

The Co-Decadence Sphere

By Theodore Dalrymple

It is a commonplace that the West is in decline, and that nothing can now save its bacon. It is addicted to consuming more than it produces, a situation that can continue only for so long. As Hemingway said, you go bankrupt first slowly, then quickly and suddenly. But for the West to become self-reliant in the matter of consumption would mean adjustments so painful that no politician would dare to make them. As the former prime minister of Luxembourg once said, we (meaning all politicians) all know what to do, it's just that we don't know how to get elected afterward.

Therein lies the Achilles' heel of representative democracy: politicians who get elected by offering immediate benefits at the cost of future unviability. The fundamental philosophical principle of politicians of all stripes in modern democracies is *Après nous, le déluge*.



TOKYO – JULY 19: Pedestrians at Shibuya Crossing July 19, 2011 in Tokyo, JP. The crossing is one of the world's most well known examples of a scramble crosswalk.

But I think that I have found the means by which the West may yet save itself. The idea came to me when I was browsing—online, of course—Japan's English-language newspaper *The Japan Times*. I found there an article about a phenomenon of whose very existence I was until then completely unaware, namely Japanese rap music.

I was aware of the existence in France of this criminogenic genre of what is loosely called music, though I cannot understand its words even when translated into what is loosely called English. The young saint whose shooting death at point-blank range by the police while he was driving dangerously his bright yellow stolen car and who had repeatedly refused to stop when ordered to do so, provoking the most recent cycle of riots in France (which ceased only when the drug dealers ordered the rioters back to barracks because they, the drug

dealers, were losing income while the riots lasted), had himself had a small part in a gangsterish rap video whose lyrics were not very lyrical. Suffice it to say that the video was not exactly an encouragement, incitement, or paean of praise to a quiet, decent life—*that* much of its lyrics, at least, I understood, besides which the gestures spoke for themselves. It would, perhaps, be going too far to say that, but for rap music, the young man would have studied algebra and the finer points of the French subjunctive, but it is not implausible to suggest that rap music would not have inhibited his tendencies to crime.

But to return to Japanese rap music. The article was about a rising star of this phenomenon, a young man by the name of Jumadiba, of whom, naturally, I had never heard. I looked up some of the lyrics of his songs, which were in Japanese, so I could not read them. However, a few words appeared in English, which presumably had no Japanese equivalent; or perhaps the use of a few words of English confers prestige among young Japanese.

Perhaps readers will not be very surprised by the tenor of the English words in question: "Stolen, stolen, stolen, stolen, stolen," for example, or "Spit," "Get more," "Mixed up, mixed up," "Fuckin' coolish," "Bad," "Bitch," "Ghetto." (I note, by the way, that the word "fuckin'" does not cause red underlining by my computer's automatic and eagle-eyed spell-checker, so I suppose it must now be considered a *bona fide* word. It is a strange experience to extend one's vocabulary by reading the lyrics of a Japanese rap "song," using the word "song" in the same loose way that one might describe a crow's cawing as its song.)

I watched a clip of Jumadiba performing. His audience seemed to me to be desperate to abandon their individuality as human beings in favor of a kind of pagan unison. I also had the impression of a fascist rally of degeneracy. The audience was committing the mental equivalent of hara-kiri. Goodness knows

what havoc a real demagogue might cause.

I have noticed before that East Asians such as South Koreans and Japanese are very good at decadence, and the Chinese too. Watching Korean television (the southern variety) in a Korean restaurant in Southsea—the town where Conan Doyle practiced medicine for a time—some years ago, the presence of the television being inescapable except by leaving the restaurant, I was astonished by the slickness and efficiency of the vulgar kitschiness and appeal to the lowest common denominator of what was shown. It was far slicker, more professional, than any Western equivalent. The difference between it and its Western equivalent was like the difference between a North Korean and Romanian communist rally under Ceausescu. It was, in its way, superb.

The idea came to me, watching the Japanese rap and recalling the Korean taste, and even vocation, for the tasteless, that therein might lie the salvation of the West. I have long given up hope of improvement in us: Our salvation, if there is to be one, lies in the deterioration of *them*, the Asians.

We should not be promoting ourselves by reference to the glories of our civilization, or to the intellectual and moral superiority of our conception of human rights, the rule of law, individual freedom, religious tolerance, etc. Rather, we should be promoting rap music for all we are worth (not for all *it* is worth, of course). With luck, this will sap the intelligence of the population, reduce their IQ by twenty points, turn them lazy, nasty, and criminal, and render them utterly disinclined to personal effort. In their nihilism will be our salvation.

The Japanese tried to seduce Asian countries before the war by means of what they called a Co-Prosperity Sphere. What we should be offering, or at least promoting, is a Co-Decadence Sphere. By this means, given humanity's apparent attraction to the vulgar and the meretricious, we may hope that they, the

Asians, will come to equal us in decline. Our relative position in the world would thus be preserved, albeit at the cost of a great deal of ugliness and the universal spread of militant stupidity.

I have seen the future, as Lincoln Steffens said on his return from Russia, and it is degradation.

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