

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MODERN GIRL  
IN JAPANESE INTERWAR LITERATURE

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REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MODERN GIRL  
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## ABSTRACT

### Representations of the Modern Girl in Japanese Interwar Literature

This study explores the Japanese modern girl's (*moga*) representations in Taishō and early Shōwa texts, and the role these representations played in women finding their voice in literature. The project acknowledges the modern girl figure as a character of fiction and a real-life figure. Examining the modern girl's position within the Japanese feminist writing, the study supports the idea that whereas the media wanted to turn her into a passive figure or a stereotype by objectifying her, literary texts' portrayals of this figure are of great variety. The modern girl differs from her contemporary, the New Woman in that, The New Woman appeared before *moga* in 1910s as a politically active feminist figure, whereas *moga* was defined as passive. *Moga* drew attention due to her Westernized looks and the way she took an active part in the public space. For these reasons, she became an inspiration for many authors. Through context based analysis of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's and Uno Chiyo's selected literary works, and Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (*Asakusa kurenaidan*) this study reveals the common patterns in the protagonists' relationships with the modern girl analyzed within the theoretical framework of objectification. This thesis argues that *moga* in real life was a complex figure that cannot be simply categorized as a product of mass culture. The study ends with the suggestion that there is still much to explore about the modern girl, especially through examining her representations in literary texts.

## ÖZET

### Savaşlar Arası Dönemde Japon Edebiyatında Modern Kız Tasvirleri

Bu çalışma, Japon modern kızın (*moga*) Taishō ve erken Shōwa dönemlerinde yazılan metinlerdeki betimlemelerini ve bu betimlemelerin kadınların edebiyatta sesini bulmadaki rolünü araştırıyor. Modern kız hem kurgusal bir karakter hem de gerçek yaşamdan bir figür olarak kabul ediyor. Modern kızın, Japon feminist edebiyatındaki konumunu inceleyen çalışma, medyanın *moga*'yı pasif ya da klişe bir figüre dönüştürmek istediğini düşünmekle birlikte, edebi metinlerin bu figürü birçok yönden ele aldığı fikrini destekliyor. Modern kız, çağdaşı olan Yeni Kadın'dan şu şekilde ayrılır: Yeni Kadın, 1910'lu yıllarda aktivist olarak ortaya çıkarken *moga*'ya politik olarak pasif denildi. *Moga*, Batılı görüntüsü ve kamusal alanda oynadığı aktif rolle dikkat çekti. Bu nedenle birçok yazarın ilham kaynağı oldu. Bu çalışma, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ve Uno Chiyo'nun seçilmiş romanları ve Kawabata Yasunari'nin *Asakusa'nın Kırmızı Çetesi*'ni (Asakusa kurenaidan) içeriksel analizle objeleştirme teorisi üzerinden inceleyerek romanların kahramanlarının modern kızla olan ilişkilerindeki ortak kalıpları ortaya koyuyor. *Moga*'nın kitle kültürünün bir ürünü olarak kategorize edilemeyeceğini, gerçek modern kızın karmaşık bir yapıya sahip olduğunu savunuyor. Çalışma, özellikle edebi metinlerde modern kız hakkında keşfedilecek hâlâ çok şey olduğu önerisiyle sona eriyor.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One of the female figures that was born during Japan's process of modernization in the year of 1923, introduced by Kitazawa Shūichi, *modan gaaru* or *moga* モガ (modern girl) appeared as a fashionable young woman with European style clothes, bobbed hair and rouged lips. Her style was a mixture of the Japanese and the West; in most of the photos that belong to 1920s, she stands proudly in her kimono, but her hair and make-up give her away (see Figure 1).

In other mass media representations as a café waitress, she wears a Western style uniform. After her emergence, *moga* was frequently commented on as an 'imitation' of the West. At first, she was merely seen as a fashion icon or a Western 'wannabe'. However, as she challenged the male-centered Meiji ideologies that focus on creating the ideal Japanese woman with decent amount of Western values, she turned into a social threat. Thus, in her later representations dated 1930s, her identity was reduced to a degenerate figure, sexualized and exaggerated. In other words, she was constructed primarily on her physical aspects. This thesis argues that the figure of *moga* is more complex than these descriptions, and explores the real-life *moga* and modern girls as challenging characters in literature.

The Japanese *moga* was, and still is a much-discussed figure in relation to Japan's modernity and anxieties that came with it. *Moga* emerged in 1920s due to social and novelties in Japanese literary criticism. Posing a threat to Meiji Government's ideologies, she was turned into both an icon and a degenerate by the media.



Fig. 1 An illustration by Togo Azuchi  
Source: *Kimono dokuhon*, No. 7, 1929

On the other hand, she played a significant role in Japanese literary texts of Taishō (especially mid-1920s) and early Shōwa literature (1926-1945), immortalized by popular authors, such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. In literary texts, she became a symbol through which authors gave voice to their fears and desires directed towards the modern times. Most of the articles written about her at the time and years after her popularity seemed to die, questioned her identity and portrayed her as an apolitical person, who was indulged by Western fashion and degenerate lifestyle. In sum, modern girls appeared on ads and magazines as fashion idols, yet they were also criticized because of their style, caused by fear against anything Western during the process of Japan's modernization. Even *atarashii onna* 新しい女 (New Woman),

who was an influential figure of the 1910s, starting women's resistance against the Meiji Government's ideal Japanese woman, shunned out *moga*. In the following quotation that was taken from an article dated January 1927, published in *Fujin koron*, some of the group of New Woman's ideas concerning the figure of *moga* are revealed:

Whenever I hear the popular word modern girl, I recall the time people were interested in the word new woman. Although I was quite disappointed with the new woman's behavior, at least I thought of them as kindred spirits because of their fresh way of thinking. But I wonder if there is anything to be discovered in the modern girl's thinking? I suppose that in these uncertain times, their way of expressing themselves is inevitable, but is it possible for anyone not to notice how vapid their lifestyles are?<sup>1</sup>

“Vapid lifestyles” pointed out to *moga*'s so called scandalous lives. According to many, modern girls and boys spent most of their times partying and exploring freedom that is mainly sexual. A leading figure of New Woman, Yosano Akiko also remarked: “These girls in their Western dress and short haircuts just copy whatever comes from abroad”.<sup>2</sup> In the light of these suggestions, it is possible to conclude that the women groups of the 1920s and 1930s did not have the aim of coming together and creating a feminist movement, simply because the image of *moga* was not perceived as an influential figure, regarding feminist activism.

The following sentence also marks the fact that recent discussions concerning *moga* also revolve around her commercial value, and her inability to become as efficient as the New Woman. According to Ito Ruri's article on *moga* in Okinawa, whereas the New Woman symbolized autonomous personhood and emphasized freedom and love, *moga* stood for mass consumer culture.<sup>3</sup> However, this study

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<sup>1</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media and Women in Interwar Japan*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Sohō, "Seinen no fuki," 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ito, “The “Modern Girl” Question in the Periphery of Empire: Colonial Modernity and Mobility among Okinawan Women in the 1920s and 1930s,” 244–249.

supports the notion that what she meant for feminist activities was more than that. In the 1920s she emerged as a fashion icon, but in the 1930s she changed from a face in cosmetic ads to a person in social circles such as *jokyū*. *Jokyū* means the café waitress, and the term was usually associated with *moga*, as we see these café waitresses in their modern uniforms for which they use their own money. They are working-class women, taking care of themselves without depending on a husband or a father. These types of *moga* became protagonists in modern Japanese literature and encouraged women like the sensational author Uno Chiyo (1897-1996) to give a voice to her own experiences. While *moga* as a historical figure and her conceptualization within Japanese feminisms have been discussed by various scholars, *moga*'s portrayals in literature; *moga* as the author and a character has not received much critical attention from academia. Therefore, this study suggests that there is still much to explore about her motives and representations through examining literary texts that tell us about the emerging modern Japan as well as early Japanese feminism.

As for the recent discussions of *moga*, a controversial issue has been whether *moga* played an activist role in Japanese women's movements. On the one hand, scholars, such as Vera Mackie argue that she was a passive figure; a Western wannabe, and a commodity to be exploited. From this perspective, she does not go beyond being an imaginary person. On the other hand, however, others argue that *moga*'s case can be read in a different way and she is too important a figure for Japanese modernism and feminism to be dismissed easily. In the words of Miriam Silverberg, one of this view's proponents, *moga* should be "placed alongside the history of working, militant women."<sup>4</sup> She also adds that *moga* was feared by the

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<sup>4</sup> Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," 260.

phallogocentric society, as she had an activist side to her. Her everyday behavior functioned as challenges against gender norms. In sum, then, the issue is whether *moga* is a victim or a powerful figure and how her image can be enhanced by feminist reading.

Authors that were chosen for discussion of *moga* are Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Kawabata Yasunari and Uno Chiyo. They were contemporary authors, who explored the city life, desire, modernism and relationships in their literary works. Tanizaki was a Japanese novelist, who got inspired by Western authors like Edgar Allan Poe. He wrote about eroticism and aesthetics. His earlier novels focus on Western concept of beauty, whereas the ones he wrote later refer to Japanese traditional beauty. *Naomi*, his first long novel is considered as the novel that made *moga* famous in literature. This thesis focus on his earlier short stories and novels about Western lifestyle and appreciation of the West. Kawabata is the first Japanese novelist, who won the Nobel Prize. In his novels, he adopted a modern style, but he also talked about the traditional Japan and expressed his longing for it in his former literary works. It is possible to say that he was more in favor of Japanese aesthetics. However, he wrote about Asakusa, Tokyo's district that was full of geisha houses, jazz bars and adventures the city offered. This novel was titled *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, one of the selected novels of this study is written in a fragmented style, which makes it experimental. Uno Chiyo drew attention due to her flashy looks and personal life that involved many lovers and drama. Her novels are autobiographical, so they play an important role in exploring *moga*.

This thesis argues that whereas *moga* was criticized by the New Woman group and Japanese society, she has got many aspects that have not been explored. This study supports the idea that the *moga*'s image was manipulated by media and

other platforms dominated by men, whereas the real *moga* in the selected novels and short stories go beyond being a stereotype. In Tanizaki's novels and short stories she is a vixen, a lesbian lover, a housewife or all of these things. Unlike the novels that reflect *moga* as a corrupted woman, who faces difficult situations and sad endings, Tanizaki's female characters develop throughout the text, and play various roles. In Uno Chiyo's literary works, *moga* is a strong woman with many talents. Thus, the aim is to identify her both as a character and a real-life figure, who made a difference in female voices (of both the author's and the characters') in literature. The study asks the question "Was she able to challenge portrayals of *moga* created by those who tried to objectify her?"

Chapter Two deals with the literature review, mainly focusing on the growing interest in the modern girl and studies that try to define her. The modern girl discourse is categorized into two groups: Those who thought *moga* was a passive figure or a product of culture, who failed to inspire women's movements. Discussions revolving around the modern girl tend to portray her as a two-dimensional figure based on historical context, advertisements and other mass culture media. The second part explores different approaches to *moga*. These approaches promote *moga*'s positive aspects and draw attention to her significance in Japanese feminism. On the other hand, there are not many Japanese articles written on this subject. This study proposes a different reading of the modern girl by including literary texts, saying although some of the selected literary works such as Tanizaki's *Naomi* has been analyzed various times, the approach of this study suggests a fresh approach to the figure of *moga*.

Chapter Three explains the way this study will follow, with a close reading and a contextual analysis of literary texts that focus on *moga* within the theoretical

framework of objectification to find a link between feminism and literature, to provide answers to the questions related to her influence and identity in modern society. The study uses three main notions related to objectification theory. Martha Nussbaum's idea of positive objectification, Sandra Lee Bartky's concept of narcissism and the male gaze, and Rita Felski's conception of the female experience as a challenge against male domination.

Chapter Four provides the reader with the background information, starting from the Edo period. The feminist writing before the Meiji Period does not occupy much space in literature. The chapter focuses on the differences between the New Woman and *moga* though some studies tend to put them into the same category. The New Woman emerged in the 1910s and it was the name of a group of intellectual women, most of whom studied abroad. On the other hand, *moga* was a working-class woman, generally coming from the rural areas to work in big cities like Tokyo. The group of New Woman published a magazine called *Seitō* (Bluestocking: A name taken from British feminism). They were an organized group, who considered themselves active politically unlike *moga*. The chapter also introduces *moga*'s media representations to solidify the claim of this study. Articles from various newspapers reflect the society's reactions directed at the modern girl and what kind of rhetoric mass media used in order to objectify the figure. On the other hand, media, especially magazines published most of the popular novels of 1920s and 1930s, thus it also functioned as a promoter of female authors.

Chapter Five focuses on the voices of the male authors depicting the modern girl, such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Kawabata Yasunari. The chapter first overviews Tanizaki's earlier novels published between the years of 1910 and 1936. His literary works that are discussed in this study are as follows: *The Tattooer* (Shisei, 1910),

*Kirin* (1910), *The Reed Cutter* (Ashikari, 1932), *A Portrait of Shunkin* (Shunkinshō, 1933), *A Cat, A Man, and Two Women* (Neko to Shozo to futari no onna, 1936), *Professor Rado* (1928) and *Naomi* (Chijin no ai, 1925). These novels are analyzed to demonstrate that women in Tanizaki's novels reverse their objectified state, although some of his novels are said to portray women in a stereotypical way. On the other hand, Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan, 1929) explores the relationship between the modernizing city and the female identity. These two novels are chosen particularly for their potential of providing a discussion on the different aspects of the desired the *moga*. Another point is to demonstrate the modern girl's potential powerful image in literature. This situation becomes evident in Tanizaki's descriptions of various types of the modern girl. Thus, this chapter serves the purpose of supporting the idea that different modes of objectification exist and female characters as depicted in Tanizaki's novels challenge the masculine culture so it is important to explore *moga* in literature.

Chapter Six devoted for "Female Voices on Moga" is a crucial part in our thesis in that, representations of women by the modern girls themselves help us understand the modern girl's experiences as a real-life figure. Another issue related to the modern girl is that, although her contemporary activist group, the so-called New Women take credit for feminist literature, the modern girl is rarely mentioned when it comes to her influence on Japanese women's writing. Thus, including the novels of Uno Chiyo, a woman who officially called herself *moga*, aims to prove that the modern girl, both as a literary figure and the writer, contributed to Japanese feminist writing and its challenges against the male gaze. On the other hand, Chiyo's autobiographical novels include examples of self-objectification, which point out to inability to cope with the oppression of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese society. A

close reading of her novels that focuses on the female experience, *The Story of a Single Woman* (Aru hitori no onna no hanashi) and *Confessions of Love* (Iro Zange) takes place, pointing out to the differences between feminine representations and masculine portrayals of *moga*.

Chapter Seven compares and contrasts the male and the female gaze, drawing parallels or pointing out the differences between the novels. The research remarks how the male gaze through objectification, helped change the society's perception of the modern girl from a fashion icon to a degenerate woman. On the other hand, the female voice and characters in literature, created by both male and female authors, functioned as a resistance against negative representations. The thesis suggests that the modern girl can be read in a different way, in which she is not merely a fashion icon, a degenerate or a victim. Although the modern girl was far from being an activist, she made an important change in the literary world in proving that the female authors may also have a voice and style of their own, providing an opposition against the voyeuristic male gaze. Thus, women writers such as Uno Chiyo were an inspiration for the next generation of Japanese feminists; and the modern girl did not completely disappear from the literary scene.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents the general overviews of attempts to define the modern girl, women and literature in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, and at the same time the gender studies and media in the Western countries as well as Japanese studies. It is aimed to show that the issue of the Japanese *moga* has been a much-discussed phenomenon and in recent years, the contribution to the modern girl discourse has been on the rise in the U.S. and Western Europe. In the general overview of the modern girl, the emergence of interest in Japanese gender history and different perceptions regarding the modern girl's role in Japanese feminism will be seen. Secondly, studies by scholars of Japanese origin will be mentioned in this chapter.

The modern girl has been a controversial figure both in the times she lived in and even after her disappearance. Most of the scholarly articles of Western origin tend to depict her as a victimized or a passive figure, whereas there has not been much Japanese research done about the subject. Moreover, most of scholarly articles or books use newspaper articles or advertisements as primary sources, mostly mentioning *moga*'s descriptions in literature briefly.

It is also important to note that *moga*'s "partner in crime" the modern boy (*modan boi*, or *mobo*) did not receive much attention from scholars when compared to *moga*. A journal called *Shinseinen* (New Youth, 1920-1950) portrayed modern boys, but they were often regarded as a positive example who would help "young people manage the increased mobility of modern society and successfully navigate its challenges."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, women in rural areas received less attention, except for

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<sup>5</sup> Mackie, "Feminism and the Nation-State in Japan," 6.

Silverberg and Sato who attempted to explore working-class women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, and the roles they played in consumer's culture.

To begin with, the field of gender history's interest in Japanese feminism began in 1990s with the translation of Japanese modernist novels, such as Uno Chiyo's *Iro Zange* (Confessions of Love, 1935) and Hayashi Fumiko's *Hōrōki* (Diary of a Vagabond, 1928-1930), and expanded through 2000s. Among the scholarly studies, Gail Lee Bernstein's *Recreating Japanese Women* (1991), a collection of studies based on original research stands out as a pioneer in its discussions about women and the family, gender and work and the modern girl. The book starts with the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) and questions women's identities.

In the period between 1600 and 1945, women asserted their autonomy in a variety of ways: through divorce and remarriage, wage work, business acumen, or artistic talent, and by participation in strikes, the modern suffrage movement, and literary publications that coined or advertised new slogans for themselves, such as "bluestockings," "new woman," or "modern girl." But they also achieved a measure of independence and influence in more socially acceptable, traditional ways, for example as matriarchs of successful families. In all these ways, women participated in the discourse on female gender and helped shape its contours.<sup>6</sup>

The study highlighted the importance of exploring Japanese women within historical context, and gave way to further researches. Miriam Silverberg's article on the modern girl was also published in this collection, whose ideas influenced the modern girl discourse. However, the discourse on the modern girl can be separated into two categories: There are those, who support the idea that the modern girl was a passive figure, that caused a little or no change in Japanese feminism, whereas the others think that the modern girl was much more than how she was represented in the media. The next part of the chapter presents the discussions on the modern girl's negative image.

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<sup>6</sup> Bernstein, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, 14.

## 2.1 *Moga* as a passive figure

Lauren Bruce portrays *moga* as a cross-cultural phenomenon in her article, but also simplifies her identity by merely focusing on *moga*'s similarity to the American flapper figure.<sup>7</sup> Bruce's article is descriptive and highly informative regarding Japan's liberal policy during 1920s, Great Kantō Earthquake (1923) and how they led to the emergence of *moga* and café culture. However, the article focuses on fashion while analyzing Japanese modern girl's similarity to the American flapper figure and simplifies her identity.

As a cultural historian, Katrina Gulliver adopts a historical approach to the literary texts of Pearl Buck, Stella Benson, Sophia Chen Zen, Caroline Bache McMahon, Lilian May Miller and Uno Chiyo, presenting *moga* as a performer of different roles.<sup>8</sup> The author supports the fact that the availability of communication between women groups during 1920s contributed greatly to the emergence and progress of women's rights both in China and Japan. It is possible to gain insight on different perceptions concerning the discussion of the modern woman. For instance, the author takes Uno Chiyo as an exemplary figure to describe the modern girl as a persona required to play different roles. Although the book starts a unique discussion regarding woman's identity between wars, the figure of *moga* is reduced to a stereotype.

Vera Mackie, a scholar, who specializes in Japanese history, gender and sexuality studies, supports the idea that *moga* is a product of capitalism. In other words, she argues that *moga* is a media construction. According to Mackie, rather than focusing on real individuals, analysis of cultural work done by media

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," 1-7.

<sup>8</sup> Gulliver, *Modern Women in China and Japan*, 32-40.

representations prove to be useful in tracing the modern girl's identity.<sup>9</sup> She supports the idea that feminism in Japan thrived in the 1960s and 1970s thanks to "Fighting Women", who published a journal called "The New Seitō", a name based on Bluestockings group of New Woman in 1910s. "Fighting Women" refer to a group of feminist activists, founded by Raichō Hiratsuka (1886-1971), Mozume Kazuko (1888-1979), Kiuchi Teiko, and Nakano Hatsuko, who published numerous articles on Japanese women's rights in the 1960s and 1970s, whereas the group of New Woman, who inspired them, fought against the Meiji Government's laws that limited women's roles in society and the ideology of "good wife, wise mother" starting from the 1910s. Bluestocking was the group's name as well as the magazine the New Woman published. They chose "Bluestocking" as their name, because it meant a woman with scholarly ability and interest, which has British origins; a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century English practice, in which people gathered to have intellectual discussions. Many of these New Women, such as their leader Raichō Hiratsuka, received good education. Some even went abroad to study. In Mackie's text, the focus is on the New Woman instead of the modern girl, when it comes to early feminist groups' influence on Japan's contemporary feminism. However, both the New Woman and the modern girl were treated in a similar way when it came to including them in politics:

Women could be the sexualised figures of the whore, the café waitress and the modern girl, or the puritanical reformists who challenged masculine sexual behaviour, censured the modern girls or attempted to clean up the political system. They could not, however, enter public space without arousing anxiety about their presence. Neither the Bluestockings, who focused on women's bodily specificity, nor the Christian reformers and suffragists, who emphasised women's essential purity, were able to challenge these dichotomies.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Mackie stresses the fact that regardless of the differences between these two groups, they faced the challenge of being turned into a stereotype through sexualisation by a phallogentric government. Overall, feminist efforts of the 1910s through 1930s are commented on as pacifist.

Another significant study about representations of women in Japanese literature, *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words: Phallic Fantasy and Modernity in Three Japanese Writers* (1999) by Nina Cornyetz, analyses “dangerous woman” trope in modern Japanese literature, focusing on Izumi Kyōka, Enchi Fumiko and Nakagami Kenji’s literary works. The term *dokufu* (poisonous woman) was introduced by Christine Marran, as a label to define violent women, such as the infamous figure of Abe Sada who killed her lover in 1936. This incident is important in that, it expresses people’s interest in violence, especially crimes committed by women. Abe Sada was a prostitute, who cut his lover’s genitals off and ran away. After she was arrested, she was interviewed, which drew the attention of people. She became an influential figure in erotic grotesque culture, an art movement which explores queer identity, sexual liberty, strange fantasies and gory images. Therefore, Abe Sada also inspired authors, who took an interest in this movement. Images of dangerous women were incorporated into literary texts from novels to newspaper articles, as they drew attention of the readers. Cornyetz regards *dokufu* as transgressive women. Representations of these women in literature reveal the anxieties of modernism.

Cornyetz’s approach to the texts draws on psychoanalysis, and exploration of literature in relation to cultural imaginaries is the primary concern of her study. She turns an analytical eye to both female and male authors’ sexist descriptions of women, especially those who do not fit in society, exploring modernization’s

influence on female abjection in early-modern Japanese literature. Cornyetz translated Kyōka's literary texts, which have not been translated to English before. Moreover, she uses Lacan's and Kristeva's theories to provide a fresh approach for looking at Japanese literature. According to her, women are both a construct of male desire and the object of Kyōka's eternal fear in his novels.

These issues manifest themselves through the recurrent elements of *yamamba* (an old witch, or a mountain hag), demons, enchantresses and other mythic figures. She supports the idea that revival of the pre-modern is the result of consumerism and androcentric Meiji State, whereas dangerous woman trope is caused by anxiety stemming from modernism, and not being able to go back to Japan of golden times. Therefore, fiction can be read as a fantasy reflecting reality. In Cornyetz's words:

...literary imaginaries, even when they offer fantasies aberrant to dominant notions of sociocultural norm, cannot transcend their geographical space and time. Literature is a complex site where social epistemologies may confront (repressed/suppressed) fears and desires; fantasy may highlight the fissures in putatively stable sociocultural and political, national and individual structures, institutions, and ideations.<sup>11</sup>

Cornyetz, following this suggestion, reads Izumi Kyōka's novels as a story of erotic realms of pre-imagined modernity, while stressing the importance of desire in literature. Her study is one of the rare studies that take literary texts as a basis for discussing women's representations and what they mean for the Japanese society. However, it does not specifically consider the modern girl figure in texts, and female characters are commented on as figures whose images were distorted by male authors, although some of them succeeded at giving them a relatively positive meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> Cornyetz, *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words*, 11.

## 2.2 *Moga* as a powerful figure

Among the pioneers of the modern girl studies, Miriam Silverberg takes on a different approach while defining the modern girl's identity. She redefines the modern girl as a powerful figure, who is categorized as a working, militant Japanese woman.<sup>12</sup> In her article, she supports the idea that the modern girl figure was feared by the phallogocentric society, because she has an activist side to her. In another book, she explores the relationship between *moga* and the erotic nonsense culture of 1930s.<sup>13</sup> According to her, the modern girl as a café waitress had a political side, because of her social background and her resentment for bourgeoisie and male oppression: "...the café waitress was modern because, unlike either the geisha or the prostitute, she was of the masses and open to the present."<sup>14</sup> Being a *jokyū* (a waitress/a woman who serves) was a difficult job; sexual exploitation was a common experience. Her discussion supports the main concern of this study; that the idealized modern girl is different from the real one that existed in public spaces:

"Modern Girl" was a phantasm projected onto the social landscape by male critics made increasingly anxious by the sociocultural change taking place all around them, change that included the politicization of women. But to deny live embodiment to the Modern Girl is to ignore the actual young women who were modern.<sup>15</sup>

The fantasized image of the modern girl drew people's attention to her physical aspects she symbolized. Therefore, the real life modern girl was judged, according to the way she was represented on platforms which were dominated by men.

Another fresh approach to the case can be seen in Sarah Frederick's study.

Frederick specializes in 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese history and literature. Mass media and

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<sup>12</sup> Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," 263-270

<sup>13</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*, 4-81.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Silverberg, "After the Grand Tour: The Modern Girl, the New Woman, and the Colonial Maiden," 356.

print culture in Japan are central to her study, which delves deeper into Japanese publication by exploring images as well as the textual value of the articles. She introduces and analyzes major women's magazines of 1920s and 1930s by arguing that these publications are central to understanding not only women's literature and culture of the period, but also the overall shape of Japanese literature and Japanese modernity. She states:

Just as certain types of magazine articles (such as “confessions” and “true stories”) and works of serialized fiction came to be closely associated with female audiences, over the course of the 1920s women were increasingly seen as the major audience for cinema, and genre films aimed at them increased in number.<sup>16</sup>

Frederick claims that 1920s' women were active participants in the act of reading. Women did not merely read these articles, but their lives were influenced by them; in such a way that such texts became a part of their experiences and a way to express their womanhood. Therefore, cultural critics of 1920s and 1930s complained that reading magazine narratives of any kind would affect young women in a negative way by dragging them to the wrong path. Thus, turning an analytical eye to women's magazines may help us assess Japanese modernity and women's experiences. Even though most of the other studies focus on media's negative side, Frederick shows otherwise by examining women's popular magazines and how they communicated well with female audiences.

Another study that looks into the relationship between *moga* and media belongs to Barbara Sato. Sato is one of the pioneers in the study of modern girls. Some of her studies show parallels to Sarah Frederick's research in that she also focused on magazines and media to trace changes in women's subjectivity. In *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (2007),

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<sup>16</sup> Frederick, *Turning Pages*, 13.

Sato focuses on mass media creating new images of women and describes *moga* as a representation of alternative possibilities for women. In her own words:

What made the modern girl such a powerful symbol was not that she represented a small percentage of "real women," but that she represented the possibilities for what all women could become. She also symbolized consumption and mass culture, phenomena identified with women after the Great War.<sup>17</sup>

According to Sato, media's effect on *moga*'s depictions was both negative and positive in that she was turned into an icon in ads, whereas various magazines or newspaper articles tend to depict her as an outcast. Her study is one of the most detailed and groundbreaking works written on the subject. Like Miriam Silverberg, she attempts to reveal the aspects of the modern girl which makes her a real-life figure. She refuses the idea that the modern girl was a commodity. In fact, the 'real' modern girl did not buy expensive commodities, she relied on less expensive items. The modern girl described by the media and the real-life modern girls were poles apart. Sato's study reveals that the modern girls were exaggerated in all aspects, such as their sexuality and consumerism.

In short, according to Sato's article, the modern girl stood for the "willful determination" that "posed a challenge to reigning social practices", meaning images of *moga* burst on the scene around the world during the consumerism boom and challenged the myth of a fixed definition of femininity.<sup>18</sup> By focusing on Japanese media's representations, Sato aimed to explore the modern girl's unknown sides. In another article she wrote with Ulrike Wöhr, Sato explores the role of women's magazines starting from late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the formation of women's status and images. According to Wöhr and Sato, modern girls played a positive role, in that

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<sup>17</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Sato, "Contesting Consumerisms in Mass Women's Magazines," 284.

these magazines turned Japanese women into active participants and readers. On the other hand, they also contributed to women's socialization into *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother" or the Meiji Government's idealized Japanese woman). The article also reveals the Japanese academics' approach to women's magazines. For instance, Murakami Nobuhiko (1987), who found the concept of *seikatsushi* (history of everyday life), went against the idea that consumer culture was an "oppressive concomitant of capitalism" which was discussed by Inoue Kiyoshi's *Nihon joseishi* (A History of Japanese Women, 1948).<sup>19</sup> Instead Murakami stressed the importance of exploring women's daily lives, and magazines were a part of them. Moreover, in 1990s researchers of Japanese women's magazines turned their attention to the readers and their experiences as seen in personal advice columns (Saitō, 1996). Studies conducted on magazines, such as *Shufu no tomo* (A Housewife's Companion) by Kimura Ryōko (1992) also took part as Japanese scholars' interest in rereading Japanese women's magazines.

One of the most comprehensive studies of the modern girl discourse, *The Modern Girl Around the World* (2008) by The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, consist of a collection of various papers on the modern girl around the world, such as modern girls in Okinawa, treating the figure as a transnational phenomenon. In general, the modern girl is depicted as an embodiment of the process of modernization, establishing herself in printed media and advertisements. Modern Girls also raised the possibility that she was little more than an image, a hollow product of clever advertising campaigns in commodity culture. The introduction presents questions concerning how the modern girl was global and what made her so. "What made her modern?" is another concern of the book. One of the

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<sup>19</sup> Wöhr and Sato, "Gender and Modernity: Rereading Japanese Women's Magazine," 2-3.

answers is modern girl commodities: cigarettes, toothpaste, high heel shoes, clothes advertised globally-became the expression of modern femininity.<sup>20</sup> Decorated faces and bodies enabled them to cross the domestic threshold into the public sphere.

The book also asks: Why was she called “girl”? The word “girl” signifies the contested status of young women, no longer children, and their unstable and sometimes subversive relationship to social norms relating to heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood.<sup>21</sup> The study draws attention to her potential as a degenerate figure, since *moga* was associated with sexuality; the primary subject of men’s fantasies. The book’s articles focus on modern girls from different cultural backgrounds. One of the articles even draws parallels between the Chinese modern girl and Japanese *moga*. Leftists, nationalist, different stands of feminists criticized her fiercely that share common vocabulary.<sup>22</sup> Reasons for these negative criticisms was the idea that her appearance solicits male attention, her behavior is negative, involving sexual pleasure, and she is a product of colonial culture. The article also points out to the differences between the New Woman and the modern girl. According to the text, New Woman is linked to the positive aspects of modernity in literary texts, she is revolutionary figure. The contrasts between the two point out to “the tensions inherent within the very construction of modernity itself.”<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3 *Moga* in Japan

The issue of *moga* does not seem to be popular among Japanese scholars, yet when the modern girl first emerged there were numerous comments both negative and positive written by critics or feminist figures of 1920s. Kitazawa Chōgo’s “The

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<sup>20</sup> Weinbaum, *The Modern Girl Around the World*, 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Dong, “Who is Afraid of the Modern Girl?” 214.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

Emergence of the Modern Girl- A Letter to My Sister in Japan” (1923) and “Modern Girl” (1924) which dealt with modern girl in England was published in *Josei* (a popular women’s magazine). It supported the idea that *moga*’s emergence was not caused by intellectual awakening, but this situation did not make her less significant. Sato summarizes important intellectuals’ thoughts on the modern girl:

...intellectuals such as Kitazawa Shuichi and Nii Itaru formed constructs that overlapped with their own idealized conceptions of Western women. Marxist Kurahara Korehito and socialist Yamakawa Kikue, on the other hand, related her to the most decadent aspects of capitalism. For Oya Soichi, a Marxist sympathizer in the prewar period, and anarchist Takamura Itsue, the *moga* became a wanton sex object.<sup>24</sup>

This statement clearly shows that the modern girl failed to be regarded as something other than “a sex object” or “a product of capitalism” by her contemporaries.

However, it also shows that any kind of group, regardless of their political thought, had something to say about *moga*, underlining her sexuality.

As for the recent Japanese researches on the issue of *moga*, a notable book titled *Modan gāru*, a collection of Japanese articles was published in 2006, but it has not been translated into English. The book’s focus is novels that take place in modern urban culture. Except for this study, Japanese scholars seem to have not published articles of great number concerning the modern girl. On the other hand, the scholarly interest in Modern Japanese Literature has taken on a new perspective in Japanese Studies, such as Sakaki Atsuko’s essays. According to Kathryn Hemmann, Sakaki’s “(Re)Canonizing Kurahashi Yumiko: Toward Alternative Perspectives for Modern Japanese Literature”:

...tackles the male dominated literary establishment of the immediate postwar decades. By following the public debates between Kurahashi and Etō Jun, Sakaki demonstrates that, in Japan, the category of *joryū bungaku* has been limited by romantic standards of realist literature; namely, male critics

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<sup>24</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Woman*, 57.

defended the position that women should write about their experiences of being women, which are centered around their bodies and their families.<sup>25</sup>

Focusing primarily on Japanese literary criticism, modern Japanese fiction, and gender relations, Sakaki explores the position of women's writing within Japanese literary canon. She examines voices of contemporary women writers tracing themes of subversion and empowerment through depictions of the body. Horiguchi Noriko also studied female body as a way of exploring how the Japanese state system defined and mobilized women's identities. Her study claims that during the 1890s;

...female bodies were assigned various roles, including (1) reproductive, domestic(ated) laboring bodies of wives and mothers at home, (2) productive laboring bodies inside and outside the home, and (3) migrant bodies outside the Japanese homeland. Women were seen as engaging in reproduction and/or economic production, depending on their socioeconomic class and the historically changing demands of both industry and the military.<sup>26</sup>

The author maintains that the Meiji Civil Code (1898) as well as *kokutai* 国体 (national polity) turned women into stereotypes and she supports the idea that only by acknowledging the national in the cross-national bodies can we begin to understand women's stories. Her study established a link between the Japanese Empire and women, which makes an interesting discussion of gender and nation.

Another distinct voice on the representation of the women during the process of modernization in Japan, Suzuki Michiko builds on the existing body of knowledge by examining three women writers, by using the theme of love as a medium to talk about women's lives in 1910s through 1930s. She supports the idea that love marriage as opposed to arranged marriage was associated with the idea of progress. Aiming to demonstrate the significance of assessing the theme of love in literature, she says:

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<sup>25</sup> Hermann, "The Female Gaze in Contemporary Japanese Literature," 17.

<sup>26</sup> Horiguchi, *Women Adrift*, 492-494.

As a figure embodying evolutionary process, the woman mirrors the broader issues of modernity. Her path of development through love resonates with Japan's own trajectory toward an imagined authenticity; she manifests both the progressive linearity of "becoming" and a problematic "overcoming" through the embracing of myth and the fetishization of a transcendent origin. Although it inspired women's sincere desires and hopes for modern transformation, the association of love's "evolution" with female progress was ultimately to facilitate a dangerous self-fashioning for both women and nation during the course of the 1930s and the Pacific War.<sup>27</sup>

Women's identities went under many changes during the prewar period; they were constructed, questioned and rewritten that say many things about the nation itself. Her book aims to understand women's experiences and "how Japanese women imagined their growth and changing identities" by focusing on novels of different genres and the themes of same sex love, modern love, love marriage and maternal love.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.4 Summary

Without a doubt, the recent studies have taken an increasing interest in the issue of the modern girl's identity. Various approaches to the case include universal, sociocultural and visual methods. This research agrees with the studies above in that the modern girl was not a political figure, or she failed at being one. This is not to say that, she is a passive figure that left no trace. She proved an inspirational figure to feminist activities that emerged after her. This study plans to adapt a relatively different approach to the modern girl case by including literary texts while seeking an answer to whether the modern girl was a victimized, her voice unheard by her society and contemporaries or a powerful figure, who helped shape women's place in literature. Turning an analytical eye to the male voice and the female gaze in literary

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<sup>27</sup> Suzuki, *Becoming Modern Woman*, 149.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-15.

texts, the study aims to explore the modern girl's potential as an active figure that was generally ignored in previous studies.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

By adopting feminist approach to literary texts, this thesis aims to explore portrayals of *moga* in the literary works of both male and female authors. One of the purposes of the feminist research is to overcome the invisibility and distortion of female experience.<sup>29</sup> The main question of this study is “In what ways the ‘real’ modern girl, as represented by Uno Chiyo and Tanizaki’s female characters, differ from male-biased representations that turned *moga* into a fantasy object?” This question is significant in not only obtaining a better understanding of the identity of *moga*, but also in assessing tendencies of the modern girl about gender politics and the process of rapid modernization of Japan between the war years.

As seen in the Literature Review, the problem with the issue of the modern girl is that, she has been mostly described as a victimized figure both in some of the past and present studies. Moreover, the modern girl’s descriptions in literary texts have not received much attention. Therefore, whilst looking into the themes of desire, and the beauty patterns of male fantasy in the novels and negative reactions against the infamous figure, and comparing them to Uno Chiyo’s, Kawabata Yasunari’s and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s distinct representations of the modern girl, the project aims to find answers to the following research questions:

- How did the rapid transformation, led by modernism and Westernization affect media’s representations of women in the 1920s and 1930s? How did these representations (re)define women’s identities in literature?

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<sup>29</sup> Lather, “Feminist Perspectives on Empowering Research Methodologies,” 569-581.

- To what extent the modern girl as a character or an author challenged gender roles and explored sexual freedom through literature?
- What are the common patterns of moga's descriptions? In what ways does the female voice differ from the male dominated text or media based representations?
- Did her sexualisation by the male voice/gaze lead to her sexual empowerment or was it a way to control her?

Systematic data research and contextual analysis are the basis of this qualitative study, and the data is interpreted within social context and follows a feminist approach. As for the primary sources, newspaper/magazine articles are accessed via Osaka University's archives, whereas the novels and other literary texts are retrieved from the internet (Kindle) or Bogazici University Library.

The analysis mainly deals with male voices and modern girl types in an overview of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's novels, a close reading of *Naomi* (Chijin no ai) and Kawabata Yasunari's *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan) to explore common patterns in descriptions of *moga*. Tanizaki's *Naomi* is one of the first examples of the modern girl figure in literature and serves the purpose of the dissertation by containing different modes of scopophilia (deriving pleasure from looking at someone) and objectification. On the other hand, Kawabata's novel gives the readers vivid descriptions of city girls. These novels are examples to different approaches to the modern girl, but similar patterns occur, caused by desire towards the modern girl. The texts will be analyzed in align with Martha Nussbaum's list of characteristics of an objectified person and Sandra Lee Bartky's idea of narcissism to make sense of what kind of an objectification takes place in these texts. Nussbaum's theory focuses on the possibility of positive objectification while Bartky points out to

different versions of objectification. Thus, objectification does not necessarily mean victimization of women if we follow their approach. The feminist approach to texts whilst assessing the theme of desire and male gaze provides an understanding of whether the modern girl's descriptions in literature are parallel to society's perception of her.

Uno Chiyo's novels are analyzed in align with to understand whether female representations of the modern girl show similarities to media or other male dominated representations. The way women are represented, particularly by women writers, Rachael Hutchinson argues, is a key concern of the feminist approach to Japanese literature.<sup>30</sup> Uno's novels are significant in getting an understanding of the real-life *moga*. Her voice within the text points out to the idea that the modern girl faced many challenges because of the society's prejudice against her. As this study deals with representation in literature, the analysis of the literary texts will take place through the theoretical framework of objectification, an unbiased feminist approach supporting the idea that women's objectification may work both ways; it may be sexually liberating, but at the same time it could mean women's sexuality being controlled, and female desire is more complex than it is imagined by the male gaze.

Although the study looks into Japanese literature, the framework applied to the novels is that of Western origin. The objectification theory applies to modern girl's case in that, media was on the rise in Japan through 1920s and this study treats print media as a core influencer of distorting the image of the modern girl through objectification. Also, the modern girl played an active role in public spaces unlike

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<sup>30</sup> Hutchinson, *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, 82.

the traditional Japanese wife. Therefore, she was exposed to people looking or gazing at them:

The café waitress, the dance hall girl, the stage actress, the movie actress and the artist's model were gendered occupations in the service industries, involving embodied work which often included an element of sexualisation. These occupations also took women out of the home and into public or semi-public spaces, where they became a spectacle to be looked at.<sup>31</sup>

Getting out of the house meant being directly exposed to people's reactions and gazes. The modern girl was among these women, who were brave enough to take an active role in public spaces. This situation, coming together with her flashy and Western-like looks, made *moga* even more exposed to people's stares.

The theory of objectification creates a space for exploring the rhetoric of objectification in Japanese literature. It also helps assessing the modern girl in a sociocultural context, as reflected by female and male voices of the texts.

Objectification theory supports the fact that women, at some point, start to believe in her image constructed by the male gaze, thus comes close to losing her identity. The following part of the chapter deals with several points discussed by feminist scholars on the subject of women's objectification and why this theory is adopted as the framework of this study.

### 3.1 The discourse on the sexual objectification theory

The act of looking involves relationships of power; it can be difficult, unpleasant and even dangerous.<sup>32</sup> After looking, there comes the act of representing. We construct meaning through language and images. However, these images might not reflect the

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<sup>31</sup> Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Sturken and Catwright, *Practices of Looking*, 9.

reality; “labels and images produce meaning, yet cannot fully invoke the experience of the object” or the person.<sup>33</sup> Images are produced within dynamics of social power and ideology. In align with this notion, the modern girl’s image does not totally reflect who she really was. The voyeur or the male spectatorship constructed a fantasized image of *moga*, which was partially caused by commodity fetishism of consumer’s culture that dominated 1920s’ Japan.

According to its definition, objectification refers to not only treating a human being as an object, but also the reasons behind the limitations that manifest themselves in the complex relationship between the genders and the male gaze. The theory of sexual objectification is said to have been introduced in the 1970s, mainly used in the Western context and attempts to understand psychological cases of women being exposed to objectification. However, women’s exploitation by the male gaze has always been a central problem of feminism. According to Ortiz-Millan, the theory of objectification can be traced back to Immanuel Kant, as many of the core discussions considering objectification build upon his idea of desire. Kant’s idea of desire can be explained through the following statements:

(a) desire for Kant means a natural empirical motive; it is an empirical causal force not only implying determinism, but also essentially outside rational control; (b) desires are subjective and contingent states, they provide an ill basis for moral motivation and for objective and universal moral rules; (c) Kant’s concept of desire is hedonistic: pleasure is “necessarily connected” with desires – these always look for empirical or practical pleasure; as a result of this follows (d) desires are self-interested, and any action motivated by desires will be so.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Sturken and Catwright, *Practices of Looking*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ortiz-Millan, “Kant on the Nature of Desires,” 321.

Kant suggests that sexuality might pose a problem outside the boundaries of morality. It leads to turning of a person into “an object of appetite”:

...as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry...as soon as a person becomes an Object of appetite for another, all motives of moral relationship cease to function, because as an Object of appetite for another a person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by everyone.<sup>35</sup>

Where or how desire is directed at became one of the core discussions of feminist thought and the basis of objectification theory. However, it is equally important to bring it to attention that the question of desire first attracted psychoanalysts. Freud's (1933) discussion of masculinity revolves around the idea that men, as explained by the Oedipus complex, want to find a woman to love as a kind of replacement for their mother, and femininity being based on penis envy.<sup>36</sup> Freud points out to male sexuality's superiority over women's; the former is based on desire, whereas the latter signifies lack. Lacan also wrote about the human subject as being constituted in part through the gaze.<sup>37</sup> The object makes the subject look at itself which leads to subject appear to himself/herself as lacking.

The concept of gaze derived from psychoanalysis plays an important role in understanding objectification and processes that undergird the practices of looking.<sup>38</sup> Feminist discussions of objectification took place as a part of emergence of consumer culture, rereadings of Freud's discussion of women's sexuality and Lacan's concept of gaze. The term “male gaze” was introduced by Laura Mulvey (1975), whose essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” claimed the gaze in cinema is controlled by men and as a result women are turned into objects. Mulvey

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<sup>35</sup> Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 163

<sup>36</sup> Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*.

<sup>37</sup> Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretations*.

<sup>38</sup> Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 120.

used psychoanalytic theory as a way of patriarchal society's construction of film form. Due to the male gaze in films, we are forced to look at women through the lens of masculinity so that men's fear of castration or the fear of the feminine is eliminated. As a result, women are turned into a fetish, a source of satisfaction, rather than a source of fear. Her idea led to discussion of women in advertisements, in which they are sold and bought. "The message though was always the same: buy the product, get the girl; or buy the product to get to be like the girl so that you can get your man" in other words, the message was "Buy the image, 'get' the woman."<sup>39</sup>

According to these suggestions, women, due to being encouraged to buy products that are promoted in a sexualized way, are forced to accept their objectified status. A prominent work of feminist studies Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) deals with the idea of objectification through explaining woman's identity in relation to politics, supporting the fact that women internalize their objectified status. Her account is a feminist approach to Freud's idea of femininity, which discusses the consciousness of self and how it could be interrupted by images of how bodies appear. French feminists like Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva emphasized woman's identity being constructed as Other through language, which is the reason why women are exposed to objectification. This resulted with "undermining woman's position as the Other by establishing her as the subject of her own writing, and for transforming her position in position in culture and politics as well."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, women's representations in media and literature affect the society's perception of

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<sup>39</sup> Wykes, *The Media and Body Image*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Benstock, Ferriss and Woods, *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*, 165.

women as well as how women see themselves. The image of womanhood presented to them become what they are.

The scholars who worked on the theory of objectification pointed out to this fact in their works. According to Luce Irigaray, a prominent figure in discussions of objectification, female sexuality is conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters. Irigaray established the link between commodities and women, that is, man decides the woman's value, pushing her into an abyss of lost identity.

Womanhood is transformed into a commodity through male desire. The female body becomes an exchange value among men, men's desire and needs define the value:

How can this object of transaction claim a right to pleasure without removing her/itself from established commerce? With respect to other merchandise in the marketplace, how could this commodity maintain a relationship other than one of aggressive jealousy? How could material substance enjoy her/itself without provoking the consumer's anxiety over the disappearance of his nurturing ground? How could that exchange-which can in no way be defined in terms "proper" to woman's desire- appear as anything but a pure mirage, mere foolishness, all too readily obscured by a more sensible discourse and by a system of apparently more tangible values?<sup>41</sup>

Irigaray points out to the fact that objectification leads to "feminine masochism", the desire to put a mask on to evoke the desire to exhibit oneself. Examining the modern girl through the lens of objectification leads to the questioning of media's role in evoking consumer's anxiety and manipulating women's identity.

According to Irigaray's statement, losing one's identity and then having it replaced with what is expected of her, the person becomes dependent on a man which is a common pattern in literary texts written about the so called modern women in 1920s and 1930s. For instance, one of this study's primary texts, Uno Chiyo's *The Story of a Single Woman* depicts a woman, who cannot help but put on

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<sup>41</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 32.

various masks in order to cope with society, and fall in love with men, without whom she thinks she cannot go on living. These occurrences lead to her questioning of herself and feeling guilty. On the other hand, Kawabata and Tanizaki's texts objectify women through desire, which leads to the question of "Do they empower the modern girl by emphasizing their sexual power and freedom, or is it a way of constraining her?" Objectification theory provides answers to the question by exploring the complex relationship between gaze objects and gazers.

Among the first scholars of using objectification as the theoretical framework of a research were Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts, who postulated that women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by the male gender and the media. Instrumentality of the body parts become the criteria, based on which a woman's objectification and its extent are defined as described in the following passage from *Theoretical Framework: Objectification Theory*, quoting Bartky:

Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her.<sup>42</sup>

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) used the model of objectification to examine how women are being exposed to masculine gaze and how it affects the mental state of women. They proposed objectification as a "framework for understanding the experimental consequences of being female in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body", supporting the fact that body is constructed from more than just biology and it carries a social meaning.<sup>43</sup> This theoretical framework places the

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<sup>42</sup> Fredrickson and Roberts, "Objectification Theory," 175.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

female body in a sociocultural context, illuminating the lived experiences which are shared by women who encounter sexual objectification.

Former debates of the male gaze in the 1970s was replaced by the scholarship of 1990s. New formulations of power and gaze put an emphasis on how different viewers, regardless of their gender can occupy the male gaze, such as transgressive female looking and lesbian spectatorship.<sup>44</sup> The original concept of the gaze did not account for the pleasures of female viewers or the male figure as the object, but even the later discussion drew on Freud and Lacan's theories.

The framework used in this study mainly draws on the later discussions on female objectification and gaze (Bartky and Nussbaum), which present alternative explanations. In these explanations, different modes of the object and relatively positive aspects of objectification are mentioned. Sandra Lee Bartky's discussion of female narcissism/self-objectification and Nussbaum's take on objectification as a part of one's fantasies are the key sources in this study to demonstrate the modern girl did not belong to the category of an object. In Taishō and early Shōwa era literature, there are examples in which she is simply an object of desire, but Tanizaki's and Uno's female characters prove otherwise.

### 3.2 Bartky's idea of narcissism and objectification

Sandra Lee Bartky (2005) supports the idea that objectification requires two persons (objectification as a double act), but the gazer and the objectified can be the same person, which means that the objectified person takes satisfaction in her physical sense. Bartky's theory is based on phenomenology, meaning one's experiences and

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<sup>44</sup> Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 131.

consciousness should be analyzed to get an understanding of a situation of self in a social ensemble.<sup>45</sup> Aspects of women's subordination that are dismissed as too personal, can be used to make sense of oppression that is surrounding them. Many of Bartky's articles illuminate the nature of sexual objectification, in which female experience plays an important role in showing the social construction of femininity and its oppressive nature. Drawing on Beauvoir, Sartre and especially Marx's theory of alienation, Bartky claims that alienation from one's body occur because of women being exposed to objectification, just as workers are alienated from the products of their labor. While explaining her take-on objectification, she makes use of Kant's theory mentioned formerly, as well as MacKinnon and Dworkin, who underlined negative aspects of objectification. What Bartky does differently is that she points out to the fact that women can be both the objectifier and the objectified. In other words, women may gain pleasure from being watched (scopophilia) and the need arises out of looking pleasing to men.<sup>46</sup> Women living in patriarchal societies are forced to perform "narcissism", in other words they become infatuated with their body.<sup>47</sup> In this study, Bartky's idea of narcissism is applied to Tanizaki's and Uno's female characters to get an understanding of the authentic female experience in a male dominated society.

### 3.3 Nussbaum's idea of positive objectification

Martha Nussbaum, as opposed to former discussions of sexual objectification, tried to find a positive aspect of objectification. Nussbaum is more critical of the negative aspects put forward by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. According to

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<sup>45</sup> Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

her, objectification does not always take place in the sexual realm, it exists in representations and attitudes and intentions of one person to another. She builds on MacKinnon's idea of "women's intimate experience of sexual objectification is definitive of and synonymous with women's lives as gender female."<sup>48</sup> What Nussbaum thinks differently is that objectification may be good or depending on the context.

D.H Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) are among the examples Nussbaum uses to demonstrate the state of being overwhelmed with feelings and desires. In these novels, the protagonists are exposed to exploitation, and consummation by desire works both ways (the objectifier and the objectified switch places constantly). Nussbaum concludes that in all analysis of literary work "we need to distinguish the objectification of one character by another character from the objectification of persons by a text as a whole", establishing different kinds of relationships such as the interaction between the text and the reader and the role objectification plays in them.<sup>49</sup> In some cases, it is difficult to know who objectifies whom, as the lines defining objectification may be ambiguous. Thus, the author creates a list of aspects that point out to objectification. The list consists of:

1. Instrumentality: if a person is treated as an instrument or tool to serve the purpose of the objectifier.
2. Denial of autonomy: if a person is treated as wanting in autonomy and self determination.
3. Violability: if a person is treated as deficient in boundary-integrity.
4. Fungibility: when a person is treated as interchangeable with other things of the same sort or different type.
5. Ownership: if a person is treated as possessed by another person who can buy or sell him/her.
6. Denial of subjectivity: if a person is treated as an object whose feelings and emotions are not worth consideration.
7. Inertness: if a person is treated as deficient in agency and activity.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Nussbaum, "Objectification," 255.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

Some of them, such as instrumentality is not problematic in all contexts as well as absence of autonomy that sometimes has nothing to do with ownership. However, if the autonomy of the person is absent, it leads to inertness, ownership and fungibility, which is a problematic situation. Fungibility refers to women seen as commodities due to their representations in mass media.

Nussbaum's theory draws on Kant's analysis of sexuality:

Sexual desire is a very powerful force that conduces to the thinglike treatment of persons...the treatment of persons not as ends in themselves, but as means or tools for the satisfaction of one's own desires.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, desire dictates how the other person will behave according to the objectifier's fantasies. Moreover, Kant's idea of sexuality consists of both parties wanting to be the objectified and the gazer. One of the primary sources of this study, Tanizaki's *Naomi*, makes a significant example of such a relationship. It is like a game, sometimes the protagonist wants to be overwhelmed by his fantasies directed at the desirable lover. Elaborating on Kant's ideas, Nussbaum adds that "the other body can be violated as long as that secures the agent's own pleasure." This brings us to one of the research questions of this study, considering whether objectification solely degrades women or if done 'properly', empowers her. In align with Nussbaum's theory, fantasies, imagined by both persons involved, may give objectification a positive meaning.

This part of the chapter presented the discourse on the objectification theory and the versions of this theory that will be applied during the analysis of the literary texts. Through objectification theory, the project discusses the differences between the real modern girl and the idealized (or objectified) modern girl, and try to find an answer to whether the modern girl was able to find her own voice in literature and

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<sup>51</sup> Nussbaum, "Objectification," 266.

understand to what extent she challenged media representations and the male gaze. More importantly, it seeks to prove that it is possible to read *moga* in a different way. The study treats some of the representations (newspaper articles as discussed in the next chapter) as “one-way” objectification, meaning the objectified does not take active part in the process of objectification, mostly unaware of the fact. On the other hand, the literary works allow different kinds of objectification, as Nussbaum states, not always negative depending on the context. Whether the female voice in the texts can transform the objectified into a powerful figure is explored through the feminist approach to literature.

#### 3.4 The female gaze and female experience

Examples of female objectification may be challenged through a different kind of reading and turning an analytical eye to autobiographical confessions and women’s writing. “How should we deal with representations of women if no fundamental truth could be accessed under patriarchal misrepresentations of women?” has become one of the fundamental questions of feminist literary criticism, which this study tries to make sense of. An answer to her question might be women’s experiences as voiced in literature and the female gaze.

The feminist literary criticism and theory examine the feminine mode of writing, the relationship between genre and gender, and representations of female experience in texts written by authors regardless of their gender. Established in the early 1960s, feminist criticism’s early voices support the idea that literature is a social construction, and in most novels written by male authors, “women are granted

little individual possibility or potential for resistance.”<sup>52</sup> However, the female voice in novels changed this tradition. The author of *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter claims that English women’s writing can be put into three groups, one of which is called “Female” period (1920 onwards). In this period women authors “reject both imitation and protest- two forms of dependency-and turn instead to female experience as a source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature.”<sup>53</sup> Female experience represented within the text becomes the very basis for women to identify and revise “the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them.”<sup>54</sup>

The discussion concerning Uno Chiyo draws on Rita Felski’s analysis of the relationship between literary and political value, the plot and gender, and the reader and the author. According to Rita Felski, female subjectivity is constructed through self-discovery in novels. In her book, Rita Felski talks about feminist approach to literature as a tool that illuminates important things regarding gender that were there all along.<sup>55</sup> Literature is a way of making sense of the world and it is saturated with social meanings. Through feminist reading, one can find answers to questions, such as “What possibilities of rebellion or refusal are available for women?” and “What stories, what metaphors, what fictional scenarios come into play?”<sup>56</sup> In most of the literary texts, the feminine experience is controlled, whereas the masculine is allowed to give voice to his story. As Felski notes:

...we are accustomed to finding broader resonances in male bodies, to glimpsing the sublime in stories of heroic struggle and drawing existential metaphor out of images of male solitude. We are less used to endowing

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<sup>52</sup> Benstock, Ferriss and Woods, *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*, 155.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Felski, *Literature After Feminism*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

female bodies with this kind of authority and reading female lives as rich in general resonances.<sup>57</sup>

Male heroism overshadows other aspects of women's lives, such as motherhood, love and friendship between women. Therefore, it is significant to read into the female experience to get a fuller understanding of how women faced social challenges during the period they lived in. Moreover, the feminist reader as well as the feminist author challenges the male gaze, the dominant influence in representation of women. "The intellectual woman looks and analyzes, and in usurping the gaze she poses a threat to an entire system of representation."<sup>58</sup> That is to say, reading into the female experience in the novels creates the opportunity of reversing the male version of representing women. On this subject, in *Speculum: De l'autre femme* (1974), Luce Irigaray shows how female subjectivity can overcome objectification and rediscover a place of its own outside the phallogentric presuppositions of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Thus, reading through the lens of gender allows us to assess positive portrayals of women. On the other hand, the female gaze refers to reversing of gender roles and objectification. This issue presents another challenge to the male gaze. In Tanizaki's descriptions of the modern girls, rather than the stereotypical *moga*, one comes across many types of the figure. These types demonstrate female dominance over the masculine. To sum up, female consciousness in a text is a way to explore oneself within the social circle, whereas the female gaze and different modes of objectification function as a resistance against objectification. The modern girl did not only actively take part in café culture and Westernization process in Japan, but also tried to find her voice through literature. Hence, the modern girl's attempt to

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<sup>57</sup> Felski, *Literature After Feminism*, 17.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

write and read becomes a kind of resistance, since the meaning is articulated in each reading experience. Japanese women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s were also a part of such a resistance. In fact, not only modern girls, but also housewives and workers were active participants. Thus, the act of reading and writing may be read as a resistance, and turning an analytical eye to the female gaze allows alternative kinds of reading for exploring the modern girl and seeing her in a different light.

### 3.5 Summary

The study follows models established by names like Bartky, Nussbaum and Felski in its discussion of the different modes and the dynamics of objectification and self-representation in novels and articles revolving around the figure of the modern girl. This study supports the idea that the female gaze adopted by the characters of Tanizaki's novels and Uno Chiyo empowers the modern girl. It aims to achieve a better understanding of the modern girl's identity and gendered subjectivity through examining the themes of desire and male fantasies and different voices depicting women characters in the novels that are selected.

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Equality, independence, respect, and a monogamous relationship are the hall marks of relationships between men and women in a civilized society...Ah, you men of the world, you talk of reform, but not of revolution. When it comes to equality, you yearn for the old ways, and follow, unchanged, the customs of the past.<sup>59</sup>

This chapter will present a general overview of the Japanese women's writing and move on to the emergence of the modern girl and the issue of defining her in relation to Japanese society in the 1920s and 1930s. Presenting a historical background of feminist writing in order will serve the purpose of contextualizing the figure of *moga* within Japanese feminist movements. After providing the reader with historical background, the chapter focuses on how *moga*'s lifestyle was perceived by the Japanese society and what kind of public spaces she became a part of. Her transition from a fashion icon in 1920s to the café waitress or the sexually liberated working woman in 1930s is one of the main concerns of this chapter. In short, this chapter intends to be an introduction to the figure of *moga* both as a historical figure and a character of fiction. It also exists to provide the reader with the explanation of terms and important events that are mentioned recurrently in the thesis.

#### 4.1 Japanese women's writing before the Meiji era

The first literary text that had ever been written by a Japanese woman and recorded in history was Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji Monogatari*, dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which is also considered the world's first novel. She had another contemporary by the name of Sei Shonagon who wrote *Makura no Soshi* (990s). Consisting of 53

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<sup>59</sup> Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, 38.

chapters, Murasaki's text focuses on Japanese court life and revolves around gossips, commentary on ceremonies and royalty. Japan of the 11<sup>th</sup> century favored such female authors, most of whom contributed greatly to literary genres such as autobiography, personal essays and poetry. However, there were many a name forgotten, since they did not gain enough popularity. Despite this fact, it is significant to insert feminist perspectives in Heian literary studies, as they shaped the modern feminine subject. On the other hand, it is equally difficult to come across female authors' achievements whilst looking at post-Heian literature. "The progressive silencing of the woman writer occurred in the postclassical ages" due to social constraints, especially the changes in the court: The court became more ceremonial in Kamakura and Muromachi eras, leading to erosion of women's formal central role in literature.<sup>60</sup> For instance, *kabuki* had no place for women. Even the women characters were played by male actors. Women were officially banned from the stage in the year of 1629, and were not able to act until Meiji years. During the Edo period (1603-1868) Japan's ideology was based on neo-Confucianism, which argued that women should be subservient to men; educational texts for women, such as *Onna Daigaku* (Great Learning for Women) and this kind of attitude also posed difficulties for female writers.<sup>61</sup> In alignment with these facts, it is possible to reach to the conclusion that in Japan, "transgressions of gender laws historically had been more open to men than women."<sup>62</sup> Creating their own voices in literature has always been a challenge to Japanese female authors.

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<sup>60</sup> Vernon, *Daughters of the Moon: Wish, Will, and Social Constraint in Fiction by Modern Japanese Women*, 5-18.

<sup>61</sup> Worsley, *Our History*, 115.

<sup>62</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, 110.

The women writers during the Edo period (1600-1868) are usually underestimated; there were many neo-Confucian texts aimed at women. As Sarah Frederick points out:

Although we might place the beginning of the modern ladies' magazine in the Meiji period, it is not true that Japanese women did not read before the 1880s or had never been targeted as readers. The activity of women writers during the Edo period (1600–1868) is also usually underestimated. There were certainly many neo-Confucian texts aimed at women, and more entertaining books often claimed to address women and children.<sup>63</sup>

The Edo period also witnessed representations of women, and the duality in these portrayals, very similar to the case of *moga* against the idealized Japanese woman. For instance, in Edo texts the “Mother” characters were categorized as either the reified educator or the dangerous woman. Women were either a threat or a maternalized figure. Authors such as Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) used this trope in his novels by using characters of the Edo Period. The mother represents the ages past, whereas “the maternal dimension is split between its ideal as female vocation (modernity) and its naturalized realm of abjection (premodernity), structurally paralleling the psychosexual demarcations between the (gendered) subject and the presubject.”<sup>64</sup>

It is possible to conclude that representations of women in Heian and Edo Literature had an extending influence. They became instruments through which the authors gave voice to their fears even in texts written in Meiji period. Women have been readers, authors and characters. They took part in many instances related to Japanese literature throughout ages.

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<sup>63</sup> Frederick, *Turning Pages*, vii.

<sup>64</sup> Cornyetz, *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words*, 25.

#### 4.1.1 Modernization of Japan and the New Woman

It is evident that Japanese women have always been participants of literature, through reading or writing. However, it was not before the Meiji era (1868-1912) that women revolted against the male-dominated literary traditions and society by using literature as a way of resistance. Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) was among those women who challenged the male author through her writing. In 1880s and 1890s the Japanese were immensely interested in the West, thus thought modernizing the prose style would be better. Higuchi, however, wrote in conservative style and traditional prose forms to emphasize the connections between tradition and women facing social realities.<sup>65</sup> She was regarded as the Meiji period's foremost woman writer. However, she also faced challenges coming from her contemporary feminist thinkers such as Hiratsuka Raichō, the founder of *Seitō*, saying she lacked the power to address social issues. This situation also points out to the fact that female authors of the early Meiji and the late Meiji era differed in their opinions about what to address in their texts and how to write.

Towards the end of the Meiji era a group of women emerged. They called themselves *atarashii onna* (New Woman), challenging the issues that were heatedly debated at the time, such as marriage, love, gender roles and women's autonomy. Meiji Government's desire to improve Japanese society to catch up with the West starting in the 1850s led to controversies between the traditional and the modern. Novelties that came with the West led to discussions concerning the New Woman. Meiji Civil Code (1897) deprived a married woman of her right to act as a head of household in financial and legal transactions and the government stigmatized women

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<sup>65</sup> Vernon, *Daughters of the Moon*, 36.

who raised their voice against the state discourse on women.<sup>66</sup> The Civil Code evidently strived to dominate women socially and politically, discouraging them from public activities. According to Gail Lee Bernstein:

While there has been some interest in the negative aspect of state policy—that is, the exclusion of women from politics—no account of women’s political exclusion to date has analyzed the reasons for this policy. The Japanese feminists who wrote the first histories of their movement believed that their task was not to understand their exclusion from politics, but to change it.<sup>67</sup>

The Japanese state’s policies from 1890 to 1911 played an important role in maintaining such an approach to women’s role in politics. The wife’s role was underlined in these policies as well as women’s contribution to the nation through hard work and house management. Except for some villages, where widowed women were granted permission to serve in her late husband’s place, women’s political participation did not exist.

In sum, the Meiji Government’s “good wife, wise mother” policy fueled women’s movements. Among these feminists who wanted to challenge the government policies, *Seitō* (Bluestockings, 1911-1916) stood out by their choice of brave words and lifestyles:

Members of *Seitō*; Akiko Yosano and Raichō Hiratsuka, focused on the concept of *renai* (romantic love in the Western sense) in their literary texts, through which women gained the chance of transgressing boundaries. They published their manifesto, reinforcing the idea that women are creative and strong. "The *Seitō* Manifesto" celebrates women as the source of radiance and, implicitly, health and strength. It also presents the female body as "the brains and hands" that create an artistic work, rather than as the womb bearing a child for the empire.<sup>68</sup>

Through literature, *Seitō* members did not only challenge the male-dominated literary canon, but also went against the gender roles. They supported the idea that a

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<sup>66</sup> Horiguchi, *Women Adrift*, 667.

<sup>67</sup> Bernstein, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, 151.

<sup>68</sup> Horiguchi, *Women Adrift*, 667.

woman's role was more than giving a birth to a child, a "womb". Their magazine aimed to encourage creative talents of women rather than advocating economic or political liberation of women.<sup>69</sup> Another important figure was Osaki Midori (1896-1971), whose novels were started to be reread by critics in 1990s and compared to contemporary Japanese authors such as Banana Yoshimoto.

In the late 1880s, novels written by women were published and Hani Motoko was the first woman to be employed by a newspaper in 1897, whereas 1890s marked Christian influence on feminist thought.<sup>70</sup> Women were permitted into the literary community, yet there was this perception that their works were merely autobiographical or looked down upon. Moreover, women writers of the Meiji era faced a challenge:

The woman writer was caught in the proverbial double bind. On the one hand, should she write sentimental poems, as the *Shinchō* critics encouraged, she would be politely acknowledged as a pretty addition to the masculine lineup— a splash of red against the gray. But no one would take her seriously. Her literary efforts would amount to no more than what these critics termed "housewife art." On the other hand, if she dared to be experimental, to test her limits, and wring from herself works that mattered most to her, critics—by their own admission—would not bother to read her writing.<sup>71</sup>

*Shinchō* (New Currents), a popular journal thus discussed the place of a woman writer and how she should write. As seen in the passage, the woman author was not given much autonomy, or her texts were simply regarded as too personal and has no more than autobiographical value. Moreover, the male gaze was still dominant in the prewar texts. According to Hutchinson, women's post-World War II, literary resistance was stronger, and names such as Tsushima Yūko created space for writers to address issues concerning women's desire. However, their predecessors prepared

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<sup>69</sup> Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, 164.

<sup>70</sup> Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 27.

<sup>71</sup> Copeland, *Woman Critiqued*, 23.

the basis by using literature as a way of resistance. Most texts of literary value written by women in those times call women to open their eyes, such as Yosano Akiko's poem *The Day When Mountains Move*:

The day when mountains move has come.

Though I say this, nobody believes me.

Mountains sleep only for a little while  
That once have been active in flames.

But even if you forgot it,  
Just believe, people,  
That all those women who have slept  
Now awake and move.<sup>72</sup>

After the silencing of the female author in postclassical ages, she was to wake up in modern times to “become a commoner—a townswoman, sometimes even a street waif or factory worker.”<sup>73</sup> After World War I, suffrage began to achieve its goals around the world; women who entered workforce during the war made the major consumer power and started to be a part of public space, hence the birth of the modern girl, although Japanese women's suffrage movement was to flourish after the 1930s: Japanese women had no voting rights before 1946, but women started to ask for their rights years before. What Yosano Akiko referred to as “waking up” meant realizing women's potential and celebrating their newfound freedom.

The modern girl differs from the New Woman movement in that, she took active part in public spaces that were degraded by the society. As “the bureaucratic state, which made broad claims of authority over morals, discouraged women's public activities”, her emergence in work places also made her a challenging figure.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Yosano, *The Day When Mountains Move*.

<sup>73</sup> Vernon, *Daughters of the Moon*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Bernstein, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, 153.

As seen in the Meiji Civil Code's parts that are directed at women only marks her importance as a dutiful wife. On the other hand, although women were allowed to write, their works were undermined by male authors. Therefore, the female gaze of authors as well as characters and their lifestyles function as important elements to investigate in order to contextualize various cultural manifestations and challenges, changes the modern girl brought with her.

#### 4.1.2 Western New Woman archetypes

As there was increase in translations starting from 1860s, authors of early 20<sup>th</sup> century literature got inspired by the Western techniques of writing as well as certain characters they found interesting. Among these characters were Alexandre Dumas' *Lady of Camélias* (1848) as an epitome of the fallen woman figure and Ibsen's Nora from *A Doll's House* (1879), first translated to Japanese in 1900. Nora meant a symbolic liberation as well as disrupting the dominant mode. In the play, Nora leaves her husband, saying she has been treated as a doll her whole life. She says she needs to get away to understand herself and refers to her marriage as a disillusionment. Mineko in Natsume Sōseki's *Sanshirō* (1908) is based on Nora as well as many infamous female characters in modernist writers's literary texts, such as Tayama Katai's *Futon* (1907).

Starting from the Meiji period, translations and adaptations of the Western texts took place as a part of catching up with the West. There were two types of translations, namely *hon'yaku* 翻訳 (translation) and *hon'an* 翻案 (adaptation) : “*Hon'yaku* sought for efficiency and accuracy in the service of progress and enlightenment, while *hon'an* sought to tame and modify the foreign to fit domestic

sensibilities, usually in the service of art or entertainment.”<sup>75</sup> The latter referred to adaptations that also included using the Western female archetype as a character, who played a central role in the formation of Japanese literary modernity.

Among the list of Western works appearing in Japanese between the years of 1868 and 1888, the following translated novels affected the thoughts of how a modern girl should be, and in some cases, they inspired women:

- 1880: *The Bride of Lammermoor* by Sir Walter Scott,
- 1882 *The History of Lady Roland* by John S. C Abbot (which particularly affected Chinese feminism),
- 1885 *Camille* (la Dame aux Camelias) by Alexandre Dumas (a great influence on Japanese feminism).<sup>76</sup>

Shakespeare’s women characters were also influential in generating an idea of the modern woman as well as a modern nation. *Julius Ceasar* (among Shakespeare’s first translated plays in Japan) referred to by Tanizaki’s protagonist Jōji, spoke well to the readers and the audience, since it was a story of the fall of corrupt governments and liberalism, which showed parallels to what was going on in Japan at the time. *Hamlet* was another play that drew attention, as being torn between duty and human feelings, which Hamlet faces, affected especially the younger poets of the Meiji era. The play was turned into an adaptation titled *Seiyo Kabuki Hamuretto* (*Hamlet: A Western Kabuki*, 1878). The Japanese audience were especially fond of Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*. The play appealed to the audience because of the trial scene; Japanese people were interested in European law during the Meiji era and Portia represented the ideal European woman.

Both fascination and negative criticism arose from this interaction between the Western texts and Japanese readers. For instance, Japanese women were depicted

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<sup>75</sup> Miller, *Adaptations of Western Literature in Meiji Japan*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

as women under the negative influence of Western values in novels like Natsume Sōseki's *Sanshirō*. On the other hand, Tanizaki's character Naomi is desired because the protagonist tries to find similarities between her and the idealized Western woman figure. In the contemporary journals such as *Shinchō*, men's reactions towards female authors were of considerable amount; some commentators went as far to condemn women characters in literary texts.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, in a more sinister form of violence against women, male writers use female characters to symbolize the inhumanity of modern society, as "all forms of love, from maternal to sexual, seem to become grotesque parodies of themselves, emphasizing the lack of connection between human beings."<sup>78</sup>

#### 4.2 Japan's Jazz Age Taishō Era and the birth of *moga*

In the 1890s, Westernization of clothes and prohibition of Japanese clothes took place. *Chonmage* 丁髷 (topknot) changed into the Western style *danpatsu* 断髮 (short cut). Later on, in 1923, due to the Great Kantō Earthquake, changes in Japanese style clothing took place, as many people lost their wardrobes and preferred Western-style clothes for their practicality. Changing times meant changing fashion. One of the main causes of modern girl's emergence was the shift in fashion (See Figure 2). Her short hair and modern clothes was a part of this transformation, if not the very embodiment of this process and all the anxieties that came with modernization.

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<sup>77</sup> Hutchinson, *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*. 82.

<sup>78</sup> Hemmann, "The Female Gaze in Contemporary Japanese Literature," 59.

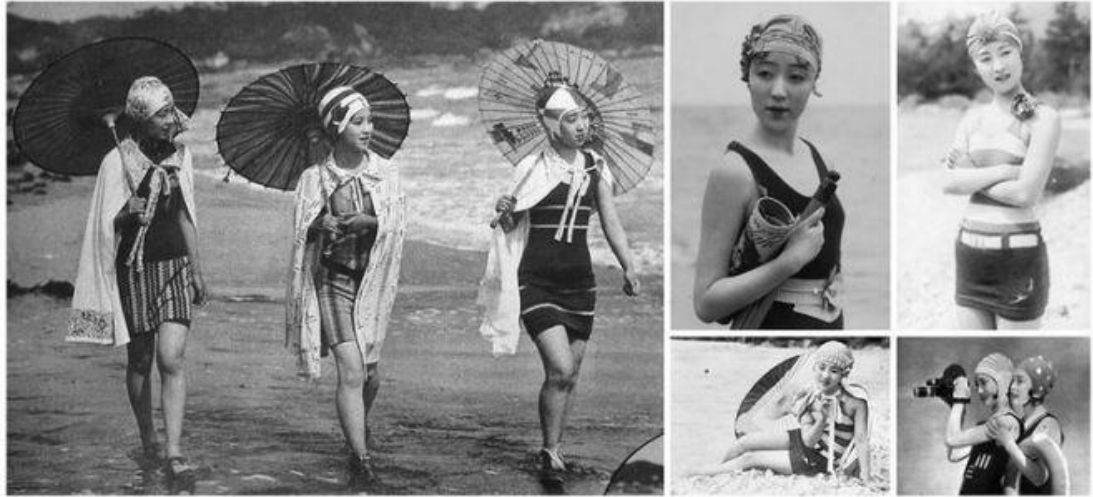


Fig. 2 *Moga* Enjoying the Beach at Kamakura.

Source: *The 'Spill*, 2014

<https://readersrecommend.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/the-japanese-jazz-age-and-the-modern-girl/>

The term *modan gaaru* モダンガール (modern girl) was first mentioned by the writer Kitazawa Shūichi in 1923 whilst referring to the young working women in England, she was not depicted as a negative figure although intellectuals of the time saw the Japanese modern girl as an imitation of Western styles, calling her *taihaitaki* (decadent)<sup>79</sup>. 1920s were the times that the term *modanizumu* (modernism) was rendered into Japanese. It was a mode of artistic expression, a powerful intellectual idea and “source of popular fashion.”<sup>80</sup> It was a powerful ideology that initiated an urban phase. American kind of journalism was also born in these years; the news was reported in a sensational way.

The rise of media marked the birth of modern girl, the source of both her manipulation and promotion. At the beginning of the 1920s the modern girl emerged as a fashion icon, her face appearing on ads, whereas the 1930s were the years of *ero guro nansensu* エログロナンセンス (erotic grotesque nonsense). It is a kind of alternative culture that was represented as decadent and focused on sensual pleasures. It

<sup>79</sup> Sato, “Contesting Consumerisms in Mass Women’s Magazines,” 264

<sup>80</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan*, 19.

appealed greatly to the consumer's culture caused by the rise of media. As a result of this artistic movement's growing popularity, erotic play of the Edo era was reborn, marking cafés as perilous places.<sup>81</sup> Ginza (Downtown Tokyo) was the heart of café culture, and it is possible to conclude that the modern girl as the working café waitress posed as a threat because of her transgressive nature. Among the famous faces of the jazz age, Hiraoka Shizuko became enamored of social dancing during a tour of Europe and America, opening Japan's first commercial dance hall Kagetsuen in March 1920.<sup>82</sup> Osaka became locus of "dance fever" in mid 1920s. During the Interwar period, jazz and dance were practically synonymous.

Hall types consisted of milk halls and Western-style coffee shops and chabuya, which provided phonograph music and attractive waitresses. Specialized "music coffeeshouses," with record collections of musical genres such as European classical, tango, chansons, Japanese pops, and jazz, appeared in the late twenties and early thirties.<sup>83</sup> All these cafes promoted themselves through their record girls, waitresses and record collections. In early 1920s the waitresses started to draw attention as a public image:

As "independent" women, they transcended older values and definitions of female virtue, as well as definitions of women as traditional workers; they became, as Tipton notes, one version of "modern girls." As such they were also models for other young women, not only in fashion but also in behavior.<sup>84</sup>

The cafés were the spaces of pleasure, the stage of performing *ero guro* (erotic grotesque) and the modern girl was a crucial part of this culture. *Ero guro* or *ero guro nansensu* (erotic grotesque nonsense) refers to a literary and artistic movement,

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<sup>81</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 84.

<sup>82</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>84</sup> White, *Coffee Life in Japan*, 51.

which was popular in 1920s and 1930s Japan. The media driven movement's defining moment is said to be Abe Sada murdering her lover in 1936. It was also a form of culture that promoted eroticism, as well as cross-dressing, sexual freedom, queer sexuality and "strange" fantasies, usually including gore. The movement was affected by the social climate of Tokyo between the World Wars. Thus, although the *moga* phenomenon first emerged as a style, she came to be associated with loose morals.<sup>85</sup>

By 1939 dance halls began closing for lack of business, as social censure effectively inhibited customers from patronizing them. With the slogan "luxury is the enemy" on everyone's lips, the entire entertainment industry faced harsh regulation to rid it of frivolity, and "the dance halls were singled out for impending elimination."<sup>86</sup> This might be the very same reason why modern girls "disappeared" from the scene.

#### 4.3 Distinct voices on *moga*

Media mostly manipulated *moga*'s image, as her actions were regarded as inappropriate by the state. Ignoring the real life *moga* also took place in most of the advertisements and newspapers that follow a more biased approach (See Figure 3). One of the newspaper articles explains that these women in the image seem as types that "catch" a man, regards it as a way of city life (See Figure 4). The article also comments on the modern girl's style, make-up, hair with a degrading voice. The second article comments on café and bar culture, modern girl and boy's favorite places to hang around (See Figure 4). The titles are important here; it says that three

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<sup>85</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Woman*, 563.

<sup>86</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, 140.

dancers were arrested, as dance halls were seen as corrupted. In the 1930s most of these places were closed because of all the rumors about waitresses working as prostitutes. Another article from Asahi Shimbun dated September 6, 1927 talks about a *moga* committing suicide with her lover. Articles such as these drew the readers' attention the most. Their interest was fueled by the erotic nonsense culture.



Fig. 3 A newspaper article titled “Evil’s Nest”, illustrated by Igawa Kirishima.  
Source: *Tokyo Shimbun*, 26.06.1925 (Retrieved from [shinsou.minpaku.ac.jp](http://shinsou.minpaku.ac.jp))

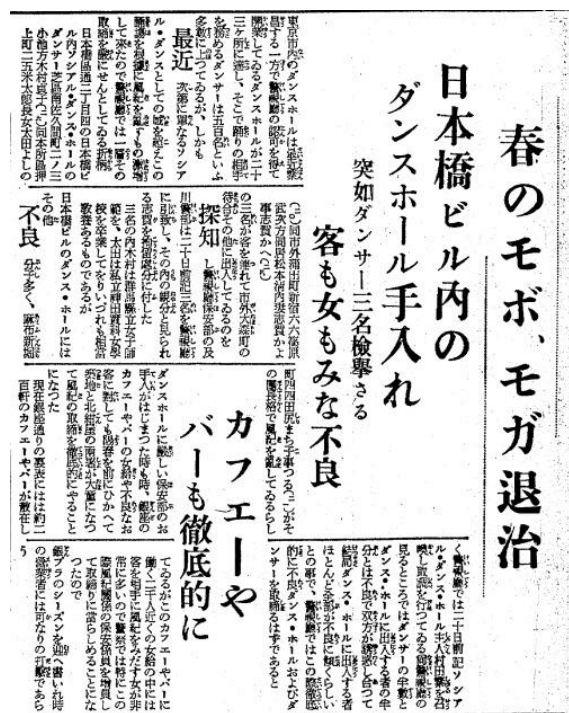


Fig. 4 An article from Asahi Shimbun  
Source: Osaka University Archives, 21.03.1929

Even though these articles made negative comments on the modern girl, there were also magazines that helped show her positive sides to their readers. As *moga* fashion was largely based on Western fashion, which was considered “trendy” by the Japanese youth, women’s magazines published in the 1920s Taishō Era helped promote the positive side of *moga*. Although *Seitō* is known as the first example of major women’s magazine run by women, other magazines such as *Fujin no tomo* were just as influential. Frederick draws attention to another magazine called *Josei*:

*Josei* (Woman, 1922–1928) was a publication that truly celebrated modernism and the image of women in it. The magazine covers featured art nouveau and art deco depictions of women in dramatic poses. Later, it put a greater emphasis on literary works. Some of the best-known authors published here were Tanizaki Jun’ichirō—the latter part of *A Fool’s Love* (*Chijin no ai*, translated as *Naomi*) was published here—Izumi Kyōka, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Nagai Kafū. Later, so-called new sensational writers such as Yokomitsu Riichi published here as well.<sup>87</sup>

Confessions and true stories were the basis of these kind of magazines. As it can be seen from the quotation, important literary texts were serialized in such magazines, and those texts were read mostly and firstly by women. It is also important to mention that these magazines had an activist side. Feminists joined the call for menstruation leave in the late 1930s. In April and May 1937 issues of the women’s magazine *Fujin kōron* contained articles entitled “Let’s Have Menstruation Leave!”

When the modern girl figure first emerged, according to the society’s perception, she was no more than a fashion trend or a Western “wannabe”. Moreover, her various occupations and lifestyles raised more discontent in the Japanese society. The meaning of her actions and desire and her identity was yet to be defined by the literary community. In mid-1920s, *moga* came to be utterly popular

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<sup>87</sup> Frederick, *Turning Pages*, 10.

in modern Japanese fiction as well as *watakushi shishōsetsu* 私小説 (I-novel), which consist of authors' intimate voices and confessions. Initially, the I-novel genre was not perceived well by critics and community alike. Kobayashi Hideo's *Literature of the Lost Home* (1924) illustrates how this genre was exposed to negative commentary including the intellectual groups. He supported the idea that the I-novel was greatly influenced by Western ideas, hence it lacked originality and could not represent the Japanese identity. However, many authors used this style to talk about their hidden desires concerning the modern girl.

Despite facing harsh criticism when it first emerged, it is significant to note that I-novels, along with memoirs of criminals invoked more empathy as opposed to newspaper articles and novels of other genres. The readers of the Taishō era were eager to know about “dangerous” women, mostly through these women's own words. One of the most famous examples is Abe Sada incident (1936), in which she killed her lover. Her popularity lived through 1970s, as there were films made about the incident, such as Tanaka Noboru's *A True Story of Abe Sada* (1975), a signifier of the fact that such figure, whom Marran calls “poisonous woman”; “a distinctly perverse character, curious but undesirable” to Japanese society.<sup>88</sup>

Talking about longings for Japan of old times and the victimization of the traditional Japanese woman are common patterns in Japanese novels during the process of modernization. The male protagonist ends up falling in love or desiring the modern girl or she plays with him, then leaves. In Tayama Katai's *Futon* (1907), the protagonist is forced choose between the traditional Japanese woman (the idealized figure, yet destined to be left behind) and the young schoolgirl, who is

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<sup>88</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman: Figuring Female Transgression in Modern Japanese Culture*, 106.

“free” to do whatever she feels like. Yoshiko, the love interest of the protagonist finds a new lover and leaves Tokio behind. Throughout the novel, we do not get to know Yoshiko’s inner world and emotions; Tokio’s responses to Yoshiko and his obsession with her are the only focus in the novel.

A similar portrayal of the modern girl takes place in Arishima Takeo’s *Aru onna* (A Certain Woman, 1919), in which the sexually liberated divorcée “plays” with men. Another traditional portrayal of the modern girl is that of a *jokyū*. The café waitress appears in Hirotsu Kazuo’s *Café Waitress* (Jokyū, 1932) as a single mother who works at a café to support her baby son. The mother Sayoko lives in Hokkaido, which refutes the claim that modern girl merely lived and thrived in Tokyo. She sacrifices things for the sake of her son, whereas the older sister from the novel *Woman of Tokyo* (Tokyo no onna, 1933) secretly works for her brother’s sake. She becomes a part of Tokyo’s nightlife, which causes so much shame that her brother commits suicide. Takeda Rintaro’s *Ginza Hacchome* also deals with a waitress who lives with a novelist and then abandoned by the man she loves. As seen in these examples, the traditional literary approaches to the modern girl always express pessimism and displeasure arising from her liberal lifestyle.

There were many things said about the modern girl. However, she was mainly described in a stereotypical way, meaning she was not given more than one role. She was a waitress or a schoolgirl, always an instrument of desire. This study analyzed novels distinguish from traditional approaches to the modern girl. Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s modern girls, despite their exaggerated aspects, explore different modes of objectification, allowing female characters to be heroines. Tanizaki’s *Naomi* might be about a waitress, but she is not a typical one. Uno Chiyo’s novels suggest a realistic account of the modern girl and opens a space for re-evaluating gendered

social issues of 1920s and 1930s' Japan. Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan, 1929) draws a realistic portrayal of dance hall culture in Asakusa and Ginza, through following the cross-dressing protagonist Yumiko. The novel also differs from other modern texts in that, it belonged to *Nansensu* literature, depicting modern life through comical characters.

#### 4.4 Summary

This chapter presented a general overview of the Japanese women's writing that pivots on the Meiji era in chronological order. The first part of the chapter dealt with important literary works that were written by women, dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It looked into the reasons why women's literature started off as powerful and then turned "silent." It was seen that representations of women in Heian and Edo literature had an extending influence. Moreover, despite appearing "silent", the Meiji era witnessed an increase in the number of female authors.

The chapter then explored the important literary names and Western archetypes that influenced the New Woman, a group of women emerged in 1910 as a politically active movement. The rest of the chapter focused on important sociocultural incidents, the rise of media and erotic nonsense culture, and their influences on the emergence of *moga*. It attempted to reveal the Japanese society's reactions against *moga*, pointing out to the differences between common descriptions of *moga* and the selected novels of this study that do not portray her as a stereotype.

## CHAPTER 5

### MALE VOICES ON MOGA

Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it's all a male fantasy: that you're strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you're unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur.<sup>89</sup>

Is including women as desired characters in novels a way to control them? This question can be explored in many ways, but here, exploration of this question takes place through the theme of desire and patterns revolving around the modern girl. This chapter looks into the gaze and expressions the prominent authors of modern Japanese literature, namely Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965), used in their definitions of the modern girl. Kawabata and Tanizaki were the creators of “modernist fiction throughout their careers”, who also mastered “native styles and tropes.”<sup>90</sup> However, Kawabata approaches to the modern girl in a more traditional way, whereas Tanizaki explores masochistic desire, which is inflicted upon him by the modern girl. Thus, modern women in his novels perform roles that are powerful and even manipulative. They change the rules of objectification by reversing the roles of the gazer and the object of desire.

The first literary texts to explore belong to Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, which presents a relatively different approach to *moga* in that the reader witnesses various types of women as opposed to stereotypical descriptions of *moga*, such as Tayama

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<sup>89</sup> Atwood, *The Robber Bride*, 470.

<sup>90</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan*, 9.

Katai's character Yoshiko from the novel *Futon* as mentioned in the previous chapter. Before the emergence of *moga*, and even the first examples after her emergence, Japanese women's descriptions were either good or bad. There was nothing in-between. The modern girl posed a threat, and the traditional Japanese woman was the good one, yet she was no longer desired by the husband.

Thus, the first part of the chapter presents an overview of Tanizaki's modern girls. It looks into modes of objectification and types of women in Tanizaki's earlier novels and short stories. The analyzed works are as follows: *The Tattooer* (Shisei, 1910), *Kirin* (1910), *The Reed Cutter* (Ashikari, 1932), *A Portrait of Shunkin* (Shunkinshō, 1933), *A Cat, A Man, and Two Women* (Neko to Shozo to futari no onna, 1936), *Professor Rado* (1928) and *Naomi* (Chijin no ai, 1925) In-depth analysis of Tanizaki's novel *Naomi* provides a significant discussion in that, the modern girl does not have a one side her, she is a complex individual, who challenged male dominance. She has many layers and many faces, which makes itself the most evident in Tanizaki's novels.

On the other hand, the second part of the chapter analyzes Kawabata's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan, 1929), in which women are both the objectified and the ones to objectify. This situation unwraps itself during the act of killing a group of women commit. However, even though the novel seems to challenge the relationship between the objectifier and the objectified, the modern girl is exposed to the male gaze throughout the novel. The chapter makes use of Kawabata's novel as an example of typical representations of the modern girl, which also includes some female characters (most of them are not considered *moga*) as powerful figures.

## 5.1 Tanizaki's modern girls

Tanizaki's contemporaries, such as Kawabata might have attempted to describe their fascination with the modern girl, but his experience is a typical example, one might define it as a usual attraction. However, in many of his novels Tanizaki uses the modern girl as main characters with distinct personalities, and gives her various roles; in his stories and novels she is a powerful woman, sometimes affectionate, but always "dangerous" in means of manipulating the others, and extremely attractive, but not in a traditional way. Perhaps one of the reasons is that Tanizaki came across such women in his life, which inspired his essays and novels. In the year of 1915, Tanizaki married Ishikawa Chiyoko (Chiyo), but five years later had an affair with Chiyo's sister, who also performed as an actress in his film *Amateur Club (Amachua kurabu, 1920)*, whereas Chiyo married his friend Satō. His interest in Seiko, the sister, caused by her "un-Japanese features, un-Japanese gaiety, and un-Japanese waywardness."<sup>91</sup> On this web of relationships, Komori comments:

...in this we see Tanizaki's special way of building relationships... [A]t an extremely unique level he is able to sustain interaction and continue living within relationships that otherwise would be destroyed. At the same time that he yields at one level he possesses at another. I think that *Chijin no ai* is wrapped in layers and layers of these minutely differentiated spheres of relationality.<sup>92</sup>

Desire of different types exists in his novels, fueled by both his personal life and fantasies. Tanizaki infused a good deal of autobiography into his earlier fiction in a subtle way. In another novel called *Kami to hito no aida* (Between humans and gods, 1923-24) the friend murders the husband to be with his wife, a brutal version of his

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<sup>91</sup> Keene, *Five Modern Japanese Novelists*, 8.

<sup>92</sup> Komori, "Tanizaki raisan," 12.

own love triangle. This is to say, women characters are also based on people he knew or observed, the real-life modern girls.

The novels he wrote in 1910s and 1920s focus on the Japanese fascination with the West, whereas the texts he wrote after these years express Tanizaki's interest in Japanese tradition.<sup>93</sup> However, it is not to say that he stopped exploring the depths of desire; even at an old age he published *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (Fūten rōjin nikki, 1961-62), in which he explores love in an old age. Japanese society has clear cut divisions between the public persona and private life, *tatemae* 建前 (outward expressions) and *honne* 本音 (what is actually thought and felt), yet in Tanizaki these terms get tangled with another, due to his intimate writing. Some of his works escaped being censored, but several of his dramas were rejected.<sup>94</sup> According to Donald Keene, who met Tanizaki in person, regards himself as a fearless writer, who wrote about his fantasy world without anything hidden:

Perhaps what distinguished Tanizaki's works most conspicuously from those of other major Japanese novelists of the twentieth century was his absorption with writing itself. His novels are not confessional, nor do they advocate any philosophy, either ethical or political, but they are superbly crafted by a master of style. No one would turn to Tanizaki for wisdom as to how a man should lead his life or for a penetrating analysis of the evils of modern society, but a reader seeking the special pleasure of literature and an echo in even Tanizaki's most bizarre works of eternal human concerns could hardly find a superior writer.<sup>95</sup>

Tanizaki's fame arose from his choice of words, his understanding of aesthetics and giving a honest voice to his desires. Women play an important role in giving voice to his love of Western things as well as obsession with fantasy play:

The recurring motif of a man molding a woman to suit his fantasies is deeply enmeshed in these endeavors, for Tanizaki's heroes remake women to reflect their cultural yearnings. For all their differences, Naomi through whom Jōji

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<sup>93</sup> Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds*, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan*, 399.

<sup>95</sup> Keene, *Five Modern Japanese Novelists*, 21.

endeavors to possess Mary Pickford, and O-hisa, the doll-like traditional woman of Tade kuu mushi, are alike in being the transformed objects of male desire.<sup>96</sup>

Ito highlights an essential fact in his suggestion, yet Tanizaki's women cannot be categorized as a stereotype, and take part in instances, in which she manipulates her partner as much as she is objectified. In other words, there are numerous hierarchies present in the protagonists' relationships with female characters. In Tanizaki's literary texts, the modern girl manifests herself in many shapes and femininities. In his works, we see the modern girl in the roles of:

1. Mother/Savior
2. Queen/Empress
3. Sadist
4. Vixen/Temptress: Often a teenage beauty that the reader comes across frequently as in *The Tattooer* (*Shisei*, 1910).
5. Housewife
6. Working woman: Among the common professions of these women are the prostitute, café waitress, maid etc.
7. Lesbian lover: The modern girl is often described as an androgynous or a sexually ambiguous character, who also engages in homosexual love. (i. e Mitsuko from *Quicksand*)
8. Narcissist: Tanizaki's female characters often find themselves in a situation that allows them to manipulate their lovers who objectify them. They internalize this objectification (narcissistic behavior) and then use it to their own advantage. (i.e Shunkin)
9. The Westernized beauty

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<sup>96</sup> Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds*, 3.

What these women have in common is that they participate in public spaces and have modern relationships; even the housewife transgresses boundaries by engaging in extramarital relationships. Tanizaki's female characters are given more than one role, unlike novels written in Meiji period or before, which depict women as either good (the ideal wife) or bad (the temptress). First of all, the maternal figure plays an important role in Tanizaki's texts as the source of an antagonizing dilemma: The protagonist wants to love her, but at the same time he fears her:

Tanizaki's fantasies of maternal regression typically erase the maternal line, melting mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers into the same "eternal woman" whom the boy protagonist is encouraged, often by his father, both to worship and to fear.<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, the mother symbolizes the ultimate feminine and an object of desire. However, she has more sides to her, as seen in the case of Queen Nanshi from the story *Kirin* (1910). The story revolves around a Chinese Emperor and his cruel and clever Queen. In the story Nanshi controls her lover, it is as if she yields all the power. She is a combination of an evil temptress, a narcissist as well as a motherly figure. She is described as a manipulative person from the beginning of the story, trying to defeat Confucius' wisdom and reason with her beauty and earthly desires. Confucius' reactions towards her echo the Japanese society's fear and desire directed at the modern girl. The Chinese Empress first presents Confucius her beauty, then moves onto showing him expensive commodities, what she believes will change him or his perceptions regarding the world, so that her husband will stop listening to Confucius and continue to do what his wife tells him to do. When the modern girl first emerged, she was recurrently associated with capitalist values and threats to tradition. She was a temptation that invited people to become a part of a more liberal

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<sup>97</sup> Long, *This Perversion Called Love: Reading Tanizaki, Feminist Theory, and Freud*, 70.

new Japan. The Empress' encounter with Confucius is Tanizaki's way of portraying this situation. In this portrayal, Nanshi is the powerful one; she has a say in everything and she is highly aware of her powers, namely, her beauty and use of words.

Another cruel temptress appears in one of Tanizaki's earliest stories *The Tattooer* (*Shisei*, 1910), in which Seikichi, the tattooer, is attracted to a girl due to his foot fetishism. He stalks her and when she enters his store, Seikichi drugs her and then paint a huge spider on her back. She is afraid at first, but discovers her powerful side after this encounter. The girl enslaves Seikichi, despite the fact that he regards her as an object of desire first. The story includes all levels of objectification: The protagonist first dreams of finding the most beautiful woman of the world:

Such a woman had to meet various qualifications of character as well as appearance. A lovely face and a fine body were not enough to satisfy him. Though he inspected all the reigning beauties of the Edo gay quarters he found none who met his exacting demands. Several years had passed without success, and yet the face and figure of the perfect woman continued to obsess his thoughts.<sup>98</sup>

Although the passage shows most of his obsessive thoughts dwell on voyeurism, he gives importance to personality. The imagined woman is to endure pain and be full of herself. After waiting five years he sees her, objectifies her by drugging her and performing his art on her, turning her into a piece of art. However, the level of objectification does not heighten in the end, he simply lets go of her so that she can enslave more men. Different modes of objectification are at play here as in Tanizaki's other novels. The Lacanian idea of desire is played with; normally the subject desires the object in order to complete their identity through the other, but the object is unreachable. As opposed to this, Seikichi gets his hands on the person of his

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<sup>98</sup> Tanizaki, *The Tattooer*, 2.

obsession and pours his soul into the art piece on her body. Seikichi's obsession is based on aesthetics. Rather than degrading the lover, he deifies her.

According to Sandra Lee Bartky, objectification takes place when there is lack of consent and a body part takes the part of the person's whole identity.<sup>99</sup> This situation serves the purpose of maintaining male dominance, but can be also seen as a part of healthy eroticism. When read accordingly to this idea, Seikichi's treatment of the female character distorts the image of woman in question both literally and figuratively. He paints a spider on her body without consent, which will stay with her for the rest of her life. He also obsesses over her "white feet" which fits Bartky's description of objectification. On the other hand, he brings out the hidden desires that slept within the woman before her encounter with Seikichi. When Seikichi shows her the painting of a Chinese princess, gazing at a man who is about to be tortured, the girl's face changes and starts to resemble the cruel princess' face. The text reads "In the picture she discovered her secret self" and in another picture, she finds "something long hidden in the darkness of her own heart."<sup>100</sup> Seikichi thus forces her to discover her sadistic side, through the act of looking, the gaze does not belong to masculine gazer anymore. She loses her timid personality, having it replaced with a new one. Seikichi becomes her first victim.

Oyū, the manipulative widow, from *The Reed Cutter* (Ashikari, 1995) is another beautiful but cruel woman whom the narrator worships. The novella takes place in early Meiji period, revolving around Oyū, a widowed woman. Despite her manipulative side, Oyū is described as an embodiment of the ideal lover and mother, who also inspired Tanizaki's other characters. She is portrayed as a childlike woman,

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<sup>99</sup> Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 26-27.

<sup>100</sup> Tanizaki, *The Tattooer*, 2.

who is fond of devotion of those around her.<sup>101</sup> She can be read as a subject of her own desire. She controls her lover and transforms their relationship into a game or a performance:

...the text calls “one of Oyū-san’s fun ways to play [*Oyū-san ni wa tanoshii asobi no hitotsu*]”... With this line it would seem that Oyū’s performance has succeeded in transforming her from an object of play into a subject of play.<sup>102</sup>

“One of Oyū-san’s fun ways to play” refers to her commands to her love interest, such as “Stop breathing” as a way of punishment. The name Oyū is also written with the kanji for the word “play”. Sexual obsession manifests itself through theatricality. The word “play” is used recurrently throughout the novella, such as, “Play one’s part” and “play pranks”. Apart from her sadistic behavior towards the lover, Oyū engages in erotic exchanges with her sister, while neglecting her son. This situation reinforces Nussbaum’s idea of positive objectification, that is, as long as there is consent, the sexual play does not point out to objectification.<sup>103</sup> However, in heterosexual relationships a negative kind of objectification is at play: The lines “You mustn’t go to sleep, she’d say, even if I do. If you get sleepy, fight it off and stare at my face as I sleep” and “...since Miss Oyū tended to assume the role of mistress, Father would pretend to be her butler or steward or pose as an artist under her patronage”<sup>104</sup> demonstrate their relationship is based on roles and Oyū using her lover as she likes.

Another character the modern girl manifests herself is Shunkin (from the novel *Shunkinshō* or *A Portrait of Shunkin*, 1933) the blind beauty, with remarks of arrogance and vanity. She loses her sight before the arrival of Commodore Perry (1853), which marks the beginning of Meiji restorations. According to Anthony

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<sup>101</sup> Chambers, *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki’s Fiction*, 39.

<sup>102</sup> Long, *This Perversion Called Love: Reading Tanizaki, Feminist Theory, and Freud*, 143.

<sup>103</sup> Nussbaum, “Objectification.”

<sup>104</sup> Tanizaki, *A Portrait of Shunkin*, 46-47.

Hood Chambers, the author of *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki's Fiction*, Shunkin was based on Barbara, a character belonging to Tanizaki's translation of Thomas Hardy's tale "Barbara, of the House of Grebe."<sup>105</sup> In the story, Barbara elopes with Willowes, but he is half blinded and disfigured due to a fire. Barbara is haunted by Willowes' former beauty, looking obsessively at a statue that resembles Willowes.

In *A Portrait of Shunkin*, Shunkin is the deformed one. Shunkin's deformation and blindness does not make her scary, but interestingly beautiful in the eyes of her lover. This situation can be explained through the examination of the male gaze within the text. According to Mulvey, women are turned into a fetish, because the masculine gazer wants to avoid the fear of castration (in this case, Shunkin's blindness).<sup>106</sup> Shunkin is empowered through her narcissism, whereas her lover Sasuke becomes the fetishist. The modern girl might be objectified, but it does not happen in a usual way. According to Catharine MacKinnon, "Admiration of natural physical beauty becomes objectification. Harmlessness becomes harm."<sup>107</sup> MacKinnon (1987) points out to women's lives being negatively affected by exposition to objectification. However, Shunkin is deformed with her former beauty hardly remaining and her beauty is created through imagination of her lover. Furthermore, it is her, who in a way causes harm. First of all, she takes pleasure in tormenting Sasuke, someone who is utterly devoted to her. Sasuke accompanies her to an extent of losing his own identity; he becomes her pupil, lover and life partner. After Shunkin gets deformed due to boiling water, Sasuke blinds himself with a needle, because he is afraid of accidentally seeing her face. In another rereading of

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<sup>105</sup> Chambers, *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki's Fiction*, 51.

<sup>106</sup> Long, *This Perversion Called Love: Reading Tanizaki, Feminist Theory, and Freud*, 109.

<sup>107</sup> MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, 174.

Shunkin's story, Sasuke might be the culprit that committed the crimes that led to Shunkin's tragedy. Even if this is the case, Shunkin is not the only one who gets hurt through the act of looking and she takes pleasure in Sasuke's injury. She shows him affection when he tells her he is blind. This situation can also be explained as a story of putting an end of the male gaze. Both gazes are destroyed as a result of objectifying one another. Shunkin dies of a heart attack, whereas Sasuke lives alone and creates "a Shunkin quite remote from the actual woman, yet more and more vivid in his mind."<sup>108</sup> Even though his self-immolation is praised by the priest Gazan of the Tenryu Temple for "the Zen spirit which he changed his whole life in an instant, turning the ugly into the beautiful, and said it was nearly the act of a saint", but the novella ends with the line "I wonder how many of us would agree with him."<sup>109</sup> The ending words suggest the speaker's critical approach to Sasuke's "sacrifice", since Sasuke's the main reason of blinding himself is to avoid seeing Shunkin's disfiguration, and live with the image of Shunkin in his mind.

Tanizaki's novel *Quicksand* (Manji, 1928-30) is another example of complex relationships, various gazers and fantasies performed as games. The novel takes place in 1927. The plot revolves around the relationship between four characters. The housewife Kakiuchi Sonoko takes art classes, where she meets an art student by the name of Mitsuko and falls in love with her. They have an affair, which evolves into a complex relationship. The Kakiuchi's husband and Mitsuko's lover also get involved with their relationship. Towards the end, it is revealed that Mitsuko also had an affair with Kakiuchi's husband. They decide to commit suicide together, but the husband and Mitsuko die, whereas Kakiuchi is saved.

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<sup>108</sup> Chambers, *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki's Fiction*, 84.

<sup>109</sup> Tanizaki, *A Portrait of Shunkin*, 84.

What distinguishes this novel from Tanizaki's other novels is that, in *Quicksand*, Tanizaki "abandoned Westernism once and for all."<sup>110</sup> In any case, *Quicksand* is a significant work to get a better understanding of Tanizaki's way of depicting modern girls and modern lifestyles. Moreover, the narrator of the text is Sonoko, the housewife, which makes it different from most of Tanizaki's novels. As the readers we get to emphasize with Sonoko and listen to her desires. She is the voyeur, reversing the male gaze. At the beginning of the novel, we witness her voyeurism during the art classes. Students are asked to draw a model, but Mrs. Kakuichi, despite looking at the naked model, thinks of someone else:

It seems that quite unconsciously, as I was looking at Miss Y there before me, I'd had another distinct image in my mind's eye. That image was reflected in the drawing—my brush seemed to be sketching it all by itself, without any intention on my part.

I'm sure you know who I mean. My model—it's all been in the newspapers anyway—was Miss Tokumitsu Mitsuko.<sup>111</sup>

This is the first time the love interest is mentioned, and the readers get to know her through the eyes of Kakuichi. In another instance, she looks at Mitsuko's body and calls it "a treasure."<sup>112</sup> She is so affected by her beauty that her eyes are filled with tears. She is a woman, objectifying another woman, without doing her harm at first. However, the level of her obsession with Mitsuko's body and its beauty gradually rises to an extreme level. When Mitsuko wants to get dressed, Kakuichi goes crazy, yelling "No, no you mustn't" and starts threatening her.<sup>113</sup> She glimpses at her white shoulders with the desire to rip it off violently. In the end Mitsuko surrenders:

She said nothing and let me do as I pleased. We stared unwaveringly into each other's eyes with an almost hateful intensity. Then a smile at having finally had my way—a cool, malicious smile of triumph—came to my lips as I peeled off the remnants of the sheet. At last the sculptural form of a divine maiden was fully revealed, and my exultation changed to astonishment.

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<sup>110</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan*, 9.

<sup>111</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 23.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

“Ah, how maddening!” I cried, tears flowing down my cheeks. “Such a beautiful body! I could kill you!”<sup>114</sup>

Death and the act of killing becomes a common subject of their dialogues. They swallow pills together to fake their suicide, they do not take a fatal dose, but enough to deceive the husband into thinking they cannot live without one another. Moreover, towards the end of the novel, Mitsuko wants both Kakiuchi and her husband to swallow the pills she gives them. Both of them are suspicious whether the pills are poisonous. The concept of dying together manifests itself as the highest level of obsession, and Mitsuko’s manipulation puts them in danger. She even cries when the couple stress over what to do:

In the end, both my husband and I were like empty husks—she wanted us to seek no other happiness, to live only for the light of our sun, Mitsuko, with no further desires or interests in the world. If we objected to the medicine, she would burst into angry tears.<sup>115</sup>

Even though Mitsuko might seem as the objectified person, she takes advantage of the way Kakiuchi worships her. In fact; “She felt somehow deprived unless she was being worshipped. She seemed convinced that it diminished her value to yield to anyone.”<sup>116</sup> In the end, Mitsuko convinces the couple to take their lives with her. Only Kakiuchi survives, saying she thought she would have been deceived by them even in death. Mitsuko and the husband end their lives in bed over which Kakiuchi’s portrait of Kannon watches over them. The novel starts Kakiuchi drawing Kannon, which is inspired by Mitsuko. The ending scene thus signifies Kakiuchi as the gazer is victimized by the object of desire.

Written in a confessional style, Kakuichi’s account is profoundly intimate. Moreover, some of her thoughts belittle the men around her, such as her dismissal of

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<sup>114</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 55.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

the director, whom she calls “a shrewd businessman.”<sup>117</sup> “The fact is, that husband of mine just lets me do as I please; he never complains. He’s so good-natured he’s boring...” she says, describing the passive husband.<sup>118</sup> She talks about her past affair. Again, the gender roles are reversed. The narrator also gives voice to Tanizaki’s idea of aesthetics through Kakuichi. She talks of ideal beauty, not belonging to a special person, but as a pure feeling. Thus, her attitude towards Mitsuko is both negative and positive objectification.

The lesbian lover Mitsuko is seemingly the object of desire, but she also objectifies other characters including the protagonist. First drawing the attention of the wife, next she moves on to her husband. Again, Tanizaki presents a web of complex relationships. Through objectification, the subjects rather than the object of desire suffer. Their identities also get mixed with one another. Kakuichi comments on her husband’s behavior as bearing similarities to Watanuki, Mitsuko’s manipulative lover. In the novel hierarchies in these relationships never stay the same. The characters start off by one dominating the other, they play the passive role and the active role, but in the next chapter we see the reversal of roles and the shift in the dynamics of power. After Kakuichi and Mitsuko become lovers, they deceive the husband. Then Mitsuko finds a male lover and the plot thickens. In the first half of the novel Kakuichi is the manipulator, but then Mitsuko manipulates her through acting as if she is going to die. In another example, Kakuichi tries to make sense of her relation to Mitsuko and her lover by saying “Only yesterday I’d been convinced they were using me as their plaything, and now, suddenly, everything had

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<sup>117</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

changed.”<sup>119</sup> Throughout the novel, it is difficult to point at who objectifies whom or who is in charge, as it is in constant change.

At first the relationship between Kakuichi and Mitsuko is based on rumors. The director spreads rumors, trying to victimize Mitsuko. Both women challenge this situation by meeting outside school, saying they are not afraid of what people say. They start playing friends, which receives various reactions from other characters. “There’s nothing wrong with being good friends, but aren’t they accusing you of something improper?” Mitsuko’s mother asks.<sup>120</sup> Tanizaki, by creating such a situation highlights the Japanese society’s reaction to homosexual relationships. According to Suzuki Michiko, lesbian relationships in Japan were seen either as a part of sexual deviancy or a part of romantic friendship that does not last for a long time:

The meanings and nuances associated with these and other terms shifted during the period, but broadly speaking, same-sex love was construed through what might be called a dualistic continuum: on the one hand, there was the adolescent romantic friendship, pure and platonic; on the other, there was the sexual deviancy practiced by degenerates and so-called “inverts” (*seiteki tentōsha*), born with an “inverted” masculine nature, whose desire was for members of the same sex.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, Tanizaki’s description of the same sex love goes beyond being a stereotypical one. Mitsuko is not of masculine nature, nor is her relationship with Kakuichi is purely romantic. Kakuichi admits that her desire for Mitsuko a hundred times stronger than what she used to feel for her former affair. It is as if they mock or make use of the schoolgirl romanticism. When her husband asks Kakuichi why she calls Mitsuko “sister”, she says:

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<sup>119</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 169.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>121</sup> Suzuki, *Becoming Modern Women*, 24.

You haven't the faintest idea of schoolgirl talk, have you? Girls often think of each other as older sister and younger sister, if they're good friend. You're the only one who finds it strange!<sup>122</sup>

They take advantage of the romantic, friendly version of the same sex love to see one another and explore their sexualities. In addition to posing a threat to male authority, the two women discuss the difference between love and marriage, their ideas are too progressive for the times they live in. Marriage is compared to “a bird in a gilded cage.”<sup>123</sup> “I don't consider myself married to that man. I'm still my own woman,” Kakuichi dictates, seeing marriage as something disposable.<sup>124</sup> Through her relationship with Mitsuko, Kakuichi is liberated, and she asks for more freedom as their relationship deepens. When Kakuichi spends time with Mitsuko, she is reminded of her affair. Looking at her husband, she says:

He seemed so cheerless that I was a little sorry for him. Although I hadn't done anything wrong, I felt a twinge of guilt when I saw that he had just finished dinner, after waiting such a long time for me. Of course when I was meeting my lover, I often used to come home after ten o'clock. But that was all in the past. So maybe he was a bit suspicious. Somehow I myself felt just the way I did in those days.<sup>125</sup>

Kakuichi thus challenges the housewife type in Meiji era novels. Instead of being a victim, she victimizes the husband and feels pity towards him. When things do not go well between the two women, Kakuichi swears she will not be subject to “wicked fantasies” and promises to become a proper housewife, which consists of shutting oneself up at home “like a person dead to the world” as Kakuichi puts it, throwing oneself into housework, washing and cooking.<sup>126</sup> If the novel ended here, it would make an example of a Meiji ideology of “good wife”, present in many novels written

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<sup>122</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 77.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

at that time. However, Kakiuchi refuses to ignore her desires, taking an active role in public space.

What makes these women modern, aside from all the attributes and challenges they bring? Mitsuko is a *moga*, in that she is frequently associated with Western culture, such as her interest in oil painting in Western style, comes to class in Western clothes, and uses French words in her letters to Kakuichi.

The housewife figure is also depicted in a non-traditional way, that is, as the author puts it:

The widow Kakiuchi seemed unaffected by her recent ordeal. Her dress and manner were bright, even showy, just as they had been a year before. Rather than a widow, Mrs. Kakiuchi looked like the typical young married Osaka woman of good family, and she spoke in the mellifluous feminine dialect of her class and region. She was certainly no great beauty, but as she said the name "Tokumitsu Mitsuko," her face became suffused with a curious radiance.<sup>127</sup>

The way she dresses becomes a reflection of her personality, but the author's note does not make a negative comment. Flashy dresses were another signifier of modern girls. They were known for their colorful Western style dresses. Kakuichi becomes one of them through her fashion sense as well as her lifestyle. She is also knowledgeable about things that were not discussed or not allowed to be discussed by women, such as birth control. When she lends an American book on birth control to Mitsuko, it causes an uproar. She is a woman who both challenges the idea of marriage and the stereotypical representation of the modern housewife.

Another atypical housewife figure can be found in Tanizaki's *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women* (Neko to Shozo to futari no onna, 1935-36). The novel revolves around Shozo's obsession with his cat Lily and his relationships with his ex-wife Shinako and recent wife Fukuko. The pattern of the relationship is not a traditional

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<sup>127</sup> Tanizaki, *Quicksand*, 22.

one. Generally, in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese texts, the abandoned wife is portrayed as a victim, since she cannot keep up with the modern times. The husband finds the modern girl more attractive in such novels. However, in his text, Tanizaki describes the ex-wife as a powerful woman, and the relationship between Shinako and Fukuko is far from being hostile despite the circumstances. Instead, Shinako's disappointment is caused by her own marriage to Shozo. Tanizaki makes the readers emphasize with Shinako through explaining what is going on in her mind rather than focusing on Shozo:

But if she felt so strongly, why couldn't she have done something about it at the time? ... People said she should be a good match for her mother-in-law when it came to plotting and planning: why then, did she just furl her flag and quietly leave without a struggle? It wasn't at all like her usual, stubborn self.<sup>128</sup>

Shinako questions herself, but this passage also reveals her manipulative side, a common trait in Tanizaki's female characters. What is more interesting is that although we are not given a detailed account how Shinako's personal history, we come across Shinako's descriptions as a maid, "former juvenile delinquent", a working woman, who "for the past one or two years provided more than half the income for the family."<sup>129</sup> The modern woman becomes what she wants, even if means transgressing social boundaries, unlike the former figure of the victimized ex-wife.

While Shinako and other women characters are represented as a strong, down-to-earth person, it is the protagonist who is described as weak and child-like. The third woman character to appear in this novel, namely Shozo's mother, is said to be doing a lot better than his son: "...it was she who was pulling the strings when

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<sup>128</sup> Tanizaki, *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women*, 64.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

Shinako was driven from the house” the text reads, pointing out to the fact that she is a controlling figure, who helps and controls her son.<sup>130</sup> When Shinako looks at him, she feels sorry for him. He is deprived of his male gaze; his obsession is directed at his cat Lily, instead of the women in his life. Shozo is always in a child-like state, always in need of a woman to be there for him. Tanizaki challenges Japanese gender roles and power dynamics through his choice of words: “spoiled child”, “feckless”, “childlike”, “lazy”, “good for nothing” and “weak-willed” are recurrently used throughout the novel whilst describing Shozo. His neediness echoes Yūtarō’s (another male character from Tanizaki’s literary work *The Sacred Woman*) words: “As long as there are women someone will take me in” and his “feminine” (*onnarashii*) qualities.<sup>131</sup> One usually comes across men in need for a motherly figure, or someone to take care of him, which does not fit in with the earlier discussions of objectification. The loss of autonomy is not caused by the male gaze in this instance.

Another common figure in Tanizaki’s novels, the Westernized beauty, comes close to typical representations of *moga*, but again she goes beyond being a commodity by enslaving men. In other novels (i.e. Tayama Katai’s *Futon*) with examples of the educated woman dressed in Western style, the female character merely remains as a mistress, despite the protagonist’s desire to divorce his wife and marry the modern girl. The mistress only causes suffering because of the impossibility of being together. However, Tanizaki does not dwell on the impossibility of a love triangle, or even more complex relationships. *Moga* becomes a part of the protagonist’s life as an exciting dominatrix to inflict pain in a mainly

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<sup>130</sup> Tanizaki, *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women*, 24.

<sup>131</sup> Frederick, *Turning Pages*, 72.

sexual way. Another pattern in Tanizaki's novels is that jealousy generally ends with violence, and it is mainly women who take action caused by jealousy. The level of this violence range from mild, such as Fukuko scratching her husband since she is jealous of a cat, to Oyū covering the protagonist's mouth and nose, forbidding him to breathe as long as she likes.

Tanizaki might be using the male gaze while describing his fantasies about women, yet women are not exposed to one-way objectification. Fetishism is not restricted to men alone. They also involve turning the masculine into an object or a slave. Women are gazers as well. This situation validates the late discussions about objectification and gaze:

Men can be looked on with pleasure and desire by men or women. Although pleasure in looking may be strongly tied to one's sexuality, we may take pleasure in ways that do not strictly conform to the codes of our respective sexual identities. Pleasure and identification are not dictated by one's biological sex, or even by one's sexuality.<sup>132</sup>

As seen in these examples, regardless of their sexual orientation, figures of *moga* in Tanizaki's novels are portrayed as the masters, turning men into slaves, whereas the male characters are mostly fond of this situation. This is not to say Tanizaki does not completely objectify women, but he presents other types of objectification, in which women are in control most of the time. By doing so he draws attention to complexity of the modern girl figure. In another example of this situation, Tanizaki's *Professor Rado* (1928) points out to the way the protagonist's masochism is fed by their partners' sadism. The arrogant academic is punished by his doll-like mistress, and this situation gives Rado pleasure:

Soon the girl, still sitting on top of him, picked up little rattan cane and sent several strokes swishing through the air onto his fat buttocks, while firmly gripping by the hair with her other hand. It was then, for the first time, that a

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<sup>132</sup> Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 130.

somewhat livelier look came into the professor's eyes, and he let out a kind of moan.<sup>133</sup>

The details Tanizaki gives to the reader suggest that the voyeur can be turned into an object. Rado enjoys looking at women (especially their body parts) each time he gets a chance, but the roles get reversed when one of the dancers he formerly objectifies turns him into a plaything. The real voyeur in the story is the reporter, peeping through the window to witness the couple's private lives.

Tanizaki thus changes the dynamics of objectification, and the modern girl is not degraded as a mere desire object, but a woman surrounded by different kinds of relationships in which she is free to choose what she wants. The portrayals of the modern girl also signify that she does not belong to a category. The line between the housewife and the temptress or other roles blurs in Tanizaki's novels. Thus, he did make a change in representations of *moga*.

It is also possible to say that Tanizaki gives a positive meaning to the trope of *dokufu* (poison woman) as well as objectification. Here, the "dangerous" women dominate men, but men are open to exploration of fantasies that are controlled by women. The characters' relationships that are woven with desire and fantasy games do not point out to degradation of women. Objectification depends on the context, and it may consume the subject even more than the object<sup>134</sup> and in some cases the objectified can be the objectifier, the objectified enjoys being an object.<sup>135</sup> These statements are proven true in Tanizaki's writing.

Masochism, lesbian sexuality and fetishism in Tanizaki's novels offers a nonphallic model of feminist fantasy.<sup>136</sup> There were also those who were critical of

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<sup>133</sup> Tanizaki, *Professor Rado*, 150.

<sup>134</sup> Nussbaum, "Objectification."

<sup>135</sup> Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*.

<sup>136</sup> De Lauretis, "The Practice of Love Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire."

Tanizaki's portrayals of women, such as Saegusa, according to whom Tanizaki was unable to treat women as fellow subjects.<sup>137</sup> However, this kind of negative comment does not take the complex nature of fetishes and relationships into account, whereas Margherita Long's feminist analysis of Tanizaki's authorship and subjectivity in his novels within the psychoanalytic paradigm in *This Perversion Called Love* (2009) proves otherwise. Tanizaki contributes to the feminist debate by creating the masculine masochist, such as his character Hōshimaru (from *The Secret History*), who is "already a masochist before he becomes a masochist."<sup>138</sup> When Hōshimaru faces a woman's severed head he says, "I want to be castrated," which recalls Freud's discussion of masculinity and the fear of being castrated. Here, the protagonist challenges the fear and identifies with the female. Another identification with the female takes place in *Quicksand*. Watanuki has a sexual deficiency and he is associated with feminine qualities. The narrator makes a reference to Kannon and Greek sculpture, emphasizing their androgynous beauty as "the most exalted forms of humanity."<sup>139</sup>

Not only Tanizaki reverses gender roles, he also does not favor objectification. He tries to abstain from it:

Tanizaki recalls that his inability to interact with his wife, Chiyo, made him fear he had begun to treat her like an inert object. He describes his shock when he explained his conundrum to a friend, only to be assured that it is perfectly fine to regard one's legal wife as an alcove decoration (*tokonoma no okimono*). Eager to distance himself from such thinking, he protests, "What I offered her may have been selfish, but I never made her into an alcove decoration."<sup>140</sup>

In his novels, the male characters also suffer from confusion arising from the thin line between objectification and desire as seen in Shozo and other male protagonists'

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<sup>137</sup> Long, *This Perversion Called Love: Reading Tanizaki, Feminist Theory, and Freud*, 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

cases. The masculine is represented as a person with almost no autonomy. “an item may certainly lack autonomy without being owned”<sup>141</sup> applies to their case, in that, they are overwhelmed with desire to the point of letting their personalities be manipulated.

Another common pattern in the protagonist’s relationship with the lover or lovers is the way the protagonist regard their love interest with religious reverence. Through objectification and gaze the lover is promoted, rather than being degraded. Kakiuchi looks at Mitsuko’s body as if it is divine; she uses her as a model for her painting of Kannon. Jōji likens Naomi’s body to the Buddhas of Nara. Oyū from *the Reed Cutter* is associated with Samantabhadra, god of practice and meditation. This is why the man in the reeds gazes longingly at Oyū, thinking his pursuit of her image will lead him to enlightenment.<sup>142</sup> The narrator of *A Portrait of Shunkin* says that Sasuke sees Shunkin as a god, sacrificing his ability to see and his life for Shunkin.

What makes Tanizaki’s female characters modern? It is not commodities, nor their physical appearances, but their behavior, ability to choose and rejecting being turned into an object. They reverse the gaze directed at them. Thus, it is possible to say that, when read in alignment with the concepts of gaze and objectification, Tanizaki promotes the modern girl and destroys the stereotype in his novels. In the next part of the chapter, one of his most famous novels *Chijin no ai*, translated as *Naomi* or *A Fool’s Love* will be examined as an example of a real life modern girl.

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<sup>141</sup> Nussbaum, “Objectification,” 260.

<sup>142</sup> Chambers, *The Secret Window: Ideal Worlds in Tanizaki’s Fiction*, p. 49.

### 5.1.1 Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and *Naomi*

Another constructive side of the magazines of 1920s and 1930s was to promote and spread the news concerning literature of the time. As mentioned before, the magazine *Josei* (1922-1928) was among those who favored modernism and published literary works such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *Chijin no ai*, translated as *A Fools Love*, or known by the title of *Naomi* (1925). According to Silverberg, the novel is “charged with transgressing the confines of her gender and exchanging her Japanese identity for a Western one, thus, threatening what was authentically Japanese.”<sup>143</sup>

Although Tanizaki gave life to various kinds of *moga*, *Chijin no ai* is one of the most discussed novel when it comes to the modern girl. One of the reasons why is the way Tanizaki starts the novel. At the beginning of the novel, he refers immediately to Western fashion becoming popular in Japan, and foreigners and the Japanese mingling together. He does not criticize this situation in a negative way. It is the opposite; he praises Western values and aesthetics, especially women who look Eurasian. A core source for understanding the male desire directed at the sexually liberated femininity in Japan's modern times, Tanizaki's *Naomi* was serialized in 1924, in the same year the term *watakushi shōsetsu* was first used.<sup>144</sup> Tanizaki thus summarizes the plot in his own words:

This is a long novel [*chōnen*], but it is a kind of “I-novel” [*watakushi shōsetsu*]; and so far the plot is quite simple. The “I”, the son of a rich family outside Utsunomiya, is a graduate of the Higher Technical School in Tokyo, and he is now working for a company as an engineer. His name is Kawai Jōji. His wife, Naomi a former café waitress, was taken in by Jōji when she was fifteen years old. Jōji has cherished her; and she has been raised in luxury and “fashionable style” [*haikara*]. At this stage of the story, Jōji is thirty-two years old and Naomi is nineteen.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Silverberg, “The Modern Girl as Militant,” 244-246.

<sup>144</sup> Suzuki, *Becoming Modern Women*, 151.

<sup>145</sup> Tanizaki, *Zenshū*, 83.

The word *haikara*<sup>146</sup>ハイカラ (high collar) first appeared in print in 1900. In 1901, the article in *Kokkei shinbun* (Comic news) defined the concept as “being full of pretension and affectation. It praised the West and denigrated Japan, using foreign words gratuitously”; years later the same word marked a desirable trait in women, especially schoolgirls.<sup>147</sup> *Moga*’s rise to media caused similar reactions. Tanizaki’s *Naomi* demonstrates Japan’s mixed emotions towards Westernization.

Jōji is described as a voyeur from the beginning. He is a well off engineer, spending time at Ginza most of the time by secretly using “every opportunity to observe women closely.”<sup>148</sup> The protagonist Jōji first encounters Naomi at the Café Diamond in Asakusa. She draws his attention because of her name that sounds Western, and her similarity to the actress Mary Pickford. After these first impressions, the narrator talks about Naomi’s body, saying “even her body has a distinctly Western look when she’s naked.”<sup>149</sup> Objectification of the female body takes place through reverse-Orientalism. Jōji often uses phrases, such as, “like a Westerner” while referring to Naomi, which pleases her. Her Western qualities are exoticised:

What shapes Jōji’s desire for Naomi is not the West as a geopolitical and cultural reality, but the “West” as he envisions it—powerful, sensual, replete with possibilities unavailable in his own culture. For such a character the actual West is no more accessible than the past is to those whose yearnings center upon the “past.”<sup>150</sup>

According to Ito’s comment, it is possible to say that Jōji imagines the West, and *moga* becomes an embodiment of the imagined West. In other words, Naomi is the

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<sup>146</sup> *Haikara* or “high collar” refers to the Western style suit of upperclass Japanese men of the Meiji period. The term was used to criticise Westernist snobs.

<sup>147</sup> Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore*, 8.

<sup>148</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 7.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>150</sup> Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki’s Fictional Worlds*, 4-5.

epitome of possibilities that did not exist before the process of modernization in the Japanese society.

Susan Napier, who talks of fantasy genre as a subversion of modernity, argues that writers like Tanizaki use female characters to symbolize cultural harbor of the past and tradition. During the prewar years, woman characters were represented the uncanny other, against which the protagonist can act out his desires; male writers use female characters to symbolize the inhumanity of modern society, as "all forms of love, from maternal to sexual, seem to become grotesque parodies of themselves, emphasizing the lack of connection between human beings."<sup>151</sup> Naomi as a café waitress is an embodiment of this ambiguity of modern times and the café as a space of both pleasures and drinking:

In 1929 Tanizaki wrote, "I have a strange aversion to cafés. The reason is that they appear to be places for eating and drinking, whereas in reality eating and drinking are secondary to having a good time with women, and yet the women aren't always at your side to wait on you. Such a shady, ambiguous set up is distasteful to me... That's what they were like when I knew them. A café was a place where you went to run after women, not to have a good time with them."<sup>152</sup>

He does not promote the degraded version of the cafés, in fact he adopts a critical tone when it comes to the ambiguous set up of such places. The concept of *chabuya* チャブ屋 (chop shops), in other words, pleasure places occupy an important place in *Naomi*. *Chabuya* is what Asakusa's bar scene is to Kawabata in terms of space as a medium for describing one's desires. According to Atkins, a *chabuya* woman was the model for Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's vixen Naomi in his serialized novel *A Fool's Love*; and the 1937 hit "Separation Blues" was conceived in a *chabuya*.<sup>153</sup> Thus, Tanizaki's Naomi is based on a socially sexualized woman figure. Jōji's attitude

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<sup>151</sup> Hemmann, "The Female Gaze in Contemporary Japanese Literature," 59.

<sup>152</sup> White, *Coffee Life in Japan*. 51-52.

<sup>153</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, 71.

towards Naomi is a representation of Japanese society's fascination with the modern girl, whereas Tanizaki's novel contains other kinds of reaction towards *moga*. For instance, Jōji's coworkers think that Naomi is a fallen woman, since she is associated with dance halls and looks Eurasian. She is said to be "playing fast and free with some Keio students."<sup>154</sup> As seen in the previous chapter, the figure of *moga* was seen as a degenerate figure due to the influence of dance halls and what took place there. Jōji's friends from work highlight this way of thinking. Other male characters, such as Hamada are the representations of *mobo* (modern boy). They are depicted as more open minded, but with a hinge of dislike coming from Jōji. Regardless of the nature of male characters' approach to Naomi, she is always the object of desire.

Inspected through the lens of objectification, Naomi's case supports the idea that *moga* was indeed turned into an object, which had a mirror effect on her. In some instances, Naomi finds herself playing accordingly to the protagonist's desires. While they are seeing a film called *Neptune's Daughter* starring Annette Kellerman, Jōji asks Naomi to imitate Kellerman. She obeys, staying in a pose and takes pleasure from how beautiful her legs are. "I'll be the sort of woman you want, I promise" she says to Jōji.<sup>155</sup> On the other hand, Yiju Huang's thesis supports the fact that Naomi is a reinvention of seductress found in classical Japanese literature. Thus the modern girl image is more than a slave of the male gaze in Tanizaki's novel:

The duality of the modern girl image, both enticing and fatal, serves as a double-edged sword. It illuminates male Japanese positive sentiments towards Western civilization, which are ambiguous, layered, fragmented and often contradictory, but at the same time is seen as a dreadful graveyard that buries Japanese tradition.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 207.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Voyeurism turns the modern girl into a Western beauty, but also condemns the traditional values. Again, the modern girl is central to anxiety arising from fear of the unknown, in other words, modernity. On the other hand, objectification functions as a tool to try and contain her. Jōji's descriptions of Naomi are as follows:

When she appeared on the beach at Yuigahama, wearing the dark green cap and bathing suit that we'd bought on the Ginza the evening before, I rejoiced at the beautiful proportions of her limbs. Yes, I rejoiced: from the way a kimono fit her, I'd already speculated on the curves of her body, and I'd been right. My heart cried out, "Naomi, Naomi, my Mary Pickford! What a fine, well-proportioned body you have. Your graceful arms! Your legs, straight and streamlined like a boy's!"<sup>157</sup>

The gaze directed at Naomi only sees her as an object of desire and these descriptions define her identity. When Jōji thinks about her background he starts to panic and feel pity towards her. Therefore, he tries to see her through the lens he created, established mainly on Naomi's physical aspects. Jōji's obsession with Naomi grows gradually. From not being certain whether he is in love with her to keeping a diary about changes that draws his attention. Most of these changes focus on Naomi's body. Jōji looks at Naomi, then bathes her, and finally worships her. "My darling Naomi, I don't just love you, I worship you. You're my treasure. You're a diamond that I found and polished. I'll buy anything that'll make you beautiful" he says, being mesmerized by the way she looks.<sup>158</sup> According to Bartky, fetishism functions as a tool that serves the purpose of maintaining dominance (p. 26-27). Whenever Jōji fears Naomi is drifting away from him, he watches her body even more than usual. For instance, after hearing rumors about Naomi's possible affairs, he comes home and a long description of Naomi's body fills the next page. She is described as "an object lying in the depths of pellucid water", which enchants Jōji.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 47.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

It is those times when he feels in control and fantasizes, yet when she has an affair with someone, all his dreams shatter:

She was no longer chaste: not only did this thought cast a dark shadow over my heart; it also lowered the value of Naomi, who'd been my treasure, by more than half. This is because most of her value to me lay in the fact that I'd brought her up myself, that I myself had made her into the woman she was, and that only I knew every part of her body. For me Naomi was the same as a fruit that I'd cultivated myself. I'd labored hard and spared no pains to bring that piece of fruit to its present, magnificent ripeness, and it was only proper that I, the cultivator, should be the one to taste it. No one else had that right. But then, when I wasn't looking, a total stranger had ripped off the skin and taken a bite. Once defiled, she couldn't apologize enough to undo what had happened.<sup>160</sup>

However, there are times, in which Jōji's efforts to mold Naomi into a Western woman faces challenges. When he tries to teach Naomi English, he becomes angry at her mistakes. This is also when Jōji faces the real Naomi, and the truth that she is a character that is purely based on his imagination, desire and dreams. The following lines point out to the classical description of women's objectification:

...when the time came for her English review, the mood darkened and became suffocating for both of us. Once a day, I'd lose my temper and she'd sulk. Cheerful until a moment before, suddenly we'd be sitting rigidly, staring each other down with hostile eyes. I'd forget my original desire to make her into a fine woman; frustrated by my own ineffectiveness, I'd begin to find her exasperating. If she'd been a boy, I might well have lost my temper and hit her. As it was, I was always shouting "idiot!" at her. Once I even rapped her on the forehead with my knuckles. Her reaction was to be perverse. She wouldn't respond even when she knew the answer.<sup>161</sup>

It might seem like Jōji wants to educate Naomi, and provides her with an opportunity to live freely and learn, which many women at the time did not access. However, Jōji limits her by doing so. He forces Naomi to accept the role he gives her, among which "remaining as a girl" in the sense of chastity and being young, is emphasized. This situation can be read as Naomi's victimization as well as her 'silent' resistance

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<sup>160</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 292.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

towards the male authority. Jōji threatens her by saying he will not let her go if she does not do it right. However, Naomi resists, making mistakes on purpose and tearing her notebook apart. As a result, her personality is commented on as “getting worse” and “more than I could handle” by Jōji.<sup>162</sup> Not behaving properly is associated with loose morals as seen in Japanese society of 1920s and 1930s approach to *moga*. In Tanizaki’s novel this situation manifests itself in Jōji and Naomi’s relationship. Jōji cannot accept her rebellious behavior while being intimidated by her reactions and angry glance. Because of her inability to learn English, Jōji thinks Naomi is stupid and abandons his hope of turning her into an intellectual woman. He sees her as a body to be appreciated; “It was her skin, teeth, lips, hair, eyes—the beauty of her entire form—that attracted me. There was nothing spiritual about it”<sup>163</sup> The image he creates becomes more and more sexualized.

Despite being portrayed as a fantasized image through objectification, what makes Naomi a powerful modern girl? In the previous examples, a different reading of the character Naomi presented her actions as resistance against the male gaze. Despite Jōji’s efforts, Naomi does as she pleases. Even while he is keeping a close eye on her, Naomi puts on showy clothes and wears make-up, ready to meet her lover. According to Jōji, clothes and make-up are extremely important for Naomi, which points out stereotypical assumptions about the modern girl figure. She destroys this stereotypical thinking by abandoning all her things. She chooses freedom over luxury. Jōji kicks her out due to her infidelity, but she does not look unhappy at all, moving from one place to another.

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<sup>162</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 79-80.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

In addition to this, Naomi is modern in the sense that she engages with life outside home. Presented merely as a waitress at first, Naomi transgresses social boundaries by playing various roles in public spaces. At the beginning of the novel she is recurrently referred as “docile” and “quiet”, with a childlike innocence. She is poor, a woman of “bad birth” as Jōji puts it.<sup>164</sup> Her family was going to turn her into a geisha, but they ended up sending her to a café to stop her from playing around. Secondly, she becomes Jōji’s maid in exchange for education. They live together in a Western house, wearing Western clothes, and eating Western food. Right after Naomi’s lifestyle changes, people make comments on how ‘modern’ she is, her modern hairstyle being “much better than doing it Japanese style.”<sup>165</sup> Then she becomes Jōji’s wife, but they decide to call each other by their names instead of husband and wife. As much as their relationship seems modern, Jōji wishes Naomi to spend her time with him in their “fairy-tale house”, yet she is bored of such a life. Naomi, the wife defines their relationship. Normally, the husband has the say in marriage (as seen in Meiji Civil Code), but in Tanizaki’s novel, the wife does not remain loyal and suggests they become friends rather than sharing a romantic bond. Naomi’s joining to the dance club started by a foreigner marks severing of the bonds with domesticity. For instance, she starts getting more and more materialistic, asking for flashy dresses, orders food instead of cooking, and pays for laundry. The dance hall allows her to socialize with her peers, whereas the place provides Jōji with the chance of meeting a real Western lady.

Their experiences in dance halls consist of coming across Westerners and the Japanese looking like or trying to look like a Westerner. Jōji repeatedly compares

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<sup>164</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 43.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Naomi to Kirako, a woman in Western style and make-up. She is described as “a precious object that’s been scrupulously polished with the highest art.”<sup>166</sup> The couple meet another woman referred to as the Pink Dress, who got divorced because of her obsession with dancing. Tanizaki mocks the Jazz scene by giving a voice to Jōji, referring to dance hall events as pretentious and dreamlike at the same time: “Is this what they call a dance? Did I deceive my mother, fight with my wife, and wear myself out crying and laughing just for this stupid dance party? for that vain, bootlicking, conceited, pretentious crowd?”<sup>167</sup> It is also Jōji’s moment of realization, his image of Naomi is shattered. As Naomi grows more confident and becomes more liberated, Jōji seems to like her less. As soon as his displeasement begins, he points to her body parts: “this small lump of flesh attached to her face, was like a part of me. I couldn't think of it as belonging to someone else. But when I looked at it now, with all this in mind, her nose turned into something hateful and filthy.”<sup>168</sup>

After she gets out of the boundaries of home, Naomi refuses to play the roles that are given to her. Jōji plan of transforming her into an ideal woman faces failure because of Naomi becoming conscious of her free will. She gains such confidence that she beats Jōji at games and they reverse roles in their relationship. Naomi goes under character development, which Jōji lacks. Jōji aims to bring her into his home and watch her grow, and then take her as a wife. For Jōji, she is mission; a woman to be educated and turned into the idealized Western beauty. She is described as a diamond or an ornament recurrently. However, Naomi rejects being an ornament by taking action and discovering herself. When Jōji asks her to pay attention to spending too much money, she replies: “What is it you called me? Your treasure? What will

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<sup>166</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 164.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

you do if my hands get all fat?"<sup>169</sup> She uses Jōji's words for her own advantage.

Whereas formerly Jōji wants to dress Naomi properly so that she will not cause embarrassment, after Naomi discovers her potential she starts to criticize Jōji, saying she cannot go anywhere with him looking like that.

The last transgression takes place after Jōji tells her to get out. She moves from place to place, from one man to another. She spends the night at a Westerner's house. She appears completely Western;

...an unfamiliar young Western woman stood there in a pale blue French crepe dress. The exposed arms and shoulders were as white as a fox. Around her fleshy nape, she wore a crystal necklace that glowed like a rainbow; and beneath a black velvet hat pulled low over her eyes, the tips of her nose and chin were visible, terrifyingly, miraculously white. The raw vermilion of her lips stood out in contrast.<sup>170</sup>

Jōji's inability to recognize the woman he builds his life on points out alienation as well as Naomi's distinctive transformation and transgression. Reverse-orientalism, always compares Naomi to a Western woman...emphasis on "white", Naomi's arms seem whiter than a Eurasian. This scene also emphasizes Jōji's obsession with Naomi's body at its highest level. Naomi in her current state is an epitome of perfect beauty according to Jōji, but at the same time he rejects the real Naomi by thinking she is an apparition, a ghost. Jōji's following statement supports the idea that Naomi as a *moga* is capable of becoming more than one thing:

Naomi of tonight was a precious object of yearning and adoration, utterly incompatible with Naomi the filthy harlot, the whorish Naomi, given crude nicknames by so many men. Before this new Naomi, a man like me could only kneel and offer worship. If her white fingertips had touched me even slightly, I'd have shuddered, not rejoiced.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 127.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

Reality gets mixed with fantasy due to desire and what it makes to the protagonist. In this case, objectification works in favor of the object of desire; she is liberated from her former duties as Jōji's wife, and she has him under control. Objection functions as a double edge sword. Jōji's obsession consumes him:

In their terrifying capacity to arouse my carnal feelings, these images were no different from the real thing. All that was lacking was the ability to touch with my hand; in every other respect, the images were more full of life than the reality was.

The image of a person, in other words, a fantasized version of the real persona exceeds reality. Delirium turns into hysteria, but Naomi continues to play with him. Her character is based on duality; the feminine and the masculine, the innocent and the temptress. Her power comes from her performative personality. If things do not work out, she immediately changes her attitude from submissive to dominant or the vice versa. After their fight, Jōji marks that her angry face was so powerful that he “was struck by her beauty” during their quarrel, his heart crying out “How beautiful!”<sup>172</sup> Moreover, as an object of desire she is aware of her attractive qualities, knowing how to “hide her flesh; she never let a man glimpse even the smallest part”<sup>173</sup> of her body unnecessarily. The situation here, in other words, displaying oneself points to Barky's narcissism. The male gaze turns her into a beautiful ornament and Naomi gets used to such a situation and does not question whether it is her who takes pride in her body. Her body is referred to as a “merchandise.” In another case, it appears as an art object, exposed to Jōji's gaze. However, Naomi always puts a barrier between them and Jōji cannot touch her despite his hopes, and remains merely as the gazer.

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<sup>172</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 314.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

Jōji likens their relationship to that of Antony and Cleopatra from Shakespeare's play and highlights the fact that men like to be deceived by women. "I believe that when Antony was conquered by Cleopatra, it happened this way: little by little he was stripped of his resistance and became ensnared"<sup>174</sup> he comments, referring to Naomi's tricks turning into manipulation, and the way he welcomes his own enslavement. The power dynamics of their relationship change drastically when Naomi cheats on Jōji. The male gaze remains, but Naomi's influence on Jōji is so great that he cannot help but "submit blindly to her."<sup>175</sup> The act of cheating also marks the ultimate objectification of the female; the transformation of Naomi's image in the eyes of Jōji. Through these words, he describes his attitude towards Naomi:

This degraded me at the same time it degraded Naomi, because it meant that I'd abandoned my integrity, fastidiousness, and sincerity as a man, flung away my pride, and bent down before a whore, and I no longer felt any shame for doing so. Indeed, there were times when I worshipped the figure of this despicable slut as though I were revering a goddess.<sup>176</sup>

As in previous novels Tanizaki, the goddess-whore figure is a recurrent pattern. The object of desire is degraded and promoted at the same time. What is also noteworthy in these lines is the fact that the subject is degraded as much as the object. Her body is referred as a work of art and her body parts look like a Greek statue (especially Venus) or a Buddhist image. Again, objectification in Tanizaki's texts feed from spirituality.

In the end Jōji surrenders himself to Naomi. He agrees with her lifestyle, that she can do what she pleases. Passion possesses him, thus reversing the former gaze that was directed at Naomi. She mocks the male gaze by saying "I'm not obliged to

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<sup>174</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 92.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

satisfy your curiosity. If you want to know so badly, then follow me. You're good at playing private eye."<sup>177</sup>

"Now do you see how frightening I can be?"

"Only too well."

"Then you won't forget what you said a little while ago, will you? You'll let me do whatever I want. You can say 'man and wife,' but I won't stand for a rigid, strait-laced marriage. I'd run away again."<sup>178</sup>

All in all, Tanizaki portrays the modern girl in a fantasized way, but his descriptions come close to defining the modern girl in that, his characters emphasize many faces of the modern girl. She has got many qualities, such as being a mother and a working woman at the same time. She is not to be played with; it is her who chooses her ways and follows her passions. Each literary text mentioned in this chapter contains the point of realization, which is the most evident in Naomi's case. The objectified woman discovers a part inside her that liberates her and allows her to resist against the male gaze. Therefore, when read within the framework of objectification and female experience, Tanizaki's female characters do not become the victims but the heroines of the stories. His novels support the idea that the modern girl phenomenon can be read in a different way; a way that empowers her and reveals her unknown sides.

## 5.2 Kawabata Yasunari and *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan)

Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) was born in Osaka, and attended Tokyo Imperial University to study English literature. In 1928, he became an active member of literary movements. He wrote novels focusing on life in Tokyo and aesthetics. *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* is one of his earlier novels, and a visual one, illustrated by

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<sup>177</sup> Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 387.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

Ōta Saburō (1884-1969). In 1930, the book version was published while the story was still being serialized. The novel was officially serialized (thirty-seven chapters) in 1929 and 1930 by Asahi daily newspaper. It is a novel, according to Alisa Freedman, “that captures a time and place in Tokyo lost through the ravages of natural disasters, war, and historical change.”<sup>179</sup> In the novel, a group of female delinquents become the guides of the narrator in his exploration of Asakusa. Various events take place that bring fiction and non-fiction together, with characters consisting of delinquents and the poor, dancers, hobos and the like.

The setting of the story is Asakusa, regarded as the center of jazz and depicted as a woman, such as Venice’s association with a fallen woman. Thus, it is possible to examine this place as a gendered space; masculine modernity’s fight with the corrupted feminine space. The fight between the masculine and the feminine manifests itself through women avenging men, explained in the following quotation:

In one of the most plot-driven sections of this otherwise episodic and impressionistic book, one of the gang leaders avenges her sister by kissing the man who hurt her, her mouth laced with arsenic, on a borrowed boat. Kawabata created unorthodox literary techniques predicated on both the Japanese literary tradition and current popular culture, to capture the raw energy of Asakusa. As a result, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* was perceived by 1930s authors and critics as a new form of realism that conveys the sensory perceptions of the dynamic city and exposes, in a forceful but lighthearted way, the darker aspects of urban modernity.<sup>180</sup>

In 1920s, Asakusa held an important place in Kawabata’s heart. He rented his own place in Asakusa and started to write.<sup>181</sup> At the time, Asakusa was regarded as the best place to study popular culture. Kawabata inspected the place as if it was a book or a kind of course to learn from. Thus, it is possible to see the traces of Asakusa’s influence on Kawabata’s writing, especially his novel *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*

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<sup>179</sup> Rachael Hutchinson, *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, 42.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>181</sup> Richie, “Introduction,” xx.

(Asakusa kurenaidan, 1929), which is central to this study. Moreover, Asakusa is where the modern girl culture thrived along with other popular cultures. It is “a modern site of desperation and of liberatory energies.”<sup>182</sup>

Because of these reasons, it is significant to assess what kind of a role Asakusa played in the novel, in order to comprehend the society’s reactions against the modern girl as well as the author’s. Therefore, this part of the chapter begins with popular ideas that revolved around Asakusa in 1920s and 1930s. One of Asakusa’s frequent visitors beginning from 1910s, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō comments on Asakusa as:

Since seeking beauty in this city of Tokyo is useless, can it be not said that the most agreeable place to live is Asakusa, where ugliness bares its essential form?<sup>183</sup>

Whereas W.E Griffis comments on Asakusa as a place full of “pretty black-eyed Dianas, in paint, powder and shining coiffure” and adds:

They bring you tea, smile, talk nonsense, and giggle...and then ask you leading and very personal questions without blushing...Full-grown able-bodied men...can find amusement for hours at such play.<sup>184</sup>

Asakusa was a place of degeneration, pleasure and modern treats, among which the modern girl stood out as one of the major reasons people visited there. Moreover, it is where the modern girl culture thrived and evolved:

Here the girls bob their hair and “Bobbed-hair” so-and-so, wearing a red dress, plays the piano, deep in a narrow backstreet lane, with her knees exposed. Her rendezvous notes are scribbled on the back of the Goddess Kannon’s written oracles.<sup>185</sup>

These description points out to the presence of the modern girl in the streets of Asakusa. As seen in the comments before, the eroticization of both, or being exposed

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<sup>182</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 5-6.

<sup>183</sup> Richie, “Introduction,” xiv.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

to *ero guro nansensu* to be more exact, is the link that connects them and how they were perceived by the Japanese society:

*Nansensu* involved the exaggerated performance of new gender roles in fashionable Tokyo places and helped to make such figures as the middle-class businessman and various kinds of ‘modern girls’ (modan gāru, moga) emblematic of the times.<sup>186</sup>

*Nansensu* is represented by Casino Follies dancers, who inspired Kawabata to write the novel. Another link between the city and the modern girl is the fact that Asakusa began to lose popularity when the modern girl started to ‘disappear’ from the scenes. One of the reasons of this disappearance of the Asakusa spirit is the military takeovers of the 1940s and the postwar innovation in Tokyo.<sup>187</sup>

*The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (Asakusa kurenaidan, 1929) is selected as one of primary sources of this study, since it includes various descriptions of the modern girl. Through the examination of the modern girl figure, the study aims to find answers to why the modern girl became associated with the degenerate side of modernism. Therefore, in the next part of this chapter, the modern girl figure is examined through the lens of objectification and in relation to the eroticized space of Asakusa. It aims to find out whether the modern girl depicted in the novel goes beyond an objectified figure, and proposes a different way of looking at the modern girl.

### 5.2.1 Kawabata, the gendered space and the male gaze

Likened to a *manga* as well as James Joyce’s *Ulysees* (1918), because of its comic-book characters and modern narrative (stories repeatedly broken into and the presence of three narrative voices), *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* revolves around the

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<sup>186</sup> Freedman, *Modern Girls on the Go*, 46.

<sup>187</sup> Richie, xix.

experiences of members of the Scarlet Gang; people of poor background and women who do not fit in, but they are the embodiment of the modern city life. The novel is groundbreaking in that, it breaks away from autobiographical tendencies, the popular genre of *watakushi shōsetsu* (I-novel) of modern times. What it also does differently from other novels written in 1920s is that, the author adopts a technique that is based on *nansensu* and voyeurism. These two terms make the novel significant in this study's discussion of the modern girl's objectification.

According to the objectification theory, the male gaze defines the female body, and causes agency's loss of the objectified. In Kawabata's book, however, objectification functions in various ways in the descriptions of *moga*. First of all, Kawabata's gaze in the novel is described as that of a "flâneur";

...one who strolled about, committing himself to nothing and no one. An often ironic observer, he turned perception itself into a kind of judgment. Like Beaudelaire on the boulevard, Kawabata in Asakusa was a literary dandy whose gaze was his only comment.<sup>188</sup>

In short, his identity as an author defines his gaze, but the question is how does he protect his gaze upon the characters he used in his novel? The female characters, such as Yumiko and Haruko attract the narrator, turning him into a voyeur. In Kawabata's other novels, namely *The Izu Dancer* and *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, objectification of women is a recurrent theme. The act of objectification manifests itself in private relationships, such as an old man going after an attractive dancer. However, in *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, Kawabata's voyeurism tends to follow that of the New Art School (*Shinkōgeijutsu*) authors. One of the recurrent themes in New art texts is exoticism of Tokyo and celebrate consumer culture, which the modern girl was a part of. Moreover, the New Art School authors generally

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<sup>188</sup> Richie, "Introduction," xxviii.

objectified the café waitress and other female workers; they “depict them as alluring aspects of the urban landscape instead of more complex characters.”<sup>189</sup> Because of these factors, it is possible to conclude that the characters in this book and what they stand for are commodities, rather than human beings, and are the exaggerated versions of the real. Asakusa, is treated in a similar way; men possessing and dominating its territories, as can be seen in a passage from the novel:

Each man has his own territory, secret (he never tells the others), where he keeps his woman, who, when things get tough, he sells off to passerbys. It doesn't matter if she has a nine year-old, a four year-old, or is six months pregnant with the next.<sup>190</sup>

Consumerism and objectification come together to give a new meaning, a kind of dominance to the modern life.

The first description of a modern girl takes place in a backstreet alley: A young short-haired girl, in a red dress playing the piano. Again, the figure is objectified; in her portrayal, her body parts are focused, and the narrator is enamored with her physical aspects:

The bright red stands out against the black of the piano, and the white of her legs, bare from knees down to feet, is young, fresh. The entryway isn't much wider than a wooden sandal is long, and from where I stand, just outside, it seems as though I can reach and give that black ribbon around her waist a tug. This ribbon is the only decoration, but because the dress is sleeveless with a long neckline, it's something like an evening gown. No, even here at home she's wearing something for the stage-a dance costume? Traces of white powder cling to the nape of her neck, and above it her hair is cropped close as a boy's.<sup>191</sup>

And another comment on the observed states:

A red ribbon droops from her bobbed head, and beneath her short open skirt, her legs (stockings rolled) dance the Charleston-cha, cha, cha cha- while through her dark encarmined lips she whistles jazzily along.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Freedman, *Modern Girls on the Go*, 47.

<sup>190</sup> Kawabata, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 5.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>192</sup> Kawabata, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 11.

Things associated with the modern girl are present in Kawabata's description: White face powder, bobbed-hair, rouged lips, her flashy appearance, and a modern dress. Gender ambiguity and jazz are a part of her identity, as in many discussions revolve around the modern girl. The narrator's desire directed at her is also evident, while he is referring to her body parts, signifying objectification.

The story is full with descriptions of people, especially those of the Scarlet Gang members matter in this novel, since the author tries to coax us into thinking and feeling the same way as he does. "I want to make you feel fondly toward the members of the Scarlet Gang. So maybe I've carried on a bit much about how attractive they are"<sup>193</sup> he says and then distinguishes Yuriko's attractiveness from the other members by saying Yumiko's attractiveness stems from her physical aspects, whereas the others have something different. He recurrently uses the word "attractive" throughout the novel.

Objectification of the female also manifests itself in the concept of gendered space. In other words, Kawabata's detailed descriptions of Asakusa (especially when the modern girl enters the scene), emphasized by his love-hate relationship with the city of Tokyo points out the tension between masculine modernity and female space in the novel. According to Helene Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), binary oppositions define the relationship between men and women; Women as the Other "is defined in opposition to, and in terms of, man. He is present; she is absent. He is associated with being, she is associated with death" and this opposition is maintained in writing.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, it is possible to say that objectification in this novel

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<sup>193</sup> Kawabata, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 17.

<sup>194</sup> Benstock, Ferriss and Woods, *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*, 166-167.

functions as a distortion of the image of *moga*, but this distortion does not necessarily turn her into a degenerate figure.

### 5.3 Summary

This chapter looked into Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's and Kawabata Yasunari's descriptions of the modern girl. The common patterns in the protagonists' relationship with the modern girl were revealed. It was seen that, rather than portraying the modern girl as a stereotype, in his novels Tanizaki presents several types of this figure. We see her playing an affectionate mother, a sadist, a lesbian lover or becoming all of them at the same time. Tanizaki's female characters have distinct personalities. Thus, it is possible to say that he adopts a new approach to the issue of *moga*. This chapter concludes that although Kawabata attempted to turn the modern girl into a powerful figure, his depictions resemble the traditional portrayals, such as the modern girl as the attractive waitress. Overall, both authors support the idea that through literature, we might get to explore various faces of the modern girl; she does not merely remain as a work of fiction or a stereotype. Therefore, literature functions as an empowering element in the case of *moga*.

## CHAPTER 6

### FEMALE VOICES ON MOGA

No one is as lucky as a woman writer! As soon as she breaks up with a man, she can write about it all without a slightest sense of shame.<sup>195</sup>

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.<sup>196</sup>

In the post-Meiji era, the world of literature provided women with a space where they can speak their own mind, although there were limitations that came with it that will be explained further in this chapter. The rise of the genre *watakushi-shōsetsu* (I-novel) was one of the reasons women regained the courage to write about themselves. In the previous chapter, how Tanizaki challenged the former perceptions of *moga* and Kawabata's take on the modern girl were discussed. The main aim of this chapter is to follow the traces of objectification/self-objectification in Uno Chiyo's (1897-1996) novels and analyze them to see whether she changed the meaning through the lens of the female gaze. In Tanizaki's novels, it was seen that despite the existence of male gaze, the female characters' gaze is more powerful, and the modern girl is not portrayed as a simply sexualized figure, but she wears various masks, such as the desirable lover, who want to depend on her love interest or the working woman, who can take care of herself. Similar in her approach, as a real-life *moga*, Uno Chiyo gives voice to her fears and experiences as a woman, who took active part in public spaces. It is also important to note that Tanizaki's modern girls,

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<sup>195</sup> Uno, *The Story of a Single Woman*, 5.

<sup>196</sup> Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," 18.

such as Naomi, are a part of luxurious life, a well-off partner provides her with opportunities. On the other hand, Uno Chiyo integrates her own experiences as a woman whose own efforts bring her success and improve her lifestyle.

### 6.1 Uno Chiyo's life and literary identity

Born in Iwakuni in the year of 1897, Uno Chiyo grew up to be an example of an independent woman, creating all her opportunities herself. She left her life as a country girl to take part in larger society. At first, she became a teacher, yet she had difficulties blending in. In fact, she never aimed to. When she was forced to leave her job due to an affair with another teacher, she fled to Korea. She came back to Japan and waited outside her lover's house with a knife in hand, but in the end nothing happened and she went her way. During her first marriage, she worked as a waitress, and while working she managed to meet some of Japan's leading editors and writers, which later helped her in her career as an author. She even became a model for the waitress in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's story *Scallions*, revealing that the fictional waitress "Okimi-san was not an ordinary waitress"; her difference comes from her passion for reading.<sup>197</sup> Uno did not merely wish to remain as an inspiration to a writer. After she moved to Sapporo, Hokkaidō with her husband, she did not give up her dream of becoming a writer. She left him due to her first literary success. She used the following words to define her marriage as Birnbaum points out: "I see that the year and eight months of married life in Hokkaido was the period of my life most filled with hope. That was the only time I ever lived a very regular life, just like everyone else."<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Birnbaum, *Modern Girls, Shining Stars, the Skies of Tokyo*, 174.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Uno Chiyo's relationships inspired her novels greatly. This is why she is regarded as intimate and an author writing in a highly personal style. Her relationship with Ozaki Shirō especially affected her and her identity as an author. Tanabe Tōkō, based on Ozaki Shirō became the protagonist of her novel whereas Tōgō Seiji, the Western-style painter inspired Uno to write *Confessions of Love*, published in 1935. During her twenty-five year marriage to Kitahara Takeo, *To Stab* (Sasu, 1966) and *Happiness* (Kōfuku, 1970) and *The Sound of Rain* (Ame no oto, 1974) were published. According to Phyllis Birnbaum, who translated some of Uno's novels into English:

Uno Chiyo is one of the very few Japanese women with an established literary reputation, having made her mark early by publishing stormy love stories based on her own entanglements. While other women writers of her generation wrote of social issues (the excesses of the militarists, hunger on city streets), she stuck to the smaller world of personal heartbreak.<sup>199</sup>

Unlike the members of Bluestockings, her literary works fed from the love affairs she engaged in. However, as much as these affairs provided her with inspiration, her interest in fashion, make-up, and being employed in various places should be credited equally, if not more for the birth of her literary voice.

Uno spent some of her years working as a café waitress. Her earliest work *Painted Face* (Shifun no kao, 1921) tells the story of a café waitress by the name of Osumi. This novel reveals how waitresses or the modern girl workers in general were perceived in the 1920s. The protagonist Osumi's lover Hüber is disillusioned; when he sees her outside without her working clothes and make-up, he loses interest. This situation brings to mind Tanizaki's *Jōji*, who keeps dreaming about Naomi's beauty, except this time the reader gets to access the uninterrupted female experience. The female voice retells the experience of being objectified by the male gaze, which

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<sup>199</sup> Birnbaum, *Modern Girls, Shining Stars, the Skies of Tokyo*, 166.

allows us to understand the modern girl figure and approach her in a different way, as Uno portrays her in a more realistic way. The title of the novel signifies that make-up functions not only as a disillusion, but also female empowerment:

Makeup became a mask for the woman writer, offering both stagecraft and protection. With her makeup intact the woman writer felt protected against the charges of "unfemininity" which her public appearance on a male-dominated stage invited. This protection in turn provided the woman freedom to unveil her ideas; and yet conversely the act of "making up" seemed to deny the writer authenticity- the creation of her art being premised on the presentation of an artificial self.<sup>200</sup>

Make-up occupies an important place in Uno's novels. It masks imperfections of the body and the character, as in Kazue's case from *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (The Story of a Single Woman). She gets rid of her dark complexion, which is contrary to Japanese beauty standards. However, white powder does not merely transform her physically, but also gives her the courage to speak up and become a member of a male dominated world. It is both a mask and a part of Uno's way of expressing herself.

In 1908, an article titled "An Essay on Women" (*Joryū sakka ron*) was published in an influential magazine called *Shinchō*, which aimed to define women's roles (as an editor, author or critic) in literature, but these roles were expected to "write like women" (*onna-rashiku*) and address "the domestic detail of feminine spheres", meaning domestic duties, their husband and children etc. If a woman as an author valued their roles as wife or daughter, they were regarded with derision.<sup>201</sup> Uno challenged this kind of limitation by taking an active part in public space and telling her stories about what happened outside the boundaries of the domestic space. As a result, she faced harsh criticism, especially directed at her physical qualities.

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<sup>200</sup> Copeland, "The Made-Up Author: Writer as Woman in the Works of Uno Chiyo," 5.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

She was not an example of “good wife”, yet she played at being a woman writer. She used the mask of make-up in order to hide her authorial (masculine) self.<sup>202</sup> This allowed her to become successful in a male dominated literary world. Painting oneself into the role dictated by literary patriarchy is a pattern one comes across in Uno’s stories and novels, such as *Rōjo Manon* (The Old Woman Manon, 1928). Another common pattern is the female narrator as the working woman disappointing her lover because of revealing her true self as seen in *Painted Face* (1921). The lover’s disappointment supports the idea that the modern girl figure was fantasized as a way of controlling her. This situation points to Bartky’s idea of the male gaze fantasy being challenged by the reality: The woman in her make-up and waitress uniform suggests the stereotypical modern girl or the desired woman. However, her true identity, stripped from all the modern girl commodities, poses a threat to patriarchy. Uno’s representations of relationships become a metaphor for Japanese society’s fear of facing the real modern woman, who works, speaks her mind and does not belong to “good wife, wise mother” ideology of the Meiji government. Uno deconstructs the ideal woman image as well as the modern girl stereotype by appearing to play by the rules and giving a voice to experiences of being a woman in such a society without the exaggeration of the male gaze.

According to some, Uno Chiyo’s journey as a *moga* started when she cut her hair, as bobbed hair was the trademark of *moga*, although her decision was made based purely on her desire to look younger. However, the real modern girl becomes the most evident in her books as well as her lifestyle and interests. In 1936, Uno started Japan’s first fashion magazine *Sutairu* (Style), writing various articles including “My Guide to Marriage”. Her advises include:

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<sup>202</sup>Copeland, “The Made-Up Author: Writer as Woman in the Works of Uno Chiyo,” 13.

When a wife discovers her husband's first infidelity, she must become insanely jealous. She must not even dream of telling him 'Dear, you have my permission. . . First, cry as loud as you can, then make a great show of screaming, 'I can't stand it! I can't! I just can't!' Don't think about what you look like. At that point, start heaving whatever is handy all over the place, or just start clawing at his face.'<sup>203</sup>

Her words function as a parody of the Meiji Civil Code, which favored the husband's choice of ending the marriage over the wife's. Despite the subjectivity of Uno's literary texts, they include feminist aspects. Thus, her readers were greatly influenced by her words.

The next part of the chapter looks into the autobiographical novel of Uno, so as to get an understanding of being a controversial woman during Japan's changing times. The novel provides the readers not only with the experiences of a real life *moga*, but also the society's approach to her.

## 6.2 *The Story of a Single Woman* (Aru hitori no onna no hanashi)

The focus of Uno's novels is commonly regarded as the smaller world of personal heartbreak rather than women's problems, yet as her life is a demonstration of the modern girl lifestyle, the elements in her novels make them essential in the question of representation of the self as a *moga*. Her novel, *The Story of a Single Woman* is an accurate portrayal of Japanese society during late 1920s; the times of instability and confusion. In the novel, the modern woman has to play different roles, it is a search for a new identity, or to be more exact, many identities and possibility of different lifestyles. In this autobiographical novel, the reader observes both Chiyo's life as an artist and as a *moga*. This novel allows us to explore the inner world of a much-discussed woman figure; how she saw love, what kind of voice she uses and her

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<sup>203</sup> Birnbaum, "The Made-Up Author: Writer as Woman in the Works of Uno Chiyo," 196.

“silent” riot against the male dominated world of literature. Through the act of writing, she discovers self-love, which makes her novel an intimate account. This novel has an important place in this study, since it is not written through the male gaze and reflects how a person living a non-Japanese lifestyle faced biased notions and reactions from the society. This situation supports Maria Mies’ idea that says

...women are the symbols of oppression being forced to fulfill the demands of their oppressors. These are the women who have experienced the oppression on their own psyche and bodies and are in better position to describe how exploitation and oppression would feel to the victims. Men usually do not have the practical knowledge of such experience and therefore lack sociological imagination of such exploitation. They also lack empathy and the ability to identify and understand the oppression and exploitation of women.<sup>204</sup>

When compared to Uno’s descriptions, female characters created by male authors, who were addressed before, express less emotion and and the readers are not given a detailed account of their inner thoughts and experiences. Therefore, the female gaze and experience in Uno’s novel allows us to approach the case of the modern girl differently.

*Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (The Story of a Single Woman) was first published in 1971. It tells the story of 70 year old Kazue and how she became the person she is now. This work distinguishes from the rest of the author’s literary texts in that, it adopts a narrative voice of a “spectator’s stance”. Furthermore, it is a retelling of Uno Chiyo’s own life story, with people’s names changed. Facts about Kazue, the protagonist are as follows: She never knew her mother. The motherly figure as the maternalized Japanese woman was absent from her life. Uno’s mother died when she was still an infant. The father figure, on the other hand, occupies an important place in Kazue’s heart. He is a dominant figure, and the father-daughter

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<sup>204</sup> Mies, “Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research,” 204.

relationship is far from containing warm feelings. After her mother's death, Uno's father imposed many restrictions upon the household, forcing Uno to both tend for her family and fight against his father's domination. When examined in align with Nussbaum's idea of instrumentality and absence of autonomy caused by objectification, relationships in Uno's novel lead to a different kind of objectification. In Kazue's case, she internalizes her objectification despite the initial lack of the male gaze. Through Kazue's words this situation can be understood clearly:

Did Kazue realize then that she found happiness in making others happy? Would she have done anything to win this for happiness? Anything at all? No. No, she wouldn't have. Unless it was for her father. For him she would have crossed the boundaries of her own desire.<sup>205</sup>

Her relationships, especially that with her father, controls her in a way that she turns into a being only with the purpose of pleasing others, which means she has a narcissistic approach. However, just when the reader thinks that she is objectified both by her father's commands and overall existence, she attempts to change the meaning of self-objectification by justifying it through these words:

She did not know then that hidden within the joy of pleasing another was a kind of self-love. It may have seemed that she did what she did for love, but it was different. Knowing how to please others was not the same as doing so out of some self-denying devotion.<sup>206</sup>

She chooses self-love over self-denying devotion, but her self-love comes from doing good for others, meaning she internalizes dominant culture's (in this case the father's) superiority. According to Bartky, narcissism is caused by the female subject's acceptance of the way dominant culture turns women into stereotypes. At

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<sup>205</sup> Uno, *The Story of a Single Woman*, 2.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

times, Uno seems to internalize this situation. The voice of the text questions why women always get hurt, but at the same time accepts being treated as an object:

She just could not understand why, when there was a relationship between a man and a woman, someone had to be hurt. Throughout her life she had been the victim any number of times. But she never once held a grudge against the one who hurt her.<sup>207</sup>

The acceptance becomes so self damaging that the protagonist is exposed to drugs and experiences rape. After getting raped she expresses her emotions concerning her identity: “She did not believe the man’s treatment of her had led her to any kind of liberation. But ever since that night, Kazue seemed very different” and “She was a ruined woman. Yes, a ruined woman lost to despair.”<sup>208</sup> In another experience with a young boy she thinks “she did not seem to care the realization wounded her.”<sup>209</sup>

Kazue’s experience as told by a female voice brings us back to one of the question of this research. Is the modern girl described as a desirable person in control of her own sexual freedom? In the case of Kazue, desire gets easily confused with objectification. Kazue herself is confused, because she “expresses her gratitude to this stranger for the violent way he had treated her.”<sup>210</sup>

Despite adopting narcissism throughout her autobiographical novel, Uno also strives to change the conceptions regarding the stereotypical modern girl. Her desire to change can be seen in her way of telling the story of the modern girl as she experienced it. Among Uno Chiyo’s resistance against objectification by the male dominance is her questioning of marriage, the way she dresses herself and the desire to earn her own money. In short, she follows the steps of a modern girl; not the one that smiles at people, found on a Western influenced advertisement, but the real one

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<sup>207</sup> Uno, *The Story of a Single Woman*, 125.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 125

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

who takes an active part in public spaces. She even works in magazine business and as a café waitress. She transgresses social bounds by starting a relationship with Shinoda in a school where they both work as teachers. As a result of being fired, she travels to Korea, thinking the land holds answers to her desires. She keeps transgressing boundaries both physical and social.

As another modern girl commodity, make-up is repeatedly commented on as deceiving. Statements, such as “Her make up was a mask”<sup>211</sup> and “a creature out of this World”<sup>212</sup> said by the male characters demonstrate negative associations of make-up. On the other hand, for Kazue make-up becomes another way of resistance; she is in her most flashy self at the time of saying goodbye to the principal who fired her. In another example, her suitor forces himself down on her. At first she struggles, but then she stops resisting physically. Instead she starts wailing and says: “I’ve slept with a man I have no intention of marrying. And I did so because I’m completely mad!”<sup>213</sup> Self-blame marks these words, again pointing out to the female experience of living in a time when women are highly objectified.

The ultimate transgression takes place after Kazue’s journey to Korea. This journey might be read as a way of transgressing both physical and emotional boundaries. She gets even further away from the proper Japanese woman. She arrives at Japan after some time and she is unable to forget the betrayal committed by her ex-lover. After she brings a knife to his place, the author dictates: “Kazue was not the kind of girl he could love. She was a frightening girl who threatened his very integrity.”<sup>214</sup> Through her novel, Uno criticizes those who saw modern girls as a

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<sup>211</sup> Uno, *The Story of a Single Woman*, 48.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

threat. Despite Kazue's traumatic experiences, the novel concludes that she succeeded at many things because of the path she chose to take.

### 6.3 *Confessions of Love* (Iro Zange)

By the time Uno began to live with Tōgō Seiji, she had made a name for herself in Japanese literature; she attracted attention because of her prose style as well as her private life. Making a detailed record of Tōgō's memoirs led to the birth of *Confessions of Love* (1935). Before meeting Uno, Tōgō was enamored of another woman called Mitsuko, with whom he committed double suicide. In Uno's own words, as quoted by Birnbaum: "No lovers attempted suicide in those days. It was a big event. The newspapers went wild. Now Japanese lovers kill themselves all the time. No one gets excited about it."<sup>215</sup> The tale of his romance with Mitsuko became the basis of the novel.

Between the years of 1933 and 1935, during which *Confessions of Love* was being written, Japan was undergoing changes; liberal elements were suppressed and nationalists wanted to achieve greater power. The novel and the characters' relationships with one another echo the confusion arising from such times. The protagonist Yuasa Jōji is presented as a passive, weak and selfish man, despite appearing attractive. In this aspect, Uno's Yuasa Jōji is similar to Tanizaki's Jōji, but they differ in that, whereas Tanizaki's Jōji uses Western elements to objectify Naomi and have her behave like a Western actress, Uno's Jōji is the one who forces himself to be Western-like. When Yuasa sees his wife-to-be with a university student, he decides he would simply behave like that urbane husband" that he had seen in American films "the kind who makes cynical jokes about the goings on in his own

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<sup>215</sup> Birnbaum, *Modern Girls, Shining Stars, The Skies of Tokyo*, 187.

household.<sup>216</sup> He also adds that he is used to his “role as urbane husband.”<sup>217</sup>

Through adopting a male voice, Uno also makes a comment on a man’s responsibilities imposed upon him by the patriarchal society. The male suffers as much as the female does, because he has got roles to play. Yuasa’s father-in-law tries to control his life as soon as he marries Tomoko. His job as an artist has to change as well as any problem his wife could cause so that he can offer his new wife a good life.

Moreover, the female author portrays the male protagonist in this case, reversing the roles of the objectified female and the male as the subject. Regarded as one of the finest Japanese novel about love, Uno’s *Confessions of Love* is a criticism of the stereotypical modern girl, the male identity and its approach to *moga*:

Just as Tanizaki took great delight in subversively reversing gender roles in traditional male-female relations by, for example, turning a man into the servant of a woman in *Portrait of Shunkin* (and to a lesser extent in his story “The Tattoo/er”), *Confessions* is a modernist farce that mocks not only male privilege and passivity, but also the supposedly modern girls who are all too eager to indulge the whims of their “Jōji boy.”<sup>218</sup>

Felski draws attention to the difference between men’s desire and women’s desire in literature:

Men’s desire to place women on pedestals harks back to the codes of chivalry and the pure and unblemished heart of the courtly hero. The passive yet conveniently unattainable heroine is the perfect expression of this fantasy, allowing it to remain intact. By contrast, a woman who idealizes her male lover often comes across as sentimental and foolish; she merely underscores women’s gullibility and propensity to self-deception.<sup>219</sup>

This was a hardship Uno faced, in 1930s when she was writing her novel, female writers were frequently commented on as too personal and dramatic. Thus, giving a

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<sup>216</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 90.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>218</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan*, 12.

<sup>219</sup> Felski, *Literature After Feminism*, 28.

voice to a male protagonist functions as a guarantee of her novel being taken seriously. Through giving voice to Yuasa Jōji's experiences, she also gets the chance of talking of female desire.

At the beginning of the novel, Yuasa takes an interest in the female character, who keeps sending him letters, because of her photograph that bears resemblance to Madame Felicita, a Westerner. This situation is also similar to Jōji falling in love with Naomi due to her Western sounding name and Eurasian physical aspects. Yuasa stalks this woman instead of meeting her, his obsession growing gradually. However, unlike Jōji, he obsesses over the desired object because she is fresh and of strong character; according to Yuasa, she is different from other women who appear in dance halls and cafés. "She looked more like a child than a woman" is the first impression of the protagonist.<sup>220</sup> This woman, whose name is nowhere to be seen in the first pages, lives a double life like Uno herself did. She tells to Yuasa:

You see, I'm very good at being two completely different people depending on the situation. When my father is at home I'm a very well behaved and proper young lady. When he goes away I become a troublemaker no one can control.<sup>221</sup>

Adopting a modern girl attitude, she is also eager to engage in an affair with the protagonist, knowing he has a wife and a child. She is really persistent, saying "If you don't come to see me, I don't know what I'll do" to Yuasa.<sup>222</sup> She begins stalking the gazer, thus reversing the roles. During the sexual play, the love interest Takao is the dominant one, doing "what the man is supposed to do."<sup>223</sup> Jōji aims to take control of her body, but Takao goes crazy, biting all over his chest and arms. She shows similarities to Tanizaki's female characters; although the male subject

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<sup>220</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 7.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

attempts to objectify or possess her, he is forced to behave accordingly to what the object of desire wants or else he faces resistance.

At first, Takao fits the stereotypical modern girl descriptions. She is a tomboy, attracted to Western people and Western things. She runs away from home and finds herself in various relationships, mostly dramatic. Her prideful character does not allow her to accept a marriage proposal. She seems to be the cruel temptress type, yet Uno's depictions of her expressiveness and emotions turn her into a sympathetic character. Thus, the female perspective offers more realistic portrayals of women. In other words, the female characters does not have roles to play, they rather react to incident occurring around them in a natural way. The temptress causes disrupt, but at the same time she is capable of showing emotions.

What about the descriptions of other woman characters? Does the voice degrade or promote them? Tsuyuko, the main love interest of Yuasa and Takao's friend, is first referred as "who was to rule my life" and "who turned my fate upside down" by Yuasa.<sup>224</sup> Unlike Takao, who has a passionate personality, Tsukuyo possesses a certain allure of purity. She is described as frail and helpless, causing Yuasa to believe she needs protection. However, she transforms after escaping from an arranged marriage. During the time of running away, when Yuasa says that she seems like a different young lady, she answers "Just exactly like Takao, wouldn't you say?"<sup>225</sup> Her character development takes place as a result of challenging patriarchy. At some point Yuasa questions her true identity, whether she was a complete fabrication or not. Revelation of the liberated identity creates disappointment; a frequent pattern in Uno's text. Yuasa Jōji also goes under changes

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<sup>224</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 15.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

and goes through character development. The “mechanic” male turns into an emotional person. The moment of falling in love are highly descriptive, as if Uno intervenes and adds something from herself. Another instance, when the male protagonist expresses his thoughts about marriage and what others would think, reverses the roles of the female and the male. The reader is directed to think that the speaker might be Uno herself. “...it made no difference what the husband thought or what was on the wife’s mind, just as long as one lived peacefully, wrapped in great warmth.”<sup>226</sup> Another reversal of the gender roles takes place when his ex-wife threatens him of exposing him in a newspaper, which will supposedly cause citizens to denounce him.

Apart from Takao and Tsuyuko, the wife plays an important role in the text, as she is far from a traditional Japanese wife. The affair is revealed to the wife from the start. She deals with it in a cool manner and does not play the jealous or helpless wife. When the time of divorce comes, she is not victimized and the husband empathizes with her, rather than complaining about the money she asks of him for their child. After the decision of getting divorced becomes definite, she immediately makes plans about the future, saying “Now I plan to start all over again...I’m going to take lessons in Western tailoring and open up a shop with a friend. Tomorrow I’ll find a small house.”<sup>227</sup> The voice of the text is proud; it is as if Uno interrupts Yuasa’s voice and infuses her own: “She then made a lively descent down the stairs... It amused me to think that she was only arranging matters as I had wished.”<sup>228</sup> The wife Matsuyo is the most powerful after their marriage ends. “Did you think I had gone crying off to sleep after being deceived like that? I am not so

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<sup>226</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 92.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

good-natured.”<sup>229</sup> She defends her rights and challenges the ex-husband without turning into the villain of the novel. In addition to this, she does not spend most of her time in domestic space. Towards the end of the novel her profession is revealed. She is a dance hall girl with (Yuasa’s emphasis) “a dance girl’s manner.”<sup>230</sup>

Oyae the waitress is another figure, yet her descriptions point out to the degraded side of the modern girl. She lives with her mean boyfriend in a shady apartment, entertains her customers during nighttime and helps Yuasa and Tsuyuko so that Tsuyuko can escape the arranged marriage. The side characters like Oyae, who appear much later in the novel, consist of the types of women that emerged as the faces of modernity, namely the schoolgirl, *moga* and the traditional Japanese woman. They do not remain as types. Like other female characters, they go under some kind of transformation. For instance, the schoolgirl Tomoko becomes Yuasa’s new love interest. Detailed descriptions of female characters, raise sympathy unlike Yuasa who is depicted as a weakling, and is unable to decide what he is going to do concerning his marriage and relationships. Tomoko, portrayed as a sickly girl at first, takes action after her dreams about marriage shatter. She runs away with someone else, putting an end to their short-lived marriage. However, rather than depending on the man she elopes with, Tomoko chooses not to.

She decides what is best for her and so do the other female characters in the text. Thus, Uno succeeds at revising self-definitions patriarchal culture imposed on women. The female characters in Uno’s novel change the stereotypical approach to the modern girl and does so by using a male voice. Instead of playing the roles that are given to them, these characters develop and do not depend on Yuasa to figure out

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<sup>229</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 97.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

their future. In fact, it is Yuasa who has to play a role so that his relationship survives. It seems that he is the only one unable to run away from his life or change it. Eloping with the lover frequently takes place in the novel, whether it is main character or someone who does not play an important role in the events. It signifies, as in Tsuyuko or Tomoko's case, character development and transformation of the self. Thus, Yuasa is not brave enough to become a part of the transformation whereas female characters do, which can be interpreted as keeping up with the modern times, given the fact that many social changes took place suddenly during 1930s' Japan. In fact, Yuasa's attempt to elope with Tsuyuko fails and the idea of running away is replaced with dying together, as Yuasa says, "Dying together with Tsuyuko would be perfectly natural, not because we could not live, but because dying was the most natural step for us to take."<sup>231</sup> However, the couple also fail at dying together. In the end, Yuasa acknowledges his inability to change and intolerance to those around him changing. The following words reflect both these words and his incapability of keeping up with the changing Japanese society. Referring to his ex-wife and child, he says:

Of course I didn't have any right to criticize their unexpected transformation and I well knew that there had been few alternatives available while they waited for me. Yet my efforts to accept the change failed and I stopped loving them... My work would be my salvation. At first this appeared to be a reasonable solution to my distress, but as I worked I realized that after so many years away my work had lost its intimate connections to Japanese society... Japan had become more unknown to me than a foreign country.<sup>232</sup>

The character's feeling towards his personal life coincides with his alienation caused by Japanese society. While every female character, such as Matsuyo the ex-wife moves on with her life and adapts to the modern Japan, Yuasa feels lost.

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<sup>231</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 136.

<sup>232</sup> Uno, *Confessions of Love*, 143.

#### 6.4 Summary

This chapter explored the issues of objectification, narcissism and female experience in the autobiographical works of Uno Chiyo. Uno was a controversial figure, who supported sexual freedom and set her own rules rather than following the rules of society. Analysing the characters through feminist approach revealed that the modern girl, by not behaving “appropriately” (which equals to ignoring her duties as wife, condemning marriage and eloping) challenges the male gaze. It is her attitude and actions that reflect her real identity. Uno, by creating female characters who resemble herself and whose lives promote the freedom to choose brought a change to victimization of the modern girls. Her voice within the text points out to the real struggles of a woman living in changing times. It was also found out that there is a recurring pattern in Uno’s novels. When the real identity of *moga* is revealed, the love interest abandons her, which points out to the society’s fear of the figure. The chapter concludes that Uno has a more realistic approach than male authors.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I focused on both the male and female authors' descriptions of the modern girl. For this, the study led to both a historical and contextual research of the selected texts of Uno Chiyo, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Yasunari Kawabata to explore new perspectives for understanding trajectories of Japanese feminism, modernity and the modern girl's identity.

I set out by presenting the literature review and briefly talked about the works of scholars who whether described the modern girl as a passive figure or a powerful figure. I pointed out to the fact that representations of the modern girl in literature has not received much attention, while highlighting the importance of approaching *moga* in a different way through literature.

In Chapter Three, I presented my methodology and explained how I approached the literary works. The theoretical framework of this study consists of Bartky and Nussbaum's take on objectification theory, as well as Felski's conception of the female experience. The notion of positive objectification enabled me to demonstrate objectification of the modern girl figure does not necessarily mean she is victimized. It also allowed me to look into the protagonists' relationship with the modern girl. A feminist reading of literary texts through the lens of objectification, written by any sex provides an understanding of the real modern girl, that she was not a passive figure, but a voice through which many women explored and reinvented their identities in the 1920s and 1930s' Japan.

In Chapter Four, I traced the history of feminist literature in Japan in order to provide the reader with the information they need in order to contextualize the figure

of *moga* within Japanese feminist movements. It was seen that in some of the newspaper articles she was transformed into a degenerate, whereas magazines, such as *Josei* helped promote the positive side of *moga*. The chapter also discussed the common descriptions of the modern girl in literature. The traditional literary approaches to the modern girl always express pessimism and displeasure arising from her liberal lifestyle. The study draws attention to the idea that the selected novels of this thesis differ from the former novels, which distort the modern girl's image.

The findings of Chapter Five revealed that, whereas the male voice in Kawabata and Tanizaki's literary works might seem as if it turns the modern girl into a sexual object, it is also important to note that Kawabata's novel introduces different types of women, and in Tanizaki's novels, objectification performs in both ways. Rather than adopting a sexist approach, the male authors' depictions tell the reader what the modern girl and modernism meant for the society at the time, a process which is both exciting and fearful. Another important point revealed in the findings of this chapter is that the modern girl has many faces; we see in the roles of a mother, the lesbian lover, a queen, and she takes an active role in public spaces. Tanizaki thus changes the idea of the modern girl as a stereotype. In-depth analysis of Tanizaki's novel *Naomi* provided a significant discussion in that, the modern girl does not have a one side her, she is a complex individual, who challenged male dominance. Kawabata also creates a powerful image, yet his descriptions bear more resemblance to the former representations of the modern girl, such as Tayama Katai's *Futon*.

Chapter Six revealed that the female voice in Uno Chiyo's texts suggest a different reading of *moga*. A recurrent pattern in Uno's literary works is the exposition of the café waitress' true identity and the male gazer's disappointment

caused by this situation. This also demonstrates how the modern girl as an object of desire was exaggerated and the way her image was distorted due to the male gaze. However, the real modern girl with her sufferings, desires and experiences can be found within Uno's lines. Her intimate voice portrays the modern girl with her imperfections as well as her strong, positive aspects.

It was also seen that the female voice (Uno Chiyo) suggests the complexity of female desire and sexual liberation despite self-objectification occurs in her telling of her own story, whereas the male voice (Kawabata and Tanizaki) might seem as if it turns the modern girl into a sexual object. However, it is also important to note that Kawabata's novel introduces different types of women, and in Tanizaki's novels objectification performs in both ways. Rather than adopting sexist approach, the male authors' depictions tell the reader what the modern girl and modernism meant for the society at the time, a process which is both exciting and fearful.

This thesis has aimed to examine literary texts not through the lenses of literary traditions, nor the united notion of female authorship, but as texts produced within specific socio-historical context and gender issues, questioning what kind of a role objectification played in shaping *moga*'s image. I believe this study will contribute to Japanese Women's Studies in that, it wishes to bring a fresh approach to the case of *moga* by including literary texts in the discussion and open space for future discussions concerning representations of women in Japanese literature. It is suggested that the future studies should approach the modern girl adopting different perspectives and focus on literary studies, especially Japanese women's literature to explore the modern girl figure. This study chose relatively famous literary names, since it aimed to contribute to the existing discussions concerning Tanizaki's female characters, Uno's personal novels and victimization of *moga*. There are Japanese

female authors whose works have not been translated into English. Some of them are not popular in Japan, either. There are many names that remain unexplored, thus I believe future studies should take notice of such authors to fully comprehend the role modern girl played both in literary studies and Japanese society during the process of modernization.

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