

Throw Away Your Books, Let's Go Into The Streets

(Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô)

Staff

Production Jinriku hikôkisha, Art Theatre Guild of Japan
Producer Terayama Shûji, Kujô Eiko
Director Terayama Shûji
Screenplay Terayama Shûji
Photography Sukita Masayoshi, Sengen Seizô
Editing Uraoka Keiichi
Sound Ôhashi Tetsuya
Light Mizumura Tomio
Music Shimoda Itsurô, J. A. Seazer, Yanagida Hiroyoshi
Art director Hayashi Seiichi, Enomoto Ryôichi

Cast

Sasaki Hideaki, Hiraizumi Sei, Saitô Masaharu, Maruyama Akihiro, Niitaka Keiko, Kobayashi Yukiko, Tanaka Fudeko, Suzuki Izumi, Asakawa Maki, Kawamura Takashi, Kunikawachi, Wakaba Shigeru, Apollo Tarô, Ran Yôko, Shôwa Seigo, Okami Jôji, Tenjô Sajiki, Tôkyô Kid Brothers

Release date: April 24, 1971

138 min.; color; 1:1.33; 35mm

Legend has it that Terayama and the members of his theatre troupe flew to Europe in the summer of 1971 on one-way tickets. They performed *Jashumon* (Heresy) at the Festival de Nancy to great acclaim in April and were there recruited to Holland by Ritsaert ten Cate to perform at his Micky Theater in June. Ten Cate made arrangements for them to enter another theatre festival in Belgrade where they won the top prize in September. By then they were out of cash, but Terayama's friend Hiroko Govaers in Paris helped him enter his 35mm *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô* (Throw Away Your Books, Let's Go into the Streets), which he had brought from Japan, into the San Remo film festival in October. He won the Grand Prix and received the award in cash, handed to him in a huge bundle wrapped in newspaper. It was with that lira that he was able to buy tickets back to Tôkyô in the fall to cap off the adventure.

Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô was the first feature film both written and directed by Terayama Shûji and would be one of three co-productions between his Jinriki Hikoki-sha and the Art Theatre Guild. Terayama had been writing scenarios since 1960, including those for four of Shinoda Masahiro's earliest films. He also dabbled in short films since 1960, when he contributed *Catology* to a Modern Jazz Film project which included works by the novelist Ishihara Shintarô, poet Tanikawa Shuntarô, and composer Takemitsu Tôru. Another of his projects from the same year was a radio drama called *Otona-gari* (Adult-hunting) which presented itself, in H.G. Wellsian fashion, as a news announcement of a revolution by elementary school students. The drama aired briefly in Kyûshû but was cancelled after local groups protested its content, which Terayama claimed was a parody of the student movement against the renewal of the Security Treaty in 1960—Terayama himself was interrogated by police regarding potential revolutionary agitation. That radio drama was reworked into a short film called *Tomato kechappu kôtei* (Emperor Tomato Ketchup, 1971) which forms an interesting pair with both the former radio version and *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô*. Ten years after the first wave of protests came another between 1968–70, again the students mobilized against the renewal of the Treaty, as well as the Vietnam War, corporate dominance of EXPO 70 in Ôsaka,

embezzlement at the universities, and the System in general. *Tomato kechappu kôtei*, then, might be read as a parody either of the revolutionism among the students or the of public fear that they would be capable of pulling it off. In this light, *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô* stands as a proposition for an alternative countercultural life-style, a type of resistance that did not battle with the riot police or barricade shut the universities.

Like most of Terayama's projects, this film is one manifestation or section of a work that spanned several different media. *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô* was first a play, but only tangentially connected to the Tenjô Sajiki troupe that Terayama and others had formed in 1967. The play-version was an experiment with stage verité, traveling around Japan recruiting teenage poets from the area to read their work onstage. It had no script. *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô* was also the title of multi-media book written by Terayama with art and layout by the artist Yokoo Tadanori, and was published just ten days before the release of the film. The film, then, is best understood as a mixture of these two former projects, several narrative elements (such as soccer) and the collage-like feel are drawn from the book version, but the Kitamura Eimei side is truly Sasaki Eimei's story, one he had told on the stage and lived in real life. Much of the script for the film itself was rewritten by Eimei the day before shooting began. The film appears extremely fragmentary and collage-like on first impression, but it may be more effective to see it as a chronologically linear treatment of its protagonist's experience. Terayama had been interested in neorealism since at least 1954, and if we choose to interpret the film as a mixture of first-person and third-person narration, but always focused on Eimei, a few things begin to come together. For example, we can look closely at the shift in Eimei's personality from a meek but curious introvert at the beginning into an extroverted, interactive, and, in the end, a ragingly angry character. That shift occurs directly following his second trip to a brothel, but this time it was a transvestite (played by Miwa Akihirô, then Maruyama Akihiro) who he visited, and where he stayed by his own will. Traced back through the fragments, then, the visualizations of personal ads, which were commonly found in the back of popular weekly magazines at the time, may have been his introduction to this other world of queer sex. His miserable trip to the soccer team's patron prostitute likely solidified the direction of his libido and his attraction to the soccer team captain is obvious throughout. The point is simply this: the narrative is fragmented, but it is still there, and it has likely been left, somewhat deceptively, in chronological order.

Finally, the opening and closing scenes in which Eimei directly addresses the audience may be the film's most important contribution to experimental cinema. The opening, with Eimei addressing the audience directly, mocking their passiveness and toying with the illusion that there are real actors behind the screen in a world with more freedom (like the right to smoke), is likely a play on the semi-transparency of a typical cinematic screen. That semi-transparency allows one to watch a film from the opposite side of the screen without a noticeable loss in image quality—something Terayama was particularly aware of because he had lived for a time directly behind the screen in his uncle's cinema in Aomori during high school. If the opening adds a bit of reality-effect with its direct address to the audience, the ending unwinds the illusion of cinema. Eimei's comment on the weakness of film in the face of daylight, whether it be Ôshima Nagisa's or Antonioni's, is partially a jab at efforts to make a political tool of film, but also a very real comment on the dependence of the cinematic medium on the institutions in which it is screened. Films don't screen well in the streets during the daytime, which is where Terayama is suggesting culture, in its full serendipitous and dialogic form, is and should continue to occur. *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyô* is, in the end, a film not just against books but also against film itself.

Steve Ridgely