

So ten years and one have now gone by. The decade which seemed so slow as it passed came to an end on September 1 of last year. I am forty-nine. And how are things today with me, and how are things with Tokyo? People say that the immediate future is dark, and that nothing is as it should be; yet looking back over the meditations in which I was sunk on that mountain road in Hakone, I feel somewhat strange. I do not know whether to be sad or happy at the irony of what has happened. My thoughts then about the extent of the disaster, the damage to the city, and the speed and form of the recovery were half right and half wrong.... Because the damage was less than I imagined, the recovery in ten years, though remarkable, has not been the transformation I looked for. I was one of those who uttered cries of delight at the grand visions of the home minister, Gotô Shimpei. Three billion yen would go into buying up the whole of the burned wastes and making them over into something regular and orderly. They were not realized. The old tangle of Tokyo streets is still very much with us. It is true that large numbers of new bridges, large and small, now describe their graceful arcs over the Sumida and other rivers and canals. The region from Marunouchi through Ginza and Kyôbashi to Nihonbashi has taken on a new face. Looking from the train window as the train moves through the southern parts of the city and on past Shimbashi to the central station, I cannot but be astonished that these were lonely wastes where I would play half a day as a child. People back from abroad say that Tokyo is now a match for the cities of Europe and America.... The daydream in which I lost myself on September 1, 1923—I neglected to think even of my unhappy wife and daughter, back in the city—did not approach the imposing beauty I now see before me. But what effect has all this surface change had on the customs, the manners, the words, the acts of the city and its people? The truth is that my imagination got ahead of me. Westernization has not been as I foresaw. To be sure, there have recently appeared such persons as the stick girls of Ginza, and the prosperity of bars and cafes quite overshadows that of the geisha quarters, and movies and reviews are drawing customers away from Kabuki; but none of these places, and even less the casinos and cabarets, bears comparison with even the Carleton Cafe in Shanghai.... How many women and girls wear Western dress that really passes as Western dress? In summer the number increases somewhat, but in winter you see not one in ten among shoppers and pedestrians. Even among office girls, one in two would be a generous estimate.

—Tanizaki Jun'ichirô, 1934

When we say the Modern Girl exists in our era we are not in particular referring to individuals named Miss So-and-so-ko or Mrs. Such-and-such-e. Rather, we are talking about the fact that somehow, from the midst of the lives of all sorts of women of our era, we can feel the air of a new era, different from that of yesterday. That's right; where can you folks clearly say there is a typical modern girl? That is to say that the Modern Girl is but a term that abstractly alludes to one new flavor sensed from the air of the life of all woman in society.

-Kataoka Teppei, "Studies of the Modern Girl" (1927)

Let's get naked and while we're at it work our damndest!

-Hayashi Fumiko