

Lilies in the Shade—Morality and Melodrama in *Hana Monogatari*

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A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Asian Studies

in

Group in Asian Studies

in the

graduate division

of the

University of California Berkeley

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Spring 2021



## Introduction

After she finished her tale, the girl who told me their story smiled softly and said the following, ‘Ah, and might you be wondering what happened to those two girls afterwards? ...Well, I am afraid it would take the skills of a Higuchi Ichiyo to do it all justice...however, I will say this much—flowers in the shade fear the sunlight and bloom only in darkness, they must wish for nothing more....’<sup>1</sup>

These are the closing lines of *Kage no Hana (Flowers in the Shade)*, a story from the latter half of Yoshiya Nobuko’s short story collection *Hana Monogatari (Flower Tales)*. Although she has become well known as an icon in prewar shōjo, or girls’, culture<sup>2</sup> and for the open acceptance of female romance she displayed in her literature, in this passage we can see her overtly state that these relationships were something to be hidden and kept at arm’s length from the real world—in short, a temporary escape from and not an alternative to heteronormative relationships or patriarchal social structures. When considered in tandem with broader historical context this passage is representative of the conservative and moralistic values that animate the entire body of her early literature.

The stories that make up *Hana Monogatari* were serialized individually from 1916 to 1924, first in the girls’ magazine *Girls’ Pictorial (Shōjo Gahō)*, then in *Girls’ Club (Shōjo Kurabu)* throughout 1925. From 1920 to 1926 these were organized into volumes and published in book format. As Yoshiya’s earliest work, it stands as a fairly representative example of the tropes that would become common in girls’ fiction, and is a valuable artifact for the study of how aspects of the late Meiji discourse surrounding girlhood were internalized and integrated into literature. In her book, *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjo*, Watanabe Shuko identifies three primary feminine ideals—love, purity, and beauty—that were central to the discourse surrounding girlhood in this period.<sup>3</sup> These had their foundation in the state’s desire to incorporate women into its conception of a productive and loyal citizenry by instilling what would come to be known as Ryōsai Kenbo (Good Wife, Wise Mother) ideology in girls now that they had become a target for universal education.<sup>4</sup> By the turn of the century, the resulting rapid increase in literacy among girls also led to the development of a burgeoning mass market magazine industry where these ideals were further internalized.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest English research on Yoshiya and *Hana Monogatari* attempted to argue that although Yoshiya’s early fiction utilized contemporary social norms regarding gender to gain wide acceptance, she presents a willingness to play with and lightly subvert expectations of compulsory heterosexuality and strict conformity, thereby supplying these works with an undercurrent of resistance.<sup>6</sup> More recent work by scholars such as Dollase, Shamoan has done

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<sup>1</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*, in *Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. pg.43

<sup>2</sup> The term shōjo in this context refers to women in their early to late teens with the further implication that they are unmarried and virgins. Shōjo and girl will be used interchangeably from this point on.

<sup>3</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 26-28

<sup>4</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 31-33

<sup>5</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 29

<sup>6</sup> Suzuki. "Writing Same-Sex Love." 581-582

a great deal to reveal the conservative underpinnings of Yoshiya's early literature; however, though *Hana Monogatari* forms one of the focal points of their analysis, there is still a tendency to describe *Hana Monogatari* in terms of broad overarching themes through targeted analysis of one or two out of the over fifty stories that make up the collection, and this analysis is often focused on the role these stories played in the formation of a distinctive aesthetics of girls' fiction, and because of this aesthetic lens of analysis they neglect the question of what she was actually attempting to convey beyond literary beauty.<sup>7</sup> They critique the moralistic foundations of girls' culture and make the connection between Yoshiya's fiction and this conservative culture, but have not connected this moralistic context to *Hana Monogatari's* narratives, which I would argue are equally moralistic in their structure.

My primary goal with this essay is to explore how the moralistic discourse surrounding girlhood in the late Meiji period influenced the depiction of relationships in *Hana Monogatari*. There are two broad molds within which a majority of the stories in *Hana Monogatari* can be fit—romances with two parties involved and romances with three parties. At their core, these stories are set up around a kind of dualism or polarity between a heavily idealized, distant, and almost phantasmal figure representing an ideal of girlhood that is defined through the longing experienced by a more mundane or misfit girl clearly meant to resonate with Yoshiya's base of readers. The stories of the first type tend to focus on one girl's romantic longing for another, often as a surrogate for an absence of maternal or familial love. The stories of the second type, though still structured around longing, focus more on relationships between girls, but this relationship is always centered around a desire, sometimes shared, for a third highly idealized shōjo figure even more vaguely defined than their equivalent in type one stories. Though Yoshiya showed a willingness to experiment with aspects of her time period's moral framework and often dramatized its tensions, she at no point challenged the validity of its premises. For instance, while she plays with some of the tropes of her fiction in her depiction of the main character(s) in both story types, the longed-for-girl figure—especially in her otherwise more narratively complex stories of the second type—is her most strictly defined archetype and speaks to a fairly rigid definition of what a truly girlish girl must be. This definition was in complete alignment with the most conservative assessments of what was expected of proper girls in their preparation for becoming wives and mothers.

The interplay between figures in these stories ultimately reinforces the conservative ideological foundations underlying girls' culture using strategies similar to those employed in melodrama such as the heightening of contradictions, passion for passion's sake, aestheticizing weakness and victimization, and a rejection of the mundane even as it seeks to appeal to it.<sup>8</sup> In exploring this relationship, this paper will begin with an overview of the historical context and main points of female moral education, then we will discuss how melodrama and girls' both utilized morality in similar binary terms. The remainder of the paper will then focus on applying this knowledge to an analysis of seven fairly representative and distinctive stories from *Hana Monogatari*: In *Wasurenagusa (Forget-me-Nots)* and *Hikage no Hana (Flowers in the Shade)* we will examine the basic archetypal character and relationship structure used throughout the collection; then with *Hamanadeshiko (Seaside Pinks)* and *Akashiya (Acacia)* we will look at how

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<sup>7</sup> Shamoou. *Passionate friendship*. 78; Dollase. "Ribbons Undone." 129-128

<sup>8</sup> Ito. *An Age of Melodrama*. 6-5, 17

Yoshiya attempted to broaden the definition of girlishness without loosening its restrictive foundations; and finally, we will critique the way poverty is used as a narrative tool to further reinforce the conservative foundations of her gender ideology in *Jinchōge* (*Winter Daphnes*), *Hiyashinsu* (*hyacinths*), and *Himawari* (*Sunflowers*).

## Context 1: The Promulgation of a Standardized Conception of Girlhood by the Meiji State and Girls' Magazines

In the course of Japan's modernization, the Meiji state had a vested interest in integrating women into its newly developed conception of a national citizenry. Ideas such as *Ryōsai Kenbo* were not relics of the Edo period—where class more so than gender often played the larger role in defining one's social role—,<sup>9</sup> rather (as was the case with the development of a national mythos centered around the imperial personage), these ideas were crafted in tandem with the development of a national mythos centered around the emperor as part of an attempt to allow the state to exert greater influence over, and extract further productivity from, its populous.<sup>10</sup> In this period intellectuals and ideologists such as Inoue Tetsujirō were widely coopted, either indirectly or directly, by the state to spread the idea that a nation having a shared moral system was a necessary component in the process of unifying the population against the destabilizing effects of the social unrest modernization was felt to produce, and in strengthening the country against further western encroachment.<sup>11</sup>

Naturally, with the development and expansion of a public education system and its explicit goal of cultivating a productive and patriotic citizenry, ideological frameworks that placed expectations on women were reflected in the education of girls—a trend that became particularly pronounced after 1903 when the Teaching Curricula for Girls' Middle School Act formalized the content to be proscribed in the morality textbooks used in girls' schools at the very time when attendance among girls was skyrocketing.<sup>12</sup> We can see the degree to which this morality had been internalized by late Meiji and early Taishō through the popularity of girls' magazines, which began to flourish with increased reader contributions in the form of writing submissions and letters to the publication. As we move into the Taishō era the continued expansion of girls' middle school attendance, the normalization of unmarried woman working, and the formation of an early woman's liberation movement as represented by the emergence of the feminist magazine *Bluestocking*, led to a gradual expansion of the ideas encompassed by "*Ryōsai Kenbo*," to include a more active role for women outside the home, but the strict and nationalistic delineation of female identity it ultimately proscribed remained largely unchanged.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned in the opening, in Watanabe Shuko's framework girls' culture coalesced around three main pillars: love, purity, and beauty. All of these values were propagated with the explicit intent of cultivating the "modern" wives and mothers that were seen as playing an essential role in the development and maintenance of a modern capitalist state based on the western model; though in girls' culture this goal is obfuscated by their goal of creating an escapist space where the idea that women were to be loving was isolated as an ideal valuable for its own sake and detached from the demands of serving a husband.<sup>14</sup> "Renai," the Meiji

<sup>9</sup> *Redefining Japanese Women*. 70, 171

<sup>10</sup> Gluck. *Japan's Modern Myths*. 38-41

<sup>11</sup> Reitan. *Making a Moral Society*. x; Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 37; Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 47

<sup>12</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 57, 157

<sup>13</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 57, 79, 96; Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 49-50

<sup>14</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 31-33; *Recreating Japanese Women*. 152-153.

neologism for “love,” was coined to represent the new ideal of spiritual, platonic love, and though it was largely introduced by members of the Japanese romantic school, being an ideal for womanhood, its values were transposed onto girls as well. This love was seen as essential for crafting the successful marriage environment which would provide a place for the husband to unwind after the stresses of work in the competitive and alienating capitalist world, and allow for the raising of high-quality children.<sup>15</sup> It facilitated the framing of a sharp divide between sexuality and romance for women and girls specifically, and played into the increasingly popular idea that women were inherently more spiritual and compassionate beings than men and thus uniquely suited to the private sphere to which they were to devote themselves not only for the sake of their family but for the further development of the nation as a whole.<sup>16</sup> The values inherent in this idea of love smoothly transitioned into a culture of chastity justified on both moral and “scientific” grounds.<sup>17</sup>

Virginity was a core aspect of an unmarried woman’s more spiritual and pure character. This character, much as a white cloth easily stains, was seen as easily sullied. Virginity being lost outside of marriage represented not only an incredible and irredeemable injury to one’s status and family, but a deeper moral stain on one’s character. By framing female morality in starkly binary terms, one was either a virgin and at least implicitly good or a non-virgin and inherently polluted.<sup>18</sup> This idea of pollution was quite literal in fact, as there was a popular—in the west as well—pseudo-scientific idea that if a woman had sex with more than one man her blood would become polluted and she would produce genetically inferior children.<sup>19</sup>

The final category is beauty, the prioritization of male desire to have a beautiful wife, with its importance projected onto women as something tied to their inherent moral worth and character. There was a hierarchy where beauty was associated with moral purity, although early on good character was prioritized and it was taught that a homely girl could compensate for her appearance with the internal beauty that accompanied excellent character, and that a pretty girl with bad character was undesirable, the implicit valuation of beauty as one of a girl’s most worthwhile attributes in of itself was still deeply rooted.<sup>20</sup>

It is also important to note the class element in Yoshiya’s fiction and in girls’ culture as a whole, because while class is rarely directly addressed, it was no coincidence that the ideal shōjo was always upper-class. Upper-middle school is one of the most consistently used settings in *Hana Monogatari*, but in the prewar period, upper-middle school—which went beyond compulsory grade school education—was a privilege largely exclusive to the middle and upper class; yet, even Yoshiya’s most destitute characters either attend or had attended one of these schools, at least for a time. This is because girlhood identity as it was propagated was non-classed, with its ignorance or romanticization of class difference highlighting the very classism it sought to ignore. As Dollase states in, “Ribbons Undone,” relative poverty when it appears in Yoshiya’s early fiction—and this point can be extended to earlier girls’ fiction as

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<sup>15</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 49, 56, 210, 37, 51

<sup>16</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 49-50, 56

<sup>17</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 50, 54

<sup>18</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 71, 78

<sup>19</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 70, 78, 288

<sup>20</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 116, 119, 117-120

well—<sup>21</sup>was heavily romanticized as a source of pathos and vulnerability that was to be viewed from a safe distance by the well-off girls who make up the bulk of her protagonists and who she could safely assume represented the bulk of her readership. Poverty was to be sympathized with through a shared culture of tears, but not something to be understood, let alone concretely addressed or confronted. Instead, girlhood was essentialized. The casual refinement, humility and docility instilled in girls by the girls' upper-middle school curriculum, and the innocence produced by isolation from the world were qualities cultivated in upper-class girls as a direct result of their wealthy and sheltered environment, an environment very different from what working class girls would experience, and yet by essentializing girlhood based on the experiences of this privileged minority all girls who wanted to engage with this culture were held to the same standards as if these natural qualities inherent to girlhood—which they were assumed to be. There was an illusion of inclusivity that ignored the role class played in terms of what qualities were valued in girls.<sup>22</sup>

### Context 2: The Melodramatic Understanding of Morality used in Girls' Fiction

Though it has received less direct attention, it has been noted that the distinctive language of girls' fiction and Yoshiya's work in particular, in part grew out of an attempt to emulate the excess and play of language seen in Meiji period melodrama. I would argue that the connection goes deeper than aesthetics.<sup>23</sup> In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Brooks describes a tendency within melodrama that he terms the "moral occult," born of an acute sense of societal dislocation and ambivalence, that sought to present the everyday world of manners and social intercourse as a mere surface, beneath which the real and fundamentally moralistic drama of existence unfolds.<sup>24</sup> In *An Age of Melodrama*, Ito takes this concept and applies it to the tendency in Meiji period melodrama to heighten the failures of the filial bonds eulogized by the state, in favor of exploring the potentials inherent in non-filial bonds of voluntary association.<sup>25</sup>

Previous scholars have read Yoshiya's use of language as an attempt to create an isolated space for the expression of girlhood identity, but I feel that this could be expanded into an understanding of her use of hyperbolic and excessive language as an attempt to elevate the expression of girlhood identity, thereby elevating the underlying moral foundations from proscribed morality to something of existential and inherent importance to one's identity as a girl.<sup>26</sup> In her engagement with issues of filiation, Yoshiya resorts to melodramatic excess, stressing the failings of filial relationships in favor of non-filial girlhood bonds that emulate these absent relationships. The overdramatic, pathos-laden presentation of pain and misfortune she uses to represent the real world does not attempt to sustain a critique of these coercive mechanisms of power or restraining systems; rather, it encourages temporary retreat into a cordoned off, escapist space. The issue being that access to this space depended on

<sup>21</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 149-150

<sup>22</sup> Dollase. "Ribbons Undone." 128-129; Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 306-307, 311

<sup>23</sup> Suzuki. "Writing Same-Sex Love." 584

<sup>24</sup> Brooks. *The Melodramatic Imagination*. 5, 8

<sup>25</sup> Ito. *An Age of Melodrama*. 5, 20, 30

<sup>26</sup> Suzuki. "Writing Same-Sex Love." 581-582



identification with a highly restrictive set of parameters based fundamentally on reenforcing and internalizing the same restrictive and patriarchal morality that facilitated the oppression of women in the real world.<sup>27</sup>

There is a pivotal scene near the end of the story *Shirayuri (White Lily)*, where we can see the way proscribed morality and melodramatic framing overlap in her attempt to attach moralistic meaning to these stories. In this scene the protagonist and her friend go to thank their music teacher for covering for them after they had nearly gotten caught for breaking curfew and school regulation to go see a movie. In the course of forgiving and lightly admonishing them, their teacher, Mrs. Hayama, says the following:

I knew, on that day I had also gone to that show and saw you girls there, and I also knew how much you must have suffered from the regret of it all. As I wrote my response to the dean, how I prayed that with this one line, I could save you two girls, young as spring-time leaf buds, from having your lives marred with a black wound. I do not regret my lie, not one bit, because with it I have managed to keep one small sin from causing two lovely girls to err in their rich prospects.... However, please, from the very bottom of my heart I beg you, never, absolutely never forget the importance of *purity*. The purity of a forever unchanging soul, and the purity of virtuous conduct, please promise me you will never forget their importance. To promise me this would be a greater sign of gratitude than anything else, so please, never forget your purity! In the language of flowers, the white lily, the flower I adore above all others, means *purity*, let us through our lifelong conduct, preserve this purity!<sup>28</sup>

The way this scene engages with the concept of purity is representative of a moralistic tendency running throughout these works. In this speech, Yoshiya goes out of her way to highlight the word *junketsu* (純潔), which can refer to purity in the spiritual sense or to physical chastity. In this scene and throughout all of *Hana Monogatari*, *junketsu* is exclusively associated with an idealized purity always associated with virgin girls but disassociated from physical sexuality; however, the conception of purity put forth here is inseparable from the fixation on, and moralization of, female chastity within contemporary discourse surrounding gender norms, and the way that she postulates purity's inherent worth makes it clear that Yoshiya was well aware of this relationship. There was a tendency to present the importance of chastity in abstract and moralistic terms due to strict gender segregation between male and female youth, and the desire among educators to avoid explicit sexual references in texts targeted towards young women while still presenting concrete consequences for breaching chastity. In morality textbooks from the turn of the century onwards, chastity before marriage came to be presented as something fundamental to a woman's worth. Temptations were everywhere, so a girl must be chaste and morally righteous. If they fail in this, then no matter how intelligent, wealthy, or beautiful they are, they have committed moral suicide and not even death will remove the stain they have placed on their honor.<sup>29</sup> In this stark binary, any lapse in restraint—

<sup>27</sup> Dollase. "Ribbons Undone." 128, 132

<sup>28</sup> Yoshiya. *Shirayuri. Hana Monogatari (Jō)*. 168-169. Emphasis preserved from original

<sup>29</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 74-75

even if non-sexual in nature—had the potential of snowballing into permanent ruin, and in spite of its gentleness, it is in precisely these terms that Mrs. Hayama frames her admonishment. She acted in order to avoid seeing their lives “marred with a black wound,” and to, “keep one small sin from causing two lovely girls to err in their rich prospects,”—the “small sin” would have led to the “black wound” had this sympathetic teacher not been there. They would have ruined their lives owing to this lapse despite it being minor; the characters in the story were given extra leniency this time, but there is the underlying threat that they may not get this in the future and the reader may not either. The view of purity and good conduct conveyed here is thus ultimately rigid and dualistic despite it allowing the characters leeway, because this rhetoric reinforces the idea that a small lapse in judgment can lead to a permanent and ugly stain that will forever mar the absolute and not just sexual “purity,” demanded of girls, with purity and goodness being seen as intimately linked.

Junketsu is situated as something that should be an unchanging aspect of a girl’s soul—something fundamental to her character and worth, and is connected with the symbol of the white lily. The association between white lilies and female purity far predates Yoshiya’s work, but by reinforcing these symbols she further perpetuated the interiorization of the underlying values of docility, chastity, reticence, and nobility that it represented.<sup>30</sup> In presenting these values as inherently central aspects of a respectable girl’s identity she deliberately obfuscates their foundations in patriarchal social expectations that men and the state had the right to regulate female sexuality, and that a woman should be a passive existence waiting to be taken by her future husband. By appealing to the melodramatic ideal of the excluded middle and exalting the goodness and purity of proper virgin girls in contrast to an unstated but understood defiled and hopelessly degraded other, purity is presented as something inherently desirable that, through its maintenance, lifts girls above the vicissitudes of the everyday world. Melodrama is thus used to naturalize and dramatize what would otherwise be indistinguishable from the didactic moral proscriptions taught to girls in school.

### The Beautiful Phantom

Now we will begin our analysis of the text by looking at the ways in which the stories in *Hana Monogatari* engage with the moralistic discourse surrounding girlhood identity through stories that are structured around longing for an avatar of idealized girlhood. In this section, we will use *Wasurenagusa* and *Kage no Hana*, as representative examples of the archetypal framework that Yoshiya uses throughout the collection, with the former marking the point where Yoshiya solidifies the core dynamics of her early fiction, and the latter being a concise, atmospheric piece where in the absence of concerns over plot and characterization the core values she sought to instill in the readers of her fiction is brought to the fore.

One tendency of Yoshiya’s early fiction that becomes immediately apparent in *Wasurenagusa* is the use of lavish description to elevate and add a sense of elegance to the fairly mundane world inhabited by its characters. In stories belonging to the first half of *Hana Monogatari* especially, the specifics of the events and characters described are often less important than how they are described; however, there is at the same time a protracted

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<sup>30</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 281-282, 287-289

attempt to impart greater underlying meaning though this excess of language—the “moral occult” described in the previous section on melodrama.<sup>31</sup> In *Wasurenagusa*, we can see how Yoshiya uses this heightened language to present non-filial bonds between girls as a safe alternative to distant and fragile familial bonds, but interestingly, this alternative is not figured as consisting of direct relationships between girls. Due to desirability in *Wasurenagusa* being based entirely on a very specific ideal of girlhood, there is an almost dehumanizing emphasis placed on conformity.<sup>32</sup>

The opening and all subsequent scenes describing the protagonist Tomiko’s attraction towards her romantic interest Suijima show the extent to which Tomiko’s love is based entirely around Suijima’s incidental conformity with an idealized conception of what is desirable in girls:

That visage...her soft, luxuriant black hair, modestly unadorned (...) strands of stray hair faintly shading her noble, broad forehead; an especially pure, exceedingly dear face. As if drawn—the eyebrows gracing her well-shaped, slim face: faintly pale; her eyes, slightly downturned, as if bashful owing to some unknown embarrassment; her long, damp eyelashes, their shadows like oxidized-silver—adding the air of a drifting, lonely dream. And her small, lightly pursed, crimson lips—ah, what thoughts might lie concealed behind their soft, almost imperceptible trembling?<sup>33</sup>

In the preceding passage, the fifth-year-students are described as, “a group of all vivid, bright, and beautiful girls, who nevertheless, looked as if there was kind of indescribable, kind loneliness—a calm, lady-like appearance, supplemented with a sense of nobility—about them.” The purpose of this passage is to separate Suijima from the crowd as distinctly appealing, but in doing so Yoshiya does not focus on Suijima as a figure that stands out from the crowd so much as she hones in on the ways in which she exemplifies, in a complimentary way, the qualities that she had just prior praised in the group as a whole. The shared attributes are nobility or refinement, kindness, and femininity. In both there is an attempt to read a kind of pathos in some quality of their appearance—the girls look “as if (よ う に)” they have a “kind loneliness...about them,” and with Suijima this suggestion of deeper emotion is heightened as the narrator speculates what “thoughts might lie concealed behind (her lips) almost imperceptible trembling,” and attaches, “the air of a drifting, lonely dream,” to her appearance. We can see here a great deal of emotional and aesthetic importance attached to markers of refinement and gentle pathos, and these markers are also used as symbols upon which Tomiko can project her longing. Suijima’s downward tilted gaze and unadorned hair align with expectations that girls be modest and unassuming, while language such as her eyebrows looking “drawn” suggest an appearance cultivated to appear appealing.<sup>34</sup> The focus on her being unassuming and humble aligns with expectations that girls be modest and not overly showy or calculated in their demeanor, while “drawn” allows her to convey an air of cultivation

<sup>31</sup> Brooks. *The Melodramatic Imagination*. 5, 8

<sup>32</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa. Hana Monogatari (Jo)*. 68; Brooks. Brooks. *The Melodramatic Imagination*. 8; Ito. *An Age of Melodrama*. 5-6

<sup>33</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 69

<sup>34</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 149

without presenting this as being something Suijima deliberately sought out—so beauty is essentialized as something simultaneously cultivated and natural.<sup>35</sup>

The use of highly impressionistic, soft, and vague description of her features, and words such as *yume* (dream), *honoka* (faint, vague), and *tadayoi* (drifting, wafting), cultivate a soft dream-like air. This is then juxtaposed in the next passage with a detailed description of her clothes to further reveal both Suijima's taste and refinement, and Tomiko's by extension for her ability to recognize how tastefully the former's outfit is put together. The focus on clothing also allows the text to imply her upper-class status without needing to delve into worldly issues such as money or the status of her family, which might distract from the carefully cultivated fantasy air.

From this and all subsequent descriptions of Suijima, which use the same basic vocabulary—pure and kind with an air of loneliness and a dream-like quality about her—we can see that Tomiko's desire for Suijima is based in identification and the passion evoked by unfulfillable longing. The few interactions between them are charged with innate meaning because Suijima is positioned as an avatar of ideal girlhood. Throughout the narrative she is described as a "maboroshi,"<sup>36</sup> a phantom or illusion, and in describing her as such her entire identity is subsumed into Tomiko's desire to project her own desire for the maternal or filial connection that she has been denied due to her status as an orphan—the orphan trope serving to highlight a sense of helplessness and pity, and presenting a narrative situation where non-filial bonds can be prioritized over filial, which are presented as distant and transient—Tomiko's mother died in her infancy, and her father died abroad.

(...) Being inclined to dreary thoughts in her isolation, from her earliest years her young heart had been crafting a beautiful phantom of the mother or older sister that she had always longed for. And now, in a way she never would have expected, she had been able to bring that longed for phantom into reality.<sup>37</sup>

The attraction Tomiko feels towards Suijima is filtered entirely through desire for platonic maternal love. By using the word "phantom," she makes it clear that Tomiko does not desire or think of Suijima in any material way, she is only in love with what she represents and so the connection she wants to forge with her is entirely pure. A possible appeal in presenting love in this way is that it allows it to be completely detached from questions of sexuality, the idea of autonomous female sexuality having been seen as a social problem since the Meiji 30s. Love, so long as it was non-sexual, was seen as a fundamental aspect of female character, which meant exploration of platonic love was viewed unproblematically.<sup>38</sup>

This presentation of Suijima also coincides with lines like, "...so much so that Tomiko could hardly tell whether she was dreaming."<sup>39</sup> We can see the same tendency at work in the poetic hyperbole evident in the following line, "The incredible delicateness of that motion

<sup>35</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 136, 141

<sup>36</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 71, 72, 75

<sup>37</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 72

<sup>38</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 75

<sup>39</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 70

brought to Tomiko's mind visions of a dragon princess fishing for pearls...."<sup>40</sup> These stylistic techniques are used to cultivate a dreamy, romantic mood around Suijima that isolates her from her environment, and detaches Tomiko's view of her from any identity the girl herself might have. What Tomiko is in love with is not the girl but the ideal that she represents not through her actions, but through a passive alignment with a set of ideals attached to girlhood independent of the experiences of actual girls. Her existence represents a kind of liminal space, the space of girlhood itself. And what lies between them is presented quite clearly as a fictive bond based on Tomiko's identification with markers of this identity.

The flowers Tomiko leaves for Suijima as a graduation present allow them to bond from a distance over their shared transient experience of girlhood, "Although she had no way of knowing the identity of whoever had left those flowers for her or what feelings they had wanted to convey, I can only hope that she (...) and in the end, hid it at the bottom of her little box of keepsakes as an eternal memento of those girlhood days that will never return...."<sup>41</sup> In place of a real relationship is a memento of an imagined bond based in overlapping nostalgia for a soon-to-be bygone girlhood. We can also see this in the scene where Tomiko traces out Suijima's name on a white wall, "the characters she traced with her finger could never leave even the faintest trace behind (...),"<sup>42</sup> and in the aftermath of her winning the school athletics festival race where the ephemerality and fundamental transience of any bond between them is stressed and presented as something naturally so, "The schoolyard's green leaves yellowed and scattered as the wintery wind began to blow, and after that among the treetop's young greenery the flower-buds began to sprout once more—early spring had come again."<sup>43</sup> The author focuses on seasonal changes in this scene to suggest that the free-floating space of girls' culture represented by girls' school is presented as something inherently transient—precious because the time spent there is fleeting and can only be preserved in memories. There was never any chance of their relationship being anything more, and Tomiko's reticence only serves to further heighten the fact that the press of time will separate them regardless of what she does, with the evocation of the Rhine river in the final line, "(...) The tender tears that you invite under that delicate name—'forget-me-not,' (...) blooming along the banks of the flowing Rhine(...)"<sup>44</sup> echoing back to the earlier line stating that the flow of time must necessarily pull them apart, "And just like that, in the midst of her longing the cheerless days of that year mercilessly flowed away."<sup>45</sup>

The other aspect of *Wasurenagusa* that remains consistent across a great deal of it is its lack of a sense of place. At no point is the location of the girls' higher school ever stated; in contrast, Tomiko's father explicitly died abroad in Italy, and the story ends with imagery of forget-me-nots along the Rhine river. School was already thought of as a place where girls were isolated from the demands of everyday life, and though we know that the school is in Japan, by keeping its location vague and by associating the emotional world of girls with an exotic west, the space of girlhood is further isolated and romanticized. As Shamoons states, one of the

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<sup>40</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 73

<sup>41</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 76

<sup>42</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 71

<sup>43</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 76

<sup>44</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 76

<sup>45</sup> Yoshiya. *Wasurenagusa*. 75

appeals of western culture as it was represented through use of the white lily symbol, is that it was seen as allowing more freedom for female self-expression.<sup>46</sup> Being free from deeply proscribed meaning, there was a sense that one could project one's identity onto these isolated western symbols without brushing against the accumulated weight of precedent and meaning attached to associations with the Japanese culture in which they had grown up. Association with western culture was thus one of the ways girls' culture remained appealing despite its underlying moral rigidity since it let them focus more on their own identity, even if the ways in which they could express this identity were quite limited.

In *Wasurenagusa*, the idea that the relationships presented in Yoshiya's early fiction should be understood in terms of longing for an ideal fundamentally disconnected from real experience or even direct bonds. In the later and more refined *Kage no Hana*, we can see with even greater clarity, the fantastic nature of her romances, their basis in the idea that girls should be and are fundamentally, non-sexual entities.

In the opening of *Hikage no Hana*, love is framed in terms of the pathos resulting from a tragic contradiction in love— "The beautiful sadness of the color of poisonous flowers,"<sup>47</sup> what is most beautiful and desirable is also that which is most dangerous. This concept is then made concrete through vivid imagery meant to highlight the beauty that might attract one to that which we know to be poisonous despite its danger—crimson capped mushrooms on a mountain road in autumn, the coral-like red of poison utsugi berries—and from this imagery of concretely poisonous objects, we move to metaphoric poison conveyed through allusion to the forbidden fruit of the garden of Eden in the bible. The color red is used throughout this passage as a symbol for passion and romance. By juxtaposing this with the inherent danger of poison, she is able to convey the idea that there is a hidden danger of sexuality and sexual contamination that underlies such passion. This is a reflection of the mainstream conservative view of female sexuality which can be seen in this excerpt from a girls' school morality textbook written by Inoue Tetsujirō,

Temptation is something that guides us down the path of impropriety...people are as easily drawn towards temptation as a fly to honey. Look at how day by day the newspapers publish stories chronicling the unending number of fools in this world who, once seduced by desire, are unable to overcome it and lose their bodies, soil their names! They have all, owing to indulgence in transient pleasures, sacrificed a lifetime of happiness (...).<sup>48</sup>

In *Kage no Hana*, though the rhetoric is less condemnatory than what one encountered in textbooks, the underlying sentiment that the world is filled with existentially dangerous temptations, with illicit sexual relations alluded to as being chief among them, is nearly identical. Owing to the sharp delineation made between non-sexual girls and sexually regulated woman there was a strong impetus to stress the danger of sexuality and the importance of maintaining virginity without exposing girls to material that directly acknowledged their

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<sup>46</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 32

<sup>47</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana. Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. 37

<sup>48</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 74-75, 136, 270

sexuality, and because of the importance they also attached to purity as an ideal this tendency remained a strong component of girls' fiction.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Yoshiya's heavy use of Christian imagery in this story could be read as an attempt to heighten the spiritual dimensions of girlhood love and to thereby further isolate its conception from the taint of sexuality. In doing so, the terms of this romance are made more abstract—since its nature is framed as the temptation of pure passion with death as its only outlet, hence the focus on poison.

In addition to dramatization and self-exotification, by framing things in such stark terms—“Why is it to this extent that—much as poison is beautiful, sin is sweet, and secrets are enjoyable—what is beautiful is cursed, and our faint happiness is...,”<sup>50</sup> she suggests that the state that she is ascribing to girlhood romance is one of hopeless and even dangerous—“poisonous”—passions, the evocative ellipses that end the passage allows the statement to fade out softly. Rather than condemnation or despair we are left with a kind of resignation where their “faint happiness” fails to become anything. The seasonal imagery—the autumn road—and the distance enforced by poison suggest in a way similar to “aware” (哀れ) or melancholic beauty, that the beauty that lies in these relationships is based on an understanding of their ephemerality and hopelessness.

From here I would like to focus on how Yoshiya's description of the protagonist Tamaki, reveals her preoccupation with the idea of “chusei,”—neutrality, which is inexorably linked with the idea that girls on their own are non-sexual entities. One aspect of Yoshiya's early fiction that is apparent in this text is the tension between the allure of a kind of boyishness and the idealized weakness seen as inherent to shōjo identity. The protagonist's appearance is described in terms of her having thick eyebrows, a firm mouth, and a kind of boyishness that leads to her being compared with three popular actors from the period, and with onnagata.<sup>51</sup> This represents an archetype that appears in a number of these stories, and one of the words most commonly used in describing it is “ririshii.” According to the Nihongo Kokugo Daijiten, in its modern usage, ririshii refers to something that has a, “toned or lean feeling to it. Youthful and gallant. Manly.”<sup>52</sup> As one can surmise, it was generally used to describe young men. While these references taken in isolation suggest Butler-esc understanding of the performative nature of gender, and even a kind of rejection of the excessive valuation of normative conceptions of femininity, this is an anachronistic reading at best because even as Yoshiya goes so far as to suggest that, “it might even be more apt to call her a young man,” she is at pains to ameliorate any subversive intent that might be suggested by such a juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity by stressing that characters like Tamaki are at their core “shōjo”:

But then, ah but then, in the end however you look at it, Tamaki was a girl, a girl! No matter how heroic, how energetic she might seem. Her chest, like the soft breast down of a female dove drenched and shivering in the gentle spring rain; or for instance, like the hollow sound of the single string of an abandoned violin, its strings cut out of petty malice; or like an abandoned and broken silver fan abandoned at the end of summer at

<sup>49</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 180, 281-282

<sup>50</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 37

<sup>51</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 37-38

<sup>52</sup> “ririshii.” Nihongo Kokugo Daijiten. Accessed from japanknowledge-com. 2021

the sandy seashore by some child, battered by the autumnal waves, so miserably damp it seems to glimmer. Pitiably, gentle, and deeply sensitive to the sadness of the world, a girls' soul is like a tiny, light-peach-pink basin (...) overflowing with beautiful, milk-white tears (...)<sup>53</sup>

In short, all girls, regardless of their exterior, have a weak, innocent, delicate, and purely feminine nature. As we will see subsequently in *Akashia* and *Hamanadeshiko* as well, there is a tendency in *Hana Monogatari* to juxtapose stereotypical expectations of femininity with something more androgynous or ambiguous, only to reveal in the end that underlying it all is a fundamental femineity shared by all girls—the propagation of a shared narrative of idealized girlhood that takes priority over all else and is presented as inherently valuable through the excessive language used to describe it. While some have read in this shared identity a source of empowerment and independence, the underlying values she extols are nearly identical to those of proper girlhood femininity.<sup>54</sup>

This is similar to the case of Takarazuka theater, which despite its explicit endorsement of traditional values and social roles, was famous for its use of a girls only retinue where they were allowed to play male roles. These girls were seen as no less feminine or proper because what is expressed in the seeming ambiguity of their gender expression was understood as movement towards a safe neutral space where what was emphasized was the complete absence of sexuality. Furthermore, when viewed in terms of the discourse surrounding S-relationships (sister relationships, the term for romantic relationships between girls used in this period), they were understood as a form of safe “mimicry,”—non-sexual practice for the heterosexual marriage in which they would engage later in life.<sup>55</sup> Due to this understanding, a girl taking a “masculine” role in one of these relationships represented a softer, emulated boyishness mollified by a girl’s fundamental femininity, and brought into the safe space of girlhood romance. What was not seen as acceptable was actual masculinity in a girl’s clothing or language.<sup>56</sup> This is something that never occurs in *Hana Monogatari*, where even if a girl is described as “ririshii,” or boyish, she is never presented as less feminine for it.

When Yoshiya emphasizes the fundamental girlishness of her “tomboys” here and throughout the collection, she is highlighting their internal consistency with the ideals expected of girls. This is one of the reasons why the heavily idealized third figure is so important in these stories. They are a concrete representation of these standards of beauty, purity, and lovability, and by showing how even when her characters appear on the surface to be most un-girlish, they at their core match perfectly with the values and feeling represented by these ideals. She highlights their “sameness,”<sup>57</sup> and the culture of sameness that formed the core of girls’ culture and romance. As touched upon above in citing her analysis of Takarazuka, Shamoan argues that the ideal S-relationship was one where the other party matched oneself almost perfectly in appearance and behavior, a relationship based entirely in identification where what was sought

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<sup>53</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 38

<sup>54</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate Friendships*. 70-71

<sup>55</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 36

<sup>56</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 37

<sup>57</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 37



was an idealized version of oneself.<sup>58</sup> It is also interesting that S-relationships are almost never depicted in *Hana Monogatari*, and even when they are it is only in the loosest and most indirect of ways. It is possible that this is simply due to the collection being one of the earliest works focusing on romantic girlhood relationships, and she was simply being more circumspect due to this. However, by 1916 when her earliest stories were published, the tame S-relationships she depicts were fairly uncontroversial, and would only become less so by the 1920s.<sup>59</sup> Although she would be more willing to depict them in subsequent work, it is doubtful that fear of censorship was the primary reason for her rectitude in *Hana Monogatari* because, as made explicit in *Kage no Hana*, she stresses the fantastic nature of these romances as something to be kept strictly to play and imagination. This point will become clearer as we look at how the relationship in *Kage no Hana* is depicted.

On this note, it would be beneficial to go back and examine three key aspects of the prior section describing Tamaki's girlishness. There is a focus on tears through imagery of the rain-soaked dove, and the fan abandoned by the seaside; a focus on loneliness through the latter two symbols in addition to the imagery of a violin left with the broken string; and finally, a focus on vulnerability as in each of these passages the symbol has been abandoned to the elements. We can add to this the basin representing a girl's soul, which is peach colored—suggesting something soft and sweet, and filled with milk-colored tears—suggesting a mother's milk and by extension her affection or care, which Tamaki has been deprived of.<sup>60</sup> Though it is made more explicit here, as we saw in *Wasurenagusa* and will see again in *Hamanadeshiko*, the impetus for a romantic attachment in *Hana Monogatari* is almost always presented in terms of longing produced by a sense of something lacking in familial bonds. The narrative is centered around the portrait of Tamaki's beautiful dead mother, who represents a desire for non-familial bonds to compensate for an insufficiency felt with familial bonds, with Tamaki's attraction to Masu being due to her resemblance to her mother further dramatizing this.<sup>61</sup>

Detachment from physical lust is essential to Yoshiya's project of presenting girlhood romance as something inherently pure and spiritual, but it can also be seen as an attempt to reformulate a desire for pure affection that is compromised in real world familial relationships due to the contaminating influence of the outer world's vicissitudes, demands, and ultimate transience—to say nothing of the fairly ridged and formal familial relations encouraged by the Meiji Civil Code.<sup>62</sup> The lavish description of Tamaki's home with its extravagant western furnishings allows for exotification and romanticization, while further stressing the associations with purity evoked by Christianity. They also serve to suggest a sense of distance between Tamaki and her own surroundings, such as through the absence of a father described only in

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<sup>58</sup> Shamoan. *Passionate friendship*. 33, 37

<sup>59</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 35-36

<sup>60</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 38. It also suggests an inherent connection with the maternal. For fairly obvious reasons, Yoshiya is hesitant to directly engage with the idea of girls' duty to become mothers, however, as will become more apparent in our reading of *Jinchōge*, there is strong evidence that Yoshiya endorsed the underlying idea of girls being natural caregivers.

<sup>61</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 38, 40-41

<sup>62</sup> It could also be read as another element seeking to distance girlhood from the adult world and filial obligations in favor of the non-filial relations of girlhood, which also allows her to ignore compromising factors such as Masu's lower class.

terms of his distance— “numerous famous occidental paintings...collected in his youth over the course of his travels across distant seas to many foreign countries.”<sup>63</sup> Paired with repeated references to the darkness and gloom of her surroundings, to the fading rays of the setting sun leaking through the curtains, and the somber painting of her lost mother, this conveys a strong impression of the transient and cold nature of familial relations.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to this, Tamaki and Masu are described as having created their own little world sealed off by a, “(...) beautiful, peach-colored veil of secrets...a small, fragrant, jewel-like world known only to them.”<sup>65</sup> The non-familial relationships of girlhood, and the stories depicting them, are held up as a way to escape the suffering of the real adult world. The girls are “flowers in the shade” because they can only “bloom,” or find expression and fulfillment in the shadows—the world of fantasy; but just as the allusions to fantasy and the opening’s use of forbidden fruit imagery suggest, these relationships should not interfere with the real world, meaning they should be treated as a form of play and not as anything more significant than that.<sup>66</sup>

The added ambivalence expressed in this story can be best understood as a consequence of the highly restrictive way love is formulated in these stories, which is heavily indebted to ideals of platonic, spiritual love.<sup>67</sup> Love based on the pure, maidenly emotions conceived as inherent to girls was acceptable because it was taken as inherently pure and innocent, lacking any perceived danger of losing one’s virginity, but because it was based in a socially proscribed conception of purity, there was nevertheless an underlying danger of overstepping the bounds of propriety used to justify the existence of these relationships since they were conceived of as something complimentary to the moral system already proscribed for girls—<sup>68</sup> Yoshiya’s literature of girlhood romances was formulated as an escape from the pressures of adult society, but she was at pains to avoid instilling the idea that these romances could serve as an alternative to it. She was willing to extract the pathos inherent in the allure of romance, while always foreclosing the possibility of it developing into something more substantial that could continue beyond girlhood and replace their future role as wives and mothers. While this tendency is made most explicit in this story, the death of Masumi in *Hamanadeshiko*, and the madness of Yuko in *Akashiya* represent the same basic idea.

#### The Sublimation of Difference Through use of the Idealized Shōjo Figure

As our analysis of *Hana Monogatari*’s basic relationship structure has shown, romance between girls, regardless of the particulars of either party, is situated in terms of distance, longing, and an aestheticization of helplessness. The more structurally complex stories follow this same pattern, but further foreground the role of idealized girlhood in centering Yoshiya’s vision of girlhood relationships.

In both *Akashiya* and *Hamanadeshiko*, Yoshiya attempts to play with and even subtly subvert elements of her fiction, but because this subversion is only done to expand the girlhood

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<sup>63</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 39

<sup>64</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 39-40

<sup>65</sup> Yoshiya. *Hikage no Hana*. 42

<sup>66</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. *Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. 43

<sup>67</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 271, 287-288

<sup>68</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 270

ideal to be more inclusive in terms of who it applies to, the actual values are ultimately reconstructed as no less fundamental than they were before.

In the opening passage of *Hamanadeshiko*, the codified beauty standards that Yoshiya had for the most part overtly and uncritically embraced, are subverted through targeted descriptions of all the ways in which the protagonist Masumi fails in meeting them. She is, “(...) not what one would call a cute girl...not at all like the doll-like girls with beautifully (?) balanced features that you would see on the cover pages and in the inserts of girls’ magazines.”<sup>69</sup> Immediately, we have the idealized figure of the beautiful shōjo, and by referencing them not through description, but allusion made through use of the very girls’ magazines that this and all of Yoshiya’s stories were published in, Yoshiya acknowledges the fictional basis of these beauty standards and attempts to create a deeper sense of parley between herself and the reader, who she could safely assume were regular consumers of the medium and thus already familiar with its tropes. Her idiosyncratic use of the western question mark in this passage also serves a destabilizing function, allowing her to gently question the legitimacy of these beauty standards while also adding a striking visual break in the sentence that primes the audience for further disjuncture; however, though she seemingly rejects conventional markers of beauty here, there is a subtle difference in their use in this scene that explains why she is so comfortable rejecting their worth in this very specific context.

This passage is more physically focused than almost any other in the series and it is one of the only passages that explicitly references the male gaze. When Yoshiya mentions eyebrows or white skin, it is generally used in highly abstracted and impressionistic terms. In her descriptions physical attributes are brought up to align a character with the shōjo ideal and to facilitate the evocative metaphors and similes which make up the bulk of her descriptions and which are meant to evoke feelings—often of beauty, frailty, or pathos. This is in line with her emphasis on girlhood as a set of ideals. As in conventional discourse, beauty is highly valued, but this beauty is meant to be a spiritual beauty that overlaps with physical beauty, but which is not bound by the lustful or worldly thoughts that descriptions of beauty in a purely physical sense were felt to conjure.<sup>70</sup> This in turn ties into her reference to male perception of female beauty, “The Chinese poets who went on and on about willow frond eyebrows, and how the eyebrows of a ‘beautiful’ woman are lovely as willow leaves, how might they describe Masumi’s eyebrows? Would they call them banana leaves or something ridiculous like that?” Yoshiya often references poetry,<sup>71</sup> but what is unique about this passage is how it foregrounds men—Chinese male poets deeply valued thin, “willow-like” eyebrows, and “they,” would no doubt have looked at Masumi’s thick eyebrows with derision, a derision she displays her annoyance with through the interjection of “honestly! (masaka),” which in this context would represent a sense of exacerbation. In describing Masumi’s skin, she goes so far as to compare it with soil and to directly reference dirt, stating that it could never be whitened even with make-up—something she generally does not reference so directly. She uses the word “bijo” in the sentence, “And beautiful women also have a snow-white face.” While the word does not

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<sup>69</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 44

<sup>70</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 115-117, 120

<sup>71</sup> Yoshiya. *Ayame*. 77, Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 51, 59, 64

technically refer to women of a specific age, it is generally used to refer to women, and is not a term that Yoshiya uses elsewhere.<sup>72</sup>

The only exception in this passage is her description of Masumi's eyes as a "deep, cool oasis," which she sets against the "grey desert" that describes the rest of her face. From her eyes—which have a history of being linked with spiritual beauty, she moves to reject the validity of these categories of beauty by then focusing on the source of Masumi's appeal—her inner strength of character—a kind of inner beauty, "(...) her face and her figure were absolutely her own, and powerfully radiated her identity. (...) Because of this, Masumi was a girl who overcame the simple question of whether one was pretty or not, and lived gallantly."<sup>73</sup> So in this passage we can see that what Yoshiya rejects is an evaluation of beauty in the purely physical realm, with the implicit suggestion that this is the way men conceive of beauty, in contrast to girls' ability to resonate with truer, spiritual beauty, this spiritual beauty being what attracts Saijima, the next character introduced, to Masumi.

This is further reenforced by the nature of Saijima's attraction to Masumi. In contrast to Masumi, Saijima is much more conventionally appealing, fitting neatly into the "ririshii" archetype of vaguely tomboyish but ultimately feminine girls described earlier in the section on *Hikage no Hana*. She is smart but humble, and her emotions are shown to be authentic rather than targeted at pleasing others,<sup>74</sup> both characteristics highly valued in the discourse surrounding girlhood that emerged in earlier girls' magazines.<sup>75</sup> Her simple archetype, vague physical description, and lower socio-economic class mark her as the audience's surrogate character that helps further situate Masumi's place in the shōjo mythos. As was the case with Tomiko in *Wasurenagusa* and Tamaki in *Hikage no Hana*, Saijima's attraction to Masumi is based in longing produced by nostalgia and a shared cultural background—having had the same hometown in this case—with the latter's appearance, "dyeing her youthful memories of that southern coast." The attraction is further strengthened by a sense of pathos and nobility about Masumi that raises her a step above the mundane world, which is associated with the sense of distance felt between her and her filial relations—with half of them off working in Hawaii. In *Hamanadeshiko*, the spiritual aspect is further stressed through an emphasis on Masumi's inner nature—her, "vivid and strong character" being its driving force.<sup>76</sup>

What sets this dynamic apart is that these two characters have a concrete relationship dynamic: they are already friends, but Masumi does not know about Saijima's deeper feelings—lack of awareness of the others' feelings being something only implicitly understood in stories like *Wasurenagusa*—and critically, Masumi does not want to deepen her relationship with Saijima in any sense—giving the relationship a concrete and explicit rather than implicit barrier.<sup>77</sup> While this dynamic could have potentially been used to present Masumi as cold, the narrative is designed to counter this by revealing that Masumi's emotions, far from being shallow, are simply drawn towards the forging of even more spiritually pure connections.

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<sup>72</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 44

<sup>73</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 45

<sup>74</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 48

<sup>75</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 146-147, 149

<sup>76</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 48

<sup>77</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 48

There was clear intent towards subverting beauty standards in the opening; however, what we find with the introduction of Sakiko, the true love interest, is that Yoshiya sought less a subversion of the underlying valuation of these restrictive standards, and more an extension of the overall *shōjo* umbrella—expanding the values and expectations of girlhood to a wider segment of the population without challenging the legitimacy or importance of any of the underlying—and in highly restrictive in and of themselves—values. If Masumi is meant to subvert expectations, Sakiko is the attempt to reconstruct and situate any subversive sentiments safely within them. As the personification of pinkness, whiteness, gentleness, and refined docility: “She was one who gave you the feeling that her face and figure were lightly enveloped in a gentle and soft gauze with the gentle softness of pink silk, and that was exactly why that pink parasol suited her so well!”<sup>78</sup> Sakiko fulfills absolutely every trope that Masumi and Saijima do not, up to the point of being vaguely middle or upper middle class—and thus in effect classless within the purview of Yoshiya’s fiction—with a focus on her lovely clothing used in place of a description of her physical features just as in *Wasurenagusa*, and with additional focus on her cultural refinement through reference to the koto training she is taking.<sup>79</sup>

Masumi’s attraction to Sakiko parallels Saijima’s attraction to Masumi, but in far more abstracted terms. Saijima and Masako have a direct relationship and shared past, having grown up together, where as the only connection between Masumi and Sakiko is that the latter, in her youth, had visited Masumi’s hometown once. Due to this, she fondly remembers and thus has a shared appreciation for the *hamanadeshiko* flowers and sakura shells that can be found there, and wants to use these shells to create something suitably lovely—which will turn out to be picks for her koto.<sup>80</sup> They are linked through a shared abiding sense of beauty that finds release through its sublimation into a refined pastime further heightened through links to poetry—Masumi’s *tanka* and Sakiko’s *Manyōshū*-era *uta*.<sup>81</sup> The linkages made between the shells, flower petals, and Masumi’s departed spirit highlight the emotional intensity and beauty of spiritual ties between girls of feeling, and it is this fervent emotion that allows even Saijima to join, though only indirectly through shared tears.<sup>82</sup>

Masumi’s suicide is another example of how Yoshiya used melodramatic excess to stress the importance of girlhood to a girl’s development, without actually challenging social expectations placed on women.<sup>83</sup> Yoshiya here is not critiquing compulsory marriage per se, rather, early marriage, which by this point was widely considered an outmoded, uncivilized social practice. The issue she focuses on is the intervention of society into the space of girlhood, which was roughly considered the age that girls attended girls’ higher school.<sup>84</sup> Masumi’s death is presented as a direct consequence of being forced out of girlhood too early, with the suicide dramatizing the trauma of this. She does not criticize marriage or take her critique beyond Masumi’s family to broader society for forcing women to marry. By never addressing the broader issue of compulsory marriage beyond girlhood—she never criticizes how Masumi’s

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<sup>78</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 56

<sup>79</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 57-58, 62-63, 70-71

<sup>80</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 63, 70

<sup>81</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 61-63

<sup>82</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 71

<sup>83</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 69

<sup>84</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 134

older sister was married off for instance, with the only difference being that she was of age—<sup>85</sup>it is taken as a natural aspect of society. Similar to the moral framework applied in Chikamatsu's love suicide plays, where death represents "the impossibility of romantic love, its exclusion from the world of society,"<sup>86</sup> Yoshiya presents society and the expectations it places on women as something immutable that cannot be challenged.

Relationships in *Hana Monogatari* are framed in terms of longing and passion, and this fixation on longing (almost as a goal in and of itself) lends a strong degree of vagueness to these imagined relationships. The girl in love wants to forge some kind of spiritual and emotional connection with another girl that is distinct from friendship but in an ephemeral way; there is never a concrete desire or goal. The ice cream scene, however, reveals that Saijima explicitly wishes to share her life with Masumi, "Really, do you really think you could come with me? If you could, that would make me so happy (...) I'd work my hardest at the plantation, and with the money I'd get I'd buy you all the ice cream, and bananas, and pineapples you could ever eat, and all kinds of rare jewels you can't find in Japan,"<sup>87</sup> which contrasts with the more standard terms of spiritual connection sought after in Masumi and Sakiko's "relationship," and while the narrative shows sympathy with Saijima, it is clear that the former relationship is the narrative focus and that she had gone too far in her desires to be taken seriously.<sup>88</sup> As was the case in *Kage no Hana*, Yoshiya seems to be drawing a fairly sharp line beyond which these relationships should not cross—that point being where they interfere with real life or provide a challenge to it.

Next, I would like to look at *Akashiya*, one of *Hana Monogatari*'s most unique stories, but one that, through its very uniqueness, manages to further reveal the underlying values and goals of Yoshiya's fiction. In *Akashiya* we can see additional facets of Yoshiya's attempt to expand the parameters of shōjo identity. The narrator of the frame-story and the narrator protagonist are both no longer girls in the strict sense—which meant girls in the higher school age range who were unmarried—<sup>89</sup>but it is this second factor and its prioritization of purity that Yoshiya hones in on. There are multiple stories in *Hana Monogatari* focusing on women who have aged beyond adolescence, but the key attribute shared by all of them is that they are unmarried, and thus still virgins, and so occupy an ambiguous position between adulthood and girlhood where the latter's heightened emotional world is seen as being still accessible because they are still un-married and thus do not yet need to dedicate themselves to serving a husband and family. We can see this in how these figures are often music teachers or, in the case of the protagonist Shinjō, English teachers—they are connected with something that raises them into a more emotionally charged world of art or something appealingly foreign—both being distinct from everyday life.<sup>90</sup>

In *Akashiya* one can see this ambiguous placement more clearly. The frame-story narrator is depicted in a state of stasis. She has dropped out of school, presumably due to the unspecified illness that she has only recently recovered from as of the text's opening, and is

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<sup>85</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 47

<sup>86</sup> Zwicker. *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination*. 75

<sup>87</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 49

<sup>88</sup> Yoshiya. *Hamanadeshiko*. 49-50, 58, 64

<sup>89</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 134

<sup>90</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 10

stuck inside with nothing to do owing to a long spell of rain.<sup>91</sup> Then when the primary narrator Shinjō appears for a visit, and she imagines what she is like as a teacher, she thinks in terms of being a student rather than a colleague, though we can presume that they are around the same age since they were classmates.<sup>92</sup>

The narrative structure of *Akashiya* is melodramatic in the sense that it relies on stark binarism rooted in a ridged understanding of morality. Shinjō's change is described in terms of a complete transformation from a bright and cheerful girl to a melancholic and haggard woman, and she herself describes the change in terms of being a curse and having become a demon.<sup>93</sup> The word repeatedly used in describing her feelings of wrongdoing, "tsumi," means, "a deed which goes against either moral or legal societal norms,"<sup>94</sup> and so, although it can be understood as either a crime or a sin, its use here is clearly in the sense of a moral transgression, with the added idea that a sin, once committed, is irredeemable. The sin that Shinjō is guilty of is her gross partiality in her treatment of Mitsuru—the idealized icon of girlhood—versus her disdain of Yuko—who on the surface is anathema to the attributes associated with girlhood. Although Shinjō harshly criticizes herself for her mistreatment of Yuko, calling it a "great psychological sin,"<sup>95</sup> the details of how these girls are described reveals that this condemnation is less straightforward than it might appear.

The source of Shinjō's initial revulsion towards Yuko is not a matter of attractiveness but of disposition. She never directly describes Yuko as ugly, but she does with startling frequency describe her unease and even horror at Yuko's lack of "girliness": "I could never think of that face as the face of a girl, her features made her look more like a young old woman."<sup>96</sup> Yuko is described as both sounding and looking significantly older than her years would suggest; as being withered; acting adult-like; and as being too direct—<sup>97</sup> all attributes standing in complete opposition to the ideal that girls should be youthful, innocent, and beautiful. One facet of the discourse surrounding the definition of girlhood in early girls' magazines was that over the idea of "girliness," which, being only a vague ideal, was often described in terms of what was un-girlish, and thus unseemly and improper in a young woman. This explicitly included acting like an adult—which meant showing too much knowledge or interest in the outside world; one's bearing being too assertive or aggressive; or simply not acting "cute" or "innocent."<sup>98</sup> Yuko is so innately disturbing to Shinjō because she challenges her ingrained assumptions about the sharp division between girlhood and adulthood that allowed girlhood to be situated as a pure and innocent space—exactly what Mitsuru represents; however, the ambiguity applied to Shinjō and the narrator's position further presents the idea that girlhood cannot be so rigidly defined. The issue being that this subtle redefinition of girlhood does not challenge the conservative premises of the ideal itself or the importance of being "girlish," it simply shifts the axis of

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<sup>91</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 9

<sup>92</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 10

<sup>93</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 11-12, 16-17, 24

<sup>94</sup> "tsumi." Dijitaru Daijisen. 2021

<sup>95</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 16

<sup>96</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 14

<sup>97</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 14-15, 20

<sup>98</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 134, 141

“girliness” away from appearance and outer demeanor, and towards a focus on one’s internal identity as a proper girl.

The twist of the narrative is that with an accompanying rainstorm projecting her inner turmoil outwards, Yuko is revealed to be a deeply feeling, weak, and romantic shōjo, who was just as capable of appreciating and falling in love with the purity represented by the idealized Mitsuru.<sup>99</sup> Shinjō’s true crime is that she had taken on the role of society; in Yoshiya’s purview, Shinjō has fallen morally by becoming an avatar of the corrosive forces that destroy girlhood happiness by forcing them into the real world—and this point is stressed by the sudden inclusion of a concrete location for the action of the text when, at the end of the scene, Yuko is said to have dropped out and returned to her hometown in Tokachi, Hokkaidō.<sup>100</sup> Nothing in the narrative up to this point had been concretely situated—the reader is never informed of the location of the narrator’s home or the girls’ school where Shinjō had been teaching, but we are told the region and area of Yuko’s hometown. Her insanity, as was the case with Masumi’s suicide, is meant to dramatize the consequences of prematurely forcing a girl into the real world, with the destruction of the emotional world being raised to the level of consequence in the real world.<sup>101</sup> Yoshiya also goes out of her way to frame things in terms of psychology—Shinjo’s treatment of Yuko had inflicted severe psychological damage on her.<sup>102</sup> The use of this language can be linked with propagation of the idea that a stable and supportive school environment was essential to a girl’s healthy development.<sup>103</sup> The tragedy in both *Akashiya* and *Hamanadeshiko* is that these girls were unjustly denied their experience of girlhood for its proper duration, thus harming them developmentally. All girls are envisioned as the same fundamentally and so the non-physical ideals should be seen as applying to all girls equally regardless of circumstance or appearance.

The final point I would like to make in this section is in regards to the use of Mitsuru. Even more so than Sakiko in *Hamanadeshiko*, Mitsuru is very loosely and impressionistically described.<sup>104</sup> By projecting the proper attributes of girlhood onto her, the narrative is able to stabilize itself around this ideal. The projection of rigged standards of identity onto girls is not the issue because these values are held up as something natural that all girls should have. Due to this understanding Yoshiya only takes issue with the idea that girlhood is an external attribute—that a girl must be beautiful, and appear delicate (though she still attaches tremendous implicit value to these attributes through the way these narratives always center themselves around her protagonist’s longing for the attention of an idealized and beautiful girl), when what is more important is that they are feminine internally and have internalized the values of femininity. The continued importance of innocence and purity is highlighted in no subtle terms, with Shinjō’s final hope being that Mitsuru remain innocent of the pain that has occurred around her—i.e., that any failures among less idealized girls not affect the validity of the ideal of girlhood itself.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 23

<sup>100</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 24

<sup>101</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 25-26

<sup>102</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 16

<sup>103</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 134, 137

<sup>104</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 16, 18-19

<sup>105</sup> Yoshiya. *Akashiya*. 26



## The Role of Poverty and Class

In this final section I will focus on three more stories from *Hana Monogatari: Jinchōge*, *Himawari*, and *Hiyashinsu*, as representative examples of the implicit but heavy class component of girlhood identity endorsed by *Hana Monogatari*. I have chosen these three because they sum up the competing and at times contradictory elements of Yoshiya's broader conception of girlhood as it relates to class, moral character, and identity.

*Jinchōge* and *Hiyashinsu* both begin with descriptions of a family that has fallen severely in status. The ancestors of the sisters in *Jinchōge* were wealthy hatamoto (Shogunal retainers) during the Edo period, who lost their former status in a familiar narrative meant to highlight the disruptive effects of the Meiji restoration—where the increase of social mobility engendered by the dissolution of the formal class system and the introduction of capitalism also meant the possibility of formerly great families falling into poverty.<sup>106</sup> This theme is carried into *Hiyashinsu* as well, where the protagonist's father and uncle were wealthy industrialists.<sup>107</sup> In both cases, however, the families fall into decline and what is described as crushing poverty. In *Jinchōge's* description of this decline in particular, the role of fate is paramount and is emphasized heavily throughout the text.<sup>108</sup> In the very first line, Yoshiya states, "Among the many people on this earth, there seem to be some families especially chosen for misfortune. The Yokoyama sisters were part of one such family." The world is criticized for lacking the, "leniency to give their father a good job," and states, "there was no way they could have a house with a gate," suggesting that that is what they should be entitled to, the root injustice being expressed is that the family has been denied its proper status.<sup>109</sup> In *Hiyashinsu*, again it is less explicitly stated, but the metaphor that the protagonist's uncle and father were "caught in the dark torrents of recession and crashed against the reef of bankruptcy,"<sup>110</sup> again, suggests an understanding of financial ruin and poverty as something that simply happens, a kind of natural disaster that is a family's misfortune to be caught in. Ushio's father in *Himawari* is the most ambiguously situated, but in describing his path in life since leaving his rural village as "a series of worldly failures that finally ended with him becoming a petty bureaucrat," there is still a sense of decline implied, and the misfortune of this is emphasized by the text's focus on the idea of fate— "The springtime, youthful heart of other girls, dancing and singing as it pleases, was denied to Ushio by fate."<sup>111</sup>

These instances get at a recurring theme in Yoshiya's description of poverty, almost all instances focus on girls whose families have fallen in status from relative wealth to relative poverty—"relative" because they always find a way to send their girls to upper-middle school at least for a time, despite this representing a decidedly secondary priority given the lower educational expectations placed on girls at the time—which suggests that these girls are in

<sup>106</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. *Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. 170; Ito. *An Age of Melodrama*. 68, 94

<sup>107</sup> Yoshiya. *Hiyashinsu*. *Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. 206-207

<sup>108</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 170-171, 175

<sup>109</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 170-171

<sup>110</sup> Yoshiya. *Hiyashinsu*. 206

<sup>111</sup> Yoshiya. *Himawari*. *Hana Monogatari (Ge)*. 140

some way inherently superior, held back only because of their reduced circumstances. This allows for a critique of the injustice of individual instances of poverty while completely sidestepping an institutional critique. Poverty is only worth critiquing when it harms otherwise well-bred girls from good families, similar to how the core injustice in *Akashiya* is that a “good,” “deeply-feeling” girl was denied the caring treatment necessary for “proper,” development, and how in *Hamanadeshiko* the issue was not marriage, but being forced to marry too early. The exception that proves the rule is Saijima, who is passed over in *Hamanadeshiko* despite having a much deeper connection with Masumi and sharing her nostalgia for their hometown and its flowers and shells; and yet, because she implicitly lacks refinement compared to Sachiko—shown by her disconnect from the poetry linked with the other girls’ identities, her lack of refined or cute accomplishments like Sachiko’s koto and Masumi’s kazoo, and at root, her coming from a completely undistinguished family—and because of this she is unable to reach the “deeper” emotional connection Masumi and Sachiko achieve through their shared refined appreciation for beauty. This essentialist view of class character lines up with her essentialist view of girlhood since all girls are encouraged to identify with shōjo culture, but the extent to which they can be considered proper girls lies in their ability to align with a set of rigidly defined character traits that correlate with coming from a wealthy family that can afford school and training.

*Jinchōge* also gets at one of the contradictions in *Hana Monogatari*’s depiction of girlhood that connects to a contradiction in the moral framework underlying it—the essentialization of goodness juxtaposed with an extreme prioritization placed on refinement and good-breeding. The older sister Kimie’s best qualities are her gentleness, kindness, and a kind of inherent girlish charm that is visible within her despite its lack of worldly decoration. Once again, a focus on proscribed positive qualities in women and the ideal of girlishness—both of which are presented as inborn characteristics that overcome her lack of distinction otherwise. The text is very explicit in describing these qualities as inborn—with her having been “blessed” with them in compensation for her other deficiencies.<sup>112</sup> Kimie’s inborn but unrefined girlishness is set against her sister Sachiko. Their relationship is not antagonistic, but she is used as a foil to highlight the desirability of Sachiko. Just as in Yoshiya’s earlier stories, Kimie, the less overtly girlish girl, is still at heart a shōjo because she still manages to align with basic girlhood expectations, but girlishness and class are never detached.<sup>113</sup> Her younger sister Sachiko is naturally beautiful, smart, and talented with tremendous skill in song—exactly the type of refined accomplishment valued in women—and is additionally precocious, but in a way that makes her more “aware” and deeply feeling. Their increasing difference in education only makes this difference starker,<sup>114</sup> and the girl Sachiko falls in love is very similar to her but even more desirable owing to her wealth and the further refinement it implies.<sup>115</sup> The narrative sympathy for Kimie is predicated on her alignment with a class based ideal that her younger sister Sachiko more fully represents owing to her being the more educated and sheltered one,

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<sup>112</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 172

<sup>113</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 198

<sup>114</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 172-173, 184-185

<sup>115</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 198

and so Sachiko's emotional struggles are what the narrative focuses on as most important, whereas with Kimie everything she does and feels revolves around Sachiko.<sup>116</sup>

Despite Yoshiya's efforts to cultivate an ideal of girlhood that could be shared regardless of circumstance, we can see here that she falls into the exact same hierarchal thinking that structured education on beauty and purity in girls' school curricula. Less fortunate girls can and must compensate for their deficiencies in natural beauty or talent with effort or a baseline natural girlish charm—if they are at least fortunate enough to align with the qualifications for that. In the end, however, girls born more “blessed,” will always be better and should be longed for and idealized as one's better.<sup>117</sup> The core relationship is not at all romantic because it stars two sisters; however, in depicting their relationship, Yoshiya uses a very similar structure to the core idea underlying her typical stories—longing and seeking fulfillment through projection of one's desires onto an idealized version of oneself in romantic or close relationships. The older sister Kimie's complete and almost slavish devotion to Sachiko unintentionally reveals the heavy degree of escapism encouraged by these stories.

The way *Jinchōge* frames its conflict is key, the focus with the father and even more so with Kimie is not what they suffer because of poverty, but what they are willing to endure for the sake of a loved one, and this endurance and suffering is extolled as beautiful and noble.<sup>118</sup> This implicit eulogization of thrift and productivity is nearly identical to the risshin shusei (worldly success) ethos extolled by the Meiji state as it was applied to women in effectively asking them to fill the role of a social safety net for their families in times of hardship.<sup>119</sup> Kimie's sacrifice, though presented as sad, is in no way criticized or presented as something negative. In the aftermath of Kimie's death, Sachiko is adopted by a wealthy sponsor out of deep sympathy. There is no stated reason or levied critique concerning why Sachiko being supported solely by a teenage sister working herself to the bone was not reason enough for sympathy.<sup>120</sup> Kimie's sacrifice feels especially insidious in this light because, while the story labors over the misfortune and miserable sadness of their plight, it never questions why Kimie should have needed to work herself to death; it was simply her duty as an older sister.

The small epilogue following Kimie's death focuses on crafting a comparison between Kimie and the jinchōge flower, which blooms in the harsh winter and has a lovely fragrance that belies its unassuming appearance:

Even as the leaves wither the flowers continue to send out their gentle, soft fragrance—  
“Ah, these flowers really do remind me of my older sister, even though they aren't  
striking in the slightest, their scent seeps deep into your heart—that gentle, and  
somehow even gallant, noble scent—the very scent of my sister's soul.

The flower is described using the standard vocabulary—it is soft, *ririshi*, and its fragrance is compared with the fragrance of Kimie's heart, which is praised for its modesty and humility. Kimie is not “striking,” meaning she is not beautiful or refined and so may not immediately

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<sup>116</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 194, 197-198

<sup>117</sup> Watanabe. (*Shōjo*) *Zō no Tanjō*. 118-119

<sup>118</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 177

<sup>119</sup> Redefining Japanese Women. 171

<sup>120</sup> Yoshiya. *jinchōge*. 203

strike one as a proper girl, but her “scent,”—her purity—is just as valuable as other more immediately apparent qualities such as beauty. Although the jinchōge flower is used here, the qualities emphasized are very similar to how lilies were described in terms of modesty and purity,<sup>121</sup> and in this context conveys the idea that Kimie, despite her work outside the home and reduced circumstances, was no less of a girl internally.<sup>122</sup> The comparison between a flower’s fragrance and a woman’s purity is an idea inherited from western discourse on femininity, which was transferred to Japan by the romantic school and was often used in girls’ textbooks and media to represent purity of heart and the appeal of unassuming inner beauty.<sup>123</sup> The discovery of the letter Kimie wrote to present Sachiko’s case to the girl she is in love with is emphasized heavily, both in this scene and in the scene where it was written as a symbol of the beauty of sisterly devotion and sacrifice. The emotion of the letter and the comparison to flowers is meant to raise the sister’s sacrifice from the mundane realm of the physical to the romantic realm of girlhood spiritual love and emotional purity. The point of this story is not to depict poverty and its effects; rather, poverty is used as a prop.<sup>124</sup> The state’s self-sacrificing version of risshin shusei is uncritically adopted to promote an ideal of sisterly devotion and the inherent nobility of proscribed feminine character. Kimie’s death is framed as something noble, as an expression of her connection to the spiritual beauty of girlhood, in spite of her miserable circumstances her pointless death is made into something beautiful that also conveniently restores Sachiko to her proper upper-class status.

This fairly cynical use of poverty can be seen in the other two stories as well. *Himawari* plays with character tropes but ultimately falls neatly into the charity category of girls’ fiction—where a wealthy girl reveals her deep and innate empathy and goodness through her desire to assist an impoverished person through some act of charity.<sup>125</sup> In *Himawari*, Yoshiya is willing to point out how the protagonist Sekiko is given undue immediate attention and popularity due to the status of her wealthy family, but goes on to compromise any implicit critique here by using her sympathy and recognition of the poor girl Ushio to confirm the goodness and moral uprightness that were implicitly attached to her wealth and beauty.<sup>126</sup> Ushio is used as a prop to reveal this real internal worth. In an inversion of the role of the idealized, distant girl in other stories, Ushio exists to reenforce the innate goodness of the wealthy and idealized but lonely Sekiko. The “tragedy” of the text being that circumstance denies Sekiko the opportunity to show this devotion and have it accepted. Her sympathy for Ushio is fundamentally based on the idea that Ushio is pitiful since she is a good girl who cannot properly express her girlhood because of her poverty. This also further reenforces the narrative that girlishness can be completely detached from class.

Dollase has already analyzed the highly conservative and escapist viewpoints underlying the way Yoshiya focuses on shared tears and sympathy between girls rather than the necessity for action or change in *Hiyanshiya*’s ending,<sup>127</sup> so I would like to focus on a different but equally

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<sup>121</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 198-199

<sup>122</sup> Yoshiya. *Jinchōge*. 204

<sup>123</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 271

<sup>124</sup> Dollase. “*Ribbons Undone*.” 129

<sup>125</sup> Watanabe. *(Shōjo) Zō no Tanjō*. 144, 149-150, 155

<sup>126</sup> Yoshiya. *Himawari*. 129, 135, 147

<sup>127</sup> Dollase. “*Ribbons Undone*.” 128-129

telling aspect of the text. *Hiyanshiya* is unique because it is the only story that specifically addresses women's work outside of education. Post World-War-One and throughout the 1920s, women working outside the home, especially if they were unmarried, was increasingly normalized and even broadly seen as positive.<sup>128</sup> This point is important because once again Yoshiya's views as expressed here align almost perfectly with the most conservative mainstream perspective. If women were not yet married, working outside the home was permitted if there was financial need, but it was seen as far from ideal, especially if women were expanding into fields that were up to that point generally reserved for men, such as office work, because women were not well suited innately to the masculine world of work.<sup>129</sup>

Owing to this viewpoint, there was great importance attached to women maintaining their "femininity" and avoiding undue contact with men.<sup>130</sup> Though Yoshiya depicts women organizing in the workplace positively, the purpose of this organizing is to promote conventional ideas of modesty and decorum in male-female relations and nothing more.<sup>131</sup> The boss's crackdown of this movement is meant to express a disconnect between men's world of work, immorality, and vulgarity, with the purity of women's space and its vulnerability to being damaged by this contact.<sup>132</sup> The protagonist desperately wants to express her devotion to her friend, but the cruel and cold demands of economic necessity prevent her—once again the real world and its demands are placed in opposition to femineity, which is presented as inherently more natural, pure, and moral.<sup>133</sup>

### Conclusion

It is indisputable that *Hana Monogatari* was widely popular among its target demographic and, aside from critiques that it lacked literary value, it was uncontroversial as well.<sup>134</sup> The ease with which it was accepted is a topic worth scrutinizing, and my goal in this paper has been to show that Yoshiya's conservative appeal goes beyond the acceptance of S-relationships as natural. One of Yoshiya's major projects in writing *Hana Monogatari* seems to have been the propagation of the idea that girlhood relationships should be based on identification with a shared culture and identity rather than appearance or even any physical connection at all. Her fixation on the idealized middle to upper middle class, educated, and cultured girl figure shows that she fully endorsed the idea that girlhood is fundamentally defined by upper-class identity and privilege, but she attempted to expand this identity outward by stressing the idea that all girls are fundamentally similar in their femininity and desires. This shared core identity encourages all girls, even the less privileged or normatively desirable ones, to still identify themselves with the idealized icons of girls' culture. Of course, this identification itself is no less surface level since it encouraged girls to ignore all contravening factors or inequalities between them in favor of a shared space of sentimentality

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<sup>128</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 79

<sup>129</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 96, 126-128

<sup>130</sup> Koyama. *Ryosai Kenbo*. 129

<sup>131</sup> Yoshiya. *Hiyashinsu*. 211

<sup>132</sup> Yoshiya. *Hiyashinsu*. 213

<sup>133</sup> Yoshiya. *Hiyashinsu*. 213-214

<sup>134</sup> Dollase. "Ribbons Undone." 133

completely detached from real conditions—effectively further isolating those that could participate in this culture directly through girls' schools and those who could not. The strong tendency to romanticize relative poverty in *Hana Monogatari* represents another aspect of this. Since girls are fundamentally the same, poverty does no real harm.<sup>135</sup> Girlhood in *Hana Monogatari* is thus broadly applied but very rigidly defined in a way that encourages conformity and escapism.

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<sup>135</sup> Dollase. "Ribbons Undone." 132

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