“Beyond Home and City: Poems by Ishigaki Rin and Shiraishi Kazuko”

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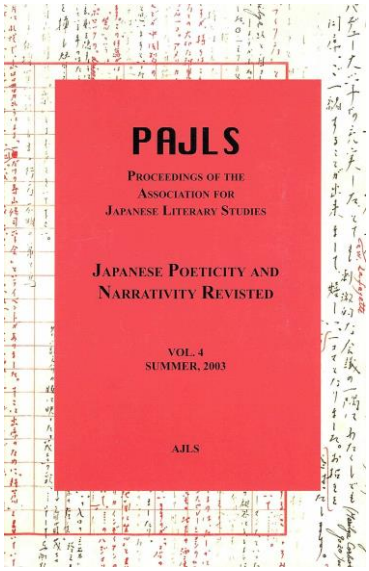

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BEYOND HOME AND CITY: POEMS BY ISHIGAKI RIN AND SHIRAISHI KAZUKO[1]

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Ishigaki Rin has a well-known poem titled “The Nameplate”:

自分の住むところには
自分で表札を出すにかぎる。

自分の寝泊まりする場所に
他人がかけてくれる表札は
いつもろくなことはない。

病院へ入院したら
病室の名札には石垣りん様と
様が付いた。

旅館に泊まっても
部屋の外に名前は出ないが
やがて焼場のかんにはいると
とじた扉の上に
石垣りん殿と札が下がるだろう
そのとき私はこばめるか？

様も
殿も
付いてはいけない、

自分の住む所には
自分の手で表札をかけるに限る。

精神の在り場所も
ハタから表札をかけられてはならない

石垣りん
それでよい。

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[1] The original of this paper is from Mizuta Noriko, “Ie to tokai no kanata: Ishigaki Rin to Shiraishi Kazuko no shi (「家と都会の彼方——石垣りんと白石かずこの詩」) in *Nijusseiki no josei hyōgen: Jendā bunka no gaibu e* (『二十世紀の女性表現——ジェンダー文化の外部へ』). Tokyo: Gakugei shorin, 2003: 266–308. Professor Mizuta gave us permission to translate this essay into English and to include it in our proceedings. The essay we have translated is a revised version of the talk she gave us during the Purdue Conference held in 2002.

It is imperative that I put my nameplate by myself
On the door of the place where I live.

It is always terrible when someone else places my nameplate
At the entrance of the place where I lodge.

When I was hospitalized
My nameplate at the entrance of my room read: Ms. Ishigaki Rin.
"Ms." was added to my name.

When I stay at an inn
No nameplate will be put outside of my room.
But soon I will enter into a crematory
And a nameplate will be placed above its closed door:
It will read Ishigaki Rin, Esq.
How can I refuse such a plate at that moment?

Neither "Ms." nor "Esq."
Should be added to my name.

It is imperative that I put my nameplate by myself
On the door of the place where I live.

I should also not let someone else place for me
The nameplate for the place where my soul is.

A plate that simply reads Ishigaki Rin
Is the best one.

This poem is highly acclaimed, to the extent that some critics even insist that Ishigaki Rin was born to compose this very poem. She wrote it in 1968 when she was forty-eight. Her second poetry anthology, including this one, was published in the same year (titled *Nameplate and Other Poems*) and allowed her to become one of the most well recognized contemporary poets.

It is often said that the last four lines articulate the poem's theme: The poet declares that her spiritual identity should not be articulated by others; instead, she should be the one who decides and expresses her own identity, which defines her as a simple self with no socialized or honorific titles. Home, hospital, and crematorium are used as metaphors that indicate the concreteness of the place where her soul may be lodged. The hospital and crematorium are examples of the "terrible" places where someone else chooses and positions her nameplate, while in "the place where she lives" her everyday life, she herself sets her nameplate; it is a place of her own and a metaphorical space where her soul resides.

This simple and articulate poem fully displays the poet's clean and firm attitude towards life (she lives with her simple and naked self) and her strong individuality (she does not pretend to be someone other than her natural self). She insisted on her "female" individuality in the sense that women often live with no title and no respect from society, and rarely have a chance to display their own nameplates at the doors of their houses.

However, Ishigaki later confessed that she hesitated to choose "mo" over "wa" to topicalize the "place of her soul" in the final lines of the above poem. Her hesitation is indicative of the concrete nature of the place in which her self lives; that is to say that her "home" is not just a simple metaphor for her "soul." The place referred to in the lines, "I should also not let someone else place for me/ the nameplate for the place where my soul is," is chosen as another example of a possible space she may be in, similar to other spaces such as home, hospital, and crematory. An explanatory word choice here (lit. "also the place where my mind/spirit exists") sounds almost a redundant addition to the poem's message on the aforementioned places: The use of "mo (also)" indeed helps the lines justify their own significance.

"The Nameplate" marks the beginning of Ishigaki's name recognition as a professional poet, but it is not the first poem she composed; rather, it demonstrates one of the conclusions of her poetic enterprise. Ishigaki Rin was born in 1920. At the age of fifteen, she started to work after graduating from a higher elementary school. She worked for the Industrial Bank of Japan for 40 years; at 55, she reached the age limit and retired. She was 25 when WWII ended. She continued working before, during, and after the war, witnessing, in particular, Japan's post-war economic recovery and its high growth as a lowest level white-collar worker—who suffered discrimination in wages based on her gender, along with discrimination against those who lacked academic qualifications.

When asked why she had decided to work young as a daughter whose parents "were able to make a living without asking their child to earn additional money for the family," Ishigaki answered that she had wanted to escape from her home and to become independent. Her own mother died when Ishigaki was four. Her first and second stepmothers also died while she was growing up. At the time she graduated her school, she had a third stepmother, together with her own younger brother and a younger stepbrother to look after. What she wanted to "escape from" was this particular family environment. She mentions that she could not have helped smiling when she was given her first monthly

pay envelope (“Invitation to a Disappearance from Home,” in *I Have Pots, Pans, and Burning Flame in Front of Me*).

Her dream of becoming an independent working woman free from family duties never came true until she finally purchased a modest one-bedroom condo at the age of fifty and retired at the age limit of fifty-five. She did not have enough personal free time because of her work for the bank, while she continued to spend all her humble earnings to support her family.

Poems included in her first poetry anthology (*I Have Pots, Pans, and Burning Flame in Front of Me*) all deal with topics related to blood relations, family, home, everyday life, and work. Here, home is not a metaphor for something, but reality and life itself, and thereby it is also a motivation for her poetry, a source of imagination and poetic energy; it is the background, and at the same time, the main theme of her poems. To use a philosophical term, home is this poet’s existential space and ontological condition, and in sum, her existence itself. It is in this sense that Ishigaki refers to the “place where she lives.”

The “home” for Ishigaki is not the pre-war institution of the Japanese home, which deprived women of their human rights. She escaped the old pre-war home when she was fifteen. However, after WWII when Japanese women started to enjoy legal freedom from the prewar household system, Ishigaki was forced to return, and was again bound to her home. Before the war, men were legally responsible to act as breadwinners for their homes, and women had to choose either independence or motherhood and either work or home. When freed from the limited choices that legally conditioned pre-war women under the imperial constitution, Ishigaki ironically fell into the new trap that burdened her with a double responsibility: She was the sole breadwinner of her family and its single caretaker; her family and home thus suffocated her.

She was not only bound to her blood relations. Her own father was paralyzed at the time the poem was written and depended on his fourth wife’s assistance. However, he attempted to function although he could barely move beyond crawling. As for his wife, she emotionlessly cared for her invalid husband and financially depended on her stepdaughter with no hesitation. Ishigaki senses “how disgusting a married couple can become: I just need to turn my face away from some of these couples.”

年をとって半身きかなくなった父が
それでも、母に手をひかれれば　（「夫婦」）

A father, aged and paralyzed,
Still moves around, being led by his wife's hand ("A Couple")

Ishigaki witnessed and observed throughout the process of growing up—from an infant to a woman via an adolescent girl—how her stepmothers took advantage of the authority of legally married women and, in turn, how much her father depended on them. When her grandmother pitied her and said "poor little one who has no real mother," she rather felt her unluckiness had provided her with rich experience. The foundation of her poetic imaginings was that sensibility cultured by her empirical knowledge. In her poem entitled "Home," she articulately pictures the place called home as a space dominated by a disgustingly shameless intimacy between man and woman, a space where the management of daily life is collusively mixed up with sexuality. Her modest monthly earning alone barely supports her family, which includes her jobless younger brother, her retarded younger stepbrother, her half-paralyzed father, and her chronically ill stepmother; the space is furthermore permeated by the smell of the old couple's sexuality:

夕刻
私は国電五反田駅で電車を降りる。
おや、私はどうしてここで降りるのだろう
降りながら、そう思う
毎日するように池上線に乗り換え
荏原中延で降り
通いなれた道を歩いてかえる。

見慣れた露地
見慣れた家の台所
裏を廻って、見慣れたちいさい玄関
ここ、
ここはどこなの？
私の家よ
家って、なあに？
この疑問、
家って何？

半身不随の父が
四度目の妻に甘えてくらす
このやりきれない家
職のない弟と知能のおくれた義弟が私と共に住む家。

柱が折れそうになるほど
私の背中の重い家
はずみを失った乳房が壁土のように落ちそうな（略）

この家
私をいらだたせ
私の顔をそむけさせる
この、愛というもののいやらしさ、
鼻をつまみながら
古い日本の家々にある
悪臭ふんぷんとした便所に行くのがいやになる

それで困る。

Evening

I get off from the El train at Gotanda station.
Oh my! Why do I get off here?
I feel like that every time I get off here.
As always, I will transfer to the Ikegami Line,
Get off at Ebara Nakanobe station,
Then walk back home along the street I always take.

The familiar alley street,
The familiar kitchen of my house,
Through the back of my house, I come to the familiar entrance door.
Here,
What on earth is this place?
This is my home, you know?
Home? What is it?
What is it to have a home?
That is the question.

Where my father, a half of whose body is paralyzed,
Is overly depending upon his fourth wife,
Is my unbearable home.
Home is where my jobless younger brother, my retarded younger step-brother
and I live together.

Just like the central pillar of a house that is ready to break;
My back is burdened by the weight of my home.
My withered breasts are ready to fall like plaster from the wall. [abbreviated]

This home
Irritates me;
It makes me turn my face away.
This obscenity called love disgusts me;
I have to hold my nose,
Every time I go to this awfully smelly toilet
That is found in any old Japanese house.
It is so tiring.

I feel awful because of this.

きんかくし

家にひとつのちいさなきんかくし
その下に匂うものよ
父と義母があんまり仲が良いので
鼻をつまみたくなるのだ
きたなさが身に沁みるのだ
弟ふたりを加えて一家五人
そこにひとつのきんかくし
私はこのごろ
その上にこごむことを恥じるのだ
いやだ、いやだ、この家はいやだ。

A toilet stool

A small toilet stool at home.
What a smell underneath it!
The degree of intimacy displayed by my father and my step-mother
Makes me pinch my nose
As their uncleanliness seems to penetrate my body.
A family of five, including two more younger brothers of mine,
Share the single toilet stool.
These days I feel
Ashamed of squatting upon it.
I hate it! I hate it! I hate this home!

Another consistent theme in Ishigaki's early poems is the topic of work. She mentions that from her younger days she wrote free verse poems, tanka, and haiku poems in a self-taught manner. Her poetry composition continued while she was working. Her life as a working woman was the foundation of her poetic creativity and led her to the realm deeper than daily reality, a realm from which her poems were born. She did not desire to become a professional poet, and at the same time she resisted being classified as a "working class" poet. However, she was very aware that her home and her workplace were the spaces where she belonged and from which her poems were created.

> My workshop provided me with salary and other things. However, I gave a lot of time and energy in order to receive those from my job. The reason for which I refer to this matter of factly is that I want to indicate my slight resistance to the expression of a working class poet

> born out of her workshop. I don't think that one's workshop and her job have such room as to transform her into a poet while she continues to work. I don't believe that these amateur poets' group activity in their workshops that we often see today will be a productive resource to create truly mature poets. [abbreviated]
> Also, I feel somewhat embarrassed to see these workshop writers convincing themselves and labeling themselves as poets. Is it true that one needs a conscious identity as a poet? As long as one has a workman identity, can't she write poems without identifying herself as a poet? Thinking of the fine line between self-consciousness and self-importance, and hearing those who claim that anyone can write poems and that they call themselves poets just because they already wrote something, I feel like I would be happier to be called a professional working woman rather than a poet. It is of course best for this opinion of mine to be voted down just like a single opposition vote is rejected in a union meeting. ("Poems with Ideological Positions Attached," in *Ishigaki Rin shishū*, Shichōsha)

Ishigaki's poems are founded on her emotions and reflections as a working-class woman, but here she does not criticize society or her own work place because her life is supported by the salary from those sources. See her poem entitled "A Monthly Payment Envelope":

縦二十糎
横十四糎
茶褐色の封筒は月に一回、給料日に受け取る。

一月の労働を秤にかけた、その重みに見合う厚味で
ぐっと私の生活に均衡をあたえる
分銅のような何枚かの紙幣と硬貨、

その紙袋は重宝で
手にしたその時からあけたりとじたりする。
夜と昼が交替にやってくる私の世界と同じよう
古びた紙幣を一枚ひきぬけば
今日の青空が頭上にぱらりと開いたりする。

街の商店は軒をつらねて並び
間口いっぱい
こぼれるほど商品を積み上げているけれど
あれはみんな透明な金庫の中の金、
生みたての玉子
赤いりんご
海からあがったばかりに見える鰯の一山も
うっかり出した子供の手までゆるすまいと
何かが見張っている、

銀行の廊下を歩く守衛のような足音が
いつもひびいている道である。

そこで私は月給袋から
また一枚をとり出す、
額面を鍵穴にあわせ
うまく、あの透明な金庫をあけさせる
ついでに売る人の口の穴までにこやかにあけはなしながら。

私がラッシュの国電でもみくちゃになれば
この紙幣も日増しに汚れ
持ち主におとらずくたぶれる。

そして最後の硬貨も出払った
捨ててもいい、というときに
用心深く、何か残っていないかと中をのぞくといるわ、いるわ

そこには傷んだ畳が十二畳ばかり敷かれ
年老いた父母や弟たちが紙袋の口から
さあ、明日もまた働いてきてくれ
と語りかける。

どうして捨てられよう
ちいさな紙袋に
吹けば飛ぶようなトタン屋根がのっていて
台所からはにんじんのしっぽや魚の骨がこぼれ出る。

月給袋は魔法でも手品の封筒でもない
それなのに私のそそぎこんだ月日はどこへいってしまったのか
それをさがすときに限り
紙幣はからになって一枚だけ
手の上にのこされる。

Twenty centimeters long,
Fourteen centimeter wide,
That reddish brown envelope I receive once a month on payday.

With its thickness that balances the weight of my monthly labor,
This counterweight of several bills of different notes and some coins
Gives my life a good sense of equilibrium.

That paper envelope is so convenient that
I keep opening it and closing it from the time I have received it,
Just like my life that is visited by day and night alternately.
When I take an old bill out of it
I happen to see the blue sky of that day pop open above my head.

All these shops in town line up one after another,
And all of their fronts appear to be
Piling up an overflowing number of products.
But in fact, they are money placed in a transparent safe;
Fresh eggs,
Red apples,
And also a pile of fresh sardine just coming out of the sea
Are watched by someone,
Who is ready to punish even the hand of an infant who carelessly stretches towards them.
The streets are always echoed by
The sound of footsteps similar to those by a night watchman who walks along the bank's corridors.

There, out of my monthly salary envelope
I take another bill.
Its face value should fit the keyhole
So that it will successfully allow that transparent safe to be opened.
Additionally allowing the seller's mouth to be wide opened with a grin.

As I am violently jolted by a crowded train everyday,
These bills of mine become sloppier day by day
And they end up as withered as their owner.

After I take out the last coin from the envelope
And when I am ready to throw it away
I give the last careful peek into it to make sure that nothing rests there,
Then I realize that all of them are there.

Twelve worn out tatami mats are placed there.
My aged parents and my little brothers peer out of the envelope
And ask me,
"Well, please don't forget to go to work tomorrow."

So, how can I throw away
This tiny envelope, which is covered
By a tin fragile roof that would have been knocked off with your little finger,
And little ends of carrots and fish bones would spill out of its kitchen.

My salary envelope is not magic or trick.
But where have gone all these days and months of labor I have poured away?
Every time I feel like looking for the whereabouts of my lost days
I find my envelope empty, with the last single bill
That drops on my hand.

This poem portrays the woman in Ishigaki through an in-depth observation of her life and indicates the fearful obscurity intrinsic to her

existential reality, which was generally shared by post-WWII Japanese women. Indeed, her poems reveal something horrifying.

> Simply, I have lived, worked and written a little. That's all it is.
> Maybe because of that, I am afraid I cannot get out of this habit of being able to write only when I am working. Furthermore, I am wondering whether I think with my mind or I sense and think with my hands and feet.
> I cannot answer this question, as my hands and feet remain silent.
> Anyway, my poems express my inner rhythm, a parade of my thoughts, an ingenious approach to my everyday life, a form of my prayer, and my original method of having another daily language. They form my awkward but best possible way of communication with others, trying to convey my messages in the manner of a mute child who struggles to say things that are hard for him to enunciate. ("To Write Poems and To Live," same as the previous quote)

Ishigaki mentioned that she was glad not to be born a man because she was not forced to become self-important. She also said that work as a woman was for her everyday life and not for promotion, authority, power, or the search for wealth. Her poems were composed on the basis of these understandings. In the context of post-WWII women's liberation, her insistence on the above understanding of women and their work allowed her to develop in her poems profound philosophical implications dealing with women's issues, and to delineate the harsh reality that conditions women's lives today.

Her poem, "The Nameplate," marks the point she had reached in the long process of her search for identity as a woman. At fifteen, she ran away from her home and started to work in search for her independence. In her twenties, she started to support her parents. She never married or had a family or any child of her own. "The Nameplate" shows the conclusion to the type of life she had thus lived. It points to the woman's space which the girl in Ishigaki had finally reached, after having consistently refused to be labeled, named, or transformed into a stereotyped feminine ideal by society and others, and after having continued to be just herself. It is a woman's space cultivated outside of the system of marriage and procreation.

The small home she maintains with her nameplate displayed at the entrance may look like a Virginia Wolfe-like declaration of "a room-of-my-own." Wolfe declared that in order for a woman to be creative, she needed to have a room for herself with earnings of 500 pounds a year.

For Ishigaki, who had composed her poems while working full time, her "room-of-my-own" is not a space for women's self-expressions; rather, it is a space she acquired as a result of her labor and creative activities. Her place is not a condition or starting point of her creativity. Instead, it is the symbolic conclusion to her self-expressions, an ulterior space transcending the conflicting reality of her home and workshop, her everyday life and work, and her family and household. It is a spiritual space that her female soul discovered and now rests in.

Working as a foot soldier of one of the major banks, which led the high growth of Japan's economic boom, she provided for her family. The facts that she started to work from a very young age and that she supported her parents instead of being supported by them did not lead her to early independence and freedom. And the freedom and independence she finally acquired in her later years could not have been obtained without the heavily burdened life she endured through her entire laboring years. Her poems express the harsh life conditions of a working-class woman. They also indicate how she faced the depth of solitude that opened as a dark hole in the midst of her daily reality, and how she gazed at the solitude of her later years as the basic human condition of life, always permeated by the shadow of death.

The reality of everyday life did not provide women with meaningful values. As Ishigaki was not a philosophical poet, she did not give abstract expressions to the themes of solitude and death. Her visions of death that appear in concrete association with common reality are insightful and tremendously powerful because of their immediacy: A death is viewed in association with the act of eating, and a death is pictured as a sudden obscure opening right at the edge of our normal activities at home, in society, and in our personal private moments.

泣いていた者も目をあげた。
泣かない者も目を据えた。

ひらかれた扉の奥で
火は
矩形にしなだれ落ちる
一瞬の花火だった。

行年四十三才
男子。

お待たせいたしました、
と言った。

火の消えた暗闇の奥から
おんぼうが出てきて
火照る白い骨をひろげた。

たしかにみんな
待っていたのだ。

会葬者は物を食う手つきで
箸を取り上げた。

礼装していなければ
恰好のつくことではなかった。（「鬼の食事」）

Those who had been crying looked up.
Those who hadn't been crying also gazed at it.

In the depth of an open door,
The flame
In a rectangular shape leaned over and fell
Forming a flash of firework.

Died at forty-three,
A male.

Sorry to have kept you so long
These words were heard.

From the depth of darkness where the fire had gone out
A cremator came out
And spread white bones still in heat.

I realized that all of us
Were really waiting.

The funeral attendants picked up the chopsticks
As if they were ready to eat food.

They would have looked awfully indecent
If they had not worn ceremonial clothes. ("A Meal for Ogres")

The blunt and unsociable air associated with the space pointed to by her poem "The Nameplate" is indicative of the solitary world she later develops in her so-called "blunt" poems.

タダでゆける
ひとりになれる
ノゾミが果たされる、

トナリの人間に
負担をかけることはない
トナリの人間から
要求されることはない
私の主張は閉めた一枚のドア。

職場と
家庭と
どちらもが
与えることと
奪うことをする、
そういうヤマとヤマの間にはさまった
谷間のような
オアシスのような
広場のような
最上のような
最低のような
場所。

つとめの帰り
喫茶店で一杯のコーヒーを飲み終えると
その足でごく自然にゆく
とある新築駅の
比較的清潔な手洗所
持ち物のすべてを棚に上げ
私はいのちのあたたかさをむき出しにする。

三十年働いて
いつからかそこに安楽をみつけた。（「公共」）

It’s for free.
I can be alone there.
My dream comes true there.

I don’t become burdensome
For the person next to me.
I don’t have to worry about
What the person next to me may ask me to do.
The piece of a closed door is what I insist upon.

Both my workshop
And my home
Are giving for me
And robbing from me.
This is the place
Lying between the two mountains.

Like a valley
Like an oasis
Like the best
And like the worst.

On the way back from my work
After having a cup of coffee at a coffee house
I go, as a natural flow of things,
To that relatively clean bathroom
Located in a newly opened train station.
I put all I have been carrying on a shelf
And expose the warmth of my life.

After working for thirty years
I have found a comfort in this place for quite some time. (“A Public Space”)

See also the poem “A Nursery Rhyme”:

お父さんが死んだら
顔に白い布をかけた。

出来あがった食事の支度に
白いふきんがかけられるように。

みんなが泣くから
はあん、お父さんの味はまずいんだな
涙がこぼれるほどたまらないのだな
と、わかった。

いまにお母さんも死んだら
白い布をかけてやろう
それは僕たちが食べなければならない
三度のごはんみたいなものだ。

そこで僕が死ぬ日には
僕はもっと上手に死ぬんだ
白い布の下の
上等な料理のように、さ。

魚や　鶏や　獣は
あんなにおいしいおいしい死にかたをする。

After my father died
We put a sheet of white cloth on his face.
It is as if we put a white cloth
On a meal that is prepared ahead of time.

As all of us were crying
I realized, "Huh, my dad didn't taste good."
He tasted bad to the point of making us choke with tears.

When my mother dies
We have to put a white cloth on her, too.
It is as natural a duty
As three meals we have to eat everyday.

Now, on the day when I have to die
I will die more gorgeously,
Like these high quality meals
Lying under the white cloth.

Fish, poultry, and animals
All die their very tasteful deaths.

The space where she lives, under the display of a nameplate that simply states her name—Ishigaki Rin—is exterior to the bonds that connect society and home, work and private life, and marriage, couples, and their family. It even excludes the poet's act of self-expression. It is the space located at the ultimate consummation of her poetic motivation and imagination, a space she had been looking for as somewhere beyond her home and city, a space free from the gender called woman, free from the hypocrisy of the institution of marriage and family, and free from sexuality and sexual relationships. It is, in sum, the space called "eternity," to borrow the term used by Shiraishi Kazuko.

Sharing with Ishigaki the world of post-WWII Japan, Shiraishi began composing her poems in the 1950s. The two poets were, however, opposite extremes in many aspects. Ishigaki's poems are short, simple, unsentimental, anti-dramatic, and written with informal, daily language. In contrast, Shiraishi's world is filled with dynamic and abundant vocabulary, extensively developing dramatic poems that intermingle a variety of different voices. Ishigaki succeeded the modern proletariat poetry tradition, while Shiraishi was influenced by the avant-garde movement in her poetic background. Ishigaki's creativity and her poems came from within the reality of her family, home, and social life, while the stage Shiraishi chose was a space outside of a domestic reality, an urban and global space of interactions. Ishigaki used a more traditional Japanese and Shiraishi's language was more cosmopolitan.

They appear as clear-cut contrasts in the above sense, yet they shared, at the origin of their creative motivation, the same critical focus

on the power institution called "home" and their common desire for freedom from choices binarily posited between marriage and sexuality. What Ishigaki achieved through her career was a transformation of an unfortunate dutiful daughter into a positive and independent woman. And the narrative Shiraishi developed through her poetic activity was a transformation of a vampire into a female saint. In the process of their dramas of female metamorphosis, the two poets commonly belittled male and paternal authorities and questioned and problematized the gender issue. In this context, we realize the commonality of their pursuit despite the differences in their methods and the worlds they conclusively materialized each for their own. I would additionally note that their common effort to overcome the problems associated with gender necessarily came from their female self-awareness as outsiders unbelonging to their gendered society and culture, and from the search for their own spaces—Ishigaki was a long unrecognized poet with no connection with literary journalism, and Shiraishi was a scandalous outcast constantly bashed and misunderstood by literary circles.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, Shiraishi came to Tokyo when she was seven. When she started to write poems, unlike Ishigaki, she had already left her home and lived in the midst of a big city, a space that allowed runaway girls to survive.

Shiraishi's career began with her first collection of poems, *Streets Where Eggs Fall*. She composed the poems included in this book as a member of the circle called Group YOU, directed by Kitazono Katsumi; her book therefore was strongly influenced by the modernist movement. From the beginning, the big city is the stage for her poems as well as their theme in the sense that it is a space free from the traditional Japanese home bound to family duties. The book portrays the image of a young, unjapanese, and extraordinary poet, who, alone, faces the modern urban reality, solely relying on her naked sensibility.

We may say Shiraishi became an authentic poet after the 1970 publication of *The Season of Amorous Saints*. In his review of this collection, Takahashi Mutsuo calls her a "female saint," arguing that there are two types of female saints—one who is a born saint and one who becomes a saint after having been purified by a fire burning at the stake. He continues that Shiraishi is an innate female saint, who is now born again to become the saint created through a purifying fire. One of what Takahashi calls "purifying fires" should be her marriage and subsequent divorce.

Originally, she had a Diasporic identity free from specific citizenship claims and from family duties. After going through marriage and divorce,

she returned to the urban streets as a mature woman poet. Raised in Vancouver as a girl who enjoyed freedom, she came and lived in pre-war Japan under the militaristic order, suffering from a number of attacks by bullies. At 17, determined to become a poet, she came to the urban streets of Japan right after the end of the war. At this time, I believe she had already established an outcast inner self through her experience of being treated as a "black sheep." It seems natural that she was attracted to modernist poems, as they displayed visions familiar to her. She soon became unsatisfied with Japanese modernism, probably because the cosmopolitan self-image the modernists pursued was already an integral part of her subjectivity.

This cosmopolitan girl unbound to the Japanese family tradition was forced to assimilate into Japanese conventions for the first time when she fell in love with a Japanese man and married him: She faced a male ego and desire and became involved with his family, a representative embodiment of the male-centered institution. This experience provided her with an initiation period to become a true poet. Her second collection of poems, A Tiger's Games, was published after nearly nine long years of silence, during which she experienced writer's blocks and witnessed a rapid and constant degradation of her composition ability. Symbolically speaking, she was burnt these years by the "karmic" fire of the Japanese male and his home:

終日
虎が出入りしていたので
この部屋は
荒れつづけ
こわれた手足　や椅子が
空にむかって
泣いていた
終日
虎　が出入りしなくなっても
こわれた手足　や椅子は
もとの位置を失って
ミルクや風のように
吠える
空をきしませて　吠えつづける　（「終日　虎が」）

All day
A tiger came in and out
Of this room, which
Continued to be devastated.
The broken hands and legs, and chairs
Looked up to the sky

And they cried.
All day
A tiger stopped coming in and out
The broken hands and legs, and chairs
Lost their original positions
And they shouted.
Like milk and wind
That shake the sky, they continue to shout. ("All Day, a Tiger")

Through marriage, she experienced subjection to a male ego, restriction caused by domestic duties and child rearing, suppression of desire in a marital relationship, and a forced self-identification with the domestic woman in the institution of marriage. This "innate female saint," who was burned at the stakes, now decided to look for the freedom of being herself by fleeing the institution of sexuality that had confined her in marriage and home. This new soul search led her to become a mature poet.

Outside her home, she rediscovered the urban streets. With the saint's eyes reborn with added toughness, Shiraishi wandered the city. The city she had rediscovered after running out of her marriage was her own Tokyo, which would be later completely transformed into her own inner universe. We here witness a transitional stage of this transformation. At this stage, her Tokyo was a chaotic space filled with noise and odor, where sexual beings were wriggling; it is a space where she lived and expressed herself as a poet who, refusing to settle down, traveled the streets endlessly. She worked and composed her poems while taking subway trains. By using the subway, which she later called the "stomach for meditation," she moved through the chaos, rediscovered jazz and dance, and encountered homeless ramblers, who, abandoning their own nationalities, stubbornly pursued freedom for expressing their original selves. They all turned out to be her alter egos, who inhabit her internally.

Shiraishi fixed her eyes on things sexual in this big city of chaos: meetings between men and women, men who love other men, women who love other women. There exists in sexuality something that primarily transcends sex and gender. Humans continue to engage in sexual acts, to survive and wander around empowered by their sexuality that brings them an impulse to love, as well as pleasure, comfort and the sense of healing. Shiraishi was deeply gripped by her encounters with each of these keen sexual emotions, which moved her with sympathy and compassion. She was determined to examine the depth of human sexuality, believing that there was something sacred in it. She rambled

around the city of Tokyo in the 1960s and watched people who expressed themselves through their sexual drives and pleasures. The collection *Signs of Storm Tonight* was created in her above environment.

神は　なくてもある
また　彼はユーモラスである　ので
ある種の人間に似ている

このたびは
巨大な　男根を連れて　わたしの夢の地平線
の上を
ピクニックにやってきたのだ
ときに
スミコの誕生日に何もやらなかったことは
悔やまれる
せめて　神の連れてきた　男根の種子を
電話線のむこうにいる　スミコの
細く　ちいさい　かわいい声に
おくりこみたい
許せよ　スミコ
男根は　日々にぐんぐん育ち
いまは　コスモスの　真中に　生えて
故障したバスのように動こうとしないのだから
そこで
星のちらばっていたりする美しい夜空や
ハイウェイを　熱い女を連れて車で突っぱしる
どこかほかの
男をみたいと思う時は
ほんとに
よくよく　そのバスの窓からのりだして
のぞかねばならない
男根が
動きだし　コスモスのわきあたりにあると
眺めがよいのだ　そんな時は
スミコ
星空の　光りぐわいの寂しさ
真昼の　おかしい冷たさが
腹わたにしみわたり
しみじみと　みえるものはみえ　すべて人は
狂わずにいられなくなる
男根には　名前もなく　個性もない
また　日づけもないので
祭のみこしのように
誰かが　かついで通りすぎる時
さわぎの様子で　ときどき
それと　在り家が知れる
そのざわめきの中で

神にいまだ支配されない種子たちの　未開の
暴動や　雑言罵詈の
空漠がきこえたりするのだ　時折

神というのは　とかく不在で
かわりに　借金や　男根だけをおいて
どこかにでかける　とみえ

いま
神に　おき忘れられた男根が
歩いてくる　こちらの方へ
それは　若く陽気で
巧まない自信にみちている　ので
かえって　老練な微笑の影に似る

男根は　無数に生え
無数に　歩いてくるようだが
実は　単数であり　孤りであるいてくるのだ
どの地平線からみても
いちように　顔も　ことばもなく
そのようなものを　スミコ
あなたの誕生日にあげたい
すっぽりと　あなたの存在にかぶせ　すると
あなたに　あなた自身が　みえなくなり
時に　あなたが　男根という意思そのもの
になり
はてもなく　さまようのを
ぼうようと　抱きとめてあげたいと思う

God exists even if he is non-existent.
Also, as he has humor.
He looks like some type of human.

This time
Accompanying a giant penis, he comes
Out on a picnic above
The horizon of my dream.
By the way
I regret that
I didn't do anything special for Sumiko's birthday.
At least, I wish
Seeds from the penis brought by God be sent
Into the fine, low, and cute voice
Of Sumiko, who is on the other side of my phone line.
Forgive me, Sumiko.
The penis grows fast everyday.
It is now growing in the middle of the group of cosmos
And remains immobile like a bus that has broken down.

Therefore, when
I have a desire to see
A beautiful night sky maybe scattered by stars
Or another man, who races his car on the highway,
Accompanying a hot gal,
Honestly
I have to hang out of the bus window
And very carefully peep at them.
When the penis moves
And comes to the outskirt of the group of cosmos
I can have a better view. Then,
Sumiko,
Loneliness in the way the starry sky shines
And a strange coolness of the midday
Go through my whole bowels.
Keenly, I see everything I can see
Realizing that all humans cannot help going mad.
As the penis has no name, no personality,
And no date,
When someone carries it
Like a portable shrine for the festival
And sometimes passes by a spot in commotion,
I realize something is going on
And hear in the noises
These seeds not yet reigned by God
Riot savagely or curse and call names
Aimlessly, from time to time.

God is often away from home
Leaving only his debts and his penis
Seemingly gone to somewhere.

Now
The penis left forgotten by God
Is walking towards me.
As he is young and cheerful
And full of unadorned confidence,
He rather expresses something similar to the shadowed smile of a veteran.

It seems like a countless number of penises grow
And an unlimited number of them are walking,
But the truth is he is singular and walks alone
With no face and no words
When you see him from any different horizons.
Sumiko, that kind of thing
Is what I want to give you for your birthday.
When I cover your entire existence with this,
You can no longer see yourself

And you sometimes become the very will of a penis
Itself
And you ramble endlessly.
Then I will hug you with my boundless love.

Shiraishi here indicates that to write about sexuality is to write about a penis with no name. This point of view implies a concept that transcends the gender binary by suggesting that a woman is also another penis. The gift she gives Sumiko for her birthday is the message that encourages her to become the will of a penis; that is, to become a naked self identified with that droll and triste sexual being. The image of an obscure and simple penis is the metaphor of human sexuality for Shiraishi, who asserts any form of sexual desire—between man and woman, between man and man, and between woman and woman. In this sense, the penis for her is not the metaphor for male centrism in her gendered society; instead, it represents the survival energy of all sexual beings.

Shiraishi encountered a tremendous amount of misunderstanding because of her poems that examined sexuality in this explicit manner; this misunderstanding was supplemented by her openly indifferent attitude towards the conventions of literary and publishing circles, and her eye-catching fashion together with her association with black and gay friends. With *The Season of Amorous Saints*, she experienced a renewed and fierce bashing from journalism, which viciously labeled her "penis poet." Through this second burning-at-the-stakes experience, she again purified herself and was reborn as a mature female saint. She transformed the image of a gender-free sexual being, which she created through the symbol of a nameless and faceless penis, into a more universally crystallized image of the eternal outcast.

Tokyo is continuously the stage for the poems included in this Mr. H. Literary Prize winning collection, but the Tokyo here is no longer a physical space filled with chaos as characterized in her previous books. It becomes, instead, her inner space. This space of her own is a creative womb, so to speak, in which she sits still like a meditating Buddha and conceives her new self, her poems, and her own living universe. Her inner space is networked by canals in the form of subway lines. The poet rode subway trains and wandered about from one place to another; her endless act of traveling overlapped the very act of her poetic composition.

わたしは釈尊のように
ほとんどこの都市にすわり

いま　１０月のぶりょうを懐妊している
（略）
わたしの　おしだまった１０月
このコンクリートの不機嫌が
My Tokyo　を徘徊している
右往左往するニセの人類のワズラワシイ
ニセの涙　オベッカがジュークボックスから
あふれでると　つぎには
イワシの大群になり　悪臭を放ち
芸術的思考に流れていく　いつもの
アカデミックな秋よ
それらの
すべてから　バイバイして
わたし　久しぶり
わたしの内なる運河に入る
また　わたしの内なる都市に潜入する
この都市の入口で　夏も終りの頃
わたしは一人の個人にあった
アモン・ホテップ（古代エジプト王）
彼は無名の青年であり　現代のバスの車掌
肉屋　レーサー　詩人　革命家　その他
すべての雨であり　すべてでないところのもの　また古代　五千年前の
エジプト
（略）
わたしは　これら混沌の中に　みえ隠れする
彼　アモン・ホテップの一瞬と　手をつなぎ
個人的演奏の季節に　突入した
その頃
地下鉄の走る音がした　わたしの都市の子宮の底を　また　舞台では
ドラムとベースが鳴り　サンドラが踊りだした
黒ずくめのサンドラはサロメでない
美しい同性愛の黒人女　中産階級
やさしくて　淫蕩な主婦　ゴーゴーダンサー
夫を青ざめたフカ　去勢されたドン・ファン
にかえてしまった黒い聖マリア

わたしが地下鉄にのりはじめたこと
それはヘンリー・ミラーとの最初の出逢いだ
便器　新聞　古い手紙　椅子　ミルク
あらゆる家具や食物の中に　わたしは彼の
飲料水　細胞　そのボロキレのような
生命を　みた
いまも　わたしは　地下鉄常用者だ
わたしは　ほとんど交合と同じくらいの時間
地下鉄を愛している　わたしの地下鉄は
もう鉄でない　柔らかな肉のかたち
文明の幻影　思考のゆりかご　いま

都市の中で　地下鉄は
一番奥深い　めい想の胃袋である
その潰瘍の上で　都市に住みつく人類が
何か夢うつつに　しがみついていた　たえず
口から泡をだしながら　それは言葉ではない
怒号ではない　哀訴ではない　微笑でも
求愛でも　満足でも　戦でもなくて
泡　であった
（略）
My Tokyo
この都市は　ほとんど
わたしたちの　子宮である
わたしは　アモン・ホテップと
この入口にたち　キスをした
すると　雨がふりだした　それから
ほとんどの連帯の時間　死ぬか交合した
五千年死ぬことと　五千年生まれること
五千年アクビをすることと　五千年笑いつづけること　それは
愛以上のものであろう

すべてのものは　蛙も　卵も　ジャムも　一片の
青空も　原稿用紙も　レコードも　蠅も
＜シーツにダイブしようよ＞
それはわたしたちの都市の合言葉だ
あるものは孤独で　死んだ猫とダイブした
あるものは　あまりに美しい男なので
鏡をブチワッテ　向こう側にいる自分のペニスを　力一ぱいにぎって気絶した
また　あるものは虚弱な自分の脳と肉体を
たえずおそれ　マタタビを食べながら
オイオイ泣いて　シーツにかがみこんだ
二匹の若い豹　この男たちは
深い思慕の林の中で　静かに抱きあっている
あの美しい猿の女たちは　互いの密室で
朝やけのように　愛撫の虹をかけていた

その頃
わたしの個人的演奏は１０月から１２月へと
急速に　不機嫌につづいた　その間
わたしは　失語症　急性歓喜症　痴呆性思索などの蜘蛛の巣にあった
そこで多くのわたしは蜘蛛のエジキになり
だらしない声をあげ　とらわれた
わたしの中の　一人は
脱出し　地下鉄にのり　尚も
なにか音楽しようとした
（略）
あ
ターミナルで幽霊になったジョオをみる

彼はすでにセクスのローラーでひかれ
灰色と影に　なっている
彼は最後の一滴の生の貯蔵から見離され
無精の砂漠に追われる　赤褐色の砂鉄か
彼はまむしのローラーにからまれながら
しだいに蜘蛛に意志の手足をとられ　すでに
おくれた時の側にサビつき　いま
最後の幕をおろそうとしているところだ

わたしも　また
わたしの都市を　あきらかに埋葬しようと
熱い意志を灰の中へ　かきまわしている時

いくつもの予感の霧を　きりぬけて
かすかに神の痛みを聞きつけた
それは　トツゼン火の痛みとなった
いま　はじめて
神のすべてが落雷し　ゴー然と
わたしのみぢかに熱くなり　いるのをみる
ほとんど永遠のように　それらはツカノマだ
半ば病み傷つきながら　ヨコタワル　それは
弱々しい旅人の姿をかりて

わたしの都市は
いま　遥かむこう
もはや　他人の顔となり
コンクリートの首を　うなだれて
あてどない眠りを　眠っている　（「My Tokyo」）

Like Shakamuni, I
Sit still on this city
And conceive October ennui.
[abbreviated]
My clammed-up October,
This ill humor with concrete,
Wanders around my Tokyo.
Annoying fake tears of
Fake people who go left and right.
Flatterers spill out of jukeboxes.
Then, they turn to become a large flock of sardines
Which stink badly.
They swim as usual with artistic contemplation.
Oh! An academic autumn!
I say bye-bye to all of them
And after a long absence,
I go back into my inner canals
And sneak into my inner city.
At the entrance of this city, at the end of the summer

I encountered a certain individual.
Amon Hottep (a king of Ancient Egypt),
He is a nameless young man, a bus conductor in today's world,
A butcher, a car racer, a poet, a revolutionist, and so forth.
He is all of the rains, all of nothingness, and ancient Egypt of
Five thousand years ago.
[abbreviated]
He is seen and unseen across these chaotic things.
One moment I joined my hand with Amon Hottep's
And dashed into the season of my personal concerts.
Back then
I heard the sound of subway running at the bottom of my city's womb
And on the stage drum and base echoed their sounds and Sandra started to dance.
Sandra in black is not a Salome.
A beautiful black lesbian, a middle-class woman,
A caring, immoral housewife, a go-go dancer
And a black Saint Mary, who transformed her husband
Into a shark that turned pale, and a castrated Don Juan.

I started to take a subway train,
Which was my first encounter with Henry Miller.
Toilet stools, newspapers, old letters, chairs, milk
Inside all these furnishings and food
I recognized his drinking water, his cells, and his ragged life.
Even now I am a regular user of subway.
Almost as many hours as I spent for having sex
I have loved subway trains. My subway
Is no longer made out of iron, but is shaped with soft flesh.
A phantom of civilization, a cradle for our thoughts,
The subway today is a stomach for our meditation
Locating itself at the deepest bottom of the city.
On its wall with ulcers, humans living in the city
Cling dreamingly, constantly foaming at their mouths.
They were neither words or shouts, or appeals, or smiles
Or courtship, or satisfaction or fights.
They were just foams.
[abbreviated]
My Tokyo!
This city is almost our womb.
Standing at its entrance
I kissed Amon Hottep.
Then, it started to rain.
Since then, during almost all of our time of solidarity
We died or had sex.
To be dead for five thousand years, to be born for five thousand years
To yawn for five thousand years, and to keep laughing for five thousand years,
They are probably more than just to love.

All things—frogs, eggs, jams, little slices of blue sky
Manuscript papers, records, and flies!
<Let's dive into the sheets!>
This is our city's password.
One was alone and dived with his dead cat.
Another was too beautiful a man:
He broke the mirror into pieces and grabbed with force
His own penis he saw it on the other side of the mirror, and he fainted.
Yet there is another one who is constantly
Afraid of his feeble body and mind; while munching silvervine,
He cries bitterly and leaned into the sheets.
Two young leopards. These two men are hugging each other quietly
In the deep forest of longing.
These beautiful monkey women were in their secret room
Forming a rainbow of their caress as if it were a morning glow.

Back then,
My personal concerts continued to be performed
Rapidly and with ill humour. During these plays
I was attacked by a number of cobwebs in the forms of aphasia, acute ecstasy syndrome,
Dementia contemplation,and others.
Many of my selves fell victim to the spiders.
They cried with ignoble tones of voices and were trapped.
A self of mine escaped, took a subway train, and even tried to play music.
[abbreviated]
Ah!
At the terminal station, I saw Joe who became a ghost.
He had been flattened by a roller of sexuality
And turned gray and into a shadow.
He was deserted by the last drop of the storage of life;
Is he a grain of rusty brown iron sand that was being chased by the spermless desert?
He was entwined by a roller of scorpions.
The hands and legs of his will power were gradually eaten up by the spiders,
And already rusted away to the side of the lost time.
He is now lowering the last curtain of his life.
I also
Wanted to lay my town to rest completely
And was stirring up my heated will into the ashes,

When I heard a faint sound of God's pain
That came by cutting through layers of fogs of my presentiment.
That, suddenly, became a flame of pain.
Now, for the first time,
The lightning of God's entirety struck with a roar.
The heat intensified around me and I saw him there.
He is a bunch of present moments, as if he were almost eternal.

Half ill and injured, he visits me there
Lying in the form of a frail traveler.

My city is now far away from me.
Its face has changed to that of a stranger.
Its head of concrete is hanging down
And sleeping its aimless sleep. ("My Tokyo")

In this poem, Shiraishi stops looking for her home, refuses to settle down, ignores social reputations, and wanders around in her inner city by taking subway trains. She calls this journey the "season of personal concerts." Tokyo is her inner world and at the same time the entire world. Urban noises consist of multiple layers of heterogeneous voices. The people living there are foreigners who have only first names and unknown nationalities; they are refugees running away from their own countries and the systems of those countries, travelers who continue their endless journeys, and artists who are pregnant with their own inner worlds, awaiting their births. The persona of this poem attempts to give forms to these strangers, believing that they are all her alter egos. In this big city, everyone is wandering with his and her own solitude. The city is the entrance for the narrator to trip through this inner womb, together with these alter ego foreigners, and to go 5,000 and 10,000 years back in time. Ultimately, she is looking toward the eternal origin of human history.

After having experienced a restricting marriage, Shiraishi freed herself from relationships that exclusively privileged particular blood and individual relationships. She now created an inner city where she existed alongside different Diasporic individuals like herself, who similarly transcended the limitations defined by race and citizenship.

Because of her exploration of the depth of sexual reality, the second burning-at-the-stakes Shiraishi was sent to was a purifying fire that allowed her to create visions of amorous saints. "Amorous heroes" are those who regard sexual energy as the starting point of humanity, and people are thus equal insofar as they are all sexual beings. Shiraishi's inner city attracted these endlessly sexually driven beings known as humanity, celebrating them through her visions of nameless penises and amorous saints; her city allowed both men and women to rest in its womb, providing fertile sleep by laying them to drift in her canal waters. Shiraishi's city thus revealed to them flashes of eternity.

As long as we remain sexual beings, we are free from differences of sex, race, nationality, and sexual orientation. Shiraishi wrote with compassion and sympathy about men's comic, yet depressing, sexual

existence. Sexuality contains a moment that mixes emptiness and eternity; it allows us to surpass social conventions. Sexual beings/amorous heroes are the ones who delineate sexuality's transcendental quality. Freedom from marriage and men, together with society's accusation of her as a promiscuous poet, encouraged Shiraishi to give birth to this new persona who expressed herself in the form of amorous heroes.

Amorous heroes were, in fact, reclusive hermits in the sense that they purporsefully rejected society's standardized reliance on heterosexual contracts. Gradually, Shiraishi encouraged the unrestrained traveler in them, then highlighted that quality in the new persona of what she calls Ulysses. He is a hero with no title and no nationality. He has no home to which to return. Carrying no passport, he travels through the world that lacks any concept of home or nation. He is a nameless and faceless living being who has no identification of his own. These are the primary characteristics of Shiraishi's naked sexual beings. After going through the second purifying fire, Shiraishi's persona transformed again into the pure mask of Ulysses, via the image of amorous Diasporic heroes.

Shiraishi's sensual traveler in the persona of Ulysses now leaves the city and moves to a desert, which materializes as a space above and beyond the horizon of the big city of the 1960s. This space clandestine to her urban cosmos is extensively described in *The Sand Tribes*.

Shiraishi's journey in *The Sand Tribes* commences with her canoe trip. In actuality, it began when she traveled to the States in 1978 and realized there that her imagined Tokyo was just a small part of her inner world. Her Ulysses, a faceless refugee with no nationality, boards a canoe and, unaccompanied, rows it toward the future. The poet's experience in Iowa provided her with images of different Ulysseses she would create; what she discovered there in America was a society full of refugees and a continent permeated by deserts, which inspired and expanded her work.

The future is an unknown realm existing always outside of the present reality, a realm that may well be unreachable. Through a long solitary trip by canoe, Shiraishi's poetic world goes towards the chaos of the Third World, and towards the darkness she finds in the depth of that chaotic reality. At another level, her canoe is a spaceship that is determined to exile itself from the earth ruled by the divisions of nations, races, and sexes; it is also flying towards the darkness of the universe in order to witness the very origin of life and death of all living beings. There, sexuality is nothing but inorganic particles that mix themselves

smoothly in the flow of the Milky Way. Note that the darkness there displays a touch of relaxed cheerfulness, which is indicative of the poet's natural humor. Shiraishi wholeheartedly embraces the pathos of all the humble lives she envisions.

リバーサイドには川がない

一九一一年以来、リバーサイドの川は乾きっぱなしだ。一九八〇年夏、わたしは始めてリバーサイドに現れる。川が乾いて六十九年目である。

わたしはリバーサイドが砂漠への入口であることを発見する。と、わたしの内側から急速に砂族というスピリットが活気づき、でていくではないか、砂漠にむかい。

リバーサイド、リバーサイドと呪文を唱え、急速に、砂族、愛すべき、あの乾いた砂粒でできたスピリットたちが、でていく、歩いていく、飛んでいく、砂漠にむかい。

どこにいてもわたしの思考が砂漠、砂のある方へむかう。乾いた土地、乾いた熱い空気、太陽さえ、カラカラにノドをやられてしまう土地にむかい、わたしの内なる砂族たちは急速に活気づき、リバーサイドに一滴も水がない事を発見するやいなや、快活に、口笛など吹き、踊りだし、裸足で砂漠にむかい、駆けだしていくのだ。

するとわたしは、どんどん埋もれる。わが砂族におおわれた、わたしの記憶はすでに遠く何万年をさかのぼる。

ここはキャリフォルニアのインデイアン、ヤキ族たちの村落のある砂地か、それともサハラの砂漠か、オーストラリア中央部、ウルルの聖地の近くであるか、記憶さかのぼるほどにアイマイである。

おそらくわたし自身が太古になり、眠っているらしい。わたしはタイコの音で、幾度か呼びおこされるが、わたしはわたし自身が砂なる大地になり、眠っているので、容易にこの眠りからさめようとしない。

Riverside has no water.

Since 1911, the water of the Riverside has been dried up. I came to Riverside for the first time in the summer of 1980. It is sixty-ninth year since the river has dried.

Riverside, I realized, was an entrance to a desert. Suddenly, from within myself, spirits called "sand tribes" were rapidly energized and popped out of me, going towards the desert.

"Riverside, Riverside," I chanted the spell when rapidly these sand tribes, these amiable sprits made from grains of sand, came out and walked and flew towards the desert.

Wherever I am, my thoughts go toward a desert and sand. They go toward a dry land, to dry heated air, a land where even the sun completely dries up his own throat. The sand tribes within me get quickly excited. The moment when they realized that Riverside had no water at all, they merrily blew whistles, started to dance, and ran barefoot toward the desert.

Then, I am quickly buried. My memories covered by my sand tribes go ten thousand years back in time.

> Here is the land of sand where the Yaki tribe, Indians from California, live in their villages; or the desert at Sahara; or central Australia; or a neighborhood of the sacred place at Ural? The more my memories retreat to the remote past, the more uncertain I become.
>
> Perhaps I myself am the antiquity and seem to sleep now. Drum beat tries to waken me several times, but I cannot quickly come out of this sleep since I am the earth of sand myself, and I fall asleep.

The "sand tribes" are sexual beings surviving at the deserted end of our civilization like small insects living their eternal presents with full force. Her city is now replaced by a desert, which has no busy noises. The rivers are dried up and no canals can be seen. The city has receded her view; she sees the face of a stranger. After the city's head with concrete leans down and falls into an endless sleep in "My Tokyo," storm hits it roughly and the sand covers the land. All creatures there—insects and animals, savages and civilized—are exposed to and fully covered by sand and wind. After all kinds of trivial, funny, serious, and solemn orgies performed by these amorous heroes, sand blows in and embraces all, nullifies everything: The silence and sleep of a Sphinx dominate here. At the same time, sand spirits of the sand tribes stand up to kiss the everlasting present, and to write their invisible sutras. This desert, or this apocalypse, is the future for this poem's persona to return to, while also serving as the origin of her self. In this world of sand, she can only see the horizon that hints at the presence of future/ulteriority.

Ishigaki Rin's "The Nameplate" and Shiraishi Kazuko's "The Season of Amorous Saints" were published in almost the same year, and together the poems clearly indicate the two extremities of the possible directions to be pursued by contemporary women poets in Japan. Ishigaki refused a symbolic use of language. Instead, she developed a poetic language consisting of vernacular Japanese that allowed Ishigaki to express the inner working rhythm imprinted in her hands, legs, and body. Her choice of language was the product of preferred poetic topics—the reality of her family and work—and also a result of her challenge to the hypocrisy of the institution of home, situated within intimate involvement with her own family. Her poems use a raw voice that uncovers the naked secret of human daily reality, while at the same time it is this inner language that goes beyond her ordinary struggles. Her poetic world points to her "existential home," locating itself ulterior to the oppositions between family and society, between life and work, between family and individuals, and between marriage and sexuality.

On the other hand, Shiraishi lets her language multiply and inundate in such a way as to violate ordinary meanings of daily language. Her poetic world exceeds language; she corresponds with voices, instruments, and music, with a voice that straightly and rapidly joins the sound of the universe, where her multiple Ulysseses travel as stars.

Ishigaki and Shiraishi both attempt to transcend materiality as represented by conventional language. By using another standard language full of simple, concrete, and physical words coming from women's commonplace existences, Ishigaki tries to visualize the truth of our lives and the world beyond our daily reality, while Shiraishi mixes words with voices, sounds, and music, and tries to open visions of another reality that goes beyond life's ordinary dimensions. The intentions of their achievements are thus far apart. They share, however, their starting points as women poets in post-WWII Japan, who wanted to escape the institution of sexuality in which men suffocate women in such forms as family, blood relations, and unequal power dimensions in marriage. They both escaped from forced ideal of womanhood, a product of their gendered society of Japan, and pursued worlds exterior to their culture.

1950 is the year when both Ishigaki and Shiraishi started to write poems; it is also the year when Hayashi Fumiko died. What is told in two of her posthumous works is indicative of the future of Japanese women living after WWII. *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds) depicts later days of the life of a female protagonist who digressed from family and marriage and drifted to the peripheries of sociality, while *Meshi* (Rice) describes an urban middle-class housewife whose individuality is suffocated by her struggling marriage and sexual relations with her husband. Hayashi sees through women's reality in Japan's postwar recovery: The society will revive another gendered system that will camouflage itself with a more fashionably modern appearance, in which women will not be liberated from their homes; rather, their freedom will be deprived again by only situating them in more highly urban landscapes. Post-WWII Japan's revitalization and development were achieved by strategically utilizing the notion of family again and by reintegrating women into the gendered society that divided them into the public-vs.- private dichotomy.

Women's desire to defy their patriarchal society (which confines them in marriage and sexuality and morally denounces those who resist) is a common motivation and hardship that acts as a catalyst for contemporary women authors to begin writing. How can women break the deadlock Hayashi Fumiko anticipated for post WWII Japanese women? When they decide either to settle down or to continue to ramble,

they find traps that deprive them of sexuality and autonomy. How can women poets and novelists cope with the effort not to fall into these traps and develop visions of freedom from their gendered society and culture? How can they give expression to the darkness they witness in the realm exterior to the conventionally interpretable world? These are the questions with which post-war writers began their creative endeavors.

The act of writing for modern women writers means to take an inner journey in order to reach that realm of exteriority. Symbolized by Ishigaki's room of her own and Shiraishi's canoe, each woman writer sets up a journey toward the unknown all by her lonesome self.

Julia Kristeva pursues the fall to the deepest bottom of the gendered culture, assuming to find there the gender-free origin of selfhood where self and others remain fused. Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, and Hélène Cixous all look for the ulteriority to the language of symbolic order and seek the écriture feminine as a language that allows women to construct the outer world free from patriarchy.

Shiraishi sailed out with her boat of poetry, filled with mixed expressive elements such as words and voices, sounds and music, and gestures and dances, towards the genderless universe of darkness, where she overlooked the modest lives of diverse sexual living beings. Ishigaki lived authentically and by her own bare hands dug through the dark depth of daily reality by using the ordinary language of a working-class woman. Isn't the space she finds at the extremity of her pursuit—the room with the nameplate Ishigaki Rin on the door—outside of the gendered society and culture? It is a space that has already erased the female individuality and female narrative subject. Both Ishigaki's house and Siraishi's desert are entrances to the outside world of life and sexuality; they are ports for these poets to temporarily lodge before sailing out again for the endless elsewhere.

Both Ishigaki and Shiraishi refused to follow women's conventional roles and societal norms, and as a result they became Diasporic subjects of sexuality, bodiless and asexual. It is only then that they witness some visions of life removed from their established cultures. That realm of reality is also and already an entrance to death, where they are welcomed by a bouquet of white flowers at the funeral, instead of red flowers intended for life's celebration:

祝いごとに
ひとかかえの花束をもらった。
独り占めする欲の深さに
気持が花より赤くなり

どうぞ、二、三本
ここから抜き取って下さいと
そばにいた
私より年若い女性詩人に差し出すと
美しいその大学教授は
大きな目をありったけ見ひらいて
ケラケラ笑い
歌うように言ったものだ。
「みんなとっておきなさいよ
こんどもらうのは白い花だよ」

目をつむって
心おきなく赤い花を抱いた。　（石垣りん「やさしい言葉」）

On a happy occasion
I was given a big bouquet of flowers.
Feeling greedy to have all of them by myself,
I flushed deeper than the red flowers I held.
"Please take two or three of them from here,"
I stretched the bouquet to a woman poet next to me,
Who is younger than me.
The beautiful college professor opened her eyes as wide as she could.
Cackling, she told me as if she were singing,
"You keep all of them. It is white flowers that you will be given next time."

I closed my eyes
And held my red flowers tight without hesitation. (Ishigaki Rin, "Kind Words")

Modern women poets have been training their imaginations to visualize the world free from patriarchal society in order for them to just be themselves. Ishigaki and Shiraishi belong to these post-WWII women poets (including Yoshihara Sachiko, Tomioka Taeko and others) who succeeded the visions developed and pursued by pre-WWII women poets and writers (Hayashi Fumiko, Okamoto Kanoko, Nagase Kiyoko, etc.) in terms of seeking freedom from Japan's gendered system. The poetic worlds the two poets have developed display extremities of the contrastive directions for women's creative imaginations. After in-depth examinations of each of their poetic worlds, we realize that in the end, the polarities they each stand for circularly join the same origin from which their poems arise.

They both refuse to surrender to the institution of family and take bold and extensive trips to find the space where their souls can truly belong, a space to be pursued outside the gendered reality. This core of their creative foundations led them to delineate the nature of their challenging endeavors: They problematize the issue of gender, challenge

society's gendered expectations, and attempt to transcend and to empower their philosophical bases for women's survival and destructive impulses. They thus enrich the understanding of the creative foundation women poets commonly share in contemporary Japan.

(translated by Eiji Sekine)