Poetry and me; poetry and my students

I always liked reading, but my first encounter with poetry was in high school. I was immediately attracted to it. I remember in particular at that time liking the poetry of Sylvia Plath and e.e. cummings. Plath’s dramatic way of writing and striking use of metaphor grabbed me. At that time, the experiments e. e. cummings did with the layout of poems were very interesting to me.

I ended up studying literature and creative writing (poetry specialization) as an undergraduate and then applied linguistics (TESOL specialization) in graduate school. After finishing school, I studied pedagogy, Japanese, and literature on my own here in Japan while working as a university teacher over the past couple of decades.

Today I continue to read, write and also teach poetry, in addition to other subjects.

Recently I revisited the poems of Plath and cummings -- in an undergraduate course I was teaching in American poetry. My students also found Plath intriguing (either interesting or frightening depending on the student!) and even my 3rd year undergraduates, majoring in British and American studies, could write interesting and competent imitations of some of cummings’ visual poems in my classes in a mere fifteen minutes of class time.

Many years ago I taught a course in Western Art History in Japan. Although I love visual art, I am not a painter or sculptor. I could not talk to students about art from my experiences in working with bronze or oil paints as I have no such experience, though I could give students facts about the artists and their works, look at slides of the works together with students, and react along with the students to the works.

My own belief is that you can learn even more about poetry, and language, by trying to write your own poems. My students seem to enjoy writing poems for their own reasons (poems can be short; students can share their ideas and feelings freely with others in the class through poem writing). I think my interest and experience in poetry as a reader and also as a writer is probably good for my teaching of poetry, though any teacher does not necessarily need this background to use poetry successfully in class.

Poetry and diversity

I was invited to participate as a panelist for a comparative literature conference that took place at Nagoya University in May, 2010. I was the only female on the panel. When I found out the planned content of the speeches of the other panelists, I noticed that the other panelists did not plan to speak about the work of female poets. At that juncture, I decided, to make up for the lack, to speak exclusively about female poets’ work in my part of the panel and chose the topic “poetry and feminism” for my part of the panel (which happens to be a research interest of mine anyway, and a topic for a workshop I’ve done many times in different forms here in Japan).

The text of my speech, given in Japanese, follows this English language preface. A chart showing a relative lack of works by females and nonwhite poets in textbooks published in Japan geared for university students for courses comprising an introduction to English language poetry was distributed to the audience and is included also here. I have used many of these textbooks myself as a teacher. Poems described in my speech I have used as material in university courses in Japan. I cannot include the actual poems for copyright reasons, but a list of the poems and where they can be found is included in the material that follows.

Although many of the textbooks I have used or sampled in university courses to teach poetry in Japan...
have many good features, another complaint, other than gender imbalance and a relative lack of work by minority poets, might be that many textbooks include relatively few contemporary works (e.g. not enough works by still living writers or works written in present day English), a lack of stylistically diverse work (e.g. a lack of avant-garde poetry), and a lack of easier work for the less linguistically advanced student. Currently, teachers like myself have to make up for this lack by supplementing textbook materials with handouts. Even some of my students have noticed on their own that the textbook selections are not adequately reflective of diversity and some students have asked me specifically for recommendations for poets to read (e.g. minority poets, female poets, contemporary poets, etc.) for their own research.

For a few years I have hoped to create my own poetry textbook that would help fill what I believe is a need for a book that is interesting but also diverse in terms of poets and poetry, and within the range of the intermediate English level learner. If there are any potential publishers or users of such a book reading my article I hope you might like to discuss my idea further with me.

A list of anthologies of female poets’ work and a short list of anthologies of avant-garde writing was distributed to the audience but is omitted here for space reasons. I have since begun compiling a list of poetry anthologies that are devoted to minority poets’ works. Interested persons can contact me for further information about those bibliographies (janenakagawa@yahoo.com). I’ve also collected together poems that are pedagogically appropriate for false beginner level students. (I will be sharing some of those this year at the national JALT conference as part of the LiLT SIG Forum.)

Why teach poetry?

I wrote a paper on the topic of why should anybody teach literature in EFL when I was a graduate student majoring in linguistics at the University of Illinois, Chicago, in the 1980s. One of the essays I referenced was published in the 1950s and written by Bradford Arthur. Arthur argued that literary works are meaningful and memorable in ways that many other texts may not be, making them ideal for a language class.

Last year in the GILE SIG newsletter appeared an article by me titled “Healing Ourselves, Healing the World Through Poetry” (Nakagawa, 2011). In it I mention that the work of some researchers suggests that reading, writing and sharing poems in a group setting has been shown to lead to improved self-esteem, better creative problem-solving abilities, a better awareness and understanding of self and others, better communication skills, better perspective-taking abilities and a larger view of life (e.g., Alschuler, 2006; Leedy, 2006; Mazza, 2003). This year appeared an article by me about a course in American history I recently taught where poems were used as part of the reading material (Nakagawa, 2012) and was very favorably evaluated by students.

I have found in my classes that students respond well to poetry (see, for example, Nakagawa 2008) so long as the poems are not too difficult relative to the students’ level of understanding and language level. Because various interpretations of a poem are always possible, poems can be good stimuli for pair and group discussions as working out what poems may mean or what varying reactions students have to them is a chance for meaningful classroom communication. I’ve also discovered that many students like hearing poems due to their musicality for listening practice, some students enjoy reciting poems themselves, and many of my students claim to very much enjoy writing their own poems and sharing them in class. I usually have students write poems in class after we have read some poetry together. The poems read in class and/or for homework can give students hints about or models for what they might do in their own poems regarding form or content. Listening to or reading what students write can be a way of getting to know your students and students getting to know each other in a class. Frequently my students will write about themselves and their lives (for example, they may write about their dreams, romantic problems, stresses, current family issues, feelings about school life, friendships, etc.) and/or their ideas about issues such as war, the environment, and others.
What materials exist for teaching poetry?

The appendix to this article lists some books but much poetry can be obtained for free on websites such as poets.org and others. Additional useful books for the teacher of poetry in Japan include Fagin (1991), Rigg and Kazemek (1996), Wiggins, et al (2010) and Bates and Tabraham (1999). How to teach poetry? Good teaching means a fit between the teacher and students so good practices will vary based on the teacher and learners involved. In recent years I have been teaching mostly intermediate level undergraduate students at a national teacher training university, but I have also worked with false beginners as well as have designed and taught a graduate course in American poetry at other institutions over a long career. I believe that a learner-centered pedagogy has the most potential because it enables tasks to be tailored to the students, especially tasks which activate the multiple intelligences (see Gardner, 2006) and MBTI-associated learning style preferences (see Lawrence, 1993). I insert poems as material for stimulus-based teaching into courses devoted to other content (global issues and other contents), and into general required or elective EFL courses, as well as create and teach courses entirely about poetry such as comparative poetry, American poetry, and poetry in English (British and American, Japanese poetry in translation).

As EFL material, I use poems as listening, speaking, and reading material as well as prompts for learner discussion and writing activities. I often bring an array of poems and let students choose one from a group of works to discuss to allow students to exercise some control and choice, to fit their own level and interests better. Vocabulary and grammar patterns can also be learned through poetry.

In courses devoted entirely to poetry, I usually require students at the end of the course to each choose a different poet to base an oral and written report on. Students prepare short speeches about the poet’s life and work, usually providing the class, in handout form, a sample poem, speech outline and brief poet bio-data as well as a keyword list. Question and answer periods follow each student speech. At the conclusion of the speeches, students turn in a written report about the poet they chose or their speech; rather than discuss one poem frequently I ask students to compare/contrast two of more poems by the same poet in their written report. These reports and speeches are good practice for the 卒論 (graduation thesis) speeches and reports students will do when they become fourth year students as well as meaningful and achievable tasks in themselves where each student becomes a learner as well as peer teacher. Students evaluate each other’s work and their own before the final teacher evaluation. In courses where I use poetry as either main or supplemental material, students utilize all the language skills.

In courses where students prepare academic speeches and reports about poets and poetry, I provide instruction in research, preparing a speech and academic report writing because many students have done neither before taking my courses.

**Conclusion**

Because poetry never fails to be meaningful, it can be part of a communicative classroom, a content course, student-centered teaching, stimulus-based teaching -- it can fit just about anywhere a creative teacher would like it to. However, more textbooks devoted to or utilizing poetry at a variety of language levels would be useful. Further, poetry textbooks more diverse in terms of poets’ gender, minority status, writing style, era, form, and language use would be helpful.

Since poems can lead to utilization of different sides of the brain and appeal to different kinds of learners -- a poems may draw on the emotions, intellect, senses -- most or all of Gardner’s multiple intelligences and the preferences associated with Jungian psychological types (e.g. thinking-feeling; sensing-intuition; Gardner, 2006 and Lawrence, 1993 are recommended resources ) we can say that poems have the potential, finally, to offer something for everyone.
References


New York:, NY Brunner and Routledge.


Author biography

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa has lived in Japan since 1989. Her most recent academic post was as Associate Professor at Aichi University of Education where she taught pedagogy, poetry, gender, American history, and required EFL. She has published hundreds of poems in international literary journals and anthologies in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia and Japan and is currently working on her eighth full length collection of poetry. She has also published and presented widely on pedagogy, especially in the areas of cooperative learning, learning styles, gender, learner-centered teaching and the teaching of poetry. Email is welcome at janenakagawa@yahoo.com.
私は高校時代からフェミニズムに興味を持っています。詩についても30年以上前から興味を持って読んだり書いたりしていましたが、初期にはフェミニズムと詩にどう違う関係があるか等と言う事についてはあまり深くは考えていませんでした。

高校時代にBetty Friedanの有名な本The Feminine Mystique（日本語タイトルは新女性の創造）を初めて読みました。この本は私がアメリカ中流家庭の専業主婦と言う物がどう言う立場にあるのかをはっきりと認識させたものです。

1970年代当時、私はシカゴの郊外に住んでいました。自分の母親も近所のお母さん達も皆専業主婦でした。今のアメリカは全然違うのですが当時はそうでした、男性は外、女性が内と言う時代でした。しかし近所の専業主婦である中年女性達は皆幸せではないなと言う印象がありました。私にとっては、高校を卒業してから自分の将来についてどうすればいいか、いろいろ考えてはいましたがはっきりとした方向があるのではなく、ただ専業主婦になりたくないなと言う考えだけは持っていました。

詩とフェミニズムの観点から見たこの時代の象徴的出来事として次の二つをあげる事が出来るでしょう。1963年のアメリカの郊外住む中流階級の女性の不安を描いたBetty Friedanの『新女性の創造』の出版と同じ年の有名な詩人、Sylvia Plathの自殺です。

大学の一年目、秘書よりexecutiveになる方がいいと思った私は経済学を勉強しましたが、向いていないと言う事がすぐ分かりて文学の専攻にしました。学位に必要な単位の半分を取った後、art school（美術学校）に転校して“creative writing”（私の場合“poetry writing”つまり詩作する事）の専攻にしました。大学卒業1年後、大学院で言語学を専攻しました（言語学とは簡単にいえば言語の特徴を研究する学問です。言語の原理、原則、意味論等を研究します）。

私の80年代のシカゴの女性友達には主婦は一人もいませんでした。友達はアーティスト、弁護士、エグゼクティブ等でした。

大学院を卒業し語学修士号を取り英語講師の職をえて日本に来ました、20年前でした。90年代に異文化コミュニケーションと教育心理学を日本で勉強しながら10年ぐらい前から詩に関する研究、詩作活動等に戻りました。この10年の間、詩とフェミニズムがどう違う関係にあるのかと言う事を中心に考えて
います。特にアヴァンギャルドの詩とフェミニズムです。

その研究について今日は5つの小テーマを中心したいと思います。

第一に、詩の中で母である事はどのように描かれているか

第二に、父権はどのように描かれているか

第3に、性別役割分担はどのように描かれているか

第4に、女性の体はどのように描かれているか

そして最後にジェンダーと暴力についてどういう風に表現されているか。たとえばDomestic Violence, ジェンダーと戦争、慰安婦問題等についてどう言う詩があるかと言う事です。

**Motherhood**

第一の小テーマについて二つの詩をプリントにのせてあります。

Sylvia PlathのMorning Song（朝の歌）と言う詩を授業で使っています。この詩の前半を読めばこの詩の中の母親が赤ちゃんを捨てたいと言う解釈が可能ですが、後半を読めば何とかこの母親が赤ちゃんの世話をすることを決めたったという事が分かります。この詩の中の母親は複雑な気持ちを持つと言う解釈が出来ます。

Ito Hiromiの“カノコ殺し”を読めば女性の人に私たちの子供を捨てましょう！という気持ちが表現されています。この詩も授業で使っていますある学生さんはこの詩が嫌だそうですね。その学生さんはもっと理想的な母親の物語みたいな詩が好きと言う事です。私の授業では学生さんが詩を読むだけではなく詩も書いてもらいます。ある学生さんは皮肉な詩、社会を批判する物が好きで、自分の授業のためく作品もそう言う物ですが、他方の学生さんはもっとセンチメンタルな感じの詩を書きます。

**Fatherhood**

第2の小テーマについてほかの四つの詩がプリントに入っています。

Sylvia Plath のDADDYの中的人物の父親がナチやパンバイアと呼ばれ、その人が自分の父親を殺す事を想像します。

Ogawa KiyokoさんのFor Your Eighth Birthday (原作品は英語で小川さんの日本語訳はプリントの最後にページにあります)の中の子供がもっといい父親をほしがっているという気持ちが表現されています。理由は今の父親はほとんど家にいないからです。

Itoさんの“わたしはあんじゅひめ子である”の中では父親が娘を殺す、殺人みすいとして表現されています。父親が砂の下に娘をうめますが、娘さんは死なないのです。

**Gender roles**

性別役割分担のテーマを取りあげている詩たくさんありますが今日のプリントの中で七つあります。
“A Humble Wish”と言う作品は18世紀の物です。Workshopや授業で使うと参加者は“今でも同じー何も変わっていないじゃない”と言う事を言います。
この詩の中の“性别役割分担”と“男尊女卑”は同じ意味になると思います。

Emily Dickinsonの“They Shut Me Up in Prose”とL.E.Lの“The Marriage Vow”と言う詩は女性の立場は檻に閉じ込められていると言う感じを表現しています。Anne Bradstreetの“The Prologue”等も授業で使っています。

Mira Kusの三つの作品(プリントペの第12ページにあります)は結婚している女性の悲しみを表現しています。Kusさんはポーランド人ですがこの作品を読めば私が高校時代のおばさん達の事を思い出します。最近のアメリカ研究によれば結婚すれば男性は自分の人生の満足度が上がりますが、逆に、女性は満足度が下がる結果が出ていました。

PLATHのLADY LAZARUSも魔法が出来る(殺しても生き返り)、ITOさんの“わたしはあんじゅりひめ子である”の子供も魔女のように殺しても死なない、それでBOLANDの化粧をする女性がヘビになるさらにCLIFTONのHOMAGE TO MY HIPSの中の女性人のHIPで魔法が出来ます。

アメリカの60年代では人気があったテレビ番組がありました。今でもNHK放送がありますが日本でのタイトルは奥様は魔女です(英語のタイトルが“BEWITCHED”です)。奥様は魔女のSamanthaは専業主婦で、もし魔法がなかったなら、女性としてはなんの力もなく、つまらないのです。同じ時代I DREAM OF JEANNIE(日本語でかわいい魔女ジニー;1965年からの放送)と言う番組もあって登場人物は魔女でした。も一つの人気があったアメリカ60年代の番組は“The Flying Nun”(日本語でいたずら天使、1967年からの放送)では登場人物は飛ぶ事が出来るあま(尼／修道女)でした。

も一つの人気が出た番組は1968から始まったテレビドラマ“Julia”でした。“Julia”と呼ばれる登場人物はAfricas系アメリカ人シンゲルマザー(戦争で夫が亡くなった)看護婦でした。

70年ではWonder Woman(ワンダーウーマン)、The Bionic Woman(バイオニック・ウーマン)とCharlie’s Angels(チャーリーズ・エンジェル)と言うテレビドラマが人気になりました。
た。でも登場人物の女性は普通の女性ではなく、Wonder Woman の tiara（ティアラ）を使って魔法ができる、Bionic Woman はサイボーグでした。そして Charlie’s Angels は空手が出来る私立探偵達でした。今の時代、女性も男性も力がないと感じている人が多いかもしれませんが、-- どうやっても戦争や貧困や温暖化、デフレ、不景気などがありますから -- でも戦後のアメリカでは、特に女性は男性より力を持っているなかったのです。今もその事はずっと続いていて、まだまだ残っています。アメリカでも、ほかの国でも。

象徴としての“魔女”と言うのは、潜在的に女性が力を持ちたいと言う願望の意味があると思いますが、もう一つ別の見方としては、男性は女性を怖がっていると言う見方もあります。

60と70年代のアメリカでは女性のロールモデルはとても限られていた：主婦あるいは魔女。女性がやってもいい役割はほとんど全部が、男性か子供の世話をする仕事、たとえば：主婦、看護婦、売春婦、尼僧（あま）秘書あるいは教師でした。

Gender and Violence

ジェンダーと暴力と言うテーマの詩はとても多いのですがこの発表のため6つ選びました。

渡辺めぐみの“ミナコは泣いた”の中で赤ちゃんがうまれる事と軍人の人殺しの事が比較されています。この詩は“女性が人間を作る、男性が人間を殺す”と言う考えを表現しています。

Asada Saho（ペンネーム）の“Viva Lesbians”の中で慰安婦、レイプ、在日、とレズビアンに対しても偏見、四つの問題を提起しています。この詩は授業でよく使っています。いつも読んでから学生が興味を持ち、おそらく意味があるdiscussionになります。

JordanのSuheir Hammad の“of woman torn”とカナダのMargaret Atwoodの“A Women’s Issue”はジェンダーと暴力がどう言う関係があるかと言う事を見検討しています。

私の授業では学生はテーマの詩を読むだけではなく、自分で詩を書いてもらう事もすると言いました。自分で書いてみれば詩をもっと深く分からようになると思うからです。さらには授業で書いた作品をほかの学生と交換したり声を出して読んでもらったりすれば学生同士の相互理解も深まりますし、英語で書けば英語のlevel upも可能であるし、いろいろな利益があると思います。“poetry therapy”の研究によって、有益な事はcommunication能力を開発し、自尊心と思いやりを高める等が可能であると言う事です。

私の授業で詩を題材として使う事は、詩人として知的な刺激と自分の考え、感情を伝えるよい機会になると信じています。学生さんにもそうだと思いますが他の国的作品を読めばもちろん異文化について勉強になるし、現代の学生さんは日本の詩人の作品もあまり知らないので日本の詩も授業で使っています。

ここで最後に言いたいのは、ジェンダーとの問題がありますがほとんどの教科書が女性詩人の作品をあまり取り入れていないと言う事です。次のチャートを見て下さい。（この統計を見れば男尊女卑の明らかな証拠ではないでしょうか。）
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**AVERAGE:** 4% 0.29%

low 0% high 38% low 0% high 5.9%

*fewer if items 91-100 (songs, etc.) are included*
Chart 2 1960s and 70s: アメリカのテレビドラマ

1. Bewitched 奥様は魔女: 1964 - 1972 まで放送されました
2. I Dream of Jeannie かわいい魔女ジニ (1960s 放送されました) main character is a female genie
3. The Flying Nun いたずら天使: 1967 she can fly! played by Sally Field
5. The Bionic Woman (バイオニック・ウーマン): mid1970s lead character becomes first female cyborg after an accident
6. Charlie's Angels チャーリーズ・エンジェル: 1976 to 1981 per Wikipedia: “one of the first shows to showcase women in roles traditionally reserved for men”
7. Julia: 〜1968 to 1971 African American female, is a nurse and a single mother (husband killed in Vietnam). Traditional except for being black and without a husband 1968年のテレビドラマ「Julia」played by Diahann Carroll (ダイアン・キャロル) アメリカのテレビ史上、初めて白人以外の女優が主演を演じたのもこの作品でした。

Comments:
1. Magic is women's only possibility of power in the 60s and 70s (and way of making them more interesting v. stuck in boring female roles--e.g. Samantha of BEWITCHED is a 専業主婦 -- life of a 専業主婦 would be dull to watch otherwise -- ditto an ordinary nun's life, etc.)
2. Magic also is a symbol of men's fear of women (women become witches and monsters in their imaginations; cf Medusa image in Boland's poem, etc.; feminine mystique/mysterious power/feminine intuition/feminine "wiles")

Main Entry: wile  Pronunciation: \ˈwɪl\ Etymology: Middle English wil, perhaps of Scandinavian origin; akin to Old Norse vēl deceit, artifice  Date: 12th century

1 : a trick or stratagem intended to ensnare or deceive; also : a beguiling or playful trick
2 : skill in outwitting: trickery, guile  synonyms see trick
日本の比較文学会第29回中部大会
詩とフェミニズム

中川ジェーン
愛知教育大学

詩のリスト:

A. 良妻賢母とは？
1. Morning Song by Sylvia Plath (1932-1963, USA)
2. 伊藤比呂美 / Ito Hiromi's カノコ殺し / Killing Kanoko

B. 尊主は元気で留守が良い？
3. Plath's Daddy
4. For Your Eighth Birthday (あなたの八歳の誕生日に) by Kiyoko Ogawa (小川聖子, b. 1952)
5. Ito's "わたしはあんじゅひめ子である/I Am Anjuhimeko, Three Years Old"
6. Plath's Lady Lazarus

C. 男性は物、女性は内でいいの？
7. A Humble Wish by anonymous (18th century ENGLAND)
8. They shut me up in prose by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886; USA)
9. The Marriage Vow by L.E.L. (1802-1838; ENGLAND)
10. The Prologue by Anne Bradstreet (English AMERICAN, 1612-1672)
19-21 (プリント p. 12) Three poems by MIRA KUS (POLAND b. 1948)

D. ジェンダーと(女性の)からだ
11. The Woman Changes her Skin by Eavan Boland (b. 1944: IRELAND)
12. homage to my hips by Lucille Clifton (1936-Feb., 2010; USA)

E. ジェンダーと暴力
13. 渡辺めぐみ (b. 1965) ミナコは泣いた Minako Cried (戦争)
14. To her husband for beating her by Gwerful Mechain (1462-1500, WALES) (DV)
15. In the fist of your hatred by Shakuntala Hawoldar (INDIA) (DV)
16. Viva Lesbians by Asada Saho (懲安婦等)
17. of woman torn by Suheir Hammad (b. 1973, JORDAN) セックスと暴力
18. A Women's Issue by Margaret Atwood (b. 1939, CANADA) セックスと暴力
Sources for poems discussed in this speech  
(Sections A - E)


Kus, M. (1996). Milosc (Love); Kamien, ktory mnie zgniata (The stone which crushes me) and Moja Matka (My Mother) [poems]. In Grol, R. Ambers aglow: an anthology of contemporary Polish women's poetry. Austin, TX: Host Publications.


