similar experiences. It was Kan’s concern for other unknown and struggling writers and his actions to help these writers that made him the “godfather” of the Japanese literary world in the early 1930s. This concern was most clearly demonstrated in his activities to create writers’ societies. The first of these societies was *Gekisakka Kyōkai* (Association of Playwrights), which Kikuchi Kan, along with Yamamoto Yūzō and others, created in May 1920. Suzuki Shikō briefly describes the creation of the Association of Playwrights in his biography of Kikuchi Kan. According to him, it was Yamamoto Yūzō who first proposed the establishment of a playwrights’ guild to extend playwrights’ legitimate rights. He consulted Kikuchi Kan and Nagata Hideo. Both agreed with Yamamoto, and they sent out a letter to their fellow playwrights. On May 8, the association was created and ten people became founding members. Yamamoto, Kikuchi, and Nagata Hideo were elected secretaries.

Kikuchi Kan also took the initiative to create *Shōsetsuka Kyōkai* (Association of Novelists) in 1921. According to Suzuki Shikō’s account, several writers including Tokuda Shūsei, Chikamatsu Shūkō, and Kikuchi Kan were dining at a Tokyo restaurant. They chatted about the lack of stability in a writer’s life and about the possibility of creating an institution of mutual support. Later, a dozen writers gathered

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310 長田秀雄 (1885-1949): poet, playwright, and novelist. He graduated from Meiji University. Earlier in his career, he was involved several coterie journals and poet societies. In 1910, he made his debut by publishing a play titled *Kanraku no oni* (Demon of Pleasure). Later, he was active in the New Theater movement. He also published many children’s stories and plays.

and discussed the association rules that Kikuchi Kan had drafted. In July, they held the inaugural meeting. Seven people were elected secretaries, including Kikuchi Kan, Tokuda Shūsei, Kume Masao, Uno Kōji, and Kanō Sakujirō.  

Despite similarities in terms of the founding members and the time of creation, the two associations underwent different developments. The Association of Playwrights became very active and powerful in resolving problems in the theater world, whereas the Association of Novelists was mostly dormant in the *bundan*. Kikuchi Kan mentioned the two organizations in some of his essays. One of these essays was published in February 1924 and titled “Shōsetsuka Kyōkai no koto” (About the Association of Novelists). In the essay, Kan laments that fact that this association was becoming dilapidated. This was because some publishers—notably Hakubunkan—opposed the creation of the association. Kan criticized Hakubunkan as being “typically capitalist” because it simply considered the association yet another manifestation of labor movement. “However,” Kan continues, “more damaging than the opposition of these publishers is the fact that many creators of the association are unenthusiastic.” He complains that only he and Kanō worked for the association, and that many others including Kume Masao and Uno Kōji did not help much.

More interesting in this essay are the goals of the association, which Kikuchi Kan tried to clarify. According to him, the primary goal of the association was mutual

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312 加能作次郎 (1885-1941): novelist. He graduated from Waseda University in 1911 and worked briefly for *Waseda bungaku* as an editor. In 1913 he became a reporter of *Bunshō sekai*, a literary magazine from Hakubunkan, and rose to be its editor-in-chief later. After he quit Hakubunkan, Kanō started to focus on writing and published short stories, novels and essays. For Suzuki Shikō’s account of the creation, see Suzuki Shikō, *Kikuchi Kan den* (Tokyo: Jistugyō no Nihonsha, 1937) 440-441.


314 Hakubunkan was having trouble with the labor movement in other areas.
financial assistance among novelists. The association was intended to act on behalf of
Japanese novelists during difficult periods of social or political problems. Kan also
dismisses the conjecture that the association was formed to support established
novelists and suppress the unknown ones.

Finally in the essay, Kan compares the Association of Novelists unfavorably with
the Association of Playwrights. He describes the latter as a fire engine that would be
dispatched whenever there was a problem in the theatrical world. And according to
Kan, the Association of Playwrights also helped newly emerging playwrights by
negotiating performance royalties.

Amid the mixture of success and failure of these early efforts, Kikuchi Kan
mediated between the two associations and helped to combine them to form Bungeika
Kyōkai (Writers’ Association) in January 1926. He became the secretary and directed
its affairs. It seems that this new association also faced some criticism. This criticism
led to a 1926 essay titled “Bungeika Kyōkai no koto” (About the Writers’
Association). In the essay, Kan argues against the criticism that the association was
powerless to act. He listed some of the achievements of the association, including
preservation of performance royalties and implementation of a solatium system. He
also cited an editorial of Tokyo asahi shinbun that expressed its pleasure to have allies
in its struggle for speech and publication freedom. This demonstrates that Kan, at one
point, understood the importance of not only organizing writers, but also uniting
writers and publishers to achieve a high level of freedom and independence. The
militarist government eventually suppressed this freedom and independence. With the
cooperation of Kan, the Writer’s Association eventually became Nihon Bungaku Hōkokukai (Association of Japanese Patriotic Writers), a propaganda mouthpiece founded in 1942. However, it is undeniable that the creation of these associations contributed to the development of modern Japanese literature.\textsuperscript{315}

Within the first month after the announcement of the creation of \textit{Bungei kōza}, about 3,000 people subscribed to the series. An editor’s notes in the August 1924 issue revealed the fact that three thousand subscriptions would not cover the cost, and more than 4,000 were desired. A second two-page advertisement also appeared in the same issue. In the postscript and another short note, Kan urges his readers to subscribe to \textit{Bungei kōza}. In the next issue, it was reported that 80 or 90 new members were joining the series on a daily base, and at least 4,000 subscriptions should be achieved by the deadline. In the October issue, a half-page advertisement announced that 7,500 people had became members and that 200 new members would be enrolled each month. The subscription figure increased to 9,000 in November. Finally, in the postscript of the December issue, Kan had to announce that \textit{Bungei kōza} would stop recruiting new members. He explained that 10,000 copies of the first issue were sold out and that many mistakes had happened due to this unexpected demand. However, he claims that he believed there would be a second installment of \textit{Bungei kōza}.

\textsuperscript{315} Writers’ Association published \textit{Bungei nenkan} starting in 1929. Kikuchi Kan became the first president of the association when the regulations were changed in 1936. The association was dismissed when the Association of Japanese Patriotic Writers was formed in 1942, but it was reorganized in December 1945 under the name of Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai, or the Japanese Writers’ Association. For a brief history of this association and its precursors, refer to Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai, \textit{Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai gojū-nen shi} (Tokyo: Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai, 1979).
An advertisement of this second installment of *Bungei kōza* was published in the April 1925 issue. It announced that the distribution of the second installment would begin in May and end in seven months. The membership fee was eliminated, but the price of each issue was raised from one yen and twenty sen to one yen and forty sen. However, this rise in fees was not stressed in the advertisement. Instead, the description of the first installment’s popularity occupied most of the first page. Obviously, in order to attract subscribers, the editors of *Bungei kōza* claimed that the subscribers of the first installment reached an exceptional total of 10,500 and that many other publishers started series ending with “kōza” to copy and capitalize on the success and credibility of *Bungei kōza*. Twelve letters from subscribers of the series were published in the advertisement to show how pleased readers were and how disappointed they felt when the first installment ended. On the second page was the table of contents of the second installment, details of fees, and the address. Following this advertisement are four pages of sample paragraphs taken from the lectures. A similar advertisement of the installment also appeared in June. In July, a one-page advertisement said that the deadline was already past but an extra two hundred supplementary subscribers would be allowed. Kan confessed in the July postscript that sales of the second installment were slow compared with the first one. And in September, he published a notice saying that one hundred copies were available for each of the eight lectures that were already distributed, and he encouraged readers of
*Bungei shunjū* to subscribe as soon as possible. Exactly how many subscriptions the second installment achieved is still unknown. It might have been similar to those of the first installment.

No more installments were published and *Bungei kōza* was discontinued after the second installment ended in December 1925. This publication is another demonstration of the characteristics of Kikuchi Kan and his colleagues at Bungei Shunjūsha. The planning was a direct result of Kikuchi Kan’s insight into the needs of contemporary readers, his shrewd business sense, and his bold entrepreneurial spirit. He explored successfully the form of subscription-only short-term periodical publication. He entitled the series with the name “kōza,” which fit perfectly its elevated goal of expanding serious learning about the literary arts. It was easy to remember, and at the same time it was refreshingly stylish. On the other hand, Kan never refrained from stating forthrightly that he did not wish to operate at a financial loss, and he created the series to earn more revenue for writers associated with *Bungei shunjū*. He cleverly used catchphrases such as “liberal arts college on paper” to distinguish *Bungei kōza* from *Bungei shunjū* and to highlight the more serious and scholarly contents of the former. But at the same time, marketing and managerial techniques as commercial as those of *Bungei shunjū* were applied in the case of *Bungei kōza*. These factors resulted in the success of the lecture series.
4.3 Bungei jidai

In September 1924, Kikuchi Kan announced the abolition of Bungei shunjū’s coterie system in the postscript.

Although Bungei shunjū was not a coterie journal, there were coterie members. However, because some of members never wrote anything and became merely titular, and because the editing of Bungei shunjū was never coterie-centered from the beginning, we will no longer specify coterie members from now on. I would like you to consider all of those people who have aspirations as the coterie members of Bungei shunjū.\(^{316}\)

As discussed in chapter 1, Bungei shunjū was from the beginning never a typical coterie literary journal. Nonetheless, a list of coterie members had appeared in most of the seventeen issues that were published by September 1924.\(^{317}\) Why did Kikuchi Kan abruptly stop publishing the list, announce that Bungei shunjū was never a coterie journal, and promise that he would no longer specify coterie members?

One likely reason is that Kikuchi Kan realized Bungei shunjū needed some changes. The contemporary readership of the magazine noticed, by September 1924, that Bungei shunjū was different from the other so-called dōjin zasshi in terms of contents, editing, and management. Kikuchi Kan was perhaps aware of his readers’ perceptions and decided to simply abolish the coterie system. This way, less confusion would be caused among the potential readers who did not care so much for highbrow literary coterie journals. And the magazine would be able to expand its

\(^{316}\) Kikuchi Kan, postscripts, Bungei shunjū Sep. 1924: 95.
\(^{317}\) Five out of the seventeen issues did not publish the coterie member list. These five issues were the January and June issues in 1923, and the June, July, and August issues in 1924. It is likely that Kikuchi Kan skipped the list in these issues because there was not enough room in the last pages where the postscripts also were printed. In the postscripts of both June and July issues of 1924, he used the term dōjin to refer to writers associated with the magazine. A promotion essay in the August 1924 issue still bore the signature of “Bungei Shunjū Dōjin.”
share in the highly competitive market. Generally speaking, *Bungei shunjū* had performed well in sales. During the first six months of 1924, the sales of *Bungei shunjū* increased from 14,374 to 17,971.\(^{318}\) This 25% expansion surely was impressive for a period of six months. However, it pales when compared with the 200% sales increase during the first four months in 1923 when the number of copies sold jumped from 2,871 to 8,562.\(^{319}\) Kikuchi Kan might have felt the urge to direct the magazine further away from serious highbrow literature to meet the needs for the leisure reading of the middle class.

However, the primary reason for the abolition of the coterie system of *Bungei shunjū* was likely the creation of *Bungei jidai* in October 1924. As will be explained below, *Bungei jidai* was affiliated with Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū* in many ways. Yet, it also posed some threats to *Bungei shunjū*. In other words, they were friends and rivals.

This complex relationship between the two periodicals is symbolized by the similarity and difference in their titles. Both are comprised of two Chinese compounds. Both start with “bungei.” Both “shunjū” and “jidai” mean “a time,” or “an age.” And to many contemporary readers, the two titles were synonymous. On the other hand, “shunjū” and “jidai” have different connotations. “Shunjū” originated from the title of a Chinese classical text, which supposedly was compiled by Confucius, and records historical events in the state of Lu from 770 B. C. to 476 B. C.. It is one of the earliest Confucian classics that was highly respected for its content and

\(^{318}\) “*Bungei shunjū kessan hyō,*” *Bungei shunjū* Oct. 1924: 98.

\(^{319}\) “*Bungei shunjū son’eki kanjō,*” *Bungei shunjū* Aug. 1923: 82.
style. In comparison, the compound “jidai” was created at a much later time—perhaps in the Song dynasty—and it is not related to any particular Chinese or Japanese classics. In Taishō and Shōwa Japan, “jidai” had a less refined and less classical, but more direct and more updated nuance in comparison with “shunjū.” This distinction was subtle. Many contemporary magazines had titles with “bungei,” “jidai,” and “shunjū” in them. Much more than this difference, other facts that strongly suggested a precarious relationship between the two magazines drew attention from the readers and critics.

First, readers and critics probably took notice of the fact that a list of coterie members was published in the inaugural issue of Bungei jidai. Fourteen founding members were on this list, and three more were added in November. Of these seventeen Bungei jidai coterie members, ten were also coterie members of Bungei shunjū, including Yokomitsu Riichi, Kawabata Yasunari, Sasaki Mitsuzō, Sasaki Mosaku, and Kon Tōkō. In addition to these ten, one Bungei jidai member was actually an editor/employee of Bungei shunjū. And all of the other six Bungei jidai members, who were not related to Bungei shunjū institutionally, had contributed to Bungei shunjū at least once as of September 1924.320

Having these many overlapping coterie members might have been the most direct reason that Kikuchi Kan decided to abolish Bungei shunjū’s coterie system. And this abolition suggests that by late August 1924, Kikuchi Kan was already aware of the fact that the young writers under his wing were creating another coterie journal. It

320 Among the six, two had 8 contributions to Bungei shunjū, one had 6, one had 4, and another one had three. Only one published once in Bungei shunjū, the least of all Bungei jidai members.
suggests that Kan wanted to distinguish *Bungei shunjū* from *Bungei jidai*. Moreover, it also suggests that he might have been upset about the creation of *Bungei jidai*. Though it is difficult to read any obvious emotions into the abolition announcement cited above, one can sense a tone of indifference. This was unusual for Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*. As has been noted above, Kikuchi Kan was an avid supporter of promising young writers. *Bungei jidai* was created by a group of such young promising writers, who were already closely associated with Kikuchi Kan and were frequently published in *Bungei shunjū*. Moreover, *Bungei jidai* was published by Kinseidō, the publisher that also had close business relationship with Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū*. All these facts seemed to lead to an expectation that Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū* would help to promote the newly created *Bungei jidai* as they did with other affiliated publications. However, during the first year of *Bungei jidai*, only one advertisement for the magazine appeared in *Bungei shunjū*. Published in the November 1924 issue, this advertisement only shows the title of *Bungei jidai*, the table of contents of its November issue, the name of its publisher and its address, an account for money transfer, price and postage rates. The enthusiasm seen in the promotion of other *Bungei shunjū* related publications, such as *Bungei kōza* and Yokomitsu Riichi’s books, was lacking.

Kikuchi Kan seems to have totally ignored *Bungei jidai*. From October 1924 to December 1925, there was no mention of *Bungei jidai* at all in any of the fifteen

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321 In fact, in the inserts of the inaugural issue of *Bungei jidai*, Kinseidō published an advertisement of an anthology of Kikuchi Kan, which was titled *Kesa no ryōnin* (Husband in Monk Robe). Four other works of Kan were also included in a Kinseido Classics Series, which were also advertised in the inserts.
postscripts of Bungei shunjū. This is very atypical of the postscripts because it was usually in the postscripts that Kikuchi Kan talked about recent activities of Bungei shunjū writers and promoted their new ventures. In the column “Bungei shunjū” in the November 1924 issue, Kikuchi Kan did mention Bungei jidai. However, despite the fact that this column was designed for observations and comments on the contemporary bundan and publishing business, and despite the fact that Bungei jidai and its hallmark of New Sensation School were the most discussed topics in the bundan at the time, this was the only occasion that Kan mentioned Bungei jidai during the years of 1924 and 1925, and he did so fairly indifferently.

About the relationship between Bungei shunjū and Bungei jidai, some outsiders are spreading rumors. I would like those people not to talk irresponsibly about others’ internal affairs. It bothers us and Bungei jidai as well.322

We do not know what rumors Kikuchi Kan tried to dismiss, but it is very likely that they were about the possible conflicts between the two magazines due to the overlap in their coterie members and staffs, and about the possible sour relationships between Kikuchi Kan and Bungei jidai writers. Such a brief comment obviously did not do much to stop the rumors. On the contrary, sensitive readers could easily detect between the lines a tone of indifference. No compliment or even positive description was directed to Bungei jidai. Further, Kikuchi Kan used the term “tōhō” to refer to Bungei shunjū, and the term is fairly formal and strong in distinguishing “we/us” from

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322 Kikuchi Kan, “Bungei shunjū” Bungei shunjū Nov. 1924: 34.
“they/them.” This rigid distinction between “us” and “them” implied in the lexicon of this short passage only strengthens the impression that Kikuchi Kan was unhappy with the creation of Bungei jidai.

To be fair, Kikuchi Kan had good reasons to be upset by the creation of Bungei jidai. He had helped many of its founding members by providing them a medium to publish, positive reviews to establish themselves, and financial support to make a living. And he expected that these young writers would continue to contribute to Bungei shunjū and to help him achieve greater success in the bundan and in the publishing business. However, to his surprise, these young writers started their own venture. And this new venture resembled Bungei shunjū not only in terms of the title and coterie members, but also column setups, pricing, and management. Most upsetting for Kikuchi Kan was perhaps the fact that the young writers did not communicate with him before they started the new journal. In an interview published in Shinchō in April 1925, a reporter asked whether it was true or not that the majority of the Bungei jidai coterie were harboring hostile feelings toward Kikuchi Kan. Kan answered as follows:

It is not true. In fact, one or two may be hostile to me. But among the Bungei jidai coterie members, eight or nine out of ten have close relationships with Bungei shunjū. When Bungei jidai was created, we had some awkward moments. But that was it. From the beginning, I understood that those writers would eventually have their own journal. However, they did not follow the proper process. Otherwise, things could have been settled without causing problems between me and them.323

As evident in this interview, Kikuchi Kan was indeed upset with the *Bungei jidai* writers. And the *Bungei jidai* writers knew that they had hurt Kikuchi Kan’s feelings. Some of them put much effort into stopping the rumors and appealing to Kikuchi Kan’s understanding. In the inaugural issue, seven *Bungei jidai* coterie members published short essays under the title “Atarashiki seikatsu to bungei: sōkan no ji ni kaete” (New life and literature: In place of an inaugural announcement). While everyone else discusses their ideas concerning life and literature, Yokomitsu Riichi titled his essay “*Bungei jidai* to gokai” (*Bungei jidai* and misunderstandings). In it, he expresses his concerns with the rumors about the relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and *Bungei jidai*. “I have received great favors from *Bungei shunjū*. Why, then, should I treat it terribly? There is no reason to do that at all. And I think I am not the only one [in the coterie to think so].” At the end of the essay, he cites a passage that Kataoka Teppei, another coterie member of the two magazines, published in *Jiji shinbun*:

> I believe that Bungei Shunjū coterie members will retain their respect for Mr. Kikuchi to the end… In human interactions that are based on good mutual recognition, there is a broad, intellectual and liberal morality. And because this morality will not contradict emotion, I am grateful to this thing called cultivation.

Yokomitsu praises the passage as outstanding, and he claims that Kikuchi Kan understood their selfish desire and allowed them to create the new journal, and that they were grateful for that.²²⁴ Both Kataoka and Yokomitsu confirm their respect for Kikuchi Kan. Both appear to be grateful that Kikuchi Kan was cultivated,

understanding, and moral enough to permit the young writers to do what they did. And in both passages, there is a nuance that both of the young writers were asking for understanding and permission from Kikuchi Kan. This was particularly true of Yokomitsu, who refers to Kikuchi Kan as “Kikuchi Sensei” (Mentor Kikuchi) and displays more reverence than Kataoka who used “Kikuchi-san” (Mr. Kikuchi).

Compared with the passionately respectful tone of Yokomitsu, Kawabata Yasunari appears to be more composed, elaborate, and balanced in his explanation of the issue. He published an article titled “Bungei jidai to Bungei shunjū” (Bungei jidai and Bungei shunjū) in Yomiuri shinbun on Oct 3. In this article, Kawabata, in a calm and clear tone, introduces the fact that rumors were going around about the relationship between the two magazines and the relationship between Kikuchi Kan and the Bungei jidai writers. He then firmly denies the validity of the rumors and begins to explain the true relationship between the two magazines and between Kikuchi Kan and the young writers.

In the explanation, Kawabata first defines the “we” in this piece as a reference to the Bungei jidai coterie members who used to be included in the Bungei Shunjū coterie. Then he distinguishes the two magazines as “totally different in terms of nature and purpose.” He claims, “The creation of Bungei jidai absolutely does not mean that we moved from Bungei shunjū to Bungei jidai en masse. It does not mean that we are estranged or disconnected from Bungei shunjū.” On the other hand, Kawabata continues, “Bungei jidai is not an extension of Bungei shunjū. To be a mere extension is meaningless, and it does not make sense that we create a new journal
against Kikuchi’s will.” He then defines their relationship with Bungei shunjū as “not a coterie, but more than contributors.” He justifies the creation of Bungei jidai as solely “an intrinsic artistic need.” Finally he denies that “we” and Kikuchi Kan had conflicting thoughts about art and that they were emotionally alienated.³²⁵

Despite all these enthusiastic and sincere efforts to claim a “friendly” relationship with Bungei shunjū by the leading Bungei jidai coterie members, those at Bungei shunjū seemed to hold a grudge. Many essays that were published in the 1924 and 1925 issues of Bungei shunjū clearly demonstrate a negative attitude toward Bungei jidai. One of the first of these essays was published in the November 1924 issue, only a dozen pages apart from the “Bungei shunjū” column cited above. It was titled “Bungei to kōyū no kankei” (Literature and friendship) and was written by Horiki Katsuzō.³²⁶ In this essay, Horiki mostly expresses his dissatisfaction with a column titled “Bundan hadōchō” (Waves in Bundan) in Bungei jidai, in which Horiki is described as “being treated with contempt” in the bundan. He also claims that he thought the so-called “shinjidai,” or “new age” in the bundan was not as good as some Bungei jidai writers promoted.³²⁷ Instead, Horiki says he believed “shinjidai” was “an egoistic botchan.”³²⁸

³²⁶ 堀木克三 (1892-1971): critic. He graduated from the English Department of Waseda University and was involved in creation of Fudōchō, a contemporary coterie journal. He was active in Shinchō and some other literary magazines and became one of the major critics of New-Sensation School.
³²⁷ The discussion concerning “shinjidai” seemed to have started in the literary column in Jiji shinpō, in which Hirotsu Kazuo tried to explain the term.
Horiki’s essay was simply a start. During the next year, “shinjidai” became a heated topic that was constantly debated in *Bungei shunjū*. Since it is a catchphrase that many *Bungei jidai* writers frequently used, these “shinjidai” discussions often were associated with the new magazine. One of these discussions appeared in the December 1924 issue. Fujimori Junzō published “Bungaku ijō” (Beyond literature) and discusses several issues in the *bundan*. When arguing about the meaning of “shinjidai,” Fujimori says he did not agree with Hirotsu Kazuo, and he confesses that he did not know exactly what the term meant for the *bundan*. Then he questions whether the “shinjidai,” which some of the *Bungei jidai* coteries advocated, was real. He praises the short story “Yume hodo no hanashi” (Talks as dreams) that Sasaki Mosaku published in *Bungei shunjū* for indeed having something new in it. However, he argues that he was unconvinced that a “shinjidai” could be constituted merely from new expressions and techniques in writing. He concludes that “shinjidai” in literature should have something more innately and fundamentally human than new expressions and techniques. The argument against the *Bungei jidai* writers that they were new merely in form but not in content was fairly common among contemporary critics. However, it is rare to see works published in *Bungei shunjū* and *Bungei jidai* compared directly, and the ones in *Bungei shunjū* were generally preferred. This move displays how strong was the negative feelings that some people in *Bungei shunjū* held against *Bungei jidai*.

This negative criticism toward *Bungei jidai* writers and their slogan of “shinjidai” peaked in the first two months of 1925. In the January issue, Horiki Katsuzō
published yet another essay titled “Tōshoka banzai” (Long live contributors) to continue his argument with *Bungei jidai* writers. In this essay, he stated that the new writing techniques of the New Sensation School were simply tricks of self-promotion that some contributors to magazines would often use. Then Mizumori Kamenosuke published “Gūkan mitsu” (Three random thoughts). And one of these random thoughts was that mere novelistic contrivance in writing techniques could not represent the “shinjidai.” This “shinjidai” should be much more vague and vast, though the new novelistic techniques were indeed significant in some ways. Harsher criticism appeared in a short passage titled “Shinjidai shitsugi” (Questioning of new age). The anonymous piece was comprised of rhetorical questions. Some of the questions were solemn: “[Sasaki] Mitsuzō’s line of thought is purely Japanese. What makes it the ‘New Age’?” “Compared with the criticism and creative works at the time of naturalism’s emergence, how do the ardor and spirit of *Bungei jidai* measure up?” Some were fairly playful: “[Sasaki] Mosaku has a favorite geisha at Kagurazaka. I would like to know how he negotiates the life of the ‘New Age’ boom and the style of such ‘old age’ things as geisha.”

All of these negative remarks and comments are signs of the uncomfortable relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and *Bungei jidai*. Yet, they remain within the scope of reasonable debate on social and literary issues. What worsened this already unpleasant situation in late 1924 and early 1925 was a series of events that eventually

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330 Anonymous, “Shinjidai shitsugi,” *Bungei shunjū* Jan. 1925: 54. This piece might have been a reader’s contribution letter. No name was indicated either under the title or at the end of the piece. Only time, location, and the author’s drunken state of mind were shown in the last sentence. It might have been a work by Naoki Sanjūgo.
became personal. One such event took place in the November 1924 issue of *Bungei shunjū*. In this issue, a chart titled “Bundan shoka kachi chōsahyō” (A Survey of the Value of Established Writers in the Bundan) appeared next to Horiki’s “Bungei to kōyū no kankei.” The compiler of this survey was not identified. Under the title of the chart, the time of the survey was marked as “the present—the end of October 1924,” and a note followed saying that “As usual, there may be many misprints.” It also gave a simple index of scores: “Eighty points and above is superior; sixty and above is pass; and between sixty and fifty is low pass.” A total of sixty eight writers were evaluated in eleven categories: erudition, talent, cultivation, courage, appearance, popularity, property, strength, sexuality, favorite woman, and future. Anyone who was familiar with the style of *Bungei shunjū* must have known instantly this survey was anything but serious. It was not a scholarly investigation but an entertaining joke. For example, Uno Kōji received eighty nine points in “appearance.” But this fairly high score came with a tiny note that says “with the exception of his face.” The “property” of Maedakō Hiroichirō became this socialist writer’s biggest opponent: *Bungei shunjū*. However, even with this obvious playfulness, the chart caused strong objection and severe anger among some of the writers evaluated. Among these offended writers were, surprisingly two *Bungei jidai* coterie members: Kon Tōkō and Yokomitsu Riichi.

In a brief introduction of the relationship between Kawabata Yasunari and Yokomitsu Riichi, Muramatsu Sadatoka gave the account how Yokomitsu was enraged by this evaluation chart, in which the promising young writer received a mere
sixty points in “talent” and fifty-two in “appearance.” Knowing it was a mischievous prank, Yokomitsu nonetheless felt his reputation was hurt. In great anger, he wrote a protest letter to sever his relations with Bungei shunjū and sent the message to Yomiuri shinbun to be published the next day. Kon Tōkō also wrote a protest letter and sent it to Shinchō. On the way back from Yomiuri shinbun, Yokomitsu stopped at Kawabata’s house and told Kawabata what he had just done. Kawabata was shocked, and he admonished Yokomitsu against doing such an imprudent deed. Yokomitsu was convinced. The two of them hurried to Yomiuri shinbun by taxi and retrieved the protest letter.

Kon Tōkō’s protest letter was published in Shinchō, and it caused personal strife between Kon and Kikuchi Kan. The young writer stopped publishing anything in Bungei shunjū, and he only resumed doing so in 1952. Regrettably, he was shut out by the literary circle to a large extent before and during World War Two. In contrast, Yokomitsu was lucky to have Kawabata as a close friend to provide him with a reasoned perspective on events. It is unknown whether Kikuchi Kan had any knowledge of Yokomitsu’s unpublished protest letter. And it is unknown how Yokomitsu brought himself to reconcile with Bungei shunjū and Kikuchi Kan. But it appeared that this reconciliation took some time. For six months after this incident, he did not publish anything in Bungei shunjū, which was a fairly long inactive period for Yokomitsu who was a frequent contributor to the magazine.

331 The source of Muramatsu’s account is not identified. Muramatsu Sadataka, Kindai Nihon bungaku no kiseki (Tokyo: Yūbun Shoin, 1975) 280-283.
By May 1925, when Kon Tōkō withdrew from the *Bungei jidai* coterie, the awkward relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and *Bungei jidai*, and between Kikuchi Kan and the young writers seems to have ended. In the *Shincho* interview published in the previous month, Kikuchi Kan confesses that awkward things indeed happened due to some third parties and some gossip that *Bungei shunjū* published. At the same time, he emphasized that many *Bungei jidai* writers maintained close personal relationship with him, and they would not be able to desert him as friends.\textsuperscript{332} The negative comments on “shinjidai” and *Bungei jidai* writers in *Bungei shunjū* decreased sharply starting in March 1925, and they eventually diminished by the end of the year. The *Bungei jidai* coterie members continued to publish in *Bungei shunjū* at a consistent rate. The total of their contributions to *Bungei shunjū* during the six months from November 1924 to April 1925 was forty seven, only one piece more than that of the next six months.

Many contemporary critics have viewed this series of “awkward” events that unfolded between *Bungei shunjū* and *Bungei jidai* as signs of the conflicts between established writers and new ones. This may be true to some extent, but it should also be remembered that it had been only six years since Kikuchi Kan himself was able to establish himself as a promising young writer in the *bundan*. During the ensuing six years, his actions proved that he was an avid supporter of promising young writers. The creation and development of *Bungei shunjū* was a perfect example. It is difficult to believe that Kikuchi Kan, who had experienced sensational success as a popular

\textsuperscript{332} “Kikuchi Kan-shi no uchiakenashii,” *Shincho* Apr. 1925: 36-37.
fiction writer, would feel threatened by a group of young writers of serious literature, most of whom were closely associated with him. He and some of the young writers might have had different thoughts on certain literary issues, but there is no evidence to suggest that these different thoughts led to personal conflicts. Being a innately straightforward person, and a firmly established writer, Kikuchi Kan was open and confident enough to debate with young writers on topics of literature in public.

As implied in the Shinchō interview, it was the lack of courtesy on the part of the Bungei jidai writers that offended and upset Kikuchi Kan. Even though both Kikuchi Kan and Yokomitsu claimed that Kikuchi Kan understood the young writers “selfish desire” to create their own journal, there must have been some miscommunication between Kikuchi and the young writers. More than different opinions on literature stemming from generational attitudes, it was likely that some of the inconsiderate missteps in the creation of Bungei jidai initiated the series of “awkward” events.

On the other hand, even though it was unlikely that Kikuchi Kan’s personal career as an established writer was threatened by the young writers, it does not mean that he was not concerned about Bungei shunjū competing with Bungei jidai. As aforementioned, the expansion of Bungei shunjū’s readership had been relatively slow in 1924. The newly created Bungei jidai would compete directly with Bungei shunjū in the limited market to attract more readers. Moreover, the overlap in coterie members meant many of the frequent and popular contributors of Bungei shunjū would have to spare their time, energy, and talents to write for Bungei jidai. As a matter of fact, many of the Bungei jidai coterie members wrote for Bungei shunjū
much less frequently after *Bungei jidai* was created. For example, in the 17 issues of *Bungei shunjū* from January 1923 to September 1924, Sasaki Mitsuzō published 20 works. While in the 13 issues from October 1924 to October 1925, he published only 12. The numbers for Minami Yukio during the same period were 18 to 9. Those for Kon Tōkō were 14 to 1. The totals of all 17 *Bungei jidai* writers were 141 to 103.

Taking into consideration that the each of the earlier 17 issues had fewer pages and pieces than the latter 13, there definitely was a substantial drop in terms of the frequency and proportion of *Bungei jidai* coterie members’ contributions to *Bungei shunjū* after *Bungei jidai* was created.

In addition, *Bungei jidai* applied some editing and marketing strategies that suggested the influence of *Bungei shunjū*. For example, *Bungei jidai* solicited contributions from not only its own coterie, but also writers with no affiliation. And it encouraged its readers to be direct subscribers in the same way Kikuchi Kan did with *Bungei shunjū*. These strategies formed direct competition with *Bungei shunjū* in attracting writers and readers. There are no indications how much of a threat Kikuchi Kan perceived *Bungei jidai* to be, and how disturbed he was by *Bungei jidai* writers’ actions. It is also impossible to know which of the two—these threats and competition to *Bungei shunjū*, or the lack of courtesy of the young writers—was the more powerful motivation behind Kikuchi Kan’s subsequent actions, such as the abolishment of *Bungei shunjū*’s coterie system or the publication of the negative comments on *Bungei jidai* writers in *Bungei shunjū*. But it is certain that he decided to face the challenge. Asked if he considered continuing the publication of *Bungei shunjū* in the Shinchō
interview, Kikuchi Kan answered: “As long as it does not lose money, as long as it is an organ of the bundan, and as long as it provides a means of living to some people, I will continue doing it for some time.”

4.4 Bungei shunjū’s Response to the Challenges

Kikuchi Kan’s determination was rewarded with continuous expansion of Bungei shunjū’s circulation in the second half of 1924 and particularly in 1925. The circulation of the magazine increased from 20,000 in August 1924 to 26,000 in January 1925. Even though the figures of February and March showed a decrease, it bounced back to 26,000 in April, increased to 30,000 in May, 40,000 in September, 49,000 in November, and 51,000 in December. The greatest increase took place in January 1926 when Kikuchi Kan decided to have 110,000 copies printed and circulated.

Kan’s determination alone does not explain this extraordinary increase in Bungei shunjū’s circulation. Many factors, including both internal changes and external circumstances that took place at the time, helped with sales improvement.

First, Bungei shunjū demonstrated a greater diversity in terms of its contributors and contributions after Kikuchi Kan abolished the coterie system in September 1924. Because Bungei jidai attracted many of the young writers who used to be frequent contributors of Bungei shunjū, Kikuchi Kan and other editors of Bungei shunjū were forced to solicit contributions from writers who had never written for the magazine.

About 181 new contributors appeared in the sixteen issues of *Bungei shunjū* from October 1924 to January 1926. These newly added contributors almost doubled the existing 194 writers who had already written for the magazine prior to October 1924. Many prominent intellectuals appeared in the list of the 181 new contributors: Izumi Kyōka, Uchida Roan, Edogawa Ranpo, Kawahigashi Hekigotō, Shimazaki Tōson, Tokutomi Sōho, Noguchi Yonejirō, Yanagita Kokuo, Yoshino Sakuzō, and many others. Leading proletarian writers such as Aono Suekichi, Sakai Toshihiko, and Takabatake Motoyuki also were included.

Creative works were given more emphasis. Starting in the September 1924 issue, Suga Tadao replaced Nakagawa Yoichi as the executive editor of *Bungei shunjū*. Then in the September issue, Suga promised that from the next month, the magazine would undergo a complete transformation by paying satisfying manuscript fees and publishing “creative works of several masters of literature.” However, this promise was not kept. None of the five writers who published short stories in the October issue could be called “master of literature.” Nonetheless, Kikuchi Kan praised Suga Tadao for his excellent editing work. He also complained that it was difficult to obtain manuscripts from those “first-class” writers. In January 1925, Suga posted a notice in the postscript saying that *Bungei shunjū* would decline all manuscripts of creative works that were not requested by the magazine. This change in contribution policy was reiterated in February, and it was explained as a natural result of the desire to “eventually raise the Creative Writing section of *Bungei shunjū* to the same level as

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those of other magazines.”

Fortunately, these efforts of the editors were not in vain. Although the works of young writers who were either Bungei Shunjū coterie members, or affiliated with Bungei shunjū, still occupied much of the space in the Creative Writing section, more works by established writers who did not belong to the Bungei shunjū group were being published in the 1925 issues. Shiga Naoya, Tokuda Shūsei, Masamune Hakuchō, Chikamatsu Shūkō, and Murō Saisei all started publishing short stories in Bungei shunjū during 1925. Satomi Ton, Kōda Rohan, and Mushanokōji Saneatsu did so in the next year. Contemporary literary critics also started to pay more attention to this section of the magazine. In the postscript of the October 1925 issue Kikuchi Kan discusses the Creative Writing section after the usual introduction of the finances of the magazine. He first expresses his disappointment that the Creative Writing section was still belittled despite its recent improvement. Then he thanks literary critics for their kindness in mentioning the creative works published in Bungei shunjū. He reassures contributors that the magazine would pay fees per manuscript page according to the market price. Finally he encourages writers to take the Creative Writing section seriously because “it could be considered as one of the most widely read creative writing sections.”

Right after Kikuchi Kan made these comments, in the November issue, Bungei Shunjūsha started its first Novel Writing Contest. The short announcement of the contest stated that the purpose of the contest was to introduce new writers. The first prize was two hundred yen and second prize was fifty yen. The deadline was set for

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335 Suga Tadao, postscript, Bungei shunjū Feb. 1925: 111.
the last day of November, and it was stipulated that no entry should exceed thirty
pages. It also promised that the first prize winning work would be published in the
January issue, and both winning writers would be given priority as contributors to the
magazine in terms of future publication of their essays. But the publication of the
result of this contest was delayed to March 1926, and no work won the first prize.
Instead, six writers, including Yamamoto Shūgorō and Abe Tomoji, were selected and
awarded fifty yen as encouragement. 337

The look of the Creative Writing section also was changed. In July 1924, the
section was rearranged with a two-column format. It, therefore, was distinguished
from the four-column format of the rest of the magazine. This two-column format was
the same as the one commonly used in many serious literary journals and the creative
work sections of Chūō kōron and Kaizō. This assimilation to the format of the other
literary columns eliminated the distinctiveness that the unique four-column format
brought to Bungei shunjū, but it reminded contemporary readers of the established
literary sections in other medium and made this Creative Writing section of Bungei
shunjū seem more authoritative, serious, and respectable. The company history of
Bungei shunjū considers this format change as the last move in the transition from an
“essay magazine” to a “real literary magazine.” 338

337 山本周五郎 (1903-1967): novelist. Upon graduate from elementary school, he worked as an
apprentice, and then as a reporter. In 1926, he made his debut as a writer. He wrote mostly teenage
detective stories in the 1930s, and moved on to historical novels later. 阿部知二 (1903-1973): novelist,
critic, and scholar of English literature. After graduation from the English Department of Tokyo
Imperial University, he published several collections of short stories and critical essays. In the late
1930s, he published many novels and became a major figure in the bundan.
In addition to these changes in the Creative Writing section, several new features in other sections of the magazine also started in late 1924 and 1925. As early as March 1924, Okamoto Ippei—perhaps the most famous cartoonist in the Taishō period—started publishing a series of caricatures in Bungei shunjū. The series was titled “Abu mo tobu bunshi kōji” (The Writer Alley where Gadflies also Fly).\(^{339}\) Each installment was a two-page cartoon that depicts an alley with shops and other establishments. Writers are engaged in various activities on the street or in the establishments. Identification of the writers and explanation of their activities are given in bubbles that appear from the characters’ mouths. All the activities were caricatures of recent events in the bundan. In other words, Okamoto Ippei did with his cartoons what the typical Bungei shunjū gossips did with essays. Although only four installments were published irregularly from March to September, it was the first time that visual artwork appeared in the magazine. In October, Okamoto began to serialize a new series titled “Tomoki Hōtei bundan no uchiiri” (Tomoki Hōtei’s Raid on Bundan), which tells a story of a literary youth’s journey in the bundan. After nine installments, this series was replaced by another series titled “Bunshi sanzesō” (Countenance of Writers’ Three Lives), which depicted the past, present, and future lives of several writers. The latter two series inherited the typical Okamoto Ippei style, which combined cartoons with texts. All the caricatures matched other parts of

\(^{339}\) Only the first installment of the series was titled differently: “Abu mo tobu bungaku kōji” (The Literature Alley where Gadflies also Fly). It seems that the title was derived from the proverb “Hae ga tobeba, abu mo tobu” (When a fly flies, a gadfly flies too). Okamoto simply replaced “mo” with an \textit{ateji} which literally means “clothe.”
the magazine in terms of content and style. This perhaps explains why Okamoto continued publishing similar caricatures for the next two years.

Another new feature that the editors added to Bungei shunjū was crossword puzzles. The first was introduced in June 1925. The clues were divided into across and down, and most of them were about writers and the bundan. For example, one says “the mainstream of the recent bundan according to Chiba Kameo,” and another “a masterpiece of Kubota Mantarō’s plays.” Readers were encouraged to send their answers back to Bungei shunjū by June 10. The first three who solved the puzzle correctly would be awarded with new books by the two writers who made the puzzle and a six-month subscription to Bungei shunjū. In the postscript of the same issue, Suga Tadao revealed his intention to publish a puzzle in each issue because he thought it would draw readers’ interest. It did. In the July issue, he published the result of the first crossword puzzle competition. A total of 110 people sent in their answers, and this relatively small number of answers, according to Suga, was due to the difficulty of the puzzle. 14 had the correct answer. 5 (instead of the planned 3) out of the 14 people received the promised awards and their names were published under the new crossword for July. The names of the other 9 were also published along with the names of 24 selected readers who did not have the correct answer. The second puzzle competition received 200 correct answers and more than 30 readers sent the puzzles they made. Seven hundred and fifty-three readers sent answers for the third competition, and about 600 for the fourth. Despite this popularity among readers, Suga expressed his frustration about whether or not he should discontinue the puzzles.
in the November issue. He said he was thinking of closing the competition because it was merely a kind of fad. On the other hand, he also wondered why as many as a thousand answers were sent in for each competition. Finally, he decided he would continue only if good puzzles were sent in by readers. In the December issue, the crossword was discontinued due to a lack of good puzzles, and it was never resumed.

In addition to the crossword puzzle and Okamoto Ippei’s caricatures, in October 1925, two columns also were added to refresh the look and the content of *Bungei shunjū*. One was titled “Yorozu annai” (Miscellaneous Announcements) and the other “Ichinin ichigo” (One Person, One Word). The first column was designed to publish miscellaneous information on everything—job offerings, job hunting, things for sale, things to sell, and so forth—for the convenience of both writers and readers. The second column published comments that *Bungei shunjū* solicited from writers about literary and social issues. Each comment would not exceed two hundred words and would be published anonymously. Once published, the writer would be paid a fee. These two columns were the first sections in *Bungei shunjū* that were not limited to literary matters. Their creation was the first step that *Bungei shunjū*’s editors took to change the magazine from a solely literary publication to a general-interest one.

These internal changes of the magazine were probably the measures *Bungei shunjū* editors deemed necessary according to their perception of the contemporary publishing business and their potential readership. In the issues of late 1924 and 1925, Kikuchi Kan constantly mentioned the “fukeiki,” or the “recession” in the magazine publishing business. The first such mention, which appeared in the postscript of the
July 1924 issue, emphasizes how well *Bungei shunjū* was selling. The second appeared in the “Bungei shunjū” column in the October issue with a more serious tone stating that “there still is no sign of recovery.” In the same column in the December issue, Kikuchi Kan elaborates a little more on the topic and attributes the recession to the magazines, books, and collections that were over-produced after the Great Kanto Earthquake. In each and every issue for the first nine months in 1925, this topic of the recession in publishing business was discussed in one way or another. Kikuchi Kan seemed to be mostly concerned that the lives of writers would be affected by this recession. On the other hand, the recession of the magazine business often was used as a contrast to the skyrocketing sales of *Bungei shunjū*. Despite the obvious bluntness in this self-praise, it also created a sense of desirability among its existing and potential readers and contributed to the growth that *Bungei shunjū* achieved during these two years.

Interestingly, Kikuchi Kan never talked about a contemporary event that many later researchers regarded as a milestone of modern Japanese journalism: the creation of *Kingu*. Created in January 1925 by the powerful Kōdansha, *Kingu* was the first Japanese magazine that was mass-marketed, mass-produced, and mass-circulated. Months before the inaugural issue, Kōdansha started an advertisement campaign that covered more than 200 newspapers and 6,000 bookstores, mailed 325,780 letters and 1,836,000 postcards, and distributed 70,000,000 pamphlets. The entire campaign cost an astronomical total of 380,000 yen. The proposed circulation of the inaugural issue was 500,000 and the actual circulation reached 740,000. Within two years, *Kingu*
topped one million in circulation.\textsuperscript{340} The success of the magazine can be attributed to the identification of a mass readership and to the content of the magazine. The marketing used catch phrases such as “Kokumin-teki daizasshi” (The Major Magazine for Citizens) and “Ikka issatsu” (One Copy per Household). And this strategy was different from the other leading magazines, which targeted a particular group of readers, such as intellectual readers, women readers, and readers of popular fiction. \textit{Kingu} was trying to reach each and every Japanese citizen who was literate and who was willing to be entertained and cultivated. Consequently, its content was comprehensive and its issues were much thicker than most other magazines. Everything from news and social commentary to music and food was published in the flamboyant Kōdansha style.\textsuperscript{341}

To what extent were the people at \textit{Bungei shunjū} influenced by the \textit{Kingu} sensatio? Neither Kikuchi Kan nor the others mentioned \textit{Kingu}, though some comments concerning the magazine publishing business in the “Bungei shunjū” column and the postscripts can be interpreted as allusions to \textit{Kingu}. This was perhaps because \textit{Bungei shunjū} was still identified as a literary magazine that targeted higher-educated readers. However, it is reasonable to conjecture that the changes of the magazine in 1925—upgrading the Creative Writing section, adding crossword puzzles and Okamoto’s caricatures, creating the Miscellaneous Announcements and the One Person One Word columns—were reactions to the new trends that \textit{Kingu} brought to

\textsuperscript{340} These numbers are cited from Satō Takumi, \textit{Kingu no jidai: kokumin taishū zasshi no kōkyūsei} (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002) 8-11.

\textsuperscript{341} Satō Takumi refers to \textit{Kingu} as a print medium with features that were similar to those of “radio and talkies.” For a detailed discussion of the magazine’s mass-orientation, see chapter one and three of his \textit{Kingu no jidai: kokumin taishū zasshi no kōkyūsei}. 

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the business. Both Kikuchi Kan and Suga Tadao probably knew that they had to constantly explore and adapt to the needs of contemporary readers to compete with new heavy-weight rivals such as *Kingu*.

The effort to attract potential readers and interact with existing ones was extended to territories beyond *Bungei shunjū*’s pages. For example, the recruitment of a Drama League was initiated in June 1925, the same month that the first crossword puzzle competition was published. In an advertisement that followed the cover page of the June issue, the creation of the Drama League was announced. The goal of the league was to create a theater-viewer group to help alleviate the chaos in the theater world, and to make the theater-viewing experience less troublesome. The planned activities included group viewing of plays, movies, and concerts, and lectures and seminars on theater, cinema, and music. The membership fee was ten sen per month. Members received discounts in the admission to performances and shows. In the postscript of the issue, Suga Tadao urged readers to become members of the league so that the total would reach three thousand, and members would get a good discount. Details about the Drama League are not known. Such information as the statistics of its membership, and the account of its activities was not published in *Bungei shunjū*. Nonetheless, the Drama League displays the eagerness of the *Bungei shunjū* editors to attract more readers in every way possible.

During the year of 1925, Kikuchi Kan had made remarks concerning both potential contributors and potential readers. In the first note in the postscript of the June issue, he complained that it was not reasonable to request fifty essays only from established
writers for each issue. He claimed that *Bungei shunju* would “surely ask those quasi-writers for contributions in order to diversify the lineup of contributors.” Then in the second note, Kikuchi Kan talked about the expansion of the readership. “[This magazine] smells too much of the *bundan*. I want to distance it a little farther away from the *bundan*, and reach to the entire reading class that is broader [than the mere *bundan*].” In the September issue, Kikuchi Kan once again expressed his desire to expand *Bungei shunju*’s readership. “According to Okada Saburō’s estimate, there are 500,000 people who understand literature. Taking this statement at half of its face value, I want to put 250,000 copies [of this magazine] on the market. It is not necessarily a dream if we advance at the present pace.” In the November issue, he reiterated his willingness to invite more people to write to the magazine. “In the future, we will ask for manuscripts from any writer, artist, or intellectual. Whether new or established, men or women, old or young, there is no checkpoint to pass.” In other words, Kan was trying to expand *Bungei shunju*’s potential contributors from young promising writers to all the writers in the *bundan*, and then to the entire intelligentsia. His definition of reader was broadened too. Although not articulated, the readership that Kikuchi Kan intended when he created *Bungei shunju* was limited to young students and workers who could be best generalized as the “literary youth.” As evident in his 1924 distinction between *Bungei shunju* and *Bungei kōza*, and in his 1925 remarks, Kan and others perceived that the potential readers should include the entire middlebrow readership who could read and appreciate literature.
Action accompanied this perception of potential readership. As mentioned above, it became routine for Kikuchi Kan to post the often exceptional sales numbers of *Bungei shunju* and express his pride. Perhaps he hoped to promote the magazine by flaunting these numbers. In addition, in late 1924, he began to publish “thank you” notes in the postscripts. In these notes, he usually pointed out it was the first time that some eminent figures—such as Tanizaki Jun’ichirō or Yoshino Sakuzō—published a short story or essay in *Bungei shunju*, and he expressed his gratitude. Occasionally, he also enticed readers by leaking the information as to who was going to publish creative works in the next issue. These thank-you notes and preliminary announcements can be interpreted as the simple expression of Kan’s joyful nature. But with self-congratulatory reports of circulation numbers and sales, they were also probably another marketing device that originated from Kan’s insight into the *bundan* and his talent for running a publishing business.

With the long recession and the emergence of *Kingu*, *Bungei shunju* also employed some commonly practiced methods of advertising. In the postscript of the February 1925 issue, Kikuchi Kan said that he was thinking of advertising *Bungei shunju* in newspapers. In the March issue, he mocked himself: “The February issue was the first time we even advertised [in a newspaper]. However, by the time the advertisement was published, the issue was already almost sold out at Tokyo bookstores.” In the April issue, Kan gave the information that the advertisement cost one thousand yen,
and that *Bungei shunjū*, though sold for under fifty sen, still managed to make a profit. A note in the postscript of the May issue counted the advertising cost as eight hundred yen.

An interesting conversation about the cost of advertisement took place in the postscript of the October issue. A reader sent a letter to *Bungei shunjū*. In the letter, according to Kikuchi Kan, this reader suggested that Kan save the advertisement fee and use it to lower the price of the magazine. In response, Kan said the price would be lower by only three or four sen if they did not advertise. Then he reasoned with the reader that they would continue the advertisement to attract more subscriptions, which ultimately would lower the price.

The advertisement of *Bungei shunjū* also caused suspicion that the magazine was not selling well. Kikuchi Kan constantly dismissed this suspicion as nonsense by citing the ever-growing sales records that made *Bungei shunjū* the top-selling literary magazine in Japan. At the same time, he stated in the December 1925 issue that the magazine would stop publishing free advertisement, which had taken up three or four pages. He also claimed that the thirty yen price that *Bungei shunjū* charged for one-page advertising was too low, and that they would not publish much advertisement anymore. Seemingly, this measure was to cut cost. But it might have had something to do with the relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and Shun’yōdō. In the postscript of the Mach 1925 issue, Kikuchi Kan stated, “After the February issue, I stopped the relationship with *Shinshōsetsu*. This magazine [*Bungei shunjū*] will be managed entirely by Bungei Shunjūsha, though it is distributed by Shun’yōdō.” Many students
of modern Japanese literature and journalism consider Kikuchi Kan the sole manager of *Bungei shunjū* during its early years. And judging from the information that Kan revealed in the pages of the magazine, one can draw the conclusion that he indeed was the general manager of the magazine and that all the management was done by him and/or his subordinates. However, what he stated about *Shinshōsetsu* and Shun’yōdō in this March postscript testified otherwise: Kikuchi Kan helped with the editing of *Shinshōsetsu*, and in return, Shun’yōdō did some of the management work for *Bungei shunjū*. The details of this deal are unknown. So is the reason why Kikuchi Kan severed this mutual relationship.

What is known is that the business relationship between *Bungei shunjū* and Shun’yōdō had gone awry in late 1924. This can be seen through the amount of the advertisements for Shun’yōdō publications in *Bungei shunjū*. In 1923 and much of 1924, Shun’yōdō’s inserts had occupied a large portion of the advertisement pages in *Bungei shunjū*. For example, out of the 78 pages of advertisement published in the July, August, and September issues in 1924, those of Shun’yōdō’s publications occupied 50 pages. This started to change in October. The last three issues of 1924 had a total of 59 advertisement pages, and Shun’yōdō used only 15. In the first three issues of 1925, the total of advertisement pages dwindled again to 36, and Shun’yōdō had 11. After the announcement of cutting relations with *Shinshōsetsu* in the March 1925 issue, this became even more obvious. Shun’yōdō was able to publish merely 4

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342 For example, Toeda Hirokazu compares *Bungei shunjū* with *Bungei jidai*. He found that *Bungei jidai* coterie members were responsible only for the editorial tasks, and all of the management work was done by Kinseidō. In contrast, Toeda says, “It was Kikuchi Kan who had the real power in terms of editing and managing of *Bungei shunjū* in its starting years.” Toeda Yokuichi, “*Kōzaitsu suru zasshi no yaku: Bungei jidai to Bungei shunjū*,” *Bungaku* 2.4 (2001): 76.
pages of advertisement in a total of 63. This without doubt had to do with the changes that can be observed in the advertisements in the 1925 issues: many publishers other than Shun’yōdō, Kinseidō, and Puraton started to advertise in Bungei shunjū; more pages were devoted to the Bungei shunjū’s own publications such as Bungei köza; and companies outside of the publishing business, such as pen makers, clinics, and drug makers, also began to appear in the advertisement pages. However, the sharply decreased Shun’yōdō advertisements, along with the suspicious statement by Kikuchi Kan in the March issue, suggest that something was going sour between Bungei Shunjūsha and Shun’yōdō.

The problem was probably related to someone named Komine Hachirō. In the postscript of the January 1926 issue, Kan introduced Komine as a long-time Shun’yōdō employee who had provided help after Kan published his first collection. According to Kan, Komine had recently set up a business on his own, and Kan give Komine permission to name his business “Bungei Shunjū Shuppanbu,” or The Publishing Department of Bungei Shunjū. From 1925 to 1926, at least three titles were published by this publishing department. In December 1926, Kikuchi Kan announced that the nominal publisher of Bungei shunjū would be Komine Hachirō. It is still unknown when Bungei shunjū stopped using Shun’yōdō as its distributor. But it is likely that the business relationship between the two stopped at some point in late 1925. The name of Shun’yōdō as the distributor was deleted from the cover of the magazine in November 1925. Interestingly enough, in the postscript of the next issue, Kikuchi Kan published the number of copies of the forthcoming January issue that
four magazine distributors had respectively accepted for distribution. The four distributors were Tokyodō, Hokuryūkan, Tōkaidō, and Daitōdō, all of which were major magazine distributing companies. Compared with such a declining literature publisher as Shun’yōdō, the four companies surely had more to offer as suitable distributors of Bungei shunjū, which was rapidly expanding.

The company history described the years of 1925 and 1926 as “the period that should be particularly remembered” because Kikuchi Kan was liberated by the departure of the young Bungei jidai writers and because he started to do what he wanted to do.343 As can be observed in the events introduced above, it is more accurate to say that Kan initiated some of the major changes that altered the trajectory of the magazine in late 1924 and early 1925. This is when Kikuchi Kan’s insightful observation of the bundan, the publishing business, and the middlebrow readership worked with events such as the creation of Bungei jidai, the emergence of Kingu, and the separation from Shun’yōdō to create a new vision of Bungei shunjū. And this new vision was depicted in an essay that Kikuchi Kan published in the December 1925 issue. In the essay titled “Honshi no kakō to shōrai” (The Past and the Future of this Magazine), Kan very briefly reviews the development of the magazine during the previous three years. He attributes the success of the magazine to the creative structure that allowed it to both have a coterie and request contributions from master writers in the bundan. “Although the coterie was disbanded in mid-1924,” he

continues, “for the sake of this magazine, it was an inevitable process by which this magazine abandoned the coterie-journal characteristics that were limiting its remarkable development.”344 This statement clearly demonstrates that Kikuchi Kan recognized the opportunity in the “awkward” situation initiated by the creation of Bungei jidai, and he intentionally acted on this opportunity. He asked for more contributions from established writers, and he kept expressing his gratitude to the established writers who started publishing in Bungei shunjū. At the same time, he was wise enough not to distance himself and the magazine from the promising young writers who had offended him. He also published Bungei kōza, to meet the increasing needs of readers to study literature and arts in a more serious and scholarly way. He emphasized the Creative Writing section. He and Suga started events such as the writing contest and the Drama League to involve more readers in various literary activities.

Moreover, Kikuchi Kan started to take the magazine beyond the limits of literature. Suga Tadao, who had creative ideas, was assigned as the executive editor; the content of the magazine was diversified to include caricatures, puzzles, and miscellaneous announcements; intellectuals other than writers were added to the contributor list. These actions worked well to expand the magazine’s readership. They also helped to reestablish Bungei shunjū as a magazine that appealed not only to literary interest, but also to broader interests in general artistic and intellectual cultivation that many middlebrow educated Japanese citizens longed for. As Kikuchi Kan, “Honshi no kakō to shōrai,” Bungei shunjū Dec. 1925: 86.

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Kan states in the essay, “This magazine holds up the highest standards for learning and leisure pursuits. At the same time, it is selling fifty-eight thousand copies. It demonstrates how well the popularization of arts in Japan is going. This is the pride of this magazine and the pride of the Japanese intellectual class as well.”

It was in the year of 1926 that the vision of Bungei shunjū becoming a general-interest magazine was realized. In April 1926, the magazine started to be printed by rotary press machines, a symbol of modern journalistic mass-production. In the same month, Bungei Shunjūsha also reissued Enkyoku shinchō (New Tides in Theatre), a theater journal discontinued by Shinchōsha. In July, it created Eiga jidai (Cinema Age). In June, Bungei Shunjūsha operations were moved from Kikuchi Kan’s house for the first time and occupied an independent building. In September, the table of contents in Bungei shunjū issues was moved from the cover to inside pages. The cover design was also changed. A new column titled “Tokubetsu yomimono” (Special Reading) was added to the existing columns of essays and creative works. In October, a fourth column titled “Rokugo kiji” (Font Six Reports). All these changes were executed to achieve the vision of Bungei shunjū being a “magazine of cultivation, leisure pursuits, and entertainment that targets the broad intellectual class.” In November 1926, the magazine made a deposit with the government and started to publish articles concerning political and social issues in its December issue. This was the official beginning of Bungei shunjū as a general-interest magazine. Within four years, the magazine developed from a literary journal to a general-interest magazine.

345 Ibid, 87.
Its contributors expanded from promising young writers to the entire intelligentsia. Its readers increased from three thousand to a hundred thousand. This achievement was unique in the contemporary bundan and in the publishing business. And it testifies again to the fact that Kikuchi Kan was a unique figure in modern Japanese literature, and Bungei shunjū was a unique publication in modern Japanese journalism.
In the postscript of the November 1926 issue, Kikuchi Kan announced *Bungei shunjū*’s transformation to a general-interest magazine. Because we have made the deposit [to the government] recently, it is allowed that we publish on political matters and current affairs. Moreover, because we have become a general-interest magazine, it would be foolish to publish only literary matters in the column “Bungei shunjū.” Therefore, we will deal with political matters and current affairs in that column. I think we can also create a new column titled something like “Shakai shunjū” (Society Times).

However, there were no comments on current political and social affairs in the “Bungei shunjū” column in this issue. Instead, an article by Ōta Masataka—a newly graduated Ph. D in economics—appeared in the “Tokubetsu yomimono” section. Titled “Fukeiki no soko” (The Bottom of the Recession), this article dealt with problems with the Japanese economy and touched slightly upon politics. It was arguably the first piece on “political matters and current affairs” that was published in *Bungei shunjū*.347 One month later, on Dec. 26, 1926, the Taishō emperor perished,
and Hirohito was inaugurated. It was a fortunate coincidence that the inauguration of
the Shōwa period also marked Bungei shunjū’s transformation from a literary journal
to a general-interest publication. However, it was by no means coincidental that the
fate of Bungei shunjū and Kikuchi Kan were deeply intertwined with the militarist and
fascist developments during the first two decades of the Shōwa period.

This chapter will briefly survey the history of the magazine from 1927 to 1945,
and highlight some major events that eventually led the magazine and its creator to
what can be seen as a betrayal of their Shōwa liberalism toward the end of World War
Two. In so doing, it will clarify how and why Kikuchi Kan chose to turn himself and
the magazine into collaborators with the Japanese militarist government.

5.1 The Difficult Decade and the Popularization of Bungei shunjū

The first decade of the Shōwa period proved to be a difficult time for both Kikuchi
Kan and Bungei shunjū. First of all, the expansion of the magazine had slowed down
compared with the growth achieved in the first four years. There actually was a
decrease in circulation in the late 1920s. In 1927, circulation was consistently
maintained at about 170,000. However, the figure decreased to 153,000 for almost the
entire years of 1928 and 1929. In the next three years, circulation managed to rebound
and eventually increased to about 188,000. For one year, starting in October 1932, it stood at about 228,000. For the years of 1934 and 1935, the figure was consistently at 248,800, and for the year of 1936, it was 258,000.\textsuperscript{348}

This relatively slower growth was, naturally, due to the fact that it was much more difficult to achieve substantial increases over such already high figures as 170,000. It will be remembered that the first issue sold only 3,000 copies. It was also due to the fact that the entire Japanese economy experienced some difficulties after the World War One boom. Though, Japan had strong overall economic growth in the 1920s, it was hit by several recessions. In March of 1927, the so-called “Showa Financial Panic” was triggered by a report in the newspapers that the central bank had issued a moratorium to Tokyo Watanabe Bank, which had loan problems. Unfavorable news of some other banks’ unsound management also were revealed. Consequently, large amounts of bank deposits nationwide were withdrawn and dozens of banks suspended their operations. This crisis was overcome by measures that the Bank of Japan took to relieve the credit shortage. In the course of the recovery, however, the Great Depression struck Japan. The nation had to wait until 1932 to see any substantial economic growth.\textsuperscript{349}

Amid these economic pitfalls, competition in the publication business became fiercer in the late 1920s. Existing journals and magazines adopted more and more aggressive strategies in marketing. This is clearly demonstrated in the area of

\textsuperscript{348} The figures are drawn from Nagamine Shigetoshi, \textit{Modan toshi no dokusho kūkan} (Tokyo: Nihon Editāsukūru Shuppanbu, 2001) 98.

\textsuperscript{349} This introduction of the crises of the Japanese economy in the 1920s is based on Chapter 9 in Peter Duus, ed., \textit{The Cambridge History of Japan}, Vol. 6, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 451-493.
women’s magazine publishing. In his study of the reading surveys of pre-war Japanese women, Nagamine noticed that a process of reorganization took place in the women’s magazine publishing sector during the early Shōwa years. As can be observed in the table below, all major women’s magazines doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled their circulations from 1927 to 1931. Their rankings, though, changed over the five years. Magazines such as *Shufu no tomo* and *Fujin kurabu* became the dominant players in the field because they were created in the more recent Taishō years, and from their very first issues, they targeted middlebrow and lowbrow readers. On the other hand, the magazines that had flat or declining circulations (such as *Fujokai* and *Fujin sekai*) were the ones that were created with a highbrow orientation in the Meiji period. They were slower and less efficient in switching to a mass-marketing strategy. Although some women’s magazines, such as *Fujin kōron*, tried to maintain or even shift upward to higher-brow levels, they could not continue this for long. Nagamine summarized the situation of women’s publications in the early Showa years as follows:

Thus, compared with mass-oriented women’s magazines, intellectually oriented women’s magazines experience extremely difficult times overall. Even *Fujin kōron*, the only one that survived the competition, eventually was forced to make radical modifications to its highbrow strategy, and to incorporate many popular elements.\(^{350}\)

\[^{350}\text{Nagamine Shigetoshi, Zasshi to dokusha no kindai (Tokyo: Nihon Editā Sukūru Shuppanbu, 1997) 187.}\]
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<th>1931</th>
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<td>1. <em>Shuju no tomo</em></td>
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<td>2. <em>Fujokai</em></td>
<td>2. <em>Fujin kurabu</em></td>
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<td>(approximately 155,000)</td>
<td>(350,000)</td>
<td>(550,000)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(approximately 120,000)</td>
<td>(200,000)</td>
<td>(350,000)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(approximately 80,000)</td>
<td>(170,000)</td>
<td>(200,000)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. <em>Fujin no tomo</em></td>
<td>5. <em>Fujin kōron</em></td>
<td>5. <em>Fujin sekai</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(approximately 60,000)</td>
<td>(30,000)</td>
<td>(120,000)</td>
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Table 5.1  Circulation Ranking of Japanese Women’s Magazines in the Early Shōwa Period


This dominance of mass-oriented periodicals was not limited merely to women’s publications. As introduced in the previous chapter, magazines such as *Kingu* and *Ie no hikari* constantly topped readers’ surveys of the general public, and their circulations had reached 500,000 or even a million.\(^{351}\) Compared with the established general-interest magazines such as *Chūō kōron* and *Kaizō*, these popular magazines were more entertainment-oriented, more intensely marketed, and easier to understand. Moreover, more new magazines were being created targeting the mass market. The total of newspapers and magazines increased from 5,089 in 1926 to 6,290 in 1931 and then to 7,531 in 1936.\(^{352}\) According to Nagamine, many of these new magazines actually modeled themselves after *Bungei shunjū*: “Because of its success, … *Bungei*...

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\(^{351}\) *Kingu* had 1.2 million copies in circulation for its January 1927 issue. *Ie no hikari* started its “Million Circulation Plan” in 1932, reached 518,297 at the end of 1933, and reached a million in September 1935. For details, see *Ie no hikari no yonjū-nen* (Tokyo: Ie No Hikari Kyōkai, 1968) 32-63.

shunjū became the new normative model of magazines. A large number of similar magazines were created.”

Some of these newly created magazines expanded rapidly and undoubtedly posed a threat to Bungei shunjū.

Journals and magazines were not the only competitors to Bungei shunjū. Book publishers were also trying to attract as many readers as possible, especially the middlebrow and lowbrow readers who had limited income to spend on reading materials. Nearly 30,000 new titles were being published annually during the last three years of the 1920s, and this number increased to 42,445 in 1936. However, what was more threatening to the magazines was not so much the quantity as the price of the new books. When Bungei shunjū was created in 1923, there was still a steep gap between the prices of books and magazines. For example, most books that were advertised in the issues of Bungei shunjū in 1923 were priced between 2 and 3 yen, ten times the price of Bungei shunjū issues. However, when Kaizōsha published Kindai Nihon bungaku zenshū at the end of 1926 and priced each title at one yen, the dynamic of the publication business was changed instantly. Books were no longer the luxury that was enjoyed by the affluent few. They became affordable to such economically unprivileged groups as students, factory workers, and farmers.

Nagamine Shigetoshi, Zasshi to dokusha no kindai (Tokyo: Nihon Editā Sukūru Shuppanbu, 1997) 215. Nagamine listed Miyako (Capital), Yomiuri (Yomiuri), and Keizai ōrai (Economic Exchange) as examples of these new magazines.

For example, Keizai ōrai’s circulation jumped from 28,000 to 100,000 one year after it was created in March 1926. Even though it dealt with mostly economic issues, this new magazine was very similar to the style of Bungei shunjū. It had to affect the circulation of Bungei shunjū one way or another.


More than 200 enpon series were put in the market during the boom. Sekai bungaku zenshū published by Shichōsha was the most successful one, and it had circulation of about 500,000 for each of its 28 volumes.
bubble of this so-called “enpon boom” burst in 1930 and thousands of copies were remaindered. At the same time, readers, especially low and middle class readers, had to reduce substantially the amount of money they could save for reading/entertainment. The rise and the demise of this “enpon boom” explains partly why Bungei shunjū suffered reduced circulation in 1928 and 1929, and only recovered slowly in the next couple of years.

In addition to the difficult economy and fierce competition in the publishing business in the late 1920s, Bungei shunjū also suffered some internal misfortunes. The first of these misfortunes occurred unexpectedly on July 24, 1927: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke took an overdose of Veronal and killed himself in his study.

The death of Akutagawa was a severe blow to both Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū. On a personal level, Kikuchi Kan lost a long-time friend and an important colleague. The two were classmates in 1910 when both were admitted into Ikkō. However, they did not become friends immediately. On the contrary, they led different lives and they were not close. As Kikuchi Kan remembered, “Akutagawa did not think highly of our self-indulgent and degenerate lifestyle, and we harbored a mild antipathy toward Akutagawa’s genteel affectation.”357 It was during Kikuchi Kan’s first-year study at Kyoto University that he started to share his interest in literature with Akutagawa. Early in 1914, Kan was invited to join the coterie of the

third Shinshichō that Akutagawa, along with Kume, Matsuoka, and Naruse, was creating. Very soon, the two became good friends. According to Kikuchi Kan, their strong friendship was maintained until Akutagawa’s death:

For more than ten years, not one thing occurred to cause estrangement between us. Because I was known to dash off angry letters and express mail them to people at the slightest offense, people called me “Kikuchi Express.” However, Akutagawa is the only person to whom I have never sent an angry express letter.\(^{358}\)

On one occasion prior to Akutagawa’s death, Kikuchi Kan described Akutagawa as the friend that Kan would entrust with his unfinished affairs on his deathbed. The loss of such a dear friend proved heart-wrenching for Kan, who displayed genuine grief. It is said that when Kan was reading the eulogy at Akutagawa’s funeral, he was filled with so much sorrow that he could not finish. Moreover, he swiftly changed the editing of the September issue of Bungei shunjū, the first issue of the magazine after Akutagawa’s death, to dedicate it to the recently deceased writer.

The death of Akutagawa was surely devastating to Kikuchi Kan on a personal and emotional level. On the other hand, Kikuchi Kan also felt uncertain about how this unfortunate event would affect the future of Bungei shunjū, which was already suffering an economic slump. After all, Akutagawa was perhaps the most influential figure, and the most recognized name associated with Bungei shunjū. As Kan admitted in the “postscript” of this September issue, the death of Akutagawa was also quite a blow to the magazine. Without fail, Akutagawa had published in every issue since Bungei shunjū was created. His column “Shuju no kotoba” (侏儒の言葉),

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which lasted three and a half years from January 1923 to July 1926, was the longest-running column in the magazine. Akutagawa’s essays had always been laid out as the first piece to appear in each issue. Almost an anchor, Akutagawa obviously played a critical role in the survival and development of the magazine. Although, as noted in the previous chapter, there had been an increasing number of established writers who started to write for Bungei shunjū by mid 1926, it was impossible for Kikuchi Kan to find someone to replace Akutagawa. It is, therefore, not surprising to see that Kikuchi Kan announced a plan to continue himself the “Shuju no kotoba” column.

I have to thank Akutagawa for the kindness that he devoted to Bungei shunjū. To return his kindness, and to commemorate him, I will continue the ‘Shuju no kotoba’ column even after his death, as long as this magazine survives. It seems that there are unpublished pieces of Akutagawa’s writing. Since there is also correspondence, there should be plenty of manuscripts for a while. Even when his manuscripts run out, I think it is fitting to publish articles about him.359

This decision to continue “Shuju no kotoba” was an act of friendship and commemoration. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as an act motivated by commercial considerations. The death of Akutagawa was the headline news in the contemporary mass media. The public was eager to read any unpublished works that the famous writer left behind. The publication of posthumous manuscripts would, without question, attract more readers. The September issue published one essay, one memorandum, and several short letters by Akutagawa. Publication of these pieces, along with a picture of the writer, four paintings by the writer, and more than two dozen reminiscences about the writer, actually did help to turn around the magazine’s

359 Ibid, 65.
sales, which had been disappointing since May. Ironically, the same concern for the magazine’s sale might have led to another change in the editing of the September issue. After Kikuchi Kan’s notes in the postscript of this September issue, an unnamed editor (either Suga Tadao or Saito Ryūtarō) made an announcement. “I intended to fill the entire issue with memorials (of Akutagawa). But there was a change during the meantime. I sincerely apologize to those who took the trouble and wrote for this memorial issue.” There is no indication of why this sudden change took place. It might have been because Kikuchi Kan and his editors thought a memorial issue filled with remembrances of Akutagawa would bore the readers.

Perhaps purely by coincidence, Kikuchi Kan announced in the same September issue the move of Bungei shunjū’s headquarter from the old mansion of Arishima Takeo to the Osaka Building, an office tower located in Kōjimachi Ward. “At the end of this month, we probably will move to Osaka Building. It is because the expense of staying in this building has increased. Also, it is because we want to curtail our expenditures in times like these, and because the employees can not help but idle away their time here.” According to the company history, “times like these” refers to the “Showa Financial Panic” that was triggered by the moratorium issued in March. Actually, the national crisis and the idle employees were not the most serious problems that Bungei shunjū was facing. The truly threatening problem was that the magazine’s sales figures were fairly flat. The magazine stopped publishing its circulation numbers in the previous year. However, Kikuchi Kan admitted that the

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360 “Postscript,” Bungei shunjū Sep. 1927: 223
361 Ibid, 223.
May, June, July, and August issues did not do well on the market. Each issue had a loss of three or four thousand yen. Consequently, Kan decided to raise the price from thirty sen to thirty five, and he repeatedly asked the readers to forgive this increase.

The already thin profit margin of Bungei shunjū was further stretched with several other Bungei Shunjūsha publication ventures. As a successful latecomer to the magazine publishing business, the young publishing house perhaps was expanding its business a little too fast. In April 1926, it took over the discontinued Enkyo shinchō (New Tide in Theater) and revived the journal. Three months later, Bungei Shunjūsha created Eiga jidai (Cinema Time). In November, it started to manage Shingeki Kyōkai, a theatrical company created by Hatanaka Ryōha. Then in March of 1927, it created a new literary coterie journal titled Shuchō (Notepad). In February of 1928, it created yet another literary journal titled Sōsaku gekkan (Creative Writing Monthly). To newly create or republish four periodicals and manage a performance troupe and the existing Bungei shunjū at the same time turned out to be excessively difficult. Consequently, none of these new ventures succeeded. The first victim was Enkyo shinchō, which was discontinued in August 1927. In the same month, Bungei Shunjūsha stopped its management and support for Shingeki Kyōkai. In November, Shuchō was discontinued. In May of 1929, Sōsaku gekkan was discontinued. In August of 1930, Eiga jidai was separated from Bungei Shunjūsha and became independent.

畑中蓼坡 (1877-1959): Actor. He started the Shingeki Kyōkai to promote modern theater, especially plays of an art-for-art's-sake nature.
While dealing with the business within Bungei Shunjūsha, Kikuchi Kan also was co-editing *Shōgakusei zenshū* (Complete Works for Elementary School Students) upon a request from Ōbunsha, and he was on several lecture tours. Anyone would have been overwhelmed by such a busy schedule. Amazingly, Kan seems to have decided to extend himself beyond the publishing business and the literary world. In February 1928, he announced that he would run for the first popular election of the Japanese House of Representatives. He was nominated by Shakai Minshūtō (The Social Democratic Party) and was listed as a candidate in the No. 1 election district in Tokyo. In a short essay titled “Rikkōho ni tsuite” (“About my Candidacy”), Kan explains what made him run in the election. First of all, it was Shakai Minshūtō that pursued Kan and asked him to be the party’s candidate. Kan admitted that it is strange for him, a “bourgeois” writer, to be listed as the candidate of a “proletarian party.” He revealed the fact that he actually refused the invitation twice, and only accepted it the third time. The reason for his acceptance, Kan stated, was that he wanted to experience a different kind of life rather than living complacently as an established writer. Moreover, he said that once elected, he was ready to do his best as the representative of a socialist party.\(^{363}\)

Unfortunately, Kikuchi Kan lost the election. He won 5,682 votes. It was enough to place him 7\(^{th}\) of the 15 candidates but not enough to get him into the top five. This result turned out to be quite a surprise for Kan. In an essay titled “Haisenki” (Record of the Lost Battle), Kan tried to find the reasons why he lost the election. He admitted

that he was fairly confident at the beginning of his campaign. However, he was shocked to read the negative reports and comments that were published in other media about his candidacy. Discussions in the political sections of newspapers totally ignored Kan, and this fact was a severe blow to his campaign. Even though Kan stated that he was happy with the votes he received because those votes were “unpolluted, educated, and cultivated,” the tone of the entire essay was dismal. It reveals the fact that Kan was upset not only by the result of the election, but also by what happened during the election.

The emotional disturbance that the election caused was only a small part of the damages of that “lost battle.” More damaging to Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū was the negative influence of the election upon the finances of the magazine and Kan himself. There is no record that reveals the amount of money that Kan spent on the campaign. However, as the company history claims, the cost of the election campaign had been massive, and it directly affected Kikuchi’s personal finances, which were at this time still mixed with the budget of the magazine. To make things worse, circulation of Bungei shunjū dropped dramatically in 1928, in part because Kan and everyone else at the magazine were so devoted to the campaign that the editing of the issues became lackluster. As Suga Tadao, the editor-in-chief confessed, in the April issue of 1928.

Due to the election, several things went amiss [in editing]. We clearly stated the distinction between the election and the magazine. However, we could not keep the influence of the election away. To
me, this issue ended up in a manner not of my own choosing. I feel that all of the many plans and ideas [preconceived for this issue] would be delayed to the next one.\footnote{Suga Tadao, postscript, \textit{Bungei shunjū} Feb. 1928: 258.}

Fortunately, Kikuchi Kan was open-minded and pragmatic. He, as well as his chief editors and managers, quickly and efficiently remedied the ills of the magazine during these difficult years. To cut operation costs, Bungei Shunjūsha was moved to Osaka Building. Employees’ salaries were also reduced, some by one third. In the expectation that this pay cut would arouse dissatisfaction, Kan told his employees that anyone who wanted to leave Bungei Shunjūsha was free to do so. In his unique style, Kan said, “Those of you who are able, please just quit this company. I will keep only those who can not go anywhere else.”\footnote{Bungei shunjū \textit{nanajū-nen shi}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 1991) 55.} It is said that no one actually left, and the salaries indeed were returned to the previous level within two months.

In addition to the move and the pay reduction, Kan and his employees also took a series of measures to rescue the business affairs of Bungei Shunjūsha. As previously noted, they discontinued \textit{Enkyo shichō}, \textit{Shuchō}, and \textit{Sōsaku gekkan} within one and a half years, stopped managing Shingeki Kyōkai, and let \textit{Eiga jidai} go independent. A more fundamental reform was to turn the company into a joint-stock corporation.

\textit{Bungei shunjū} was created by Kikuchi Kan singly-handedly with his own “pocket money.” On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the magazine, the business of the
Bungei Shunjūsha had obviously outgrown the relaxed family-business model that the company had been following. Kikuchi Kan himself realized this. In the February issue of 1928, Kan published a note in the postscript.

As for this magazine, I have no idea at all whether it is making or losing money. First, there are no books. People from the Bureau of Taxation are skeptical that we do not have any books. We truly do not have them. I do not know if we are earning or losing money. My personal account is mixed up with that of the company. Some people were kind enough to tell me that, in order to straighten up the accounts, I should make the company a joint-stock corporation, even if only in form.  

In the postscript of the May issue, right after the election, Kan told his readers that he had decided to “try to separate myself from the company.” This was realized in the next month. In June 1928, Kan announced that the magazine’s management was “finally changed to a newer structure.” It was actually on May 30 that Bungei Shunjūsha finished the procedure to become a joint-stock corporation. The initial offering was a total of 2,500 shares at 20 yen per share. Thus, the total capital was 50,000 yen. Kikuchi Kan became the president-director, and Suzuki Shikō the executive director. Three others, including Kume Masao, became directors, and two people were auditors.

50,000 yen was a large amount of money at the time. However, Kikuchi Kan, as the owner of the company before the offering, received only about 10,000 in cash subscription. He explained the initial offering of the company in some detail in the postscript of the July issue of 1928.

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This company was my personal property. In order to make it the property of contributors, of people involved in *Bungei shunjū*, and of all of the staff, I gave some of the shares to these people. Moreover, I gave some shares to Miyako Karyū, Kobayashi Ichizō, Mishima Yoshimichi, and other people who have been kind to me and my magazine.\(^\text{368}\)

Obviously, Kan did not intend the initial offering of the company’s stocks as a chance to make more money. Instead, he rewarded people who had helped him during the early years of *Bungei shunjū*. And he was also shrewd enough to give shares to the staff of the company so that everyone would have an interest in the company’s performance. One has to recognize the business talent that Kikuchi Kan demonstrated in doing so.

In addition to the financial and structural reconfiguration of Bungei Shunjūsha, Kikuchi Kan and his editors/managers also made efforts to explore various journalistic techniques to attract more readers. The most successful of such explorations was the invention of the *zadankai*. The term literally means a round-table talk. In Japanese journalism, it often times refers to a practice that can be observed frequently in all of the major magazines and journals in the present. Usually, a publisher invites guests, mostly authoritative intellectuals and/or celebrities in entertainment, to join a *zadankai*. At the *zadankai*, the guests and hosts converse on various topics. The publisher records the talks and then publishes the transcript in its periodical(s).

This widely and commonly accepted journalistic practice was invented by Kikuchi Kan. The first such *zadankai* appeared in the March issue of *Bungei shunjū* in 1927.

There was only one guest: Tokutomi Soho, one of the most influential intellectuals at the time and a frequent contributor to *Bungei shunjū*. Akutagawa, Yamamoto Yūzō, and Kikuchi were present as the hosts. The talk itself was held on February 3 at Bansuiken, an office building located in central Tokyo. Tokutomi did most of the talking, which was about the writing of a history book that he was engaged in.

Rather than the content, it was the form and style of the transcript that was most interesting. Last names of the guest and the hosts are arranged one space higher than the conversations. This way, the readers did not get confused as to who was talking about what. All dialogues are in colloquial style with “masu/desu” endings. Reading them resembles eavesdropping on everyday conversations. The script appears to be recorded in a manner that is very loyal to the real talk. Expressions such as “Thank you very much” and “You are welcome” are recorded and published as they are. On several occasions, the equivalent of the onomatopoeic “Hahahaha” is used to represent Tokotomi’s laughter. Obviously, this *zadankai* form of publication was intended, first of all, to provide a space where the invited guest(s) could freely express themselves. Kikuchi Kan explained this intention in the postscript of the March issue himself.

> From now on, I have decided to hold a *zadankai* every month. It is to invite the first-rate people of our time and to listen to what they say. We will totally take the position of listeners and allow the guests to talk to their hearts’ content. This month, we asked Mr. Tokutomi to join. I think he is the perfect choice for the inaugural publication of *zadankai*.  

On the other hand, this form of *zadankai* also seems to have been intended as another feature of *Bungei shunjū* to boost circulation. As noted in the previous

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chapter, Kan and his editors had made renewed efforts to attract more readers, especially those who had less education than the readers of highbrow literature and publications, and/or those who were looking for entertainment more than learning. These efforts included creating reader clubs, adding a *yomimonon* column, changing the design of the cover page, and so forth. The creation of *zadankai* was yet another experiment in the same vein. The form and the style of *zadankai* intrigued readers with an illusionary sense that they were also a participant in the conversation. The intellectuals and literary celebrities who participated in the *zadankai* appear to be quite human. The talks appear to be more interesting than an essay that is written on the same topic in formal written style, and the atmosphere of the communication appears to be more dynamic and interactive because the hosts make inquiries about things that the readers also want to know. This invention of *zadankai*, along with the measures of renewal that Kan and his editors took earlier, were an answer to the changing magazine publishing business, which was increasingly becoming mass-market, mass-produced, and mass-consumed.

In an advertisement for *Bungei shunjū* that appeared in both *Yomiuri shinbun* and *Asahi shinbun* at the end of 1926, the following catch phrases were published:

Do not indulge your heart in mere comfort and entertainment. Do not wear out your heart in mere study and learning. Sixty percent comfort and entertainment, forty percent study and learning—this is the unique new world that this magazine creates.\(^\text{370}\)

The company history labels this slogan of “sixty percent comfort and entertainment, forty percent study and learning” as the new motto of Bungei Shunjūsha. This motto was to “differentiate [Bungei shunjū] from the other general-interest magazines that target scholars and high-class intellectuals.” It epitomizes the intention to make Bungei shunjū “a magazine that is attractive to the general public who have considerable amounts of cultivation and ample life experience.”371 In fact, by the year of 1927, Kikuchi Kan and his editors already had a clear vision of the readership. This vision was articulated in another newspaper advertisement.

The readership of this magazine covers all classes. Liberal politicians, sensible government officials, perceptive businessmen, educators without antiquated minds, company employees with aspirations, laborers who have the ability to read, students who have an interest in literature, and female students who claim to be modern women—all of the people who are included in each and every one of these categories, who have an interest in arts and science and who are sensible, should be readers of this magazine.372

This statement should be read as Bungei shunjū’s official pronouncement defining itself as a middlebrow general-interest magazine. It was published, of course, as a result of the competition in the business from both the established highbrow general-interest journals such as Chūō kōron and Kaizō, and the newly create mass-oriented magazines such as Kingu and Ie no hikari. More importantly, this perception of the magazine’s readership is the result of the unique characteristics of Kikuchi Kan and

Bungei shunjū at large. As discussed in the previous chapters of this study, Bungei shunjū was intended to be a coterie journal at the time of its creation, though it also demonstrated many features of a commercial magazine.

Kikuchi Kan, as the creator and editor-in-chief, was a complex person. Being an intellectual and a writer, he certainly held philosophical convictions about literature and culture at large. At the same time, as a shrewd businessman, he displayed pragmatic views and attitudes.

It was these complicated characteristics of the magazine and Kikuchi Kan that kept driving the transformation of the magazine from middle/highbrow to middle/lowbrow in terms of the stratification of the readership that was targeted. Seemingly, this was a downward tendency. However, it was not necessarily socially objectionable. The appeal to a lower denominator obviously facilitated the further popularization of the knowledge of literature, art, and science, provided more affordable relaxation to the public, and helped writers and intellectuals by popularizing their names and raising their incomes. On the other hand, this transformation was related directly to the magazine’s and Kikuchi Kan’s voluntary involvement in the war, and it foreshadowed the rightist stance of Bungei shunjū in the postwar years. These negative effects will be examined later in this chapter.

The popularization of Bungei shunjū was also manifest in several other events and editorial changes that took place during the early Shōwa years. First, Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha continue to organize events that promoted literary production and appreciation. In June 1927, the company sponsored a “Bungei Kōenkai” (Literary
Lecture Meeting). Kataoka Teppei, Yokomitsu Riichi, Kawabata Yasunari, Iketani Shinzaburō, and Kikuchi Kan went on a tour and gave lectures to general audiences in three prefectures in Northeastern Japan. These kinds of tours to educate the public about literary matters had been created as least two decades previously. However, Bungei Shunjūsha and Kikuchi Kan appeared to be particularly avid supporters of this kind of lecture tour. For example, after Akutagawa’s death, Bungei Shunjūsha held in October a “Lecture Series in Memory of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke” in cities all over Japan. In 1934, similar events took place to commemorate Naoki Sanjūgo.

Second, in October 1928, the publisher started to publish *Bungei sōsaku kōza* (Literary Creation Lectures), which continued the effort to educate a mass readership as its precursor *Bungei kōza* had. Also in this month, *Bungei shunjū* started to run a contest of “*jitsuwa*,” or “real stories,” which eventually became a column. In this event, readers were asked to send in writings that were “based on historical facts, contemporary events, or even the reader’s own experience.” There should be “no fabrication added at all,” and the pieces should be “interesting.” Kan implied in the postscript of the same issue that this event was *Bungei shunjū*’s answer to the “fad” of publishing “real stories” in American and Japanese media. At the same time, he emphasized that this would be the first time in *Bungei shunjū* for these kinds of “real stories.” He stated he would like to create “an era of real stories” in the world of *yomimono*. In other words, this was the first time that the magazine organized a reader-participatory event that was oriented toward such popular literary genres as

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yomimono. The announcement of the event opens as follows. “As you know, popular literature has become increasingly absurd due to the excessive pursuit of novel ideas, characters, and props. Are not you demanding, poignantly, a fresh realism in yomimono?”

This was the first time that the magazine tried to follow other mass-oriented media and publish reader contributions that were of a creative, entertainment-oriented yomimono nature. Even though by this time, the magazine was already including yomimono that were written by professional writers, the “jitsuwa” event surely displayed the determination of the publisher and Kikuchi Kan to make Bungei shunjū even more mass-oriented. In the same vein, the Bunpitsu Fujinkai (Association of Literary Women) was created in March 1929 in the office of Bungei Shunjūsha. In December 1929, Bungei shunjū began to publish timetables of the Japanese railway system. In the January issue of 1931, several winning works of a writing contest were published, and a diary-calendar was given to readers. In December 1931, Bungei Shunjūsha held a readers’ conference to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the magazine.

In addition to these attempts to attract more readers and to communicate better with them, Kikuchi Kan and his editors also tried to create new publications that would cater to the needs of a mass readership. As previously noted in this chapter, the publisher created several new magazines such as Shuchō and Sōsaku gekkan. But these new ventures focused on highbrow to middlebrow genres, and none of them survived long. Therefore, it seems that in late 1929, Kan and his colleagues in Bungei

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374 Ibid.
Shunjūsha changed their strategy and started to churn out middlebrow and lowbrow publications. The first of such publications was *Fujin salon* (Lady’s Salon). In July 1930, *Bungei shunjū* published a special supplement that was titled *Ōru yomimono* (All Yomimono). As can be seen from its title, it was intended for all readers and carried purely entertainment-oriented materials. In response to its popular reception, this special supplement became a monthly in April 1931. In October 1930, *Modan Nihon* (Modern Japan) was created. Unfortunately, it appeared that both *Fujin salon* and *Modan Nihon* did not perform well. Consequently, the former was discontinued in December 1932 and the latter went independent in January 1932. In February 1933, *Hanashi* (Story) was created also to target a lowbrow readership. By the mid-1930s, both *Ōru yomimono* and *Hanashi* had not only survived but also achieved success. In January 1932, one and half years after its creation, *Ōru yomimono* reached 300,000 in circulation and surpassed *Bungei shunjū* as the best selling product of Bungei Shunjūsha. Only in May 1944, as a result of the difficult war situation, was it suspended and incorporated into *Bungei shunjū*. *Hanashi* was a relatively more moderate success. It was discontinued in May 1940 due to paper rationing.

Soon after putting into effect this new editorial strategy, Bungei Shunjūsha suffered a series of losses of writers and editorial staff. On February 6, 1934, Sasaki Mitsuzō, one of the founding members of *Bungei shunjū*, passed away. In the March issue of 1934, Kikuchi Kan appeared to be quite composed in announcing the news.

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375 It was created in September 1929 as the first women’s magazine that Bungei Shunjūsha ever published. However, due to its short life, little information about this magazine is available.
Sasaki Mitsuzō died. As our longtime subscribers know, when Bungei shunjū was created, he published in every issue under the title “Waidan” [(Obscene Talk)] and did a good job. He was one of the people who has provided distinguished service to the expansion of Bungei shunjū.

The loss of Sasaki was damaging. This was because he was one of the most prolific contributors to Bungei shunjū. In the January issue of 1932, Bungei shunjū published the most recent result of its traditional Contribution Ranking. Sasaki Mitsuzō was ranked third in the East section and sixth overall. However, an even bigger loss came eighteen days later when Naoki Sanjūgo died of tubercular meningitis. This was a blow to Kikuchi Kan and the magazine as severe as the death of Akutagawa six and half years earlier. Naoki was the most frequent contributor to the magazine. In the same January 1932 Contribution Ranking, he was yokozuna in the East section, and he had the most contributions of all the writers in both East and West sections.

Moreover, Naoki’s contribution to Bungei shunjū can not be judged merely by the quantity of his writing. At the time of his death, he was already one of the best-known writers in Japan. As noted in Chapter three, Naoki Sanjūgo started to serialize historical vengeance-themed novels in major newspapers and magazines in 1929. From May to June in 1930, he published Nankoku taiheiki simultaneously in Osaka mainichi shinbun and Tokyo nichinichi shinbun, which “solidified his indisputable position in the literary world, and created his reputation as the newest stellar writer.”

During the next four years, Naoki continued publishing popular novels, many of which were set in contemporary Japan and were politically controversial. He

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was, thus, able to maintain his celebrity status in the literary world and in Japanese society at large. At the same time, he still contributed frequently to *Bungei shunjū* and continued to publish highly provocative essays in the magazine as he had been doing since 1923. Although by 1934 it was already much easier for the magazine to attract contributions from established writers, the loss of such a stellar writer as Naoki surely weakened the glamour of the magazine among those readers who were his fans.

Kikuchi Kan was very close to Sasaki and particularly to Naoki. The two became friends in 1920, and they remained particularly close to one another thereafter. The loss of a dear friend of more than a dozen years was perhaps as heartbreaking as the loss of Akutagawa. In the special issue in memory of Naoki, Kikuchi Kan wrote an essay titled “Go no tenaorihyō” (Table of Handicap Adjustments in *Go*). In this essay, Kan remembers how he and Naoki played *go* on the day when Naoki became very sick and was hospitalized. At Naoki’s wake, Kikuchi Kan found out that someone cleaned the room and had taken down a transcription of handicap adjustments, which had Naoki’s handwriting on it and had been hung on the all. Kan was enraged that the transcription, a souvenir of his friendship with Naoki, was thrown away. He instantly ordered the staff of *Bungei Shunjūsha* and the maid to search for it. Fortunately, it was found in the yard. Kan himself posted it back onto the wall where it had been. Although there is no written record of Kan’s sorrow at Naoki’s passing, the essay is very moving to read, and it surely expresses Kan’s sorrow in his unique way.
5.2 The Creation of the Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

It was mainly genuine and deep sorrow that motivated Kan to commemorate his deceased friends in a new way. In addition to holding lecture meetings, publishing special issues, and writing short memoirs, Kikuchi Kan decided to create two literary prizes and name them after his departed friends. And, perhaps to Kan’s surprise, these prizes eventually became not only the best memorial of his two close friends but also the most influential honors in the Japanese literary world.

The Akutagawa and Naoki prizes were by no means the earliest literary awards in modern Japan. From the mid-Meiji period, newspapers and magazines started to sponsor various writing contests to encourage contributions from promising young writers and to expand their readerships. Most of these writing contests did not have names, but they were often associated with powerhouses in the publishing business, such as Osaka mainichi shinbun, Yomiuri shinbun, Yorozu chōhō (Universal Morning Reports), Chūō kōron, and Kaizō. In addition to these contests, some awards were created prior to 1934. In 1912, Monbushō (the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) named Tsubouchi Shōyō—one of the leading men of letters in Meiji Japan—as “Bungei Kōrōsha,” or “Person of Distinguished Service to Literature,” and awarded him a medal and a prize of 2,200 yen. In 1926, right after the Writers’ Association was created out of the combination of the Association of Playwrights and the Association of Novelists, the Watanabe prize was created by the association to honor
the writers who had the most remarkable literary activities for each year. In 1929, Asahi shinbun created the Asahi Culture Award to honor artists who made outstanding contributions to Japanese culture, and many writers were given the honor.

On the other hand, the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes were the first literary prizes that were named after established writers, the first prizes that were inclusive of the literary works published not only in the hosting publication but also in all newspapers and magazines, and the first prizes that were intended to honor the most outstanding literary works produced by new writers. Moreover, none of the earlier literary awards—including the writing contests—were operated on a regular basis. None of them achieved national influence, and none were able to survive World War Two and be revived in the post-war years. Though neither prizes was intended to recognize well known writers as many other literary prizes—such as the Nobel Prize—do, both of them established, in Japan, the norm for literary prizes.

Kikuchi Kan may have been involved in the creation of the Watanabe prize, but there is little doubt that the creation of the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes was his brainchild. Sasaki Mosaku clearly stated that, “The birth parent of these two prizes

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377 Details of the prize and its donor Watanabe Yasuji are not known. According to Odagiri, Mr. Watanabe was an entrepreneur from Hokkaido and he donated 10,000 yen to the Writers’ Association for the prize.
was Mr. Kikuchi. There is no doubt about it.” Kan expressed his idea of creating literary prizes in the names of Naoki and Akutagawa in April 1934, very soon after the death of Naoki.

Iketani\textsuperscript{380}, Sasaki, and Naoki, these folks who were close to me died one after another. Things are getting more and more desolate around here. To commemorate Naoki, I think the company will create something like a “Naoki prize” and present it to new writers of popular literature. At the same time, we also will create something called the “Akutagawa prize” to award new writers of pure literature. Rather than to commemorate my deceased friends with these prizes, we created them to use the names of my deceased friends for the sake of the prosperity of this magazine, which has lost both Akutagawa and Naoki.\textsuperscript{381}

This announcement is interesting in many ways. First is the distinction that Kikuchi Kan makes between the two prizes. As stated in the passage, the Naoki prize was intended for new writers of popular literature (\textit{taishū bungei}) while the Akutagawa prize was for new writers of pure literature (\textit{junbungaku}). This distinction testifies to the fact that Kikuchi Kan had an inclusive conception of “literature” and that he believed writers of both kinds of literature should be recognized for their achievements. This belief certainly reflects Kan’s own trajectory in his literary career: he debuted as a new writer of pure literature and later became a well-received popular writer. However, he was by no means the first person to distinguish between \textit{taishū bungei} and \textit{junbungaku}. As the sensational success of Naoki testifies, Japan had

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{380} Iketani Shinzaburō 池谷信三郎 (1900-1933): A young novelist and playwright who contributed frequently to \textit{Bungei shunjū} during his short writing career. He died at the age of 33 on December 21, 1933, two months prior to the deaths of Sasaki and Naoki.
\end{thebibliography}
produced several prominent writers of \textit{taishū bungei} in the 1920s and 1930s who were very influential literary celebrities in the \textit{bundan} and among the general public. In literary criticism, the topic of \textit{taishū bungei} had been discussed heatedly for years, especially after the socialist writers started to claim that the real \textit{taishū bungaku} should be created by the proletariat, for the proletariat, and in order to educate the proletariat. Kikuchi Kan was strongly opposed to this proletarian \textit{taishū bungaku}, and he had argued with socialist writers for a long time. At the same time, he still believed that writers of all kinds of literature should be awarded for their quality. This was despite the fact that most of Kan’s contemporaries respected \textit{junbungaku} much more than \textit{taishū bungei}. In this respect, the Naoki prize is significant in the development of modern Japanese literature not only because it was one of the first influential literary prizes in Japan, but because its was awarded particularly to writers of popular literature. At the same time, the creation of both the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes testifies again to the fact that Kikuchi Kan paid close attention to the status and welfare of writers, whether these writers produced high literature or popular literature. It also marks, whether it was Kikuchi Kan’s intention or not, an attempt to establish the profession of writing popular literature as equally legitimate and desirable to that of writing serious literature.

On the other hand, the creation of both the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes also helped institutionalize the commonly perceived distinction between \textit{junbungaku} and \textit{taishū bungaku}. I will not discuss this topic in detail because it would require a book-length study to outline the conceptualization of \textit{junbungaku}, \textit{taishū bungaku}, and other
concepts including chūkan bungaku (middle literature) and junsui shōsetsu (pure novel), and to examine the effects that the creation and development of the two prizes had on these concepts. Yet, there is no doubt that the two literary prizes played an important role in the conceptions of various genres and of “literature” in general in modern Japan.

Second, the paragraph cited above is also interesting because it seems to be a very blunt statement of self-interest. Kikuchi Kan claims that he and others at Bungei shunjū created the two prizes not to commemorate their deceased friends but to help the magazine maintain and expand its circulation. This is regarded by most literary critics as another example of Kikuchi Kan’s simple and honest personality. It is natural to conjecture that this statement resulted merely from Kan’s pragmatic attitude toward literature and life in general, the attitude that he demonstrated in so many postscripts and by the motto “life first, art second.” Yet, this kind of simple and honest confession was a perfect example of a characteristic of Kan and Bungei shunjū, a characteristic that was often described as refreshing and stylish. This surely was related to “Japanese modernity” in the 1920s and 1930s.

After the Great Kantō Earthquake, this Japanese modernity flourished because of the massive reconstruction of Tokyo, the relatively loose governmental censorship, emerging new ideologies, and the expanding mass media and entertainment business. As the terms “moga, mobo” and “ero, guro, nansensu” illustrate, a more honest, self-expressive, non-conformist, and non-traditional attitude was much desired and admired during this decade. Kikuchi Kan’s pragmatism and bluntness surely was the
part of his nature that seemed most compatible with this new modern personality. On the other hand, Kan might have been intentionally playing on this attitude to attract more readers, especially of the younger generation. He and other editors certainly knew that it was critical for *Bungei shunju*’s success to keeping *Bungei shunju* consistently refreshing and stylish in the eyes of the modern middlebrow readers. The creation of a literary prize was a modern novelty at the time. Creating two literary prizes at the same time in the names of two prominent writers was provocative in Japan. Moreover, it was announced openly in public that these two prizes would be created not to commemorate the two writers who were the creator’s closest friends but to help the magazine’s business. This surely seemed to be an action of a modern maverick. There was no question that Kan was extremely saddened by the loss of Naoki, but the announcement of the prize which totally disregarded ninjō (human feelings), was meant to reinforce the image and the status of *Bungei shunju* as a modern maverick in the contemporary literary world and publishing business.

Underneath the seeming coldness and indifference of his public posture, there also seems to be a hint of the nihilist tendency that Kan displays in the articles he wrote after the Great Kanto Earthquake. It is impossible to determine Kan’s real motivations for writing the essay and creating the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes, but it could have been a mixture of genuine sorrow, his pragmatism, and his nihilist attitude. Kikuchi Kan was a complex person and the publication of *Bungei shunju* was a difficult and complex enterprise.
The announcement of the creation of the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes was published in the January issue of 1935.

Announcement of the Akutagawa·Naoki Prizes

- In order to commemorate deceased Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Naoki Sanjūgo, we decided to create the Akutagawa prize and the Naoki prize. We hope this contributes a little to the flourishing of culture.
- Bungei Shunjūsha will provide the prize money and the costs that are required by the above prizes.

Committee of the Akutagawa·Naoki Prizes

Following this announcement, the “Provisions” and the “Particulars” were also published. The provisions of both prizes were basically the same. First, both prizes were to be awarded to unknown or new writers who published the best creative works in any newspaper or magazine, including coterie journals. Second, both prizes would present a gold watch and five hundred yen to the winners. Third, a committee would be formed to choose the winner of each prize. The members of the committees would be chosen from friends of Bungei Shunjūsha or people who had good relationships with the company. Fourth, both prizes would be awarded every six months. There would be no winner when no work of sufficiently high quality could be found. Fifth, the winners of both prizes would be encouraged to publish a creative work in one of the publications of the company. The first selections for the prizes would be chosen from the works that were published from January to June in 1935, and the results would be published in the October issue of Bungei shunjū and the November issues of
Hanashi and Ōru yomimono. Finally, the company would make efforts to include the winners in all award ceremonies and to have the committee members introduce the winners’ next works to other newspapers and magazines.

There were two differences in the provisions for awarding the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes. One was that the Naoki prize was to be awarded to “the best work of taishū bungei by an unknown or new writer,” while the Akutagawa prize was to be awarded to “the best sōsaku” (best creative writing of pure literature). The other was that the two prize committees would be comprised of different members. The first Akutagawa prize committee included Kikuchi Kan, Kume Masao, Kojima Masajirō, Sasaki Mosaku, Yamamoto Yūzō, Satō Haruo, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, Murou Saisei, Takii Kōsaku, Yokomitsu Riichi, and Kawabata Yasunari. Kikuchi, Kume, Kojima and Sasaki, along with Yoshikawa Eiji, Osaragi Jirō, Mikami Otokichi, and Shirai Kyōji, were listed as the members of the Naoki prize committee.

It is plausible that all the details of the prizes were worked out not by Kikuchi Kan himself, but by others at Bungei Shunjūsha. According to Nagai Tatsuo, the decision to create the two prizes was announced at an editors meeting in October 1934, and the next day the staff members started to discuss the details. It was Nagai who, in the capacity of executive director, took care of the matters concerning the two prizes. Nonetheless, Kikuchi Kan who gave birth to the two prizes, publicized them, praised them, and defended them. During the first years of the existence of the prizes, Kikuchi Kan made comments concerning the prizes frequently in his “Hanashi no

kuzukago” (Wastebasket of Gossip) essays. In the essay that appeared in the February issue of 1935, Kan said that he was happy that the creation of the prizes was said to have been warmly welcomed by many people. On the other hand, he argued against those who thought the selection of the members of Akutagawa prize committee was one-sided.

I think the selection is fine as it is. In a sense, it is only reasonable that the Akutagawa prize will be given to works that somehow drop hints of Akutagawa’s style, or at least are of an art-for-art’s-sake nature. … It will be great if someone creates something like a Kobayashi Takiji prize for the sake of outstanding works of proletarian literature. 383

In addition to this kind of ideologically motivated criticism, there were also concerns that the prize money was too little. Some even suggested that both prizes be awarded once a year and one thousand yen be given to each winner. Kikuchi Kan admitted that the money was a relatively small amount: the annual total of 2,000 yen was only equal to the second prize of the Asahi Award. However, he decided to keep the prizes as they were because twice a year would provide more chances for new writers. 384 Moreover, Kan was expecting a more independent and sustainable way of maintaining the prizes. In 1938, he started Nihon Bungaku Shinkōkai (The

384 Ibid, 150-152.
Association of the Advancement of Japanese Literature), which was assigned as the sponsor of Akutagawa, Naoki, and Kikuchi prizes. Bungei Shunjūsha donated 30,000 yen and eventually 100,000 to support the prizes.

Generally speaking, the contemporary literary world received the prizes positively. Most major newspapers and magazines reported the news and expressed their appreciation. The prizes surely helped Bungei shunjū expand its circulation. They also contributed greatly to the development of modern Japanese literature. Kikuchi Kan wrote the following paragraph in the October issue of 1934, one month after the first Akutagawa and Naoki prizes were awarded.

> Of course, both the Akutagawa prize and the Naoki prize were created partly for the sake of this magazine’s publicity. I have announced this intention from the beginning. However, we created them partly because we have a righteous intention to honor the eminent writers such as Akutagawa and Naoki, and at the same time, to facilitate the emergence of new writers in an impartial way. Kikuchi Kan, “Hanashi no kuzukago,” as cited in Odagiri Susumu, “Akutagawa shō no hanseiki,” Akutagawa shō shōjiten (Tokyo: 1983) 150.

This statement epitomizes the motivation behind the creation of both the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes.

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385 The Kikuchi prize was created with the Association of the Advancement of Japanese literature. However, its provisions and committee members were published in February 1939, and its first winner was announced in April 1939.
5.3 Tightening censorship

The first decade in the Shōwa period was challenging for Bungei shunjū also in terms of the political situation. This was primarily because there was a shift in Japanese politics:

From 1924 to 1932, the two conservative parties monopolized the premiership and extended their influence among other political elite groups. Between 1932 and 1940, however, party influence declined swiftly and steeply. In its wake, the opinions of administrative specialists in the civilian and military bureaucracies, joined by the views of a newly emergent business elite, became paramount in the determination of Japan’s foreign and domestic policies. ³⁸⁷

Thought control and publication censorship, which had been relatively lax in the Taishō years, started to tighten while these administrative specialists and the business elite became dominant. Chian iji hō, or the Peace Preservation Law, was promulgated in 1925 and revised in 1928. It eventually covered most aspects of social life and provided legal justification for arrest, interrogation, trial, imprisonment, and even torture by the police.

The “enpon boom” also played its role in the development of the censorship of the publishing business in the early Shōwa period. During the Taishō period, there existed informal consultations between publishers and censors. However, the boom in the

publishing business forced the censors to stop these consultations simply because they could not keep up with the new publications. Requests to reform the existing censorship system started to emerge.\textsuperscript{388}

Particularly after the Manchurian Incident, the political and social milieu turned sharply toward the right and nationalistic fervor was on the rise. As a result, the censorship intensified, and the number of banned publications increased. According to a survey by the Home Ministry, the annual total of banned publications ranged between 789 and 1,227 during the first four years of the Shōwa period. However, it grew by 63\% to 1,922 in 1930. The next year, there was another sharp increase to 2,518. In 1932, the last year of the survey, the total was a record 3,609, a 43\% increase over the year of 1931. For each year, two categories of cases were recorded: “\textit{Annei chitsujo bōgai}” [Disruption of Peace and Order] and “\textit{Fūzoku kairan}” [Violating Public Morals]. Prior to 1930, the “Public Morals” cases were overwhelmingly more frequent than the “Peace and Order” ones. In 1930, however, “Peace and Order” cases tripled while “Public Morals” cases decreased by 58\%. For the next two years, “Peace and Order” cases dominated. In total, “Peace and Order” cases occupied more than 80\% of all the banned publications from 1930 to 1932.\textsuperscript{389} It is clear that “Disruption of Peace and Order” was intended to prosecute works judged to threaten the existing political order and its established ideology. This sharp

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{388} For a brief account of thought control and censorship in the Shōwa period, see Jay Rubin, “Overview: Thought Control and Censorship after Meiji,” \textit{Injurious to Public Morals} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 227-234.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{389} These statistics include magazines, newspapers, books, posters, and commercial pamphlets. They are drawn from a survey by the Bureau of Police [\textit{Keihokyoku}] of the Home Ministry, as cited in Hashimoto Motome, \textit{Nihon shuppan hanbaishi} (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1964) 456-457.}
increase in the cases of banned publications, especially of publications banned for “Disruption of Peace and Order,” testifies to the fact that under the influence of a changing political, social, and cultural milieu, the Japanese government intentionally tightened its control over the publishing business from the late 1920s to the early 1930s.

However, it is interesting to observe that after 1932, censorship cases decreased dramatically. According to Tokyodō’s *Yearbook of Publishing* [*Shuppan nenkan*], there were 362 cases of banned magazine and books in 1932, about 10% of all censorship cases that year. It decreased to 205 in 1933, came back up to 302 again in 1934, but took a nose dive down to 114 in 1935, and went down further to 96 in 1936.³⁹⁰ Rather than a relaxation of the censorship, this phenomenon was caused by the sudden decline of the proletarian movement in Japan, and particularly of its influence on literature and art at large. It is well known that the Japanese government expanded and intensified its crackdown on leftist movements in the early Shōwa years. As Jay Rubin observes, “The crackdown on communism expanded to the suppression of left-leaning cultural and literary groups that had heretofore been considered legal.”³⁹¹ Two incidents best demonstrated this tendency in the governmental crackdown. In February 1933, the prominent proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji was tortured to death by the Special Higher Police. In the same year, Takikawa Yukitoki—a law professor at Kyoto University—was suspended from teaching by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture due to his liberalism in his study of

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criminal law. In addition, many leftist activists and artists were put in prison. Many writers and intellectuals issued announcements of their conversion from their leftist ideology. This governmental repression dramatically reduced leftist publications, and consequently, the numbers of banned publications.

On the other hand, the sudden increase of censorship cases after 1929 also testifies to the fact that the government was not prepared for and could not react to the rapid changes that were taking place in the publishing business prior to 1929. By the end of the Taishō period, no revision had been made to the Publication Law that was put into effect in 1893. It had been almost twenty years since the Press Law was promulgated in 1909. In the summer of 1926, the Writers’ Association contacted Nihon Zasshi Kyōkai (Japanese Association of Magazines), and committee members of the two organizations produced a proposal and presented it to the Home Minister. In the proposal, the organizations suggested that they create a consultation institute jointly with the government and that the government replace the total ban of the *entirety* of violating books or magazines with the partial ban of the violating *portion* only. The government followed the proposal and started the partial ban in September 1927. Also after the proposal in 1926, the Home Ministry changed its practice of collecting finished samples of publications after printing to collecting galley proofs. The publishers welcomed this change because it helped them to avoid huge losses in printing costs in the case a publication was banned. But this new practice of galley proof collection was stopped and the old routine was restored the next year because it has become a burden on the Ministry.
By 1926, the publishers and writers were aware that communication with the government was insufficient and ineffective, and they wanted to change how the government enforced the laws in order to minimize their risks of financial loss. Not surprisingly, Kikuchi Kan was one of the writers and publishers involved in drafting and presenting the proposal. After all, he was the creator and a committee member of the Writers’ Association, which initiated the proposal. It is unknown, however, if Kikuchi Kan was the one who had the idea and started the process, and what motivated him to act upon this idea if he was indeed the initiator. One plausible reason is that Kikuchi Kan was looking toward the future. As noted previously, he already had a vision of the future of *Bungei shunjū* in 1925, and by the summer of 1926, he had probably begun planning for the transformation of the magazine from a literary to a general-interest publication. Kan was shrewd enough to know that the ability to publish on sensitive social and political issues meant a higher possibility of being censored. The proposal was perhaps intended as a preventive measure.

As testified to by the number of banned publications from 1929 to 1932, this proposal was not very effective in the face of an increasingly severe state repression. Among the thousands of books, magazines, and newspapers that were censored during these four years was *Bungei shunjū*. As early as June 1929, the magazine encountered its first government ban: two short stories—Takeda Rintarō’s “Bōryoku” (Violence) and Tanaka Jun’s “Mura no kaii” (Uncanny Phenomenon in a Village)—that appeared in the June issue were censored. Fortunately, the issue was allowed to be circulated.
with the pages of the offending stories left blank. However, merely four months later, a much more serious *hakkin*, or “circulation ban,” was imposed on the magazine.

In the October 1929 issue, six contributions to the *Jitsuwa* contest were published. Two of the six pieces—“*Kangofu seikatsu oboegaki*” (A Note on the Life of a Nurse) and “*Tōjin fujin no nazo*” (The Riddle of the Woman who Threw herself in the Water)—were judged to have violated public morals. As a result, the entire October issue was banned and not one copy was allowed to circulate. This ban had serious consequences. First, it caused a financial loss that Kikuchi Kan estimated to be between 5,000 and 10,000 yen. This loss equaled anywhere from one quarter to a half of the company’s net worth and “posed a danger to the survival of the magazine.”

Second, it caused damage to the magazine’s relationship with its readership. Although the circulation numbers barely changed after the ban, readers must have felt some disappointment when they could not read the October issue.

Third, the ban greatly disturbed Kikuchi Kan. He regretted that the magazine published the two contributions, which he deemed obscene stories. While admitting that the nature of the two obscene stories more or less matched *Bungei shunjū*’s middlebrow character, Kan tried to reiterate and reestablish the image of the magazine that he had envisioned since the mid-1920s:

> Does that kind of careless mistake of *Bungei shunjū* deserve this harsh punishment? … Perhaps the folks at the Bureau of Police do not know about *Bungei shunjū*, but I believe it surely is a magazine that is beneficial to Japanese society. It is neither radical nor reactionary. It advocates a new liberalism, and it is a good friend of the intelligentsia.

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At the same time, he expressed his dissatisfaction toward the censorship.

A magazine as good as Bungei shunjū is banned because of trifling articles. I think this is damaging to the nation. Rather than censoring insignificant words and sentences, the officials at the Bureau of Police should remain focused on larger issues. 393

Although Kan did not elaborate on this occasion what he meant by “this is damaging to the nation,” nor did he specify what larger issues the officials should “remain focused on,” he obviously was dissatisfied with the censorship system. This dissatisfaction and questioning of censorship began much earlier than this incident. As mentioned previously, he was one of the representatives who proposed revisions of the Publication Law and the Press Law to the Home Ministry in 1926. When running for a seat in the Japanese House of Representatives in the spring of 1928, Kan also publicized a campaign slogan: “Rectify the Censorship System!” In a column in the March issue of 1928, an explanation of this slogan appeared as follows:

To request the rectification of the censorship system is to request the freedom to express one’s thoughts, and to request the right to tell the truth.

For this reason, the rectification of the censorship system is not an issue that concerns only writers and thinkers. On the contrary, it is an issue that concerns the whole nation. If Japan is one of the “civilized nations,” its citizens have to request en masse freedom of thought. 394

This passage helps explain what Kan meant by “damaging to the nation” in his

393 Ibid, 58.
comments on the 1929 ban. The writer of this column is not identified. However, it surely reflected Kikuchi Kan’s ideals concerning reasonable censorship, good government, and “civilized nation.”

However strong his dissatisfaction with the contemporary censorship system, Kikuchi Kan seems to have lost the desire to fight for his ideals after the circulation ban in 1929. Instead, he decided to identify and solve the “problems” within the company. In other words, he did not hold his ground as a liberal and humanist as expressed in the passages cited above and elsewhere, and he failed to stand up against censorship. Rather than take on the government, Kan vented his confusion and rage on his subordinates at Bungei Shunjūsha. It is said that he was furious at the editors’ meeting after the ban and asked everyone to resign. Although most of the editors were rehired, Suga Tadao was never restored as editor-in-chief. Kikuchi Kan chose Sasaki Mosaku who Kan thought had “good commonsense” to fill that position.395

There appears to be no concrete evidence to explain the shift in his posture from challenging the censorship system to disciplining his own company. One possible reason is that the two articles that caused the ban were truly obscene in nature. Kikuchi Kan considered literature a means of moral education. As demonstrated in previous chapters, he believed that literature should not only have artistic merits, but also “content-derived values” that were beneficial, morally or economically, to the reader’s life. He created Bungei shunjū and many other publications in order to foster

literary cultivation among a mass of readership. The publication of the obscene stories might have been entertaining to some, but it certainly was a serious violation of this principle of mass moral education. This perhaps was why Kan was enraged more by his reckless editors than by strict censorship.\(^{396}\)

A second reason is that Kan most certainly knew that challenging the ban would be futile, and even worse, the challenge would backfire and cause more damage to the publisher. If Bungei Shunjūsha did not recover or even collapsed because of the ban or the challenge, Kan’s personal finances and professional reputation would suffer greatly. Moreover, the employees and the writers who were closely associated with the magazine would suffer even more, especially at a time of economic depression. The readers also would lose a “good friend” that is “fresh and liberal.” Thus, it is not surprising to see that the company posted a “hatsubai kinshi zettai kihi shugi,” or Absolutely-No-Circulation-Ban-ism in November, 1929. As always, “life first, art second.”

In attempting to understand why Kikuchi Kan in the end, so willingly cooperated with the government, it is instructive to refer to an earlier debate between Kikuchi Kan and Maedakō Hiroichirō, the prominent proletarian writer/critic. The argument took place in February 1923. Tsuda Kōzō, who was considered a young proletarian writer at the time, contributed an essay to Bungei shunjū, for which he was criticized on the left, which saw the journal as a bastion of bourgeois literature. Kan heard about this criticism and he arranged for a short essay to appear in his column titled “Sesō

\(^{396}\) According the company history, at the editors’ meeting soon after the ban, Kan used very harsh language to scold the editors and asked those “reckless folks” to resign. Ibid, 59.
"zakkan” (Miscellaneous Thoughts about this Society). In the first half of this essay, subtitled “Shisōteki keppei” (Ideological Scrupulousness), Kikuchi Kan tries to defend Tsuda by stating that he did not believe there should be “class division” in literary matters. He also asks a rhetorical question in a satirical way: Why was it all right for proletarian writers to publish in the major magazines that were owned and managed by capitalists? Following the logic of the “ideological scrupulousness” that was displayed in the criticism toward Tsuda, Kan jokes in the typical *Bungei shunjū* way, that those proletarian writers should either kill themselves or hide in the mountains eating nothing but brackens. More interesting is the second half of the essay in which Kan tries to provide the reasons of his defense:

> Compromise! Compromise! The secret of modern life is compromise. If someone finds a method to live in modern times without any compromise, I’ll be willing to serve that person in any way. It is necessary to compromise in modern life as long as one believes in the just and noble causes from the bottom of his heart.

> Nobody should scold those who make one or two compromises. Nay, those who make one compromise are not entitled to scold those who make a thousand compromises. *If* there is a proletarian controversialist who is not making any compromise with the modern capitalism in his life, it is this person, and this person alone, who can criticize the so-called bourgeois writers. Such criticism made by anyone else is nonsense.\(^{397}\)

In the reply to this essay, Maedakō Hiroichirō argued on February 25 in *Yomiuri shinbun* that the correct way to live in modern life is to fight. He stated that the proletarians were not “compromising” with but were being exploited by the

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capitalists.\textsuperscript{398} Two days later, Kan published an article, also in \textit{Yomiuri shinbun}, to answer Maedakō. In this article, Kan states that by “compromise,” he was referring to the sad contradiction that the proletarian writers had to live with: they considered capitalists to be evil, but they had to make a living by selling manuscripts to the newspapers and magazines that were run by capitalists.\textsuperscript{399} This explanation of “compromise” was obviously a free interpretation that Kan made in order to retort Maedakō. It is obvious that the “compromise” in the original \textit{Bungei shunjū} article does not refer specifically to the pathetic state of a proletarian writer. It appears to be neutral or even positive in its nature: in modern times, everyone, without exception, has to compromise with the capitalist system; it is legitimate to do so as long as a person retains just and noble causes in his or her heart. As in many other debates in which Kan was involved, his conceptualizations are often fluid, and his arguments random. Still, Kikuchi Kan clearly displayed his pragmatic ideas, his conservative point of view, and his disenchantment with the proletarian ideology.

This philosophy of compromise and the policy that the magazine would never again suffer the ban of the entire issue surely worked. Once Sasaki Mosaku was hired as the editor-in-chief in 1929, an issue of \textit{Bungei shunjū} was never again banned. During the ensuing sixteen years, there were only five cases in which the magazine was ordered to remove an article, a column, or even a portion of a creative writing

\textsuperscript{399} Kikuchi Kan, “\textit{Maedakō Hiroichirō ni},” \textit{Yomiuri shinbun} 27 Feb. 1923, morning ed. : 7.
piece from its issues. This low figure contrasts sharply with the steep increase in the bans on issues of magazines that publishers all over Japan suffered in the early 1930s.

5.4 The Wartime Collaboration

This “excellent” record of compliance on the part of *Bungei shunjū* with the censorship system in the 1930s and 1940s was the result of Kan’s philosophy of compromise. However, when one takes into consideration what Kikuchi Kan and the company did and what *Bungei shunjū* published during this period of time, “compromise” does not seem adequate to describe the level of cooperation with the government. Both Kan and *Bungei shunjū*, in fact, demonstrated a willingness and eventually a desire to cooperate and collaborate with state authority. This cooperation and collaboration were much more than the “compromise” that “modern life” would normally require. During the span of these fifteen years, especially after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, Kikuchi Kan and his company grew ever closer to the state. More than anywhere else, this evolution is explicitly demonstrated in “Hanashi no kuzukago,” the column that Kan hosted in *Bungei shunjū* from August 1931 to April 1946.

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400 These bans took place in November 1933, October 1936, June 1938, February 1939, and February 1939.
401 The numbers of bans that were imposed on other leading general-interest magazines are yet to be discovered. Even *Bungaku*; a highbrow literary journal that Bungei Shunjūsha took over in 1936, had two circulation bans in the late 1930s.
402 The column first appeared in *Oru yomimono-go* (All Yomimono), the supplementary issue of *Bungei shunjū*. It was moved to *Bungei shunjū* in August 1931.
By coincidence, “Hanashi no kuzukago” was initiated in Bungei shunjū one month prior to the “Manchurian Incident.” Although the column was supposed to be a collection of “social commentary-like thoughts,” “miscellaneous records of personal affairs,” and “communication-like postscript,” Kikuchi Kan did not comment much on the situation in Manchuria either before or after the incident. Only two references to the “manmō mondai” (Manchuria and Mongolia problem) were found in the column from August 1931 to the end of 1932. The first appeared in Sept 1931: “I am glad to see Minami, the Minister of the Army, is in high spirits about the Manchuria and Mongolia Problem. It feels like we are back to the Japan of 1904 and 1905.” The second was published in December 1932, after Manshūkoku, or the Manchuria Nation, was founded. Kan questioned the validity of a survey in the Lytton Report by saying that it is unlikely that only two agreed with the creation of the Manchuria Nation among 1,500 replies, and that 50 is a more believable figure. Obviously, both references were in support of the policy and actions that the Japanese government was executing at Manchuria. Kan was actually celebrating the militarist invasion of Japan in Manchuria because it was reminiscent of the nationalist zeal seen during the Russo-Japanese war. In fact, Kan is likely to have been supportive of Japan’s invasion of Manchuria before the incident. In September 1930, Kikuchi Kan had visited the

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403 This Manchurian Incident, or Manshū jihen in Japanese, took place on September 18, 1931. Another English name of the incident is the “Mukden Incident.”
406 In January 1932, a commission was formed by the League of Nations. Victor Alexander George Robert Lytton, a British Privy Councilor, headed the commission and published a report in October 1932. Details of the survey is unknown. Kan’s comment is from Ibid, 59.
region, accompanied by Sasaki Mosaku, Naoki Sanjūgo, Yokomitsu Riichi, and Iketani Shinsaburō. This trip to the de facto colony of Japan by some of Japan’s most prominent writers surely had political implications in Japan, and it surely demonstrated the attitudes that these writers held toward the Manchuria issue.

On the other hand, these two references to the Manchuria and Mongolia Problem were buried in hundreds of comments concerning baseball games, crimes, books and magazines, and literary matters. The tone of both references is leisurely and calm. This is rather a sharp contrast to the usual sensationalist style of Kan’s political writing. It perhaps is because Kan wanted to keep the newly created column less political and serious. Moreover, there was an extensive and prolonged coverage of the incident and its consequences in other sections of Bungei shunjū from 1931 to 1932. As shrewd publishers, Kan and his editors did not forgo an opportunity such as the Manchurian Incident to expand their coverage of political and social issues, to solidify the magazine’s “general-interest” status, and to attract more readers. Their effort to utilize the incident was most evident in the arrangement of zadankai. As aforementioned, zadankai is a journalist device that Kikuchi Kan created and popularized in Japanese mass media. It was often the major attraction in an issue, and its title was always highlighted with the largest and boldest fonts in the table of contents. Prior to the Manchurian Incident, zadankai were mostly about social issues and everyday life: “criticism of radio broadcasts,” “night life in Tokyo,” “ex-convicts,” “comparison of Japanese, Chinese and Western cuisines,” “ailments and cures,” and “eastern and western cafés” are some examples of zadankai topics from

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the issues published before October 1931. Starting with the October issue, the topics suddenly changed. “Manchuria and Mongolia in Relation to Our Special Interests,” and “Air Raid and the Truth of the Imperial Air Force” were published in October; “Manchurian Incident and World War” in November; “Field Investigation of the Manchurian Incident” in January of 1932; “The Shanghai Incident and World War” in April; “Asking Araki, the Minister of Army” in September; “Recognition of the Manchuria Nation and the Tendency of the World Powers” in October; “College Professors’ Discussion of the Lytton Report” in November; and “The Truth of the Patriotic Movement at the Moment” in December. In addition to these zadankai, a section that was particularly dedicated to the Manchuria and Mongolia Problem appeared in the issues of March, April, and May in 1932.

From the titles of these zadankai, it is easy to see that the editors of Bunget shunjū grafted the magazine’s sensationalist gossip-like style of literary journalism onto reportage of political affairs. This style of reporting politics did not substantially increase circulation. From October 1931 to August 1932, the figure remained consistently at about 188,000 except for the New Year’s special issue in January 1932. On the other hand, it did not hurt the magazine in any regard. The censors did not bother the magazine either. The circulation was stable, and it started to go up beginning in September 1932. It seems that the editors believed their reports on the Manchuria and Mongolia problem were well received: in January 1933, they dispatched a special correspondent to Manchuria.
After the February 26 Incident in 1936, power was reallocated from the political parties to the military and “new bureaucrats.” Japan was led on a fast track to fascist international and domestic policies. On July 7, 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident led the Japanese army to invade Peking and consequently, full-scale war broke out between China and Japan. Under these intense political and military circumstances, Kikuchi Kan and *Bungei shunjū* rapidly changed from casual support of the military (as seen after the Manchurian Incident) to active, whole-hearted collaboration with the military and state authority.

First, Kikuchi Kan became more active in organizing writers and in Japanese domestic politics. As noted above, Kikuchi Kan became the first president of Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai in May 1936. Even though the main goal of this Writers’ Association was to advocate writers’ rights and improve writers’ welfare, it soon became an effective tool to organize writers for the purpose of collaborating with the war effort. Then in March 1937, Kan was elected as a councilman to Tokyo City Council. Although he claimed that he “did not have any aspirations to change the municipal government,” serving as a councilman of Tokyo helped him build connections within the government and facilitated his further involvement in both domestic and international politics.

After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Bungei Shunjūsha reporting machine shifted into high gear. In the August issue, a *zadankai* titled “Far East in Crisis”

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407 Ibid, 246.
408 In a later installment of the column, Kan said he regretted the fact he was elected, and he complained about the difficult schedule and the boring meetings at the council. However, these meetings provided him with chances to know politicians, and he did not express any desire to resign in the comments. Ibid, 260.
appeared and several articles were published concerning the situation in China. For the next eight months, eleven zadankai and dozens of essays on the war in China were published. However, compared with the other general-interest magazines such as Chūō kōron and Kaizō, Bungei shunjū appeared to be less dedicated to serious discussion of the war. The original sections were kept intact; the literary “Zuihitsu” section still occupied the front page position; creative works appeared continuously; war related writings were merely a small portion of the entire issues; and no editorial or substantial article was published on the war situation. As Takasaki Ryūji—one of the harshest critics of Bungei shunjū’s war activities—points out, “it seemed that [Bungei shunjū] totally ignored the war.”409 This may be true of the magazine Bungei shunjū, but the company Bungei Shunjūsha was a different matter. Bungei Shunjūsha started publishing a series of temporary supplementary issues that were dedicated to reportage on the war. The first of these supplementary issues appeared in August 1937, and it was titled “Nitchū no zenmen shōtotsu” (The Full-Scale Clash between Japan and China). However, most of the 272 pages of this supplementary issue were occupied not with serious reports on the war situation, but with essays of various topics. Takasaki describes these essays as “95% pointless,” and he attributes the lack of serious reporting to a “frivolous, speculative, and entertainment-oriented” editing policy.410

410 Ibid, 32.
The publisher’s true attitude toward the war was revealed in the postscript to the August issue of \textit{Bungei shunjū}.

At present, the attention of the entire world is focused on the North China Incident that ensued from the Marco Polo Bridge on the night of July 7. Our government made a firm determination. Our punitive expedition holds up the banner of justice and marches forward. The people support the government and encourage our military. Observing the beautiful utmost devotion of the National Defense Donation Movement and the utmost passion of the “thousand-stitch belt,” who can hold back their tears? The national unity and the Nation Mobilization system were established in an instant. We are confident that a full-scale Sino-Japanese clash is nothing to be frightened of.\textsuperscript{411}

In their typical sensationalist tone, the editors of \textit{Bungei shunjū} clearly expressed their unconditional belief in the legitimacy of the war, their doubt-free confidence in the desirability and effectiveness of the national unity and national mobilization, and their whole-hearted support for the military government.

In contrast, Kikuchi Kan himself seemed to be more composed and less feverish. In the column “Hanashi no kuzekago” in the September 1931 issue, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
It is regrettable that Japan and China take up arms against one another in north China. It might have been the inevitable consequence of the anti-Japanese sentiment of recent years. However, if Japan and China become foes like Rome and Carthage and have to fight for ten or twenty years, it will be a huge obstacle to the development of peace and culture in the Orient. However much military power Japan has, it is probably impossible to completely conquer that huge country and its four hundred million people. …
Since the incident, Chinese Central Army’s fighting can only hold up the Japanese army’s advance temporarily. However, after we gain
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{411} Instead of Marco Polo Bridge Incident, contemporary Japanese used “China Incident,” “North China Incident,” or “Japanese-Sino Incident” to refer to the event. \textit{Bungei shunjū sanjūgo-nen shikō} (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū Shinsha, 1959) 117.
our military victory, [the government] should give some careful consideration and bring about a drastic adjustment in diplomatic relations between Japan and China. …

Kan seemingly was not as optimistic about the result of the war as the other editors of Bungei shunjū had shown in the postscript. And he even suggested that Japan’s current policy toward China should be changed drastically. However, this worry and suggestion do not mean that Kan was against the war. There was no obvious opposition to the military invasion at all. On the contrary, he attributed the origin of the war simply to the “anti-Japanese sentiment” in China. He never questioned the legitimacy of Japan’s desire to “completely conquer that huge country and its four hundred million people.” Rather than the human and cultural loss that both China and Japan were already suffering in the war, Kan seemed to be more concerned with the future “development of peace and culture in the Orient”. Moreover, he was very confident that Japan would achieve victory. In this confidence, there was an implicit sense of pride expressed toward the supremacy of Japan’s military power. It is then, not surprising that in other comments, Kan showed his sympathy for the Japanese soldiers who were killed or wounded, and praised the soldiers for fighting for Japan and for “peace and culture in the Orient.”

As a consequence of the rapid advance that the Japanese military made in China in late 1937 and early 1938, Kikuchi Kan became increasingly optimistic and zealous about the military force of Japan and a future victory. “Like the great victory in the

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Sino-Japanese war, like the great victory in the Russo-Japanese war, we had another great victory in this China Incident. It is, by all means, a joyous event. “The strong Japanese Air Force is reliable. In recent events, our people are no longer afraid of England, America, or the Soviet Union because our air force is dependable.” “It is the one-year anniversary of the China Incident. The war has just started. … However, it is certain that we will win. It is just a question of when things will be resolved.”

More than the words, the actions of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha are convincing testimony to the fact that they voluntarily cooperated with the government’s military efforts. As soon as the full-scale war broke out, Bungei Shunjūsha donated money and supplies for the purpose of “national defense.” In October 1937, it gave one thousand yen out of the profit that the company made from the first supplementary war issue published in September. By the end of 1937, it had donated seven thousand yen from the profit it made from all the supplementary war issues.

Further, in the last three months of 1937, Kan urged readers to donate books and magazines that were easy and entertaining to read. These items would be collected as “Zensen bunko” (Frontline Collection) and sent to the frontline by the Writers’ Association. This effort to support the troops was continued until March 1938. The

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413 Ibid, 270. This was published in December 1937.
414 Ibid, 278. This piece was published in January 1938.
415 Ibid, 299. This piece was published in August 1938.
company published a supplementary issue of Ōru yomimono, titled Kōgun imon zenshū (Complete Works in Support of the Imperial Army), and donated 35,000 copies to the Imperial Army.

The hallmark of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū’s voluntary cooperation with the militarist government was the award ceremony of the sixth Akutagawa prize. The winner of the prize was decided in February 1938 and announced in the March issue.

The Akutagawa prize, as introduced in a separate announcement, was awarded to Hino Ashihei’s Fun’nyōtan (Tales of Excrement and Urine).416 We are happy that an unknown new writer is able to win. This fits the purpose of the prize. The novel is wonderful. Although its title is dirty, the work is vigorous in style and at the same time, delicate in taste. It contains a thread of melancholy and possesses good descriptions. Moreover, the fact that this writer is a soldier fighting on the front deserves our total support. His work saves the Akutagawa prize, which has been lack-luster of late, from its monotone dull quality. … I always believe that only real soldiers are able to produce real war literature, or even battlefield literature. It is gratifying that such vigorous new writers as Mr. Hino are charging ahead on the battlefields of central China. I think we should expect from Mr. Hino the right kind of a new war literature.417

Perhaps with the objective of reinvigorating the Akutagawa prize, the award ceremony took place on the frontline in China. At the time, the famed literary critic Kobayashi Hideo was on an assignment in Shanghai. Bungei Shunjūsha asked Kobayashi to present the prize and he agreed. On March 27, a fairly simple ceremony was held in Hangzhou, where Hino was stationed. In addition to Kobayashi and Hino, two commanding officers, a second lieutenant from the army’s Information Corps, and

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416 火野葦平 (1907-1960): novelist. He studied at Waseda University, and was involved in proletarian movement. He converted in prison in 1932, and fought in China starting in 1937. Besides Fun’nyōtan, he also wrote many war-themed novels.
the entire squad attended. After Kobayashi, Hino, and one of the commanding officers gave short speeches, the award was presented and the ceremony was over.

Despite its simplicity, this battlefront award ceremony of the Akutagawa prize can be seen as a symbol of Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha’s deeper involvement in the war. Prior to this ceremony, Kan and the company often published pro-war messages in their periodicals and gave donations (both money and reading materials) to the military. These pro-war activities can be described as a kind of “voluntary cooperation” with the militarist government. They did not go beyond what many writers/journalists and most magazine publishers were doing to support the government’s policy at the time. However, the battlefront ceremony demonstrated a desire to actively collaborate with the military to prosecute the war in China. The fact that the coveted Akutagawa prize was presented to a soldier writer in service on the battlefront in China sufficiently demonstrated that Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha avidly support the war against China. Moreover, Hino was transferred from the fighting unit to the Information Corp shortly after the ceremony. At the Information Corp, he was able to use his talent and write about the war as a military-assigned professional writer. It is very likely Kikuchi Kan and his company played a role in Hino’s transfer for the benefit of their publications.

About the same time as the ceremony, Kikuchi Kan expressed explicitly his decision to actively collaborate with the government.

At the time of this national crisis, I began to think that it is a good thing for a magazine publisher to collaborate [with the government for the sake of] the national objective. In other words, I intend to contribute our strong resource to fight in the international propaganda
war. I want to counter the demagoguery directed toward Japan and introduce Japanese culture to foreign countries.\textsuperscript{418}

Kan published this passage mainly to explain the rationale for creating \textit{Japan Today}, an overseas version of \textit{Bungei shunju} that started in April 1938. This is probably the first time that Kan, publicly and explicitly, announced he and the company would fight the war to achieve the national objective. This announcement, along with the battlefront ceremony awarding the Akutagawa prize, clearly marked a transition from what was a “voluntary cooperation” to an “active collaboration” in Kan’s and the publisher’s wartime behavior.

Further actions soon followed. The publisher reinforced its reporting capability by dispatching Satō Haruo as a reporter on special assignment to China in May 1938. The next month, another reporter was also transferred from Manchuria to China. The next stage in the escalation of “active collaboration” started in September when Kikuchi Kan began to plan a writers’ trip to China in his capacity as the president of the Writers’ Association. This trip was sponsored by Naikaku Jōhōbu, or the Information Bureau of the Cabinet. It appears that this Information Bureau contacted Kan about the trip, which was originally designed for four or five people. Kikuchi Kan was concerned that volunteers would be few since they would go to Hankou, the epicenter of fierce fighting in China. So he asked about a dozen writers to meet at the Information Bureau so that he would be able to find four or five people willing to go. To his surprise, almost every one of the writers at the meeting expressed a desire to join the trip. Kikuchi Kan himself admitted that he did not plan to go at first.

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid, 282.
However, after the presentation by the Information Bureau, he also decided to go along. Out of about two-dozen candidates, Kan selected twenty to form what became known as the “Pen Butai” (Pen Troop). The criteria for his choices were: (a) writers who were popular among readers; and (b) writers who were young, energetic, and healthy. Priority was given to popular writers because Kan believed that “popular writers can directly transform what they observe in the war into literary works.”

This Pen Troop was divided into an Army Division and a Navy Division. The Army Division left Japan on Sept 11, and the Navy Division on Sept 14.

As the president of the Writers’ Association and the organizer of the trip, Kan joined the Navy Division. The details of the journey are unknown. According to Kan’s account, they arrived in Nanjing and traveled upriver along the Yangtze as far as Jiujiang. In November, they returned to Tokyo.

Surprisingly, about two months later, Kikuchi Kan once again departed for China. In late January, Kan took a flight from Tokyo to Shanghai and went on to Nanjing and Wuhan. During this trip, he mainly stayed in the vicinities of Nanjing and Xuzhou and visited the battlefronts in order to collect materials for a biography of Captain Nishizumi, who was revered as the “God of War” of the Shōwa period. At the battlefronts, he frequently interacted with Japanese soldiers: taking pictures with them, signing books for them, and giving speeches. His impressions of these soldiers were

420 The Army Division included Kume Masao, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Shirai Kyōji, Kataoka Teppei, Kishida Kunio, Ozaki Shirō, Takii Kōsaku, Fukada Kyūya, Niwa Fumio, Asano Akira, Nakatani Takao, Satō Ōnosuke, and Tomisawa Ui. The Navy Division included Kikuchi Kan, Satō Haruo, Yoshikawa Eiji, Kojima Masajirō, Kitamura Komatsu, Hamamoto Hiroshi, and Yoshiya Nobuko. Hayashi Fumio went on the same trip with the Army Division as a special correspondent dispatched by Kaizōsha.
all very positive. There were no accounts of the suffering of the wounded and very few descriptions of damage to the towns and rural areas of China. Every comment in the “Hanashi no kuzukago” was informally written, and many of the comments seem more like the jottings of a tourist than war reportage.

In April 1940, Kikuchi Kan went to China for a third time within one and a half years. This trip was more official: to attend the celebration of the establishment of the new Nationalist government of China at Nanjing. He was the representative of Japanese writers and artists. It seems the Japanese government treated this representative of Japanese artists with great respect: Kan was aboard the flight with Abe Nobuyuki, an ex-Prime Minister of Japan, who had recently been assigned as the Japanese ambassador to the puppet Chinese government. In the souvenir photograph of the celebration that was taken at the main entrance to the Nationalist government building, Kan stood in the first row right next to Abe, a prominent position representing his importance.

In addition to these frequent trips to China after 1938, Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha were active within Japan organizing events in support of the war. One of the major events was the lecture series called “Bungei Jūgo Undō” (Literary Home-Front Movement). The official sponsors of the lectures were the Writers’ Association and Mainichi Shinbunsha, the publisher of Mainichi shinbun. However, it was the
personnel at Bungei Shunjūsha who did all the work. The idea for organizing this
lecture series was initiated by none other than Kikuchi Kan. In a comment published
in “Hanashi no kuzukago” in January 1940, Kan writes:

I think we, as writers, should do our best to strengthen the spirit of all
the citizens. This is only my personal plan, but I want to gather some
volunteers in the literary world and we will have a canvassing tour
through the nation. I want to start a real patriotic movement that is not
too obsessive about details and has no isms or political agenda.

The first lecture tour in this series started on May 6 at the city of Hamamatsu. The
lecturers traveled from the Kanto region to the Kinki region. They visited wounded
soldiers at military hospitals during the daytime and gave speeches at night. The
second was held at the Kōshin and Kitariku regions in June. The third took place in
Korea and Manchuria in August, and the fourth in Okinawa and Taiwan. Kikuchi Kan
went on the last two lecture trips and visited the colonies. Through the year of 1941,
the second round of the lecture series was held in smaller cities all over Japan.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjūsha
showed even more zeal toward the so-called “Great East Asia War.” On May 26,
1942, Nihon Bungaku Hōkokukai (The Association of Japanese Literary Patriotism)
was created as a replacement for the Writers’ Association. Although Tokutomi Soho
was elected to be the president of the new Association, Kikuchi Kan still played an
active role in the operations of the Association. For example, in November 1942, the
Association organized a “Daitōa Bungakusha Daikai” or “Conference of Great East
Asian Writers.” Writers from China, Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Taiwan
were invited to Tokyo to attend the conference. One of these writers was Nikolai Apollonovich Baikov, a Russian writer who lived in Manchuria after the Russian Revolution. It was Kikuchi Kan who discovered this Russian writer, published his novels, invited him to the conference, and received him in Tokyo. In the “Hanashi no kuzukago” column published in the November and December issues, Kan mentioned Baikov’s literature several times and introduced some information concerning the conference. Kikuchi Kan was, without doubt, heavily involved in the operations of the Association of Japanese Literary Patriotism.

In January 1943, Bungei Shunjušha published a new magazine titled Kōkū bunka (Arial Culture). It was created, with the support of the Aviation Office of the Army under the auspices of Kōkū Bungakukai (Association of Arial Literature), a literary organization created and presided over by Kikuchi Kan. In February 1943, Bungei Shunjušha donated an aircraft to the Imperial Air Force and Kan expressed his willingness to donate more if the company’s financial situation would allow. In November 1943, the company founded the Manshū Bungei Shunjušha, a Manchurian branch office created to circumvent paper rationing in the Japanese home islands and to reinforce the propaganda machinery in the colony.

Despite all the efforts that Kikuchi Kan and Bungei Shunjušha exerted in support of the war, Bungei shunjū was designated as a “literary magazine” by Nihon Shuppankai (The Association of Japanese Publishers)—a governmental regulating body of the publishing business—in January 1944. This was a shock to Kikuchi Kan

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and the company because *Bungei shunjū* had been regarded as one of the leading general-interest magazines for many years. Kikuchi Kan complained about this designation in “Hanashi no kuzukago,” which best summarized the magazine’s active collaboration with the government and the military and even suggested the special “favor” the company received in return.

This magazine has the largest circulation of all general-interest magazines. In comparison to the other two, or three [general-interest] magazines, this magazine has won tremendous support from the intelligentsia. We are confident to say that *Bungei shunjū* is the best-known Japanese magazine in the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, Manchuria, and the Nationalist China. Since the China Incident, we have conformed to the guidance and the orders that were given by the government and the military, and we earnestly collaborated with the prosecution of the war. Because of this, we have received almost no complaints from the government and the military. In addition, we were even granted a letter of appreciation last year by the Information Corp of the Army. I believe *Bungei shunjū* is the only general-interest magazine to have received such a letter. In the recent two or three years, there have been frequent reductions in paper rations. The reduction rates of *Bungei shunjū* were much lower compared with those of the other magazines. Therefore, I believe we deserve the right to be designated as a general-interest magazine much more than any of the others.  

It is obvious that more than any other magazine, *Bungei shunjū* was the one that most actively played the role of a propaganda machine for the government and the military. Kikuchi Kan obviously took great pride in the contributions his magazine and company made to the war effort. This led many later critics to wonder: why Kikuchi Kan, who was frequently referred to as a humanist, so willingly and actively supported a war that caused such unfathomable damage?

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First, Kan’s collaboration with the government and the military was surely out of commercial considerations. As noted above, Kikuchi Kan started to oversee the editing of the magazine after it suffered its first circulation ban in October 1929. Soon after the ban, Kan announced his policy to avoid being banned in the future. In order not to endanger the financial stability or even the very existence of *Bungei shunju*, Kan and his associates were determined to do everything possible to prevent further bans. This determination was not a surprise: from the first issue of the magazine, Kan and others at *Bungei shunju* had been very open about their goal of keeping the magazine alive. In Chapter 1, I argue that at its birth, the magazine possessed several characteristics of a commercial magazine. After more than two decades of development, it had become a commercial operation in almost every respect. To ensure the survival and expansion of the magazine, Kan and the editors were willing to raise prices, change cover designs, modify columns and sections, add cartoons and crosswords, sponsor contribution contests, and publish controversial gossip and sensational comments. This determination was a direct result of Kan’s pragmatic motto: “Life first, art second.” With censorship that became increasingly intensified in the 1930s and 1940s, the magazine had to maneuver toward cooperation and collaboration with the government and the military to stay in business. Kikuchi Kan thus was able to secure his job and life and to help dozens of others who made a living through the publications of his company. Kan and others at the company preferred to
remain blind to the unprecedented loss of innocent human life both within and outside of Japan. The desire to be a successful entrepreneur entirely overwhelmed the conscience that a humanist writer/artist was supposed to possess.

Second, Kikuchi Kan perceived the on-going war as a rare chance to improve the status of literature and writers in society. In the 1920s and early 1930s, he had complained many times that the government was remiss in not recognizing writers and treating them properly. For example, in April 1932, he complained that no writers had ever received an invitation to the Imperial Academy’s art exhibition.423 Starting in the mid-1930s, however, the government and the military began to see the need to mobilize writers and other artists for the purpose of war propaganda. It is, then, not surprising that the Information Bureau of the Cabinet sponsored the trip of the Pen Troop, or that The Information Corp of the Army reassigned Hino Ashihei as a military writer after Hino won the Akutagawa prize. Kikuchi Kan felt honored that the government and the military would recognize the importance of writers and literature at large. And for this reason, he was determined to collaborate, sometimes even at the risk of his own physical well-being.

I have been dissatisfied that this country does not acknowledge literature, and I have been complaining about it. This time, the government recognized writers on an extensive scale and carried forward the plan [of the Pen Troop] with me. Because of this, I decided to take the lead and go to China without concern about my health, safety, or schedule.424

423 Ibid, 40.
424 Ibid, 308.
Though he belonged to the so-called art-for-art’s-sake group, Kikuchi Kan, ironically, was lacking in the confidence to believe that literature as an art form was independent of political power. It surely was beneficial to the development of modern Japanese literature that Kikuchi Kan helped to organize writers, form a mutual help system among writers, advocate the welfare of those who made a living by writing, and improve the social status of writers. However, his eagerness to help writers be recognized by the government was so strong that even the good will to heighten both economical and social status of writers became superficial. Kan’s actions defined literature not as an independent art form that portrays and promotes humanity, but rather as a dependent institution that relied on and longed for sponsorship and recognition from other social institutions. Worse, these social institutions in wartime Japan, be they the military, the government, or the state, were intentionally utilizing literature and writers as tools to achieve goals that later proved to be the exact opposite of the humane objectives of literary discourse. As his famous motto “Life, first, Art second” suggests, Kikuchi Kan never believed that literature and its elevated goals were of primary importance. Moreover, even the all-important “life” eventually had to give up its “first” position to the goal of winning the war. “As long as the nation is going forward toward the fulfillment of its war objectives, we should elevate our personal lives to the slogan ‘The War Comes First.’”

425 Ibid, 524. Also in explaining the rationale for donating the aircraft, Kan said, “I believe that for things such as the prosperity of culture and the advancement of literature, the top priority is to win the war.” Ibid, 526.
Third, Kikuchi Kan’s disenchantment with the proletarian and socialist movements doubtlessly played important roles in pushing him and his company toward the extreme rightist position. The early arguments against social realism that were written by Kan and many others at *Bungei shunjū* drew the attention of critics and readers to the magazine and helped the magazine expand. This anti-proletarian and anti-socialist stance never changed. It actually intensified during the governmental oppression on the socialist movement in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Kikuchi Kan was very proud of his battles against the leftists. To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of *Bungei shunjū*, Kan published an announcement in January 1944, in which he stated that he believed the magazine had two achievements that it could be proud of. One was that “from the late Taishō period to the early Shōwa period, [*Bungei shunjū*] confronted the leftist literature that was rampant and was able to indirectly contain the diffusion of leftist ideology.”426 As a successful writer, journalist, publisher, politician, and social activist, Kikuchi Kan not only demonstrated his willingness to “compromise” with the capitalist system, but also became a part of the system. This statement of the magazine’s achievements testifies to the fact that he sincerely believed that the socialist movement was evil, and it was good that he and his magazine helped to “indirectly contain” the evil. Who directly contained leftist ideology, Kan did not specify. But it is a well-known fact that the government started an anti-socialist campaign and cracked down on the re-emerging socialist movement from the late Taishō to the early Shōwa periods. What Kan says in the statement

certainly suggests that he not only found it legitimate for the government to crackdown on the leftists but also that he avidly supported it. It was after this crackdown that the communication between Kan, as a representative of writers and artists, and the government and military became frequent. In this respect, his conservative attitude toward proletarian literature functioned as a catalyst that encouraged a belief in the government and a trust in the military.\footnote{Despite some criticisms against governmental censorship, Kan expressed mostly positive opinions, or even praise toward the government and especially the military in \textit{Hanashi no kuzukago}.} This belief, which appears blind today, was one of the reasons Kan believed in war propaganda, maintained the war was legitimate, and supported it to the utmost.

In post-war Japan, many writers, critics, biographers, and scholars often labeled Kikuchi Kan a “liberal.” In many cases, retroactively defining Kan as a liberal was a means to dilute Kan’s rightist ideology and excuse his actions during the war. This is particularly true with the company history.\footnote{In the company history of Bungei Shunjūsha, Kikuchi Kan’s objection to the intensified censorship was highlighted to demonstrate Kan’s pursuit of freedom of speech as a liberal. \textit{Bungei shunjū nanjū-nen shi}, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1991) 71-141.} Actually, Kan himself stated that \textit{Bungei shunjū} was a magazine of liberalism. In January 1937, he stated in an essay celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the magazine:

\begin{quote}
At the time of its creation, \textit{Bungei shunjū} fought against the proletarian literature from a liberal point of view. After that, the magazine consistently held to an editorial policy of common sense and good conscience. At the time of the Manchurian Incident, there were rumors that we had become fascist. But those were groundless rumors. In the future, we intend to adapt to the changes in the current
\end{quote}
of the times to a certain extent from a journalistic position. However, our fundamental spirit is to occupy the impartial position of liberalism and represent the conscience of the intelligentsia.\footnote{Kikuchi Kan, “Jūgoshū-nen ni saishite,” Bungei shunjū Jan. 1937. As cited in Bungei shunjū nanajū-nen shi, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1991) 110-111.}

This liberal position was soon changed to a nationalistic one, which, after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, of course, can not be described as “impartial journalism” or the “representation of conscience.” In a short comment published in “Hanashi no kuzukago” in December 1937, Kan first praised both Nitobe Inazō and Kiyosawa Kiyoshi for their brave defense of Japan on the international stage despite the fact that both had been treated harshly within Japan due to their liberal points of view. Then he claims:

> I think “liberalism” means a man can take actions according to his own conscience. For a liberal, methods and ways of thinking are different. But in terms of their love for the nation and their consideration of Japan’s future, I do not think they are inferior to others who are not liberal.

In other words, there are no philosophical and ideological criteria to judge who is a liberal and who is not. A liberal can be liberal in any respect. Implicitly, Kan suggests that a priority of moral judgment should be given to national goals and Japan’s interest. Whether liberal or not, a person deserves respect as long as he or she defends the nation in one way or another. Consequently, a liberal can criticize governmental controls in social life but he or she should cooperate with what the government does to protect the nation and its future. This reasoning is one explanation why Kikuchi Kan embraced the militarist and fascist policies of the
Japanese government so quickly and zealously. Large portions of the “Hanashi no kuzukago” columns were dedicated to highly nationalist comments after the full-scale Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. A sincere fear for the survival of the Japanese nation, people, and culture perhaps lies at the root of the nationalist thinking of Kikuchi Kan and many of his contemporaries. However, it was this liberal interpretation of “liberalism” that freed Kan from all restraints and let nationalist zeal engulf him.

The designation of Bungei shunjū as a literary magazine shocked Kikuchi Kan and everyone at Bungei Shunjūsha. However, they decided to accept the designation and to continue to collaborate with the government to achieve the national objective of winning the war. In May 1944, Bungei yomimono (Literary Yomimono) and Bungakukai (Literary World), two magazines published by the company, were discontinued. In April 1945, Bungei shunjū was discontinued due to paper shortages and the deteriorating war situations. Although revived in October of the same year, the magazine suffered a shortage of paper and published issues only irregularly for the next eighteen months. Moreover, in March 1946, Kikuchi Kan decided to dissolve Bungei Shunjūsha due to the difficult financial situation of the company and the leftist criticism of the magazine’s actions during the war. In the same month, at the same location as Bungei Shunjūsha’s former office, Bungei Shunjū Shinsha (New Bungei Shunjū Company) was created and it published its first issue of Bungei Shunjū three months later. This dissolution of the old publisher and the creation of the new one was
clearly an attempt to erase the “Kikuchi Kan factor from the company: Kikuchi Kan was no longer the president and largest stock holder of the publisher, and he was not involved with the new magazine in any way. But it was not easy to erase what Kikuchi Kan and the company did to collaborate with the wartime government. In October 1947, both Kikuchi Kan and Sasaki Mosaku, who became the president of the Bungei Shunjū Shinsha, were purged from public life by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. Kan vehemently protested the purge:

It is America’s shame that they purged me as a war collaborator. Whether American or Japanese, it is the just obligation for a citizen to do his best for his country during war. I did not agree with the war. But once it started, it was only natural that we tried our best not to be defeated. I can say that I am proud of what I did.

In a state of confusion and unhappiness, Kikuchi Kan died five months later. It should be noted parenthetically that, down to the present, Bungei shunjū has had a reputation for a kind of conservative anti-Americanism.
EPILOGUE

The purge of Sasaki Mosaku from public life forced him to resign from the position as the president of Bungei Shunjū Shinsha in October 1947. However, he was transferred to Shinyūsha, a newly created subsidiary of Bungei Shunjū Shinsha that dealt with the circulation of the magazines, and thus, he was able to continue working to establish the internal structure of the publishing company. After about six months, Sasaki was taken off the purge list and restored to the post of the president of the company. This was the last contribution that Kikuchi Kan made to Bungei shunjū before his death: he wrote a testimony and testified that Sasaki Mosaku was not involved in any activities that deserved the penalty of being purged. This testimony was added to the appeal documents that cleared Sasaki of the purge.

Therefore, rather than bringing the demise of Bungei shunjū, the death of Kikuchi Kan actually brought about the rebirth of the magazine. In the next two decades, Sasaki Mosaku led the company to a quick revival and rapid expansion. Bungakukai was republished in March 1949 and completed the three magazine structure that supported the publishing company. The Akutagawa Prize, sponsored by Nihon Bungaku Shinkōkai, was resumed in April 1949, and the first post-war winners were

\[\text{In addition to Bungei shunjū and Bungakukai, the other is Ōru yomimono. It was republished in October 1946.}\]
announced in August. A new company office was constructed and opened in 1950. The Conference of Avid Readers was held all over the nation in 1952 to celebrate the magazine’s thirtieth anniversary. The Kikuchi Kan Prize was revived in April 1953. A bi-monthly *Manga yomihon* (Manga Storybook) was created in December 1954. The headquarters of the company was moved to Ginza in November 1955. *Shūkan bunshun* (Bunshun Weekly) was created in April 1959 and its inaugural issue reached 750,000 in circulation. In March of 1966, the name of the company was change to Kabushiki Kaisha Bungei Shunjū (Bungei Shunjū Inc.) and the headquarters was moved into a new building located at Kioichō in Chiyoda-ku in downtown Tokyo.

The circulation of *Bungei shunjū* and other periodicals published by the company also increased multifold. The June 1946 issue of *Bungei shunjū* sold about 70,000 or 80,000 copies. This was lowered to 35,000 in July 1947 due to paper rationing. In June 1949, a *zadankai* titled “Tennō Heika ōi ni warau” (Your Majesty Guffaws) was published. This was considered by the company history as the start of an amazing expansion for the years to come. The average monthly figure increased from 93,300 in 1948 to 136,700 in 1949, 284,600 in 1950, 405,700 in 1951, and 486,000 in 1952. In January 1952, the magazine had a circulation of 630,000 and one year later, 738,000. When the company moved into the Kioichō building in 1966, the circulation of its major publications was close to two million: *Bungei shunjū* was 640,000, *Shūkan bunshun* 900,000, and *Ōru yomimono* 355,000.

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432 Ibid, 212.
This rapid expansion was made possible by the rapid economic growth of Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. However, it was also the editing and management policies that helped the company to achieve this success. As the zadankai title “Your Majesty Guffaws” suggests, Bungei shunjū has consistently chosen sensationalistic topics that attract the attention of readers. It maintained, often explicitly, its rightist and nationalist stance. Therefore, in the zadankai on the emperor, there is no serious questioning of his war responsibility, but merely descriptions of “Your Majesty,” who actually laughs and is approachable and likable. Similarly, the magazine had an overwhelmingly critical attitude toward communism in the 1950s, and there was more criticism of the New Japan-US Security Pact than support in the 1960s. In July 1969, Kabushiki Kaisha Bungei Shunjū created Shokun! (My Friends!), which became a notoriously populist/rightist publication.

The firm’s rightist ideology only became more obvious after Sasaki’s death in late 1966. And it proved to be popular among middlebrow readers at a time when Japanese nationalist sentiment rose along its economic success in the 1970s and the 1980s. Bungei shunjū consistently occupied the top position of general-interest magazines during these two decades, and Shūkan bunshun has been among the top five of the weeklies. Although the magazine publishing business, with other mass media, has suffered losses in the economic hard times and fierce competition since the 1990s, these publications of the company still played important roles in the social, political, and ideological lives of many people in Japan.
As of 2006, *Bungei shunjū* was still the best selling general-interest magazine in Japan with an average monthly circulation of 447,000. *Shūkan bunshun* was the best-selling weekly with 570,000, a 70,000 issue margin over the second placed *Shūkan shinchō*. *Bungaku* maintained its second position as a literary magazine with 12,000 in circulation after *Bungei’s* 15,000. *Bungei Shunjū* as a publisher was ranked 12th in terms of the number of new books published, 5th in terms of new publication in *bunkō* form, and 6th in terms of new publication in *shinsho* series. It is the 26th most profitable publisher, and three books published by the company were among the annual top twenty best-sellers.433

*Bungei shunjū* was an exceptional success. A small literary journal created in 1923 with 3,000 circulation expanded quickly and became a leading monthly general-interest magazine within ten years. Despite its collaboration with the militarist government during Word War Two, it was allowed to be republished soon after the defeat of Japan. It managed to capitalize on the national sentiment and became an opinion leader in post-war Japan. Without doubt, the magazine and its creator Kikuchi Kan contributed to the development of modern Japanese literature: the discovery and protection of new writers, promotion of writers’ rights and welfare, the creation of prominent literary prizes, the encouragement of literature as a medium of both education and entertainment, and so forth. As a competitive mass medium, *Bungei shunjū* and its publisher also contributed to the development of modern Japanese

journalism and the publishing industry: inclusive editing that treated various literary
genres equally, egalitarian pricing that tried to attract as many readers as possible,
transparency of the publisher’s finances, creation of various journalist devices such as
kōza and zadankai, and so forth. However, as an influential opinion leader, the
magazine and company failed to guide the nation and its citizens toward higher goals
of humanity. The collaboration with the fascist government during the war and the
insistence on a nationalist and rightist agenda displayed the limitations of the
magazine, its creator, and its publisher. These limitations, evident in the discussion
here, are the result of a long history of complicated interactions between the personal
beliefs of Kikuchi Kan and, to a lesser extent, his colleagues and successors, the needs
and desires of existing and potential readers (especially of middlebrow readers), the
dynamics of the literary world, the ruthless competition in the publishing business, and
the highly uncertain social and political milieu. Only Kikuchi Kan and Bungei shunjū
involved this much interplay of artistic creation, commercial ambition, political
struggle, cultural movement, and personal desire. An understanding of Kikuchi Kan
and Bungei shunjū helps us deepen our knowledge of modern Japanese literature and
journalism, and at the same time, provides insights into the relationship between
literature, modernity, and the nation state in modern Japan.

Kikuchi Kan’s most outstanding virtue was his deep understanding and sympathy
for his readership. At the same time, this was also the major defect of both his
character and his publishing company. He personified his readership, and if he
collaborated with the social trends leading to Japan’s militarization, so did his
readership. In this, the career of Kikuchi Kan and the history of his company form a microcosm of Japan’s middle class, at times courageous and progressive but just as often venal and reactionary.
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