Shōjo Temporality: Queer Time in Yoshiya Nobuko's *Hanamonogatari*

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The numerous flowers that bloom
In the dreams of the days of our girlhood,
To which we can never return,
I send to you,
Beloved

— Yoshiya Nobuko,
Hanamonogatari dedication. [1]

Girlhood cannot last forever. That is the sentiment that underpins the poem by popular novelist Yoshiya Nobuko cited above, and that led to the enormous popularity of her short story collection *Hanamonogatari* ("Flower Tales," serialized from 1916 to 1924) among adolescent girls (*shōjo*). The *Hanamonogatari* are widely considered the pinnacle of early twentieth-century girls' culture, and the longevity of the series is a testament to its explosive popularity. The reason the stories met with such success was due to their language, which is lush, ornate, and sentimental; and their themes of heartbreak and the loss of girlhood innocence, which resonated with adolescent girl readers. The text is an important resource for the insight it offers into how schoolgirls in the early twentieth century lived, thought, and felt, explored through topics such as female-female relationships and the important symbolic role of the school dormitory.

The fleeting nature of girlhood is also the key feature that defines "shōjo temporality," a concept that I use to critically engage with ideas about gender and sexuality in the context of modern Japan. During the time *Hanamonogatari* were being published, the ideal of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" dominated Japanese gender ideology, and sexuality was increasingly understood through the framework of European sexology, which sought to catalogue and classify sexual behaviors as either normative or perverse. I argue that the special temporality of girlhood led shōjo culture to generate frameworks for gender and sexuality that were fundamentally different from these mainstream developments. Shōjo temporality destabilizes the futurity of the modern state, which demands compulsory heterosexuality from its subjects, by being anti-reproductive and therefore antithetical to biopolitics.

Shōjo Culture

The term "shōjo" requires additional unpacking, as the idea of shōjo is indispensable to any discussion of the *Hanamonogatari* and the types of magazines they first appeared in. While shōjo is usually translated as "girl," it evokes adolescent girlhood specifically. The word came into popular use at the turn of the century, reflecting the increasing relevance of adolescent girlhood as an interstitial life stage between childhood and adult womanhood as growing numbers of girls

[1] Yoshiya Nobuko, "Maegaki," in *Hanamonogatari,* v. 1 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1985), 1. All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

attended secondary school. The rapid increase in girls' secondary school attendance was due to the 1899 Girls' Higher School Order, which required that girls' schools be built in all of Japan's prefectures. Previously, secondary education had been the almost exclusive domain of upper-class girls, but the edict opened the door for daughters of the upper middle class, primarily wealthy merchants and regional landowners, to further their education as well. As such, "shōjo" denoted not only youth. but also a certain level of refinement. The newly standardized national curriculum of the Girls' Higher School Order adopted *ryōsai kenbo*, "Good Wife, Wise Mother," as the guiding principle of girls' education. According to this principle, the aim of girls' education was to ensure that, once married, women would be able to run an efficient and hygienic household, converse intelligently with their husbands, and help their children with homework. In 1911, when *ryōsai kenbo* was incorporated under the revised national ethics curriculum for elementary schools, the state's gender ideology was extended to Japanese girls of all socio-economic backgrounds.

Despite the conservatism of *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, not everyone welcomed the changes wrought by the increase in girls' secondary school attendance.[2] Concerns about the suitability of education for women were exacerbated by the fact that girls often moved from their natal homes in order to attend distant secondary schools, leaving them unchaperoned.[3] Given the large number of things that were believed to test a girl's virtue, from reading novels to going to the cinema, it is little wonder that the media was rife with speculation over the supposed degeneracy of schoolgirls. Most troubling was schoolgirls' unsupervised access to men. In 1909, Kitazawa Rakuten wrote in the satirical magazine *Tokyo Puck* that, "Just as we associate actors with gigolos, schoolboys with frequenting pleasure quarters, and geisha with prostitution, we associate schoolgirls with women of loose morals."[4] In the popular press, the schoolgirl was caricatured as a creature of voracious appetites who had come to school, not to study, but to read trashy novels and chase men, whose destined endpoint was back home in her village with a child and no man in tow.[5]

Naturally there was pushback against such an unflattering picture of schoolgirls, and educators were determined to instill in their charges a sense that they should hold themselves to a high moral standard. Watanabe Shūko describes how the legacy of Christian missionary schools in the early period of girls' schooling in Japan, combined with the state-sanctioned goal of education in pursuit of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal, coalesced into the "white lily" as a symbol of girlhood.[6] The white lily symbolized purity, fragility, and beauty. Girls were instructed to model themselves on Beatrice from Dante's *Divine Comedy* (herself often symbolized through white lilies in European art), and through their own exemplary conduct act as a moral compass to others, particularly, once married, to their husbands.

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[2] By the mid-1920s, equal numbers of girls and boys were achieving secondary education. That is not to say there was educational equality: boys' schooling was far more academically rigorous, and girls had far fewer options than boys for tertiary schooling.

[3] "Although the [1899 Girls' Higher School Order] stated that girls' higher schools should be established in the prefectures, as with higher education institutions in general, girls' higher schools—especially private schools—became concentrated in Tokyo." Jason Karlin, *Gender and Nation in Meiji Japan: Modernity, Loss, and the Doing of History* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 195.

[4] Ibid, 207.

[5] For a more detailed analysis of the trope of the degenerate schoolgirl, see Karlin, 195-210.

[6] Watanabe Shūko, *'Shōjo'-zō no tanjō: Kindai nihon in okeru 'shōjo' kihan no keisei* (Tokyo: Shinsensha: 2007), see the chapter "Shirayuri ni shōchō sareru kihan toshite no 'shōjo' zō."

While on opposite extremes, these perspectives share a didactic concern over how girls should (or should not) behave, rather than reflecting girls' experiences. Shōjo magazines offer a more well-rounded picture of girlhood. Magazines in modern Japan encouraged a high degree of participation, with frequent opportunities for readers to contribute to the content of magazines through their own submissions.[7] Linguistic anthropologist Miyako Inoue (2006)has analyzed how the reader-submitted sections of popular girls' magazines helped foster a virtual fan community that anticipated today's online media, to the point even of developing in-group slang.[8] Because the content of girls' magazines was written not only for shōjo, but also to a degree *by* shōjo, the line between creator and consumer blurred. As early as 1911, the popular magazine *Shōjo Sekai* ran a poll to have readers select their top five shōjo writers. It then ran a feature on the so-called "*Shōjo Sekai* Five" that included photographs of each of the girls selected, raising them to quasi-celebrity status, at least among the readers of *Shōjo Sekai*.[9] Though not entirely unmonitored – all media production in Japan took place in the context of heavy censorship, and the adults who ran the magazines certainly had a vested interest in steering their readership in the "right" direction – still, shōjo fan culture of this period was inscribed with a sense of playfulness. Self-referential and celebratory, the virtual shōjo community that was fostered between the pages of girls' magazines allowed for girls to imagine versions of girlhood that exceeded those of heavy-handed, moralizing adults.

A remarkable feature of Japan's early girls' schools, frequently depicted in girls' magazines, was the culture of romantic "sisterhood" between older and younger schoolgirls. There were a great number of regional- and school-specific names for the practice, but the most common were *ome* (possibly a contraction of *omedetō*, meaning "congratulations") and "S" (short for "sister," because the younger of the pair referred to the older as "*onē-sama*," a respectful term for an older sister).[10] As knowledge of the practice spread outside of schools, newspapers and intellectual journals became preoccupied with policing what constituted "normal" as opposed to "pathological" (*byōteki*) female friendship.[11] These debates were sparked by a sensational incident in 1911, wherein two recent girls' school graduates who were known to have been in an *ome* relationship committed lover's suicide together. The "Niigata incident" drew attention, not because it involved two women (articles describing double suicides among lower-class women, especially factory workers and prostitutes, appeared regularly in the papers) but because the young women were of good family. Responses to the incident were split. Some commentators insisted that this case was exceptional, and that usually "S" relationships were an innocent way for girls to satisfy their desires for romantic connection while also keeping them safe from predatory men until they

[7] Reader submission columns were an important element of children's magazines since their inception (in 1877), the idea being that such writing assignments would be instructive and foster talent in exceptional students. Takahashi Ritsuko, *Takehisa Yumeji: Shakai genshō toshite no "Yumeji-shiki"* (Berlin, Brücke, 2010: 90).
[8] Miyako Inoue, *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 102.
[9] Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, *Age of Shōjo: the Emergence, Evolution, and Power of Japanese Girls' Magazine Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 25.
[10] For more on "S" relationships, see Gregory Pflugfelder, "'S' is for sister: Schoolgirl intimacy and 'same-sex love' in early twentieth-century Japan," *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, ed. Kathleen Uno and Barbara Molony (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), and Deborah M. Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).
[11] Akaeda Kanako, "Kindai Nihon no onna dōshi no shinmitsu na kankei wo meguru – kōsatsu," *Tokyo Shakaigaku Nenpou* 10, (2002): 83-100.

were married.[12] Others drew on theories of European sexology to warn of the dangers of homosexuality, which purportedly could have drastic effects, such as mental and physical masculinization and even sterility.[13] Interest in the topic was considerable, especially following the translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1913, which helped spark a "popular sexology boom" in the 1920s. These events show that the advent of a new paradigm of sexuality based on European sexology was deeply linked with shōjo culture.

Despite pushback from parents and educators, the practice of "intimate friendships" persisted in girls' schools, and in shōjo media it remained a popular trope until the decline of shōjo culture in the late 1930s. The swan song of shōjo novels in the "romantic friendship" genre was *Otome no Minato,* cowritten by Kawabata Yasunari and Nakazato Tsuneko and serialized in the magazine *Shōjo no Tomo* in 1937-38.[14] The novel describes a schoolgirl love triangle from the point of view of the younger student, who must choose between two "*onē-sama*." By that time, two shōjo magazines, *Shōjo Club* and *Shōjo no Tomo*, so dominated the market that other magazines could not compete, particularly not as wartime paper shortages grew severe.[15] As the only remaining girls' magazines, *Shōjo Club* and *Shōjo no Tomo* came under increasing government scrutiny. To continue publication, the magazines, particularly *Shōjo no Tomo,* which had previously enjoyed a reputation as a magazine for stylish urbanites, had little choice but to become vehicles for government propaganda.

Yoshiya Nobuko's *Hanamonogatari*

Yoshiya Nobuko is an icon of early shōjo culture. Born in 1896 in Niigata, she published her first story when she was only twelve years old. By 1935, she was the best-paid writer in the country, with an income three times that of the prime minister.[16] Her incredible popularity is all the more surprising given that for fifty years, from 1923 to her death in 1973, she lived openly with a female partner, her secretary Monma Chiyo. Passionate friendship between women is a constant theme in her writings, with same-sex romance heavily implied and sometimes even made explicit. The work for which Yoshiya is best remembered today, the *Hanamonogatari* ("Flower Tales"), is one such work.

The *Hanamonogatari,* fifty-two short stories that were published mostly in the girls' magazine *Shōjo Gahō* between 1916 and 1924, are among the most representative and best-known cultural products of early shōjo culture. Founded in 1912, *Shōjo Gahō* was one of the earliest girls' magazines and catered to an upper-class urban audience, who would have recognized themselves

[12] This was the stance taken by Tamura Toshiko, for example, in her defense of "S" relationships. Tamura won the Osaka Shinbun Award in 1911 for her novel *Akirame,* which depicts a love triangle between three girls who attended the same school. Tamura Toshiko, "Dōsei no koi," *Chūō Kōron* 28, no. 1 (1913): 165–68.

[13] The four stages of "congenital homosexuality" theorized by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his highly influential *Psychopathia Sexualis* were, first, "psychic hermaphroditism" (*psychische Hermaphodisie*), then homosexuality or "urnism" (*Urning*), followed by feminization (*Effeminatio*) in men and masculinization (*Viragirnität*) in women, culminating finally in physical transformation into the other sex (*Androgynie* or *Gynandrie*).

[14] Yasunari took full credit, and Nakazato's involvement wasn't revealed until 1984.

[15] Endō Hiroko, "Kaisetsu," *Shōnen shōsetsu taikei, v. 24: Shōjo shōsetsu meisakushū (1),* ed. Katō Takeo and Endō Hiroko (San-ichi Shobō, 1994), 608-609.

[16] Jennifer Robertson, "Yoshiya Nobuko: Out and outspoken in practice and prose," *Same-Sex Cultures and Sexualities: An Anthropological Reader*. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 196.

in the privileged, cultured heroines of many of the *Hanamonogatari.* In some stories, particularly the earlier ones, the tone is decidedly didactic. Of particular interest in the story "White Lily," which invites association with the aforementioned moralizing ideal of girls as white lilies, but also suggests the possibility of a romantic attachment between girls, as the word for lily, *yuri,* is used today to reference the genre of girl-girl romance. The story begins with the arrival of a new music teacher, Hayama-sensei, which sets off a "Hayama fever" at the girls' school in which the story is set. Like just about everyone else on campus, the first-person narrator has a crush on Hayama-sensei, writing her name over and over in her diary. When a production of *Les Miserables* reaches the local cinema, the narrator allows a friend to talk her into sneaking out of the dorms to see it, but upon their return, they are caught by the dorm superintendent. To get out of trouble, the girls lie and say they were only at music practice with Hayama-sensei and had lost track of time. Unexpectedly, Hayama-sensei covers for them, but later chides them that from now on, they must live lives pure as white lilies; shortly after, she resigns from her job and returns to her hometown, only to die within a year of an unspecified illness.[17]

In this story, Yoshiya borrows heavily from the rhetoric about pure girlhood to warn readers about the consequences of engaging in behaviors that might earn them the label of "degenerate schoolgirl." On the other hand, it is significant that the lily-white shōjo of the story is not the protagonist or any of her friends, but Hayama-sensei, a character who through direct reference to Dante's Beatrice and Michelangelo's Madonna is elevated to a position of beauty and goodness akin to sainthood. One could read a hidden critique of the high standards to which shōjo are held into this story, since to become another Hayama-sensei is out of the reach of ordinary shōjo, or indeed mere mortals. Significantly, the white lily is only one of fifty-two flowers represented in the stories, and the girls associated with each flower run the gamut, from a shōjo who chooses her career as a nurse over higher education so that she can help those less fortunate than herself ("Dahlia"), to a gallant, tomboyish girl who runs away from home on horseback ("Wisteria"), to a teacher who bullies a student so severely that she drops out of school and has a nervous breakdown ("Acacia"). Thus, the *Hanamonogatari* present readers with a wide range of various girlhood types, rather than stereotyping girls into a near-unattainable ideal.

Scholarship on the *Hanamonogatari*

The *Hanamonogatari* reemerged into the limelight in the 1990s, following the publication of Honda Masuko's seminal article "The genealogy of *hirahira*: Liminality and the girl."[18] In it, Honda looks back on her childhood during World War II and describes how girls' media like Yoshiya's *Hanamonogatari* allowed her to escape the horrors of wartime into a world of poetic beauty. The article inspired academic interest in prewar girls' culture and was instrumental in establishing the field of shōjo studies. Significant for the purposes of this article, Honda too believed that shōjo had a special relationship to time, a relationship that she describes as "liminal." She argues that unlike boys' culture, which has both feet firmly planted in gritty reality, girls'

[17] Elements of the story are apparently autobiographical: Yoshiya herself was kicked out of her American Baptist dormitory because she went to see a movie and missed curfew. Sarah Frederick, "Not that innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's good girls," in *Bad Girls of Japan,* ed. Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 69.
[18] Honda Masuko, "The genealogy of hirahira: Liminality and the girl," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, ed. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley (New York: Routledge, 2010),19-37. *Hirahira* is an onomatopoetic word describing the sound of fluttering ribbons, which Honda argued was a symbol of girlhood.

culture vacillates between "ordinary reality and the world of imagination."[19] Unwilling to grow into womanhood, girls prefer to close the door to reality and slumber "as pupa in their own small rooms. … Thus they stand outside the linear advance of time, permitting eternal flowers to bloom."[20] To Honda, the significance of girls' retreat from linear time is that it allowed them to withdraw from the realities of war. While her essay betrays frustration that girls' fiction was not taken seriously by historians, she stops short of analyzing shōjo culture as a space with significance even outside the context of Japan's wartime mobilization. Scrutinizing shōjo temporality more broadly in terms of gender and sexuality uncovers the ability of shōjo fiction like the *Hanamonogatari* to create alternative possibilities for girls beyond heteronormativity and eventual marriage.

Honda's article sparked interest in shōjo culture among Japanese historians and resulted in several influential monographs in the early 2000s, notably *Shōjo no shakaishi* (Social History of Girlhood, 2007) by Imada Erika and *"Shōjo" zō no tanjō* (Origins of the Image of the "Girl," 2007) by Watanabe Shūko. The topic was soon picked up by scholars outside of Japan as well. *Girl Reading Girl in Japan* (2010), the collection in which Honda's essay was first translated into English, was influential in introducing shōjo studies to an Anglophone audience. Other indispensable works are Deborah Shamoon's *Passionate Friendship* (2011), which examines the depiction of "S" relationships in early shōjo media, and *Age of the Shōjo* (2019) by Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase.

Given that Yoshiya Nobuko's *Hanamonogatari* naturally feature prominently in scholarly treatments of shōjo, where the lack of consensus over how to interpret sexuality in the *Hanamonogatari*, and shōjo "S" culture more broadly, is evident. How ought one to weigh the widespread acceptance of relationships between girls as innocent and nonsexual on the one hand, with sensationalized media reportage about schoolgirls' same-sex love (*dōseiai*) on the other? Michiko Suzuki's approach is instructive. Rather than attempting to read the romance in the *Hanamonogatari* as either platonic or queer, she instead engages directly with theories about sexuality circulating during the time that Yoshiya was writing. "By closely reading Yoshiya's early works through their conversation with sexology discourse, I show how she simultaneously *uses and subverts* the definitions and parameters sexology maps onto female-female love. Yoshiya reiterates mainstream views of same-sex love yet at the same time challenges sexological "truths" and reveals the inadequacies and gaps within sexology."[21] Rather than representing a static and superficial perspective, close analysis reveals that the *Hanamonogatari* were in dialogue with the contemporary theories about sexuality.

Shōjo Temporality

As mentioned, shōjo temporality was characterized by a sense of impending finality: with time, a girl would grow up, get married, and enter her prescribed role as a "Good Wife, Wise Mother" (*ryōsai kenbo*). I interpret *ryōsai kenbo* as an ideology best approached through the framework of *chronobiopolitics*, the arrangement of the time of life of populations. The term was

[19] Ibid, 35.
[20] Ibid, 36.
[21] Michiko Suzuki, "Writing same-sex love: Sexology and literary representation in Yoshiya Nobuko's early fiction," *Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 3 (2006), 577. Emphasis mine.

introduced by gender historian Dana Luciano as an expansion of the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics.[22] As she points out, governmental power operates not only through the regulation of a population's bodies (biopolitics), but also of their time (chronobiopolitics). Chronobiopolitics anticipates the timely accomplishment of certain benchmarks in the life cycle of the modern subject: marriage, reproduction, child rearing, death. It is particularly relevant to women, whose time supposedly runs (or runs out) on a ticking "biological clock." For the queer individual, it can be difficult or even impossible to sync to chronobiopolitical time, resulting in the individual's marginalization from mainstream society.

On the other hand, by skirting the edges of state control, queer time can also enable new and liberating ways of being. I argue that the way time operates in the *Hanamonogatari* invites a creative interrogation of the chronobiopolitical pressures exerted on schoolgirls in the early twentieth century by calling into question the normative temporal schema of the modern state. A thread of tragedy weaves together these stories that cannot end happily because, no matter what, they must end, the period of shōjohood being finite. The radical intervention that occurs in shōjo media like the *Hanamonogatari* is the rejection of marriage and motherhood as a "happily ever after." If marriage appears as a plot device in the story at all, it is as the tragedy that brings a shōjo's girlhood to a close. Rather than providing landmarks on the road to progress for the modern individual, for the heroines of the *Hanamonogatari* the markers of "straight time" instead elicit feelings of fear, regret, helplessness, and even heartbreak.

The antagonistic relationship to the "middle-class logic of reproductive temporality"[23] evident in the *Hanamonogatari* recalls Lee Edelman's identification of anti-futurity as a defining characteristic of the queer experience. Anti-futurity is the repudiation of the mobilizing force of an imagined political future "for the children." "[O]nly by assuming the truth of our queer capacity to figure the undoing of the symbolic [i.e. the "better future"] and the subject of the symbolic [i.e. the child] can we undertake the impossible project of imagining an oppositional political position exempt from the repetitive necessity of reproducing … the politics of reproduction."[24] This concept helps elucidate the way in which shōjo media like the *Hanamonogatari* lend themselves to a radical queer reading. Investment in a chrononormative timeline is political, because the success of the future generation is tied to the success of the state. Especially in the case of schoolgirls, the rationale for establishing girls' schools was that girls should receive sufficient training to run a hygienic and economical household, in order to maximize the potential of their children (especially sons) as future students, workers, and soldiers of the Japanese empire, according to the ethos of "Good Wife, Wise Mother." Within shōjo media, "shōjo temporality" enables the rejection of progress and invites an unwillingness to move on from the homosocial present into a heterosexual future.

One particularly tragic installment of the *Hanamonogatari* that illustrates the function of shojo temporality is a story called "Pear Blossoms" (*Nashi no hana).* In this short, fairytale-like

[22] Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America,* New York: New York University Press, 2007.
[23] Jack Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 4.
[24] Lee Edelman, "The future is kid stuff: Queer theory, disidentification, and the death drive," *Narrative* 6 (1), 1998, 28.

story, two unnamed girls ascend the steps of a tower holding hands. At the top, they admire a pear orchard in bloom:

> "Pear blossoms… pear blossoms… so pretty… so white and fuzzy…." the girl with the crimson sash said, gazing at the distant cluster of flowers.
>
> "Yes — But they're fleeting, those flowers– the kind of flowers that seem likely to disappear by the time you've reached them," the girl with the cream-colored sash said—
>
> "Oh! — The evening moon–" gasped the child with the crimson sash.
>
> "The evening moon — Ah… How fleeting the pear blossoms, but all the more fleeting is the evening moon above those pear blossoms…" the child with the cream-colored sash— murmured solemnly.
>
> "And us…?"
>
> " — I don't know…."[25]

A year later, the girl in the cream-colored sash climbs the tower alone. Her friend, we learn, is now dead. Gazing tearfully at the blossoming pear trees, the girl imagines that she can see her friend's red sash among them. Seeking to join her, she jumps to her death.

The story is rife with ambiguities, chief among them the significance of the question, "And us?" The girls seemed to anticipate their separation. Perhaps the girl with the red sash was suffering a fatal illness and knew she did not have long left to live, a common trope in this era of rampant tuberculosis.[26] Or was it because one of them was soon to graduate and step into her role as a "Good Wife, Wise Mother"? In that case, was the death of the red-sashed girl an accident, or did she commit suicide, as the girl with the cream-colored sash was to do shortly after? There is precedent for such a choice in other *Hanamonogatari,* for example in "Seashore Pink," which ends with the heroine choosing to throw herself into the ocean rather than to be married off, or "Spider Lily," which ends with both central characters falling asleep forever in a field of poisonous flowers.

Another argument in favor of the suicide hypothesis is the prominence of articles about lover's suicides (*shinjū*) in the media of the time, of which readers would surely have been aware. As mentioned, the incident that first brought "S" relationships among girls to public awareness was the double suicide of two girls in Niigata. In 1911, such an event drew wide-ranging consternation; by the 1920s, however, articles about girls committing suicide together were a regular feature in the papers. Between 1925 and 1935, 342 such cases were reported in the press, representing roughly a third of all *shinjū* incidents.[27] Jennifer Robertson interprets the phenomenon of high rates of female double suicide, and especially the reporting of it, as a "culturally intelligible act that turned a private condition into a public matter."[28] Young women used their love letters and suicide notes, and even statements to journalists, to express their feelings and their own views on gender and sexuality. Their suicides won them not only notoriety, but also some level of political

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[25] Yoshiya Nobuko, "Nashi no hana," in *Hanamonogatari,* v. 3 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2003), 215.

[26] The trope is called *kajin hakumei* ("beauties die young"). See Fukuda Mahito, *Kekkaku no bunka-shi: kindai Nihon ni okeru yamai no imēji* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 1995), 3.

[27] Scott Reynen, "Exclusive liberation and lesbian suicide in interwar Japan," *Honors Projects, History* (Illinois Wesleyan University, 2002), 1. https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/history_honproj/8

[28] Jennifer Robertson, "Dying to tell: Sexuality and suicide in imperial Japan," in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 25 (1), 1999: 30.

and cultural cachet, and by extension a voice in the narrative about them presented to the public even after their deaths. Lover's suicide was commonly understood as an expression of discontent over outdated social constraints that prevented one from marrying the partner of one's choosing; in the case of female same-sex double suicides, the protest was against the requirement to marry in the first place. By referencing the high rates of double suicide, however obliquely, shōjo media like the *Hanamonogatari* were able to express covert resistance to the "politics of reproduction" that so dominated gender ideology. The popularity of "lover's suicide" stories like "Pear Blossoms" among shōjo implies that this is a sentiment that resonated widely with its young readership.

It is clear that the characters in "Pear Blossoms" are aware of their time as shōjo running out, a reality that, in the story, is synonymous with death. Despite the prominence of death as a trope in the *Hanamonogatari*, I do not interpret their anti-futurity as purely nihilistic. Creators of shōjo culture like Yoshiya Nobuko constructed a rhetorical space in which the relationships that were important to shōjo outside of their prescribed roles as daughters and future wives and mothers took precedence – including even romantic attachments to other shōjo. In a sense, the premonition of impending end, whether through growing up and out of the role of shōjo, or through an untimely death by illness or even suicide, opened a space for girls to let go of prescribed roles. As gender studies scholar Jack Halberstam writes, "preadult, preidentitarian girl roles offer a set of opportunities for theorizing gender, sexuality, race, and social rebellion precisely because they occupy the space of the 'not-yet,' the not fully realized."[29] If the trajectory of a girl's life is not towards the next milestone in the chrononormative timeline but rather towards an end, then there is room for uninhibited improvisation as the sand funnels through the glass.

This potential comes to the fore in another feature of shōjo temporality, that of protracted adolescence. The phenomenon of protracted adolescence coincides with the refusal to progress along the normative timeline: one need only think of celebrations of bachelorhood as a means of escaping the "ball and chain" of marriage, for example. (Not incidentally, the archetype of the campy bachelor has long been characterized by his ambiguous sexuality.[30]) In the context of early twentieth century Japan, where despite the influx in women's participation in the workforce, low pay (typically one third that of men) kept girls from remaining unmarried for long, protracted adolescence instead meant clinging to their identity as shōjo even once they had left school. One method for extending their fleeting shōjohood was by continuing to participate in shōjo fan culture. A frequent type of letter to the editor of girls' magazine *Shōjo no Tomo*, for example, was to seek reassurance that one was not too old to join in the fun. To such queries, the editors responded, "In this [virtual club] room there's no such thing as age! There are even people who have already become mothers here, so [at 20] you're still a child!"[31] In other words, while the association between shōjo and schoolgirls remained strong, shōjo media pushed the message that shōjohood was as much a state of mind as a phase of life.[32]

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[29] Halberstam, *In A Queer Time And Place,* 177.
[30] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), especially chapter 5, "Proust and the spectacle of the closet."
[31] Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha, "Tomo-chan club," *Shōjo no Tomo* 27 (8): 1934, 298.
[32] This interpretation continues to be influential in contemporary Japan. For example, the well-known novelist Yoshimoto Banana (b.1964) self-identifies as a shōjo. Anne Allison, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xxi.

Halberstam unpacks the intersection of queerness, fan culture, and protracted adolescence in the context of contemporary US American punk culture, but I see an overlap in the shōjo counterculture of Taishō-period Japan. It, too, can be interpreted as a space in which, "girl […] partial identities can be carried forward into adulthood in terms of a politics of refusal – the refusal to grow up and enter the heteronormative adulthoods implied by these concepts of progress and maturity." The identities associated with youth counterculture are then reimagined "not as stages to pass through but *as preidentities to carry forward, inhabit, and sustain*."[33] If we think of shōjohood as a "preidentity" for girls to "carry forward, inhabit, and sustain" into the future, then what happens? *Ryōsai kenbo* no longer seems as monolithic, nor, for that matter, does compulsory heterosexuality. The protracted adolescence of adult women still eager to participate in shojo culture betrays an unwillingness to let go of a girl-centered past in which girlhood was a spectrum, and the possibility of queer romance was not just acknowledged but celebrated.

Flowers of Flame

Among the many *Hanamonogatari,* "Burning Flowers" (*Moyuru hana*) stands out for its use of shōjo temporality. By queering normative time, Yoshiya creates a heightened, fairytale-like atmosphere that is permissive of unusual closeness between the two lead characters. Following Michiko Suzuki's example, I analyze "Burning Flowers" to show how Yoshiya "reiterates mainstream views of same-sex love yet at the same time challenges sexological 'truths' and reveals the inadequacies and gaps within sexology."[34] Since such sexological 'truths' are founded on beliefs about normative sexual development, close attention to the operation of time in the story enables a nuanced understanding of the various epistemological frameworks that structure the relationship between the lead characters.

The story opens on an old mission school at an unspecified location in the north country at the start of the new year. During a snowstorm, a frantic ringing resounds from the back gate of the school. Our heroine, Midori, opens the gate to a strikingly beautiful stranger, who asks to see the principal, Miss Wagner. Midori leads her to the principal's residence, where the stranger throws herself weeping into the old woman's arms. As she does so, her headscarf slips, revealing hair done up in the *marumage* style of a married woman.

The stranger joins the student body and is introduced to the other students as Mrs. Kataoka (Kataoka-*fujin*). Miss Wagner entrusts her to Midori's care and assigns Mrs. Kataoka to be her roommate. Upon returning to her room, Midori finds it ornamented with Mrs. Kataoka's expensive, tastefully arranged possessions (lovingly cataloged by Yoshiya), so foreign to her own experience that she cannot help "gawping and feeling as if she had stepped into a different world."[35] As she stands there in shock, Mrs. Kataoka grabs her hand and draws her further into the room. Clutching Midori's hand, she tells her that she remembers her "cute face" from that night at the gate, and thanks her for helping her in her hour of need. She then begs Midori's pardon for intruding upon her space. Far from being put out, however, Midori is delighted:

[33] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place,* 179. Emphasis mine.
[34] Suzuki, "Writing same-sex love," 577.
[35] Yoshiya Nobuko, "Moyuru hana," in *Hanamonogatari,* v. 2 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1985), 43.

> Midori, as if drunk on pretty poetry, was spellbound; she turned yearning eyes already full of tears on the lady, and, as if pledging an oath, she answered:
>
> "I— will be your handmaiden, beautiful princess—"
>
> The lady quizzically returned, "A princess, you say! And what's this about a handmaiden?"
>
> Midori raised her round eyes, knelt at the lady's feet, clasped her hands in front of her chest as if in prayer, and said, "You are a beautiful princess! Allow me to be your handmaiden and serve you."
>
> "Well!" The lady, turning red up to her ears, glared in kind reproach. Nevertheless, as if unable to bear how cute she was, she hugged Midori's shoulders. Like a mother with her infant, she stroked her cheek as she whispered, "Well, it's just like a fairytale, isn't it! Very well, I'll be the princess. And you, my good handmaiden, please, save me."
>
> — Their four eyes gleamed happily, like pink roses that bloom in a dream.[36]

Before long, the other students at the school, jealous of Mrs. Kataoka's beauty, begin to call her a witch. Midori, who in the meantime has gained a reputation as Mrs. Kataoka's shadow, is unbothered and sings to herself: *Oh witch! Oh witch! Oh beautiful witch! Allow me to serve you.*

One night Midori wakes up and realizes that Mrs. Kataoka is not in the bed next to hers. She finds her standing frozen on the balcony and brings her back to their room. Mrs. Kataoka embraces her under the covers, and whispers in Midori's ear that she must always strive to remain a pure maiden as she is now. Gripping both her hands while crying, she implores her never to grow up.

One day a visitor arrives for Mrs. Kataoka, but upon seeing the calling card, she blanches and begs Midori to go in her stead. In the waiting room, Midori meets a woman described unflatteringly as "small and round, like a goldfish walking upright."[37] In a long monologue, the woman reveals that Mrs. Kataoka is the wife of a wealthy mine owner, that she threw away unimaginable riches to seek sanctuary at this school, and that she, the visitor, intends to bring her back.[38] Midori, moved to tears at Mrs. Kataoka's strength of spirit, struggles but at last succeeds in turning the woman away. Once she has left, Midori finds Mrs. Kataoka hiding in the organ room and confesses her deep admiration.

A few days later, a man who looks like a gangster from the movies drives up to the school gate. He tries to bribe Miss Wagner, and, when that fails, threatens her. Some days pass, and then one night there is a fire in the dormitory. The girls evacuate, but quickly realize that Mrs. Kataoka

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[36] Ibid., 45-46.

[37] Ibid. 57.

[38] It is likely that Yoshiya based this story on true events. In 1921, Yanigawara Byakuren, one of the "Three Beauties of the Taishō Period," left her coal magnate husband to be with her lover, the socialist Miyazaki Ryūsuke. Proponents of "free love" defended Byakuren's choice in the papers, while others decried her for the crime of adultery. The character of Midori is likely based on Byakuren's close friend and confidante Muraoka Hanako, a girl eight years her junior, whom she befriended when she attended a girls' school after her first marriage (the coal magnate was her second). Muraoka later became famous as the Japanese translator of *Anne of Green Gables.* For more on the incident, see Michiko Suzuki, *Becoming Modern Women: Love and Female Identity in Prewar Japanese Literature and Culture* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, Calif, 2010), especially Chapter 4, "Love marriage ideology."

and Midori are missing. In the closing scene of the story, Miss Wagner rushes back into the building at great risk to herself, just in time to witness the deaths of her two students:

> Inside the fire Miss Wagner had gone into— there, alas, Mrs. Kataoka, dressed in fine clothes of gold thread, stood half engulfed in flame. Beside her was Midori, kneeling at her feet like a handmaiden waiting upon her queen, the purple skirt of her hakama spread around her…. Miss Wagner screamed, causing Mrs. Kataoka to peer through the fire.
>
> "Sensei, go back, quick, run away! I will stay— the flames will purify what has been sullied!"
>
> The lady didn't move a step. Between one moment and the next, the smoke grew thicker, covering the two figures. Pure white flowers, blooming within the scarlet flames!
>
> Within the flames, fragrant petals scattering!
>
> The sound of a heavy pillar falling, incessant screaming, within that tumultuous noise, ah, only there, how silent and beautiful a scene![39]

Of the characters in the story, it is Mrs. Kataoka whose life course most obviously deviates from the chrononormative track laid out for her: her decision to once more become a student is a clear case of protracted adolescence, a perversion of linear progress. Indeed Mrs. Kataoka appears to regress throughout the course of the story. While she begins in a maternal role, stroking Midori's cheek "like a mother with her infant," she becomes increasingly childlike in her dependence on Midori. In scenes such as the one in which Midori must coax her off the balcony back to their room, or when her aversion to meeting with her visitor is so strong that she becomes almost petulant, Midori, despite her youth (Midori is a fourth-year, which would make her around sixteen), seems the more mature of the two. Even so, the reader, seeing Mrs. Kataoka through the eyes of Midori, is never judgmental of her behavior. In the confrontation between Midori and the visitor, the mismatch between modern, capitalist values and Midori's shōjo values becomes most clear. When asked what it is Mrs. Kataoka does all day, Midori responds that she studies, even reading her passages of poetry in English. To the visitor, it is inconceivable that someone would waste their time studying when all the wealth they could imagine is at their fingertips. She interprets Mrs. Kataoka's escape from her husband as selfish, because it appears that even fabulous riches are not enough to satisfy her: "It's shocking, isn't it, that someone would throw away a fortune in the millions, a palatial mansion, honor, everything, what more could she possibly want?"[40] However, to Midori, abandoning wealth in order to pursue spiritual and intellectual improvement is the height of nobility. Her conviction reflects an effort on Yoshiya's part to establish the shōjo as pure-hearted and diligent, in opposition both to adults and to the mainstream portrayal of girls as vapid and easily swayed by whatever was flashy and new. The most significant element of Mrs. Kataoka's regression, however, is that reliving her adolescence allows her to reopen a door that, in the chrononormative timeline, was closed to her: queer romance.

In contrast to Mrs. Kataoka, Midori at first appears to be on the typical Bildungsroman track. At the beginning of the story, she is childish to the point of being nicknamed "Baby-chan" by her peers. Her infatuation with Mrs. Kataoka incites her to mature. This begins from their very first encounter, which follows a comedic episode wherein Midori runs around the school trying to find a teacher or servant to go out and answer the door, but everyone is indisposed because they

[39] Ibid., 80-81.
[40] Ibid., 64.

are celebrating the New Year. In the end, she decides to shoulder the responsibility of answering the door herself. Thanks to this initial display of initiative, she is tasked by Miss Wagner to be responsible for Mrs. Kataoka, a task she eagerly takes on in the role of handmaiden. Caring for Mrs. Kataoka provides her with ample opportunities to grow and mature. When she goes to retrieve her from the balcony, for example, she must first overcome her fear of ghosts, which is what she initially believes Mrs. Kataoka's nightgown-clad form to be. The final test of her newfound maturity is the encounter with Mrs. Kataoka's unwelcome visitor. At multiple points during their conversation, the woman tries to bully her, or, when that does not work, wheedle and manipulate Midori into allowing her to see Mrs. Kataoka. Despite her insecurity, Midori holds firm. Thus, through her role as Mrs. Kataoka's protector, Midori grows from "Baby-chan" to a girl resolute enough to stand up the strong-willed visitor. In the end, however, the resolution of Midori's story is not that of a Bildungsroman protagonist; instead, she dies.

The most memorable element of this story is its ending. Neither of the lead characters can resist the pressures of mainstream society long-term, and so they choose death instead, Mrs. Kataoka because she sees no other way out of her marriage, and Midori out of loyalty to her lady. Thus, the story displays the characteristic of anti-futurity that is typical of the *Hanamonogatari* taken to its extreme. Only through death is Mrs. Kataoka able to free herself from the role of wife. Midori, too, escapes the trajectory of graduation, marriage, and motherhood that awaits her on the Bildungsroman track, adhering to Mrs. Kataoka's admonition to "Please never, ever, ever lose your youthful innocence," and to not grow up because "growing up is awful."[41] The story's anti-futurity rejects chrononormative time as "progress"; instead, it is quite literally a dead end.

However, despite the impressive destructive force of anti-futurity at the end of "Burning Flowers," Yoshiya also uses temporality productively to create an atmosphere of nostalgia for a past consigned to folklore. This nostalgia is generative of queer alternatives to the linear progress of chrononormative time.[42] Much of the feeling of temporal singularity in "Burning Flowers" is achieved through its setting. The school's location in the northeast, which has historically been Japan's poorest region with a reputation as a rural backwater, is essential for establishing it as a place apart, peripheral to the modern metropolis of Tokyo. In a place as out of the way as the northeast, the rules of rational, scientific knowledge espoused by the modern order are usurped by an earlier tradition rooted in myth, magic, and superstition. This is established early on, when upon meeting Mrs. Kataoka in the blizzard, Midori fears for a moment that she might be a figure from local folklore, a "Snow Woman— they say that on winter nights in the north, a suspicious shadow roams about and leads people's souls astray."[43] The prevalence of magical thinking is reinforced throughout the story, with Midori later mistaking Mrs. Kataoka for a ghost (during the scene on the balcony), and the other students accusing her of being a witch who holds Midori under her thrall. The confrontation between Midori and the woman sent to fetch Mrs. Kataoka back to her husband also draws on mythology by implying that the stranger is a *tanuki*, a shapeshifting trickster figure from Japanese folklore:

[41] Ibid., 53.
[42] For an in-depth analysis of how nostalgia functions within queer temporality, see Keith Vincent, *Two-Timing Modernity: Homosocial Narrative in Modern Japanese Fiction,* Leiden; BRILL, 2012.
[43] Ibid., 37.

> The lady wrapped in black fur thrust her catlike face forward and stared at Midori. The unsettling fur thing gleaming on her shoulders and hands, the short, overweight figure, the manner of speech, somehow, undeniably, called to mind a tanuki— not just any tanuki but a tanuki of legend, the kind that would play tricks on travelers to remote mountain villages and steal sake; such a tanuki suited the look of that fur.[44]

Through tricks such as these, Yoshiya uses the setting to establish the mission school as a place where the rules of the "real world" need not necessarily apply. It is worth noting, however, that the break between school and the real (i.e. modern) world is not a clean one. If it were – if, in other words, Yoshiya were trying to establish the girls' school as some kind of wish-fulfillment queer utopia – the closeness between Mrs. Kataoka and Midori would draw no comment. Instead, the two are ostracized by their classmates as a witch and her willing servant. Apparently, the intimacy between the two was of a kind that could not be endorsed even in the more permissive atmosphere of a girls' school.

The one exception is the dorm room the two of them share: upon entering it, Midori feels that she has "stepped into a different world." It is also the space in which Midori and Mrs. Kataoka enter into their roleplay as princess and handmaiden. Although a sexual relationship is not implied as strongly as it is in some other *Hanamonogatari,* this distinction of their bedroom as a "different world" drives home the narrative necessity for a place wherein the rules of propriety of the "real world" do not apply.

The potential of such a space as a buoy against the tides of "progress," with its associated gender roles and expectations of heterosexual union, is explored further in another of Yoshiya's works, *Two Virgins in the Attic* (1920). This novel is considered the most explicitly lesbian of Yoshiya's works, not only because of the implied sexual content but because the two leads do indeed choose to live together as a couple at the end. The novel tells the story of Akiko, a timid girl studying to become a schoolteacher who rooms in a small, triangular attic room of the YWCA and falls in love with another resident, Akitsu. Describing the significance of the setting, Sarah Frederick writes that, "The attic lies outside of the Japanese family structure or other institutions (school, dormitory administration, church), and is even not quite Japanese; this is what will permit Akiko to explore different options for living as a young woman in the world."[45] The attic is a space where Akiko can experience cohabitation with Akitsu, sharing the room and even the bed. Ultimately, the life she decides on is one by Akitsu's side. In this way, *Two Virgins in the Attic* delivers on the promise of shōjo temporality. By naming them "virgins" (*shojo,* not to be confused with *shōjo*), Yoshiya stresses their "protracted adolescence" as unmarried young women, though of marriageable age; the permissiveness of the attic as a space which lies outside of the purview of modern institutional power allows them to develop this "preidentity" into something to "carry forward" into their lives as adults. Like the attic in *Two Virgins,* Midori and Mrs. Kataoka's dorm room creates an exceptional, liminal space wherein a future of domestic bliss between two women can be imagined.

[44] Ibid., 60.
[45] Frederick, "Not that innocent," 71.

Subverting Good Wife, Wise Mother

Mrs. Kataoka's protracted adolescence takes on additional relevance in the context of the early twentieth-century sexological understanding of homosexuality as a type of arrested development. According to Freud's theory of psychosexual development, sexuality evolves in the following stages: first, primary identification between mother and child in infancy, then maternal desire, narcissism, homosexuality, and finally heterosexuality; homosexuality in adulthood indicates an inability to mature into the final phase. In the case of female homosexuality, the three stages of maternal desire, narcissism, and homosexuality become conflated, because in each case the object of desire is female. The fact that Yoshiya frequently explains a character's attraction to an older student in terms of her having been separated from her mother, for whom the older girl becomes a substitute, suggest that she was familiar with this rationale for female homosexuality. For example, in "Yellow Cherry Blossoms," the first-person narrator moves from Italy to Japan to attend school, leaving behind her ill mother. She is taken under the wing of an older student, about whom she thinks, "I wanted to bury my little head in her gentle, fragrant, and soft breast, like that of my absent mother which concealed the smell of sweet milk, and remain there forever in an ecstatic trance."[46] Similarly, in "Night-Blooming Flowers," the protagonist has "crossed the line of friendship" with a girl called Masuko, who bears an eerie resemblance to her dead mother's portrait (and consequently, one presumes, to herself). Yoshiya used contemporary Western theories of sexuality to construct a plausible psychological basis for her heroines' same-sex attraction. Far from proscribing romantic attachment, love for a mother figure in the *Hanamonogatari* can serve as the basis for a passion between girls.[47]

In her history of the "girls' novel" (*shōjo shōsetsu*), Kume Yoriko interprets this negatively, suggesting that Yoshiya's portrayal of same-sex attraction as "abnormal" reinforces a heteronormative and patriarchal social framework that contributes to the marginalization of queer sexuality.[48] While I believe Kume is right to point out that internalized homophobia likely contributed to some of Yoshiya's authorial choices, I take a more positive view of the incorporation of sexological "truths" in Yoshiya's fiction. Referencing sexology was a way to assert that the girls' attraction was not entirely platonic, in an era where many writers of shōjo fiction excused their portrayal of intimacy between girls by claiming such attachments were innocent. Yoshiya also sometimes directly challenged sexological claims about gender and sexuality, for example in "Night-Blooming Flowers," whose protagonist Tamaki is "entirely – yes entirely! – a girl"[49] despite her boyish appearance and love for Masuko. This contradicts contemporary sexological theories of "inversion," according to which same-sex attraction resulted from psychological identification with the opposite sex. Unlike Kume, I read Yoshiya's references to sexological "knowledge" as appropriation for the sake of reclaiming "truths" about female homosexuality.

"Burning Flowers" takes this strategy a step further by employing the trope of the mother complex to subvert "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideology. It initially is used to establish Midori's

[46] Yoshiya, "Yellow cherry blossoms," *Hanamonogatari v. 1,* 69.
[47] To learn more about how the trope of maternal affection shaped lesbian relationships in a European context, see Chapter 5, "A strenuous pleasure: Daughter-mother love," in Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 113-142.
[48] Kume, *"Shōjo Shōsetsu" no Seisei,* 246-7.
[49] Yoshiya, "Hikage no hana," *Hanamonogatari* v. 2, 205.

attraction to Mrs. Kataoka, when the latter strokes her cheek "like a mother with her infant." At the time, Midori is still known as "Baby-chan," emphasizing their dynamic as mother and child even further. But although it is Mrs. Kataoka who plays the maternal role when they first enter into the roleplay, before long the roles are reversed, with Midori instead becoming the caretaker of Mrs. Kataoka. At no point does Midori seek to become the dominant partner, however; the pleasure she feels in their relationship is in being able to serve Mrs. Kataoka, and she is so open in this ambition that the other students mock her for it. Their dynamic of dominance and submission serves as further evidence of the "perverse" nature of their relationship. On the other hand, Midori's willing subservience to Mrs. Kataoka can also be read as exemplary femininity in the context of early twentieth century gender ideology. By putting Mrs. Kataoka's needs over her own, Midori behaves as a Good Wife and Wise Mother should. It is not Midori's actions themselves that are objectionable, but the fact that they are made on behalf of a beautiful older woman instead of a man. Installing Mrs. Kataoka in the place of the husband/son destabilizes the male-centered gender order of modern Japan, wherein the position of the woman was meant to be a peripheral. This subversion of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideology, enabled by Mrs. Kataoka's protracted adolescence and emphasized by Midori's anti-futurity, indicates that there are ways of "doing" femininity outside of the context of heterosexual marriage and reproduction.

Conclusion

The two shōjo in "Burning Flowers" take drastic measures to legitimize their relationship in the only way that they can, in a society that otherwise exerts near-inescapable pressure to continue along the trajectory to marriage and motherhood. Their double suicide draws not only on literary and historical tropes, but also on the contemporary reality of high rates of suicide among young women, of which Yoshiya and her readers would doubtless have been aware. Throughout the story, the modern conception of time as linear progress is repeatedly perverted and queered through interventions such as anti-futurity, Mrs. Kataoka's protracted adolescence, and nostalgia for a mythological past. The special temporality of girlhood means that in shōjo media, motherhood could be coopted to portray female-female romance and to install women in the central position usually occupied by men in Japan's patriarchal gender ideology. Similarly, liminal spaces such as dorm rooms were reimagined as a shared domestic idyll that could be experienced without the prerequisite that a girl grow up, marry, and become a housewife. For readers, these interventions opened a window into another world, rife with possibilities beyond that of "Good Wife, Wise Mother."

In this paper, I have argued that girls' media from the early twentieth century in Japan can be productively read as a counterweight to the normalizing pressure of modern society to fashion individuals into productive and reproductive subjects. Although the queer identities portrayed in Yoshiya Nobuko's *Hanamonogatari* were impermanent because of the stories' inevitable tragic endings, they nonetheless laid the groundwork for readers to carry forward "preidentities" that did not hinge on compulsive heterosexuality. This extraction from "straight time" was achieved through the strategic implementation of the trope of lover's suicide, which allowed girls to lay claim to a higher purpose in death. As a result, in the context of countercultural shōjo media, death is not solely a negative force but is also generative of new possibilities. In the imaginative creative space of girlhood, flirtations with other girls could be taken seriously. As active participants in the creation of shōjo culture, both lived (at school) and virtual (shōjo magazines), girls helped shape

their own interpretive frameworks, and theirs were a lot more accommodating of experiences that fell outside the mold of the biopolitical state. To be sure, the worlds shōjo helped create weren't utopias, as they were still classist and colonialist, but they were expansive enough to accommodate frameworks for alternative femininities off the chronobiopolitical track.

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