Final scenes: “The technique of literary expressionism: by transcending spatial and temporal logic in order to objectify inner experience, Kawabata seems to have successfully described an otherwise inexpressibly complex state of mind.”
--Araki, “Kawabata and His Snow Country.” 348

“Shōichi Saeki . . . interprets the novel’s concluding sentence as a passage symbolizing a sexual union with the greater universe.”
--Araki, “Kawabata and His Snow Country.” 348

“The vision of the distraught Komako rushing to embrace the body of Yoko, burned in the fire, has all the power, and all the intensity, of a powerful nō drama. And, as in the nō, such a final moment of intensity serves to show the innermost layer of emotion that makes up the character of the personage portrayed, a summation of the dramatic purposes of the whole. And, like the nō, Kawabata’s structure serves to emphasize the deepest roots of personality in the central character rather than to increase tensions between characters in the narrative: the tension remains internal.”
--Rimer, Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions. 174

“As the Milky Way repeats its see-saw motion of coming down to engulf Shimamura and then scooping him up into itself, something significant happens. The last sentence of the novel reads, ‘and the Milky Way flowed down inside him with a roar.’ What is striking in the sentence is that in inversion of distance, perspective, and size has taken place: now Shimamura is larger than the Milky Way. He has become the Milky Way. Whereas the horizontal movement begins with a very slow tempo and on a large scale, and ends with a faster rhythm on a smaller scale, the vertical movement begins with a sure, unhurried tempo and on a somewhat small scale, then terminates with a greatly accelerated speed but with a scope that encompasses heaven and earth. The effect of these two movements on the reader is to draw him into an extended pattern of a slow and easy tempo at first, and then, when their scales suddenly change and their tempos quicken, the reader’s grip on temporal and spatial perspectives is broken. In other words, these movements are designed to break down our normal, firmly structure image of reality. They condition our reality reflexes so that we may accept a world where Shimamura is free to vacillate between heaven and earth and where he can absorb the Milky Way, which itself has already absorbed Komako and Yoko.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 262

“Although the mirror and the movement patterns liquefy reality enough to permit the fusion of distinct elements, the fire in the final scene probably plays the most vital part in this process. The most obvious effect of the fire is to liquefy the snow. . . . The world ‘melting in the quotation is yurumu, or ‘loosen,’ in the original. It is interesting to note that the author twice during this scene uses the same word in reference to Komako’s hairdo.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 262

“We may also note that, though by her fall from the burning warehouse Yoko is abruptly thrust into the up-and-down movement, seemingly in place of Komako, the female lead role in the fire scene is undeniably neither Komako nor Yoko, but the Milky Way, which seems to combine Komako’s nearness and Yoko’s remoteness.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 262, n. 11

“The fire brings about vivid sensations”: olfactory, auditory. “the fire inspires inanimate objects with life, for Shimamura sees that ‘the low, dark houses along the street seemed to be breathing as they floated up in the light of the fire and faded again.’”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 262-263

“The fire scene likewise loosens the time framework by thrusting the future and the past into the present.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 263

“Besides reversing time sequences, the fire also has the effect of suspending life and death. . . . Just as earlier it did not occur to Shimamura that it was impolite to stare at the girl reflected in the train window, because he was charmed by the unreal, other-worldly power of the window-mirror, which so shaped everyday reality that he could enjoy it as a purely aesthetic experience, so now the fire produces the same effect on Shimamura: it has stopped the passage of time, and with it the conventional polarity between life and death.”
“Thus, by confusing our sense of space and time, such devices of Kawabata as the mirror, the oscillating movements, and the fire liquefy our survival-oriented world. Once inside this fluid state a pure aesthetic experience becomes possible.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 264

“The instant at which intense and complete union of the three characters takes place comes when the vertical-horizontal movements reach a sudden climax in the twitch in Yoko’s leg. Komako’s scream and Yoko’s spasm produce in Shimamura an unusual pair of simultaneous ‘motions’: ‘The scream stabbed him through. At the spasm in Yoko’s leg a chill passed down his spine to his very feet. His heart was pounding in an undefinable anguish.’ Only after this union does Shimamura become ready for a union of a much greater dimension, union with the Milky Way. It is a kind of union made possible only when Shimamura demands the purest of experiences, through mirror, not through raw reality.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 264

“Kawabata . . . rejects this artificial separation of things instituted by us for the sake of survival. He sees all things as organically related. He refuses to recognize any division among things – the animate and the inanimate, man and beast, man and plant. He sees the world as one gigantic flow of a river. Thus he uses various devices to enable his reader to see things in this state of flux, so that the reader may gain experience of the basic life-force pervading the universe. One can almost say that Kawabata is anxious to reduce the rational world to its primeval stage so that his reader may be allowed a glimpse of the beauty of life no longer marred by rational compartments. This is why Kawabata takes advantage of dualities in order to eliminate them, since they are the fundamental division of things. Tokyo versus snow country, snow versus fire, sky versus earth, the past versus the future, man versus woman – these opposites are exploited until in the end they all merge into the single experience of the Milky Way roaring into Shimamura.”
--Tsuruta, “Flow Dynamics,” 264-265

[Fire scene] “If she were a wife or a prostitute, she would just watch Yoko lying on the ground, as Shimamura and other villagers do. What she actually does is to ‘break away’ from Shimamura, run toward the fire, and hold the unconscious girl at her breast. Komako has entered the final stage of her metamorphosis.”
--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 85

“The Milky Way, now as the Woman [affects Shimamura profoundly] for the power of primitive nature is less intellectual, more immediate. It can flow down inside a person with a roar, even when that person is an atheist.”
--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 87

“. . . what redeems Komako is neither a Judeo-Christian nor a Buddhist nor a Shinto scheme of salvation, but a more primitive scheme that was the origin of all these religions. It may be viewed as a religion of primitive, wild nature which is symbolized in the image of the Milky Way near the end of Snow Country. . . . The nuns Shimamura saw were living in the mountains of the snow country. Komako, too, runs toward the mountains, leaving Shimamura behind, when the fire breaks out; and on those mountains the Milky Way is falling. Shimamura feels ‘a terrible voluptuousness’ in the Milky Way, as if it were coming down to ‘wrap the night earth in its naked embrace’ (165). If the Milky Way is coming to be the Woman for Shimamura, that transformation must have been initiated by Komako who is running toward it. Komako is merging with primitive nature, dedicating her womanhood to it. After the dedication, she will be a woman without womanhood: a nun.”
--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 87

Fire scene: “Yoko is an embodiment of virginity which Komako has lost – or, which she has sacrificed for Yukio’s sake and for Shimamura’s sake. Yoko, as such, is a painful reminder for Komako of what she has lost. Komako is a nun who holds, and will keep holding, that painful reminder in her arms.”
--Ueda, “The Virgin, the Wife, and the Nun,” 87