

Poetics of women's everyday life: labour, things, language

Asako Nakai, author

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Abstrak

ABSTRACT

The "everydayness" of the modern life, "unthinking, mundane reality" as described by Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, is often associated with the reified state of consciousness in bourgeois society. Also, linked with repetitive, uncreative, and contingent qualities of housework, the everyday tends to be gendered feminine, as Henri Lefebvre declares that "women symbolizes everyday life in its entirety" and that women are its "active critique". However, if women immerse themselves in everyday life so as to be the symbol of it, the question is: how can women acquire the revolutionary consciousness that enables them to perceive, theorize, and alter the everyday? How can women's creative work such as poetry be both the symbol and at the same time an active critique of their everyday life?

This paper will examine how postwar and contemporary women poets writing in Japanese and in the proletariat literary tradition - such as Ishigaki Rin, Chong Chuwol, Park Kyongmi - have been seeking for an alternative poetic language in which they could represent and critique women's everyday life. Particular focus will be given to the interconnections between women, their domestic work, and objects used for their work, as typically seen in Ishigaki's famous poem, "In Front of me the Pot and Rice-Pot and Burning Flames" (1959). Where as Ishigaki follows realistic methods to portray women's life, Chong and Park, being second-generation Korean poets and ever uncomfortably affiliated with the Japanese language, are visibly more experimental. As a contemporary "postmodern" poet, Park argues that in poetic language, words should carefully be arranged and combined so that they cannot invoke sentiments that are attached to so-called "mother tongue". This alienated state of language, or language as butsu (thing/ object), becomes analogous to women's body, labour, and their everyday life.