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Standing on the Street Corners of Capitalism:

Translations of Tawara Machi's *Chocolate Revolution* Tanka

By Jared Ridabock

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in University Honors and Japanese

Thesis Adviser

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I. Overview

My first intuitive spark to study Tawara Machi's work came to me at a 7-11 convenience store in Tokyo. Two hours earlier, I had arrived into the city after landing at Narita airport in order to prepare for my first study-abroad program in Japan at Hokkaido University. Exhausted, I walked into the store when I saw the words Can-chu Hai (a cheap canned cocktail) and was immediately surprised to have a poem from Tawara's *Salad Anniversary (Sarada Kinenbi)* pop into my mind:

“Yomesan ni
nare yo” da nante
kan chuuhai
nihon de itte
shimatte ii no

“Marry me”
after two canned cocktails-
are you sure you want to say that?

(Winters-Carpenter 1989, 35)

This small, “aha!” moment transported me back to this poem and had me think “Ah ha! So *this* is what she meant.” Tawara was writing poems about the hopes for marriage somehow with this cheap-looking canned beverage. And, as my time in Japan continued, I found these connections to pop up more and more frequently in my day-to-day life. With a mass of her poetry capturing moments surrounding small objects and scenes normal for daily Japanese life, even as a foreigner I felt completely immersed in her world of small “ah-ha!” moments, where the most commonplace item could trigger all kinds of emotional associations.

Prior to my studies at Portland State University, my exposure to Japanese poetry had been limited to the syllable restrictive 5-7-5 haiku form in my middle-school literature class, where my schoolmates and I tried to make English words awkwardly fit into a form suboptimal for the language. This strange contradictory feeling of being a

semi-advanced speaker of Japanese but also being somewhat confused about Japanese culture is commonly shared among my friends, who also have varying levels of experience with the language and culture of Japan. Perhaps because of my ah-ha moment with Tawara and Can-chu Hai cocktails on my way to Hokkaido, I became more interested in understanding Japanese culture through her works instead of through more prominent Japanese writers like Murakami Haruki or Kawabata Yasunari.

Therefore at the end of my language training in the Japanese program at PSU, I decided to translate a portion of Tawara's poetry and look at these poems through a critical lens. Although selections of more famous tanka poets, such as Masaoka Shiki, Yosano Akiko, or Ishikawa Takuboku, have been translated in anthologies or textbooks, with the exception of Juliet Winters-Carpenter's 1989 translation of *Salad Anniversary* and its recent 2014 reprint by Pushkin Press, Japanese poetry, particularly contemporary works, go largely unnoticed by Western audiences. In my advanced literature classes at PSU, I became more familiar with Tawara's later tanka collections and I wanted to test my translation and literary analysis skills on a part of Tawara's 1997 *Chocolate Revolution* (*Chokorēto kakumei* チョコレート革命), which has been mostly overlooked by Western literary scholars and translators.

The aim of this project is to increase accessibility of Tawara Machi's lesser known poems and contemporary Japanese poetry as a whole to English-speaking audiences. Although my thesis does not feature a complete translation of *Chocolate Revolution*, I believe its first sections that I have selected represent many of the main stylistic qualities that make Tawara the interesting but also polarizing poet she is. Perhaps this project will also generate more research and translation of contemporary writers and

poets who work to evolve tanka as technology advances and keep the genre at the forefront of Japanese poetry. I have chosen to include the original Japanese text with my translations and notes, both to encourage more students to pursue Japanese language studies and, for those already having Japanese ability, to take me to task for my translation choices.

II. Criticism

Tawara Machi is a best-selling author and poet in contemporary Japanese literature, whose writing, despite being largely engaged in premodern Japanese poetics, is widely read and celebrated amongst a modern Japanese public since her debut hit *Salad Anniversary* was published in 1987. Having sold over eight million volumes worldwide (Pushkin Press 2014), it is no surprise then that her success as a tanka poet has been hailed as a revival of a traditional art form in an increasingly Westernized contemporary Japan. In this thesis I will be translating and analyzing selected poems from Tawara's 1997 collection *Chocolate Revolution*, citing examples from the first three sections, "There's No One Here" ("Daare mo inai"), "Time in the Wetlands" ("Shitsugen no jikan") and "Street Corners of Capitalism" ("Shihonshugi no machikado"), which have yet been translated to English. After briefly introducing tanka as a genre, I will analyze my selections from *Chocolate Revolution* by adopting the critical lens developed by Dean Brink, arguing that Tawara, rather than taking a directly political approach to social resistance, uses tanka as a way to provide readers with small snapshot moments of daily life, granting them an opportunity to critically analyze actions that go unnoticed. Lastly, I

will discuss more recent work on poetry that Tawara Machi has published through social media, arguing how these recent examples may suggest a change in the political aspects Tawara's poetic voice, and how digital publication may change the structural nature of tanka at large.

As noted by Makoto Ueda, tanka is a traditional Japanese poetic form that follows a 31-syllable (5-7-5-7-7) syllabic structure (1983, 2). With a history rooted in the *waka* form from at least Heian period's (794-1185), this regulated syllable form of poetry not only employs a set meter, but a restricted lexicon of poetic allusions, be it the image of cherry blossoms to evoke a shared knowledge of the coming of spring, or an allusion to tangled hair to suggest the lover's haze after having sex. These shared and universally understood images in traditional *waka* gave authors a set lexicon of thematic and rhythmic devices to employ as important as metaphor, simile and iambic pentameter are to Western literature (Brink, 631). Historically, well-executed employment of these allusions defined a poet's elegance or *yūgen* (mystery and depth) and conversely, their merit as a writer at large. By the 19th century however, this millenium-old tradition had grown trite amongst writers of the time, particularly with the growing influence of the analytical, inward-looking Western-styled literature that had become popular and canonical amongst Japanese intellectuals and artists by the first two decades of the next century. This led to the development of tanka: a poetry no longer concerned with refined elegance, now more focused on the struggles of work, the beauty of everyday things, and matters of the inner self.

Many tanka poets throughout the genre's history have had strong ideological structures governing how they write poetry, be it Masaoka Shiki's devotion to

documenting reality through his “sketching life” (*shasei*) method (Ueda, 10) or Yosano Akiko’s impassioned and strong romantic style. In her own writing however, Tawara Machi, as a writer of the contemporary period (1945-present day), employs a more simple philosophy than her predecessors from the modern period (1868-1945). In a paper discussing the passage of time captured in tanka’s short form, Jon Holt describes Tawara’s method, noting that she merely attempts to capture moments that give her pause, or as she writes, her “ah moment!” (*a to iu shunkan*) with her “magic wand” (*mahō no tsue*) the tanka form. Holt elaborates further, quoting Tawara from her 1993 poetic guide *Reading Tanka* (*Tanka o Yomu*), “The first step for one to compose a tanka is the “waving” of the heart (*kokoro no “yure”*). It doesn’t matter how small it is, as long as you have a feeling that gives you some kind of ‘ah!’” (Holt, 37). The importance of this “ah moment!” is again argued by Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912) who, as noted by Holt claimed that “tanka’s convenient form will give modern Japanese the power to take control, however momentary, of their time,” granting them the ability to capture what Tawara would later call her “ah moment!” in the unique short form of tanka (Holt, 37). In essence, Tawara uses tanka’s brief form as a recording device to document the passing of her day-to-day life. While her work has drawn ire at times from literary critics who accuse her work of being “shallow” due to her plain subjects and the employment of a poetic voice that reads more like spoken Japanese than the complex grammar of classical poetry, I find that Tawara’s ability to capture her “ah moments!” of daily life (*seikatsu*) in contemporary Japan, like her Can-chu Hai marriage epiphany, is the reason why she has captivated audiences, who share her experiences, feeling not only moved by her work but also empowered to use it as a mirror to analyze their own day-to-day existences.

In his 2008 article “Sustaining Jouissance: Commercial and Heian Modes of Intertextuality in Tanka by Tawara Machi”, Dean Brink argues that by composing tanka engaged in the language of commercial copy writing, Tawara creates an apolitical poetic style subsumed in the ideals of consumer society. Despite this apolitical stance however, Tawara has “developed a public style that,” Brink argues, “subsume contradictions in society rather than questioning them, yet makes us more aware of them and as such creates opportunities for resistance” (Brink, 655).

Shi to iu wa
nichiyohin no
naka ni ari
conbini de kau
koudenfukuro

the thing we call “death” is a grievance envelope
found in the daily necessities aisle
and bought from a convenience store

In this poem, Tawara presents readers with an equally absurd and sad image, juxtaposing the image of death through the grievance envelope for funerals, something that certainly evokes a heavy feeling of sadness in a reader, with its normal placement in a convenience store’s “daily essential” aisle. Through her poem, the grievance envelope, despite being used to make a monetary offering to a deceased person’s surviving kin, is readily available for purchase at nearly every corner in urban Japan and thus is consumed equally alongside candy bars, can coffee, and bento lunches. Tawara’s decisions to highlight the immediate and cheap availability of the grievance envelope’s symbolic and cultural importance item draws readers’ attention to two points: that death, as with waking up in the morning is an inevitable and common moment of daily life and also, just as dirty hair calls for the purchasing of shampoo, so too does capitalist society turn even the event of death itself into an opportunity for a transaction. By waving her “magic

wand” of tanka to capture what she describes as this “ah!” moment, I argue that Tawara successfully constructs a poem that creates a lens for her reader to observe and analyze a normalized and absurd moment of consumer society despite the poem’s critically neutral appearance.

My reading of the following poems also support Brink’s argument. Although Tawara does not position herself as anything other than an observer, she successfully highlights how symbolically significant images and objects in Japanese culture are cheapened within the confines of a consumer society.

kiosuku de
chuuingu gamu o
kau you ni
sarariiman ga
kau takarakuji

a salary man
buys a lottery ticket from a kiosk
as one would buy chewing gum

“itto ga dema
shita”to iu kuji
uriba ni
tesoumi no you
na rouba ga suwaru

an old woman is sitting like a palm reader
near the place they say
the grand prize was won

osatu to iu
kami o kuji to iu
kami ni kae
Shinjuku nishi guchi
sakusaku aruku

turning paper called “bills”
into paper called “lottery tickets” —
walking quickly through the Shinjuku West Exit

The first poem, selected from the collection’s third section “Street Corners of Capitalism”, further supports Brink’s argument. Here Tawara’s “ah!” moment captures a common scene in Tokyo: the salary-man (a Japanese office worker clad in a white shirt with a black suit and tie) in this scene, likely just off of work for the day, walks up to the

lottery kiosk and in a casual manner buys a ticket as one would buy any commonplace daily item, chewing gum in this instance. Tawara again acts as the critically neutral observer, drawing attention to how members of society infrequently consider the symbolic importance of the small actions, transactions and capitalist structures around them. In this example the lottery ticket serves as a symbol, of the hope to change one's position in life. However, despite the large symbolic implications of the lottery ticket, the salary-man and society at large view it as a small and dismissible item. On the same page there are two more tanka concerned with this scene in Shinjuku station, emphasizing the impact witnessing this scene has on the author and forcing the reader to question the true absurdity of this moment: why do we buy lottery tickets, but do nothing else to attempt to change our station in society?

I find this effect of “creating a opportunity for resistance”, to borrow Brink's phrase, to be particularly amplified in these examples, where Tawara employs two contrasting but equally important literary devices. The first of these is the employment of a technique identified by tanka poet Takano Kimihiko as the “white outline of the empty ‘I’ (*watashi*)”. As noted by Jon Holt, this technique “lures readers into thinking they are getting the actual poet in the tanka and instead they end up with a generic, iconic persona, which they see themselves as anyways” (Holt, 36). By writing tanka from the position of a critically neutral observer, Tawara puts the reader immediately in the position of the experiencer, both allowing the reader to live through the scene in slow motion and creating a window to critically consider this small moment of daily life that might otherwise go unnoticed.



Customers in line at a lottery kiosk at Shinjuku Station's West Exit (Isazy Saien 2009).

The second and arguably more important device employed in this section is Tawara's effective sequencing (*rensaku*) of the tanka, whereby she develops a larger narrative running through this particular selection of poems. Ueda explains that *rensaku*, an idea developed and coined by the late Masaoka Shiki, is a literary device in which tanka is arranged in sequence, surrounding a particular theme, be it a moment in time, an object or a feeling, to create a more complex, nuanced narrative than afforded by the 31-syllable form (Ueda, 48). Donald Keene notes that Shiki's disciple Itō Sachio expanded this idea further, creating a set of rules for the construction of *rensaku*:

1. There can be purely objective but not purely subjective *rensaku*;
 2. *Rensaku* must deal with the present, and if some poems in a sequence describe nostalgic recollections or imaginings of the future, they should be linked with the present;
 3. *Rensaku* must be carefully organized and not merely present in sequitur.
- (Keene, 56)

As tanka began to evolve from these modern origins and the impact of the Western novel had increasing effect on the literature of Japan, *rensaku* became the de-facto mode of writing and compilation for tanka poets (Keene, 57). To native Japanese speakers the word *rensaku* does not distinguish whether a sequence has as few as two or as many as a hundred poems (Goldstein 2001), this new form for arrangement would often feature thirty to forty tanka under a single title; each poem serving to add its unique nuance to a larger picture while simultaneously retaining its individual poetic value (Keene, 56).

The latter two lottery poems in this example effectively demonstrate how the sequencing of poems, relative to the construction of the individual page and the twenty-seven tanka *rensaku* “Streetcorners of Capitalism” as a whole, can work to create a narrative while strengthening the impact of each poem respectively. In the example I have provided, the latter two poems have a film-like effect on the scene, initially focused on the transaction at the kiosk. As one reads the second and third poems, the camera pulls further back, revealing other nearby characters, in this case a seated old woman, until the it stops, finally revealing the scene to be Shinjuku station’s west gate – a common stop for millions of workers in Tokyo who commute by train every day. Even for myself, as a foreign reader who has visited the spot many times, Tawara’s “zooming out” effect creates an instantly recognizable scene, amplifying the emotional impact of the “ah!” moment by painting an image of the scene readers themselves have witnessed or can easily imagine. By sequencing these thematically related series of poems, Tawara fills in the minute details of the moment, while creating the larger narrative threads of this scene in a style similar to Western prose. With the movement forward of each of the tanka, the

theme of the “Street Corners of Capitalism” *rensaku* grows as a whole, become more complex and nuanced. In this section, Tawara shows, in both small and large scale, the seemingly unimportant and often absurd moments of our lives that consumer culture normalizes and desensitizes.

Although Brink’s reading of Tawara as an apolitical writer is very persuasive, in my own reading of *Chocolate Revolution* I find Tawara’s work after the 1987 *Salad Anniversary* collection has taken a stark and more decisively political stance. I would argue Tawara has become even more openly political in her writings than Brink and Holt believe. In particular, selected work she has published on her Twitter account, a popular, text-based social media platform that limits its users to posts no larger than 140 text characters, has taken a more direct, almost instructive tone, as seen in this poem:

kono natsu no
shukudai to shite
kuroshiro no
baruun agaru
kokkai no mae

for this summer’s homework
raise a black and white balloon
in front of the National Diet

This poem, published on August 30 2015, describes protests that took place in Tokyo, Japan on the same day, held in opposition to the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe led National Diet’s reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, allowing Japan to again engage in foreign wars after sixty years of military peace. More specifically, the poem is showing support for protestors and encouraging protests, using the image of the black and white balloons used to raise signs protestors created reading “End Abe” (referring to Japan’s ruling prime minister and his cabinet) at the protest. This poem shows a marked change from Tawara’s previous apolitical stance; while in her earlier

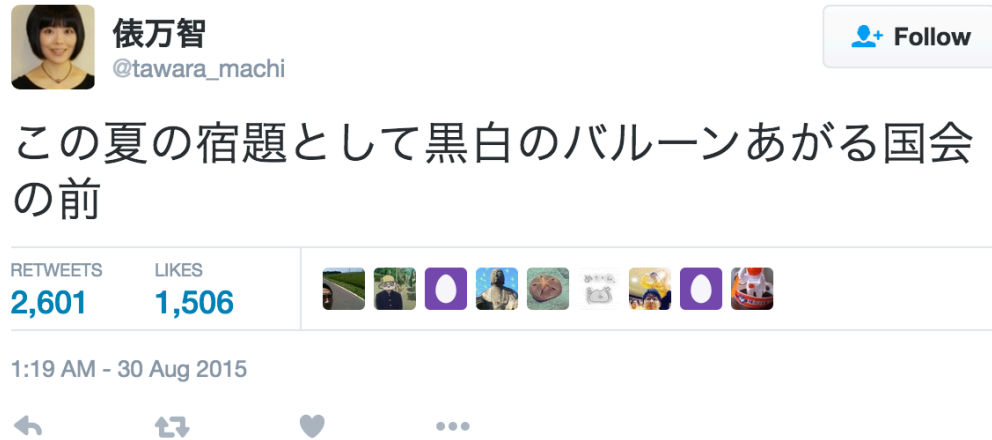
work she may have maintained a neutral position regarding social and political issues to have her readers to discover their own criticism (as Brink argues), this poem shows a change in Tawara's poetic and political voice, directly encouraging her readers and in this case, Twitter followers at large, to take action in response to one of the most controversial political actions in Japan since the end of World War II.



Protesters in front of Japan's National Diet on August 30, 2015 (Onoyasumaro 2015).

This poem also demonstrates a possibly huge shift in where tanka publication will take place; moving from printed matter and publishing industry dominance to the more free, immediately accessible platform of social media. In regards to tanka, Twitter seems like the most likely stage for this growth, given that Japan is particularly active on the text-based social media platform, with over twenty-six million active users, representing 20% of the Japanese population (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2015). Moreover, the 140-character restriction, while limiting to one or two sentences for English language users, is a significant amount of space for Japanese due to the Japanese language's ability to condense information into single ideographic characters and a flexible linguistic-shorthand (for example the ability to shorten or omit the copula). Tawara herself comments on the ample space Twitter provides in the description section

of her personal Twitter account, stating: “I make tanka. Because it is always 31 syllables, the space here [on Twitter] feels vast.” (Tawara 2016).



Screen-capture image of Tawara Machi’s anti-Abe tanka published August 30, 2015 (Tawara 2015).

While there is no question that Twitter can provide the space for tanka to be published, it remains to be seen how this can and/or will affect the creation of *rensaku*. The immediacy of the platform, coupled with its 140-character text restriction at most allows a tanka poet to publish three poems at once. With this in mind a poet could publish bursts of “tanka strings” or short groups of interconnected tanka (Goldstein, 18) in real time, allowing the author an immediate audience and readers to see the construction of *rensaku* as it occurs. Readers in this situation can also serve as commentators and poets themselves, responding to and criticizing the author’s work as it comes out. Given the openness and egalitarian structure of this platform, it is important to note that Twitter usage, while already at 500 million tweets a day in 2016 (internetlivestats 2016), can spike up to hundreds of thousands of posts per second, relative to social events be they large sporting events or natural disaster. The example poem above highlights this spike as Tawara’s poem directly responds to a protest occurring at the same time as its publication

and as such, allows users not only to directly respond to it as a work of art, but as a call to resistance and a news source.

I believe it will take time to see if these changes seen on Tawara Machi's more recent Twitter-published tanka will materialize into a true stylistic shift or if this example was merely a situational aberration. Despite this, I argue that the above poem coupled with Tawara's conscious usage of Twitter as a platform for publication in a changing political and technological climate may spark a slow shift in Tawara's artistic position, away from the critically neutral stance argued by Brink and into one where she explicitly writes as a poet and activist. As Japan continues to connect more and more to the Internet, it is difficult to discern what implications growing Twitter usage may have on the future of tanka, but Tawara's work demonstrates that the genre's brevity and symbolic weight can stir a wavering of the heart enough to not only create a window for resistance but also help incite one.

III. Acknowledgments

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だあれもいない

“No One There”

1

明治屋に初めて二人で行きし日の苺のジャムの一瓶終わる

I'll finish the one jar of
strawberry jam
from the day we first went to Meiji-ya

2

祖母の家の北向きの部屋に積まれいし絵本の中の王子の匂い

in the north-facing room of my grandmother's house
the smell of a prince
from a pile of picture books

3

眠りつつ髪をまさぐる指やさし夢の中でも私を抱くの

gently running your fingers
through my hair while I sleep—
even in dreams you're embracing me

4

日曜はお父さんしている君のため晴れてもいいよ三月の空

for you being a father
it'd be fine for Sunday to be clear—
March's open sky

5

優等生と呼ばれて長き年月をかつとばしたき一球がくる

you were called a nerd—
that ball you've wanted
to knock out of the park all these long years is coming

6

木曜のドラマ終わればそののちを生きずともよい椎名桔平

if Thursday's dramas end
I could die right now—
Shiina Kippei

7

屋上にねころんで手をつないでみた無力な二枚の木の葉のように

lying on the rooftop
trying to hold hands
like two powerless leaves on a tree

8

ユリの花の雌蕊かすかに汗ばんで運ばれてゆく午後の地下鉄

the lillies' pistils lightly sweating
as they get carried away—
afternoon subway

9

チョコレートとろけるように抱きあいぬサウナの小部屋に肌を重ねて

like melting chocolate
wholly embracing each other—
skin on skin in the small room of the sauna

10

シャガールの描く「緑の恋人」の心霊写真のような一枚

one ghostly photograph of us
like Chagall's painted
"Lovers in Green"

11

梅雨寒や抱かれ心地のシャツ借りてしばし続きを読むミストリー

oh monsoon season cold—
the feeling of embrace from your shirt I borrowed
I continue reading my mystery

12

話好きの運転手にて狸穴とう地名を一つ覚えて降りる

thanks to the chatty taxi driver
I was reminded of the name of somewhere in Mamiana
and got out

13

ネクタイのサイコロ模様をはずませて人近づいてくるティールーム

a man in a bouncing
dice-patterned necktie
is comes close to me in the tea room

14

午後五時のバーに二人の女いて二人の男待たれておりぬ

5:00pm at the bar,
there were two women waiting—
and two men made to wait

15

友だちに着地を決めた人と会う食前酒にはベリーニがいい

I ran into my friend at his rendezvous point
for aperitifs—
my bellini was good

16

カラスミのパスタ淫らにブルネロディモンチーノで口説かれている

karasumi pasta and
I'm easily seduced
with Brunello Montalcino

17

「夏の夜の夢」にあなたが笑うとき微かに香るファーレンハイト

when you laughed at *A Midsummer's Night Dream*
the faint fragrance of
Fahrenheit

18

通販の人気の商品等身大を抱いて眠る東京

embracing a popular
mail-order life sized pillow—
sleeping in Tokyo

19

私にも秘密はあると思う午後真珠の白に爪を塗りつつ

I thought I also have secrets
while I painted my nails
pearl white this afternoon

20

ラフレシアの花のような耳つけて夢にあなたの言い訳を聞く

cupping my rafflesia-like ears
to focus my hearing—
in my dreams I listen to your excuses

21

境界がじわりと暑き水無月尽抱き合うよ彫刻となるまで

the boundary between us is gradually getting hotter
like the last day of July—
we embrace until we become statues

22

なくともいいものにこだわる週末を探してやまぬホースラディッシュ

all weekend long I can't stop
looking for the thing I'd be fine without—
Horseradish!

23

ベーグルパン置かれる朝の食卓に勝てぬシャンパンを冷しつつける

the bottle of champagne still cooling
cannot beat the bagel you left
on the breakfast table

24

「勝ち負けの問題じゃない」と諭されぬ問題じゃないなら勝たせてほしい

if it's not going to convince me
saying "it's not a matter of wining and losing"—
I want you to let me win

25

二回だけベルを鳴らして切りました宙ぶらりんの「おやすみなさい」

I only let the phone only ring twice
and hung up—
a pending “goodnight”

26

愛することが追いつめることになってゆくバスルームから星が見えるよ

to love you is becoming to chase you—
from the bathroom
I can see the stars

27

幾千の種子の眠りを覚まされて発芽してゆく私の肉体

thousands of seeds
being woken from sleep
and sprouting in my body

28

真夜中の間違い電話に「もういい」と言われておりぬもういいんだね

being told “Enough!”
by a late-night wrong number—
I’ve had enough too

29

午前四時夢のつづきを抱き合えば少し濃くなる私の輪郭

if I could continue making love
with my 4:00am dream
my silhouette will become a little darker

30

逢うたびに抱かれなくてもいいように一緒に暮らしてみたい七月

to make it so we don’t have to make love every time we meet
I want to try to live together—
July

31

クーラーの風に吹かれて鳴っている風鈴の音、君の寝返り

blown by the breeze from the air conditioner
the wind chimes sound—
you toss in your sleep

32

死というのは日用品の中にありコンビニで買う香典袋

the thing we call “death” is a grievance envelope
found in the middle of the daily necessities aisle
and bought from a convenience store

33

からみつく視線という名の藻のなかを酸素欠乏の熱帯魚ゆく

an oxygen deprived tropical fish
passing through my tangled gaze
like algae

34

簡潔に君が足りぬと思う夜愛とか時間とかではなく

the night I simply thought
there wasn't enough of you
it wasn't an issue of something like love or time

35

抱かれることからはじまる一日は泳ぎ疲れた海に似ている

on the day we started off by making love
I looked tired
like I was swimming in the sea

36

金木犀の気分よければこのままいいような気もしている九月

if the sweet olive trees are feeling this good
then I'll be fine staying like this—
September

37

ベランダの鳩追う目玉に見つめられ今年の最後のそうめんゆでる

being watched by the eye-ball toy
that scares the pigeons off the veranda—
boiling this year's final somen

38

焼き肉屋「大將軍」が食べ放題の「くいどん」になるほどの年月

the time spent at the
Taishogun yakiniku shop
is turning into something like the buffet at Kuidon

39

ぶどう狩りパスして我に逢いにくる男よふりむかなくていいのか

the man
who cancelled grape-picking to meet me—
don't you need to go back?

40

ゆりかもめゆるゆる走る週末を漂っているただ酔っている

riding the slow running Yurikamome—
floating through the weekend
with motion sickness

41

嘘っぱさにむしろやすらぐ夜ありててかてか光るお弁場の海

rather than dealing with your dishonesty
an unlikely peaceful night walking—
Odaiba's sea shining brightly

42

地ビールの泡やさしき秋の夜ひやくねんたったらだあれもいない

pleasant microbrew bubbles on an autumn night—
if I stood for a hundred years
there would be no one there with me

43

骨の髄味わうためのフォークありぐっと突き刺してみたき満月

I want to stab the full moon
with a fork
to fully taste bone marrow

44

台風が誰にも等しく迫る夜めぐり忘れた暦に気づく

on a night a typhoon passes through someone like me—
I notice the calendar
I forgot to turn

45

サヨナラの形にススキが手を振って駆け抜けてゆく風の輪唱

the pampas grass is waving it's hand
as if to say "goodbye!"—
the hymn of the wind passing through it

湿原の時間

“Time in the Wetlands”

46

風はしる釧路湿原見ておれば古代の神話はじまるごとし

if you see the wind running
through the Kushiro marshlands
it's as if an ancient legend will begin

47

鶴の名を呼ぶとき鶴のまなざしをしており水辺に暮らせる人は

the person who can live at the waterside
has the look of a crane
when they call the crane's name

48

ゆうらりと浮かべよカヌー一枚の木の葉のように釧路を下がる

a canoe gently floats
descending onto the Kushiro Marsh
like a leaf from a tree

49

蛇行する川には蛇行の理由あり急げばいいってもんじゃないよと

there is a reason the meandering river
meanders—
it's something that would be no better if it hurried

50

「にんげんの役には立たぬ湿原」にとって役には立たぬにんげん

“it's a swamp useless to humans”
according to
a useless human

51

葦だって考えている湿原に生きてく知恵を水辺に束ね

I think those are reeds—
bundling up the wisdom of the marsh
at the waterside

52

鳴き交わす鶴のつがいや結婚をかくも迷える我らの世代

a pair of cranes call to each other—
marriage can be so led astray
in our world

53

一年に一ミリ伸びるミズゴケに蓄えられる湿原の時間

time in the swamp
is stored in the peat moss
that grows only a millimeter a year

54

この星のオアシスとしてゆるやかに眠れる水を湿原と呼ぶ

an oasis for the stars—
they call this gently sleeping water
a marsh

資本主義の街角
“Street Corners of Capitalism”

55

資本主義のとある街角必要に応じて受けとるティッシュペーパー

on some street corner of capitalism
taking tissue papers
as a necessity

56

イッセイのシャツ着こなせる若者がふるさと自慢に言う笹だんご

a young man dressed up in an Issey shirt
boasting with pride
about his hometown bamboo dumplings

57

テレビには油まみれの鳥映り鳥の視線の行方映らず

on the television
showing a bird covered in oil
without ever showing where it's looking

58

鑑賞用ゆえに酸っぱく美しく「クレオパトラ」という名のみかん

an ornamental and therefore
sour and beautiful
tangerine called “Cleopatra”

59

かけあわせ試験の途中で消えゆけばついに名前を持たぬくだもの

if it disappears
in the midst of crossbreeding experiments—
in the end, just a fruit without a name

60

チョコを買うように少女ら群がりて原宿のコンドマニアの灯り

young girls gathered around
as if to buy chocolate—
Harajuku Condomania's light

61

現実がドラマを越えてゆく秋の誘拐事件テレビに映る

real life is starting to
surpass soap operas—
an autumn kidnapping on the television

62

その名ゆえ訪ねてみたきところありヤリキレナイ川心に刻む

there's a place I want to visit
just for it's name—
I'll carve Yarikirenai River into my mind

63

駅前に犬猫用のホテル持つリゾート平成二年終わる

a resort with a pet hotel
in front of the train station—
1991 will end

64

犬猫のチェックアウトは七時にて追加料金とられてしまう

pet checkout
is at 7:00
additional fees will be applied

65

ワンポイントはいいいけどラインはだめという校則のいう「白いソックス」

“needle point is okay,
but lines are prohibited”—
the “white socks” school rule

66

卒業式の前の日に知る千円でバラは三本買えないことを

on the day before a graduation ceremony
I realized you can't buy roses
three for ten dollars

67

ある日ふと靴屋の前からなくなりしポストについて誰か語ろう

I want to talk to someone

about the mail box

that one day disappeared from the front of the shoe store

68

冷蔵庫に貼られておりぬ奥尻島救援 TEL の番号のメモ

a note stuck to the refrigerator

with the number

for Okushiri Island rescue

69

サンリッチレモンという名をつけられて花屋に咲いておりぬ向日葵

at a flower shop bearing the name

“Sun Rich Lemon”

sunflowers in blossom

70

キオスクでチューインガムを買うようにサラリーマンが買う宝くじ

a salary-man

buys a lottery ticket from a kiosk

as one would buy chewing gum

71

「一等が出ました」というくじ売り場に手相見のような老婆が座る

an old woman is sitting like a palm reader

near the lottery booth

where they say the grand prize was won

72

お札という紙をくじという紙に換え新宿西口さくさく歩く

turning this paper called “bills”

into a paper called “lottery tickets” —

walking quickly through the Shinjuku West Exit

73

真夜中の留守番電話に愛を言う男の声を見下ろしており

I despise the voice of the man
saying I love you into my voicemail
in the dead of night

74

宝塚の友より届くファックスに「幸運」とあり家をなくせど

I got a fax from my friend in Takarazuka
saying "I was lucky"
even though she lost her home

75

まぼろしの讃岐うどんの特集でテレビ画面に映るまぼろし

a phantom Sanuki Udon special feature
and a phantom
displayed on the television screen

76

しんしんとインドの香を焚きおれば君の部屋から届く微粒子

if you endlessly burn Indian incense—
small particles flowing
from your room

77

アラスカの氷はじげる地下のバーに熱帯魚のごと夜憩えり

tropical fish relaxing one night
in an underground bar
full of Alaskan ice

78

友だちに戻れないかもしれないと思えば寂し口つけなども

if I think we might not be able
to go back to being friends
it's something of a sad kiss

79

弱りゆく都市の筋肉「セックスでキレイになる！」という説もある

the city's weakening muscles—
and the explanation that
“you’ll become beautiful through sex!”

80

ささやかな小道具として買う土鍋「今年はチゲが流行るらしいよ」

I’ll buy a pot
as a small decoration—
“this year Chige really seems to be popular”

81

忘れるという知恵を持つこの国の平和、それでも平和を愛す

the peace of this country that holds the wisdom
we call “forgetting”—
and yet we still love peace

1

Meiji-ya is a Japanese grocery store chain with over 24 locations in the Tokyo metropolitan area alone.

<http://www.meidi-ya-store.com/english/>

6

In Japanese the term *dorama* refers to a dramatic, often romantic style of television program similar to soap operas in the United States. This particular poem is likely referring to the drama *Age 35 Yearning* (*Age 35 Koishikute*) that aired on Fuji television's Thursday 8:00pm slot from April to June 1996, in which the main character is a married man who has a romantic affair, much like the partner alluded to by Tawara Machi in *Chocolate Revolution*. Shiina Kippei was an actor on the show, regarded for his charm and handsome, masculine features. In this poem Tawara is identifying with the program, while also feeling flustered by Shiina Kippei, expressing a feeling of affection induced bliss.

<http://jdorama.com/drama.12.htm>

10

Chagall's "Lovers in Green":



<http://www.wikiart.org/en/marc-chagall/green-lovers-1915>

16

Karasumi is cured Mullet roe. It is very salty and considered a delicacy in East Asian countries. In this instance Tawara is describing a common dish served in Italian restaurants in Japan that tries to include flavors for a Japanese palette.

Brunello Montalcino is a Italian red wine grown and manufactured in Tuscany.

<http://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-brunello+di+montalcino>

17

Fahrenheit is a cologne launched in 1988 by the clothing company Dior. It's aroma is described as a mix of honeysuckle, sandalwood and balsam.

http://www.dior.com/beauty/en_us/fragrance-and-beauty/fragrance/mens-fragrance/fahrenheit/fr-fahrenheitfpl-fahrenheit.html?gclid=CO_v_N6q4swCFYlrfgodUBgHXA

37

In this poem Tawara describes being watched by an eyeball-shaped balloon commonly affixed to patios or expensive plants to ward off birds and sold at department stores throughout Japan.

38

Taishogun is the name of a yakiniku (barbecue meat) chain in Tokyo. Kuidon is the name of a buffet chain also in the Tokyo area.

40/41

The Yurikamome is a raised monorail train in eastern Tokyo that routes through Odaiba, a man made island and popular entertainment district in Tokyo Bay.

46

The Kushiro Marshlands are a national park wetland on the eastern side of Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido.

55

In urban Japan it is common for employees of a nearby business, usually a karaoke venue or bar, to hand out free tissues with a small advertisement on the packaging. Here Tawara is acknowledging her necessary compliance in this absurd transaction.

56

Issey is a popular, high-end Japanese fashion label.

60

Condomania is a novelty store in Tokyo's popular Harajuku shopping district, featuring hundreds of unique and specialty condoms and other sex toys.

62

The Yarikirenai river is a river located in central Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. "Yarikirenai" is directly translated to English as "unbearable." The river was given this name due to its history of flooding and a humorous adaptation from the original Ainu name for the river "Iyare Kinai."

<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/ヤリキレナイ川>

68

Okushiri Island is a small island off the western coast of Hokkaido. It is notable for its frequent natural disasters, most famously a 1993 tsunami that killed 230 people on the island.

74

Takarazuka is a small town located between Osaka and Kobe. This poem directly refers to Tawara receiving a fax from a friend during the aftermath of the 6.9 magnitude Hanshin Earthquake which occurred on January 17, 1995. Here her friend feels lucky to still have her life in wake of the destruction, despite the fact that her home was destroyed.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/great-hanshin-earthquake/>

75

Sanuki Udon is a thick-cut variety of Udon noodles famous to Japan's Kansai region. This poem was difficult to translate as まぼろし (maboroshi) can mean "phantom" "rare" or "dreamlike." In particular regards to food it can often mean something that is so good it's as if it isn't real. To keep that fleeting feeling intact, as well as the effect of the word's repetition in English, I chose the word "phantom" rather than using other meanings.

80

Chige or Jjigae is a Korean kimchee stew, featuring a meat item and prepared in a similar fashion to a Western stew.

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