“Broken Rings and Broken Brushes: The Broken Dreams of a Modern Murasaki”

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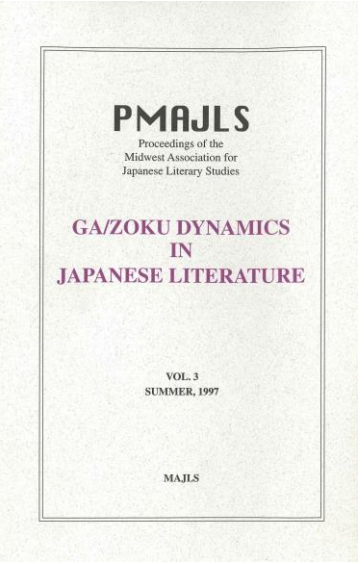

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Broken Rings and Broken Brushes: The Broken Dreams of a Modern Murasaki

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> "Where is the Modern Murasaki hiding; where the Meiji Shōnagon? Eagerly I await your appearance--nay, even more than I, our very society longs for your arrival."
>
> *Jogaku zasshi,*
> November 29, 1890

Shimizu Shikin (1868-1933) concludes her essay "*Jobungakusha nanzo ideru to no osokiya*" (Why Are Female Literati So Slow to Appear?) with the above plea. She was certainly not alone in her desire for the return of female participation in Japanese letters. Since the second Meiji decade, male writers, educators, and reformers as well had been clamoring for a "Modern Murasaki," a "Meiji Shōnagon." Despite the sincerity of their requests, circumstances inherent to Meiji society conspired against the possibility of a "*Modern* Murasaki." Central to these circumstances were attitudes surrounding the perceived impropriety of writing prose fiction and of women's participation therein, and the assignment of language style and subject matter to gendered categories. Thus, while women were being encouraged on the one hand to join the modern literary sphere of prose fiction, they were being reminded on the other that as women they were expected to conform to classical literary tastes. In other words, when women attempted to answer the demands of modernity (*zoku*) in a fashion not unlike their male counterparts, by experimenting with colloquial language, contemporary problems, and the personal subject, they

removed themselves from those elegant enclosures of the classical (*ga*) marked "feminine" and invited charges of immodesty, vulgarity, and other "unladylike" traits.

Shikin ruefully observed that even though women now had the educational opportunities to enable their full participation in the literary world, they allowed their talents to waste away because they continued to cling to misguided modesty. "Do not confuse humility with cowardice," she warned her sisters sharply.[1] But full participation in a literary enterprise so markedly male would require inordinate--at times impossible--courage from these Meiji women.

A FEMINIST "NEW WOMAN"

Shimizu Shikin did what she could to overcome her own inculcated sense of feminine modesty. In the late 1880s she joined the *Jiyū minken undō* (Freedom and People's Rights Movement) lecture circuit as a public speaker, and from the spring of 1890 she moved to Tokyo where she began to write for *Jogaku zasshi* (Women's Education Magazine), the first mass-circulated journal in Japan to address women and women's issues. Her articles for the journal were largely derived from the speeches that she had given earlier on the lecture circuit--speeches meant to rouse women from their complacent lassitude. Additionally, she inaugurated an interview column, whereby she visited people central to women's education and political advancement and transcribed their conversations. Among those she visited were Atomi Kakei (1840-1926), the founder of the Atomi Academy for Women; Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), an important educator and a spokesperson for women's issues; and Ogino Gin (1851-1913), Japan's first licensed female

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[1] Shimizu Toyoko, "Jobungakusha nanzo ideru to no osokiya," *Jogaku zasshi* (hereafter JZ), no. 241 (1890): 222.

physician. Shikin also began a question-and-answer survey featuring a different Japanese woman writer with each issue. Given the relative scarcity of candidates, however, the survey only managed to include five women before running out of subjects and interest.[2]

Jogaku zasshi had been founded in 1885 with the goal of enlightening female readers by informing them of educational opportunities, inviting them to participate in contemporary debates concerning women's rights worldwide, and alerting them to customs and freedoms enjoyed by women in Western countries. In an effort to make this enterprise even more accessible to female readership, the editor, Iwamoto Yoshiharu (1863-1942), instituted several important changes in the winter of 1890. He simplified the language, providing a *furigana* gloss for every Chinese character, and he hired eight women to oversee the journal's regular columns, naming Shimizu Shikin the chief editor.

It was in January of 1891--in the New Year's issue of the journal--that Shikin published her first work of fiction, "*Koware yubiwa*" (The Broken Ring). When the issue sold out, Iwamoto had this story and another reprinted in a special number issue. Critical reaction to the work was positive. Shikin was heralded an "epoch-making" new writer; and it seemed she was on her way to becoming a "Modern Murasaki." Indeed the piece

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[2] Shikin's survey featured Koganei Kimiko (1870-1956) in no. 205 (March 22, 1890), Kimura Akebono (1872-90) in no. 206 (March 29), and Wakamatsu Shizuko (1864-96) in no. 207. Miyake Kaho (1868-1944) was slated to respond in no. 209 (April 19) but declined due to ill health. Shikin asked four questions in her survey: 1) your reasons for writing *shōsetsu* and your experiences therein; 2) your ideals, hopes, and "pet opinions" regarding *shōsetsu*; 3) your favorite *shōsetsu* of the past; 4) your opinion of today's *shōsetsu*. Interestingly, all the women refrained from answering the last question, stating it would be inappropriate to comment on their [male] peers.

courageously answers the call for modernity on several accounts. First, it is written in *genbun itchi.* Second, the story relates not only a "new woman's" awakening to the intolerable unfairness of her married life but focuses on her decision to take action. And finally, the story is told in the first person, which, surprisingly, Shikin's critics found far bolder than her use of *genbun itchi.*

> You have noticed that my ring is missing its stone. It is, just as you say, unsightly to wear--broken as it is. Perhaps I might exchange it for another? Yes, but for me this ring, in its broken state, is a sign, and I cannot possibly exchange it.[3]

And so the story opens with an unnamed, first-person narrator describing for an unnamed listener the history of her marriage. By beginning with reference to the broken ring, Shikin establishes the frame for the story--enabling her narrator to move backward through the marriage and forward to the divorce and the occasion for the broken ring. Against her wishes, the narrator had married a man whom she had hardly known and certainly had not loved. Not surprisingly, the marriage is unhappy. She discovers that her husband had been married before and that, in fact, he has never broken with his first wife. Having been raised with the lessons of *Onna daigaku* and the Chinese *Biographies of Filial Women,* she merely acquiesces to the humiliation--until she encounters Western arguments for female emancipation in the women's magazines she reads during her copious free time. Awakened to the idea that women too have a right to happiness,

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[3] Shimizu Shikin, "Koware yubiwa," in *Tanpen josei bungaku kindai,* Imai Yasuko, et. al. (Ōfūsha, 1987), 9. For a complete translation of this story see Marianne Harrison, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist in Meiji Japan* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1991), 190-202.

she leaves her husband and pulls the gemstone from the ring he had given her, so as to make of it a constant reminder of her broken state and of her perfect determination.

> Every time I look at this ring I feel greater pain than if my entrails were pierced in two. And this is why I cannot be parted from my ring not even for a second. Why? Because this ring is my benefactor. And why is that? Because thanks to the pain and sorrow this ring has given me, it has forced me to arouse the zeal I need to become a full-fledged human being. For me there can be no greater inspiration than this ring. It has called forth my spirit and multiplied my courage. . . . When others look at this ring, I suppose they see something unsightly. But to me it is priceless, not to be exchanged for a million dollars. . . .You don't yet know my life story, do you? Well in fact my life resembles this broken ring. . . . At one point I looked at this ring and cried tears of despair, believing that I was as pathetic as it. But I soon came to my senses. . . . [4]

Not only does the narrator aspire to a life of her own making, she dedicates herself to the education of other young women so that they will not be hoodwinked, as was she, into believing that "misfortune and sorrow [are] a woman's inherent state."[5] As she declares, "I will work for the sake of this ring. I will protect the fate of the countless pitiable young girls so that these jewel-like maidens will not fall into the trap as I did."[6]

Shimizu Shikin was hardly the first to despair of the unhappiness inherent to marriages of convenience. Reform of feudal marriage customs had become a rallying cry for more than a few Meiji intellectuals. Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, had written widely on current marriage practices and the negative

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 13.
[6] Ibid., 14.

effect they had on women. His colleague in the Meiroku Society, Mori Arinori, had not only written against the unfairness of the traditional family system but had made headlines when he entered into a companionate marriage, exchanging vows with his bride "on an equal contractual basis."[7] Iwamoto Yoshiharu continued the discussion in his journal by advocating marriages that adhered to the Christian ideal of home (*hōmu*)--a union of love between an individual man and woman.

Meiji writers had been quick to turn these marriage issues into fodder for their fiction. The misery of individuals, female as well as male, locked into loveless marriages had become a stock subject in many works of the period. Generally writers focused on the hopelessness of the situation and on the perverse beauty and nobility found in the suffering of the female protagonists. Shikin differs significantly from these other writers in that she features a woman who refuses to suffer, nobly or otherwise. Her heroine surmounts her misery by leaving her marriage of her own volition to begin a new life all to herself.[8] In this sense, Shikin offers the first feminist "*atarashii onna*" (new woman) in modern Japanese literature. She takes the "new woman" and imbues it with a woman's reading.

Consider the portrayals of the "new woman" by Shikin's contemporaries: Futabatei Shimei's Osei in *Ukigumo* (Drifting Cloud, 1887) is modern, "masculine,"[9] and ultimately shallow.

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[7] William Braisted, "Introduction," *Meiroku Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), xxvi.

[8] For a comparison of "The Broken Ring" with marriage narratives by Tsubouchi Shōyō and Higuchi Ichiyō, see my "Shimizu Shikin's 'The Broken Ring': A Narrative of Female Awakening," in *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. VI (December 1994): 38-47.

[9] Ishibashi Ningetsu identifies Osei as "masculine" in a review of *Ukigumo* published in *Jogaku zasshi.* For a detailed analysis of this review, see Marleigh Ryan, *Japan's First Modern Novel: "Ukigumo" of*

Although Miyake Kaho provides the first female-authored "new woman," her Hamako in *Yabu no uguisu* (Warbler in the Grove, 1888), differs from the earlier Osei only in that she is even more self-centered and silly. She is justly punished in the end for her superficial adoration of the West. Mori Ōgai's Elise in *Maihime* (Dancing Girl, 1890) is not Japanese and so a stronger candidate for the "new woman" role perhaps. But she is powerless, poor, pregnant, and ultimately insane. Then there is Tsubouchi Shōyō's Otane in *Saikun* (The Wife, 1888) whose superior education, while qualifying her as a "new woman," renders her inappropriate for anything but disaster and ridicule. "New Women" were not an enviable lot in Meiji-era fiction. Largely a product of male fantasy and fear regarding modernization, the "new woman" was concocted as the companion to the enlightened Meiji man. But, she was not herself enlightened. Rather, she tried on Western ideas and modern notions like a new wardrobe--more for the pleasure of her mate than for her own comfort. Shimizu Shikin's offering was therefore extraordinary. Her woman is bright, strong, and courageous. Hardly concerned with the latest Western garments and finery (her ring is broken and unsightly, after all), she is more interested in arming herself with integrity and independence. Although lacking the education Tsubouchi Shōyō provides his heroine, she nevertheless does what Shōyō's Otane never considered. She thinks. She thinks for herself and of herself, and she speaks to her readers with the sensible, straightforward diction of Meiji-era Tokyo speech.

GENBUN ITCHI AND THE FIRST-PERSON VOICE

One might suspect that contemporary reviews of Shikin's work would fault her for using *genbun itchi*. Miyake Kaho before her had been castigated for recording the speech of

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Futabatei Shimei (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1965), 112.

household servants--as naturally as possible, in a narrative that was otherwise appropriately *gabuntai.*[10] Other than Wakamatsu Shizuko, who had devised her own *genbun itchi* when rendering English into Japanese, no other woman writer had experimented with colloquial language, considering it too vulgar for the feminine hand.[11] Shikin's decision to use *genbun itchi*, which had heretofore been recognized for its utilitarian and instructional value, was fitting for a story largely aimed at educating a female readership.[12] But for a review by Mori Ōgai, her language was hardly noted.

Ōgai, who had experimented briefly with *genbun itchi* himself before abandoning it, observes that Shikin's "so-called *genbun itchi* style" did not have "the grammatical consistency of a Bimyō nor the polish of a Saganoya."[13] He criticizes her for mistakes in usage of *kana* and particles. "Even with *genbun*

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10 See Ishibashi Shian's critique of *Yabu no uguisu* in *Kokumin no tomo* (August 1888), 155-157. For an analysis of this critique and a partial translation, see Harrison, 93-94.

11 Wakamatsu Shizuko, an important translator of English literature, had begun experiments with narrative voice and *genbun itchi* in an attempt to foster a more suitable language for the translation of Western texts. She is most remembered today for her translation of Frances Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (*Shōkōshi*), which she began in 1890 and serialized in *Jogaku zasshi.* Most notable in Shizuko's translation style are her use of repetitive words (*jōgo*) and her unique use of the past tense negative: *arimasenkatta.* On the other hand, Shizuko's contemporary, Koganei Kimiko, whose works frequently appeared in her brother's (Ōgai) journals *Shigarami zōshi* and *Mezamashigusa*, was noted for her renditions of Western-language texts into beautifully elegant *gabuntai.*

12 As Nanette Twine observes, the first phase in the *genbun itchi* movement was utilitarian, the objective being to make the language simple so as to reach as wide an audience as possible. Twine, "The Genbun itchi Movement: Its Origins, Development, and Conclusion," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 33, no. 3 (1978), 339.

13 As cited in Yamaguchi Reiko, *Naite aisuru shimai ni tsugu* (Sōdo bunko, 1977), 137.

itchi, one must not overlook grammatical structure,"[14] he snipes. Yet he did find the writing close to "the feel of natural speech."[15]

Most of the critics were more concerned with Shikin's use of the first-person voice and her portrayal of divorce than they were with her choice of language. Kōda Rohan, writing for the *Kokkai Shimbun*, considered the story an allegory (*hiyu*) which "lambastes the foolish parents of the world who selfishly oppress [their children]. . . . It is a pity that the author sees the old customs (of marriage) as the basis of unhappiness, while failing to recognize that it is the new ideals that contribute to the unhappiness (of divorce)."[16]

Both Rohan, in the above review, and Taguchi Teiken in a review for *Keizai zasshi*, concur that Shikin would have done well to provide further examples of the husband's cruelty. As it was, they did not feel the reasons for divorce were adequately described.[17] Ōgai, as well, refers to the first wife as a mistress, thus failing to read the husband as a bigamist. Even those who did, demurred from seeing bigamy as sufficient grounds for divorce. Apparently the practice of maintaining two wives, though illegal, was not particularly unusual at the time.

Ishibashi Ningetsu and Uchida Fuchian (or Roan) state that the work reads like an autobiography, because of Shikin's unusual choice of a first-person narrator.[18] Interestingly, both

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] As cited in Yamaguchi, 134-135.
[17] Ibid.
[18] *Wasuregatami* (The Keepsake), Wakamatsu Shizuko's translation/adaptation of Adelaide Ann Procter's poem, "The Sailor Boy," published in the January 1, 1890 issue of *Jogaku zasshi*, employs a first-person direct address narrative. Apparently this style influenced other *Jogaku zasshi* readers. Not only did Shikin adopt this approach

offer oblique apologies for suggesting that it might be. None of the critics knew of Shikin or her life story.[19] The implication seemed to be not only that it would be scandalous to link an accomplished female writer[20] with a divorcee, regardless of the circumstances for the divorce, but that the very notion of female self-presentation was somehow suspect.

EVERYWOMAN'S STORY

Indeed, "The Broken Ring" is not autobiography. Although the situations in the story are strikingly similar to events in Shikin's life, she keeps the story purposely vague and unidentifiable so as to open it to her female readership. Shikin's own father was a scholar of Chinese and an official in the Kyoto prefectural government. But the father in Shikin's story is

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in *Koware yubiwa* but so did Miyake Kaho in *Hakumei* (1890) and Higuchi Ichiyō in *Kono ko* (1896).

For more on the narrative style of *Koware yubiwa*, see Takada Chinami, "'Koware yubiwa' to 'Kono ko'," *Nihon kindai bungaku*, vol. 47 (October 1992), 13-28. For summaries of the critiques of *Koware yubiwa* by Ningetsu and Fuchian, see Yamaguchi, 136-137.

[19] *Koware yubiwa* was published under the name "Tsuyuko" with no surname listed. As with so many other Meiji period writers, male and female, this author's name was ever changing. Shikin was born Shimizu Toyo. On the lecture circuit, 1887-89, she was known as Okazaki Toyoko, taking her husband's surname. When she began working for *Jogaku zasshi* she used Shimizu Tsuyuko. It was not until 1896 that she adopted the penname Shikin, and she did so, apparently, to allay her husband's discomfort with her role as "writer." She wrote literary pieces under the name Shimizu Shikin; but essays on "domestic science," being more suitable to her "calling" as wife, were published under her "married penname," Kozai Shikin.

[20] Any woman with enough education and social connections to publish a work of fiction during this period would have been "accomplished."

unnamed and un-particularized. He is everywoman's autocratic father; the mother is everywoman's submissive mother, the husband everywoman's philandering husband, and the narrator herself, with her everywoman's education in the Confucian classics of the day, is the kind of *hakoiri-musume* everywoman (at least everywoman of this social class) could have identified with.[21] And clearly many did. Sōma Kokkō (1875-1955), raised in Sendai but educated at Ferris Women's Seminary in Yokohama and at the Meiji jogakkō in Tokyo, writes that she first read the work when she was fifteen:

> I loved literature at the time and the mere idea of a work by a woman writer made my heart pound. . . . The story told of a woman's suffering and did so without artifice or embellishment. And though I was yet a young girl unversed in the ways of passion, I sympathized deeply with the heroine.[22]

Whether "The Broken Ring" was read by contemporary critics as autobiography or not, it seems the import of the story was generally overlooked. Some critics, such as Uchida Fuchian, felt that the husband was the story's true protagonist.[23] Rohan read the work as an allegory, Ōgai as lyrical (*jojōteki*) fiction, and others as a protest against the marriage system. Although these readings are valid, the story goes well beyond even the

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21 For more on *Koware yubiwa* as an "everywoman's tale" see Yamaguchi, 145-147.

22 Sōma Kokkō received copies of *Jogaku zasshi* from her aunt, Sasaki Toyoju, or Toyoshi, (1853-1901), an outspoken member of the Tokyo Women's Reform Society. Eventually Kokkō found her way to Meiji jogakkō in Tokyo, where she met Shimizu Shikin. She recorded her impressions of Shikin and two other women writers in *Meiji shoki no sanjosei*, 1940. Here I am citing from *Meiji joryū bungakushū*, 1, in *Meiji bungaku zenshū*, 81 (Chikuma shobō, 1966), 403.

23 See Uchida Fuchian, "Koware yubiwa o yonde," in JZ, no. 249 (1891): 652-653

sum total of these views. It is more than a protest against contemporary marriage customs, more than the courageous account of a woman's defiance and self-awakening. The point of the story *is* "the broken ring" and all that it signifies for the narrator.

SYMBOLS OF SACRIFICE

The ring had been introduced into Meiji Japan as a symbol of perfect conjugal love--along with the "Christian marital union" as the marriage ideal.[24] The ring in this story, however was not a marriage token. "It was not what is known these days as a wedding ring, [My husband] just bought it for me for no particular reason."[25] The heroine's ring is devoid of meaning, as is her marriage. And like the marriage, the ring is given meaning only when it is broken. It is the heroine who renders the ring significant, and she does so by making of it a complex and contradictory symbol. The "broken ring" represents her freedom and self-establishment. But these qualities are only available to the heroine through her willingness to sacrifice social and financial comfort.

The narrator is no stranger to female sacrifice. As a child she had witnessed her mother swallow her own desire while waiting on her father hand and knee. As a daughter she had studied the self-mutilation of Chinese paragons who sliced off their noses for the sake of female fidelity. And, as a wife she had learned of

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[24] The practice of exchanging wedding rings did not become popular in Japan until the Taishō period. But *Jogaku zasshi* carried a series of articles on rings in the spring of 1888, explaining that the ring symbolized the marital union and that a broken ring meant a broken marriage. This interest in the ring was in keeping with the mood of the mid-Meiji period, largely abetted by journals such as *Jogaku zasshi*, which accepted the Western marriage and its accompanying practices as the romantic ideal.

[25] Shikin, 9.

the saintly self-denial of Monica, Saint Augustine's mother, whose Christlike endurance of her husband's abuse led to *his* eventual salvation. Shikin's heroine is not adverse to self-sacrifice. Indeed, she is willing to make a martyr of herself. But not for a worthless man. Shikin's heroine sacrifices herself for those pure jewel-like maidens ("so that [they] will not fall into the trap as did I.") She sacrifices herself for love.

Understanding this point helps in reading the final statement in the story: "I have but one more wish, that the one who gave me this ring might make it new again. But, at this late date, I wonder if . . . ."[26] And the narrative breaks off into silence. It is tempting to read this closure as a retraction of Shikin's earlier feminist stance. Nagamatsu Fusako interprets the final lines as a coy attempt to "camouflage" or soften the threatening potential of the feminist message in the story.[27] I see the closure as an opening. The narrator remains open to love. She despaired of her marriage, not simply because her husband was an insensitive cad, but because she had not loved him, nor he her. "When I see [the many couples who today can marry for love] I wonder why my husband had not loved me nor I him. And my broken ring gives evidence to my feelings."[28] Marriage, for this woman, is only possible through love. She is waiting to be fulfilled by love. She is willing to sacrifice herself for love.

TO MARRY FOR LOVE

Reading the story this way helps to make sense of Shikin's choices as a writer after "The Broken Ring." She did not publish another work of fiction for a year and a half. Surprisingly, her

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26 Ibid.

27 Nagamatsu Fusako, "Josei sakka ni totte no Meiji--Shimizu Shikin no baai," in *Hōsei Daigakuin kiyō*, no. 5 (1980): 39-57.

28 Shikin, 14.

next piece was not written in *genbun itchi*, nor did it concern the awakening of a "new woman." Rather, it was a near-verbatim transcription of a love letter Kozai Yoshinao, a suitor, sent her during their courtship. Her subsequent works, all written in the classical *gabuntai*, deal with paragons of female virtue who, caught in the machinations of a patriarchal society, are neither able to find love nor escape their terrible misfortunes.

"Love," of the profound, spiritual variety known as "*ren'ai*," was the single most discussed subject among the young male poets and female students of the 1880s and '90s and largely the catalyst for the Romantic Movement in Japanese letters. Kitamura Tōkoku, who coined the word, despaired of ever achieving such an ideal in his seminal piece, *Ensei shika to josei* (The Pessimistic Poet and Women, 1892). Young women in mission schools and Christian-founded private academies (such as Iwamoto Yoshiharu's Meiji jogakkō) dreamed of marrying for love. In sensational cases some ran away or elected suicide over the marriages their parents had arranged for them, earning their schools reputations as training grounds for promiscuity.

It was against this background that Shikin wrote "The Broken Ring." It was also shortly after publishing the work (or some contend just prior to it) that she began a love affair with Ōi Kentarō (1843-1922), a dynamic member of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, who obviously had a way with bright and ambitious women.[29] She became pregnant, and when

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29 Ōi Kentarō was a socialist and one of the founders of the Jiyūtō. Implicated in the Osaka Incident of 1885 he was jailed briefly. Shortly after his release he became involved with Fukuda (Kageyama) Hideko, another member of the Osaka Incident. She became pregnant. Hideko and Shikin had been friends and traveling companions on the *Jiyū minken undō* lecture circuit. Apparently neither knew of the other's involvement with Ōi until after their pregnancies. Hideko took Shikin's affair with Ōi as an assault on their friendship, and she treats Shikin to greater venom in her autobiography *Warawa no hanshōgai* than she

it became clear in May 1891 that Ōi was not going to marry her (indeed, he too was a bigamist of sorts), she withdrew from *Jogaku zasshi* and returned to her home in Kyoto. That November she gave birth to a son whom she left in her older brother's custody. She returned to Tokyo the following January. But the pressures of bearing an illegitimate child, not to mention of being emotionally exploited by a man whom she had trusted and admired,[30] were more than she could endure, and she was subsequently hospitalized for severe depression. Upon her release several months later, her older brother introduced her to Kozai Yoshinao, a professor of agriculture at Tokyo Imperial University. That fall she resumed her duties at *Jogaku zasshi.* And Yoshinao proposed. Against the advice of all, she divulged her darkest secrets to him: "I have fallen to the deepest depths, stricken with despair. My body is damaged, my name soiled."[31] She assumed that once Yoshinao learned of her dubious past he would have nothing more to do with her. Yoshinao countered by sending her a long letter in which he described his marriage ideals. He intended her to be not just a "wife" but a lifelong

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accords Ōi.

[30] By this time Shikin had experienced a number of encounters with duplicitous men. What she found most difficult to accept was the fact that even those who claimed to favor women's rights proved themselves to be quite capable of mistreating women. In her preface to Ueki Emori's *Tōyō no fujo* (Women of the Orient, 1888) she writes: "Among these [advocates for human rights] are hypocrites who face the government and cry out for liberty, while at home they expect their wives to be subservient; among these are false preachers who knowing the integrity of equal rights between the sexes nevertheless agree with *danson johi* [revere men/revile women] out of personal convenience." (Yamaguchi, 76) Ironically, Ueki Emori himself, whom Shikin clearly respected, was known to preach against prostitution by day while frequenting the brothels by night.

[31] See Takeda Kiyoko, "Shimizu Shikin no *Imin gakuen*: Kirisutokyō to jiyūminken to no aida," in *Dochaku to haikyō* (Shinkyō shuppansha, 1967), 189.

friend. He reminded her that he had fallen in love with the woman she was now and was not interested in marrying whom she might have been once. They married in the autumn of 1892.

Love may have been able to overcome adversity but not without sacrifice. Yoshinao was disturbed by the dubious reputation he believed yet clung to the writing profession--a perception made all the more profound because he felt Shikin's literary activity linked her to the unsavory men of her past: her first husband, and Ōi Kentarō. As a concession, it would seem, Shikin altered her writing style though not necessarily the content of her "message."

Of course, Shikin was not the only writer to turn away from *genbun itchi* and other of the more outward aspects of modernity at this time. *Genbun itchi* was now out of favor with most literati, many of whom were cowed by the nationalistic fervor sweeping the country in the 1890s. As Nanette Twine notes:

> It was as if the nation had been seized with panic at the prospect of the imminent disappearance of its own unique characteristics under the increasing craze for Westernization. Scholars began to assert that Japanese traditions should be carefully preserved rather than cast aside in favor of foreign imports.[32]

It was all the more unseemly for women, those "repositories of the past,"[33] to persist in their experimentation with language. To underscore the message, the Imperial Rescript on Education advocated renewed training for women in *wabun*, poetry, and the polite arts of music and tea. Schools nationwide, even the more progressive mission schools, followed suit. Shikin dispensed

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[32] Twine, 351.

[33] Sharon Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 15.

with the sparse, utilitarian style of "The Broken Ring" and began to spin tales out in a densely classical language, replete with torturous wordplays and elegant turns of phrase. Although her works appeared in the popular literary journals of the day--*Taiyō*, *Bungei kurabu*, and *Sekai no Nihon*--none received the attention or praise "The Broken Ring" had garnered. Rather, they were criticized for their hackneyed themes and tired language.

MODERN/MURASAKI--- A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS

Like other Meiji women writers of her generation, Shikin was in an impossible position. Those who thumbed their noses at tradition by writing of subject matter considered un-ladylike (protests against prostitution and the contemporary marriage system) *and who did so in a self-righteous tone using too direct or too colloquial a language*, were chided in the press as "*hasuha musume*" (hussies) or "*otemba*" (flappers).[34] Shikin could ill afford such attention. She was now properly married to a distinguished scholar--a man who would one day become the president of Tokyo Imperial University. Moreover, her marriage had been predicated on love and the sacrifice it entailed. Her husband had "sacrificed" to marry her--knowing, as he did, that

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[34] Both Tazawa Inafune (or Inabune, 1874-1896) and Kitada Usurai (1876-1900) were castigated for creating female protagonists who spoke too freely, and wisely, of the female condition. As Inafune would lament through the persona of the male protagonist in her posthumously published *Godaidō* (The Five Great Halls, 1896):

> Whenever [women writers] allow themselves to describe even a little of their own thoughts, they are immediately derided as hussies [*otemba*]. Fearing just his sort of reaction, they avoid writing what they really want to, all the while hoping to be praised as feminine.

See, Tazawa Inafune, "Godaidō," in *Meiji joryū bungakushū*, Part 1,. 263. See also Harrison, 87-88.

she was a woman with a past.[35] He is described as "magnanimous" for his "selfless" act.[36] Touched by her husband's generosity, Shikin "broke her brush." Or so the story goes.

To become a Modern Murasaki, it would seem, was thus a contradiction in terms. "Modern," at the time, was associated with the West, with the male-authored "New Woman" (who was masculine, fickle, and superficial), and thus with a rejection of those values largely identified with "feminine virtues"--passiveness, modesty, and inarticulateness. On the other hand, "Murasaki," as a cultural concept, signified all that was elegant and pure in Japanese womanhood and literary activity. To be a proper Murasaki, one could hardly be modern. One could not engage too liberally or defiantly in public discourse. Rather Meiji women writers were to remain as morally chaste in their writing as they would in their private lives. As Marianne Harrison has observed:

> To write 'boldly and frankly' in a plain style about the 'ugly side' of one's personal life was to defy those very bounds of 'femininity' that defined a woman writer. In other words, to write as a woman was by its very definition to be placed in a marginal position in relation to the mainstream literary world.[37]

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35 In addition to this generous sacrifice, Yoshinao began quietly to support Shikin's older brother and her illegitimate son from 1898 when the former was blinded in a laboratory explosion and forced to resign his faculty position.

36 Takeda Kiyoko notes that the president of Tokyo University wrote to her after reading her article on Shimizu Shikin in 1956, indicating that he had not known that the wife of Kozai Yoshinao, a woman he had deeply respected while he was a student, was the troubled Shimizu Shikin. And learning this only intensified his respect for Kozai Yoshinao. See Takeda Kiyoko, " Sabetsu to Shimizu Shikin no *Imin gakuen*," in *Fujin no kaihō no dōhyō* (Domesu shuppan, 1985), 92-94.

37 Harrison, 135

Shikin tried to balance the contradiction inherent to her dual callings of proper wife and woman writer. She returned her writing to the elegant folds of feminine narrative, sublimating her own creative frustration within the identities of heroines who suffer nobly to protect their chastity in the face of immoral male desire. But the pressure to write of modern issues through the medium of an antiquated past was too daunting. For Shikin, the only solution to this contradiction was silence. Having inaugurated her career with a story describing a woman's refusal to endure her broken dreams, Shikin ends her career by breaking her own--in a gesture of perfect love.