ABSTRACT
This paper deals with Mizumura Minae’s 2012 novel *Haha no isan* (*Inheritance from Mother*), the story of a middle-aged, middle-class woman named Mituski faced with two crises: the demise of her ill and aging mother and the repeated infidelity of her husband. Both problems come to a head when the mother is admitted to a hospital. At the same time, Mitsuki’s husband and his current lover are plotting to confront Mitsuki with a divorce once the husband returns from a sabbatical in Vietnam, where he is living together with the other woman. At the end of the novel, both conflicts are resolved. The mother dies and leaves Mitsuki an inheritance with which to begin a new life on her own. *Haha no isan* is based on a number of subtexts, most prominently on Ozaki Kōyō’s *Konjiki yasha* (*The Demon Gold*). In order to point out parallels, the paper places Ozaki Kōyō in perspective as a writer of literary realism. This aspect of Kōyō’s oeuvre is often overlooked, as *The Demon Gold*, for instance, is written in classical Japanese. *Madame Bovary* also provides a subtext for the novel, such that in consequence *Haha no isan* incorporates the vitae of female protagonists both in Japan and Europe going back for more than a century.

KEYWORDS: literary realism, Mizumura Minae, Ozaki Kōyō, women in literature, Madame Bovary

Introduction
The writer Mizumura Minae has an unusual biography: At the age of twelve, she went with her parents to the United States, to a suburb of New York City. She eventually returned to Japan as a young adult to become a writer. In what is perhaps her most famous work, *Shishōsetsu from left to right* (*Mizumura 1995*)¹ there is a telling scene in which the young Japanese girl, homesick for Japan, is caught by her schoolmates secretly reading a Japanese book under her desk during class. “Minae is reading a love

story!” (Mizumura 1995, 97) The work in question is Higuchi Ichiyō’s Nigorie. “Minae” is reading the famous passage where Oriki, revolted by her life as a prostitute, runs away from a party at the Kikunoi. The quote from Higuchi Ichiyō’s story is directly inserted into the text of the novel. The text is set in cursive, is in Classical Japanese, and maintains the older forms of the Chinese characters (Mizumura 1995: 96-97). Troubled Waters is a canonical text from before the establishment of the canonical genre of the shishōsetsu, written in 1895 in a style which pre-dates the canonical modern style gembun itchi (“the unity of spoken and written language”). It seems significant that even at this early stage, the young “Minae” is seen reading works by a Meiji writer. If “Minae” really wants to become a great Japanese writer, one would suggest, she should at least read the somewhat later shishōsetsu writer Shiga Naoya under her desk, and then go on to write a shishōsetsu deserving of the name. Instead, Mizumura Minae goes against the grain of modern Japanese literature. She leaves the hermetic, airless world of the shishōsetsu and the fanciful realm of the postmodernist to construct realistic novels. It can be argued that the period of realism, at least in the West, has been over for more than a century. In the case of Japan, on the other hand, it can by argued that the period of literary realism not only has been over for more than a century, but was also over virtually as soon as it started. This paper will argue that the long novels of Ozaki Kōyō (1868 – 1903) are indeed realistic novels in the Western sense, and that it is therefore no coincidence that authors of the Meiji period and more specifically Ozaki Kōyō form a subtext for the works of Mizumura Minae, who views herself as an heir to Meiji realism. In an interview with the journalist Ozaki Mariko about Haha no isan, Mizumura has this to say: “I always have the feeling that I am writing novels with the ambitious intention of wanting to grasp Japan as a nation-state. In English you would perhaps say chronicler.” Mizumura goes on to mention Natsume Sōseki and Higuchi Ichiyō as her models. (Mizumura: 2012, 138)

This paper will first discuss Ozaki Kōyō before moving on to Mizumura’s novel Haha no isan, which bears an intertextual relationship to Ozaki Kōyō’s The Demon Gold.

Having grown up in New York and studied French literature at Yale University, Mizumura Minae is of course versed and fluent both in

3 For a discussion of the establishment of gembun itchi (= ‘the unity of spoken and written’), cf. Königsberg 2008b.
4 The English titles of Kōyō’s works follow Keene 1987.
(American) English and French. Her novels – whether it be Shishōsetsu from left to right or Haha no isan – contain direct inserts from these languages. For instance, the very first chapter of Haha no isan depicts the night when the “mother” of the title dies. Her daughter Mitsuki muses – in the original French – “Aujourd’hui, maman est morte.” (Mizumura: 2012a, 13) This is the opening line of Albert Camus’ famous novel L’Ètranger.

Given her polylinguistic background, Mizumura has written essays about languages, collected in her three volume work Nihongo de kaku to iu koto, Nihongo de yomu to iu koto and Nihongo ga horobiru toki (Mizumura: 2008, 2009a, 2009b). The last mentioned volume of this trilogy has been translated into English. (Mizumura: 2014) Accordingly, a number of articles and reviews deal with the way that Mizumura’s œuvre is interwoven with Western languages\(^5\). This subject would appear to be appealing to those heralding such authors as Mizumura (under the term ekkyō bungaku, or border-crossing literature)\(^6\) as representatives of a global, world literature. Mizumura’s indebtedness to her Meiji predecessors, has, on the other hand, evidently not received as much attention, since this aspect of her work roots her not only in a native tradition, but also – in the case of Ozaki Köyō – in a largely forgotten native tradition. This paper would like to shed some light on this dimension of Mizumura’s work. Thematically as well, Haha no isan is indebted to Ozaki Köyō: As the author of this paper has shown elsewhere (Königsberg, 2008b), the Meiji writer developed in the course of his short life from a Saikaku-esque depicter of the pleasure quarters to an early champion of fulfilling marital life for women. As will be shown below, Mitsuki in the course of the novel also comes to terms with her unhappy marriage and lives her own life.

**Ozaki Köyō as a Realist Novelist**

As was stated above, the author of this paper is of the opinion that Mizumura Minae stands in the tradition of literary realism in Meiji Japan. This section will deal with Ozaki Köyō as a realist novelist. In their comparative study of literary modernization across Asia, Oldřich Král and his colleagues state that: “In Japan, the novel is even equated with literature in general.” (Král: 1986, 85) It is for his novels that Ozaki Köyō is known, and although this is not the light in which he is currently viewed,

\(^5\) Cf. among others: Nakai 2005 and Odagiri 1995. In this article, when authors with Japanese names write in English, the Western convention (first name before family name) is followed.

his contemporary, the German Japanologist Karl Florenz, regarded his works as virtually perfect copies of contemporary Western novels: “The first works of Kōyō and his youthful contemporaries followed European models so closely that they looked almost like translations.” (Florenz: 1909, 615) Florenz is speaking here about Kōyō’s early works, but it was in his middle and late periods that Kōyō wrote his realist masterpieces. Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, for instance, was a great admirer of Sanmī zuma (Three Mistresses, 1892). Tanizaki discusses the aspect of plot construction, which he calls kōzōteki bikan or ‘the aesthetics of structure’, throughout Japanese literary history. He writes: “When we reach the Meiji Period, then Kōyō’s Three Mistresses is the greatest work. Since times of old there have been few examples of works in Japanese literature that are so beautifully and consumately constructed.” (Tanizaki: 1968, 108) Kōyō’s greatest realistic novels were arguably Three Mistresses and The Demon Gold. Three Mistresses is written entirely in gazoku setchū tai (i.e. in classical Japanese), while The Demon Gold is an experiment: The dialogues are in natural, contemporary spoken Japanese, while the narrative portions remain in classical Japanese. Both works offer complex plots, with a broad range of characters from different walks of life, and it is this, presumably, that Tanizaki finds so admirable. In contrast, Kōyō’s few works in gembun itchi have almost no plot and a very narrow focus. The writer Enchi Fumiko has this to say about Tajō takon (Passions and Griefs 1895), the story of a widower, Ryūnosuke, who mourns so deeply after the death of his wife and suffers so from loneliness that his best friends, a married couple, take him into their home: “If one reads Passions and Griefs today, it is a rather boring novel, which has – strangely enough for Kōyō – no plot to speak of.” (Enchi: 1978, 445)

Kōyō’s most famous novel, The Demon Gold, is the story of an ill-fated love. The novel was written in installments over the course of six years and follows the story of two young lovers, Hazama Kan’ichi and Shigisawa Miya, throughout the same six years (Ozaki Kōyō: 1993a)8. After the death of his parents, Kan’ichi is adopted by the Shigisawa family, goes to university, and is engaged to their daughter Miya. At the beginning of the novel, Miya sees the rich banker’s son Tomiyama Tadatsugu at a New Year’s card party. Tomiyama is wearing a large diamond ring, and Miya soon breaks off her engagement to Kan’ichi in order to marry him. Kan’ichi attempts to convince Miya of the importance of love in a

7 Here and in all other cases own translation from German.
8 Synopsis – in German - in Königsberg 2008a, 733-739. Miya is also sometimes referred to with an honorific prefix as Omiya.
marriage; when she does not listen, he kicks her to the ground and runs off. Since he has lost his love to money, he decides to live only for money. He leaves the family Shigisawa and school to become a usurer. The further course of the novel with its diverse sub-plots brings together characters from many walks of life. Miya’s marriage is an unhappy one, she longs for Kan’ichi and writes him letters, none of which he answers. Kan’ichi in the meantime works for the money-lender Wanibuchi and wards off the advances of a beautiful female colleague. In depicting the craft of the money lender, Kōyō introduces many tragic characters, for instance the lovers Aiko and Sayama. Aiko works as a geisha to pay off her mother’s debts, and Sayama has embezzled money from his company to pay off gambling debts. At the end of the unfinished novel, Kan’ichi decides to pay Aiko’s and Sayama’s debts, and out of gratitude they move in with him as servants and help him to bear the loneliness that the loss of Miya has caused.

At this point, after having introduced two of Ozaki Kōyō’s realist novels, an attempt will be made to place them in a larger context. The Prague scholars in Oldřich Král’s research group preface their discussion of individual literatures with a broad historical overview of the changes involved in modernization through Western influence in the four Asian countries (Iran, Bengal, China, and Japan) on which they concentrate. They state: “a revision of old values and the import of new precipitate especially social reforms or, at least, vigorous attempts to have such reforms carried through, to which literature makes a substantial contribution. Common to all the countries under consideration is, above all, the reformatory activity aimed at removing social discrimination against women.” (Král 1986: 25)

It is no exaggeration to state that this was the most important theme for Ozaki Kōyō, and Three Mistresses marks a turning point. The plot of the novel revolves around a rich man, Yogorō, who after the age of sixty begins to collect concubines in addition to his wife. The construction of the novel – with the three concubines and the wife Asako – offers Kōyō the chance to contrast the status of wives with that of concubines. After having installed his first mistress and while he is hunting the second, Yogorō decides to spend an evening at home with Asako. Kōyō describes the scene, in which he contrasts the devotion of a good wife with the infantile and wanton behavior of a bad husband, only to finish: “If you consider all of this, then a wife is like an unpaid prostitute. And even if you were to pay her, is there a woman who would let herself be treated like this and not leave the house in a rage?” (Ozaki Kōyō 1993b: 66-67) Thereafter, Kōyō refrains from depicting geishas and prostitutes at all, although they had up
until this point often been the heroines – tragic or not – of his works. That the Meiji woman had few other options than to seek a wealthy husband is the other side of the picture, which will treated at the close of this paper. Köyō’s last novel The Demon Gold is admittedly melodramatic, and the few critics who have dealt with it have not tended to praise it. (McClellan 1971: 361) On the other hand, some energy has gone into tracing the work upon which it could behave been based. No similar attempts have been made to trace a Western model for Three Mistresses, of course, presumably for the reason that modern Western novels about wealthy gentlemen who maintain a harem are few and far between. Common to both Three Mistresses and The Demon Gold is a tendency that Harald Weinrich describes for the West: “From the 19th century onward and starting with Balzac, the novel becomes realistic, and that means: sociological. The novel no longer merely tells a story which is to a greater or lesser degree beautiful and exciting; instead, it has the ambition to at the same time present reliable, and – in the case of the Naturalists – scientifically reliable information about the social relationships of the period.” (Weinrich 1971: 98-99) Therefore, rather than search for models for Three Mistresses and The Demon Gold, it makes sense to assume that both novels deal with consumption and with the commodification of the female body, because this is a reflection of the state of capitalist Japanese society at the time. This point will be discussed in the following comparison of The Demon Gold and Mizumura Minae’s Inheritance from Mother.

The Realistic Depiction of Three Generations of Women in Inheritance from Mother

Inheritance from Mother is a long novel; it runs to some 524 pages in the Chūō kōron edition (as opposed to “only” 390 pages for Shishōsetsu from left to right). With its great length, the large number of subplots, the many characters, and the complexity, the novel is structurally reminiscent of The Demon Gold. The plot – summarized briefly – is as follows: The protagonist is a middle-aged married women named Mitsuki. Her husband, Tetsuo, is a university professor. Mitsuki herself earns money as an adjunct lecturer and also takes on part-time translations from French. The couple

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9 Examples are, for instance, Kyara makura (1890, Pillow of Aloewood), the biography of a geisha who has, as an old woman, become a nun, or Oboro bune (1890, Floating Ship), the story of a young girl from an impoverished samurai family sold into prostitution.

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has no children. Mitsuki’s older sister Natsuki has married into a wealthy family and does not need to work. Chapter I of the novel is entitled: “A long telephone call on the night of the wake.” Their mother has just died, and the two sisters immediately discuss how much money they can expect, for instance once the deposit from the nursing home is returned. At the end of the chapter, Mitsuki goes to bed (alone, her husband is on sabbatical in Vietnam). In the next chapter, the narrative time of the story is turned back to the year before: “It was last year on December 28 at around two o’clock.” (Mizumura 2012: 20) Mitsuki gets the house ready for New Year, and she writes two condolence letters. When she opens her husband’s desk drawer to look for postage stamps of a suitable subdued hue, she sees a brightly flowered tissue paper holder that can only be a present from a woman. She is immediately certain that her husband is having (another) affair. While she is standing there, the telephone rings. It is the hospital: Her aging mother has been admitted with fractures. (ibid 23)

In chapter 11, Tetsuo sends a short email from Vietnam and tells her that he will only infrequently be able to send emails from the apartment he has rented. Mitsuki answers briefly, turns off her computer, thinks for a second, and then turns the computer on again. (ibid 90-91) Many years ago, when he was often away doing “research,” Tetsuo told Mitsuki his email password and asked her to check his mails occasionally. Mitsuki enters the password, and – to her surprise – Tetsuo has never changed it. She immediately sees a long correspondence between her husband and his new lover (ibid. 92)\textsuperscript{11}. Mitsuki begins to read. “Mitsuki had thought that she would wait until her mother was settled in [= at the nursing home, M.K.] to think about Tetsuo, but without Mitsuki having to think, the woman had kindly thought over the future for her. The woman had not just gone to Vietnam with Tetsuo. By going for a year, they would establish the fact of a one-year separation, and if Mitsuki were to suggest coming to visit, they would evade the issue. Immediately before returning to Japan, Tetsuo would submit divorce papers to Mitsuki; he would come back to Japan but not return to the apartment. At least, that is what Tetsuo had been caused to promise the woman.” (Ibid, 93)

Thus, by the end of this chapter, a number of plots and sub-plots have already been introduced. There is no suspense regarding the demise of the mother, since the reader already knows she will die. In contrast, after chapter 11 the second story line takes on great urgency. Once Mitsuki has read the emails from Tetsuo’s lover, she must organize her life so that she

\textsuperscript{11} The word research (\textit{kenkyū}) is in quotation marks in the original.
can live without Tetsuo, and this means first of all that she must have sufficient funds. After roughly one hundred pages, in chapter 25, the narrative returns to the story of Mitsuki’s mother’s demise. She has only just moved into the old people’s home, and now she is in the hospital with pneumonia. She dies at the end of chapter 32, roughly halfway through the novel and shortly before the New Year. Mitsuki goes off to a hotel on Lake Ashi in Hakone for a short time to think things over. The sequence in Hakone, which goes on for almost the entire remainder of the novel, consists mostly of flashbacks. At the end of the novel, Mitsuki divorces Tetsuo. She goes back to Tōkyō and – with her mother’s inheritance – takes her own apartment.

The most explicit subtext for the novel is Ozaki Köyō’s *The Demon Gold*. Mitsuki’s grandmother, her mother’s mother, is referred to exclusively as Omiya. This is, of course, the name of the main female character in Köyō’s novel. The first allusion is made in the very first chapter, when Mitsuki goes to bed on the night her mother dies. She finds it strange that she does not cry for her mother, and then remembers that her mother had also not cried for her own mother, Mitsuki’s grandmother. Then she remembers: “It must have been more than ten years ago that she had had a very different insight into Mother. They were walking along the beach at Atami. Her mother scoffed, »And there wasn’t even a Kan’ichi for her!« Then she said, »Ridiculous! To call herself Omiya!« Mitsuki could tell by her voice that she was trying not to cry, perhaps because she had suddenly remembered her own mother. Her mother tried desperately to keep up with her daughter, stabbing her cane into the sandy beach” (ibid. 16). Another important subtext for *Haha no isan* is Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. In the hotel in Hakone, Mitsuki makes the acquaintance of the elderly lady Kaoru, who mentions that she has seen Mitsuki reading *Madame Bovary* in the hotel lobby. Mitsuki is reading the novel in French, and Kaoru pronounces the title correctly. Mitsuki tells her that she studied for one year in Paris, whereupon Kaoru explains that she had also lived there for almost thirty years. (Mizumura 2012, 305) In one flashback, Mitsuki recalls that she once had had the offer to do a new translation of *Madame Bovary*, which she refused because she at the time not only had to care for both of her aging and sick parents, but also because it would have meant giving up her job as an adjunct teacher and thus earning less money. (ibid, 340-343)

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12 One of the most dramatic and famous scenes in *The Demon Gold*, the scene in which Kan’ichi tries to persuade Miya to marry him and then runs out of her life forever, takes place in Atami, cf. Ozaki Köyō 1993a, 60-73.
One could ask what these two novels have to do with *Inheritance from Mother*. To begin with, Emma Bovary has been called “a character in search of a novel.” (Culler 1977, 208) This is the synopsis given in *Inheritance from Mother*: “It is the story of a nineteenth-century French woman from the countryside who has read too many love stories. The sentimental, dreamy young Emma is the daughter of moderately prosperous farmers; while she is in a convent school receiving an education above her station in life, she voraciously reads novels about ‘love and lovers,’ and she comes to expect life to be more glamorous than it is. But the man she marries is the most average country doctor imaginable. ... To fill up the void inside her, she has one affair after the next, buys expensive clothes from Paris, and goes heavily into debt. Finally she takes poison and dies in agony.” (Mizumura 2012, 360) In a similar fashion, Mitsuki’s grandmother – and scores of other women of her generation – attempted to “live” the novel *The Demon Gold*. Chapter 48 of *Inheritance from Mother* – which is entitled “Konjiki yasha” - describes the novel and its impact, using the term “Bovarysme made in Japan” (ibid. 375).\(^\text{13}\)

In attempting to answer the question why Ozaki Kōyō’s *The Demon Gold* is such an important subtext for Mizumura’s *Inheritance from Mother*, it is worth remembering that the subtitle of the novel is *shinbun shōsetsu*, or ‘newspaper novel.’ In December 1889, Ozaki Kōyō joined the staff of the *Yomiuri shimbun* as an author of fiction. (Tosa 1973: 1) Roughly from this time onward, almost all of his works – including *The Demon Gold* - were newspaper novels. At one point in *Inheritance from Mother* Mitsuki even describes herself as the child of a newspaper novel:

> "So why did her mother become that sort of a person? Why is some person that sort of person? There cannot be anything like an answer to that question. However much neurological science advances, however much is understood about the function of brain cells, there can be no answer. And yet, thinking about her mother, Mitsuki could not stop asking that question.” (Mizumura 2012: 371)

> “That was simply the character that her mother was born with. Given that character, wherever she had been born, she would have

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\(^{13}\) The Japanese original is 和製「ボヴァリスム」.
caused havoc all of her life. But it was also the life that her mother had led which turned her into the person she was. Yes, that was it. If her grandmother had not identified herself with *Omiya-san*, her mother would not have been born either. If her grandmother had not read the newspaper novel, she would not have run off with her son’s private teacher. If that had not happened, not only would Mother not have been born, neither would her two daughters have been born. If there had not been such a thing as a newspaper novel in Japan, Mitsuki would not exist, she would not now be in a hotel deep in the mountains, ordering wine, even though she usually did not drink, and muttering »I was never loved« to herself.

When you thought about it, Mitsuki was the child of a newspaper novel.” (Mizumura 2012: 373)

Mitsuki may be the child of a newspaper novel, yet *Inheritance from Mother* is not a newspaper novel in the same sense as Kōyō’s *The Demon Gold*. The question that Mitsuki asks – why her mother had become the sort of a person she was – is, after all, a basic question of literary naturalism, and this question can only be answered by going back for generations in the life of a literary character. Thus *Inheritance from Mother* has a much broader historical scope than the traditional newspaper novel. Yet the traditional newspaper novel, embedded as it is in the newspaper – “the paradigmatic realist text” (Michaels 1987: 46) – played an important role in the development of realism. At the turn of the twentieth century, the relationship between newspaper and literature worked both ways, as Kōyō made clear in an interview about his inspiration for *Three Mistresses*. He had read an article in the *Yomiuri shimbun* about the funeral of a rich man with three mistresses, each of whom had cropped her hair and put it in the coffin:

“I thought it would be interesting to show how these three completely different women with their different characters would try to win over their master. There would be jealousy and fighting, and besides, their master would have a different relationship with

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each of them. I decided to pick up my brush. I got the gist of the story from the newspaper, the rest I made up.” (Ihara Seiseien 1906: 36)

The question of the motivation and actions of the three mistresses is, once again, the basic question of literary naturalism, the question, to put it simply, of what makes people tick.

Kōyō has a simple answer to the question of what makes people tick: It is the title of his novel, it is the demon gold. Money makes people tick. Paradoxically, this is the message sent by all of his novels once he begins to champion the cause of the wife and to call for fidelity from both partners in a marriage. As shown above, Kōyō idealizes marriage with his authorial voice in Three Mistresses, and in Passions and Griefs, he has the mourning widower Ryūnosuke voice the same opinion in a figural voice. Ryūnosuke is horrified when he finds out that his married friend Hayama has been to the pleasure quarters: “How terrible, to go to the pleasure quarters! You have a wife, don’t you? What do you think about your wife?” (Ozaki Kōyō 1993b, 184) Yet given the mores of the time, Kōyō’s female characters - even in the “ideal” marriages he is attempting to propagate - do not marry for love. The marriages are arranged, and – logically enough, one is tempted to say – the women marry money, while the men marry beauty. Kōyō makes this especially clear in his construction of the novel Two Wives (Ninin nyōbo, 1891-1892), in which the two daughters of a low ranking samurai marry. The pretty older sister is named Ogin (‘silver’), the homely younger sister is named Otetsu (‘iron’). At a party given by their parents Ogin sees a public official who is expensively dressed in a frock coat and wears a golden chain and a golden stickpin with a ruby. (Ozaki Kōyō 1993b, 231) A marriage is arranged, and now the younger sister is to marry. She is offered three candidates and chooses a blacksmith. (ibid, 327) Under these historical circumstances, it begins to appear only logical that the beautiful Omiya in The Demon Gold should marry the rich Tomiyama and not the poor Kan’ichi.

It is perhaps no coincidence that nineteenth-century literature produces, at three different corners of the globe, three heroines driven by desire, whether it is Omiya lured off by Tomiyama’s diamond ring, Theodore Dreiser’s Sister Carrie in the novel by the same name (Michaels 1987, 29-48) or Emma Bovary. In all three countries, capitalism gave rise to

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15 In his chapter “Sister Carrie’s Popular Economy,” Michaels discusses desire as the motor driving the female protagonist.
consumer culture, driven largely by a new class of women customers, who gathered in cities and in new department stores. The stores were geared to women consumers and offered “under one roof all kinds of goods - clothing, millinery, groceries, furniture.” (El-Rayess 2014: 3) Mitsuki’s mother falls squarely into this pattern when she spends money like water at her favorite department store, Isetan. In one scene, Mother buys new flowered sheets for ¥ 30,000 and pays with her “I-card.” On the way out, she spots even more luxurious flowered sheets for more than ¥ 70,000. Mother explains that she will be spending most of her time in bed from now on, returns the less expensive sheets, and buys the expensive ones, although Mitsuki is almost in tears: “Mother, you don’t have money. You shouldn’t be buying luxury items.” (Mizumura 2012, 37-38) When cleaning out the house in Chitose funabashi, Mitsuki finds many items her mother had bought at Isetan and never used. (ibid. 83) Yet her mother is depicted as never having worked for an income: She had supplemented the family income by knitting woolen kimono jackets. (ibid. 47) Her own father, Mitsuki’s grandfather, had initially tried to have her educated at the teachers’ seminary, but she did not pass the entrance exam. (ibid. 390) The money for the nursing home (and, later, for the inheritance) comes from the sale of the family home. The piece of land it is built upon has become valuable. (ibid. 47-48)

In paradoxical contrast, the grandmother, Omiya, had a profession (a profession with which Ozaki Kōyō was well acquainted). She was a geisha, and the daughter of a geisha. As a young girl she had lived with foster parents under one roof with a young man, a student of samurai background like Kan’ichi. The two young people fell in love, but the foster parents had set their hopes on the young man having a career in the bureaucracy and did not want him marrying the daughter of a geisha. She gave the young man up - whereupon, like Kan’ichi, he ran away and dropped out of university. Given her youth and beauty, Omiya was installed as a concubine by a wealthy patron in Kōbe. Almost as soon as this happened, the rich man’s wife died. Omiya thereupon became the official wife of the wealthy patron. When Mitsuki’s grandmother married the rich man, her foster parents were relieved, only to be aghast when she ran off with Mitsuki’s grandfather, the tutor of her children, leaving not only her husband, but also her two sons. Mitsuki’s grandfather did not marry Omiya, but at least acknowledged Mitsuki’s mother Noriko as his daughter. She grew up in a tenement in Ōsaka. (ibid. 374-395)

For the society of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, Charlotte Perkins Stetson has this to say about “women and economics”:
“The girl who marries the rich old man or the titled profligate is condemned by the popular voice; and the girl who marries the poor young man, and helps him live his best, is still approved by the same arbiter. And yet why should we blame the woman for pursuing her vocation? Since marriage is her only way to get money, why should she not try to get money in that way? ... On the other hand, note the effect of this dependence upon men ... In simpler relations, in the country, wherever women have a personal value in economic relation as well as a feminine value in sex-relation, an early marriage is an advantage. The young farmer gets a profitable servant when he marries. The young business man gets nothing of the kind – a pretty girl, a charming girl, ready for »wifehood and motherhood« – so far as her health holds out, - but having no economic value whatever. She is merely a consumer, and he must wait until he can »afford to marry.«” (Stetson 1898: 93-94)

Mitsuki’s grandmother Omiya would thus be the “girl who marries the rich old man,” while Mitsuki’s mother is the “pretty and charming girl … of no economic value whatever.”

And Mitsuki herself? She has managed to find a niche as a teacher at a university, although she is described as having no particular aptitude for studying. It is evidently enough that she has spent a year in France and enjoys reading. Her translation work brings good money, even if it does not interest her particularly. (Mizumura 2012: 329-330) Most important, and unlike her mother, she has the capacity to be content with herself, with what she has, and – at least for a time – with Tetsuo. This becomes clear when the novel describes how Mitsuki occasionally helps out at Natsuki’s house when her older sister has company. The guests are mostly rich and connected in some way to the arts or music (Natsuki’s husband is a cellist), but Mitsuki cannot ever imagine them reading a book. She comes home, goes to bed, and leans her head on Tetsuo’s shoulder. “»Our home is the best.« »You don’t want anything, Mitsuki.« »Like I say, this is all I need.«” (Mizumura 2012: 331) Tetsuo is the unsatisfied one; he longs for a bigger and better apartment downtown. (ibid. 333) Soon he begins to have

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As far as “a woman’s health holding out” is concerned, the depiction of “women and illness” is also an important theme in Inheritance from Mother. It unfortunately not possible to also treat this theme within the framework of this paper.
affairs. (ibid. 342-350) After shaking off the unsatisfied people in her life – her demanding mother and her philandering husband – Mitsuki moves into her new apartment, on March 10, 2011. (ibid. 521) The next day, while she is unpacking, the floor of the house shakes so violently she cannot stand. For two weeks, she is so numbed that she cannot continue to unpack. Finally it is April second:

“It was the second morning in April. When she woke up and went into the living room, she could see through the golden colored organdy that a white cloud surrounded the pond. She held her breath and pulled the sheer curtain aside, and the white cloud was a cloud of cherry blossoms. I am alive … I am alive, like this. I am happy – At that instant, Mitsuki felt that it would be a crime if she were not to feel that way.” (ibid. 532)\textsuperscript{17}

Mitsuki’s modest proclamation, “I am happy” is the echo, and at the same time the resolution of her self-diagnosis at the beginning of the novel, “I am unhappy.” (ibid. 20) In between comes not only the chronicle of her mother’s death, but a description of the varying fortunes of the Katsura family, and more specifically of the lives of three women: grandmother, mother, and Mitsuki herself. In this detailed and careful description of Japanese women throughout the twentieth century, Mizumura Minae places herself squarely in the tradition of the short-lived school of Japanese realism and its doyen, Ozaki Kōyō.

\textbf{Literature}


\textsuperscript{17} Ellipsis (dots) and dash in the original.


AUTHOR’S PROFILE

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Matthew Königsberg studied Japanese Studies at the University of Virginia (USA) and the University of Hamburg in Germany. He took his Ph.D. at the University of Tübingen and has held academic positions at the University of Hamburg, Washington University (St. Louis) and Free University of Berlin, where he is currently employed. Academic research on teaching Japanese language and modern and pre-modern Japanese literature. Publications (in German) on the literature of the Korean minority in Japan and on literary realism in the works of Ozaki Kōyō.