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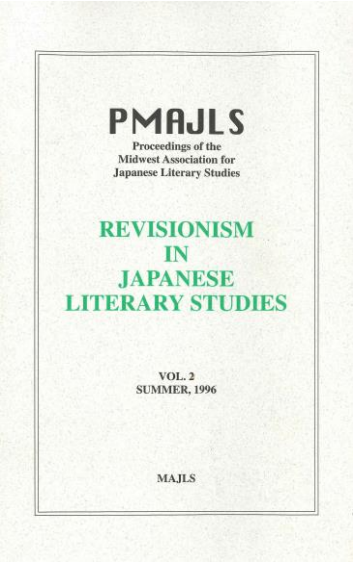

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"TANGLED HAIR" ON A "BAD HAIR DAY": FEMINIST TRESSES, MARXIST PRACTICES AND ETHNOPOETICS IN YOSANO AKIKO AND TAWARA MACHI

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Introduction[1]

I will begin in the true anthropological tradition of telling a story. I mentioned to one of colleagues that I was working on a project involving the famous Japanese poet of the turn of the century, Yosano Akiko. "Oh Akiko," he sighed. "She's so vain. And in order to understand a lot of her poems, you have to know the special circumstances that surround them ... which hotel she shacked up with with Tekkan during which month. Why should we care?" I also told another colleague that I was looking at the works of Tawara Machi, the young pop poet who recently swept the country. "Oh, Machi-chan, the woman who turned *tanka* poetry into an adolescent fad," she scoffed. For a while I was taken aback. I am an anthropologist and not a literary critic, after all. Had I chosen the two worst examples of versification in Japanese history? Were my suspected connections a mere mirage, or some misfired synapse in the brain, due no doubt to some earlier abuse

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1 In this paper, Japanese names are given in the Japanese order with family name first. However, unlike the Japanese convention of often referring to famous poets by their first names, I will use "Yosano" and "Tawara" throughout the text lest it sound to English ears like we are double dating. Japanese text is given in bold face, and loanwords are italicized; titles of books and journals are underlined. The Hepburn system of romanization is used, with long vowels being repeated. Certain well known Japanese names and places remain Westernized. I wish to thank Kobayashi Yūko for helping me with troublesome readings of several of these poems.

in my undergraduate days? Needless to say, these two women are controversial. Perhaps they are among the most talked about female poets in Japanese literary history. Undaunted, I took this to mean that I was somehow on the right track, though sometimes it was not clear to me exactly where the train was heading.

In this paper, then, I will examine some of the works of Yosano Akiko and Tawara Machi from a number of points of view, including feminist, Marxist, and ethnopoetic poetic perspectives. For their times, Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) and Tawara Machi (b. 12/31/62) received the most attention of any of the female *tanka* poets. Both women appeared at special times in Japanese literary and social history. Yosano's famous *Midaregami* ("Tangled Hair," 1901) was a sensual and often graphic portrayal of women in love and angst. This work caused scandal and acrimony at the height of the Meiji Period's modernization of the Japanese economy and government. Tawara's *Sarada kinenbi* ("Salad Anniversary," 1988) appeared at the pinnacle of the Japanese "economic miracle" in the late 1980's. Her humorous poems of the everyday life of young Japanese women--from family entanglements to mundane crises like facing a preoccupied hairdresser--caught the fancy of millions.

Though more than half a century separates these two poets, I argue that both Yosano and Tawara are exemplars of certain kinds of feminine consciousness at these two critical junctures. Marxist approaches examine various hidden forces that affect literary creation. But feminist scholars see these hidden forces as privileged differences between men and women. The discourse of extreme subjectivity of Yosano and Tawara show all these forces at work. Their poems attack the canons of form and structure, revitalizing classical Japanese poetic forms. They also attack the canon of gender, expressing female concerns in a

female voice. I argue, however, that no single approach to these works can capture the wealth of beauty and wisdom within them. I suggest that taking a very broad perspective--seeing texts as a culture--can offer the best opportunities for appreciating Yosano's and Tawara's poetry.

In the first section I start by briefly looking at some of the theories often used to study literature, and suggest that there is not a one to one correlation between the forces that influence literary forms and the theories that explain them. I next describe a little of the background of Yosano and Tawara, and discuss their influence on the form of *tanka* poetry. In the next sections I then approach the poems of these two women from three different styles of analysis--traditional history-rhetoric, feminism, and Marxism respectively. I then offer an ethnopoetic approach, using some of the techniques of the anthropologist, as another critical option. I argue in the concluding section that a comparison of these two poets--in spite of great distance temporally and psychologically--is indeed a valuable exercise that says much about Japanese poetry, culture, and the roles of women.

Styles of Literary Analysis

We cannot make any comments on "revisionism" in Japanese literature until it is at least a little clear what might be being revised. Thus, before I begin my discussion of Yosano and Tawara, let me preface my analysis with some brief comments on my views of literary theory. I hope their connections to the specific Japanese case will become clear as we go along.

Obviously, no data--whether it is the specific gravity of some chemical substance, the presence of a certain kind of kinship system in some culture, or a literary composition--exists in a theoretical vacuum. The analyst must explain raw data before it

makes any sense; that is, there really is no truth, only interpretation. This is probably even so in the hard sciences. But there can be no interpretation without a theory. The theory acts as a pair of sunglasses, helping you focus on things you want, while helping you dismiss or ignore the plethora of other stimuli that you do not need to focus on. Such a powerful tool, then, must be chosen with great care, as the kind of glasses you put on will literally color your world and make you see things in a certain way. As we all act as interpreters of one sort or another, we are all theoreticians by default-- whether we like it or not, or are even willing to admit it.

In the case of literature--and anthropology, for that matter--theory is always a sensitive issue because there are so many of them. In other disciplines, (like physics or biology) there is usually only one dominant accepted theory at any one time (e.g., "relativity quantum mechanics" or "evolution"). One of the problems in the humanities is that there is not a clear one to one correspondence between the obvious forces around us that shape our lives, and the theories that try and explain them. As an example, I list some of these forces and theories in the table below (which is obviously not exhaustive):[2]

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2 Obviously there are hundreds of general works on literary theory in existence. Consulted references included Robert Davis and Ronald Schleifer, *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (New York: Longman, 1989); Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975); Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); Raman Selden, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1985); John Natoli, ed. *Tracing Literary Theory* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) and John Sturrock, ed. *Structuralism and Since: From Levi-Strauss to Derrida* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<table>
<tr><th>FORCES</th><th>THEORIES</th></tr>
<tr><td>economics& subsistence</td><td rowspan="2">Marxism</td></tr>
<tr><td>social conditions</td></tr>
<tr><td>cultural factors</td><td rowspan="2">historical criticism</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">psychology/
psychodynamics</td><td>speech acts</td></tr>
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<tr><td rowspan="3">language constraints/
opportunities</td><td>Deconstruction</td></tr>
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Feminism</td></tr>
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The point is not whether I have drawn the lines correctly, ignored much overlap, named all the significant theories, or even placed them in the right order. I stand guilty on all counts. The real point is, I believe, that no one theory professes to cover every contingency. Thus, it is imperative that a variety of theoretical perspectives be judiciously chosen, even incorporating techniques and tools from outside literary disciplines. Revisionism, then, might start with no more than taking a holistic approach to the text--the data--at hand. I hope to show aspects of this in the analysis that follows.

Yosano and Tawara: Two Revolutionary Poets of the *Tanka* Form

To call Yosano Akiko and Tawara Machi "phenomenons" is to do a slight disservice to the term. Both have had considerable impact on their audience--for good or bad--and both are assured of some kind of place in Japanese literary history. In this paper I will look mostly at both of their first major works--*Midaregami* and *Sarada kinenbi*--as this appears to be a fair and natural comparison: Yosano's *Midaregami* contains 399 *tanka* poems written when the author was 23 years old; *Sarada kinenbi* contains 434 *tanka* poems written by the 26 year old Tawara. These two works, I believe, are quite reflective both of the position of women, and the state of *tanka* art, of the times they were written.[3]

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3 Primary sources for Yosano Akiko texts and commentary are Yosano Hikaru and Shinma Shin'ichi, *Yosano Akiko Senshū* ["Yosano Akiko Anthology"], 5 Vols. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1966) and Supplement, *Yosano Akiko Zenshū* ["The Complete Works of Yosano Akiko"], 13 Vols. and Supplement (Tokyo: Bunsendō Shoten, 1972). The text for *Midaregami* is included in Volume I of Yosano and Shinma given above, and was used as the main source for this paper (with references to it abbreviated here as YAS I); page numbers are given as those cited there. The Tawara poems are taken from Tawara Machi, *Sarada Kinenbi* ["Salad Anniversary"] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1987), abbreviated SK in the text, with examples following their pagination. Translations are, for better or for worse (or "plus-minus," as Tawara might say), my own. English translations of some Yosano's and Tawara's poems can be found in: Sakanishi Shio, *Tangled Hair: Translated form the Works of the Poet Akiko Yosano* (Boston: Marshall & Co., 1935); Glen Hughes and Yozan T. Iwasaki, *Three Women Poets of Modern Japan: A Book of Translations* (Seattle: University of Washington Bookstore, 1928), Dennis Maloney and Hide Oshiro, *Tangled Hair: Love Poems of Yosano Akiko* (Freedonia. New York: White Pine Press, 1987); Kenneth Rexroth and Ikuko Atsumi, *The Burning Heart: Woman Poets of Japan* (New York: New Directions/Seabury Pres, 1977) Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda, *Tangled Hair: Selected Tanka from Midaregami* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1971); Juliet Winters

Yosano Akiko, and her *tanka.* By the turn of the century in Meiji Japan, many had become dissatisfied with the traditional 5-7-5-7-7 syllabic *waka* (later called *tanka*) form of Japanese verse extant since the beginning of Japanese recorded history. Hackneyed phrases, trite and overused images, and the simple limitations of being able to say something new or profound in 31 syllables, all contributed to various "poetry revolutions" during the Meiji era. These included *Shintaishi* ("new style poems") written under the influence of European imports using longer forms, and eventually, free verse (the abandonment of syllable restrictions all together).

Experimenters with traditional forms, of course, were also numerous. One of the most initially influential of this style of poet was Yosano Hiroshi, or "Tekkan." Yosano Tekkan, founder of the magazine *Myōjō* ("Bright Star," or "[Venus] Morning Star") in 1900, lambasted the effeminate and effete in *tanka*, and urged a more masculine and nationalist verse. Among the founding members of the *Myōjō* group was a young woman named Hō Shō 鳳しょう（晶子）, who actually called herself Shōko. Also in this group was a young woman, Yamakawa Tomiko.

Hō Shōko eventually married Tekkan, taking the name Yosano Akiko ("Akiko" being another way of pronouncing the characters for "Shōko"). However, Tekkan's affections for both Yamakawa Tomiko and his previous wives made life complicated for Akikio. Various kinds of liaisons between Tekkan, Akiko, and Tomiko occurred, sometimes creating public scandal, and sometimes being described in various public and private ways in their poetry.

Akiko was at least as influential as Tekkan in revitalizing

Carpenter, *Salad Anniversary* (Tokyo: Kodansha English Library, 1990).

the *tanka* form. Often using Chinese-based words and pronunciations--a convention not really allowed until these *tanka* reform movements--as well as making complex and subtle syntactic constructions are hallmarks of her often difficult poetry. However, Akiko Yosano was most noticed for her sensual use of language, explicit images, and the sexual content of her poems. For example, in the following poem, hair as a symbol of youth, sexuality, love, and desire, is typical of the numerous "hair" poems of *Midaregami*:

Ex. 1 (YAS I, 32)

くろ髪の	More than the
千すぢの髪の	tangles of my
みだれ髪	tangled thoughts are the
かつおもひみだれ	tangles of thousands of
おもひみだるる	strands of tangled black hair

A woman with "midare-gami"--"disheveled" or "tangled" hair--carries a connotation of sexuality both in Japan and the United States (as most any Calvin Klein ad demonstrates). However, in Meiji Japan, hair slightly astray was particularly erotic (Goldstein and Shinoda 1987: 22-23). Honda Heihachiro (1957) even translated "midare-gami" as "hair in sweet disorder." But as seen in this poem, Yosano conflates this image with ideas of psychological states, emotions, thoughts, and memories.

Donald Keene[4] said the following poem, the first in the *Midaregami* collection, announced the arrival of an important new poet:

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4 *Dawn to the West, Japanese Literature in the Modern Era: Poetry, Drama, Criticism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1984), 22.

Ex. 2 (YAS I, 5)

夜の帳に	In the curtain of the night
ささめき尽きし	a star collapsed
星の今を	becoming a person
下界の人の	of the Earth
鬢のほつれよ	with stray locks of hair

There are numerous ways of reading this poem. An initial reaction might be to see a connection between it and the famous *Tanabata* story of the star-crossed lovers (the Weaver Star and the Cowheard Star) who could only meet each other on the seventh night of the seventh lunar month. As this story is celebrated as one of the five traditional festivals in Japan, this interpretation seems logical. A Marxian view might be to see the "curtain" as the blind placed between noble men and women in Heian times suggesting that we are dealing with the upper classes in this poem. The stray locks could be the somewhat unkempt coiffure of the working classes. There are dozens of other interpretations as well, as the numerous Japanese commentators have mentioned. Regardless of any final "right" version, these example, I believe, leave little doubt about richness of Yosano's verse.

Tawara Machi and her *tanka.* Where Yosano Akiko was the social radical and literary sensualist of the turn of the century, the 1980's Tawara Machi is, by contrast, the neo-conservative girl next door. This shy unmarried high school teacher in Tokyo, however, has sold more than 3,000,000 books, and this is not counting the spin-off comic books, CD's, TV shows, films, and assorted other affiliated items. And critical acclaim has not been absent, either.[5] She received the Kadokawa prize for *tanka* as

5 See, for example, the manga version of *Sarada Kinenbi*: Tawara Machi and Ide Mayumi, *Sarada Kinenbi KC Delux* (Tokyo: Kōdansha KC Delux, 1988).

well as other awards.

The tremendous appeal of Tawara's work is her fresh language and images. She has brought to *tanka* an almost conversation tone, and discusses common everyday subjects that most people can relate to. For example, what woman has not had to deal with the preoccupied hairdresser as in the following poem:

Ex. 3 (SK, 135)

我が髪を	"Is this your first time here?"
三度切りたる	I am asked as I sit down
美容師に	before a beautician
「初めてですか」と	who has cut my hair
聞かれて座る	three times

The "hair" images for Tawara are not those of complex sexual passions, entangled tormented recollections, or confusing psychological states. Instead, they are much more mundane: everywoman's fear of a bad hair day, everyman's fear of facing his woman on a bad hair day.

Besides contemporary language, Tawara also brings to us contemporary images. Consider the venue in the following poem:

Ex. 4 (SK, 156)

「元気でね」	In the corner
マクドナルドの	at MacDonald's,
片隅に	writing
最後の手紙を	"Take care, OK!" in my
書きあげており	last letter to you

In more traditional *tanka*--to say nothing of the way Yosano would handle this--instead of a woman writing her good bye letter in a corner at MacDonald's, other authors might place at the foot of some famous bridge or mountain, or in some obscure

remote inn of special significance.

Rhetorical and Traditional Readings of Yosano Akiko and Tawara Machi

What I am calling rhetorical criticism here--for lack of a better name--is concerned with the effects of language in a piece of literature, and often focuses on the texts themselves. In some work, what figurative language and tropes are used, and for what purposes? Which linguistic devices employed, and to what means? How is discourse constructed to achieve particular emotional responses in the readers, like sympathy, empathy or catharsis?. How does a text elicit a multiplicity of responses? In the case of Yosano and Tawara, a few of these things have already been pointed out in the poems presented above. I will mention a few specific examples to show how Yosano and Machi might be examined in the traditional rhetorical style of literary analysis.

Rhetorical approaches to the works of Yosano Akiko. In the discussions above, the side of Yosano that was a stylistic revolutionary was stressed. But it must be remembered that Yosano, in spite of her innovations and controversial images, was first and foremost, a *tanka* poet following the norms and canons of traditional Japanese *waka* poetry. In 1915 she even wrote a small instruction book, *Uta no tsukuriyō* ["How to Write Poetry/ Let's Write Poetry"] where she used some of her own verse as examples of classical forms in new guises. It is within the parameters of these traditions that she draws both her originality and novelty, her beauty and grace. Indeed, it is her ties with the past the make her modern *tanka* most interesting. For example, many of her poems hark back to the traditional verses found in the famous classics. For example, the following two poems are a dialog between a *koto* and its owner:

Ex. 5 (YAS I, 33)

そら鳴りの	Thou koto
夜ごとのくせぞ	I am driven nearly crazy
狂ほしき	with the breathless silence
汝よ小琴よ	every night
片袖かさむ	Take me! By my corner sleeve
(koto ni)	(to the koto)

Ex. 6 (YAS I, 33)

ぬしえらばず	You, with drooping eyebrows,
胸にふれむの	think of this koto,
行く春の	who,
小琴とおぼせ	in the coming spring,
眉やはき君	will touch your breast
(koto no irabete)	(the koto answers)

The koto, speaking to a woman perhaps on the verge of tears, cannot choose its owner, but it says that she may cry to it whenever she wants. There are a number of such dialogs between *koto*s and ladies in the *Man'yōshū* over a millennium ago. Some of Yosano's poems are obviously directly patterned after *Man'yōshū* selections as well. Besides following the usual classical canons of using appropriate stylistic conventions (e.g., *makura kotoba* pivot words and the like), she also uses traditional images in traditional places. The *Midaregami* image again appears in the following poem, suggesting sensuality as well as the disordered emotional state of the woman who been so distraught for this past spring.

Ex. 7 (YAS I, 14)

春三月	During these three months
柱おかぬ琴に	of spring, not a sound
音たてぬ	from the bridge of my koto
ふれしそぞろの	except for when my

宵の乱れ髪　　disheveled hair touches it
without intention

Rhetorical approaches to the works of Tawara Machi.
One of the first things we notice about Tawara's poems is the frequent use of English loanwords or references to Western images. Most of the poems in *Sarada kinenbi* contain at least some *katakana*; if anything is her special trademark, it is this. This use of non-classical forms and images is perhaps the most innovative *tanka* technique that she has adopted, and she always uses theses devices for humorous or dramatic effects. In the following poem, the lights of Elvis's heartbreak hotel are now on. The lonely woman recalls that her partner also sang about this locale, but she never thought it would be a place they would visit together. The "vacancy" sign is never off:

Ex. 8 (SK, 22)

いつか君が	The light of
歌ったこんな	Heartbreak Hotel
夕暮れの	in the evening.
ハートブレイク	You sang about that
ホテルの灯り	kind of place once

Another similar image is found in the following Tawara poem, where after surreptitious appropriating her lover's apparently leather jacket, a woman strikes a James Dean-like stance--perhaps imitating his own attempts at being terminally cool

Ex. 9 (SK, 81)

君の香の	Quietly wearing
残るジャケット	your jacket
そっと着て	with your lingering aroma
ジェームス•デイーンの	I try out a
ポーズしてみる	James Dean pose

These 1950's references to America or Western culture (Elvis, Heartbreak Hotels, James Dean) should not be thought of as some kind of retro-throwback or nostalgic yearning for simpler times gone by. It is Japanese young people that appreciate these images the most. It is not that Elvis or the Beatles are having a comeback; in Japan, they have never died in the first place.

But it must be remembered that Tawara does write *tanka* in the formal style, after all, in spite of all her modern images. This is no doubt one of the reasons for her popularity. As we see this example,

Ex. 10 (SK, 61)

君のため	There are blank spaces
空白なりし	left for you
手帳にも	even in a notebook
予定を入れぬ	written in a pencil that
鉛筆書きで	has not scheduled anything

classic poetic connecting words or verbs (such as *nari* above) show that Tawara is not just writing modern Japanese slang or prose in 31 syllable form.

Feminist Readings of Yosano and Tawara

There obviously are many varieties of feminist criticism.[6] Generally, two issues (among many) seem paramount in the feminist project. First, feminist critics are concerned with social issues; that is, what social conditions have created the current situation women are in, and how might this be changed by artistic

6 See, for example, Elaine Showalter, ed. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory* (London: Virago, 1986).

writing or criticism? A second important issue is how might gender roles be re-constructed or redefined to legitimately give rise to an authentic expression of self?

Feminist readings of the works of Yosano Akiko. Both these issues are found in Yosano's *Midaregami*. In places Yosano laments male domination and power, but more often she is concerned with finding her own sexuality, and coming to terms with her passions and desires:

Ex. 11 (YAS I, 5)

歌にきけな	Ask the verses
誰れ野の花に	who is it that claims that
紅き否む	the field of flowers
おもむきあるかな	is not red? It is the girl
春罪もつ子	who has the sin of spring

One of the issues that female intellectuals, writers, and artists were confronting in this period--the middle of Meiji--was what did it mean to be a "new woman" (*shin-fujin*)? Did the "new woman" want a new sexual identity, or need protection from an oppressive patriarchy? Would social emancipation naturally come from economic equality?[7] Such problems were debated at length in new journals such as Seitō ("Blue Stockings"), to which Yosano and other women poets contributed frequently. Understanding the following poem, for example, involves realizing that part of Yosano's accommodating her sexual nature is to become proud and comfortable with own body:

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7 Sharon Sievers, *Flowers in the Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983).

Ex. 12 (YAS I, 9)

ゆあみする	While bathing
泉の底の	does not my body
小百合花	of twenty summers
二十の夏を	look like a lily flower
うつくしと見ぬ	at the bottom of the spring?

Such a poem sounds not only immodest to Meiji ears, but indecent as well. Many of the poems that were considered obscene by contemporary commentators were actually attempts to express her identity as a woman, and establish her role as a sensual human being.

Feminist readings of the works of Tawara Machi. For Tawara, her views of men's and women's roles, gender inequality, and sexuality are less clarified. She is more cautious and circumspect. She often pokes fun at the many little foibles and weaknesses men have in a gentle, almost teasing, way:

Ex. 13 (SK, 14)

君を待つ	It's another Saturday
土曜日なりき	I've spent waiting for you.
待つという	Women were born
時間を食べて	to thrive on
女は生きる	time spent waiting

But many times she is insecure. In the next poem, while describing a presumably mundane and carefree moment of watching a film, anxiety and doubts arise.

Ex. 14 (SK, 87)

君と観る	The love scene,
画面いっぱいの	filling the whole screen,
ラブシーン	that I watched with you--
よく似た仕草の	the leading man's gestures
主演男優	really resembled yours

Does her lover love her, or is he just going through the practiced motions? Has he practiced these moves on others? Many might see her a hopeless romantic, while a hard core feminist might argue that Tawara needs some serious lessons on consciousness raising. However, I will argue shortly that such claims might not only unfair, but wrong.

Yosano, Tawara, and Marxist Readings

Karl Marx argued that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness." That is, human mental phenomena and ideologies are the products of social, economic, and environmental conditions rather than the other way around. This, coupled with another of Marx's claim--"As people express their lives, so they are ..." form the basis of Marxist criticism[8]

Marxist readings of Yosano Akiko. The power of Marxist analysis is that it can sometimes uncover hidden forces at work--economic structures, relations of power and subordination, struggles of social classes--that remain out of sight in day to day living. For example, in a fair number of Yosano's poems we find references to liaisons between courtesan and client, travelers and innkeepers' "maids," and the like.

Ex. 15 (YAS I, 18)

泣かで急げ	Don't cry,
やは手にはばき	hurry and wait for the evening
解くえにし	when the soft hands
えにし持つ子の	of another girl
夕を待たむ	will untie your clothes

8 See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

These affairs and one night stands are almost elevated to point of grand passion by Yosano:

Ex. 16 (YAS I, 20)

うなじ手に	His hand on the nape
ひくきささやき	of my neck,
藤の朝を	low whispers,
よしなやこの子	the wisteria of the morning,
行くは旅の君	I am the girl that reluctantly sends off my traveling lover

Again, this romanticizing of what were probably quite sordid affairs is seen in this next poem:

Ex. 17 (YAS I, 39)

わかき子が	My traveling lover
胸の小琴の	who knows
音を知るや	the beating sounds of the
旅ねの君よ	koto in this young girl's
たまくらかさむ	breast--I will shelter you

A Marxist might argue that Yosano is mistakenly seeing romance and excitement where there is really only exploitation and degradation. While the thought of having many lovers desiring her for a dear price might be titillating, reality is much different. The reason such an intelligent woman as Yosano has these fantasies is that the economic system is so insidious that people buy into it without much conscious awareness.

Marxist readings of Tawara Machi. Marx also claimed that commodities--cultural and social products, after all, which actually have no intrinsic value until one is imposed on them--can often take on a life of their own.[9] They often become "fetishized,"

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9 Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret

desired for their own sake. A crude example might be desiring a Rolex watch when a Casio would tell the time just as well. Another aspect of commodities is that we eventually tend to think of their symbolic qualities as real properties. To use the same oversimplified example, I might think that because you own a Rolex you therefore must be a valuable person. Indeed, we may fall into of the trap of thinking in terms of commodities instead of any other kinds of symbols.

In the case of Tawara, a Marxist might point out that it seems that she can hardly make an allusion without reference to some kind of commodity. For example, in speaking of her doubts about the solidity a romantic relationship, she refers to the kind of things they both share (in this case, what the couple drinks):

Ex. 18 (SK, 177)

注文は	When we order, we
いつも二つの	both choose "American" coffee.
アメリカン	But I don't know
相思相殺	if this is mutual love or just
かもしれないね	canceling each other out

The exchange aspect of Tawara's preoccupations is obvious in the following poem, where precious memories become reduced to mere things.

Ex. 19 (SK, 54)

梅雨晴れの	It's the end of the
ちりがみ交換	rainy season's exchange
思い出も	for toilet paper. Should I
ポケットテイシュに	trade these memories, too,
換えてくれんか	for pocket tissue?

Thereof" in Janet Dolgin et. al., eds. *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 245-253.

The trading in of old newspapers and magazines to the wandering neighborhood recycler for toiletry items is humorous when juxtaposed with recollections of the spring. But one wonders how unintentionally materialist the image is.

A similar observation could be made for Tawara's poem about bargains in the store window. Again, her feelings, and responses, are encoded in the language of commodities.

Ex. 20 (SK, 18)

通るたび	Each time
「本日限り」の	I pass by
バーゲンを	I see the red blouse
している店の	of the store that is having
赤いブラウス	a "today only" sale

I will show in the next section that these materialists interpretations, while accurate to a point, leave some key issues to be explored.

Ethnopoetics: An Anthropological Look at Poetry

Cultures as texts, texts as cultures. The various ways of looking at the poetry mentioned above--feminism, Marxism, and the traditional rhetorical analysis--all contain valuable insights. However, an anthropologist might look at things in a slightly different way. I am not claiming that we should ignore other approaches, or that an "anthropological" view of poetry--whatever that might be--is necessarily exclusive. But the perspectives of the anthropologist might be different.

For more than a decade now anthropologists have realized that literary theorist have much to offer. That is, the idea that culture could be some kind of "text" to be read is a very powerful notion. Now, some of the tools of interpretation used in literary studies could applied to the study of social and cultural phenomena,

at least with some degree of success.[10] But is it possible that some of the traditional tools of the anthropologist might also be useful in literary studies as well? I think so, and I will now look at Yosano's and Tawara's works in this light. That is, I will view their poems as ethnographic events, comparable, maybe, to other more obvious social phenomena like ritual, ceremony, or other performance aspects of culture. By taking these literary events as exemplars of cultural-social activity, some insights into understanding these poets and their work--complementary, of course, to other more traditional literary approaches--might be possible.

What do anthropologists actually do? What are some questions they might ask? How might an anthropologist compare these two poets? Obviously, these are tough questions, and the answers probably vary in proportion to the number of people who call themselves anthropologists. I might start by simply looking at some obvious overall similarities and differences between Yosano and Tawara, as outlined in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 seems to indicate that the approaches to poetry and lifestyle taken by Yosano and Tawara are so different that any comparison between them is almost pointless. Yosano constructs her gender role through narcissistic sensuality and sexuality, while Tawara is almost the innocent girl in the extreme. Tawara approaches her task with lighthearted self-deprecating humor,

10 See, for example, George Marcus and Michael Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); and James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

and an sensitive eye for the intimate and beautiful in everyday activity. Yosano, in her poems, attacks life and love with the intensity of pure *wasabi* on a naked tongue.

Table 1 Some Key Differences

Yosano Akiko	Tawara Machi
technically rather complex poetry, with clear connections to classical *tanka* forms; rather difficult	technically rather simple poems, in everyday vernacular language, easily approachable by everyone
often sexually explicit or	usually sexually obvious subtle or inhibited; coy
popular mostly among literati	mass popular appeal
marginal figure in terms of lifestyle and social philosophy,	mainstream social persona
references often complex and personal; frequent use of nonce symbols	common references to everyday popular and mass culture; symbols generally accessible by all
view of men: object of passion, but yet potential enemies or exploiters	view of men: often cute and helpless (sometimes frustratingly so); potential saviors
generally does not use humor as poetic device	humor often used as a important poetic device

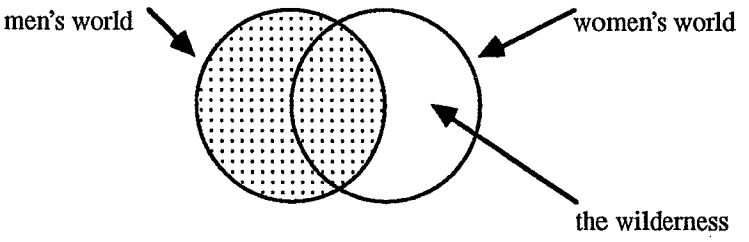
the special and sensual taken as the most common subjects	most common subjects are mundane activities
love and passion are everything in life	love is but one part of day to day living
physical beauty is celebrated, almost to the point of clinical narcissism	physical beauty is not stressed; self-deprecating view of self presented
headstrong, self-confident	self-doubting, a little shy, hesitant
poems make references to a number of well known personal involvement	no references to personal affairs
part of particular poetry movement, The *Myōjō* poets	not part of a special new poetry movement
little exposure outside specialized poetry journals	became a national fads or industry (comics, TV show exposure, etc.)
thought to be feminis revolutionary	thought to be an or average mainstream young woman; not especially feminist
changed her name several times	kept her same name
tangled hair	a bad hair day

Table 2 Some Key Similarities

Yosano Akiko	Tawara Machi
achieved instant fame after *Midaregami*	achieved instant fame after *Sarada Kinenbi*
technical and stylistic revolutionary; made important contributions in revitalizing the *tanka* movement	technical and stylistic revolutionary; uses humor, *gairaigo*, and everyday language as literary devices
romantic at heart	romantic at heart
a feminine voice amidst a sea of male discourse	a feminine voice amidst a sea of male discourse
a product of some special circumstances of women's social history: Meiji-Taisho social revolution	a product of some special circumstances of women's social history: post-WWII economic development

But, nonetheless, there are intriguing similarities between these two poets in spite of great distance in psychological and physical time. Table 2 points a few of these out. That is, even after three quarters of a century, the voice of Japanese women--at least in poetry--has not changed. Why might this be?

Muted voices. The anthropologist Edward Ardener[11] has argued that dominant groups in society control and manipulate the dominant modes, or means, of expression. That is, if non-dominant groups choose to express themselves they are forced to do so in, and using, the dominant mode of expression and ideology. Any group not that does not have access to these dominant modes of expression--or for whatever reason cannot use them--will be "muted." Women are one such group. Ardener does not claim that these non-dominant groups are necessarily silent or unnoticed. Women speak a great deal, after all. They are "muted" because their model of reality and world view cannot be symbolized, [text continued after the tables] Table 1. Some Key Differences represented, or imparted in the dominant discourse. That is, the sub-dominant group is forced to structure their understanding of the world through the model of the dominant group.[12] How "does the symbolic weight of that other mass of persons express itself?" (Ardener, 3) Through ritual, art, and other symbolic expressions of performance.



11 Edward Ardener, "Belief and the Problem of Women" in Shirley Ardener, ed. Perceiving Women (New York: Halstead Press, 1975), 1-17; "The Problem Revisited," ibid., 19-27.

12 Henrietta Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 3.

The illustration in Diagram 1 shows, in kind of an elementary school Venn diagram style, Ardener's view of the relationships between the dominant and sub-dominant groups. In the case of men and women, there is much that is the same in their lives (that is, the two circles overlapping each other), but there is not complete similarity. Note, too, that the situation depicted here is unlike the Victorian view of men and women living in separate but co-exiting lives (i.e., circles that do not overlap at all). The top circle--the male world view, symbolic vocabulary, and so on--covers and dominates the second circle. But there is a part of the second circle that is outside the domain of the first. This is literally a no-man's land, a world of women's concerns and feelings, expressed in a women's voice. To men, this is terra incognita--the "wild" in Ardener's words. Women know the whole of the men's world because it the dominant ideology of the culture. Even if they have never experienced some particularly male activity (however supposedly secret), it is the stuff of gossip and legend. But as this wilderness is not structured in the voice or language of men, it is inaccessible to them.

This explains, I think, some of the power of these two poets. As we have seen, more traditional feminist critics might argue that both Yosano and Tawara are rebelling against male bias and stereotypes. That is, they are trying to re-define or re-construct their gender roles, apart from male definitions imposed upon them. But here, I would argue, these women are writing in the wilderness, the dangerous "wild zone" that is a dark mystery to men. This is why both are so remarkable and controversial. So when Yosano is celebrating the beauty of her body, the power of her sexual desires, or the arrogance of her youth, these are dangerous poems:

Ex. 21 (YAS I, 18)

わが春の	Doesn't my twenty old
二十姿と	spring figure
打ちぞ見ぬ	resemble
底くれなゐの	the deep red
うす色牡丹	of the pale-colored peony tree

This is a rather difficult poem; it would be much more clear if Yosano would had room to add *kana* to the end. But in any case, Yosano says you can't imagine how the brilliance of her twenty year old spring figure shines. These are feelings that probably Meiji men--who no doubt assumed that women themselves also believed that family loyalty, patriarchy, and subservience was normal, natural, and desirable--did not even imagine women had. The problem was not so simple as Yosano just being an immoral libertine or harlot--that is, an isolated case. What if our wives and daughters and sisters--to say nothing of *okāsan*--also feel this way, even only occasionally? The emotions she is speaking about are not just wild, they are unfathomable. When Tawara speaks of cold fathers, as in

Ex. 22 (SK, 47)

やさしさを	It is time
うまく表現	to forgive
できぬこと	my father's generation
許されており	their inability to
父の世代は	express kindness well

No doubt the hard-working salaryman-provider is puzzled and perplexed by such laments. What have I done wrong? What is to forgive? Is not my daughter being presumptuous and arrogant [again]? Have I failed to raise her right?

Nature and culture. This idea of the wild is sometimes seen in other aspects of anthropological analysis. The famous

structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss[13] has argued for the existence of so-called "binary oppositions," which supposedly reflect some aspect of psychological processes found cross-culturally. In most cultures, if I say "left" you say "right;" "up" is opposed to "down," "white" to"black," or "man" to "woman" (to name just a few examples). Some anthropologists, in an attempt to explain the apparent universality of patriarchy, view the status of women as due to the distinction between the opposition of "culture" versus "nature." All societies make a distinction between the natural world and human society, of course. But Ortner[14] argues that women, due the properties of their physiology and involvement in reproduction, are seen in all societies as closer to the natural world, and therefore symbolically associated with it. Men are associated with culture--that attempt to control, socialize, or transcend nature. As all societies try to control the natural world, it is likely, then, that women should be controlled as well.

How wild and how civilized are the poets Yosano and Tawara? Yosano, as with many--if not most--traditional Japanese poets, venerates the natural world. But as we have seen, she does so in a sensual or sexual way:

Ex. 23 (YAS I, 22)

つばくらの	Shall I smooth the
羽にしたたる	spring rain that is dripping
春雨を	on the black swallow's wing?
うけてなでむか	my hair
わが朝寝髪	in morning disarray

13 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

14 Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Interestingly, Tawara--who no doubt loves nature as much as the next Japanese--seems more content to use "civilized" images. For example, instead of, say, comparing her lover to the sound of a tiny brook in summer we see her making an image that is much more pedestrian:

Ex. 24 (SK, 29)

君といて	When you are here,
プラスマイナス	even trough the gurgling
カラコロと	sound of gargling
うがいの声も	for better or worse (+ or -)
女なりけり	I become a woman

Tawara seems almost compelled to make references to things in the urban world. Even when speaking of sadness in spring, she has to connect this allusion to a famous rock and roll group, the Southern All Stars:

Ex. 25 (SK, 176)

忘れたい	Because it is a spring
ことばっかりの	filled only with things
春だから	I'd like to forget
ひねもすサザン	I play the Southern All Stars
オールスターズ	all day long

Liminal states, betwixt and between. Many anthropologists also view certain key social events in special ways.[15] For example, all cultures seem to have "rite of passage," and the processes involved seem to be universal. A person starts in one social state, goes through a transitional "liminal" period, and ends up socially re-defined. Each of these stages are marked

15 See, for example, Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982).

by institutionalized--and socially readily recognized--characteristics. To give a college example, a plain student may step on campus as a freshman, but after going through "pledging" and "rushing" he may end up a fraternity "brother," a different category of person than at the start. There is a multitude of rites of passage we all through as we travel down the life course, some brief (as in a junior high graduation), some interminably long (like a divorce or tenure decision, for example).

But these same processes seem to be involved in a widely varying range of contexts. Performances and rituals, for example, often seem to have similar stages as they go about trying to accomplish their goals. Before a rain dance, (to use some generic ethnographic instance), there is drought and depravation. During the ritual, it is a time of transition, when there is doubt, confusion, and danger. Will the magic work? Or will the ceremony backfire and make things even worse? Afterwards, a new state has been effected; the world is now a different--and hopefully wetter--place than before.

In the arts, for example, it could be argued that similar things take place, at least psychologically, during some event or performance. Presumably the reader/listener/viewer has been changed in some way. The particular impact of reading any given poem is no doubt always open to speculation. But, in any case, I think that both *Midaregami* and *Sarada kinenbi* are certainly rite of passage books in many ways. By this I do not simply mean that these were the first significant works by their respective authors, or that their immediate fame changed them and made them different persons. That is certainly true. What I mean is, both books are about passage and change, by people going through it themselves. Tawara, an unmarried high school teacher in her mid-twenties, felt in interviews that she is not yet really an adult,

barely more mature than her students. Yosano was even younger when her book came out, and barely felt emancipated. Both had recently negotiated leaving home; some of Tawara's poems explicitly speak of her disappointment in herself having to return home after living alone for some time.

But more importantly, the poems of these writers often seem preoccupied with transitions in life, both physical and psychological. For example, Yosano sings the praises of her youth and attractiveness when she speaks of the vanity of a young woman:

Ex. 26 (YAS I, 5)

その子二十	That girl of twenty
櫛にながるる	with a comb streaming
黒髪の	through her raven hair,
おごりの春の	how wonderful is her arrogance
うつくしきかな	of the spring of her life

Tawara confronts the changes taking place among the friends around her who are getting married in the following ostensively simple poem:

Ex. 27 (SK, 58)

異星人の	Like an alien
ようなそうでも	from another planet,
ないような	but yet, not quite,
前田から石井	my friend Miss Maeda
となりし友人	becomes Mrs. Ishii

The married women is the same friend as before obviously, but yet, there is certainly something alien about her now. In this brief passage Tawara has captured all the ambiguous feelings of joy and sadness we all have for our newly married acquaintances as our relations, by default, become changed.

Tawara also often speaks of transitions that are not quite so permanent, but no less emotional. The feelings of unrequited love, or unsatisfied love, are especially painful around the holidays (even Western ones).

Ex. 28 (SK, 110)

恋をする	Jingle Bells
ことまさびしき	can't reach my heart.
十二月	To be lonely
ジングルベルの	being in love
届かぬ心	in December

The speaker is in a liminal state on several levels: being lonely, being in love, being in winter, being in the holidays, and even listening to a brief song. She is certainly betwixt and between many psychological states--a condition described in many of Tawara's verse.

Culture as flux. In spite of the heuristic categories used to describe them, cultures are dynamic and changing, and are always in a constant state of flux. Culture is not simply a fixed set of parameters or options that people can choose, or choose from. Instead, culture consists of systems of symbols, customs, ideologies, cognitive patterns, and emotions that are constantly being negotiated, contested, reified, and redefined as we go along. Maybe saying that people "wing it" is a bit too flippant, but individuals--as producers and consumers of culture and cultural products--no doubt create and change culture as much as institutions do.

Looking at to two significant poets separated by some years reminds us how much culture can change, as well as how much the individual is free to manipulate and play with the cultural rules. Consider the following poem by Yosano:

Ex. 29 (YAS I, 8)

人かえさず	The early evening festive
暮れむの春の	feeling of spring grows dark
宵ごこち	with someone not returning;
小琴にもたす	the koto is really
乱れ乱れ髪	tangled with my tangled hair

This is *tanka* in very much the classical style. The images of kotos and spring, for example, are part of the accepted *tanka* canon going back more than a millennium. The images of the tangled hair are certainly risque and suggestive, and as we have mentioned, no doubt raised an eyebrow or two at the turn of the century. But now consider the following poem by Tawara, describing in a very Disneyland way, what love and her lover means to her.[16]

Ex. 30 (SK, 102)

君を抱く	I want to become
テインカーベルに	Tinkerbell,
なりたくて	who holds you
パールピンクの	in my arms, and
フラットシューズ	wears pearl-pink pumps

Undoubtedly the other eyebrow gets raised here as well, but for different reasons. Comparing these two poems above shows not just the obvious fact that Japan has changed in 86 years, going from a post-feudal agrarian society described in *Midaregami* to a post-modern industrialized one depicted in *Sarada kinenbi.* What has happened, of course, is that it is Tawara and the people of her generation who have created this new Japan, rather than just absorb it, inherit it, or accept it. If nothing else, a comparison of

16 Another possible interpretation of this poem is that the speaker wants to be small and petite (a Tinkerbell), but feels herself overweight.

these two works should remind us of that.

Concluding Remarks

Yosano Akiko and Tawara Machi are often compared by "back of the book jacket" critics. However, I feel these claims are somewhat dubious. These blurbs do little to support their claim of similarity save for saying that Yosano and Tawara are both popular female *tanka* poets who have idiosyncratic styles. There is certainly no easy line that can be drawn tracing Yosano to Tawara either in terms of style or formal structure. But I do think that even though they are very different poets--who actually defy comparison in some ways--there is great usefulness in setting their poems together side by side.

One thing such a comparison does, if nothing else, is to show the wonderful ability of the *tanka* form to change and remain constant. Many of the same allusions, key words, and literary devices are used by both women, but the resulting overall effects could oftentimes not be more different. A comparison also shows how both women were obvious products of their times, as well as being products of particular social and rhetorical forces. It shows how their own individual personality and style comes through the plethora of these forces. If nothing else, we are in the presence of quick and agile minds. And these poets appeared at the right place at the right time, with--most importantly--with the right voice.

In terms of theoretical exegesis, I think the analysis presented here shows that there seems to be no right or privileged way of examining these works. All approaches have their strengths and all have their weaknesses. Each tells the story, but in rather different ways.

For example, though a Marxist analysis will show us some things about relations of economic power, class difference, and the relations of people to commodities, it will be blind to other critical aspects. I do not believe that Tawara is a mere bourgeois young woman who has only bought into the capitalist system; I do not believe that the reason she uses so many loanwords is because of alleged commodity fetishism. As I have argued elsewhere,[17] these things are rhetorical devices that are actually quite creative and innovative. Likewise, I do not feel that Yosano sort of glorified prostitution because of an insidious economic system which hid its real purposes and effects (an common Marxist argument). Yosano had her own personal psycho-sexual agendas to contend with, as well as social statements to make, and her poetry no doubt served them.

At the same time, from the feminist standpoint, I do not feel these poems deal only with problems of gender identity and new roles for women. For example, Tawara is often at a loss as how to deal with men, who are in many ways are a mystery to her:

Ex. 31 (SK, 151)

土曜日は	That salaryman
ズックをはいて	who comes to visit me
会いに来る	on Saturdays
サラリーマンとは	wearing his sneakers
未知の生き物	is sure a strange animal

17 James Stanlaw, "'For Beautiful Human Life:' The Use of English in Japan" in Joseph Tobin, ed. *RE-Made in Japan: Everyday Life and Consumer Taste in a Changing Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 58-78; or "Hikaru GENJI Monogatari: The Poetics of English in Japanese Song and Verse" in Roger Thomas, ed. *Poetics of Japanese Literature: Proceedings of the Conference "The Poetics of Japanese Literature*, October 3-4, 1992, Purdue University.

Yet she seems to suffer no real dissatisfaction with her role as woman; indeed, she relishes her femininity and gentleness at times. Yosano, at the other extreme, at times wallows in the control she has over men, and the power of her body and sexual energy. A "feminist" reading of these poets, then, would have to be very subtle, and require great personal and cultural sensitivity.

The noted anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski supposedly once said that "Anthropology is the study of man embracing woman." If we took liberties with this aphorism and said "*tanka* is the study of woman embracing man" I believe neither Yosano Akiko nor Tawara Machi would disagree.