

Little Women, *Anne of Green Gables*, *A Little Princess*, *Daddy-Long-Legs*, *Pollyanna*, and *Heidi*—for over one hundred years, these stories, though they originated in the West, have resonated with young female Japanese readers like no others. They have been repeatedly translated into Japanese, reprinted, adapted as animated television series and more, continuing to attract new audiences. The origin of Japanese girls' fiction, *shōjo* manga (girls' comics), and even anime can be traced back to these Western stories that inspired little girls, including future fiction writers and manga artists who grew up steeped in them.¹

The Japanese girls' fiction genre has gone through many transformations over the past century, repeatedly reshaping its themes and the images of its heroines. It has picked up and shed various attributes through the years, but at the core of today's sprawling Japanese girls' culture an evolving force consisting of a pattern of attitudes and processes has persisted. Sparked by girls' resistance against their oppressive fates as females in traditional Japan, this force originally manifested as a passive retreat into fantasy worlds and the attempt to maintain them beyond their practical limits. The strength of these reveries proved durable, generating attitudinal and practical changes in the lives of those they inspired. The soft power of this phenomenon, which continues to expand and advance through generations and throughout the larger culture, is a process we can identify as the "way of *shōjo*."

The "way of *shōjo*" traces back to the introduction of Western girls' stories into Meiji Japan. Great numbers of them were translated during this period, a time when Japan, having just exited its feudal period, was transforming into a modern nation. Wakamatsu Shizuko (1864–1896),² best known for her translation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, contributed greatly to the introduction of Western girls' fiction in Japan. One magazine that published her translations was *Jogaku zasshi* (Women's Education Journal),³ a Christian magazine founded by her husband Iwamoto Yoshiharu. Her original intention was to use these stories to introduce young women to the idea of the Western home and modern women's domestic roles. However, responding to the growing number of juvenile magazines in the late nineteenth century, she gradually widened her intended audience to include children.

Wakamatsu was entrusted with a girls' section in the magazine *Shōnen sekai* (Boys' World, founded in 1895), in which she wrote original fiction for girls. Kume Yoriko sees the birth of girls' fiction here, and states that Wakamatsu's literature—"a mixture of didacticism with fantasy and romance—is the precursor of the girls' fiction that emerged abundantly in the later era."⁴

The age of *shōjo* commenced with the creation of girls' magazines, which proliferated in the 1910s, corresponding with the increase in the number of girls' schools. Girls' magazines normally consisted of educational articles, fiction, and readers' pages. It was frequently a convention to indicate the genre category *shōjo shōsetsu* (girls' fiction), above the title of a story.⁵ Judging from the fact that boys' magazines did not feel it necessary to label the gender category of their stories, it seems the editors considered girl readers a subcategory that required special guidance and attention from adults and educators. Girls' fiction was used as a means to promote the *ryōsai kenbo* (Good Wife, Wise Mother) educational ideology, a national policy that was a conglomerate of the ideals of Western womanhood and Confucian female roles. Girl readers, nevertheless, were enthralled by girls' stories and embraced the publications, which they soon turned into their own cultural space. They communicated on the pages of the magazines via submissions of letters and compositions and constructed a girls' community. Some girls emerged as fiction writers from this magazine community. They each aspired to an ideal of girls' fiction suitable for readers of the new era. The result was a dynamic negotiation between authors' intentions and publishers' commercial goals. This book will follow the transformation and development of Japanese girls' magazines, investigating, in particular, the role girls' fiction played in the creation of modern girls' culture.

***Shōjo* Narrative Study**

"*Shōjo*," indicating adolescent girl, is a modern concept. The *Daijirin* dictionary defines *shōjo* as "girls of age between 7 or 8 to 15 or 16": in other words, school age. However, as many would agree, age is not a particularly important factor in defining this concept. The term *shōjo* should rather be understood as a cultural term, formed amid the give and take between modern educational policy and consumer culture. In premodern times, *shōjo* (少女) in kanji was also read as *otome*, which simply indicated the status of unmarried woman. When a girl started menstruation, she was viewed as a woman available for marriage. Later, with the rise of female education in Meiji, the term *shōjo*—female youth—became the counterpart of *shōnen* (少年), for male youth.⁶ *Shōjo* may be physically mature and recognized as capable of reproduction during this period, but they are temporarily

partitioned in the space of a school. As long as they are in this space, they are free from social obligations, including marriage. Ōtsuka Eiji states that *shōjo* are “exempt from all kinds of production,”⁷ including labor and reproduction. John Treat finds the idea of *shōjo* to be uniquely Japanese: “[I]n Japan, one might well argue that *shōjo* constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction.”⁸ Temporarily excused from social obligations, the culture allows girls to embrace freedom from gender normativity as well.

The study of *shōjo* narratives in Japan has encompassed a variety of approaches, ranging from examinations of their stylistic qualities to political and psychological analyses of their characters. Honda Masuko is regarded as a pioneer in the field of Japanese *shōjoron* (Girls’ Study).⁹ Her “Hirahira no keifu” (The Genealogy of *Hirahira*), published in 1982,¹⁰ explains the nature of girls’ narratives exemplified by fiction writer Yoshiya Nobuko’s sentimental prewar stories. According to Honda, Yoshiya’s stories are characterized by ephemeral imagery and motifs of flowers and “*hirahira*” (swaying) ribbons; fantasy that enables girl readers to divorce themselves from their social reality.

In order to gain entry to the world of the girl one must first engage with these “colors, fragrance and sounds.” These “signs” are not found in boys’ genres. . . . Boys’ culture has been granted a place in . . . [the] everyday order with terms such as “boys’ idealism” and “guts and grit drama.” Girls’ culture, on the other hand, has been excluded from all discussion. . . . As a result, the door of the world of *hirahira* has been closed to all except the girl. Girls have hidden themselves behind this door and let their dreams dance and sway within their closed room.¹¹

Girls’ fictional world advances different values from those of mainstream culture. Honda contends that the function of girls’ fiction is to provide fantasy to the girl audience, and that through reading fantasy stories, girls constantly resist joining the establishment.

Feminist and artist Miyasako Chizuru’s *Chōshōjo e* (Towards Super/Beyond-Girl) published in 1989,¹² however, expresses a different judgment on the flowery, frivolous aspects of *shōjo* culture. Miyasako looks at girls as real individuals who may stray outside the stereotype. She criticizes critics’ oversimplification in understanding girls’ culture.

Shōjo is systematically made. Honda Masuko only explains superficial aesthetics of the self-satisfactory world that is constructed upon the girls’ *hirahira* image. . . . Of course, humans are made up, too, and people are

forced to wear underwear called culture. It is not the aesthetic of *shōjo* culture that we should be discussing today. . . . *Shōjo* study should focus on *shōjo* by addressing today's women's situation.¹³

Miyasako asserts that *shōjoron* should contain “the message of women's liberation.”¹⁴ She considers that not all girls resemble *shōjo*, wearing ribbons and frills, but many of them in fact feel uncomfortable with the stereotypical *shōjo* image. She calls those who cannot accept the conventional image of *shōjo*, *hishōjo* (non-*shōjo*), insisting that these *shōjo* need to be the focus of study.

Yokokawa Sumiko points out that critics attempt to assign a single quality to *shōjo* narratives, as their arguments are sometimes based on binary oppositions such as feminine versus nonfeminine or political versus nonpolitical, debates that merely essentialize the notion of *shōjo*.¹⁵ Literary critic Takahara Eiri's “Shōjogata ishiki”¹⁶ (“The Consciousness of the Girl”), a chapter in his *Shōjo ryōiki* (The Territory of the Girl) published in 1999, introduces a fresh approach to *shōjo* study. He proposes to interpret *shōjo* in terms of attitudes or psyche. Taking works from beyond the boundaries of girls' fiction, written by both male and female authors, in which young women appear as central characters as examples, he addresses *shōjo* characters' propensity for rebellion against the patriarchal system and heterosexual normativity. He coins the psyche of these heroines, as well as that of the writers and readers, “*shōjo* consciousness,” characterizing it with the ideas of “freedom and arrogance.”¹⁷ Takahara finds the origin of *shōjo* consciousness in the Taishō era (1912–1926), manifested first among young women of the middle and privileged classes, proposing that this consciousness “defied both the national hegemony and economic rationalism.”¹⁸ He contends that *shōjo* consciousness is a mode of thinking not confined to girls; therefore, it can be exhibited by men, as well. Takahara's book avoids girls' fiction published in the girls' magazine medium because female gender is premised and normalized in the magazines. Tomoko Aoyama considers that Takahara's theory—*shōjo* as a mode of thinking—can be a “‘strategy’ to deal with real and important issues.”¹⁹ In her “The Genealogy of the ‘Girl’ Critic Reading Girls,” she includes Takahara in the ranks of critics who provide their own unique approaches to the reading of the girl that contest the conventional, patriarchal critical literary framework.²⁰

Girls' magazine studies have placed emphasis on readers and the content of magazines, but the personal circumstances of the authors who served as cohorts in the development of magazine culture surely influenced the ideas transmitted by the stories, and therefore are worthy of our attention. One of the goals of this book is to investigate the *shōjo* mentality of these authors and how they expressed

it in their stories, expanding the concept beyond Takahara's idea of girls' consciousness. Within the controlled space of magazines, the authors' management of their desires and their educational responsibilities is evident. The girls' genre has been trivialized as being comprised of immature stories for children. However, the low social status of girls allowed authors to deal with socially prohibited opinions and taboos behind the cloak of girls' "immature" narratives. This book will investigate the politics of authors who wrote stories by taking advantage of the social marginality of *shōjo*.

Summary of Chapters

American author Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women* is one of the seeds from which the entire history of Japanese *shōjo* fiction grew. Chapter 1 is an examination of the first Japanese translation of *Little Women*, which could be considered the first American work to focus on young adult women.²¹ This domestic fiction, published in America at the same time as Japan's Meiji restoration, was translated into Japanese with the title *Shōfujin* (Little Ladies) in 1906, and was regarded as an educational book that taught the marrow of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideology. The story follows the development of four sisters who, under the guidance of their wise mother, correct their flaws as they grow into women. Using the vehicle of the Western author's voice, the young female apprentice translator was able to transmit her own dreams and desires. We will examine how she was able to allow *Little Women's* ambitious heroine Jo March to become a writer at the end of the story, despite how extraordinary this achievement would seem in the conservative culture of Meiji Japan. Over the years, *Little Women* was repeatedly translated into Japanese and serialized in girls' magazines. Each time the portrayal of Jo March was slightly calibrated to fit the audience, and editorial goals, of the period, but the strong, unconventional Jo has always appealed to young female readers and has become a *shōjo* prototype of Japanese girls' fiction, a literary heroine for young female writers.

Jo motivated many young girls who would later become professional writers themselves. They took their first steps into this world as readers and contributing fans of magazines such as *Shōjo sekai* (Girls' World) magazine,²² which launched in the same year the translation of *Little Women* was published. Chapter 2 examines this magazine and its role in the formation of girls' culture, or *shōjo bunka*. With "Good Wife, Wise Mother" as its educational tenet, this magazine intended to nurture schoolgirls into future domestic women. Editor in chief Numata Rippō, however, also urged young girls to understand the preciousness of the adolescent

period they were going through. He attempted to develop ideals for the new concept *shōjo*, and proffered them to his readers in the hope of assisting their smooth growth without being pressured by their future responsibilities. In order to create a family-like atmosphere, he often organized readers' gatherings; a group of enterprising girls, including Kitagawa Chiyo, Yoshiya Nobuko, and Morita Tama, who met at one such get-together soon founded a book reading club and published booklets. These talented young girls eventually flew from his nest to become fiction writers.

The girls' fiction genre was still developing in the 1920s, and writers were trying to come up with suitable material for adolescent girls. Chapter 3 will follow two of the above-mentioned aspiring writers, Yoshiya and Kitagawa, and look at how they contributed to the momentum and diversification of girls' fiction. Although Yoshiya and Kitagawa emerged from the same circle of girls, they each found their own areas of interest and cultivated individual themes and writing styles. Yoshiya depicted tales of same-sex love in her sentimental writings and provided young readers with romantic dreams. Kitagawa wrote about the reality of working-class girls in simple undecorated language, teaching readers about the class inequality of society. Despite their differences, however, Yoshiya and Kitagawa were both motivated by discontent with a society that exploited women, girls, children, and the socially weak. Yoshiya's escapism was a sign of resistance against patriarchy, and Kitagawa's harsh stories about helpless girls were critiques of the class system. Diversity in the genre of girls' fiction pushed girls' magazines forward to further prosperity.

Chapter 4 shifts focus from magazine stories to literary works targeted at a wider audience. Semi-autobiographical works by Yoshiya and Morita display the influence of *Seitō* (Bluestocking), the first Japanese feminist group. This group was born in 1911, and the magazine *Seitō* members published became an arena in which feminist dialogues took place about such ideas as marriage, sexuality, and motherhood. The power of these "new women" stimulated young girls like Yoshiya and Morita. Yoshiya's *Yaneura no nishojo* (Two Virgins in the Attic) and Morita's *Ishikari Otome* (Ishikari Maiden) portray young girls' struggles in patriarchal culture. In these works, heroines refuse to submit to gender normativity or their predefined future roles. They eventually find ways to develop into women without extinguishing their *shōjo* spirits. The words *otome* and *shojo* (*shojo* meaning maiden or virgin, as distinct from *shōjo* meaning "girl"), included in the story titles and both indicating maidenhood, imply the heroines' pledge to be faithful to their *shōjo* identity and the declaration of a modern womanhood different from the conventional. While these stories contain elements of the girls' fiction observed

in girls' magazines, the application of *Seitō* feminist discourses can be perceived as well. The examination of these works reveals the potential of girls' fiction to be elevated to *shōjo* literature possessed of political and artistic distinction.

Eventually, dark clouds cast their shadow over the landscape of girls' culture. In 1938, the National Mobilization Law was issued and magazines were obliged to support the war. The role of print media was critical in the government's effort to gain the public's support of the war, and tremendous pressure was placed on girls' magazines. Chapter 5 will look at the transformation of *Shōjo no tomo* (Girls' Friend),²³ which was the most popular girls' magazine in the 1930s. Yoshiya Nobuko and future Nobel Prize recipient Kawabata Yasunari were star writers for this magazine, and emerging illustrator Nakahara Jun'ichi's contributions added to the magazine's flowery and modern air. As the war situation intensified, however, the magazine was forced to wipe fantasy and Western images from its pages, and instead to publish war propaganda. The readers, editor, and writers were initially confused and frustrated, but they eventually succumbed to war culture. For example, although Yoshiya alleged the peaceful nature of women and opposed male violence in her stories, she cooperated with the government's efforts to colonize Asia during the war. Other writers ended up collaborating with the government as well. Kawabata Yasunari, who had worked for children's education, eventually became a promoter of Japanese-language education in Japan's colonies throughout Asia during the war. Kitagawa Chiyo and her contemporary Tsuboi Sakae, both socialists, came to support the military state through their stories published in *Shōjo kurabu* (Girls' Club), which instructed girls how to contribute to the war through labor. The image of a dreamy *shōjo* was transformed into a *gunkoku shōjo*, a girl of the military nation.

The war ended with the defeat of Japan in August 1945. On the world stage it was the end of the old and the beginning of the new, and the same applied to the realm of girls' culture as the next generation decided its direction. The allied forces led by the United States of America occupied Japan to rehabilitate the Japanese. Media was utilized to introduce American democratic values into Japanese society, and girls' magazines were no exception. Chapter 6 will examine *Himawari* (Sunflower),²⁴ a girls' magazine founded by Nakahara Jun'ichi, the beloved illustrator from the prewar era. Respected writers and educators, including Yoshiya (who wrote an inaugural essay), Kawabata, and Muraoka Hanako (who is famous for her translation of *Anne of Green Gables*) joined the magazine. The stories and articles mirror some of the writers' ambivalent feelings toward the American presence in Japan and its influence; they knew that it was necessary for Japan to change, but could not help lament the disappearance of old culture. Kawabata's

Hana to kosuzu (Flower and Small Bell) is saturated with his escapist nostalgia for the purity and beauty of traditional Japan through the portrayal of a melancholic young dancing girl. But contrary to the reluctant adults, girl readers, who welcomed American culture, proceeded enthusiastically toward the new Japan. The sales of *Himawari*, a magazine that had been an arena in which the writers and editors struggled through the acceptance of Japan's Western future, declined, and it ceased publication in 1952, the last year of the occupation.

With the passing of a few decades, the wheel turned again, and a new generation of young female writers, arising from the ranks of magazine readers as had their forebears, shifted from wholeheartedly embracing to critically examining the state of their new society. Chapter 7 will look at girls' fiction written in the 1980s, an era that was called the "women's age." Shūeisha's *Cobalt* magazine²⁵ was originally created to celebrate the increasing independence of and career opportunities for women. Although the new social and economic strength of women, approaching materialistic extremes, gained attention in the media, in reality young women were still bound by the notion of traditional Japanese family and pressured by their families to marry. Himuro Saeko, who wrote many stories for *Cobalt* and its book series, was one such woman.²⁶ Her *Za chenji* (The Change) and *Nante suteki ni japanesuku* (How Splendid Japanesque) could be read as her reactions to traditional female gender roles and social conventions. She shifts the setting of her stories to the distant past of the Heian period but satirizes the new excess, as well as the persistent conservativeness, of contemporary Japanese society, filtered through the cultural sense of 1980s girls. Her works were entertaining and funny; they were written in colloquial language and accompanied by illustrations that could be enjoyed much like those in *shōjo* manga. These features function to mitigate the harshness of her social criticism, becoming important features of the evolving *shōjo* literary style.

The way of *shōjo*, surviving several variations to its form, had persisted on the pages of girls' magazines for the better part of a century, nurturing and influencing women writers even outside the girls literature domain and beyond the topic of young girlhood. Chapter 8 looks at mainstream writer Tanabe Seiko, an ardent fan of Yoshiya Nobuko who had immersed herself in girls' magazine culture in her youth. Her *Ubazakari* (Blooming Old Woman) series of short story collections gives us an opportunity to investigate the influence that girls' culture and fiction have provided Tanabe in her writing. At seventy-six years of age, the series heroine Yamamoto Utako is no child, but elderly women have some commonalities with young girls; *shōjo* and *rōjo* (elderly women) are both treated as marginal beings in society. Although she herself lives comfortably, Utako's role is to be a listener

for those who suffer at home due to the heavy domestic responsibilities that aged women shoulder in the present modern family system. Humor, supporting the fantasy of Utako's fortunate and idealized lifestyle in contrast with others in her social group, is utilized as Tanabe's literary tool to vividly criticize Japanese cultural conventions. As in the stories that had come before, fantasy is used to mitigate the harshness of the commentary on society by characters on its periphery.

The notion of *shōjo*, which was "discovered" at the turn of the twentieth century with the introduction of Western girls' education, has developed and diversified in meaning in today's consumer culture. *Shōjo* culture is no longer owned by schoolgirls, but is appreciated by women of all generations. Clothing and goods bearing illustrations and designs of Nakahara Jun'ichi are purchased even today by women of all ages. Prince Edward Island in Canada, the travel destination for fans of *Anne of Green Gables*, is even more popular among mothers and daughters because of the 2014 NHK morning television drama *Hanako to An* (Hanako and Anne).²⁷ A 2014–2016 exhibition tour of the *shōjo* manga magazine *Margaret* (founded in 1963 by Shūeisha)²⁸ was a tremendous success; women young and old swarmed to its venues. These phenomena suggest that the *shōjo* imagination cultivated in girls stays with them forever. *Shōjo* culture has served as an important realm that allows girls and women to explore thoughts and ideas that are alternative, radical, revolutionary, and fun. Girls' narratives, which have constantly exhibited values different from the mainstream, have influenced women's culture, art, and literature. This book will showcase the coherent historical and cultural trajectory of Japanese girls' magazine culture. We will start with the dawn of the age of *shōjo*, observing its eventual growth beyond boundaries of time and place.