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Tonsuring the Performer

Image, Text, and Narrative in the Ballad-Drama *Shizuka*

This essay explores the portrayal of the famous *shirabyōshi* dancer Shizuka in an illustrated, hand-copied book (*nara ehon*) dating from the late sixteenth century. The text for the *nara ehon*, taken from a somewhat earlier ballad-drama (*kōwakamai*), describes Shizuka's capture by her lover's brother and enemy, the shogun Minamoto Yoritomo. In the tale, Shizuka and her mother are taken from the capital to Kamakura, Yoritomo's headquarters. Shizuka bravely refuses to reveal her lover's whereabouts, spending her time in captivity defiantly demonstrating her formidable skills and erudition to Yoritomo and his retinue. By contrast, the illustrations of the text provide a counter-narrative stressing the loss and suffering that Shizuka endures during her time in Kamakura, ignoring some of the most famous parts of the narrative, including a defiant dance she performs at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in front of Yoritomo and his men. I focus on the juxtaposition between text and image in this work, stressing the discontinuities between the two, especially in comparison with other, near-contemporary *nara ehon* versions whose illustrations more closely follow the text. I argue that the increasing enclosure and control of women during the late medieval period is reflected in the portrayals of Shizuka and her mother, whom we see only in captivity or on forced journeys that could end in death.

KEYWORDS: *shirabyōshi*—*nara ehon*—Kamakura shogunate—Minamoto Yoritomo—Minamoto Yoshitsune—Shizuka

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SHIZUKA 静, beloved of the great general Minamoto Yoshitsune 源義経, is among the most celebrated female characters from the early medieval period. A famed *shirabyōshi* 白拍子 performer, she is the subject of narrative, performing arts, song, and image. She represents many things in many contexts: beauty, heroism, virtue, artistry, and female perfection (NAITŌ 2004, 3–4). Legend has it that her dancing skills ended a drought, her attentiveness saved Yoshitsune from a night attack, and her defiant loyalty to Yoshitsune earned her grudging respect from her lover’s brother, the shogun Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝, as well as empathy from Yoritomo’s wife, Hōjō Masako 北条政子.

This essay discusses a *nara ehon* 奈良絵本 version of the *kōwakamai* 幸若舞 *Shizuka*, which recounts Shizuka’s forced trip to Kamakura and interview with Yoritomo after she has parted from Yoshitsune. *Kōwakamai*, or “ballad drama,” was a performing art involving dramatic recitation of a story; its strong narrative element lent it to textualization by the late Muromachi period in works including this *nara ehon* (a kind of hand-copied book with colorful hand-painted illustrations), dating from the sixteenth century and held by the Library of Congress (hereafter LC). The LC text is one of a number of extant *nara ehon* versions of this tale, including two others that have been digitized by the Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan 国文学研究資料館 (National Institute of Japanese Literature, hereafter NIJL).¹ As an illustrated text grounded in a performance tradition, the LC *nara ehon* is one discrete manifestation of the vast body of works comprising the “legends about Shizuka” (*Shizuka densetsu* 静伝説),² and represents a multi-dimensional artifact for understanding how tales about Shizuka developed and were reinterpreted as cultural norms changed during the late medieval age. This

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1. The two *nara ehon* belonging to NIJL are included in their “New *Nara ehon* Database”: http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/n_naraehongazou.html (accessed 3 September 2008). The first is in the *nara ehon* format, and the second has been disassembled and remounted on a screen. Kobayashi Kenji also reproduces several images from a woodblock print edition (KOBAYASHI 1998, 19–65, esp. 59–60).

2. *Shizuka* is the title given to the LC *nara ehon*; other versions of the *kōwakamai* identify the piece as *Shizuka monogatari*, and an *otogizōshi Shizuka no sōshi* covers the same general narrative terrain (TOKUDA 2003).



FIGURE 1. Cover of volume 1. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

study argues that the details of the LC *nara ehon*'s images, as well as the scenes chosen for illustration, suggest a recasting of the base narrative that results in a story resonating strongly with medieval revelatory tales while downplaying Shizuka's celebrated identity as a performer.

The LC *nara ehon* is a "large format" book comprised of two volumes with dimensions of 34 x 25 cm. The covers are of *torinoko* paper 鶏の子紙 with an *uchigumori* 内曇 ("cloud-figured," meaning color gradation from blue-green at the top to purple at the bottom) pattern (FIGURE 1). The text is composed on *ogami* 緒紙 (jute paper). Tsuji Eiko notes that the narrative is close to the *Daigashira* 大頭 *kōwaka*

lineage, and its illustrations are in "relatively good condition." The text is written in one hand, although interlinear markings in another have been added (TSUJI 1994, 180). Along with three other *nara ehon*, Shizuka has been included in the LC's initial digitization project for its premodern Japanese holdings (OYLER 2007).

The tale told in the *nara ehon* is one of several of the best-known episodes from Shizuka's biography: her trip to Kamakura to be interrogated by Yoritomo concerning the whereabouts of Yoshitsune, who has incurred Yoritomo's wrath following the Genpei War (1180–1185). This story is elsewhere recounted in *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡 (Mirror of the East, ca. 1266) and *Gikeiki* 義経記 (Record of Yoshitsune, ca. fifteenth–sixteenth centuries), but the *kōwaka* presents a more complicated plot—and more drama—than those earlier works.³ Shizuka is not included in the Kan'ei-period (1624–1644) *Mai no hon* 舞の本 (Collection of *Kōwaka* texts),⁴ and it appears under the rubric of *bangai* 番外 (extracanonical)

3. In *Azuma kagami*, Shizuka dances first and gives birth second; in *Gikeiki* we find the motif of the "womb search" introduced. It reaches its fullest and most dramatic articulation in the *kōwakamai*, as discussed.

4. Pieces from the *kōwaka* repertoire, which consists primarily of tales about the Genpei War and its immediate aftermath, were organized in the *Mai no hon* to create a chronological record of the various events they describe. Various illustrated, print-edition *Mai no hon* were issued from the early Edo period and represented narrative renditions of the *kōwaka* repertoire; see ARAKI 1964.

in the *Shoseki mokuroku* 書籍目録 (Inventory of publications, Kanbun 10 [1670]) (KOBAYASHI 1998, 19–20). *Shizuka no sōshi* 静草紙, an *otogizōshi* 御伽草子 (medieval tale) recounting the story in a form “that seems derived from both [*Gikeiki* and the *kōwaka*],” represents one further manifestation in another medieval genre (TOKUDA 2003, 36).

Shizuka in Legend

Shizuka first appears in the major works about the Genpei War (1180–1185) and its aftermath. She makes a brief appearance in variants of *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tales of the Heike) in descriptions of Yoshitsune’s escape to Yoshino,⁵ but the interrogation at Kamakura is first mentioned in *Azuma kagami* and *Gikeiki*. In these two works, Shizuka is identified as a *shirabyōshi*, a kind of female performer who, according to *Heike monogatari*, “[i]n the beginning ... dressed in men’s *suikan* overshirts and high caps and wore daggers with silver-decorated hilts and scabbards.... In more recent times, they have worn only the overshirts.... The name *shirabyōshi* [white rhythm] comes from the color of the overshirts” (McCULLOUGH 1988, 30). *Shirabyōshi* flourished in the late Heian (794–1185) and early Kamakura (1185–1333) periods, under the patronage of such powerful males as Retired Sovereign Go-Shirakawa 後白河院, and as *Heike monogatari* famously asserts in the Giō 妓王 episode, Taira Kiyomori 平清盛 (WAKITA 2001, 132–62). *Shirabyōshi* performed dances and songs for their patrons. The contents of the songs were often auspicious and at least nominally ritualistic, and in Japanese scholarship, the historical development of *shirabyōshi* is generally traced back to *miko* 巫女 (female shamans) and other ritual performers (WAKITA 2001, 9–25).

The *shirabyōshi* as a category was also highly eroticized and juxtaposed with more conventional, domestic women. *Shirabyōshi* were mobile and expected to form temporary sexual relationships with patrons. In some cases they married high-ranking men, but many seem to have led less settled lives, at least during their active years (WAKITA 2001, 156–62). The actual origins of the *shirabyōshi* are unclear. Yoshida Kenkō’s *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (Essays in idleness, 1330–1331) names Shizuka and her mother, Iso no Zenji 磯禪師, as the original *shirabyōshi*, an assertion contradicting other equally unverifiable accounts, including *Heike monogatari*.⁶ What can be known with certainty is their popularity during the period described in the *nara ehon*.

In all legends about her, Shizuka’s relationship with Yoshitsune was particularly close. When he fled the capital to escape assassins sent by Yoritomo, he

5. Her courage and attentiveness when Yoshitsune is attacked by Tōsabō are recorded in both *Heike monogatari* and *Gikeiki*.

6. The Giō episode’s most famous incarnation appears in the Kakuichi-bon 覚一本 variant, chapter one, episode six. Variants are discussed in STRIPPOLI 2006.

took Shizuka with him, but he was later forced to abandon her in the Yoshino mountains. From there, she returned to the capital, which is where the *nara ehon* opens. The *nara ehon* follows a general story also found in *Gikeiki* and *Azuma kagami*. The material shared by all three works includes: that she was held in Kamakura until the birth of her son; that the infant was killed on Yoritomo's orders; and that Shizuka performed a dance at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu in front of an audience including Yoritomo before she returned to the capital.

In addition to the famous stories of her interview at Kamakura and her parting from Yoshitsune in Yoshino, there are also legends concerning either her birth, or her life after her release by Yoritomo. Tales from western Japan often describe her birth and focus more centrally on the travails of her pregnant mother, Iso no Zenji. These tend to be set in coastal areas, and Naitō Hiroyo posits that the “Iso” 磯 (“strand” or “beach”) of Iso no Zenji's name conveys these origins. Stories from eastern Japan concentrate rather on her attempts to join Yoshitsune as he fled to Hiraizumi (NAITŌ 2004, 64–75). As with many medieval legends about Genpei-era heroes, such stories situate relatively obscure locales within the larger, well-known narrative of the war and its aftermath.

Shizuka is not mentioned in any historical document beyond *Azuma kagami*, the accuracy of which is doubtful.⁷ While not denying the possibility of Shizuka's historicity, Naitō stresses the extremely strong legendary component in all aspects of her story and suggests that, rather than providing material for teasing out a “real” Shizuka, the variety of narratives about her are better used to indicate the layers of specific cultural and historical exigencies that brought her to life (NAITŌ 2004, 3). The LC *nara ehon* provides a unique example of how one set of iconic characteristics is inscribed visually on a somewhat older narrative, thereby translating that narrative into a new idiom informed by changed historical and social contexts. The very translatability of these characteristics suggests the hagiographic nature of the Shizuka story and its significance as a gauge for late-medieval interpretations of a defining historical moment, the establishment of the Kamakura warrior government.

The LC Shizuka

The particular interest of the LC's *Shizuka* derives from a combination of its reliance on the long and detailed *kōwaka* version of the story and its unique set of illustrations. As with many such articles of material culture from the period, the LC *Shizuka*'s exact date of creation and reception history are impossible to

7. Considering that *Azuma kagami* was written after 1266, the accuracy of its records from the Genpei- and early-Kamakura periods is questionable; most records seem based on other sources, including contemporary diaries, but also clearly fictionalized accounts like *Heike monogatari*. For a discussion of *Azuma kagami* as a historical source, see MASS 1985, 15.



FIGURE 2. Akoya contemplates betraying Shizuka. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 3. Shizuka receives provisional ton-sure. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

judge. Unlike the NIJL texts, in which the illustrations in the main emphasize the several scenes demonstrating Shizuka's virtuosity as a dancer and woman of letters, the LC illustrations instead create a visual version of the tale that highlights moments of anxiety, sorrow, and loss for a mother and daughter. The LC text thus presents a pair of interlocking yet somewhat discordant stories: the textualized rendition of the (performative) *kōwaka* version of the tale, refracted through a set of images that frames the narrative as a gloomy tale of suffering.

Following the *kōwaka* narrative, the LC *nara ehon* opens in the capital, as does the *Gikeiki* version of the story, but in the *kōwaka*, this episode is rather lengthy and is also essential in framing the remainder of the story. Shizuka is in hiding at Jōdōji,⁸ but is discovered after Yoritomo's representative Kajiwara no Kagetoki 梶原景時 posts a reward for her capture and a maid, one Akoya あこや, betrays her.⁹

8. *Gikeiki* has her residing at Hōshōji.

9. Scholars note the similarity of not only the plot device, but also the maid's name, to Akoō, the treacherous wife who betrays the hero Kagekiyo in the eponymous *kōwaka*. Akoya is eventually punished for her treachery—she is paraded through the streets and drowned; here, the illustration of this event in a print version of *Shizuka* is identical to that of Akoō's punishment in *Kagekiyo*, both of which strongly resemble the *nara ehon* version as well (KOBAYASHI 1998, 39). Notably, all *nara ehon* versions I have been able to view include several scenes concerning this betrayal, and particularly Akoya's humiliating ride through the city to her execution.

Akoya's revelation of Shizuka's location comprises the first set of illustrations in the *nara ehon*, which are typical of the LC text: though not particularly lavish, they contain a fair degree of detail and vivid coloring, often utilizing gold leaf. As in most of the LC text's illustrations, the images here intrude provocatively into the text. In FIGURE 2, for example, Akoya, on her way to betray Shizuka, appears to be sinking in—or at least weighted down by—her story, a situation foreshadowing her ultimate fate: her revelation of Shizuka's whereabouts will result in Kajiwaru ordering her to be drowned in the river.

The *kōwaka* version alone continues with a long altercation at the temple between Kajiwaru and Shizuka, who is defended by Iso no Zenji, with whom she is in hiding. Kajiwaru insists that Shizuka accompany him to Kamakura, but she manages to put him off long enough to go through the motions of tonsuring: she calls the holy man (*hijiri* 聖) of the temple, who “touched the razor to the hair at her forehead as she intoned the promise to act in accordance with the precepts (*kaikyō* かひきやう[戒行]) and asked for the administration of the five precepts (*gokai* 五戒)” (TSUJI 1994, 176).¹⁰ FIGURE 3 depicts the LC *nara ehon* illustration of this scene, the first image of Shizuka in the text. Dressed in sumptuous robes decorated with ornate designs in gold leaf, she sits obediently before the holy man, as a row of weeping nuns looks on. The illustration fills an entire page of the book, representing an unusual pause in the flow of the narrative.

Shizuka's provisional tonsuring recalls a similar scene from *Heike monogatari*, in which Taira no Shigehira 平重衡, having been captured and summoned to Kamakura, takes leave of his religious teacher, the holy man Hōnen 法然. Forbidden to take the tonsure, Shigehira asks Hōnen to mime shaving his head, as recorded in the Heike episode “Kaimon 戒文” (Kakuichi-bon chapter 10, episode five). Like Shizuka, Shigehira is transported immediately thereafter to Kamakura; he is later sent to Nara for his execution. The similarity of this moment in the *kōwaka Shizuka* to that well-known episode certainly would have cast a pall over the narrative for the *nara ehon* reader.

The *kōwaka* continues with a rather lengthy dissertation on the “Five Precepts.” Although not presented explicitly as the words of the holy man, in form and placement it suggests that he is the speaker. It opens, “Now, what we call the Five Precepts are prohibitions against murder, theft, jealousy, mendacity, and drunkenness. If you ask the origins of these ...” (TSUJI 1994, 176). A point-by-point description of all five categories follows, much of it cited from *setsuwa* collections, including *Hōbutsushū* 宝物集 (Collection of treasures, ca. early Kamakura period) and *Jikkishō* 十訓抄 (Miscellany of ten maxims, 1252). In general, the lecture presents a comprehensible and putatively authoritative account of the

10. Referred to as *amasogi* 尼削ぎ (nun's cut), this was a first step that could be followed by formal tonsure (KATSUURA 2002, 117–22).



FIGURES 4 AND 5. Shizuka's *michiyuki*. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

origins and meanings of the precepts, quoting examples from Buddhist antiquity as well as more recent Japanese history and legend.

The sermon establishes several contexts that remain important throughout the work. First, it depicts Shizuka as a devout and humble follower of the Buddha. The portrayal here of Shizuka's devotion accords with a privileged connection between *shirabyōshi* and Buddhism that will be explored more fully below; one place we have already encountered it is in the Zenji 禪師 (zen master) of Iso no Zenji's name. Additionally, this scene serves as a template for several more complex scenes of oratory later in the piece: a speaker (the holy man) explains the meaning of something in front of an attentive audience—in this case, Shizuka and the assembled nuns. Although the scene represented in FIGURE 3 creates the image of the performative space in which the sermon was presumably delivered, neither the holy man's actual recitation of the sermon nor any of the episodes comprising its contents are illustrated.

Following this scene, we encounter a lyrical and liberally illustrated *michiyuki* 道行 (travel sequence). As in the illustration of Akoya's betrayal, text and image in the *michiyuki* interpenetrate each other, suggesting visually the movement we find described in the text (FIGURES 4 and 5). Shizuka's concern about her mother's age prompts her escort to allow Zenji to ride rather than walk. The *michiyuki* is absent from the *Gikeiki* and *Azuma kagami* accounts of Shizuka's trip to Kamakura, although a different version appears in *Shizuka no sōshi* (TOKUDA

2003, 34–35). In the *kōwaka*, as in *Shizuka no sōshi*, it is articulated partially in alternating five- and seven-syllable lines.

Shizuka's difficult interview with Yoritomo (found in all versions) occurs soon after her arrival in Kamakura. In the *kōwaka* alone, Yoritomo is immediately hostile to her, accusing her of being not only his enemy but also “a dancing girl” (*yūjo* 遊女, which he clearly uses judgmentally) with “an indeterminate number of patrons” (TSUJI 1994, 170). This is the only place in the text in which Shizuka's identity as a *shirabyōshi* is referred to in pejorative terms; generally, her fame as a performer is the source of admiration and desire (both aesthetic and sexual) for Yoritomo and his retinue.

Yoritomo berates Shizuka for her pregnancy by Yoshitsune, to which she responds by saying, “A person's love, though you say mine is ‘indeterminate,’ is preordained from former lives; how could it just end or wither?” She then continues: “In the old days, the Captain Genji (had many loves)...” She then lists—in the form of a *monotsukushi* 物尽くし—several chapter titles from *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, concluding that, “in the sixty chapters of *Genji*, there were many brief love affairs, but they say ‘sharing the shade of a tree or a drink from a stream is all the result of a karmic connection from a past life.’ How long will the fortunate flourish? Until when does the ‘until-when-grass’ (*itsumadegusa*) last? One never knows when frost will wither it” (TSUJI 1994, 170).

Shizuka's lecture is a convoluted and not entirely logical answer that theoretically explains her relationship with Yoshitsune. On the one hand, she seems to position herself as Genji, the man of many loves, each of which is meaningful, regardless of its brevity; on the other hand, the name “Genji” evokes the Minamoto clan to which Yoshitsune and Yoritomo belong, thus suggesting other possible equivalencies. She claims that her love for Yoshitsune was fated, but also that the nature of existence is for all things to end. Yoritomo seems to link “Genji” to his own Minamoto identity, and immediately interprets her words as a coded criticism:

When you say “until-when grass,” you mean me. Although now I have come to control the world as my own, you think: “until when?” What you say is that mutability is the way of the world; we can't count on tomorrow. Yet there are things that endure. We plant the pine and worship the Sumiyoshi deity. In a world where “names of things reveal their nature,” you praise the inconstancy of the world, flattering me by comparing me to the “until-when-grass” of *Genji monogatari*—I see you are trying to curse me. Such defilement to my ears! I'm going to cleanse them in the waters of the Yi River!¹¹ (TSUJI 1994, 170)

11. The Yi River is on the continent, famed in legend as the location where, in ancient times, Xu You 許由 was said to wash the unhappy news that Emperor Yao had lost control of the country from his ears before retreating to the mountains to live as a hermit (MASHIMO 1987, 245 n. 22).



FIGURE 6. Kajiwara comes to take Shizuka away. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 7. Edict in hand, Iso no Zenji pursues the party. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

He promptly withdraws in anger, followed by his assembled retainers, leaving Shizuka alone.

The idea of a hidden message requiring interpretation foreshadows two scenes described below: Shizuka's famous performance of the *shizu ya shizu* song at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, and another that is unique to the *kōwaka*. Note that this scene involves a conversation in which Shizuka uses her knowledge of the literary canon—in this case, *Genji monogatari*—seemingly to encode her resistance to Yoritomo in a form superficially resembling the holy man's sermon. Her motivations are not explicitly confrontational here, but the possibility that she is challenging Yoritomo is in keeping with legendary characterizations of her interactions with him: this is further suggested by Yoritomo's response, in which he attacks Shizuka by questioning her mobilization of words and asserts the proper stability of the relationship between words and their meanings. He accuses her of manipulating this fundamental connection by trying to disguise her curse as flattery. Although his ability to discern her true message depends on his comprehension of the multiple registers on which she conveys meaning, he nevertheless insists on privileging one interpretation: "names reveal the nature of things," he insists. Notably, his response quotes legend and song, and his display of cultural knowledge marks him as a worthy interlocutor (and adversary)—he, too, can



FIGURE 8. Shizuka's reprieve. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 9. Mother and daughter reunited. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

employ the canon in defense of his position. Yoritomo gets the last word in this scene, if by force: asserting his power over her, he leaves, refusing to continue to serve as her audience.

The LC text's rendition of the interview differs somewhat from other versions by splitting it in half. Where other *kōwaka* variants record Shizuka giving a fairly long speech and Yoritomo an equally long response, the LC text instead involves two altercations: Yoritomo interprets Shizuka's shortened disquisition on *itsumadegusa* as a slight and leaves the room; then Kajiwara takes her before Yoritomo again, where she continues to enumerate *Genji* chapters and Yoritomo responds angrily. Grammatical disjunctures in the LC text suggest this may be a transcriptional error. Nevertheless, this repetition heightens the tension of the encounter.¹² This scene is not illustrated in the LC text, although it is in the *nara ehon* held by NIJL.¹³

Perhaps the most striking addition to the *kōwaka* version of the story follows: Kajiwara insists that Shizuka undergo a "womb search" (*tainaisagashi* 胎内

12. For comparison, see TSUJI 1994, 170–69; MASHIMO 1987, 242–43; and SUDA 1987, 371–72.

13. See [http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnails/situkathum/pages/sizuka%20\(2_2\)_jpg_g.htm](http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnails/situkathum/pages/sizuka%20(2_2)_jpg_g.htm). (Accessed 3 September 2008).



FIGURE 10. Kagesue murders the child. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 11. Shizuka and Iso no Zenji pursue Kagesue. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

探し), to determine the sex of her unborn child by Yoshitsune. Kajiwara escorts Shizuka from the room following her interview with Yoritomo. “Laughing to himself, [Kajiwara] moved closer to Shizuka. ‘Come this way,’ he said as he took her from the room. ‘Oh, you criminal—what will time do to this little family intrigue? Before the night is out, . . . we’ll search your womb, and that will bring an end to this seditious branch of the family tree!”¹⁴ His considerable enthusiasm for the project reverses his position in *Gikeiki*, where he cautions Yoritomo against such rash and cruel action. This displacement of the competition for the Minamoto patrimony between Yoritomo and Yoshitsune onto the conventionally villainous Kajiwara is very much in keeping with general narrative trends concerning the brothers’ rivalry, in which Kajiwara becomes the cause of their falling-out. The first volume of the LC *nara ehon* concludes with this scene.

Volume Two opens with the dramatic “womb search.” Kajiwara retrieves Shizuka from her lodging to take her to Yuigahama for execution, at which point there is an excruciating parting between Shizuka and Iso no Zenji (FIGURE 6).

14. TSUJI 1994, 170–69. The ellipses in the translation represent the placement of the second interview with Yoritomo; Kajiwara’s statement in all other versions is effectively interrupted here by Shizuka’s continued *Genji* lecture and Yoritomo’s response. The proposed “womb search” is in fact a death sentence, since it would entail cutting Shizuka’s belly to reach the womb. That it was to be conducted at Yuigahama, a site frequently used in Yoritomo’s time for executions, underlines this fact.



FIGURE 12. The women collect the infant's remains. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 13. The women are prevented from committing suicide. From *Shizuka*, Library of Congress *nara ehon*, sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Distraught, Zenji runs to the residence of Hōjō Masako, secures an edict (*hōsho* 奉書) from the shogun's wife forbidding the “womb search,” and begins to pursue Kajiwara's party. This sequence is the topic of significant illustration and elaborate, suspenseful description—as she is carried past the Tsurugaoka Hachiman shrine, Shizuka implores Hachiman in verse. In the distance comes the faint sound of Iso no Zenji running to catch the party (FIGURE 7). While on patrol at the shrine, Yoritomo's prominent retainer Doi Sanehira 土井実平, whom most narratives portray as sympathetic and fair-minded, encounters Kajiwara and questions him, but ultimately lets the party proceed after chasing them from the shrine precincts—such activity as Kajiwara has planned is defiling and inauspicious on sacred ground. In a dramatic “last minute reprieve” scene, Iso no Zenji finally overtakes Kajiwara, and, with the support of Sanehira, is able to stop him from killing Shizuka (FIGURE 8). Mother and daughter are reunited (FIGURE 9). This dramatic interlude, in which the narrator explicitly compares Shizuka's journey to a trip along the road to the otherworld (*meido* 冥途), is absent from the *Gikeiki* and *Azuma kagami* versions but included in *Shizuka no sōshi*'s rendition of the story of Shizuka at Kamakura.

The final episode for which the *nara ehon* provides illustrations returns to narrative terrain shared by *Azuma kagami* and *Gikeiki*: the tragic killing of Shi-

zuka's child. After the boy's birth, Kajiwara's son, Kagesue, comes to retrieve him at Sanehira's residence, where the women are lodging. In a scene reminiscent of his father's impatience with Shizuka in the capital, Kagesue eventually takes the child and dashes him against the rocks at Yuigahama (FIGURE 10). The two women pursue Kagesue (FIGURE 11), eventually to encounter the baby's broken body. They gather up his scattered remains (FIGURE 12), and onlookers restrain them from committing suicide (FIGURE 13). The scenes of Kagesue dashing the infant against the rocky shore and the women collecting the mangled body—portrayed in graphic detail in the LC text—are the poignant final images of the *nara ehon*.¹⁵

Although the illustrations end here, the remainder of the *nara ehon* contains the most memorable events from the broader legendary record of Shizuka's time in Kamakura. After her tragedy, the *kōwaka* records, she remains in the warrior capital to recover, receiving letters and then a visit from Masako and other high-ranking ladies, who flock to her because of her fame as a *literata* from the capital. This episode reinterprets one found in *Gikeiki*, differing in its length and the good intentions of Shizuka's visitors—in *Gikeiki*, the scene is a setup to trick her into dancing at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, whereas in the *kōwaka*, the women visit her to benefit from her mastery of the arts.¹⁶ She is not only a famous calligrapher, we learn, but also an initiate into the secret meanings of canonical literary texts. This she demonstrates in a long dissertation on the “hidden secrets” of *Ise monogatari*. Her lecture is at times allusive to and at times directly quoted from either *Ise monogatari nangichū* 伊勢物語難義注 (Explanation of obscure meanings in The Tales of Ise, ca. Kamakura period) or *Ise monogatari zuinō* 伊勢物語髓脳 (Essence of The Tales of Ise, ca. 1320s; KLEIN 1997, 443).

Both commentaries offer explications of hidden meanings in *Ise monogatari* that, when deciphered, reveal hidden Shingon truths; both were most likely produced by or under the influence of the medieval Reizei and Nijō schools of *waka*, for which *Ise* commentaries played a vital role in esoteric Buddhist initiation (*kanjō* 灌頂) rituals for their members.¹⁷ Knowing such truths qualifies Shizuka as a member of the cultural elite; she then transmits this knowledge as the teacher of the assembled women in a scene somewhat suggestive of the holy man's lecture at the beginning of Volume One. The *kōwaka*, as mentioned above, uses this scene to recast Shizuka's performance at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. Whereas she is tricked into performing in *Gikeiki* and coerced in *Azuma kagami*,

15. The image of the infant's broken body seems to be unique to the LC *Shizuka*. For comparison, see [http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumb_nails/byoubuthum/pages/byoubu\(36\)_jpg_g.htm](http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumb_nails/byoubuthum/pages/byoubu(36)_jpg_g.htm). (Accessed 3 September, 2008).

16. For comparison, see the *Gikeiki* account in MCCULLOUGH 1966, 227–30.

17. For a discussion of *waka kanjō* rituals, see KLEIN 1997. BOWRING 1992 also addresses the issue of *Ise* reception by the medieval *waka* schools.

here she rather accedes to a request by Masako, proffered in the context of the community of women discussing the classics and the arts. Other texts lavishly illustrate this scene, but the LC *nara ehon* does not.¹⁸

The narrative's final scene finds Shizuka at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, preparing to perform before the gathered audience of Yoritomo and his retinue. At the last minute, however, she balks, and Zenji, herself an accomplished *shirabyōshi*, buys time by dancing and singing an *imayō*, which impresses the assembled viewers. Shamed that she has placed her aged mother in such a position, Shizuka decides to perform, opening with a conventional felicitation (*toki no shūgen* 時の祝言). She follows with the famous *uta* (song/poem) about the shuttle (*otamaki*) used in weaving: "Shizu ya shizu/shizuka otamaki/kurikaeshi/mukashi wo ima ni/nasu yoshi mo ga na" (Softly, softly, the shuttle slides back and forth; would that yesterday become today!). Manabe Masahiro draws attention to the fact that parts of this *uta* appear elsewhere in the *kōwaka* canon and are indeed considered felicitations (MANABE 1987, 4–7), but Yoritomo, as we know, interprets it as coded criticism: "Softly, softly, the shuttle slides back and forth; would that yesterday...!' She is singing of her longing for Yoshitsune, whom she left in Yoshino. I will not watch this," he snaps. However, Hatakeyama Shigetada 畠山重忠—like Sanehira, generally a sympathetic character—soothes Yoritomo by reinterpreting it as in fact a felicitation: "When she sang, 'Would that yesterday become today,' she meant that the age of the Five Sage Rulers of yore has returned, and the world is at peace" (TSUJI 1995, 99). Yoritomo grudgingly acknowledges the performance. Shizuka sings one last *imayō* and receives lavish rewards, all of which she dedicates to the shrine as a prayer for Yoshitsune's safety. She then returns to the capital. As in the scene of her earlier interview with Yoritomo, she again appears to encode her anger, sorrow, and defiance; he responds in anger; and it is only through Hatakeyama's recasting of the *uta*—and Yoritomo's acceptance of that reinterpretation—that the performance concludes successfully.

Depicting Shizuka: The LC Images and the Shizuka Legend

The story as told in the *kōwaka*—and so in the *nara ehon*—is framed as a sequence of scenes emphasizing either movement or stasis. The static scenes for the most part serve as platforms for some sort of virtuoso literary interpretive performance: the holy man's lecture; Shizuka's verbal sparring with Yoritomo; the scene of explication of hidden Buddhist truths revealed in *Ise monogatari*; and Shizuka's dance at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. Such static scenes exhibit a degree

18. See the NIJL *nara ehon*: [http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnails/sit_ukathum/pages/sizuka%20\(48\)_jpg_g.htm](http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnails/sit_ukathum/pages/sizuka%20(48)_jpg_g.htm); and screen: [http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnail_s/byoubuthum/pages/byoubu\(44\)_jpg_g.htm](http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnail_s/byoubuthum/pages/byoubu(44)_jpg_g.htm). (Both accessed 3 September 2008).

of “staged-ness”; they are pauses between scenes of movement, and they depend on the context of performance to create tension and tell their story. Between them, we find travel sequences: Shizuka’s *michiyuki*, Zenji’s last-minute reprieve of Shizuka, and the women’s pursuit of Kagesue as he takes Shizuka’s child to Yuigahama and murders him. This structure is suggestive of *kōwakamai*, in which alternation between scenes of stasis and those of motion heightens drama.

In *Shizuka*, this pattern additionally evokes certain conceptualizations we associate with *shirabyōshi* performers like the heroine—unfettered by the usual restrictions on movement experienced by more settled women, *shirabyōshi* moved from place to place, pausing to perform at each locale, creating and dissolving ties with patrons. And yet this version of Shizuka’s story presents something entirely different from the kind of freedom we associate with the *shirabyōshi*’s mobility, since both Shizuka’s movements and her performances are controlled by Yoritomo. How does this structuring affect the picture of Shizuka we get from this narrative? And how does this specific set of illustrations contribute to that characterization?

The scenes of performance in the *nara ehon* are fundamentally concerned with demonstrating Shizuka’s laudable personal qualities: her first act in the story is to ask to be provisionally tonsured, and the first performance is the holy man’s lecture on the Five Precepts. The illustration of Shizuka before the holy man portrays her as part of a sequestered religious community of nuns. None of the other “performances”—all of which seem to invite illustration, and which depict Shizuka’s formidable skills as a *shirabyōshi*—are portrayed in this *nara ehon*, although they are in one or both of the NIJL texts. These unillustrated scenes describe her in a favorable light, portraying her as a bright, well-educated, and quick-thinking woman of pluck. All are fundamentally about her mastery of cultural, and particularly literary, canons; each further recreates the context of lecturer and audience depicted in the holy man’s sermon.

The most conventional and least contentious of these is Shizuka’s visit with the women, where she teaches them the hidden secrets of *Ise monogatari*, quoting texts that rely on what Susan Klein has termed “etymological allegoresis” (KLEIN 1997, 445)—using the etymologies of words used in *Ise* as allegories for Shingon teachings. Here she, like the holy man, explains something difficult to a group of women: she transmits secret knowledge, hidden in and as words. This celebration of her knowledge about the meanings of words is of course colored by the exegetical context from which her explication is derived. Both commentaries on which her discourse is based link Ariwara Narihira’s 有原業平 sexual exploits with enlightenment, stressing an underlying and fundamental connection between the linguistic, erotic, and religious, a combination suggestive of Shizuka as *shirabyōshi* and given expression in the discourse’s multiple registers.

Shizuka’s two confrontations with Yoritomo also turn on hidden meanings of

words, but in completely different contexts. Allegory in these episodes is about disguising, not explaining: they recall, in an inverted form, the *yamato kotoba* exchanges Susan Matisoff notes in works including *Minatsuru* 皆鶴 (The story of Minatsuru) and *Jōruri jūnidan sōshi* 浄瑠璃十二段草紙 (The twelve-part story of Lady Jōruri) (MATISOFF 1997, 117–34). In those tales, poetic missives from a man disguise secret messages that his erudite female lover alone is able to interpret—the missives’ multiple levels enable cooperative action between lovers. In *Shizuka*, by contrast, Shizuka encodes rather than decodes meaning, attempting to express resistance by hiding her actual intentions from her hostile male audience. Her position and strategy here suggest the Aesopian communication context. By speaking at once on superficial and allegorical levels, she demonstrates the possibility of undermining conventional meanings through denying a fixed connection between signifier and signified. Theoretically, she addresses one audience that will understand allegorical meaning, and one that will not: the felicitation is directed at her captor, Yoritomo, while the audience or reader is expected to recognize the implied criticism of him. Yoritomo, however, is not obtuse. He is able to interpret her “true meanings,” and in each case he makes a point of criticizing her infelicitous mobilization of words. His response to her assertion of fluidity is a refusal to listen. Notably, he must make his defense on her terms (acknowledging multiple meanings), and his control can be accomplished only by asserting his power over Shizuka, in effect silencing her by refusing to listen.

At stake in their contest is the nature of the spoken word: Yoritomo seeks to make it stable, transparent, and auspicious, whereas Shizuka demonstrates its slipperiness and category-crossing potential. Several layers of contradiction frame these exchanges, however. Shizuka’s wordplay is about the constancy of her affections for Yoshitsune, ultimately suggesting a sort of moral and sexual fixity for her position. For his part, Yoritomo immediately intuits hidden meanings, demonstrating his own capacity for creative word use; it is in fact only through his point-by-point criticism of her narrative that its subversive potential is articulated. These caveats complicate the very idea of a polarization of positions, and they create a representation within the text of just the sort of non-dualism Shizuka explicates to the women.

The semantic freedom at stake in these confrontations mirrors the sexual and spatial mobility for which Yoritomo chastises Shizuka initially, freedoms directly connected to her identity as a *shirabyōshi*, a category of female performer known (and by the medieval period also feared) for her social-border-crossing abilities. There are, of course, medieval tales celebrating such ambiguity, using the female performer to embody the juxtaposition of worldly and enlightened (KAWASHIMA 2001; FAURE 2003; STRIPPOLI 2006). In stories including the *Kojidan* 古事談 (Tales from the past, ca. 1212) and *Jikkishō setsuwa* about the *chōja* 長者 (brothel keeper) at Kanzaki, or the *yūjo* of Eguchi (FAURE 2003, esp. 261–66; KAWASHIMA

2001, 51–55; WAKITA 2001, 107–21), the performing woman or prostitute reveals herself to in fact be a bodhisattva; sexual desire for the woman thus triggers enlightenment. Shizuka functions similarly here: she articulates the ambivalence—if not emptiness—of such categories in her performances of allegoresis, through foregrounding *Ise* exegesis: in this light, the *shirabyōshi* mirrors Narihira, enlightening not despite but because of her sexual and secular dimensions.

In the LC illustrations, Shizuka's performances of semantic and professional virtuosity are precisely what we are not shown. Because the illustrations in the LC text simply stop halfway through the second volume, it would be unwise to attribute specific intentionality to the failure to illustrate the various scenes of performance from the latter half of the work. The illustrator may have miscalculated space or run out of time or funding. Yet the absence of further illustrations creates a striking and unique visual text: we do not actually see Shizuka recasting the holy man's lecture on meanings into opportunities to demonstrate her considerable interpretive and creative skills. And we never see her as a *shirabyōshi*, a teacher, or a rival to Yoritomo.

The images are, in the main, a record of movement rather than static performance, and we have noted that movement in this story is both forced and inevitably connected with death or the possibility of it; movement here represents an overwriting of the freedom of the *shirabyōshi*'s mobility (and a textual manifestation of the control Yoritomo seeks to exert). We see Akoya's betrayal and subsequent execution; the *michiyuki* to Kamakura (recall the very similar sequence of events for Shigehira in *Heike monogatari*); Shizuka's near-execution at Yuigahama; and the final, heartbreaking murder of the child and recovery of his remains by his mother and grandmother. Viewed as a series, the arc of these discrete journeys leads to the final scene of death and mourning (FIGURES 12 and 13). The few static scenes illustrated within these sequences are about imminent parting. The tale told in the illustrations, therefore, is one of a tragedy, where the death of the male heir leaves behind a mother and a grandmother to mourn the tragic loss—Shizuka is first and foremost a mother and secondarily a daughter, as the prominence of Iso no Zenji in the images suggests. Her significance as Yoshitsune's lover, and therefore a manifestation of both the sexually unfixed *shirabyōshi* and a reminder of Yoshitsune (whom Yoritomo is also unable to control), is missing from the visual narrative.

Shizuka differs from other medieval tales about bereft women left behind as the illustrations do not actually depict the heroine taking the full tonsure at the tale's conclusion—although in *Gikeiki* and throughout the larger body of *Shizuka* legend, that is precisely what she does. Nevertheless, the LC illustrations appear to address this issue, if only through a surrogate: although *Shizuka* never appears in tonsured form, Iso no Zenji does, as her head covering reveals (see FIGURES 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11–13). Nothing in the text directly states or even implies that Zenji is

tonsured, and her dance and *imayō* recitation at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu appear to contradict such a portrayal; the likelihood of a fully tonsured, late-Heian nun performing in this manner seems unlikely. Moreover, not all *nara ehon* versions of Shizuka portray Zenji as a nun.¹⁹ In other words, there is a degree of ambiguity about her religious status within the story per se. What does it mean for her to be portrayed as a nun in this illustrated text, and how does it affect our reading of Shizuka?

Iso no Zenji's biography seems fundamentally a product of the Shizuka lore, and within that body of literature, I have not found any reference to when and under what circumstances Zenji took the tonsure. One probable explanation for Zenji's portrayal as a nun is her name, with its Buddhist element, *zenji*. Such nomenclature is not uncommon among both real and legendary *shirabyōshi*, and it should be recognized that within literature, at least, the allegorical potential of such naming could be deployed with no subtlety at all, as in the case of the *shirabyōshi* Hotoke's name (火土) in the Giō narrative. However, given the probable date of this text—*shirabyōshi* no longer flourished in the late medieval period—Zenji's portrayal as a nun could also represent simply a category slip on the part of the illustrator. Additionally, she had reached venerable old age (thirty seven in *Shizuka no sōshi*; TOKUDA 2003, 36), so the illustrator (and audience) might well have expected her to have taken the tonsure as a matter of course by this point. Women who had reached a stage when their sexuality was no longer socially viable—be they widows, aging performers, or wives past their child-bearing years—often took Buddhist vows and lived lives of varying degrees of social seclusion (KATSUURA 2002, 117). Such general trends certainly inform the depiction of Zenji in the LC *nara ehon*.

What does this mean in the context of Shizuka's story? Naitō has drawn attention to the use of the “Shizuka at Kamakura” story in *Azuma kagami*—the tale's oldest extant variant—as a means to articulate an important counter-narrative in that work, the sorrows and anger of Masako for her daughter Ōhime 大姫, whose husband, Shimizu no Kanja 清水冠者, was killed on the orders of Ōhime's father, Yoritomo.²⁰ By all accounts, Ōhime never recovered from the blow, and her ensuing series of illnesses provoked constant worry for her mother. The resemblances Shizuka bears to the *Otogizōshi karaito no sōshi* 唐糸草紙 (“The Story of Karaito”)—which describes the intrigues between Yoritomo and Shimizu no Kanja's father, Yoshinaka—further suggest other connections to the problem

19. See the NIJL screen: http://world.nijl.ac.jp/~kiban-s/database/naraehongazou/html/n_thumbnails/byoubuthum/index.htm. (Accessed 3 September 2008).

20. The similarity of Shizuka's story—Yoshitsune was also killed on Yoritomo's orders—also helps cast Shizuka as a paragon of conjugal fidelity, a characterization implicit in her defense of Yoshitsune in *Shizuka*, but expanded upon in the Edo period on stage and in didactic texts for women.

that became the impetus for Ōhime's tragedy. Both stories turn on close mother-daughter connections, allowing the Zenji/Shizuka relationship, as NAITŌ argues, to textually double and expand the Masako/Ōhime combination (2003, 23–30). Certainly, the prominence of the Zenji/Shizuka and Masako/Ōhime pairings in *Azuma kagami* imply one possible source for the prominent role played by Zenji in *Shizuka*.²¹ *Shizuka*'s thematic and structural similarities to the Giō episode of *Heike monogatari* and the Noh plays *Yuya* 熊野 and *Rō-Giō* 籠妓王 also reinforce the significance of the parent-child, and particularly mother-daughter, relationship for this work. And as in all narratives about *shirabyōshi*, this connection is not solely about love, but also professional identity: most accounts relate that mothers taught their daughters their art, and daughters followed in their mothers' footsteps. Their identity as performers, in other words, was deeply embedded in this matrilineal connection.

Throughout the *nara ehon*'s illustrations, Shizuka and Zenji appear as a unit—their only separation is during the dramatic “last-minute reprieve,” which is in large part about their reunification. On the one hand, this conjoining seems an embodiment by performing women of the kind of nondualism we have seen throughout this tale. In all images, they look like opposites—secular and sacred, youth and old age, passion and detachment—that are inexorably intertwined as reverse sides of the same coin, as illustrations like FIGURE 6 suggest imagistically. The narrative told by these illustrations, however, emphasizes the diachronic dimension to the pairing. These categorical opposites are equally stages in a *shirabyōshi*'s (and potentially anyone's) life: the trajectory of their shared story is unmistakably etched in the portrayal of Iso no Zenji, the tonsured nun.

On the one hand, the *kōwaka*'s general structure enables a positive interpretation of the meaning of Shizuka as a *shirabyōshi*, since a nondualist interpretation empowers her as a marginal character operating outside of traditional patriarchal hierarchies, challenging what was in the late-medieval and early Edo period an increasingly rigid social system. This tension is embodied by the fixity/transparency-of-words debates between Shizuka and Yoritomo. The narrative alone seems to emphasize such tensions and revel in the complexity and subversiveness that Shizuka's wordplay engenders. But in the *nara ehon*, the intense focus on movement in the illustrations—and movement headed toward suffering and death—combined with the constant reminder of the direction in which both narrative and life are going, creates the stronger message.

This trajectory, engendered by Zenji's tonsured form, tends to color this work as a bleaker, more forward-looking tale than the narrative alone requires. This view is in part driven by the more conservative, restrictive social and religious

21. TOKUDA (2003) also mentions the vital connection between the *Shizuka* legend and *Karaito no sōshi* (32).

practices of the day that tended to sequester women and ostracize those outside the hierarchy, including women performers (GOODWIN 2007, 124–40). Such physical and social enclosure is evident in the several interior scenes portrayed in the LC text. Strongly religious or domestic, these scenes are presided over (whether beneficently by the holy man or malignantly by Kajiwara or Yoritomo) by a power-wielding male (FIGURES 3, 4, 8, and so on), which results in the depiction of Shizuka and Iso no Zenji as well-bred, domesticated women. The characteristics that mark them in the narrative as *shirabyōshi*, in other words, are left to the reader's imagination. This recasting also partially erases the warrior hierarchy responsible for Shizuka's figural and narrative imprisonment—we never see the situations in which she confronts her captor.

Nara ehon are generally thought to have been included in women's dowries, and many works about Genpei-period men and women are represented in this form in the late medieval and the early Edo periods. Although the LC *Shizuka* is not a particularly elaborate edition, it is not difficult to imagine that it would have been read by wives, mothers, and daughters in the homes of the fairly well-off in late medieval Japan. The LC text's illustrations provide an interpretation that counters the textual portrayal of Shizuka as Yoshitsune's defiant lover, as we have seen. And certainly other, near-contemporary versions emphasize quite different aspects of the story, which allows Shizuka's self-expression to be celebrated despite the constraints placed on her by Yoritomo. Yet the world illustrated in the LC's *nara ehon* resonates with several important themes increasingly found in other popular narratives about bereft women as the medieval period progressed: the engendering of movement with a sense of fatality, the increasingly common practice of tonsuring, and a movement toward portraying Shizuka as a paragon of marital fidelity (NAITŌ 2004, 23–30). Ultimately, the visual narrative creates a specific reading of the story that, as Yoritomo did, refuses to witness Shizuka's vitally important assertions of ambiguity and shifting meanings, instead fixing her within increasingly constricting narrative and social conventions.

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