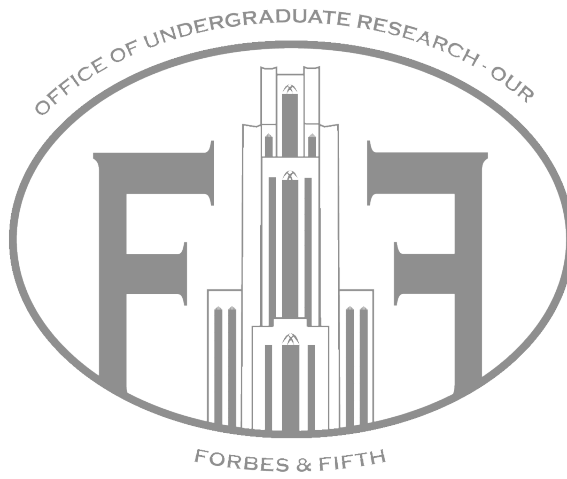


MEGHAN HIRSH

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“An Outline of the Modern Girl” from Akemi Ishiguro’s *The Modern Girl’s Story*

When I began a little translation project almost twelve months ago as a final paper for my Aspects of the Japanese Language class, Professor Hiroshi Nara suggested that I translate more than just the first ten pages and submit it for publication. I initially hesitated, still somewhat unsure about my translational skills and ability to plan such an undertaking, not to mention that I was unaware of the publication opportunities available for undergraduates, but with Professor Nara’s unwavering encouragement, I eventually agreed to undertake the project under the condition that he would be my mentor for the process. He has been a better guide than I could ever hope for. For that, I owe him my most sincere gratitude.

Although longer than anything else I have ever translated, printed in the cramped font typical of pre-war Japan, and full of typographic irregularities unseen in contemporary Japanese, it has been very exciting to translate and to explore the rich depths of this text. This single first chapter of Akemi Ishiguro’s 1928 book, *The Modern Girl’s Story* (*Modan Gāru Monogatari*), entitled “An Outline of the Modern Girl,” has provided much more historic detail than I think either of us expected to find. One of those details, and one of the most important to understand before reading this text, is that the author, and perhaps even 1920s Japanese culture itself, differentiated ‘modern’ from ‘Modern.’ The former, translated from *kindaiteki* in the Japanese simply means ‘contemporary’ or ‘modern.’ The latter, which I decided to capitalize in order for new readers to be able to visually distinguish it from *kindaiteki/modern* much like the original Japanese audience, is the transliteration of the word *modan*, the Japanese pronunciation and spelling of the English adjective ‘modern.’

On the surface, both *modan* and *kindaiteki* are approximately the synonymous. However, *modan* (as in *modan gāru/Modern Girl*) has profound implications relevant to the 1920s that the other does not. *Modan*, being a loan word from a foreign language, carries an air of newness, informality, stylishness — feelings that *kindaiteki* did not. Moreover, things and people that were considered *modan* were related to or influenced by America and Western Europe. Film, jazz, cloche

hats, drop-waist dresses, and lipstick were *modan*. *Modan* women, both those few in real life, and the multitude seen in the media,¹ were a breed apart from non-*modan* women.

Of equal importance when considering this translation, or any translation for that matter, is the background of the author. When I learned, via Professor Nara, that *Akemi* is a unisex name (albeit mostly feminine these days), and once we agreed that the author, given the time and the topic, was most likely male, I made assumptions about his character that ended up being proven wrong. I predicted that I would use this introduction to tell my readers how biased, but typical of many people from that time, his so-called findings were going to be. Happily, it did not turn out so. I found little to no biographical information about Akemi Ishiguro. It seems that “Akemi Ishiguro” was either a pseudonym, or the author had never written anything else, at least under that name. I then turned to an individual mentioned just once in the forward: one Iwane Sumiya. Another unisex name.

Unlike Akemi Ishiguro, I can say for certain quite a bit about Sumiya. He was a young artist in his twenties when *The Modern Girl's Story* was originally written, and one of the founding members of a renegade modern art group called Mavo. Besides creating abstract sculptures, paintings, and plays, he and the other members, who were proponents of socialism, also orchestrated politico-artistic demonstrations and found themselves in jail on occasion. While much is left unsaid about Ishiguro, that he asked someone like Sumiya, who at the time would have been only a few years older than me, for assistance with his book suggests that he did not disagree, at least, with some fairly revolutionary ideology. After realizing this, I developed a newfound respect for Akemi, and have perhaps even grown a little attached to him, whoever he really was.

One of the most frequent questions I have received while translating *The Modern Girl's Story* has been ‘how is this relevant?’ It is a fair question, given that to some readers, a book from 1928 Japan might as well be from another planet. Nevertheless, to borrow a quote from Mr.

¹ Craig, Alison. “Japan’s 1920s Modern Girl: Non-feminist, Commercial Tool, and Social Construct.” *Evoke Journal* (2007): n. pag. Web. 3 October 2013.

A, a character in this chapter, “I’m surprised you haven’t heard, but I’ll share it with you.”

The Modern Girl’s Story reminds us that women’s movements do not exist in vacuums. They are affected by and affect the economy from which they stem. They are influenced by preexisting culture and create new culture. As you will see, Japanese women became major consumers in the Japanese economy for the first time in the 1920s. Practices first undertaken by Modern Girls eventually became more common for Japanese women in the latter half of the twentieth century: accepting jobs, accessing higher education, living outside of the family home before marriage, and even sometimes willfully avoiding marriage altogether. They were admired by some and reviled by others for the degree of personal agency they demanded.

It also demonstrates that contemporary feminist movements are not new, nor are they post-feminism. Many people are not aware of women’s movements prior to The Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 70s, but in women’s studies, that is known as the second wave. The movement that started in the late 1800s but which really began to make waves in the 1910s was the first wave. Modern Girls were part of the first wave. Many issues that were first challenged by women back then, including those mentioned in this translation, are still problems today in the third wave.

Many girls in countries all over the world do not have access to a basic education, often for monetary or political reasons. The wage gap between the genders Beatrice Webb fought to close is still found all over the world. Worse still, women the world over still have limited access to birth control and reproductive choices, even in “First World” countries like America. Related to this, relative ignorance of the female body is still widespread, resulting from a toxic combination of a lack of sexual education and of continued shame surrounding feminine reproduction. What would Margaret Sanger have to say?

Lastly, and of the utmost importance if one is to practice true intersectional feminism: to not talk about Modern Girls is to assume they have nothing to contribute, or that what they said and did didn’t matter. Thinking like this serves only to emphasize a sense of superiority of Western culture and practice over other cultures. Many Americans value Western culture at the expense of knowing about other cultures.

"...while working on this project, an acquaintance was surprised to learn that there was jazz in Japan in the 1920s. Well, not only was there jazz, there was also Mozart, Hollywood films, Dadaism, Ibsen, Marx, and Poe!"

For example, while working on this project, an acquaintance was surprised to learn that there was jazz in Japan in the 1920s. Well, not only was there jazz, there was also Mozart, Hollywood films, Dadaism, Ibsen, Marx, and Poe!

This ignorance also exposes the overwhelming whiteness that has plagued the contemporary women's movement for some time now. Feminism was never meant to be limited only to white, English-speaking individuals. The earliest proponents in the working class neighborhoods of Boston and New York City had Irish and Eastern European accents, and many of the loudest voices in the second wave belonged to women of color, such as bell hooks, Alice Walker, and Gloria Anzaldúa. The title of feminist cannot be denied to Modern Girls on the premise of race or language.

Even today, we look to the East for examples of anti-feminism; for real and perceived slights against women — foot binding, concubines, harems, arranged marriages, the veil — all the while feeding the pervasive stereotype of quaint and childlike, yet highly sexualized Asian women. Everything that the Modern Girl embodies defies prevalent stereotypes of Japanese women.

These women were not melancholy, submissive Madame Butterflies. They broke cultural norms for the sake of self-affirmation and personal growth. Even though the feminism they practiced was not radical, based on today's understanding of the word, by many accounts, they were Bad Girls, rebels.

There has been no era before or since the 1920s that was so associated with women in Japanese history (and yet this period is mostly unknown elsewhere). It is

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my sincere wish that readers treat this translation not just as a pretty narrative of a bygone era, but also as a sort of feminist recovery project.

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Foreword

Every age has flowers that adorn it. So-called Modern Girls are one. Such flowers are not necessarily in good fashion; thus, it is necessary for society to ascertain the Modern Girl's true character. This is not an area of interest for every last person, but the fact is, it is required more and more of men as they come in contact with women, and women with men. I would be grateful if my book is of some significance in that course.

Thank you, Mr. Iwane Sumiya, for your assistance in formatting this book.

May 20, 1928
Akemi.

An Outline of the Modern Girl

The appearance of the Modern Girl is a recent phenomenon, after the Great Kanto Earthquake. The methods of the Modern Girl seem different from those of the so-called Blue Stockings Society, who, at one time, prided themselves with their unconventionality and took the world aback. Perhaps the impatience to see the Modern Girl's true character is a kind of curiosity hidden in the minds of contemporary people.

What type of woman is she? Somebody told me, "I thought that I'd like to meet a Modern Girl so I stood on a corner in Owari-chō,² but didn't meet anyone like that." Come to think of it, given that all women today are 'modern,' a true Modern Girl would not stand out. To that end, the trend for the Modern is widespread. When I say this, I may sound like a foolish moralist, but I do not mean it like that.

What is the definition of a Modern Girl? It is not like geometry or physics; there is no reason to expect a logic that has those kinds of

² Owari-chō is a neighborhood in trendy Ginza, Tokyo.

formulas and principles. However, to a Modern Girl expert like Itaru Nii, although he may be annoyed to hear this, that kind of definition may indeed exist. But if anyone said, “Well, that’s what makes it Modern,” they would come to understand. However, when the moment of truth arrives, there is no definitive separation. One cannot make a clear distinction between women who are Modern and women who are not.

“That’s right, indistinctness is characteristic of us,” those girls might say, bluntly.

However, I would not say that they haven’t any characteristics. There exist commonly-accepted ideas of what a Modern Girl is.

—

“‘Modern’ is the opposite of ‘ancient,’ and an adjective meaning contemporary. And a ‘girl’ is an unmarried, young woman. It’s simple, it’s just a young woman of today,” says an old man who studied English long ago.

This cannot be the answer.

I want to know those young women of today.

Mr. A, a worldly man who is very well-acquainted with Shinbashi’s pleasure quarter, interrupts, “No, gramps. It’s that they’ve gone and heartlessly chopped off their shiny hair that makes them Modern Girls.”³

“Oh, ho, ho,” he laughs, uneasily, a Modern old boy, argued into a corner in one go.

“Then... there’s also *this* method of interpretation.” Mr. A tends to become a tad carried away.

“‘Method of interpretation’? That’s some cheeky talk coming from a fellow with no education!” he laughs.

“Shush! Even though I might not look it, I’ll have you know I graduated from a prominent school, and — ”

“Sure, the school of debauchery.”

“Now that was uncalled for.”

“So, what about that method of interpretation?”

³ Mr. A’s explanation is a play on words in the original Japanese. The kanji used to phonetically spell ‘Modern’ literally mean “cut hair,” implying that a Modern Girl is a woman with bobbed hair.

“I’m getting there. Namely, in spite of their youth, not yet having come of age, they’ve got, how should I put it, one of *these*,” says Mr. A in a strange voice as he sticks out his thumb.⁴

“As a matter of fact, you’ll hear the housewives in the neighborhood say, ‘a lover already, at her age,’ and, the whispering about this young, licentious girl in full swing, they shorten it to ‘Modern Girl,’” he chuckles.

“Hey now, this isn’t vaudeville,” the old man laughs.

Mr. A, growing more and more proud of himself, adds, “But people like this are also found in the *sekihan* area.”

“People like what?”

“Don’t mock me,” replies Mr. A. A pause, before he continues. “So, in *sekihan*...”

“Hold on, just what is this ‘*sekihan*’?”

“I’m surprised you haven’t heard, but I’ll share it with you.” Here, Mr. A lowers his voice.

“*Sekihan*, as in, ‘red beans and rice’; *seki* stands for *aka*, and *han* means *saka*. Akasaka.⁵ The area by Tamachi! It’s a code word that a writer called ‘Mr. S’ made popular. A fellow would have nothing to worry about if he said, ‘How about it? Let me take you out for some red beans and rice, tonight,’ to a friend, while his nervous wife is nearby, allowing the partners-in-crime to dally all they want in their scheme.

“Incidentally, in Tamachi, they say it’s like this: if she’s experienced, she’ll tell you how much this or that costs and, in a strange way, will get in touch with her benefactor before it’s all settled and you go on your merry way. In fact, I hear that amateurs these days will, for only five or ten yen, take the train and just slip into the exploitable suburbs with a person they met at a coffee shop in Ginza. In other words, she flips onto her back like a frog, wonderfully quick and modern, so she’s called a Modern *Gaeru*.”⁶

“Alright, *that’s* stretching it!”

⁴ This gesture is commonly used in Japanese culture to mean ‘boyfriend’ or ‘lover.’

⁵ The two kanji for Akasaka (赤坂), a neighborhood in Tokyo, can alternatively be read as *seki* and *han*.

⁶ This complicated word pun makes use of the word *kaeru* (返る), meaning ‘to turn over,’ as well as a homophone for 蛙, frog. Mr. A changes the K to a G, a common occurrence in Japanese morphology, making the word sound similar to *gāru*, the Japanese pronunciation of the English word ‘girl.’

“Well, we’re just going on and on, so drop it,” relents Mr. A.

However, even Mr. A’s explanation is still imperfect. At this rate, they are nothing but modern day harlots. And if that is the case, there will likely be objections... from them.

—

Let us begin our analysis of the Modern Girl according to common wisdom:

There is considerable refinement involved, and it appears that this is a requirement for the Modern Girl. First, the level at which they can read: it is probably about that of a secondary school graduate. Everything that the Modern Girl is begins here.

“Have you read ‘The Age of Wandering’ in *Kaizō*?”⁷

“Of course.”

“That was quick.”

“What do you think of it?”

“His point of view isn’t wrong, but I wonder if that sort of feeling is really possible.”

It seems that one must be able to respond like this. Being able to read books is of the utmost importance, but they do not need to understand the topics in-depth. It is enough to merely make others *think* that they appear to possess this much refinement. So even if it is in English, one will have to understand at least a little bit. For example, the meanings of “love scene,” “all-star cast,” “easy going,” and such; these basics are expected to be understood.

They are aesthetically inclined enough that they are able to talk about how to look at a painting. When autumn comes, and with it the desire to be artistic, they won’t forget to go to the Ueno Imperial Museum.

“Miss A, how was the Nikakai Exhibition? You went, no?”

“Yes. In this year’s, though, the tones in general seemed to have changed.

⁷ *Kaizō* was a magazine that published general interest articles and fiction, often with socialist undertones, that ran from 1919 to 1955. Yū Ryūtanji’s debut book, *The Age of Wandering*, won the *Kaizō* Magazine Prize in 1928.

Personally, I preferred the Nikakai's to the Imperial Exhibition's."⁸

"Is that so? What did you think of Yoshimune's 'Reclining Nude'?"

"The pose was, well..."

There is something fresh and new about the way they speak. For Japanese girls ten years prior, there was no such distinctive characteristic. In general, their feelings are clear: cheerful and carefree; shyness around strangers and bashfulness are taboo for the Modern Girl. Having five pieces of knowledge and working with them so that they appear to be seven or ten also seems to be a common feature. This depends on one's point of view, as well. Even if one says that they are just pretending to be well-informed, or, on that note, if one says that they are shallow, one would not be incorrect. They are, however, all the more so because they are vivacious and bright.

That is why they appreciate humor; and even that, too, may become a joke. One day, I overheard a conversation between two Modern young women who were walking down the sidewalk in Ginza:

"I haven't got any at all, today." Of course, she is acknowledging to being without pocket money. If she *did* have any, she probably would not have forgotten drinking cream soda at Shiseido while wearing — do forgive me — rayon stockings.⁹

But such was not that day. Just as she confessed, she was broke. On the other hand, the second girl, her companion, said, "You've been like that a lot lately," laughing stiffly. This, my dear readers, is a vivacious joke pouring from the red lips (and they are *literally red*) of a twenty year-old girl. It is very likely that this girl is always mooched off of by the other one. What blithe humor she has, what timely sarcasm. They do not neglect the efficacy of language. Such gaiety and insightfulness are nowhere to be found among the girls who variegated old Japan.

They are good at describing things.

It's evening; two young women are walking leisurely along the

⁸ The Nikakai was a group of progressive artists that broke away from the Imperial Academy.

⁹ Rayon was marketed as a cheap alternative to silk, and it appears that the author is admonishing her for choosing the inferior option.

edge of a wide field. The sky is a milky opaque tone in the orange twilight. One of the women notices the silhouette of the forest at the edge of the empty field. Pointing, she says, "If I could look again at the forest when the orange was deeper..." I for one do not understand the purpose of this inconceivable proposal. Perhaps this is a modern characteristic of Modern. Then again, this way of feeling might just be futuristic.

She goes on to say, "The break in the light clashes with the gradation of darkness in the forest." With her mental acuteness, perhaps

"It's evening; two young women are walking leisurely along the edge of a wide field. The sky is a milky opaque tone in the orange twilight."

soon she will be able to sense the waves of ether in the atmosphere, too.¹⁰ How sharp this Modern lady is. Perhaps a Modern lady's true values exist in this kind of moment.

They are bold. When a girl of old had a sweetheart, melancholic and joyless, she would make her parents ask the maid to inquire after him. She would pick at the *tatami*,¹¹ and not say a word. "Is it that boy, this time," the maid would chide. The girl would not nod her head in agreement but would not shake her head "no," either. That was her way of saying "yes." This was the way someone who was in love confessed their feelings.

So-called 'Modern' girls are not like this. They have a scale of love.

"I've really fallen for Mr. S over in that department."

"But, he's with Miss Y!"

"But that doesn't mean I can't like him! I can't help it, it's meant to be!"

Before long, she will commence direct negotiations. Her audacity is brave, even on the battlefield of love. For her, to be bold is to be free.

"Don't try to boss me around, Mother!"

Even her mother has difficulty exercising authority over her.

¹⁰ It was theorized in the late Victorian era that light traveled via ether in the atmosphere. Come the 1930s, this theory was less widely accepted, and is probably used jokingly here.

¹¹ *Tatami* are floor mats.

“What is culture?”

She is always thinking about it.

“What is creation?”

She thinks along these lines, both consciously and unconsciously. However, this very notion, for me, at least, is a problem. For them, the creation of style is possible, but what about the creation of culture? Their originality exists in the breaking of the curse of tradition. Their great strides are made by peeling back the husk of convention. In a sense, it is a women’s rebellion. However, along this idea, I wonder how many out of these women would allow themselves to be called Modern Girls.

It is possible, also, to define Modern Girls by how much economic power a single one of them has. The rapid progress of modern women is the result of Americanism. By having “women’s economic power,” a Modern Girl’s capacity to act can be supported. However, this, too, in regards to the women of present day Japan, is a question of the extent of said economic power.

“[Modern Girls’] originality exists in the breaking of the curse of tradition. Their great strides are made by peeling back the husk of convention.”

“Mother, I’m out of pocket money again!” A girl who pesters like this does not qualify as a Modern Girl. But if she smiles and says, “Well, I’ve goofed around too much. If I finish my work next Sunday, I could go see the greenery in Hakone.” *Voilà*, a Modern Girl; a truly refined, economically independent contemporary girl. But, on that note, they are apt to protest that “the fabric of Japanese society is to be blamed.” They say, “It’s hard to get one’s foot in the door as a woman in Japan.” Likely because feminists in Great Britain, too, have been declaring, “Equal duration of work, equal amount of work, equal number of holidays, and equal wages.” If memory serves, the afore-mentioned are the words of Madam Beatrice Webb.¹² In other words, being employed,

¹² Webb, Beatrice. *The Wages of Men and Women: Should They Be Equal?* London: The Fabian Society, 1919.

that is to say, having financial power; I would like to think about having financial power, whether now or in the future, and the Modern Girl.

—

Now, what kind of family do these girls come from? That is, the class from which they come. Presumably, the well-educated middle class, I believe. If they are the daughters of the bourgeoisie, they do not have the spare time to ponder over life, or rather, since these girls are satiated in their worlds, there is no need to. Therefore, they do not delve deeper. Their lives are such that they are unable to look closely at things. Thus, my earlier-mentioned “rebellion against the curse of tradition” is unlikely. Because of this, they cannot exist as free people, just as one would expect of someone so sheltered.

Maybe those who we consider Modern Girls in a good sense cannot be explained like this. Even if they were refined, it would not prove useful to them in their journeys ahead; neither on the inside, nor the outside. If we think in this way, this educated middle-class is a favorable greenhouse in which to raise this sort of woman.

For these girls, there is a world of endlessly free fantasy. Their dreams are pink. It is a fantasy world where they run through the sky, to the extent that they are without the repression of anyone. And eventually they have fantasies of love, a yearning for men. Contemporary girls are inseparable from their dreams. And even if those dreams are dashed, there is a characteristic among these girls to not become discouraged or disappointed. When their dreams are dashed, they just dream another new dream; and in their dreams...

There are bungalow style houses painted a smart-looking pale pink, in the leafy green shade of the suburbs. But they are not expecting a conventional domestic life. They do not want that. Perhaps what they want is a form of cohabitation. Perhaps they hope for a life of love, a direct approach without anyone's mediation. Therefore, from the very beginning, a baby's room is nowhere to be found in the blueprints of their bungalow houses. Instead, they must be planning to bring in a piano, although it will be Japanese-made.

Rather than to be loved, they hope to love — never half-heartedly, but proactively. Their lovers are often treated like pets, and tend

to be *considerably* younger. Here is one episode. It is the story of an acquaintance of mine, a young woman, who for our purposes we will call Katsue Takeuchi:

She was born on a bright and sunny little island in the south. Perhaps the pungent aroma of the lemon blossoms had a hand in making her adolescent sensibilities ripen. Her parents had a soy sauce brewery; she, a gift for music. Her good looks only complemented her God-given talents, of course. As soon as she graduated the girls' secondary school in M City, she left for Tokyo and entered a private music school. There she was baptized into complete Modernity. Her daydreams were pink, after all.

She completed her Modern studies upon graduating from conservatory. When she graduated with a certificate, her parents, who had put together her Seven Essentials, thinking she would get married, found that their 'gray daydream' was utterly crushed. She remained in Tokyo under the pretext of continuing her studies, and became employed as a chorus girl at a certain Grand Theater. And then, the curtain (the picture scroll of her self-development) rises on her Modern life.

Congregating around her were several Modern Boys. There was also an executive of a large company, an editor-in-chief of a large newspaper, and a Modern senior official of a government ministry, too. However, none of those people were applicable to her love scale. Being taken care of or becoming somebody's lover would not mean grave consequences, unlike traditional Japanese women, for whom it would be a disgrace, self-depreciation, sacrilege, and such things as those. Perhaps that would be a good thing, depending on the circumstances, but that kind of passive standpoint would not comply with her Modern habits. She chose a fresh-faced higher school student¹³ to be her partner in her 'romantic stage play.' She wanted a young man who would welcome the embraces and kissing that came continuously from her welled-up passions. She wanted a boy younger than herself. He was not younger than her, in fact, they were the same age, but because of his innocence, his doll-like face, and the way he let her hold him tight, he conformed to her scale. She was contented.

She now sings her love to that man in her arms in a bungalow in

¹³ Based on the pre-war education system, he would have been 17-20 years old.

a shady pine grove at the foot of a hill in the suburbs of Suginami-machi. Perhaps people strolling around the neighborhood can hear her ecstasy playing its serenade of love from the other side of the curtain. It is the realization of her pink daydream. However, what if she becomes pregnant? And of course, she has made arrangements, no, must have made *preparations* beforehand. There are ○○condoms, ○○pins, ○○Sanger, and also ○○disinfectant.¹⁴ But how long will her financial power be able to power her imagination?

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Society looks upon Modern Girls and cinema like indivisible parts. To that extent, there is a close relationship between Modern girls and film. One cannot overlook the fact that film propagated the modernism that floats on the surface of modern cities. There are cases in which modern-day girls are born from film. Moreover, recent movies incorporate, in great amounts, the substance and livelihood of these Modern young women. Like the chicken and the egg, the question of which came first may soon appear, as Modern Girls and cinema become more indistinguishable.

In their dreams they envision a film studio in Kamata. In their fantasies they soar through the skies of Hollywood. They make it easy to be drawn into a state of trance-like rapture by dissolving their dreams into the films. Yes, the cinema is one part of what makes up their existence. See below, some sparrows of the Ginza twitter to each other about a film.

“R-chan, have you seen *Sorrell and Son*?”

¹⁴ These words, all related to birth control, were partially censored in the original text, and have been left that way. Birth control was highly frowned upon, if not illegal, in many countries in the first half of the 20th century, and was not talked about openly in polite society. The “pin” mentioned likely refers to a method of abortion in which a long pin, such as a hat pin, would be used to break the amniotic sac. ○○サーナ一, which is probably an atypical rendering of the name Sanger, points to the ideology of Margaret Sanger, a prominent women’s rights figure from the 1910s to 1950s, and an early proponent of birth control. She visited Japan in 1922. Household cleaning products and disinfectants, such as Lysol, were made into douches and used as a form of birth control in the early 1900s.

“You mean at the Hōgakuza?”¹⁵

“Uh huh.”

“It made me cry!”

“Which part?”

“Um, in the last scene where Christopher, who was played by Asther, sees Sorrell dying, and had that expression that he wanted to be a good son, but there was his father, dying.”

“You softy.”

“Says you! I was just completely captivated by Asther’s acting!”

They are trying to nonchalantly flirt with the Western actors on the screen. However, from here they push forward even more acutely, and go on to make an insightful commentary that would put a professional critic to shame.

“But isn’t *anything* by the famous director, Brenon, too good to miss?”

They have become such connoisseurs that they appreciate the hard work of the technicians and the director that does not show up on the screen.

“Say what you will, but the one who has capitalized on that movie overall is the star, H.B. Warner. I’ve seen a lot of pointless movies,

“They are trying to nonchalantly flirt with the Western actors on the screen. However, from here they push forward even more acutely, and go on to make an insightful commentary that would put a professional critic to shame.”

but ones like this that really capture a father’s deep love, with the war in the background... Well, you don’t see those very often.”

They have completely memorized the names of famous studios, directors, and film stars. Here is one more episode where they can immediately call to mind celebrities’

features and characteristics — H. B. Warner’s face, Anna Q. Nilsson’s eyes, Carmel Myer’s demeanor, the gallantry of Richard Dix, and the passion of Rod La Rocque.

Above the shoe rack in S Building in Marunouchi, someone had left behind a package wrapped in a red merino *furoshiki*. Perhaps it

¹⁵ The Hōgakuza was a well-known movie theatre in the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo.

was something a shop girl from somewhere in that building misplaced. The maintenance man turned it in to the young employees of a certain company in the same building at their after-hours tea party. They had been speaking fondly of their wives, and chatting about *The Black Cat*¹⁶ for about an hour. The package was turned in around the time they ran out of things to talk about. Without hesitation, they decided to inspect the package to see what was inside. Inside was a Modern young lady's journal and, being a journal, perhaps contained the secrets she held most dear. Thus, the young men's curiosity — especially that of the many bachelors — was even more intense than when trying opening a jewel box. Surprisingly though, the journal contained nothing about the usual trivial matters; just reviews of movies and names of actors.

ΔΔ month / XX day

Saw Lily of the Dust. As usual, Paramount has hit the nail on the head. It's about the elegant pursuits of a girl whose love has been tossed about by fate since the Great War: Pola Negri plays the lead role, Lily Czepanek. At any rate, we found the embrace at the climax titillating. I let out a soft sigh then. I put both of my hands above my breast and, just as I suspected, my heart was pounding.

But I don't want to think about that, love being toyed with by fate. After all, I want to keep a close eye on my love. I want to nurture it.

Went to Shibuya Kinematograph.¹⁷ On the way back, I went to Futaba for tea and sweets with N. It gets busy here after 10:00.

ΔΔ month / XX day

Saw Goldwyn-Cosmopolitan's big hit, Enemies of Women. Was this supposed to be Vicente Blasco Ibanez's masterpiece? The theme he was aiming for did not sit well with me. Rather, I related far too much to Alicia, the duchess of Lille, whose strange desire to be liked by men was her life goal. Maybe it's my thinking that's odd.

As soon as the lights dimmed, K, the boy I had take me to the movies today, asked to hold my hand and snuggled up to me all strange-

¹⁶ The works of Edgar Allan Poe experienced a rise in popularity around this time in Japan.

¹⁷ The kinematograph was an early film projector.

like. He was so annoying.

ΔΔmonth / XX day

It was slow at work today so I went to listen to Musei

Tokugawa.¹⁸

The fellow I went with was S, a would-be Modern Boy. It wore me out, he was so awful. The skit was just a plain, old skit. It was funny though, to some listeners, so maybe they were dumber than the speakers. The sketch could have used some better humor. It should have had more cynical comments about society, I think. It will be a long time before Japan sees someone like Bernhard Shaw.

These are the opinions, knowledge, and the like they have of the films they see. Ten years ago, even if Japanese girls like these wanted this sort of knowledge, I am not certain it was available. If one becomes trapped in her sophisticated discernment, then Mr. Tokugawa, the famous budding commentator, will never have a chance. To compare Tokugawa to Shaw, that she spoke ill of him, she is in a sense becoming a social commentator herself. If he had compared himself to Shaw, certainly even Mr. Tokugawa would not have gone on stage.

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They have a good ear for music... or at least, they pretend to. Even if they call it music, it is nothing like sound of those three strings that, on moonlit nights, lament the tranquil autumn and stir our hearts in the melancholy of spring. Then again, they do not expect it to be as sweet as admiring the melody of the *koto* that so suited the tastes of Prince Nakakuni who, one autumn night, set out on horseback to locate Lady Kogō. It is Western music, of course, *modern* Western music. In addition to that, it seems they are not overly fond of the way the serenades and threnodies gently, yet somehow, pierce one's heart.

Perhaps it is impolite to say so, but this unappealing American-

¹⁸ Musei Tokugawa (1894-1971) was one of the most famous film narrators of the silent era, as well as a social commentator.

style, prestissimo jazz is apparently well-liked by them. There is a reason behind this. Inside the over-ripe melting pot of material civilization that they grew up in, these girls, yearned not for the gray music of dark Northern Europe, like Beethoven, Bach and Mozart, and then Schumann and Schubert — the classical music with dull, gloomy shades. Of course, for them, in a world devoid of mystery, where music is as simple as $2+2=4$ — that is, “1 and 2 and 3, 4” — jazz seems appealing. They pursue a world of rhapsody rather than one of meditation. They enjoy the excitement from Southern Europe.

It is not the quiet appreciation of finer music, but the enjoyment of a world of gay music, such that, instead of a sound that twines itself around the heart, the sound of jazz, which bombards the body directly, is preferred. If I was to borrow a phrase from Leopold Auer, I would have to say, “the world of music spins,” is very much true. Connected to the world of music is dance, but that is not yet universal.

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Their palate is to be considered next. Years ago, a line of seventeen- or eighteen-year old girls would form in front of the sweet potato-seller’s store. But then Modern girls came to hate sweet potatoes. What’s more, the girls who passed through Umezono’s entrance on the way back from paying respects to Kannon — the ones who would say, “Hold on, Mii-chan, why don’t we go and have some red bean soup” — decreased. Instead, parties of Modern young women, requesting tables and practically setting up camp on the second floor of Dai’ichirō’s Chinese Restaurant, on the way back from Tsukiji Theater, have increased. I have even heard that there are Modern ladies of class who order Western cuisine a la carte at the grill in The Imperial Hotel. The ability to adapt the palate to simple and plain food has been lost.

They like greasy chicken with green peas in sauce, mooshu chicken, char siu, fried carp with sauce, duck strips served hot, crab omelette with vegetables, Peking duck, fried things, sautéed things, things that are braised, and roasted things. Japanese cuisine — horsetail greens with sesame dressing in the springtime, salads of bamboo shoots and peppertree buds, abalone in cold water, broiled eggplant with miso paste, salted trout intestines in the early autumn, sea bream hot pot, chicken hot

pot, seafood and vegetable stew — these “unpleasantries” rather repulse them. They prefer a thick potage to clear broth. While in regards to their choices of sweets, there are coconut and peanut clusters, apple pie, and doughnuts. If one thinks about it, it is a change in taste over time.

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If we closely examine each and every piece thusly, we will find hints of the free world yet to come. At every opportunity, they try to rid themselves of the old ways; a sort of masculinity in them can be seen. However, in their progress to the next world, they cannot try to pass through without paying. They could not forgive themselves if they did not grasp the core of the truth, of reality, in everything that they do. They step firmly on solid ground. A unique characteristic of Modern Girls is their going about by realism.

Indeed, I spoke of painting a pink dream. However, these are not dreams about a princess in a fairytale. They are painting a picture of tomorrow in their hearts. The beating of their wings grows stronger before the dawn of a new era. Their dreams are founded on mathematics and accumulated logic. If such is the case, not only do they not appear to be in any danger, but the sentiments of these eighteen-year-olds are not wrong, either. It is likely that if they fall in love, they will not become heartsick like ordinary sheltered girls. Women who are free, intelligent, and have been blessed with culture; women who are realistic, and try to advance while resisting all of the old ways, are Modern Girls.

“If we closely examine each and every piece thusly, we will find hints of the free world yet to come. At every opportunity, [Modern Girls] try to rid themselves of the old ways; a sort of masculinity in them can be seen.”

Having come this far, it is somewhat clearer what makes a Modern Girl. They can also be seen as outcasts of a women’s rebellion. However, they will not hold themselves back or despair in the slightest because of that. There are morals they try to create for themselves, and virtues they try to establish. Perhaps if we judge from the point of our own customs and morals, content of their lives would certainly be called coquettish. Of course, they are coquettes.

Some of them will say blatantly, “It’s said that marriage is agreeing to sell your body as reimbursement of a life-long contract,” and, “They say chastity is the fulfillment of this contract, disregarding, of course, the sense of love in both marriage and chastity,” — what, ladies and gentlemen, is this if not a thunder cloud in the blue skies of we the people of the old era? In this way, they frown on the old world as they stride powerfully onward to the next era.

They try to be free, to be intelligent. They try to make great strides. Who will lead these girls — a point the intelligentsia and cultural guides must contemplate the most. My motive in deciding to write this book was to offer such people better data.

