

## Selections from Ryōkan's Chinese Poems

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傭賃ゆうにん

家在荒村裁壁立  
轉展傭作且過時  
憶得疇昔行脚日  
衝天志氣敢自持

家は荒村に在りて裁わすかに壁立し  
轉展傭作ようさくして且しばらく時を過ごす  
憶おもひ得たり疇昔ちゆうせきあんぎゃ行脚の日  
衝天の志氣あえ敢て自ら持せしを

#1

### *Hired Day-Laborer*

From this shack, its walls barely standing in a desolate village,  
I scurry here and there as a day-laborer for a while—  
Ah, recalling those old times of pilgrimage—  
How my spirits soared heavenward then, making myself journey  
on and on!

## 五合庵

仍 <small>しきり</small> 敲 <small>たた</small> 月下門	唯 <small>ただ</small> 有隣寺僧	竈裏 <small>そうり</small> 更無烟	釜中 <small>かま</small> 時 <small>とき</small> 有塵	壁上 <small>かべ</small> 偈 <small>げ</small> 若干	戶外 <small>かど</small> 竹一叢	實 <small>じつ</small> 如懸磬然	索々 <small>さくさく</small> 五合庵
仍 <small>しきり</small> に敲 <small>たた</small> く月下の門	唯 <small>ただ</small> 隣寺の僧有りて	竈裏 <small>そうり</small> 更 <small>さら</small> に烟 <small>けむり</small> 無し	釜中 <small>かま</small> 時 <small>とき</small> に塵 <small>ちり</small> 有り	壁上 <small>かべ</small> 偈 <small>げ</small> 若干	戶外 <small>かど</small> 竹一叢 <small>そう</small>	實 <small>じつ</small> に懸磬 <small>けんけい</small> のごとく然 <small>しか</small> り	索々 <small>さくさく</small> たり五合庵

## #2

*Gogō-an*

Wretched and desolate is my retreat, Gogō-an.  
 Yes, my hut is utterly bare.  
 Outside the door a bamboo grove,  
 And hanging on my walls some Chinese poems,  
 Dust on the unused rice pot  
 And not a wisp of smoke from the stove.  
 Only a priest from a nearby temple  
 Now and then, in the moonlight, taps at my gate.

生涯懶立身	騰々任天真	囊中三升米	爐邊一束薪	誰問迷悟跡	何知名利塵	夜雨艸庵裡	雙脚等閑伸
生涯身を立つるに懶 <small>ものう</small> く	騰々 <small>とうとう</small> 天真に任す	囊中 <small>のう</small> 三升の米	爐邊 <small>ろへん</small> 一束の薪 <small>まき</small>	誰か問はむ迷悟の跡	何ぞ知らむ名利の塵 <small>ちり</small>	夜雨 <small>そら</small> 艸庵の裡 <small>うち</small>	雙脚等閑に伸ぶ

#3

Too lazy am I to make my way in the world,  
 I bequeath all to the truth of Heaven.  
 In my pouch are three measures of rice,  
 And beside my hearth a bundle of firewood.  
 Why ask who has satori, who hasn't?  
 What in the world does this me know of the dust of fame or  
 gain?  
 On rainy nights in my grass hut  
 I sprawl with both my legs in perfect ease.

少年参禅不伝燈	少年より禅に参じて <small>ともしび</small> 燈を伝えず
今結草庵為宮守	いま草庵を結んで <small>みやもり</small> 宮守となり
半似社人半似僧	なかば社人に <small>に</small> 似なかば僧に似たり
少小学文懶為儒	少小より文を学びて <small>じゆ</small> 儒となるに <small>ものう</small> 懶く

## #4

As a boy I learned Chinese classics,  
 But too lazy was I to become a Confucian scholar;  
 In my early years I chased after Zen,  
 But gained no light worth handing down;  
 Now I've secluded myself in this grass hermitage,  
 And I act as if I've become a shrine guardian,  
 Something like a half-Shinto man, a half-monk.

寄之水潺湲	感恩終有淚	消息無人伝	山海隔中州	悠々三十年	一自從散席	朝参常先徒	入室非敢後	踏碓思老盧	運柴懷龐公	恒歎吾道孤	憶在円通時
これを寄す水の潺湲たるに	恩に感じついに涙あり	消息人の伝うるなし	山海中州を隔て	悠々たり三十年	ひとたび席を散じてより	朝参つねに徒に先んず	入室あえて後るるにあらざ	碓を踏んで老盧を思う	柴を運んで龐公を懐い	恒にわが道の孤なるを歎ぜしことを	憶う円通にありし時

#5

When I recall my days at Entsūji Temple,  
 I always lament the lonely way I pursued on the path to Buddha.  
 Carrying piles of brush, I think of the Chinese monk Hō-kō,  
 And treading the stones for grinding, I recall the famous Zen  
 Master Old Ro.  
 I dared not enter late when tested by my Zen teacher,  
 And I was always first for morning meditation.  
 Since I left my place at the temple,  
 Thirty long long years have passed.  
 Mountains and seas separate Bichū and Echigo,  
 And there is no one to bring me any news.  
 Feeling the obligations I bear, I find my tears fall without end.  
 Let them flow on and on toward the murmuring streams.

春夜々將央	相對共無語	餘香入此堂	閒庭百花發
春夜夜將 <small>まさ</small> に央 <small>なかば</small> ならむとす	相對して共に <small>ことば</small> 語無く	余香 <small>こ</small> 此の堂に入る	閒庭百花 <small>ひら</small> 發 <small>き</small>

## #6

In this quiet garden many flowers are blooming.  
 How fragrant the air drifting into our matted room.  
 You and I remain silent as we face one another,  
 And by and by the spring darkness deepens, and soon it will be  
 midnight.

拾句自成詩	我性多逸興	地辟趣自奇	意閑白日永	菜花遶東籬	蝴蝶舞南園	徐々叩柴扉	行々摘野草	隔岸桃李飛	臨水楊柳暗	飄々著衲衣	四月朱明節
句を拾うて自づから詩を成す	我が性逸興を多とすれば	地辟 <small>へき</small> にして趣 <small>おの</small> 自づから奇なり	意閑にして白日永く	菜花 <small>とうり</small> 東籬 <small>めぐ</small> を遶る	蝴蝶 <small>こちよう</small> 南園に舞ひ	徐々に柴扉 <small>さいひ</small> を叩 <small>たた</small> く	行く行く野草を摘み	岸を隔 <small>と</small> てて桃李 <small>とうり</small> 飛ぶ	水に臨 <small>よ</small> んで楊柳 <small>ゆうりゆう</small> 暗く	飄々として衲衣 <small>さき</small> を著る	四月朱明の節

#7

In this fourth month, this season of early summer,  
 With a light heart I don my black robe,  
 Willows dark green at the water's edge,  
 Peach and plum blossoms falling along the opposite bank.  
 I walk along gathering slender blades of wild grass,  
 And quiet is my tap at the brushwood gate of the house I am  
 visiting.  
 Butterflies flutter in gardens to the south,  
 And toward the east rape flowers sprawl along a bamboo fence.  
 Long and slow-moving is this day of perfect ease, perfect calm.  
 It's just this kind of remote spot that attracts me.  
 Yes, the beauty of the place suits my eye for the picturesque.  
 I gather a few phrases and lo! they turn into poems.

孰謂我詩々	我詩是非詩	知我詩非詩	始可与言詩
たれか謂うわが詩を詩と	わが詩はこれ詩にあらず	わが詩の詩にあらざるを知 <sup>し</sup> つて	始 <sup>はじ</sup> めてともに詩を言うべし

#8

Who is it calls my poems poems?  
 The poems I write are not poems.  
 Once you know my poems are not poems,  
 Then, for the first time, we can talk about poems.



頭髮蓬々耳卓朔	納衣半破若雲烟	日暮城(頭)歸來道	兒童相擁西又東
頭髮蓬々耳卓朔	納衣は半ば破れて雲烟の若し	日暮城(頭)歸來の道	兒童相擁す西又東

#9

My hair unkempt, my ears sticking out,  
 My threadbare robe half-torn, thin like fog through clouds,  
 Homeward bound at dusk along my path,  
 I find the town children, from west, from east, circling round  
 me!

## 毬子

袖裏毬子直千金

謂(言)好手無等匹

可中意旨若相問

一二三四五六七

袖裏しゅうりの毬子きゅうし直千金あたひ謂おもふ言われは好手にして等匹無しと可中の意旨おも若し相問はば

一二三四五六七

#10

*Temari*

As valuable as a thousand gold coins, this *temari* ball in my kimono sleeve.

I guess I'm so good at it no one can bounce it better.

Should anyone ask me the meaning of this game,

I'd have to say it's all in the one, two, three, four, five, six, seven!

袖裏毬子打又打  
 自誇好手無倫匹  
 此中意旨如相問  
 一二三四五六七

袖裏の毬子打ち又打ち  
 自ら誇る好手倫匹無しと  
 この中の意旨如し相問はば  
 一二三四五六七

#11

This *temari* ball I take from my kimono sleeve and bounce again  
 and again,  
 And I brag that no one's as good at it as I am.  
 Should someone ask me what's the meaning in it,  
 Oh, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven!

道是誰氏兒	行人皆佇立	褰裳步遲々	回首若有待	疎雨濕燕支	婦來日已夕	春山折花歸	柳娘二八歳
道 <small>い</small> うこれたが氏 <small>し</small> の兒 <small>じ</small> ぞと	行人 <small>ちよりゆう</small> みな佇立し	裳 <small>もすそ</small> を褰 <small>かか</small> げて歩遅々たり	首 <small>こらべ</small> を回 <small>めぐ</small> らして待つあるごとく	疎雨 <small>そらえんし</small> 燕支 <small>うるお</small> を濕す	婦 <small>め</small> り来 <small>き</small> つて日 <small>ひ</small> すでに夕 <small>く</small> れ	春山花を折 <small>ひ</small> つて歸 <small>かへ</small> る	柳娘 <small>りゆうじやう</small> 二八 <small>にはち</small> の歳 <small>とし</small>

## #12

A slender and beautiful girl, sixteen years old,  
Returning with plucked flowers from her spring excursion to  
the hills.

On her way back the day has already turned to dusk.  
Her face, powdered and rouged, is moistened by a gentle rain.  
She looks back as if she has been waiting for someone,  
And slowly as she goes ahead, she raises her kimono hem.  
All who pass her stop, stand still,  
And they wonder, "Whose daughter is she?"

可 怜 好 丈 夫	閒 居 好 題 詩	古 風 擬 漢 魏	近 体 唐 作 師	斐 然 其 為 章	加 之 意 新 奇	不 写 心 中 物	雖 多 復 何 為
あ わ れ 憐 む べ し 好 丈 夫	か ん き よ 閒 居 し て よ く 詩 を 題 す	か ん き 古 風 は 漢 魏 に な ぞ ら い	と う 近 体 は 唐 を 師 と な す	ひ ぜん 斐 然 と し て そ れ 章 を な し	し ん き こ れ に 加 う る に 新 奇 を も つ て す	心 中 の 物 を 写 さ ず ん ば	多 し と い え ど も ま た な に を か な さ ん

#13

What a nice fellow he is!  
 He idles away his days, but he does compose good Chinese  
 poems.  
 For old-style ones, he imitates poets in the Han and Wei dynasties,  
 And for modern poems, he models himself after the poets of  
 Tang.  
 Well, his phrases are elegant, colorful,  
 And besides, they are sometimes original.  
 But if he does not show his real heart,  
 His poems will be worthless no matter how many he writes.

## 宿玉川驛

凄々風雨屬秋闌

遊子關心行路難

永夜幾驚枕上夢

江聲錯作雨聲看

## 玉川驛に宿す

凄々たる風雨秋闌に属す

遊子心にかにか関る行路の難

永夜幾たびか驚く枕上の夢

江声あやま錯なつて雨声の看なを作す

#14

*Overnight Lodging at Tamagawa Station*

Desolate and lonely are this wind and rain, autumn about to  
end.

I travel, and so I worry about the journey's hardships.

During the long night how often am I startled from my dreams.

Sounds of a nearby stream distracted me, not, as I thought,  
the falling rain.

白扇賛

団扇不画意高哉  
 纔著丹青落二来  
 無一物時全体現  
 有華有月有楼台

白扇の賛

団扇画かざる意高きかな  
 わずかに丹青を著くれば二に落ち来る  
 無一物の時全体現る  
 華あり月あり楼台あり

#15

*In Praise of a White Folding-Fan*

Meaning lies within the whiteness of a folding-fan where nothing is written.

Tints of red and green may be brushed on, but these have no significance.

All will be revealed where nothing is drawn.

Behold! a flower, a moon, a stately mansion!

題蛾眉山下橋杭	蛾眉山下の橋杭に題す
不知落成何年代	しらず落成の年代ぞ
書法適美且清新	書法適美にして且つ清新
分明我眉山下橋	分明なり我眉山下の橋
流寄日本宮川濱	流れ寄る日本宮川の浜

## #16

*A Pillar From the Bridge Below Mt.Gabi*

This pillar, whose date of construction I do not know...  
 And still the calligraphy on it is beautiful, is pure.  
 From the writing it is clear that the pillar came from the bridge  
 below Mt.Gabi,  
 And it drifted all the way to Japan, to the shore at Miyakawa.



錯為箇痴 <small>あやま</small> 獣 <small>ちがい</small>	自一出保社	迷花言不歸	看月終夜嘯	家實委蒿菜	食裁乞路邊	々々是生涯	襤褸又襤褸
錯 <small>あやま</small> つて箇 <small>こ</small> の痴 <small>ちがい</small> と為る	一たび保社を出でてより	花に迷うて言 <small>こと</small> に帰らず	月を看て終夜嘯 <small>うそぶ</small> き	家は実 <small>こころい</small> に蒿菜 <small>ゆた</small> に委ぬ	食 <small>わすか</small> は裁 <small>わすか</small> に路邊に乞ひ	襤褸是生涯	襤褸 <small>らんる</small> 又襤褸

#17

In these tattered clothes, these rags,  
 These rags and tatters—this is my life.  
 As for my food, I beg a pittance by the side of a road.  
 As for my house, it's overrun with mugwort.  
 Gazing at the autumn moon, I mumble poems all night.  
 Enchanted by spring flowers, I lose my way and forget to come  
 home.  
 Ever since I left the temple that sustained me,  
 This is the kind of battered great fool I've become.

回首五十有余年  
 人間是非一夢中  
 山房五月黄梅雨  
 半夜蕭々灑虛窗

首を回こらへらせば五十有余年  
 人間の是非は一夢の中うち  
 山房の五月おうばい黄梅の雨  
 半夜しやうしやう蕭々として虚窗きよそうに灑そそぐ

#18

I look back over these fifty years and more,  
 And ephemeral as dreams are the right and wrong of human  
 beings.  
 Outside my mountain hut during this rainy season of early  
 summer,  
 Beyond my lonely window, quiet and steady are the falling  
 rains toward midnight.

閃電光裏六十年  
世上榮枯雲往還  
巖根欲穿深夜雨  
燈火明滅古窓前

閃<sup>せんでん</sup>電光裏六十年  
世上の榮枯は雲の往還  
巖根<sup>うが</sup>穿<sup>うが</sup>たむと欲<sup>うが</sup>す深夜の雨  
燈火明滅す古窓の前

#19

Like a streak of lightning these sixty years have passed,  
And the world's glory and the world's decay are like clouds that  
come and go.

Far into the night the rains are tearing at the foot of the cliff.  
By the old window the wick of my oil lamp flickers.

## 草庵雪夜作

回首七十有餘年  
人間是非飽看破  
往來跡幽深夜雪  
一炷線香古匆下

首を回せば七十有余年  
人間の是非看破するに飽く  
往來の跡幽かなり深夜の雪  
一炷の線香古匆の下

#20

*Composed at my Grass Hut on a Snowy Night*

I look back over my more than seventy years,  
And I am tired of ascertaining what's right and wrong for  
human beings.

Tonight's deep snow has left the paths deserted,  
And I watch an incense stick burning down.

乞食

十字街頭乞食了  
 八幡宮辺片徘徊  
 兒童相見共相語  
 去年癡僧今又来

乞食

十字街頭乞食しおわり  
 八幡宮辺まさに徘徊す  
 兒童相見てともに相語るらく  
 去年の癡僧いままた来たと

#21

*Begging*

My begging over at the town crossroads,  
 I loiter around Hachiman Shrine.

The children see me and call to one another:

“That crazy monk of last year—he’s here now! he’s come back  
 again!”

## 避雨

今日乞食逢驟雨

暫時廻避古祠中

可笑一囊與一鉢

生涯蕭灑破家風

今日食を乞うて驟雨しゅううに逢ひ暫時廻避こしす古祠こしの中可笑いぢのうなり一囊いぢのうと一鉢とを生涯しやうさい蕭灑破家の風

#22

*Rain Shelter*

Out begging for food today, I was caught in a sudden downpour,  
 And I took shelter for a while inside an old shrine.  
 You may laugh at me with my hanging bag and my begging  
 bowl,  
 But honest poverty's my life, all worldly cares left behind.

冬夜長

一思少年時

ひとたび思おもう少年の時

讀書在空堂

書あを読んで空堂あに在り

燈火数添油

燈火しばしば油そを添え

未厭冬夜長

いまだ厭いとわざりき冬夜の長きを

#23

*Long Winter Night*

I think back to my younger days  
When reading books alone in the empty hall  
And again and again refilling the lamp with oil,  
I never once lamented how long the winter nights were.

静聽春禽聲	時息長松陰	翠岑路不平	擔薪下翠岑
静かに聴く春禽 <small>しゅんぎん</small> の聲	時に息 <small>いこ</small> ふ長松 <small>ながまつ</small> の陰 <small>かげ</small>	翠岑 <small>みち</small> 路平 <small>みち</small> らかならず	薪 <small>すいしん</small> を担 <small>か</small> うて翠岑 <small>すいしん</small> を下 <small>くだ</small> る

## #24

Down these green peaks with my bundle of firewood,  
 Green peaks whose narrow paths are anything but smooth,  
 I rest every now and then under a towering pine  
 And listen to the quiet calls of spring birds.



空盂二首

空盂二首

青天寒雁鳴

青天に寒雁鳴なき

空山木葉飛

空山に木葉飛ぶ

日暮烟邨路

日暮にちぼ烟えん邨そんの路

独掲空盂帰

独ひとりり空盂くわうを掲かかげて帰る

#25

*Two Poems on an Empty Bowl*

Calls of winter geese flying across a blue sky  
And falling leaves circling in the wind on this bare mountain,  
I head for home along this village road in the evening haze,  
My empty begging bowl carried in my hand.

癡頑何日休  
 孤貧是生涯  
 日暮荒村路  
 復掲空盃歸

癡頑ちがんいずれの日にか休やまん  
 孤貧こひんこれ生涯  
 日暮にちぼ荒村の路  
 また空盃くわうを掲かかげて帰る

## #26

When will I cease my foolish and stubborn ways?  
 Loneliness and poverty—these are my life.  
 Twilight on the narrow pathway of a desolate village  
 As once again I return home with an empty bowl.

Sources for our translations of Ryōkan's Chinese poems:

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