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Digital Modernisms

Curatorial Statement

Born into an affluent merchant family during the Meiji period, Akiko was introduced to this world in December of 1878 with limitations that expanded beyond her inherent power of being born into wealth and access to educational materials. She was a first born child during the Meiji period, a time of industrialization and social movement that led to a restoration of the imperial systems and rules. This reintroduction to conservative and traditional Japanese societal structures resulted in a strengthened military presence and focus on defense systems. As Yosano grew up in this environment, she actively spoke out against masculine and patriarchal standards that her society was functioning in. She vehemently spoke out against the Russo-Japanese war that her brother fought in and actively campaigned for peaceful options all while continuing to empower women in Japanese society by reclaiming their bodies of through erotic poetry.

Akiko Yosano was able to redefine the expectations for women in Japanese society and challenge the hypermasculine and patriarchal expectations that were brought onto society by war through her transcendental poetry. In this exhibition, we will explore the Russo-Japanese war and Yosano's dramatic shift in politics, Yosano's challenges to masculine and patriarchal identities or societal frameworks, and the ways in which interpretation can both minimize and/or maximize understanding of events.

"Thou Shalt Not Die" was originally a letter that Yosano sent to her brother while he was serving in Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese war, the poem was later turned into a song that was sung against the ideations and actions of war itself. Later in life, Yosano began to praise the same militaristic forces that she stood against as a young woman. Regardless of her political shift,

Yosano maintained the fight against patriarchal and masculine standards by producing poetry that empowered women through their bodies and voices in *Midaregami* (Tangled Hair). Through New Historicism we break down the impact of her work on society and seek to explore how her work was revolutionary within the theory. With that, we also look at the application and comprehension of her work that is explored through various forms of media now in the twenty-first century. Her life story and actions have been manipulated or tweaked depending on the interpretation in music, art, and literature as we'll explore through the *Bungou Stray Dogs* anime and various musical works produced by artists who were inspired by Yosano's poetry. In addition to these interpretations, we hope to offer our own interpretation as we annotate and explore various poems to analyze themes across her work.

Works Cited

Yosano, Fogel, and Fogel, Joshua A. *Travels in Manchuria and Mongolia: A Feminist Poet from Japan Encounters Prewar China*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001. Print.