

W. B. Yeats's "Imitated from the Japanese" and the Philosophy of Kobayashi Issa¹

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Introduction.

In 1938, W. B. Yeats published his poem "Imitated from the Japanese" in his poetry collection *New Poems*. The poem reads:

"Imitated from the Japanese"

A most astonishing thing
Seventy years have I lived;

(Hurrah for the flowers of Spring
For Spring is here again.)

Seventy years have I lived
No ragged beggar man,
Seventy years have I lived,
Seventy years man and boy,
And never have I danced for joy.²

Yeats wrote the draft version of this poem in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley, written in 1936, now published in *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (1964). According to the letter, he composed "this poem out of a prose translation of a Japanese

Hokku in praise of Spring³.”

Since the letter’s disclosure, Yeatsian scholars had been looking for the haiku (*hokku*⁴) that had influenced Yeats, and there have been various theories put forth. For example, Earl Miner suggested that the haiku might be from a part of the Noh play *Kakitsubata*, which Ezra Pound translated⁵. On the other hand, Richard Finneran insisted that the source was Emori Gekkyo’s haiku⁶.

The source of the poem remained undetected until Edward Marx’s discovery in 2005. Marx published a series of papers under the title, “Yone Noguchi in W. B. Yeats’s Japan” in a serial bulletin of Ehime University, which was later reprinted in *Yeats Annual 17* (in a combined and revised version), in 2007. Consequently, his discovery became popular among international readers. Marx found that Yeats nearly plagiarized a series of Kobayashi Issa’s haiku⁷, which had been translated by Yone Noguchi; The series was included in Noguchi’s essay, “Hobby,” published in the journal *Adelphi* in 1935, and later reprinted in the Indian journal *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, in 1936. Yeats likely read the Indian journal, and composed “Imitated from the Japanese” based on Issa’s haiku, found within.

This paper will discuss the philosophies of Yeats and of the haiku poet Issa. Yeats’s philosophical stance will be discussed in light of his theory of “tragic joy,” while Issa’s stance will be based on his evocation of Pure Land Buddhism faith, especially True Pure Land Buddhism [*Jōdo shinshū*] founded by Shinran (1173-1223CE).

While this paper does not insist that Yeats was strongly influenced by Issa, a closer examination of the similarities and differences between the two poets seems relevant, in light of Yeats’s near plagiarism and the main content of the poem under purview.

The body of this paper will be divided into two parts. In Part One, Yeats’s tragic philosophy and self-caricature in “Imitated from the Japanese” will be discussed. In this

Part, it will be discussed from the viewpoint of the philosophical influence of Friedrich Nietzsche. In Part Two, Issa's haiku and his philosophy will be presented. In this Part, Issa will be discussed from the viewpoint of the religious faith.

Part I. Tragic Laughter and Self-caricature.

Before discussing the origin of this poem, it is important to note that Yeats edited and published *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936. At the time (1936-37), Yeats re-read Friedrich Nietzsche and enforced his philosophy of tragedy. In the introduction, he excluded War Poets such as Wilfred Owen, insisting that "passive suffering is not a theme for poetry⁸." It is well-known that this statement incited a great controversy. As well, it should be remembered that Yeats rejected Sean O'Casey's play, *The Silver Tassie* at the Abbey, for a similar reason. His antagonistic attitude toward "passive suffering" was deeply rooted in his philosophy.

In the poem "Imitated from the Japanese," special attention should be paid to the last line: "And never have I danced for joy." This can be read as a resignation or a passive resignation to a joyless life, in old age. So, here is a question: Does this stance contradict Yeats's own philosophy or not? I admit this line can be interpreted as a great happiness "never have I danced for joy" *like this*. However, Issa's model haiku of this poem cannot read as such a happiness, and Yone Noguchi, the translator of the haiku, explained as the following:

How strongly I was impressed by the last *hokku* poem [note: the model haiku of the final line of Yeats's poem "Imitated. . ." i.e. "Alas fifty years have passed, / Having no night / When I danced in joy"] since I myself like Issa had spent long fifty years with no night in dancing! Issa must have been a poor fellow like myself, who if he was asked about his hobby

had no other way to answer but with the word of walking.⁹

Regarding to the fact Yeats read Noguchi's passage above with the haiku, it is safety to say that Yeats did not interpret the model haiku as an expression of great happiness.

Concerning Yeats's philosophy of tragedy, a full description would be quite complex as it contains various aspects, but it is generally accepted that Yeats was deeply influenced by Nietzsche: as scholars like Harold Bloom, Dennis Donohue, Otto Bohlman, and Frances Nesbitt Opper point out¹⁰.

As well, Yeats confessed his fascination with Nietzsche in a letter to Lady Gregory¹¹, he was also absorbed with texts such as Hausmann's English-translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872, revised 1886; Hausmann's English translation). In the early part of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche praised Schopenhauer's tragic theory: "all tragedy . . . leads to *resignation*¹²" as "the metaphysical comfort¹³." However, in the introduction of the expanded edition of the book, Nietzsche later criticized such this thought as a "will to disown life," and attacked it as a mode of hostility against the will to live¹⁴. He further advocated the opposite value: "the will *to be* tragic," which means a philosophical stance to affirm a hero's fatal end, with joy. Hausmann's English edition included this new introduction and Yeats read it.

In Yeats's philosophy, Schopenhauer's resignation concerning the "will to disown life" may correspond to Yeats's depiction of "passive suffering." The final line of the poem "Imitated from the Japanese" seems evidently to state this. If it is true, just as seen in the later Nietzsche, must Yeats reject this kind of resignation as "passive suffering"?

In the letter included the draft of the poem, Yeats confessed that he had an "emotional crisis¹⁵." He had read William J. Moleney's book, *The Forged Casement Diaries*, which stated that Roger Casement's diary on his own sexuality was forged by

the British police. Yeats did not discriminate against Casement's sexuality, but his anger was roused against the possibility of forgery by British authorities (Yeats wrote: "If Casement were a homo-sexual what matter! But if the British Government can with impunity forge evidence to prove him so no unpopular man with a cause will ever be safe¹⁶"). As well, considering the alarm caused by the coming Spanish Civil War, Yeats also worried about the situation in Europe¹⁷. Furthermore, he was attacked by critics because of the publication of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Yeats defended his philosophy against this kind of criticism. According to his letter, the poem was written "to dissolve" his "emotional crisis."

So, was the poem a mere pastime to calm his mind, rather than to express his core philosophical stance? In the same letter, Yeats wrote: "My emotional crisis has given me a theme for one of my more considerable poems, in the metre of *Sailing to Byzantium* but I must not attempt it until quite recovered¹⁸." The metre of *Sailing to Byzantium* is *ottava rima*, an eight-line stanza form of pentameter with an *ababcc* rhyming scheme, of Italian origin, used mainly for mock-heroic verse. In the history of British literature, Lord Byron adopted this form for his "Don Juan." Yeats also adopted this form in his later career, and employed it in "Among School Children," and other poems. Yeats wrote: "one of my more considerable poems, in the metre of *Sailing to Byzantium*" is probably "The Gyres" (this was included in the collection *New Poems*). In this context, it is reasonable to think that "The Gyres" deals with a similar theme to that of "Imitated from the Japanese." Here follows an extract of the poem:

The gyres! the gyres! Old Rocky Face, look forth;
 Things thought too long can be no longer thought,
 For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth,
 And ancient lineaments are blotted out.

Irrational streams of blood are staining earth;
 Empedocles has thrown all things about;
 Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy;
 We that look on but laugh in tragic joy. (lines 1-8)

Superficially, this poem “The Gyres” seems to be quite different in stance from “Imitated from the Japanese.” In “The Gyres” the narrator depicts the shift of the *tinctures* of the gyres in his mystic systems—in other words, he depicts the shift of civilizations, and the tragic fall of one: “Hector is dead and there’s a light in Troy; / We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.” This couplet is famed for conveying Yeats’s philosophy of tragedy or “tragic joy.” Yeats deals with laughter as a Nietzschean form of “Superman” laughter, meaning that it is for a hero who can look into the abyss with joy, without closing his eyes. In his poem “Vacillation,” Yeats wrote “such men as come /proud, open-eyed and laughing to the tomb” (lines 33-34).

Here, Yeats’s “tragic joy” seems to be limited to such a brave hero in danger. However, apparently this is not so. Acceptance and resignation differ; acceptance is an affirmative attitude, while resignation is the opposite. In his poem “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” the voice of “*My Soul*” resigns his life and aims at Heaven (“That is to say, ascends to Heaven; /Only the dead can be forgiven” (lines 38-39), while the voice of “*My Self*” affirms his clumsy life with impurity in a manner of Nietzschean Eternal Return:

My Self: A living man is blind and drinks his drop.

What matter if the ditches are impure?

What matter if I live it all once more?

...

We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest. (lines 41-43; 70-72)

As well, Yeats sometimes shows another version of acceptance of life, employed through self-caricature. He sometimes caricatured his own old age in his poems like "The Tower." Psychologically, caricature is a style of metacognition, a way of recognizing an object through the (often ludicrous) exaggeration of its features. In self-caricature, a person can recognize him/herself at a distance and represent themselves as a kind of humorous object. This style of metacognition can act as a psychological therapy to calm an "emotional crisis." Furthermore, in Nietzschean philosophy, for artists it is a way to attain greatness. In *A Genealogy of Morals* (1887; 1888, 1924, Hausmann's English translation, which was a favored text of Yeats), Nietzsche states:

Thus, as I said, it would have precisely been in keeping with a great tragedian: who, like every artist, only reaches the last summit of greatness, when he learns to see himself and his art below him, when he knows how to *laugh* at himself.¹⁹

Here, Nietzsche states that through the artist's transcendence and mocking laughter over both their art and self is a means of attaining tragic greatness. Yeats is in agreement with this idea. But after reading Nietzsche, Yeats fell into a slump. Yet, after learning to laugh at himself, he overcame it:

Some years ago I began to believe that our culture, with its doctrine of

sincerity and self-realisation, made us gentle and passive. . . . When I had this thought I could see nothing else in life. I could not write the play I had planned, for all became allegorical, and though I tore up hundreds of pages in my endeavour to escape from allegory, my imagination became sterile for nearly five years and I only escaped at last when I had mocked in a comedy my own thought.²⁰

As well, Yeats associates laughter at himself with “tragic joy.” In his essay “Samhain: 1904—The Dramatic Movement,” he wrote the following: “The arts are at their greatest when they seek for a life growing always more scornful of everything that is not itself and passing into our own fullness . . . from this is tragic joy and the perfectness of tragedy²¹.”

The poem “Imitated from the Japanese” possesses a tone of self-mocking or self-caricature; the poet can afford to laugh at bitterness or difficulty in attaining “tragic joy” as a living man—this can be seen to describe a path to “tragic joy.”

Part II. Kobayashi Issa’s Philosophy of “Wild Foolish Being²².”

As previously mentioned, according to his letter, Yeats composed the poem “out of a prose translation of a Japanese *Hokku* in praise of Spring” with its origin in Noguchi’s translation into English of Issa’s haiku.

Noguchi’s essay “Hobby” is written in “*haibun*” form (a light essay with haiku included). In the essay, Noguchi lamented that he had no hobbies except walking or wandering—referring to the wandering haiku poet Kobayashi Issa.

Kobayashi Issa is among a handful of most-famed historical Japanese haiku poets; he lived in Edo period (1765-1828CE). Unlike the premier haiku master Matsuo Bashō (1644-1964CE), Issa was from the peasant class. It is known that he had

numerous personal tragedies in his life: the loss of his mother in his childhood, bullying by his stepmother, hardship during his apprenticeship, the death of his father, and following family quarrels concerning his father's heritage, the serial death of his wife and four children, and second wife, followed by the burning-down of his house, and then disease. Living such a hard life, Issa wrote haiku revealing a deep sympathy with small living things, like insects.

Before the essay "Hobby," Noguchi presented some information about Issa to Yeats. And then Noguchi dedicated his haiku collection book in English, *Japanese Hokkus* (1920), to Yeats. In the introduction, citing Yeats's famous phrase of "Innisfree," Noguchi discussed Issa as a poet of "clay and wattles made" and praised "his simple sympathy with a small living thing²³."

Returning to the haiku published in "Hobby," Noguchi cited and translated Issa's verses. These were not poems about fragile insects but rather about his own old age:

How strange it is
That I should have lived fifty years!
Hallelujah to flower's spring!

First day of spring at last!
Fifty years! I've lived, . . .
Not a beggar in rush clothes!

Alas fifty years have passed,
Having no night
When I danced in joy.²⁴

As can be seen, the lines seemingly resemble Yeats's poem "Imitated from the Japanese." Yeats wrote that his poem was drawn from a prose translation of a haiku, but as Marx keenly points out, this is incorrect. It is not a translation of a single haiku poem but a verse translation of a series of three haiku²⁵. The original haiku poems in Japanese are following. (I added *romaji* and my *literal* translations):

五十年あるも不思議ぞ花の春
*gojū-nen aru mo fushigi zo hana no haru*²⁶

I've lived for fifty years
 how amazing—
 spring of flower

春立や菰もかぶらず五十年
haru tatsu ya komomo kaburazu gojū-nen

spring has come—
 without wearing ragged beggar's clothes beggar's clothes
 I've lived for fifty years.

These two haiku were taken from Kobayashi Issa's haiku notebook *The Seventh Diary* [*Shichiban Nikki*], which was begun in 1810, when he was 50 years of age.

The last of the three haiku is not included in this diary. It was written 10 years later and compiled in *Busei Era Haiku Notebook* [*Bunsei kuchō*]. Noguchi changed the original phrase "sixty years" into "fifty years," according to his aim to lament (or mock) his own fifty years. The original haiku is the following:

六十年踊る夜もなく過しけり
rokujuū-nen odoru yo mo naku sugoshi keri

sixty years spent—
 without a night
 of dancing

As Marx points out, in usual the interpretation, the “dance” is “*bon odori*,” the traditional Japanese dance to console ancestor spirits²⁷. However, the dance had another aspect—that is, a couples’ matching party with dance in the night; it sometimes included sexual affairs. In this haiku, the narrator expresses his lamentation that he did not have such night-dance parties. There might also be a renunciatory tone; however, in this context the sixty-year-old man laments his unachieved opportunity to join others in the dance. Through the inference inherent in the haiku form, Issa ironically describes his aged narrator’s unquenched sexual passion.

As Edward Marx points out, Issa was a man who kept his sexual vigor into his old age, recording his affairs in his poetic diaries. I agree with Marx’s suggestion that Yeats would have been glad if he had been able to learn of this fact²⁸.

Marx’s discoveries are redoubtable; however, I would like to add something here. Issa often wrote his own introductions to his haiku diaries on the day of New Year. In the essay “Hobby,” Noguchi cited Issa’s introduction of *The Seventh Diary* because Issa had reflected on his long, wandering life in it. Noguchi did not however cite the introduction found within the *Bunsei Era Haiku Notebook*. However, if he had referred to it, this would have been quite interesting. Here, it is worth paying attention to the introduction of *Bunsei Era Haiku Notebook*. The year when Issa became sixty-year old

was significant year in that his philosophical theory of “*ara bompū*” [lit. a wild, foolish being/a sinner] was first elucidated. In Mahayana Buddhism, an ordinary person is called “*bompū*,” which means “foolish being” or “sinner.” In the introduction of the haiku notebook, Issa termed himself “*ara-bompū*.” “*Ara*” means “wild,” so he regarded himself as a wild foolish being or wild sinner. On New Year’s Day that year, Issa wrote the passage following:

荒凡夫のおのれのごとき、五十九年が間、闇きよりくらきに迷ひて、はるかに照らす月影さへたのむ程の力なく、たまたま非を改めんとすれば、暗々然として盲の書を読み、あしなへの踊らんとするにひとしく、ますます迷ひに迷ひをかさねぬ。げにげに諺にいふとほり、愚につける薬もあらざれば、なほ行末も愚にして、愚のかはらぬ世を経ることをねがふのみ²⁹

My translation is below:

I, being as *ara-bompū*, until now, have spent fifty-nine years, getting lost, from darkness to darkness, without the faint power to perceive a far-off moon beam. Occasionally, when I try to amend my faults, it is in the darkness, as if a blind man tries to read a book, a lame man tries to dance, delusions come upon delusions³⁰. As the old saying shows, there is no elixir to cure foolishness. So, all I can wish is to meet my last day with foolishness and live this world with the same foolishness.

Issa was not able to overcome his earthy desires, and spent his lifetime with delusions until the year of the above writing, struggling as though in the same manner as Yeats:

"[t]he struggle of the fly in marmalade" ("Ego Donimus Tuus," line 49). At the same time, he asserted his own life with desires and clumsiness. This is similar to the attitude of "*MySelf*" in Yeats's poem "A Dialogue of Self and Soul": "The unfinished man and his pain / Brought face to face with his own clumsiness" (lines 47-48).

While Yeats's philosophy is influenced by Nietzsche, Issa's philosophy is based especially Pure Land Buddhist belief. He is remembered as an ardent believer of this strain of Buddhism³¹.

In the Pure Land teaching, Amida or the Buddha of Immeasurable Light wants to salvage, especially, sinners because these people cannot help themselves and know that on their own they are helpless—bounded to earthly desires and unable to do any good (create good karma through their actions). So, all they can do is completely rely on the mercy of Amida by calling the name of the Amida: "nembutsu," through repeated chanting. If they can only do so, they can then be reborn in the Pure Land of Amida, which is a path to nirvana. In this teaching, believers must be completely passive toward Amida's mercy. This is known as *tariki hongwan* [lit. relying on other-power (of Amida)]. The opposite of this—relying on anything other than Amida (including themselves) is regarded as something false thing which will cause the sufferer further delusion, resulting in being cast into Buddhist hell.

As an eager believer of this school, in his masterpiece *My Spring* [*Ora ga haru*], Issa referred to various attitudes self-help as the "hell fire of self-help [*jiriki jigoku no honō*]³²."

Nonetheless, as the introduction of *Bunsei Era Haiku Notebook* shows, Issa affirmed his own clumsy life with earthly desires in this faith. Does his philosophy contradict with Pure Land Buddhism, or not?

In the ninth chapter of one of the sacred scriptures of the Pure Land sect, the *Tannishō*, or Passages Deploing Deviations of Faith, *bompu* and dance are both

discussed. Within, a dialogue on the theme of dancing happiness and delusions is presented between the founding father of the school Shinran and his disciple Yuienbō (1222-1289CE):

念仏まうしきふらへども、踊躍歡喜 [note: dance for joy]のこゝろ、をろそかにさふらふこと、またいそぎ浄土へまいりたきこゝろにさふらはぬは、いかにとさふらふべきことにてさふらふやらんと、まうしいれてさふらひしかば、親鸞もこの不審ありつるに、唯円房おなじこゝろにてありけり。よくよく案じみれば、天におどり、地におどるほどによろこぶべきことを、よろこばぬにて、いよいよ往生は一定とおもひたまふなり。よろこぶべきこゝろををさへて、よろこばせざるは煩惱の所為なり。しかるに仏かねてしろしめて、煩惱具足の凡夫とおほせられたることなれば、他力の悲願はかなくのごとし、われらがためなりけりとしられて、いよいよたのもしくおぼゆるなり。また浄土へいそぎまいりたきこゝろのなくて、いさゝか所労のこともあれば、死なんずるやらんところぼそくおぼゆることも、煩惱の所為なり。久遠劫よりいままで流転せる苦悩の旧里はすてがたく、いまだむまれざる安養の浄土はこひしからずさふらふこと、まことによくよく煩惱の興盛に候ふにこそ。なごりをしくおもへども、娑婆の縁尽きて、ちからなくしてをはるときに、かの土へはまいるべきなり。いそぎまいりたきこゝろなきものを、ことにあはれみたまふなり。これにつけてこそ、いよいよ大悲願はたのもしく、往生は決定と存じ候へ。踊躍歡喜のこゝろもあり、いそぎ浄土へもまゐりたくさふらはんには、煩惱のなきやらんと、あやしくさふらひまなし³³
(emphasis mine)

An English version of this passage is shown below:

Even when I call the Nembutsu, I rarely feel like dancing for joy [note: *yuyaku kangī* 踊躍歡喜 in the original Japanese], nor do I have any fervent longing to be reborn in the Pure Land. Why is this so?" I asked.

"There was once a time when I, Shinran, also had doubts on this question. Now, Yuienbō, I find you sharing the same doubts. But when I reflect on this more deeply, I realize that our Rebirth in the Pure Land is all the more assured because we cannot feel like dancing for joy as we would wish. That is how you should think of this problem. It is defilement by evil passions that presses our hearts and prevents us from rejoicing. But since Amida Buddha, knowing this already, has called us 'common beings defiled by Ignorance,' I realize that the Compassionate Vow of Other Power was made for the benefit of just such defiled beings as ourselves, and so I feel it all the more worthy of trust.

Moreover, when we have no longing to be reborn instantly in the Pure Land, if we fall even slightly ill, we feel helpless with the fear of death. This is likewise because of our evil passions. How strong indeed must they be when we find it so hard to leave our native land of suffering, where we have been wandering through births and deaths for numberless *kalpas*, and when we can feel no longing for Amida's Pure Land, where we have yet to be reborn! We are reborn into that land when we have exhausted, even though reluctantly, our karmic relations to this world of suffering and end our lives helplessly. So Amida pities above all those

who feel no urgent longing to go to the Pure Land. Reflecting on this, we realize all the more how trustworthy is Amida's Great Compassionate Vow and how firmly our Rebirth is assured. If, on the contrary, our hearts were to rejoice[*note: 踊躍歡喜 in the original Japanese*] with an eager aspiration for Rebirth in the Pure Land, we might believe that we had no evil passions at all.³⁴

The words or phrases “dancing for joy” and “rejoice” in the translated passage is *yuyaku kangī* 踊躍歡喜 (or *kangī yuyaku* 歡喜踊躍) in the original Japanese, which means “dance for joy.” This term is a cornerstone of the Pure Land sect, and often appears in sutras like the (*Dai*) *Muryōjyū-kyō* [(*Larger*) *Infinite Life Sutra*] to describe the heavenly joy attended by knowing the Buddhistic truth (Amida Buddha's Vow No. 44: “設我得仏、他方国土、諸菩薩衆、聞我名字、歡喜踊躍、修菩薩行、具足德本、若不爾者、不取正覺³⁵”; an English translation is the following: “If, when I attain buddhahood, bodhisattvas in the lands of the other directions who hear my Name should not rejoice so greatly as to dance and perform the bodhisattva practices and should not acquire stores of merit, may I not attain perfect enlightenment³⁶” (emphasis mine)). The Buddhistic dance for joy is also related to ancient, shamanic *bon* dance. Developing this notion, a monk known as Ippen (1234-1289CE) started a new school of Buddhism known as Jishū, or Dancing Nembutsu School.

There is an inaccurate but common theory stating that the *Tannishō* scripture was prohibited for lay people. However, according to *The New Encyclopedia of Jōdo Shū*, in the Edo period, the scripture was published numerous times, and common people became accustomed to its philosophy³⁷. Regarding this fact, is very likely that Issa had knowledge of this scripture.

In the passage quoted above, the faith's founder Shinran confessed that he was

not able to "dance for joy" in the truth of Amida Buddha as a foolish being filled with earthy desires. However, such attitude can be a way to be saved, because one faces one's own clumsiness relying on the mercy of Amida Buddha.

Based on this faith, Issa accepted his own weakness and affirmed himself as a man with earthy desires. With reference to the ninth chapter of *Tannishō*, this haiku can be read differently. In the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, a life without dancing in joy can be understood as a life of delusion. However, to face and accept such reality of life can become a path to enlightenment, or rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. In the teaching of the sect, believers must remain passive toward the mercy of Amida Buddha. This can be regarded as an attitude of passive acceptance of one's own being. However, it is not an attitude of self-pity, in that self-pity avoids facing or accepting the reality of oneself. This haiku, illumined by Issa's philosophy based on Pure Land Buddhism, represents a attitude which is neither self-pitying or that of "passive suffering." The phrase "having no night / when I danced in joy" may be interpreted as Issa's assertion of his fifty years of worldly existence, with earthy desires—and in an illuminative, transformative realization understanding himself as a wild, foolish being or wild sinner: *ara-bompu*.

Conclusion.

As discussed above, this paper has presented the philosophies and philosophical stances of Yeats and Issa. The final line of Yeats's poem "Imitated from the Japanese" appears to condone a passive resignation of a joyless life—a perspective clearly disliked by Yeats elsewhere in his philosophical writings. However, regarding his elucidation of tragic philosophy, as influenced by Nietzsche, it is possible to trace a path to "tragic joy" through a laughing at himself, in other word, self-caricature.

The final line of the poem is taken from one of Issa's haiku, written when the

poet was sixty years old. The haiku, as with Yeats's line, reveals bitterness, regarding old age and life. However, in the same year, in the same haiku notebook, Issa expressed his philosophy of *ara bompu*, in which he asserts the nature of his own life and old age, based on his Pure Land Buddhist faith. In the teaching of Pure Land Buddhism (especially of Shinran), to be "passive" toward the mercy of Amida Buddha enables us to have a positive attitude to face and affirm our lives with impunity. Issa lived in this faith, and composed his haiku works. Then, Yone Noguchi translated Issa's works. And Yeats, the Nietzschean poet who disliked "passive suffering," adopted the translated haiku as a model of his own work. The philosophies of the two poets differ, but their philosophies both have power to accept and affirm human life including the bitterness of old age.

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Notes

- 1 This is a revised version of the paper read at the International Yeats Society and the Yeats Society of Japan Joint Symposium in Kyoto 2018 held at Kyoto University, December 15, 2018.
- 2 In this paper, W. B. Yeats's poems are cited from W. B. Yeats, *The Poems: The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, eds. Richard Finneran (New York: Scriber, 1997).
- 3 W. B. Yeats and Dorothy Wellesley, *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford UP, 1964) 116.
- 4 Technically speaking, "*hokku*" (lit. starting verse: the first 17 syllable verse of *haikai*

renga) and "haiku" are different. However, the latter is the term used throughout this paper for convenience.

5 Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1958) 251.

6 Yeats, *The Poems* 681-82.

7 Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828 CE) "Kobayashi" is the poet's family name while "Issa" is his *haigō* [haiku poet's penname]. His personal name is "Yatarō." Even so, for haiku poets, it is common to call one's *haigō* rather than calling one's family name or personal name. In this paper, he is mainly called as "Kobayashi Issa" or "Issa."

8 W. B. Yeats, ed., *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892-1935* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1936) xxxiv.

9 Yone Noguchi, "Hobby" *The Adelphi* 11:2 (London: Self-published, 1935) 107.

10 Cf. Harold Bloom, *Yeats* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970); *The Anxiety of Influence: A theory of Poetry*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1973); Dennis Donohue, *Yeats: Fontana Modern Masters*, eds. Frank Kermode (London: Fontana, 1971); Otto Bohlman, *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Frances Nesbitt Opper, *Mask and Tragedy: Yeats and Nietzsche, 1902-10* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1987).

11 W. B. Yeats, *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, eds. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954) 379.

12 Friedrich Nietzsche, William A Hausmann trans., *The Birth of Tragedy: or, Hellenism and Pessimism*. (London: T. N. Foulis, 1909) 11.

13 *Ibid*, 18.

14 *Ibid*, 7.

- 15 Yeats and Wellesley, *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley*, 117.
- 16 *Ibid*, 141.
- 17 *Ibid*, 116.
- 18 *Ibid*, 117.
- 19 Friedrich Nietzsche, William A. Haussmann and John Gray trans., *A Genealogy of Morals* (London: Macmillan, 1924) 132-33.
- 20 W. B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (New York: Macmillan, 1959. New York: Touchstone, 1998) 333-34.
- 21 W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962) 169-70.
- 22 In Hongwanji-ha's glossary, “凡夫[*bompu*]” is translated as “foolish being” (Shinran, Dennis Hirota, et, al., *The Collected Works of Shinran*. Vol.2 (Kyoto: Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 187. On the other hand, in Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (BDK)'s English version of Tannishō, the term is translated as “ordinary being” (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith & Rennyō Shonin Ofumi: The Letters of Rennyō* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007), 25. According to Shinran, “Foolish beings: [...] we are full of ignorance and blind passion. Our desires are countless, and anger, wrath, jealousy, and envy are overwhelming arising without pause; to the very last moment of life they do not cease, or disappear, or exhaust themselves” (Shinran, Dennis Hirota, et, al., 488)
- 23 Yone Noguchi, *Japanese Hokkus* (Boston: Four Seas Company, 1920) 17.
- 24 Noguchi, “Hobby” 106-07.
- 25 Edward Marx “Yone Noguchi in W. B. Yeats's Japan (2): Hokku” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Law and Letters: Humanities 19* (Ehime University. 2005)118; “Nō Dancing: Yone Noguchi in Yeats's Japan,” *Yeats Annual 17* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007) 83.

- 26 Issa's original haiku poems are cited from Kobayashi Issa, *The Collected Works of Kobayashi Issa [Issa zenshū]: Vol. 3-4* (Tokyo: Shinano Shimbun-sha, 1977).
The phrase “花の春 *hana no haru*” is kigo (season word), which literally means “spring of flower” but also connotes “new year.”
- 27 Marx 2005, 122; Marx 2007, 86.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Issa, *The Collected Works of Kobayashi Issa: Vol. 4*, 333.
- 30 The original Japanese word is “迷い [*mayoi*].” In BDK's English version of *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus [Muryōju-kyō]*, the kanji “迷” is translated as “deluded” (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003), 44.
For the reason above, that word “delusion” was chosen here as the translation.
- 31 Cf. Zuika Ōshiki, *Issa's World: Shinran Follower's Literature [Issa no sekai: shinran kyōto no sekai]* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1997).
- 32 Ōshiki, 57.
- 33 Daiei Kaneko. ed. *Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith [Tannishō]* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1982) 54-55. “*Kunojiten*,” Japanese two-character-sized repeat marks, in the original quotations are replaced by common hiragana.
- 34 Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith & Rennyō Shonin Ofumi: The Letters of Rennyō* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007) 7-8.
- 35 Hajime Nakamura, et. al. ed. *The Three Great Sutras of Pure Land Buddhism [Jōdo sambu-kyō]: Vol. 1* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1963) 163-64.
- 36 Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003) 17.
- 37 Jōdo Shū, “*kangi yuyaku*” *The New Encyclopedia of Jōdo Shū [shinsan jōd*

o shū daijiten], *jōdo shū daijiten*] Online. <<http://jodoshuzensho.jp/daijiten/index.php/%E6%AD%93%E5%96%9C%E8%B8%8A%E8%BA%8D>> para. 1