

# Beyond the Facade: Exploring Haruno Yukinoshita's Fragile Quest for Authenticity

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## Abstract

Forged through meticulous character analysis, this paper challenges the Oregairu community's tendency to dismiss Haruno Yukinoshita as a manipulative or aggravating figure, unveiling an elusive gem—a fragile girl aching to break free yet shadowed by fear, yearning for a genuine soul, perhaps Hachiman Hikigaya, or her own strength to roam the unknown forever. Through the light novel (Volumes 1-14), anime (Seasons 1-3), and Zoku game, it blends psychological and lyrical lenses to probe her cynicism, vulnerability, and passion, enriched by her fraught bond with Yukino (see Appendix), revealing a capacity for fierce loyalty and radiant devotion that beckons readers to cherish her intricate beauty.

## Note

This paper assumes familiarity with prior events in *Yahari Ore no Seishun Love Comedy wa Machigatteiru* (light novel Volumes 1-14, anime Seasons 1-3, Zoku game, and Haruno's character song "自由の色") for optimal understanding. Song analysis is available in the Appendix.

## 1 Introduction

Haruno Yukinoshita emerges in *Oregairu* as a study in paradox, her poised exterior as a socialite (conscientiousness: 85) belying a fragile soul beyond her facade, desperate for rescue (neuroticism: 60). Often misjudged as manipulative, she reveals vulnerability in subtle flusters, such as trembling at Hachiman's ski wear praise, a reaction masking a deeper fear of exposure rooted in a childhood of conditional love (Watari, Volume 11). Drawn to Hachiman's raw honesty—a stark contrast to the masked pretenses she navigates daily—she yearns for an authentic spark—his or her own—her Fearful-Avoidant heart torn between terror and longing, her brilliance poised for liberation. This complexity extends to her fraught relationship with her younger sister Yukino, a dynamic of rivalry, manipulation, and unspoken love shaped by their affluent, expectation-laden family. This paper explores Haruno's multifaceted character, blending resilience with vulnerability and disdain with desire, through the Big Five traits, attachment theory, her bond with Yukino, and her song "自由の色" (see Appendix), arguing she embodies a tragic romantic seeking boundless redemption through genuine connection.

## 2 The Mask of Perfection: Haruno's Outer Strength and Inner Fragility

Haruno projects impeccable competence, a reflection of her high conscientiousness (Big Five: 85), honed by Japan's perfectionist culture and the collectivist pressure of filial piety that demands subsuming her desires for family honor. Her orchestration of the cultural festival with precision (Season 1, Episode 10) and adept social navigation epitomize the elder Yukinoshita ideal, a role she embodies as the golden child of a wealthy, influential family—her father a successful businessman and politician, her mother a stern enforcer of legacy (Watari, Volume 11). Yet this polished exterior forms a gilded cage shaped by unchosen obligations—a panopticon of scrutiny where every move is watched and judged (Foucault, 1975). Watari hints she was once the family heiress, only to be sidelined—perhaps through rebellion or perceived inadequacy—leaving her stranded between freedom and constraint, her sacrifices of real feelings and autonomy a silent toll of her role as the perfect vessel for her lineage's ambitions (Volume 14). This burden is mirrored in her sister Yukino, the younger daughter perpetually in Haruno's shadow, yet Haruno's own entrapment complicates her seeming flawlessness. Her song "自由の色" captures this in its opening lament, "自分なんてねえ、どこにあるの?" ("Where am I, really?"), a cry of a lost identity beneath her mask, her conscientiousness serving as a shield she cannot shed (see Appendix). Unlike Yukino, who finds solace in Hachiman and Yui, Haruno remains isolated, her university life devoid of companionship, a solitude accentuated by her moderate neuroticism (Big Five: 60) and evident in her wistful gaze as Yukino asserts autonomy (Season 2, Episode 7)—a gaze tinged with both envy and a buried wish for her sister's liberation from the same familial chains that bind her.

## 3 Cynicism and Envy: The Roots of Haruno's Disdain

Haruno's cynicism, mirroring Hachiman's own (low agreeableness: 35), cuts through pretense with precision, a worldview forged in her early years by an upbringing steeped in family expectations, her failure to shield Yukino from their mother's cold pragmatism (Watari, Volume 11), and Hayato's superficial veneer (Watari, Volume 13)—a fakeness she grew to despise as a daily masquerade she could not escape. Her sharp intellect (openness: 75) recoiled from people even then, viewing most as shallow or insincere, her critical nature rejecting the facades around her. This disdain extends to her family dynamics: raised alongside Yukino in a home where their stern mother prioritized legacy over individuality and their distant father offered unspoken expectations, Haruno became the "perfect" daughter—charismatic and talented—while Yukino bore the brunt of comparison and bullying in her youth. Haruno's resentment toward Hayato, who failed to protect Yukino from that torment despite his social sway, burns beneath her playful exterior, a rare crack revealing her protective love twisted by her own powerlessness (Watari, Volume 11). She keeps others at arm's length—her cheekier side reserved for rare ties like Hachiman and Hiratsuka, not her family, where formality reigns—her guarded stance a lifelong habit born from these early betrayals and the relentless pressure to embody perfection (I). This fuels her ruthless testing of authenticity, as seen in her orchestration of the school festival Sagami incident (Season 1, Episodes 9-10) and her persistent challenges to the Hachiman, Yukino, and Yui trio (Season 3, Episode 4). Labeling their dynamic "codependency"—a harmony she scorns as illusory—she envies its warmth, a connection her Fearful-Avoidant heart struggles to replicate, her meddling a quest for the "genuine" she idealizes yet rarely finds. Her envy of Yukino's freedom simmers beneath her sharp remark, "I've always hated how you

act superior”(Season 3, Episode 4), and surfaces in her silence during Yukino’s election speech (Season 2, Episode 7), a muted yearning for a liberation she couldn’t secure for either of them, pushing Yukino’s growth as a vicarious pursuit of what she lacks (Watari, Volume 12).

## 4 Yearning for the Real: Haruno’s Draw to Hachiman

Hachiman Hikigaya emerges as a beacon in Haruno’s shadowed existence, his unpolished honesty igniting her curiosity (openness: 75) as a rare crack in the facade-laden world she inhabits. His concealed compassion, evident in his self-sacrificial acts (Watari, Volume 6), and steadfast resistance to her machinations (Watari, Volume 12) captivate her, blending her extraversion (70) with the tension of her Fearful-Avoidant attachment. This inner conflict manifests in her neuroticism (60), trembling subtly in their interactions, such as the charged kiss in Zoku (Zoku game). She engages him through calculated probes—stirring tensions in Kyoto (Watari, Volume 9) and drawing near at the Christmas event (Season 2, Episode 11)—her song’s plea, “レプリカ揃いの日々を抜け出して”(“Break free from these replica days”), reflecting her frustration with a fake life she longs to escape, a yearning Hachiman’s realness amplifies (see Appendix). This draw contrasts with her complex bond with Yukino, whose reliance on Hachiman Haruno both mocks—teasing her dependence during the Christmas event (Season 2, Episode 11)—and envies, admiring the autonomy he fosters in her sister, a support Haruno couldn’t offer during Yukino’s bullied past (II). In Zoku’s Haruno route, this desire intensifies across three kisses: a light kiss marking a tentative step, a charged kiss delivered in shadowed intimacy with a husky whisper—where she leaps into him with deep fervor—binding him to her, and a final deep kiss on a bed, pulling him close for further intimacy (Zoku game). These moments, punctuated by her trembling grip in the twilight bridge scene, amplify the subtle yearnings muted in the main narrative, revealing a passion tempered by fragility. Hachiman labels her “scary”(Watari, Volume 10), a nod to her daunting intellect and fierce attachment, yet their shared cynicism—unlike Hayato’s polished veneer that failed Yukino—forges a profound, unspoken bond, a stark contrast to the superficiality she loathes (II).

## 5 Flirtatious Pursuit: Haruno’s Romantic Spark Ignites

Haruno’s attraction to Hachiman weaves a complex thread of tension through her psyche, her neuroticism (60) casting a shadow over an ardent romantic interest that sparks early in *Ore-gairu*’s narrative—a fascination with qualities she deems worthy amidst a world of masks. This interest ignites during the cultural festival (Volume 6, Season 1, Episodes 9-11), where Hachiman defends Yukino from Sagami’s incompetent leadership, taking the blame for the unfinished closure after Sagami abandons her duties—an act of twisted loyalty and selflessness that contrasts sharply with Hayato’s inaction, who, bound by his need to be everyone’s perfect favorite, fails to shield Yukino from bullies (Volume 11). Hachiman’s willingness to wound Sagami’s pride to protect Yukino showcases a raw intelligence, dependability, and authenticity—qualities Hayato’s polished facade lacks—surprising Haruno as a rare glimpse of the genuine companion she craves (II), embodying loyalty in a way her high conscientiousness (85) yearns to mirror (V). This moment also underscores her resentment toward Hayato’s past betrayal of Yukino, deepening her pull toward Hachiman’s steadfastness—a quality she couldn’t provide her sister (II). From their first meeting, her lingering gaze (Watari, Volume 1) hints at curiosity, a subtle flicker that grows in Volume 7’s Bonus Track Drama CD, where Komachi playfully lists Haruno as a romance candidate alongside Yukino and Yui; Haruno leaps at the suggestion with

enthusiasm, proposing she'd pair up as Hachiman's girlfriend and adding she'd love a sister like Komachi—her eagerness hinting at a longing to intertwine her life with Hachiman's, both romantically and familially (VII). In Kyoto, she teases his “gentlemanly” aid to Yukino (Watari, Volume 9), lingering close—a playful probe that escalates in Volume 10, where she boldly offers to be his girlfriend in the donut shop (Watari, Volume 10), calling him “cute,” deeming him “too good for Yukino,” and lamenting he's “wasted on those who don't treasure his genuineness”—her extraversion (70) weaving invitations she's too proud to state outright, urging him to probe deeper, though his fear keeps him wary (Watari, Volume 10). Her remark, “We're both unable to get drunk”(Season 3, Episode 2), doubles as a critical jab and flirtatious lure: she scorns the irrational haze of alcohol—disgusted by fake camaraderie and pointless chatter it breeds among “random people”—her conscientiousness and analytical mind (openness: 75) rejecting such surrender, yet with Hachiman, she hints at a shared depth, an invitation to drink together and test each other's walls (Season 3, Episode 11). These moments trace an escalating romantic interest, driven by her fascination with Hachiman's contrast to the superficiality she loathes, setting the stage for deeper longing (IVb).

## 6 Vulnerable Longing: Haruno's Romantic Core Unveiled

Haruno's romantic pursuit of Hachiman peaks as she reveals a vulnerability, yearning for a genuine bond that challenges her guarded nature. In Season 3, Episode 8, at Yukino's apartment, she wears short shorts and a tank top, relaxing with Hachiman, Yukino, and Yui—a casualness unseen with anyone, especially her family, bound by affluent norms of ladylike behavior. Waiting outside to ambush Hachiman, she calls their exit a “secret date,” clasping his hand and leaning on his shoulder, her playful intimacy signaling a rare crack in her guarded shell. This vulnerability persists across her story: she confesses her life as a “sham” spent “lying to herself” in the novel and anime (Watari, Volume 14; Season 3, Episode 11), a constant struggle, and pleads, “Will you save me?” and “Will you help me?” in the novel, anime, and Zoku game (e.g., Volume 14; Season 3, Episode 11; Zoku game), an intrinsic trait of fragility she carries—one she subtly shares with Yukino, whose own pleas for independence Haruno both fosters and tests (II). In Zoku's Haruno route, this trait fuels a distinct arc: as Hachiman digs deeper into her world, their bond blossoms into romance, culminating in a deep kiss and further intimacy (Zoku game)—her conscientiousness (85) driving fierce loyalty built on his genuineness (IVa). When Hachiman attends a high school reunion with Yukino, Yui, and Totsuka without her, she learns of it later, her neuroticism (60) flaring into jealousy, craving his attention. At home, she complains gently, her warmth revealing how much she values him; with a knowing smile, she lets it slip, their trust unshaken (VII). This trust overrides envy with love, her Fearful-Avoidant heart easing into security—a trust she couldn't extend to Yukino's past, yet now mirrors in her sister's growth (II). In Zoku, his “bitter” chocolate choice sparks a shy surprise—she hesitates, a faint blush betraying her delight at his unexpected thoughtfulness, a sign of his sincerity piercing her cynicism. His ski wear praise flusters her—she dismisses it as “lies” despite a glow, her rare stumble exposing a heart softened by his genuine regard (Zoku game). These moments, subtle yet pivotal, reveal how Hachiman's authenticity unlocks her romantic core, amplifying her longing for a real connection (III). She muses about needing “someone to save her” (Season 3, Episode 10), deflecting Hachiman's probing with pained evasion, her song's “差し伸べた手を遠ざけても心はそれを望んでいるね”(“Even if I push away the outstretched hand, my heart craves it”) capturing this tension (see Appendix). Haruno's journey lays bare a fragile longing for a real connection, tempered by devotion.

## 7 The Elegance Beneath: Haruno's Latent Brilliance

Beyond her provocative exterior, Haruno reveals a profound depth, nurturing Yukino's autonomy (Watari, Volume 12), mourning Hachiman's burdens, and forming authentic bonds with a select few—Hachiman and Hiratsuka chief among them—her cheekier side reserved for rare moments with them, not her family, a mirror to her suppressed rebellion (IVa). Shizuka Hiratsuka, a confidante from their drinking outings, observes Haruno's rare openness toward Hachiman, a shift from her guarded norm she deems progress, though Haruno—still unable to “get drunk” and unload—deflects: “Prying won't get you married,” shielding her core like a fortress under siege (Season 3; Zoku game). In the Volume 7 Drama CD, discussing preferred pets, she chooses dogs for their “loyalty and obedience,” reflecting her distrust of people (II) and a longing for reliability—traits her conscientiousness (85) projects onto Hachiman (IVa)—hinting at a brilliance poised for devotion. This choice also echoes her protective rage toward Hayato, who failed to embody such loyalty for Yukino during her bullied past, a failure Haruno couldn't rectify due to her own distance and familial constraints (II). Her character song “自由の色” unveils this richness, its lyrics illuminating her introspective potential:

- “自分なんてねえ、どこにあるの?” (“Where am I, really?”) reflects her lost identity beneath the mask, a question underscoring her gilded cage (I) and the fragility her brilliance seeks to overcome—shared with Yukino's own shadowed past (II).
- “差し伸べた手を遠ざけても心はそれを望んでいるね” (“Even if I push away the outstretched hand, my heart craves it”) mirrors her Fearful-Avoidant yearning—evident in her trembling with Hachiman (IVb) and her manipulative pushes for Yukino's growth (II)—a tension her latent brilliance could resolve through trust.
- “歪でもいい” (“Even if it's distorted”) suggests an acceptance of her flaws, a strength her brilliance hints at, poised to bloom if she embraces Hachiman's authenticity (IVb) or her own resolve, perhaps even for Yukino's sake.
- “絶対的な存在に揺るがないオリジナル欲しくて” (“Craving an unshakable, absolute original”) captures her longing for a true self, a brilliance her conscientiousness (85) could forge into fierce loyalty unbound by her family's past (I), a freedom she vicariously seeks through Yukino (II).

These lines, with “キミ” as her inner self (see Appendix), reveal a reflective struggle her high conscientiousness promises to resolve: with Hachiman, her teasing softens into charm and her trust deepens into devotion as her Fearful-Avoidant attachment eases (IVb); with self-realization, she could fully bloom, her passion a radiant force breaking free from her past constraints—a liberation she couldn't secure for Yukino but now supports through her own complex love (I, II).

## 8 Thematic Resonance: Haruno and the Quest for Genuineness

Haruno's arc resonates with *Oregairu*'s theme of pursuing authenticity, a quest illuminated by her reliance on Hachiman to probe her deficits and desires, her allure a poignant yearning for the “genuine” forged in youth—family duty, Yukino's betrayal by Hayato's inaction, and his

fakeness (Watari, Volume 11)—not adulthood’s shadow. Through Yukino and Yui’s narration, Haruno is often cast as a manipulative figure—Yukino sees her sister’s teasing as a relentless exposure of her flaws (Season 2, Episode 11), while Yui perceives her meddling as disruptive (Season 3, Episode 4)—yet this view oversimplifies Haruno’s motivations, painting her as a villain when she’s not wholly “bad.” Her manipulation, like goading Yukino during the prom arc (Season 3) or mocking her reliance on Hachiman (Season 2), stems from a twisted love—she pushes Yukino to break free from their family’s mold, a freedom Haruno herself couldn’t claim, constrained by her role as the perfect daughter (I). Her failure to shield Yukino from childhood bullying—due to age, distance, or their parents’ emphasis on self-reliance (II)—left her with an inadequacy she masks with a carefree facade, a weakness her rage at Hayato betrays (II). This isn’t cruelty but a desperate bid to toughen Yukino, rooted in regret for her past inaction and envy of Yukino’s chance to defy their mother’s control, a chance Haruno never took (II). Yet this personal struggle, laden with guilt and unfulfilled sisterly duty, does not fully define her quest—it merely shapes the lens through which she seeks a deeper truth. Some might misattribute her motivations to a fear of shallow adult relationships, but her disdain—evident in rejecting drunken fakeness (Season 3, Episode 2)—and her high openness (75) reflect a pursuit of depth forged in the crucible of early disillusionment, not a late reaction to temporal pressures, her sacrifices a testament to a lifelong trap rather than a newfound dread (I). Her cynicism, honed by childhood betrayals and an intellect that saw through facades (II), far outweighs any mere amplification by adulthood; her quest predates and transcends such fears, driven by a lifelong idealization of authenticity she seeks through Hachiman—fully realized in Zoku’s candid talks (IVb)—a living antithesis to the masks she loathes (III). She muses to Hachiman that “growing up means making sacrifices” (Watari, Volume 14)—her own sacrifices of freedom and true feelings, a price of her role as the elder daughter in a prestigious family mirrored by Yukino’s (I); when Hachiman presses to dig deeper, she redirects, mirroring her constrained life onto him, noting he too must sacrifice but can choose what, unlike her lack of agency—a projection of her gilded cage onto his potential freedom, a quest for genuineness she couldn’t fully claim nor secure for Yukino (II). Her hobbies—eating junk food and traveling—symbolize this struggle: junk food a defiance against the controlled, high-end meals of her panopticon-like upbringing, while traveling reflects her will to roam untethered, a compass pointing to a horizon she cannot reach (Volume 14). Her fascination with Hachiman’s bond with Yukino casts her as observer and participant, her wistful gaze at them in a cafe (Watari, Volume 12) a silent cry for the freedom she lacks—yet in Zoku’s end, her trust in Hachiman despite reunion jealousy (IVb) hints at a hard-won authenticity, her song’s “わたしはわたしで きみは きみなんだ” (“I am me, and you are you”) affirming her longing for distinct, genuine connection, a hope she extends to Yukino’s path (see Appendix).

## 9 Derivation of Haruno’s Big Five Scores

Haruno’s Big Five personality traits were assessed on a 1-100 scale (50 as hypothetical norm,  $SD \approx 10$ ), estimating her position relative to a narrative-derived population rather than an empirically measured sample, reflecting interpretive analysis (cf. McCrae & Costa, 2008, US norms: Conscientiousness  $M = 50.6$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). These scores, derived from her actions and dialogue across *Oregairu* sources, highlight her unique profile:

These scores reflect Haruno’s complex character: her high Openness drives her probing nature—seen in her manipulation of Yukino (II)—Conscientiousness her polished exterior and loyalty projection (V), Extraversion her social engagement, low Agreeableness her cynical edge

Trait	Score	Percentile	Evidence
Openness	75	~top 25%	Curiosity toward Hachiman (Watari, Volume 10), meddling (Watari, Volume 9)
Conscientiousness	85	~top 15%	Festival mastery (Season 1, Episode 10), polish with resentment (Watari, Volume 11)
Extraversion	70	~top 30%	Sociability (Season 2, Episode 11), bold Zoku moves (Zoku game)
Agreeableness	35	~bottom 35%	Cynicism (Watari, Volume 13), sharpness softened by care (Watari, Volume 12)
Neuroticism	60	~top 40%	Envy (Watari, Volume 14), trembling kiss (Zoku game)

Table 1: Haruno's Big Five Traits

tempered by care for Yukino (II), and Neuroticism her emotional tension—all consistent with her Fearful-Avoidant attachment (VIII) and thematic quest (VI).

## 10 Assessment of Haruno's Fearful-Avoidant Attachment

Haruno's Fearful-Avoidant attachment style, derived from narrative behavior, is characterized by a dual impulse: a deep craving for closeness juxtaposed against an intense fear of rejection. This manifests in tender moments—such as Zoku kisses and hand-holding with Hachiman (Season 3, Episode 8)—yet she recoils when vulnerability looms, deflecting praise (ski wear, Zoku game) or redirecting probing questions with pained evasion (Season 3, Episode 10). Her subtle hints—“too good for Yukino”(Season 3)—and rare intimacy in the apartment scene (Season 3) signal longing, while her flustered retreats (“lies,” Zoku game) and guarded redirection reflect avoidance rooted in distrust forged by conditional love from her family—like a prisoner wary of an open door (Watari, Volume 11). This duality echoes her bond with Yukino: her failure to shield her sister from bullying (II) reflects a fear of familial repercussions, yet her manipulative pushes (II) and trust in Yukino's growth (IVb) show a craving for her sister's strength—a love she can't fully express directly. In Zoku's end, her trust in Hachiman despite reunion jealousy (IVb) shows a fleeting shift toward security, though her initial discomfort reveals lingering fear—her neuroticism (60) a tightrope she walks (VII). Her isolation amplifies this fear, yet her moderate openness to Hachiman suggests a potential shift toward security, distinguishing her from a severe avoidant's complete withdrawal, her sacrifices (VI) a lock she yearns for him—and perhaps Yukino—to unpick.

## 11 Conclusion

Haruno Yukinoshita emerges as a fragile soul ensconced within a polished shell, her Fearful-Avoidant heart aching for authenticity amid a life shaped by duty and distrust. Beneath her mask of perfection (I), forged in a childhood of cold parental control and unattainable standards, lies a

woman whose cynicism (II) and yearning for Hachiman's realness (III) reveal a desperate quest to break free. Her flirtatious pursuit (IVa) blossoms into vulnerable longing (IVb), where his authenticity pierces her guarded facade, offering a spark her brilliance craves (V). This journey intertwines with her bond with Yukino—a sister she manipulates out of love and regret, pushing her to rise beyond the family shadow Haruno couldn't escape (II), a dynamic misjudged as villainy by some yet rooted in a shared struggle for identity (VI). Illuminated by her Big Five traits—conscientiousness as her shield, openness as her probe—and the introspective strains of "自由の色," Haruno's spirit stands poised for liberation, a tragic romantic whose fierce loyalty and radiant devotion shine through her flaws. Whether through Hachiman's unwavering presence or her own resolve, she traverses the unknown "自由に歩けたなら" ("If I could walk freely"), a journey of redemption I cherish for its heartbreaking depth and quiet triumph.

## Author's Note

I love the characters in *Oregairu* deeply, but Haruno Yukinoshita holds a special place in my heart. Her sharp wit, fierce loyalty, and hidden fragility captivate me—she's a whirlwind of charm and complexity, cute in her rare stumbles like blushing at Hachiman's chocolate or glowing despite dismissing his praise (Zoku game). Her flaws—her manipulative edge, her guarded cynicism—don't diminish her; they make her human, a product of a sad childhood under a cold mother's control and a father's distant expectations, where she was molded into perfection while Yukino suffered in her shadow (II). Denied the freedom to falter or protect her sister from bullying, Haruno masked her loneliness with a playful facade, a coping mechanism for a youth spent meeting impossible standards (I). I'm thrilled she breaks free in the Zoku game, embracing romantic freedom with Hachiman—a liberation her song "自由の色" yearns for (IVb). Yet it's unfortunate that readers and the community often overlook these qualities, casting her as a villain, a Joker-like antagonist, when she's no such thing. Her meddling stems from love and regret, not malice (VI)—a poignant struggle that deserves recognition, not disdain, for its heartbreaking depth.

## A Full Analysis of Haruno Yukinoshita's Character Song “自由の色”

### Full Lyrics in Japanese —自由の色

自分なんてねえ、どこにあるの？  
無防備になる言葉たちを  
冷静に微笑んで口にしたいっだって きみは  
差し伸べた手を遠ざけても心はそれを望んでいるね  
同じ道を歩いてきたんだ  
よく似た瞳に記憶が揺れた  
寄り添うことで見えなくした弱さも  
レプリカ揃いの日々を抜け出して本物を見せてよ  
この心と向き合って自由に歩けたなら  
明日はどんな色会いたくなるね  
歪でもいい むき出しの感情はどこに？  
絶対的な存在に揺るがないオリジナル 欲しくて



わたしはわたしで きみはきみなんだ

Let's reconsider the connection between Haruno's personality and the lyrics of "自由の色," focusing on who "キミ" might be, with particular emphasis on the possibility of it being "Haruno herself (the side behind the mask)." We'll delve deeply into the links between Haruno's complex inner world—her masked perfection, cynical perspective, and yearning for inner freedom—and the lyrics, comparing alternatives like Hachiman or Yukino to reach a conclusion.

## Haruno's Personality Traits

- **Masked Perfection:** Haruno always appears bright and sociable, playing the "perfect older sister," but this is a mask to meet the expectations of her family and surroundings. She rarely shows her true feelings or weaknesses.
- **Cynical Perspective:** Haruno possesses a sharp, slanted view of things, seeing through the hypocrisy of others and society. She resonates with Hachiman in this regard, yet she also tends to view herself with a touch of irony.
- **Inner Conflict and Yearning for Freedom:** Haruno feels frustration at her inability to live freely, admiring the "realness" of Yukino or Hachiman. Beneath her mask, loneliness and self-exploration swirl.

## Connection to the Lyrics

- 「自分なんてねえ、どこにあるの? 無防備になる言葉たちを」 This directly expresses Haruno's sense of losing herself. "Where am I, really?" aligns with her self-mocking tone, while "words that leave me defenseless" are moments when her mask slips, revealing her true feelings—strongly tied to her inner self. (Referenced in Section I to highlight her fragile identity beneath the mask.)
- 「冷静に微笑んで口にしたいってきみは」 We can imagine Haruno calmly and ironically accepting her true feelings. She suppresses her emotions and has a habit of objectively viewing herself behind the mask; "smiling" fits her ironic self-awareness. (Used in Section V to underscore her introspective irony.)
- 「差し伸べた手を遠ざけても心はそれを望んでいるね」 This reflects Haruno's contradiction—pushing away connection while her heart longs for it—linking her isolation with the suppressed truth beneath her mask. (Cited in Sections IVb and V to mirror her romantic tension with Hachiman and inner yearning.)
- 「レプリカ揃いの日々を抜け出して本物を見せてよ」 Haruno's frustration with her fake life and her desperate wish for "something real" are evident here. It can be read as her inner self seeking to become authentic. (Referenced in Section III to emphasize her inner struggle, amplified by Hachiman's authenticity.)
- 「この心と向き合って自由に歩けたなら明日はどんな色会いたくなるね」 This conveys Haruno's hope for self-acceptance and freedom, directly connected to her desire for liberation. (Used in Conclusion to tie her quest to freedom.)

- 「歪でもいいむき出しの感情はどこに？」 Haruno’s struggle to find the “raw emotions” hidden beneath her mask is vivid, with her inner self emerging as the song’s core. (Cited in Section V to show her potential acceptance of flaws.)
- 「絶対的な存在に揺るがないオリジナル欲しくて」 This captures Haruno’s longing for an “original” self, not the mask, resonating deeply with her identity crisis. (Referenced in Section V to underline her introspective struggle.)
- 「わたしはわたしできみはきみなんだ」 This phrase suggests Haruno acknowledges the distinct essence of herself and others while yearning for a true connection. (Used in Section VI to affirm her quest for genuine bonds.)

## The Three Interpretations of “You” 「キミ」 in the Lyrics

### If 「キミ」 “Kimi” is Haruno Herself (Behind the Mask)

**Interpretation:** “Kimi”= Inner Haruno: Viewing the lyrics as Haruno’s self-dialogue, “Kimi” is the real Haruno beneath the mask—the self yearning for freedom and to shed its disguise.

- 「冷静に微笑んで」 “Calmly smiling” is Haruno’s ironic acceptance of her true feelings.
- 「差し伸べた手を遠ざけても」 “Pushing away the outstretched hand” is her rejecting her own weakness while her heart longs for it to be acknowledged.
- 「レプリカ揃いの日々を抜け出して」 “Breaking free from replica days” is a cry to her masked self to become real.
- 「よく似た瞳に記憶が揺れた」 “Memories shook in similar eyes” can be interpreted as the moment her masked and true selves confront each other.

**Consistency:** The lyrics resolve as Haruno’s introspective journey, with “the color of freedom” as her wish for self-liberation. **Fit with Haruno’s Personality:** Her duality—mask and true heart—is projected onto the lyrics, encapsulating her loneliness, irony, and yearning for freedom. Making “Kimi” herself allows the deepest exploration of her inner world.

### Hikigaya Hachiman

- 「レプリカ揃いの日々を抜け出して本物を見せてよ」 **Connection:** “Breaking free from replica days and showing something real” perfectly fits Hachiman’s pursuit of authenticity. “Calmly smiling” matches his ironic smirk. “The same path” reflects their shared cynicism.
- **Relation to Haruno:** Hachiman stimulates Haruno and shakes her mask. If “Kimi” is Hachiman, it frames Haruno as admiring and challenged by him.
- **Limits:** “Similar eyes” and “hiding weakness by staying close” align more with Yukino or Haruno herself, slightly off for Hachiman.

## Yukinoshita Yukino

- 「よく似た瞳に記憶が揺れた」 **Connection:** “Memories shook in similar eyes” strongly ties to their sisterly resemblance. “The same path” is their shared past of family expectations. “I am me, and you are you” reflects Haruno acknowledging Yukino’s independence.
- **Relation to Haruno:** Yukino is Haruno’s emotional core, with family conflicts reflected in the lyrics.
- 「本物を見せてよ」や「オリジナル欲しくて」 **Limits:** “Show me something real” and “craving an original” are closer to Hachiman or Haruno’s themes, and “calmly smiling” feels slightly unnatural for Yukino.

## Who is “Kimi”?

After reconsidering the lyrics and Haruno’s personality, I conclude that “Kimi” is Haruno herself (the side behind the mask).

### Reasons:

- **Depth of Introspection:** The lyrics consistently depict Haruno’s self-exploration—“Where am I, really?” “Show me something real,” “If I could walk freely”—with her mask-true self dialogue at the core.
- **Alignment with Personality:** Her cynicism, loneliness beneath the mask, and yearning for freedom are condensed in the lyrics, making “Kimi” her inner self to most vividly depict her duality.
- **Thematic Completeness:** “The Color of Freedom” resolves as Haruno’s wish for self-liberation, highlighting the song’s individuality. Making “Kimi” Hachiman or Yukino introduces an external perspective, slightly diluting its introspective power.
- **Examples:** 「冷静に微笑んで」 “Calmly smiling” is Haruno ironically accepting her truth, “replica days” her frustration with a fake life, “craving an original” her longing for her real self—all pointing to her inner world.

### Notes on Hachiman and Yukino:

- **Hachiman:** The “realness” theme and cynical resonance are appealing, and Haruno is influenced by him. But the lyrics’ personal tone leans toward her own voice.
- **Yukino:** Family ties and “similar eyes” are strong, but the urgency of “realness” and “freedom” is most deeply rooted in Haruno’s own struggle.

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