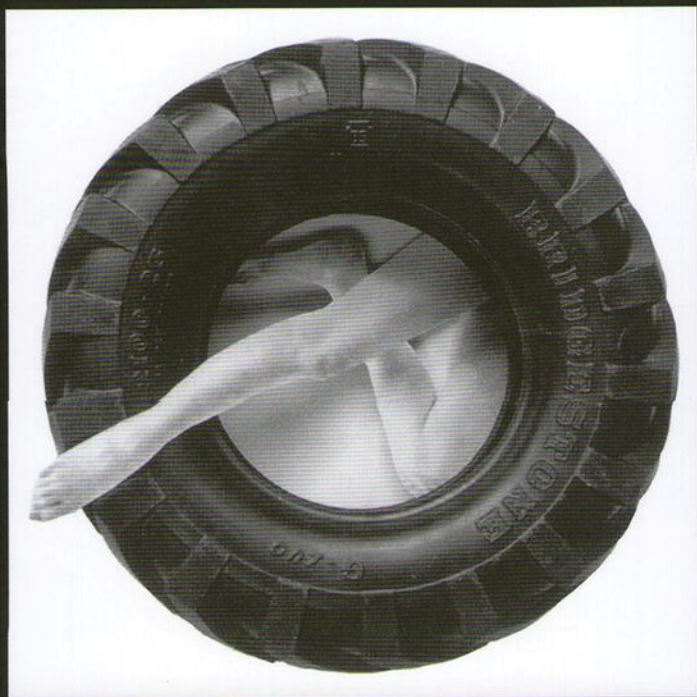


*Bearded Cones  
&  
Pleasure Blades*

The Collected Poems of Torii Shōzō



Edited and Translated  
by Taylor Mignon

h i g h m o o n o o n

The Collected Poems of  
Torii Shōzō

*Bearded Cones  
&  
Pleasure Blades*

The Collected Poems of Torii Shōzō (1932-1994)



Translated by Taylor Mignon  
with Yarita Misako



h i g h m o o n o o n

2013



Translations and Afterword © 2013 Taylor Mignon

*Fossil Sea* poems © Yarita Misako

Introduction © 2013 Shiraishi Kazuko

“Nude Fantasia,” translation © 2013 John Solt

Torii Shōzō poems © Torii Fusako 2013, used with permission.

Kitasono Katue “Plastic Poem” cover and illustrations, pages 12, 32, 92  
and 154, © Hashimoto Sumiko 2013, used with permission.

Yamamoto Kansuke drawing, p. 136, © Yamamoto Toshio 2013,  
used with permission.

Cover photograph: Kitasono Katue, “Plastic Poem, *VOU* No. 121, 1969.”

© Hashimoto Sumiko 2013, used with permission.

Printing at Printed Matter Press, Tokyo.

Published by highmoonoon in an edition of 1,000 copies.

All rights reserved.

highmoonoon

9121 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, California 90069, USA

Tel: 310-276-9522

Fax: 310-276-0242

[www.highmoonoon.com](http://www.highmoonoon.com)

ISBN 978-193360631-6

## Acknowledgments

Shima Yufuko (1941-2012), poet and editor of *Sei-en* (Blue flame) first introduced me to the work of Torii Shōzō, encouraging me to translate his poetry, for which I am grateful. Photographer, poet and critic Masafumi “Gabun” Suzuki (1948-2011) in many ways guided the tenor of this project. Thank you Ryu Makoto (Drew Stroud), who offered encouragement on an early draft. I am also indebted to Yarita Misako who noticed that my earliest translations published in *Sei-en* were improvable. This observation instigated me to provide better translations.

I translated the poems offered here into English myself first, except those contained in *Fossil Sea*, by Yarita. Below are those who collaborated on improving the translations. A special thanks to you all. I gratefully acknowledge all of your work, though I am responsible for the accuracy of the final versions.

Uncollected Nos. 56-60: Goto Kentaro

Fire Device: Eric Selland

Black Metaphysics: John Solt

Alphabet Trap: Ry Beville, and Miura Reiichi

Fossil Sea: Ry Beville

Wind Semiotics: Minato Keiji

Instances of the poet's use of French and English words within the mostly Japanese language text are italicized, including titles. Japanese names appear surname first, except the dedications in the *Fossil Sea* poems under the titles and friends' order of preference, here in the acknowledgments, notes and references. The following bookstores helped in finding volumes and materials necessary to complete the project: Tamura shoten, Nakamura shoten and Shoshi hiyane.



Thanks to: Wayne Pounds, Michael Meter, and Jeffrey Johnson, who gave insightful comments on drafts of the Afterword. I also thank Hashimoto Sumiko, Mori Ichiro, Yamamoto Toshio, Onodera Akihiko, Aaron Comsia, Jeff Liss and Joe Zanghi for their assistance. Most importantly I acknowledge the support and warm enthusiasm of Torii Fusako, and I thank her for the use of copyright. Without the scholarship and friendship of John Solt, this project would not have been realized. I also appreciate his permission for his translation on p. 7.

Thanks to the following editors for publishing earlier versions of the poems: Larry Sawyer online at *Milk Magazine*; Michael Rothenberg and Jane Joritz Nakagawa at *Big Bridge*; the editors of *Moria* and *Free Verse*, Monti DiPietro at *Assemblylanguage*; and in print, Hillel Wright (*Jungle Crows*), William I. Elliot at *Poetry Kanto*, Sawako Nakayasu at *Five Factorial*, and the editors of *Vallum: Contemporary Poetry*.

Sasaki Kikyo, the publisher of early Torii volumes through his Presse Bibliomane, gave wonderful anecdotes of Torii, especially how he could write capable poetry spontaneously while incapacitated.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction by Shiraishi Kazuko

\*

Uncollected, *VOU* Nos. 56-60

Fire Device

Black Metaphysics

Uncollected, *VOU* Nos. 80-95

Desert of the Back

Alphabet Trap

Fossil Sea

Wind Semiotics

\*

Afterword



**Torii Shōzō of the VOU Club:  
His Poetry and Journey of Bookmaking Love**  
by Shiraishi Kazuko (1931—)

Kitasono Katue (1902-1978) shaped VOU Club with members of two generations: Nagayasu Shūichi (1909-1990); and Tamura Ryūichi (1923-1998) and Kihara Koichi (1922-1979). In the latter half of the 1950s, after the Wasteland Group departed, the earlier generation left VOU. Kitasono gathered new younger poets with brilliant sensitivity in the VOU School. They were under 25 years old, such as Suwa Yu (1929-1992).

While knowing of the name Torii Shōzō (1932-1994) through his works, I received the opportunity to see him with my own eyes, quite some time after Kitasono's passing.

We started meeting in 1983, I think it was, when he started publishing his limited edition poetry journal, *TRAP*. In the January 1983 issue here is what VOU people love: "In the wind / a long, slender ghost prisoner / crossing a town / with no face as de Chirico ... because of mercury panty wife's cute voice / the cellar young Dionysus / suffers from the rare Sabbath Day."

The cynical title "Festevil Day" and the last lines indeed symbolize a raw Torii Shōzō portrait, he continued to be a young Dionysus until he died. He simplified his life by throwing poetry into the cast through bookmaking; the most beautiful and silent books until that day.

For that reason, in this world from which he departed early, he left behind not only his exclamatory poems which contain ironical beauty, sensitivity, sharpness – and were written in broken meter – but also shining books. Those books made people feel tears of delight as the pleasures of a lavish cuisine.

The Kaijinsha books were supported by his wife and by Ohie Toshio (1949—) who is the peerless, greatest French style bookbinder in Japan. So I shared in the benefit of bookmaking; such as the pink, orange, blue and green of the mysterious book *Four Windows*, the sober gray, tinged with silver of *Sheep's Afternoon*, a specially made book. Those books allowed me to be seated on the throne of eternal tomes of the world.



People admired Torii Shōzō and felt his immeasurable *something*. He was virtually maniacal in his hot pursuit of fulfillment towards poetry and books, he took his position exceeding Mt. Everest; he conceived active large minded surrealistic thoughts.

To the people who thought this borderline heavy drinker was a crazy reprobate, he had occasion to experience awakening to depth and substance. Another profoundly dark depth he reached was with his book collection. More so than in a library, immediately when people viewed those materials, they understood he was courteous in preserving them, as if these books were princes or princesses.

A Chinese poet said that really wonderful poems are written when drunk. This expression doesn't apply only to Li Po (Rihaku); Torii Shōzō was aiming for pure expression. When did Torii Shōzō step on the path of being a great poet? There is the poetry book *Fire Device* which Kitasono Katue graced with his original illustrations. The still young Torii Shōzō, in 1955, was there. Yet he wasn't a sweet VOU lyricist puffing on a cigarette.

#### WINTER PORTRAIT

a tragedy closed alongside an infinitely running straight wall  
intense murderous white blood recurred sunlightless mid  
noon armless mannequin, inside a yellow image  
collapsed then at that time white sex deserts  
swiftly expanded dimly, there were wire wings  
mutating

What kind of life Torii Shōzō led, I do not know. In his poetry we have another VOU family member of the same generation related to unreality, yet more than a playful, rhetorical genius, one with a dark response to a deep place. This spirit combined with his severity was formidable, but as shown in the last poem quoted, "white sex deserts swiftly expanded dimly, there were wire wings mutating," he was composing beautiful *poésie*.

The youth of this style had eaten away at many months and years, at last in 1984 he released *Alphabet Trap*, with its title full of witticism.

This limited edition of 165 copies was an independent volume from the imprint of *TRAP* journal.

Once again, "Shooting Carnival," "Holy Crime," "Paradise;" these works published in *VOU* from 1967 to 1973 astonish. After all, he was naughty. You prankster! This is the Torii Shōzō I commend. Playful joking wit, irony, the very sharp amusing cruelty, and eros, which deep down in the soul sounds twisting squeals. Indeed, the humor, the human genius. Ah, the energy of the carnival; "Holy Crime's" serious crime; brilliance not lost; swiftly the poet of paradise.

When I read these poems, I thoroughly feel bitter frustration and become depressed. He and I would have played with poetic dragonflies. I don't drink as a drunken Dionysus, but we would have enjoyed our several seasons by throwing our poems at each other, playing ping pong, shooting squirt guns *bang bang*. Remorse is something that comes in retrospect. From *Alphabet Trap*:

#### HOLY CRIME

violating Delvaux's blond hair  
venturing to mumble *hot damn*  
the feel good Mr. E

the hair sprouting chair's  
long socks with talons  
being very dialectically erotic  
even the vampires being raised  
unfortunately faint

a green egg which  
Mrs. E's soft vessel is full of  
is destroyed by a hot brown bullet

the marble emperor  
in dark amniotic fluid, takes his hard penis  
and wrecks it



Back in 1992, in the poetry volume *Wind Semiotics*, Torii Shōzō would no longer play with Mrs. E and a “hair sprouting chair” (this is a wonderful expression by the way). Already, he had been facing it.

## ETERNAL RETURN

sleeping deeply  
O bright Sphinx  
open your eyes  
sleep is nothing but death  
the golden emperor perished long ago  
the palace's crumbled walls  
on pebble stones lizards crawl  
those  
are instant ephemeron  
the voiceless monologue of a soap opera  
is all it can be  
and  
the setting sun melts  
on an unknowing girl's  
thin fingertips  
winter's Sunday  
white wind holds its breath  
waits for nightfall  
deeper and deeper, still green mountains  
a slender boy  
running across the wilds  
of which  
is a recurrent stage set  
or  
content with vacuity  
one sheet of history?

To much surprise, Taneda Santōka (1882-1940) appears here with “Deeper and deeper, still green mountains.” Suddenly, he had come to Santōka's world. Death, at some place proceeding along the road, had been intuited. In such a way, I leave this article about Torii Shōzō half finished; I have the feeling of writing more and I wanted him to live longer without haste. These moods attack me alternately. These are my thoughts



looking through his beautiful volumes one by one; he, a drinker poet  
Dionysus dilettante, couldn't control the rampage of his own poetry and  
Dionysus which entered into his soul.

*Tr. Mignon, Yarita Misako & Shiraishi Kazuko*