

## Mimesis and modernization: Dialogues in Meiji novels

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The period of Meiji (1868-1912) in Japan is marked by rapid changes in politics, social and cultural life, as well as in the literary language. The necessity to create a new medium for speaking about new reality is embodied in the postulates of *genbun it'chi* or the unification of the written and spoken styles of Japanese. The tension between the written and spoken language is much present in the discussion of the role of dialogue in the novel which is to be found in *Shōsetsu shinzui* (The Essence of the Novel, (1885-1886), Tsubouchi Shōyō's influential work focusing on the role of prose in Meiji Japan.

In *Shōsetsu shinzui* Tsubouchi noticed that “[d]ialogue is one area where a colloquial style does have advantages. Unfortunately, though, there is no getting around its defects”. The aim of this paper is to analyse how dialogues were stylized, incorporated into narratives and used for manifold purposes in the early works of Meiji fiction, including Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds, 1887-1889), Mori Ōgai's *Maihime* (Dancing Girl, 1890), Higuchi Ichiyō's *Wakaremichi* (Parted Ways, 1896), Ozaki Kōyō's *Konjiki yasha* (Golden Demon, 1897-1902).