

THREE POEMS

辻潤 TSUJI JUN 1922 - 1924

Prologue to The Theatre of Pleasure and Darkness Stew translated from the Japanese by Ryan C. K. Choi http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/japanese/poetry-by-jun-tsuji

Absurd translated from the Japanese by Erana Jae Taylor in Tsuji Jun: Japanese Dadaist, Anarchist, Philosopher, Monk

Cover: Eugène Delacroix

The Death of Sardanapalus, 1827



Therefore, Dada equals Spinozan dreams, humming

"The Tune to the River Yalu1."

falling for the Rat Snake Princess (the town

whore he fucks).

Asakusa-cloud hat pagoda2, column

of flames: from the

ashes, grass-scented *La Variété d'épicure*is born, heavy with the
sorrow attendant upon

the flux of all things,

<sup>1.</sup> Popular song in the Taishō era (1912-1926), first sung by Japanese rafters working away from home on the Yalu River (also known as Amnok River) on the border between China and Korea.

<sup>2.</sup> Referring to Ryōunkaku (opened 1890), Japan's first Western-style skyscraper. Designed in the late 1880s by British expatriate W.K. Burton, shortly after his arrival in Japan at the invitation of the Meiji Government, the much admired building, standing twelve stories tall, was built of red brick and wood and equipped with electricity. In 1923, it was so severely damaged in the Great Kantō Earthquake that the standing remains were demolished.

the beating of castanets, tambourines-

Children with lipstick, powdered faces!

Ignore the holes in your socks!
Bless the testicles and lips of the boys incanting
Panta Rhei<sup>3</sup>, Panta

Rhei!-

Origin of Vaudeville: dubious, dubitable tease.

Don't eat the low-brow dumplings!

Don't worship the rags of the daughters of the bourgeoisie!

King of Babylonia, Sardanapalus<sup>4</sup>, limp in his den of iniquity.

<sup>3. &</sup>quot;Everything flows," – Heraclitus.

<sup>4.</sup> Legendary last king of Assyria, who, according to Roman-era Greek Historian Diodorus Siculus, lived a life of such insatiable decadence that it led to the downfall of Assyria circa 7th century BC. Eating and drinking with swinish gusto at every meal, he slew on a whim anyone who slighted him, and dressed as would a queen, keeping close an entourage of male and female concubines with whom he openly fornicated. In the last days of the kingdom, as hordes of invaders and torrential rains converged on the capital of Nineveh, he composed an epitaph to himself in glory of sensuality, then had a capacious pyre constructed—of palace treasures and other fineries—in which he ordered himself and his servants to be burned mid-orgy.

Bury The Imperial Theatre and The Yurakuza Cinema<sup>5</sup> in the outermost

moat of The Imperial Palace, erect a new Folly Variété!

HARUKICHI KUROSE<sup>6</sup>, pimp of ideals, ever plotting a workers' strike, conceived the insane phantasm of *Variété* in a dream—...drinking the piss (of Utako Tachibana<sup>7</sup>).

In opium dyed purple robes befitting a king, vomiting up his \_\_ cutlet, the demented sex fiend debuted on stage at The Theatre of Pleasure

(his "art-market" status would never match his cachet as *public* spectacle).

As the Bowl and Tinplate "Peace Exhibition" slurps the brackish waters of Benten<sup>8</sup> Pond.

even his comedy routine-

flying a sail from a seafarer's ass, pants pockets leaking—cannot match the farce-aesthetics of OUR "Theatre of Pleasure."

<sup>5.</sup> Historic movie theatres in Yūrakuchō, the neighborhood of The Imperial Palace.

<sup>6.</sup> Socialist labor leader, futurist. Date of birth and death unknown.

<sup>7.</sup> Vaudeville performer, 1897-1964.

<sup>8.</sup> Goddess of arts and wisdom.

Straddling the Great Elephant of Nihility, sniffing a poison crimson lily,

Sardanapalus!

Moon-lit games (with *thou* loyal pierrot), as a puckish träumerei plays a round in your old bamboo-flute–*play*!

In the dusky bowels of his heart, in the refrigerated cage of her chest,

a reddish tune is set ablaze.

To the victims of boredom and despair-

"The puppet, in unkindly fate, knows for a moment's spark, what it is to be a tomato—"

(In the original draft, "to be" had been "to be hungry for".)

Deranged pack of wolves!

Drum on the kerosene cans!

Raise the curtains!

Hush! Shush!

is something I have never tasted,

but, if I had to guess, it tastes something like this-

"Students, let us refer to the children's song sung thura to

thura in Ancient

Greece

to herald the appearance of the swallows:

Come out, spring has arrived!

Open the gynaikon windows!

Swallows fly in blue skies!

See the black plumes, their snow-white breasts.

Open the pantry and give us treats,

honor their coming with liquor in flask, cheese in basket, oat and wheat bread.

Make offerings!-

Will you?
Or shall we leave?

Don't make us wait-

If you don't want to share,

don't-

We'll tear off the doors and take what we wish-

Simple to do,

Brittle ladies.

Open up! Make offerings!

The swallows are here!

We are children,

not old men.

NEXT, a recitation of an Arthur Symons poem,

The Wanderer's Song-

I have had enough of women,
and enough of love,
But the land waits, and the sea waits,
and day and night is enough;
Give me a long white road,
and the grey wide path of the sea.
And the wind's will and the bird's will,
and the heart-ache still in me.

Why should I seek out sorrow,
and give gold for Strife?

I have loved much and wept much,
but tears and love are not life;

The grass calls to my heart,
and the foam to my blood cries up,
And the sun shines and the road shines,
and the wine's in the cup.

I have had enough of wisdom,
and enough of mirth,

For the way's one and the end's one,
and it's soon to the ends of the earth;

And it's then good-night and to bed,
and if heels or heart ache,

Well, it's sound sleep and long sleep,
and sleep too deep to wake."

In Vaudeville, there is a tradition called the burlesque pastiche.

In Nagasaki, there is a dish called *shippoku*.

Despite this similarity, it is foolish to assume a relation to dada poetry.

If I chew beef and mackerel-jerky together, I generally seem able to tell them apart,

and whether the mix is delicious or atrocious.

Bourgeoisie - Prolétariat = 0.

Fingering the top and bottom beads of the abacus an envelope of lonely space forms a round us

, here;-

...let us head to the night fair...

anywhere;-but herein

: consecutive infinities.

ABSURD 1924

Capsize, drive to frenzy, twist your life;
A laugh loud and out of turn, a harlot's white blood cells,
A camel's thickheadedness..... a leopard's electric current-inject them all

Gather the Bat cigarette butts<sup>9</sup>, tatter-tattered
Take your red polished ego and burn it, drop it into the

Take your red polished ego and burn it, drop it into the
\_\_\_\_\_
The breathing mechanism's gasping..... the opened-up
\_\_\_\_\_

Take that two-faced shyster and \_\_\_\_\_ his neck!!
The madman's wan inflamed tongue
Your deadened senses-- burn them away in sulphuric acid
The bitter smile of a dog made \_\_\_\_\_
The point of contact is the point of contact......

Draw an infinitely expansive ellipse
Revolve infinitely
We are drooling away life's resources wastefully

Clop clop clop
v^ ^v ^h, holes
Don't touch the yawning pistons
A sheet of tin is more tender than your bosom
Your pallid blood is streaming, trickling
Drip drip ..... drp drp ......

<sup>9.</sup> Probably referring to the ash of the Japanese "Golden Bat" brand cigarette since Tsuji refers to "an empty carton of Bat" in another (untitled) poem.

The moon is grinning red
A stacatto gnawing the mad dog's corpse
The owl's eyes more magnificent than obsidian
The torso suspended upside-down
I can hear the cruel flute of the winds now
Darkness ...... a great empty hole

"Touii is a georifica of modern culture. In the Jananese literary
"Tsuji is a sacrifice of modern culture In the Japanese literary world Tsuji can be considered a rebel. But this is not because he is a drunkard, nor because he lacks manners, nor because he is an anarchist. It is because he puts forth his dirty ironies as boldly as a bandit"
-Hagiwara Kyōjirō
Jun Tsuji (1884-1944) was a Japanese writer, translator, theatre actor, musician, and philosopher of anarchism, egoism, nihilism, Dada and Buddhism.

