

**A STUDY OF THE WARTIME POEMS OF TAKAHASHI
SHINKICHI:
WRITING BETWEEN DADA AND ZEN**

Masataka Matsuda*

m-matsuda@isc.osakac.ac.jp

Abstract: *In this paper I discussed Takahashi Shinkichi's worldview and his view of language, focusing on his wartime poems in "Kirishima", "Visiting Shrines", and "Yamatoshimane", poems written while he found himself caught in a conflict between his private self and his public self. Takahashi has been recognized for the singularity of his schizophrenic style of writing in his prewar poems and for his worldwide reputation as a Zen poet in the postwar period. However, the number of studies on his wartime poems is still very limited. In this paper I focused on his wartime poems to feature him as a poet who wrote pro-war poems, and from this perspective, I contemplated his bewilderment, the suffocating tension he experienced, and his abandoning communication through language. In the words publicly written in accordance with the contemporary discourse, the author's personal desire to put his own comments, not ready-made ideas, to express his own feelings, can sometimes be seen. The poetic blank caused by this conflict is one of the premises on which Takahashi stood during the wartime period.*

Keywords: *Dada, Zen, private self, public self.*

Introduction: Dada's Landing in Japan

In August, 2010 Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) *Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto* was published in Japan as a newly translated version in Kobunsha classics. As can be observed from the name of the series, Dada is already a classic in Japan. In the postscript, the translator Tsukahara Fumi gives a detailed explanation about what made this Romania-born artist come to Zurich.¹ To make a brief summary of the story, in the summer of 1914, immediately after the outbreak of World War I, Tzara entered the University of Bucharest, but when the war situation took on a lingering aspect, he headed for Zurich to escape the turmoil of war. University students in Romania had been exempted from military service at that time, but the privilege became less certain. So it was really "a good timing" when Tzara got off at the central station in Zurich in October, 1915. He could evade military service by enrolling in a university in Switzerland, a country committed to permanent neutrality. Thus he legally avoided responsibility for bombing on the battlefield. This does not mean, however, that he refused the battle itself. Tzara

* Assistant Professor, Ph.D., - *Osaka Electro-Communication University, Japan.*

¹ Torisutan Tsuara, *Musshu Anchipirin no sengen*. trans. Tsukahara Fumi. Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2010. 213-38 (Tristan Tzara, *Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto*).

dropped a bomb which came as a shock to the modern art - DADA - in his fight against the common sense at that time which impelled people into the battlefield.

The artists who had gathered in Zurich, evading the disasters of war, produced anti-art performances in the cafe Cabaret Voltaire. At the beginning, their performances were nothing but nonsense festive events called "Dada evenings," but Tzara composed his first dada manifesto *Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto* as early as in 1916.

DADA is our intensity: it erects inconsequential bayonets and the Sumatral head of German babies; Dada is life with neither bedroom slippers nor parallels; it is against and for unity and definitely against the future; we are wise enough to know that our brains are going to become flabby cushions, that our antidogmatism is as exclusive as a civil servant, and that we cry liberty but are not free; a severe necessity with neither discipline nor morals and that we spit on humanity.²

The impact of this Dada bombardment singing of anti-establishment movements swept in a flash across the world, and soon after that it landed on Japan in the Far East Asia. It is said that in Japanese writing the word "dada" was used for the first time in an article of the newspaper *Yorozuchoho* for June 27, 1920 ('A Strange Phenomenon in the Art Circle of Germany: Schwitter's Merz Pictures'). At the very same time, the newspaper conducted a short story contest, for which Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-1987) won the first prize. With his prizewinning story 'Raising a flame' published in the newspaper on August 1, he made his debut as a writer. It is incidental but rather interesting that we can see the first Japanese reference to Dada and the first Japanese dadaist poet's debut in the same newspaper at the same time. Furthermore, two articles on Dada appeared in *Yorozuchoho* on August 15, soon after the publication of 'Raising a flame.' Takahashi continued to read the newspaper even after his winning the prize and later he said himself that he had known Dada through the two articles: 'The Latest Art of Epicureanism: Dadaism Becoming Popular in the Postwar Era' by Shiran, and 'A view of Dadaism' by Yotosei. The articles were "more critical than sympathetic" toward Dadaism as a newly rising art movement.³ But Takahashi was truly impressed by the following passage.

To put aside what is written, there seems to be a tendency to put more emphasis on its form than its content: the lettering goes vertical and horizontal, and what is worse, diagonal.⁴

In 'A view of Dadaism' we can see a quotation from Tzara's *Dada Manifesto 1918*.

² Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*. trans. Barbara Wright. London: John Calder, 1977. 1.

³ Ko Won, *Buddhist Elements in Dada: A Comparison of Tristan Tzara, Takahashi Shinkichi, and Their Fellow Poets*. New York: New York University Press, 1977. 16.

⁴ Kamitani Tadataka, '(Shiryō) Nihon no Dadaizumu (1920-1922),' *Hokkaido daigaku jinbun kagaku ronshu*. 16:1-43, 1976. 2. (all translations in this paper are mine unless referred).

I hate slimy objectivity, and harmony, the science that considers that everything is always in order ... I am against systems; the most acceptable system is that of having none on no principle. I proclaim the opposition of all the cosmic faculties to that blennorrhoea of a putrid sun ... DADA; the abolition of the future.⁵

Deeply impressed by these passages concerning Dada, Takahashi was urged to write his first dadaist poem, 'Ennui' (later retitled as 'Dish'), which appeared in the first issue of *Simoon* in April 1922.⁶ I will comment on this poem later. While using his illogical style of writing and irregularly arranged typography and selecting subjects, such as sexual desire and madness, which might have been restricted or suppressed in the contemporary discourse in Japan in the 1920s when it suffered the devastating damage from the Great Kanto Earthquake, Takahashi wrote his avant-garde poems on the basis of his own mental disorder (as he did in *Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi*, the collection of his early avant-garde poems and *Dada*, the autobiographical novel in which he wrote about his experience of madness).

1. Takahashi Shinkichi: the Schizophrenic Dadaist

Takahashi thus became known as the first Japanese dadaist poet before World War II. After the war, he devoted himself to Zen Buddhism and was introduced world- widely as a Zen poet. In this paper, however, I would like to focus on what the poet wrote during the wartime, which can be said to be the intermediate time of his career between a dadaist poet and a Zen poet. Now let us consider another aspect of Takahashi that has rarely been studied: the poet who wrote pro-war poems.

It goes without saying that we can hardly know what sort of person Takahashi really was. As far as we read the works that were written under his name, we might find it difficult to create an image of Takahashi Shinkichi through merely biographical investigations. In particular he is a writer who can control his own personality by using different styles of writing, and at the same time, can be controlled by the styles of writing.

I am writing this with the words others also use. These are the so-called ready-made words. I am pretty sure that it is not me who writes this and also that someone does make me write this. This would not be a task that I could manage alone.⁷

In fact, it seems true that he occasionally suffered schizophrenic symptoms in his youth. As Takahashi himself stated, he had gone mad three times. The most crucial episode occurred when he was practicing Zen Buddhism in 1928. Compulsorily sent back to his hometown, his eccentric utterances and behaviors

⁵ Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*. 9-13.

⁶ Sato Kenichi. 'Nihon no Dadaisuto Takahashi Shinkichi: Dada, pafomativu, kyōki ni tsuite,' *Gobun*. Nihon daigaku kokubungakkai. 136. 2010. 30.

⁷ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Hakkyō (Madness)*. Tokyo: Gakujishoin, 1936. 199-200.

never ceased, and he did not refrain from cursing his father who was doing his best to look after his son. This finally drove his father to suicide. But this schizophrenic predisposition has its own peculiar charm especially in his poems; this assumes a special significance particularly when we read his wartime poems.

The Dadaist Shinkichi wrote something similar to avant-garde poems in order to set out an antithesis to common sense or to express a madness of his own. Yet he was very different from Tzara in that he tried writing avant-garde poems in the very center of the fascist regime while Tzara launched Dada in Switzerland, a country committed to permanent neutrality. Takahashi had mental breakdowns caused by the ironical situation in which he had to write what he must not write. To write what is not allowed to be written. To write with the knowledge that he might be arrested, or executed under certain circumstances. Consequently Takahashi wrote pro-war poems. Did Takahashi want to write to support the totalitarian spirit of the age promoted by the regime? Did he accept the fact that he could not write *Dadaist Shinkichi's poems* at the center of militarism?

The persecution under censorship had already begun to reach him. Some of the sexual descriptions in his early works such as *The Insane* and *Madness* had already been suppressed, but the censored blanks were truly remarkable especially in "The Survived" one of the essays in his *Collected Follies* published in 1941, the year of Pearl Harbor attack by the imperial Japanese navy. In this essay, the passages in which we can now guess Takahashi put his severe criticism of the regime were substantially cut off by the publisher beforehand. Takahashi thus experienced the far-reaching enforcement of censorship through the blank passages in his writings. Then he wrote pro-war poems. Yet here I would like to raise a question: is it really sincere to reproduce the discourse in which the fact that a poet once wrote pro-war poems was always attached to him like a sticker which could never be removed? Is it really all we can do? But what if the poet succeeded in placing in any way his criticism of the regime in his writings, consciously or unconsciously, while he seemingly wrote pro-war poems? In this paper I would like to consider this point, making references to his wartime works such as *Visiting Shrines*, *Kirishima*, and *Yamatoshimane*.

2. Indecisiveness in the Style of *Visiting Shrines*

There is no reason for adding a comment on the poetic works of a well-known, God-given poet like Takahashi Shinkichi, but I would like to say a word to express my new realization especially about this poetic work. It is nothing but this: this collection of poems titled *Visiting Shrines* rises above the conventional idea about his style of writing to become a strong voice of our race that is yearning for the ancestor worship that the truly ancient people once had.⁸

Takamura Kotaro wrote this in the foreword to *Visiting Shrines*. Takamura was obviously surprised here at the fact that Takahashi's style, previously filled with madness, suddenly turned to be obediently quiet. It is true that Takahashi

⁸ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Jinja Sanpai (Visiting Shrines)*, Tokyo: sangabo, 1941. 5.

often changed his style of writing: for instance, as Sato pointed out, he began the novel *Dada* in a first-person narrative but in the latter part he shifted to the third-person and in the last part back to the first-person. Yet when Takamura referred to Takahashi's alteration in the style of writing, he was paying attention not to the stylistics as such but to Takahashi's attitude toward writing, or its spirit. Now let us consider Takahashi's style in *Visiting Shrines* and his attitude toward writing implied in it.

As shown in Takamura's foreword to *Visiting Shrines*, the readers at that time who had been familiar with Takahashi's avant-gardist style in his early works like *Makuwauri Anthology DA no.1*, *Dadaist Shinkichi's Poems*, *Dada*, *The Insane*, and *Madness* must have felt awkward when reading *Visiting Shrines*, in which Takahashi suddenly began to write in an emotionally detached, quiet style, even if the wartime censorship had been very severe. In other words, there must have been readers who were surprised at his shift from the abnormal style in the prewar period to the detached one during the wartime. Or not a few readers must have felt bewilderment at Takahashi who committed himself to the contemporary imperialist discourse and wrote pro-war poems or emperor worship poems. But I believe Takahashi himself was aware of his own frustrations, swaying between the private self as an avant-garde poet and the public self as a writer who had to earn his living. At least, certain indecisiveness can be seen in the style of his *Visiting Shrines*.

Takahashi visited shrines that were interspersed throughout Japan and wrote short essays on each of them, which were put together in his *Visiting Shrines*. On each of the shrines, he described the history, the enshrined deity, the rituals held in it, and sometimes the journey to it and the landscape around it. Some are written as poems and others in prose. I shall examine these aspects in another occasion. Here I would like to concentrate my attention on a minor but idiosyncratic trait of his style: that is, his treatment of the end of a sentence.

kami no kago de aru
issai wa shii wo zesshite kami no itonami de aru
nanimo omoi sugosu you wa nai⁹

This is a divine protection.
Everything is divine deed beyond our thoughts.
Nothing is worth to be thought about too much. ('Atsuta Shrine')

The keynote in *Visiting Shrines* is based on this authoritarian narrative told from a transcendent, privileged standpoint, but in some of the essays we can also find a rather modest style in the beginning of 'Konohananosakuyahime' and 'Hikumo shrine' as quoted below.

*konohananosakuyahime wa niniginomikoto no okisaki ni narareta
kata de arimasu. niniginomikoto ga tukushi no kuni ni*

⁹ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Jinja Sanpai*. 6. (emphasis mine)

*amakudararetekara, kasasanomisaki ni, kaoyoki otome to oaininatte "tare no musume zo" to otoninaruto, otome wa "ooyamatuminokami no musume, na wa kamuatatsuhime, mata no na wa, konohananosakuyahime" to okotae ni narimashita.*¹⁰

Konohananosakuyahime became the wife of Niniginomikoto. When Niniginomikoto came to Tsukushi, he asked Kasasanomisaki, after seeing a beautiful young lady, "Whose daughter is she?" the lady answered "I am the daughter of Oyamatsuminokami, my name is Kamuatatsuhime, or as also known as Konohananosakuyahime. ('Konohananosakuyahime')

*ouminokuni kougagun taraomura ni arimasu.
yamatohimenomikoto ga, sakatanomiya e ookami wo housen sareru
mae ni, kokoni wa yonen kan itsuki tatematsurareta toiu koto desu.*¹¹

It is located in Tarao, Koga county in Omi. It is said that Yamatohimenomikoto had been serving the great god in this place for four years before moving the god to Sakata shrine. ('Hikumo shrine')

These are the examples of modest ways of writing that come from experiences of self-effacement, kneeling to gods, but at the same time it can also be said that Takahashi used a colloquial style in view of reader-friendliness. The number of published books was so limited because of the paper shortage during the wartime period. Things that did not meet domestic demands were considered as being unworthy of publication. Since Takahashi earned his living as a poet no matter how poor he actually was, he would have lost his way of living if his writings had not been published. And it is true that he had been interested in Shintoism since the prewar era, but is it unreasonable to think that Takahashi tried emphasizing this to make his writings publishable because he would otherwise have been unable to feed himself? In other words, the positive affirmation of the public self enabled him to support imperialism, the very source of every discourse at that time. Regarding Takahashi, however, the more he affirmed his public self, the more active his private self grew. Takahashi's wartime works are profound partly because they give a vivid account of the way his private self struggled against his public self in an effort to express itself in the strained social circumstances.

Apropos of *Visiting Shrines*, Shimazaki Toson also wrote a foreword. Shimazaki thought highly of Takahashi's poetic works, considering them "religious poems"; at the end of the foreword, he expressed his hopes in connection with the future of the poet.

Will the destiny of history lead the author to write a still more excellent collection of religious poems in the future? Will this time we are facing now make him produce still more abundant desperate words?

¹⁰ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Jinja Sanpai*. 26. (emphasis mine)

¹¹ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Jinja Sanpai*. 209. (emphasis mine)

In this sense I would like to watch this author closely in the future.¹²

Judging from the fact that Takahashi was gradually heading for Zen poems after completing this “collection of religious poems,” we must admit that Shimazaki truly had foresight. Yet even if “the destiny of history” made Takahashi produce “still more abundant desperate words,” they were not “religious poems.” Takahashi groped again for the possibility of “avant-garde poems” stealthily. In the collected poems *Kirishima* and the following collection *Yamatoshimane*, his private self began to spill over his public self.

3. The Conflict between the Public Self and the Private Self in *Kirishima*

As I have stated, Takahashi tried to kill his private self when reproducing the totalitarian discourse. He placed the pro-war poems at the beginning of *Kirishima*. He could not help accepting his public self, and he engaged himself in an excessive feeling of exaltation, following the surging tide of the contemporary discourse, and composed a lot of pro-war poems. The following is a poem titled ‘The Southern Sea,’ which sounds like propaganda all the more because it is composed of short and rhythmic lines.

Let us go
To the southern sea
To the land of everlasting summer
Singapore has surrendered.
We are close to India.
Very close to Australia.

Let us go
To the Himalayan peak
To the sea of New Zealand
Great Britain surrendered
Asia is tomorrow.
Europe is the past.

Let us go
To the Philippines, to the Java
To the Hawaii
America is powerless.
We are close to Panama.
Very close to New York.

Let us go
Under the equator
To the tropics

¹² Takahashi Shinkichi, *Jinja Sanpai*. 4.

Manila has surrendered.
The Pacific Ocean was liberated.
The world is small.¹³

Indeed Takahashi wanted to kill his private self to give himself over to the public self. In the poetic work *Father and Mother*, which was also published in the wartime era, we can see Takahashi confessing like this:

Nobility of living
Splendor of being alive
Loveliness of a female voice
To have a family
To have a state
Nobility of living
As one who belongs to it
I cannot endure
Solitude
I want to assimilate myself into the society, the state soon.
I want to be alive intensely and furiously.¹⁴

We can easily find in Takahashi's wartime writings this sort of expression in which he manages to hold his own place by giving himself to the public self. This kind of expression would inevitably have contained the pro-war statements. Takahashi's enthusiasm for giving himself and recklessly rushing to the surging tide of the contemporary discourse is clear in 'The Southern Sea' in *Kirishima* quoted above.

However, as we turn the pages, Takahashi's private voices begin to appear like sighs here and there, in a manner that is different from the hasty ways of the public self. In 'Treading over dried leaves,' for example, the exhausted condition of society is described appropriately and the poet standing alone there seems reluctant to utter a word. In this poem we cannot find a bit of the feeling of exaltation that we can see in 'The Southern Sea.'

I was walking, treading over dried leaves.
A dog, with its face covered in scabs, was lying on the road.
A crowd of dusty shoes passed over in a yellow mass.
Flies stop on the dog's face.
The wind was dead
The Indian oleander felt repulsion against the rising temperature.
In factories,
The machines mashed and bleached
Dissolved intelligence and severed dream into passion.
The earth fell apart in anguish.

¹³ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Kirishima*. Tokyo: Hougasha, 1942. 13-5.

¹⁴ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Chichi Haha (Father and Mother)*. Tokyo: Reimeichosha, 1943. 24-5.

Like a machine, standing aloof from thinking
Like a dog, I became anxious for a lazy posture.¹⁵

The theme presented here is the same feeling of fatigue expressed by Takahashi in his early poems such as *Makuwauri Anthology Da no.1*, *Dadaist Shinkichi's Poems* and so on. When picking out only the lines “In factories, / The machines mashed and bleached / Dissolved intelligence and severed dream into passion. / The earth fell apart in anguish.” they may be regarded as criticism of the current regime. Of course, as I have pointed out, there are a great number of pro-war poems at the beginning of *Kirishima*, so the implicit meanings of these lines were saved from inspection even if they had anti-capitalistic or nihilistic connotations.

Whatever the poet's intention really was (no one can know about this), it can be said that the totalitarian discourse was always criticized by the private voices overheard from the gaps between pro-war poems. Writing pro-war poems and at the same time criticizing the status quo. This may seem impossible. Yet as Leo Strauss has once stated, in the writings of Plato one can already see the art of writing in which the author writes from “the government-sponsored views” with the very logic of the current authorities but at the same time puts his anti-establishment messages between the lines to escape the persecution of the authorities.¹⁶ In Takahashi's case, he truly supported the worshiping discourse for the emperor. The discourse was the horizon, or his language itself, on which he was made to stand in the beginning, and without which nothing could start in him. At any rate we all have to accept the ready-made language. Otherwise we cannot say a word. Before making a statement, before a narrative, the individual self is not established yet. It is still in the stage where it only mimics the totalitarian discourse to be part of the whole body. In short, it is the stage of maintaining the public self. In Takahashi's case, the private self can be heard in any way like a dissonance while he plays his part as the public self. In this respect, I suspect that he was more or less a strategic writer. There is an interesting poem titled ‘Two eyes’ in *Kirishima*.

I have no less than two eyes.
One eye, becoming weaker, cannot see even a car coming.
The other can see the footprints of an ant creeping away.
Likewise in my thoughts
I think of two different things at a time.
I dare to carry out inconsistent things.¹⁷

Here we can see his attitude in which he tries to undertake his schizophrenic vision rather positively. To “think of two different things at a time” also means to think “between” two things. I do not mean to say that he respects both. Takahashi respected the “spaceless space,” that is to say, this “in-between-ness” that looms

¹⁵ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Kirishima*. 86-8.

¹⁶ Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

¹⁷ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Kirishima*. 114.

like a specter when one thinks of two different things at a time. In this respect, it is in his succeeding poetic work *Yamatoshimane* that Takahashi seems to “carry out inconsistent things” more strategically. The binding for this book was surprisingly poor and the paper was very coarse partly because of bad distribution of paper. Yet I think this is the most thrilling work of his other wartime works. In what way? I would like to consider this in the next section.

4. Reprinting the Avant-garde Poems in *Yamatoshimane*

Regarding *Yamatoshimane*, first of all, I cannot help being conscious of the table of contents which is put at the very end of the book. Even if this was not particularly unusual among the works at that time, I think the table of contents in *Yamatoshimane* had to appear at the very end of the book. For those who had been familiar with Takahashi's poems, it would be very clear from the table of contents that his prewar avant-garde poems such as ‘Dish’ and ‘Dumb’ were also reprinted. This work also begins with pro-war poems as if this were a kind of camouflage. There are also poems reprinted from *Kirishima* and *Visiting Shrines*. In other words, the readers faced a succession of the pro-war poems right after the prologue. They had to read page after page the poems that praised the Japanese people and the nation. To the readers who sought the poems cheering the Japanese spirit, the avant-garde poems reprinted furtively in the latter part of the book might have been invisible.

Surprisingly, among others, his most important prewar poem ‘Dish’ was reprinted. As I have pointed out, this was Takahashi's first Dadaist poem, which was originally written under the title ‘Ennui’ and is famous for describing weariness from labor.

dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish dish
dish
ennui
passion of an earthworm creeping on the brow
Do not wipe dishes
with the rice-colored apron.
a woman with black nostrils
There smolders humor too.
Dissolve dishes in the water.
On a cooled stew pot
weariness floats.
Smash dishes.
Smash dishes and then
there will come out the echo of ennui.¹⁸

Takahashi must have been aware that reprinting this poem was dangerous. In comparison with the poem in *Dadaist Shinkichi's Poems* and the version from *Yamatoshimane* we can find that he made small corrections. First, as is shown in

¹⁸ Ko Won, *Buddhist Elements in Dada*. 39-40. (Slightly modified from Ko Won's translation)

the quotation above, all of the lines were flatly indented though they were originally uneven (this may have been a question of printing). Furthermore the word “dishes” was repeated modestly 16 times while it was originally repeated 22 times. “Dissolve life in the water” in the eighth line of the original version was drastically changed into “Dissolve dishes in the water.” The flatness of the indent, the number of “dishes,” and rewriting “life” into “dishes” make the *Yamatoshimane* version of this poem restrained to some extent.

More thrillingly, these reprinted prewar avant-garde poems are connected to “furyumonji (no dependence upon words and letters)” in Zen Buddhism. In the last part of *Yamatoshimane*, Takahashi sought to go beyond language. I quote some of them because these are the poems that foretell Takahashi’s postwar devotion to Zen.

On this small Earth, to believe you are superior
Is a pitifully absurd thing. (‘Absurdity’)¹⁹

There is nothing to say.
Everything can be understood without a word. (‘There is nothing to say’)²⁰

If you give a meaning to a word,
You will cause a serious mistake. (‘A word’)²¹

To distinguish things and understand them
Is useless.
The moment you understand it, the truth will already have been lost.
(‘Distinction’)²²

Tzara had insisted on the significance of being suspended between more than two languages. Needless to say, this attitude to something incomprehensible, often called Dada, was greatly useful to Takahashi especially when he sought to express “life” using something other than language, because he had also already been suspicious of the totalitarian element that language would have more or less in itself. Takahashi also considered Zen and the koan to be greatly useful as a framework to represent “life.” To Takahashi Zen was the experience of coming out of language through the collapse/transcendence of logic within one language. He was very aware that he was unable to write a poem in the same language that was generally used, so after the war was over, he tried polishing his poetical imagination in the manner of “furyumonji.” In order to examine the possibility of enlightenment beyond language (or he may have regretted writing pro-war poems) he visited famous Zen masters like Ashikaga Shizan and Yamada Mumon and asked himself what poetry could really be (Takahashi commented on Zen in

¹⁹ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Yamatoshimane*. Tokyo: Youshokakuakamonshobou, 1943. 106.

²⁰ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Yamatoshimane*. 112.

²¹ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Yamatoshimane*. 116.

²² Takahashi Shinkichi, *Yamatoshimane*. 117.

his writings such as *The Life of Dogen*, *The Gateless Gate*, *The Recorded Teachings of Linji* and so on). To Takahashi, however, Dada and Zen were significant not as historically located cultural phenomena but as endless questioning about ordinary language that always tended to be fixed as a unity. I think it was a point somewhere between Dada and Zen that Takahashi gazed at.

I have discussed Takahashi's worldview or his view of language, focusing on his wartime poems in *Kirishima*, *Visiting Shrines*, and *Yamatoshimane*, in which he managed to write poems while his private self and his public self were in a continuous conflict. Takahashi has been recognized for the singularity of his schizophrenic style of writing in his prewar poems or for the worldwide reputation as a Zen poet in the postwar period. However, the number of the studies on his wartime poems has still been very limited. In this paper I have intended to focus on his wartime poems to feature him as a poet who wrote pro-war poems, and from this perspective, I have contemplated his bewilderment, the oppressive tension tormenting him, and his abandonment of communication in language. This does not mean that the bewilderment can be an excuse for writing pro-war poems. But it will be a problem if the fact develops a life of its own and makes other aspects disappear from sight. In the words publicly written in accordance with the contemporary discourse, the author's personal desire to express his own feelings, not ready-made ideas, can sometimes be seen. The poetic blank caused by this conflict is one of the premises on which Takahashi stood during the wartime period.

Conclusion: Writing between Dada and Zen

In his late years Takahashi liked to title his books in the form of 'A and B.' This is quite natural if we consider it as his rhetoric to highlight the possibilities of "in-betweenness" by juxtaposing two different worlds like 'Dada and Zen.' And it can be said that a koan in Zen is not a technique to convey a truth from a master to the disciples but an art of language that is realized when the disciples read something between the lines in the spoken words, or between languages, that is to say, the spaceless space that has infinite possibilities. I believe Takahashi was fascinated by this spaceless space. And when turning back to dadaism again from this position, it proves to be the potential that can be more creative than mere nihilism in which everything is rejected as meaningless. As nothingness looms between two sheets of mirror facing each other, two systems of totally different nature must come face to face with each other to summon the ghost-like "in-between." It seems inevitable that these two peculiar worlds - Dada and Zen - encountered each other in Takahashi's texts. We can also find a quotation from Walter Serner's dadaist manifesto 'Last Loosening Manifesto' in the article of *Yorozuchoho*, the newspaper in which Takahashi knew about dadaism for the first time. Takahashi believed Serner's words "World views are word mixtures" was the essence of Dada. And he referred to Dada and Zen like this:

Tzara wrote "no more words" and "wordless thoughts." This makes me believe that he meant Zen Buddhism when he mentioned "the religion of Buddhist indifference." While still young, he grasped a thought similar to

furyumonji of Zen. Otherwise Dada could not have swept across the world and affected the superior minds.²³

Takahashi himself aimed at the "wordless thoughts" between Dada and Zen. When Dada was reevaluated in Japan in the 70s, he firmly insisted that he was the pioneer of Japanese Dada.

REFERENCES

1. Kamitani, Tadataka, (1976), (*Shiryō*) *Nihon no Dadaizumu (1920-1922)*, *Hokkaido daigaku jinbun kagaku ronshu*. 16:1-43.
2. Sato, Kenichi, (2010), *Nihon no Dadaisuto Takahashi Shinkichi: Dada, pafomachivu, kyouki ni tsuite, Gobun*, Nihon daigaku kokubungakkai, 136.
3. Strauss, Leo. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988
4. Takahashi, Shinkichi, (1936), *Hakkyo (Madness)*. Tokyo, Gakujishoin.
5. -----, *Jinja Sanpai (Visiting Shrines)*, Tokyo, Sangabo, 1941
6. -----, *Kirishima*. Tokyo, Hougasha, 1942
7. -----, *Chichi Haha (Father and Mother)*. Tokyo, Reimeichosha, 1943
8. -----, *Yamatoshimane*. Tokyo, Youshokakuakamonshobou, 1943
9. -----, *Zen to bigaku (Zen and Aesthetics)*. Tokyo, Houbunkan, 1979
10. Tzara, Tristan, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*. trans. Barbara Wright. London, John Calder, 1977 (Torisutan Tsuara, *Musshu Anchipirin no sengen*. trans. Tsukahara Fumi. Tokyo, Kobunsha, 2010)
11. Won, Ko, *Buddhist Elements in Dada: A Comparison of Tristan Tzara, Takahashi Shinkichi, and Their Fellow Poets*. New York, New York University Press, 1977

²³ Takahashi Shinkichi, *Zen to bigaku (Zen and Aesthetics)*. Tokyo: Houbunkan, 1979. 124.