Translations from the Japanese of
Hagiwara Sakutaro

GRAEME WILSON

Face
About the time when dozy buds
Begin their travail on the cherry-trees,
A vague white face floats up outside the window
To peer in, blindly, at realities.

Somewhere, somewhere I have seen that face.

Behind the shadow of some ancient, bleak
Remembrance I have met it. I have seen it
Spawned in the harbour,
Somewhere,
A white leak
Of worry ten feet down. It has the smell,
That gloomy smell, of violets in decay.

Look, from the glitter of the window-pane’s
Bright outer glass the white face fumes away
To vanish in the distance like a rainbow
That night’s pure blacknesses may be pure black.

Ah, as I drift through life’s ill-lighted corner,
I’ve learnt one grief that need not now come back.

Chairs
Persons sleeping under chairs,
Are they not the sons and heirs
Of men who built enormous houses,
Mega-chairmen, millionaires?
Dinner at the Empty House

Under the yellow lamp, we suppered: me
And the family.

No fish, no meat, no vegetables; just
Rice dry as dust.

The empty house was full, as sorrow is,
Of absences.

This happened on the evening of the day
Of your going away.

Quiet Night

A photograph, blue platinum,
Hangs in the window facing
A street as strange as whist.

Feet to that blueness pacing
Outwalk the world of feet.

Above the staring window
A tower-top appears
Like a thin glass wrist,
A woman's wrist of platinum.

And stars are shining; stars
Hang shining in the street.

The Ninth Small Poem

How slightly
The small fry in the shallows stir,
How lightly
Snow settles on the fir,
How slight and light a flower
The first frost is:
As tenuous as our
Consentiences.
Toad

In the smithy of rain
The bellows toad
Swells that insane
White dream of you
Which in my dream
Both grew and glowed
And, glowing, grew.

In the forge of the rain
The soul sucks in,
Again and again,
This world and those
That are other than this.

And time wears thin
As that growing grows.

Seed in the Palm

I pile upon my palm
Earth, and I plant therein
Seed; and from a water-rose
As white as porcelain
I pour out water on that earth
In one umbrella’d thin
Down-blossoming of moisture,
A domed delicious spray . . .

And feel, as earth-cold penetrates
My palm, that, far away,
I’m pushing open windows
That widen on to May.

I stretch my hand towards a sun
That hums like a spring hive,
My skin grows warm with fragrance,
The whole world seems to wive
As, on my palm, that seed becomes
Breath-takingly alive.
Toy Box: Morning

The hunter dressed in blue
Shoulders a rod-like gun:
    One, two, one,
    Two, one, two.

At the heels of that braggart man,
Completely shrivelled up,
A wooden black-and-tan
Twitches the biscuit tip
Of its uncomplaining queue:
    One, two, one,
    Two, one, two.

Near Mount Futago

All feelings in me of remorse
Had long gone sour. What reason then
To chew this dandelion stalk,
To suck its bitter milk, the coarse
Bile of a natural bitterness?

Through country paths of loneliness
I trudged like those demented men
Who walk because they have to walk
Till sheer exhaustion saps the will.

At last, exhausted and resigned,
I slumped down on some meadow-hill,
Some low green hump whose wands of hay,
Wind-conjured, sank to raise a view
More marvellous than Xanadu.

Yet, blind with self-awareness, I
Could find no trove in that trouvaille.

Then, in the distance, suddenly,
A train ran past. Its smoky-blue
Knitting-needle purged my mind
And knit the world. Because, to be
The thing it was, it needed me.
HAGIWARA SAKUTARO

Moonlit Night
Flapping such large, such heavy wings,
How weak their hearts must be . . .

In this sadly gasoliered
Clear night of moonlight, see
That fume of creatures floating
White-witheringly past.

Look at their quiet direction,
Look deep into the vast
Sea-deepnesses of feeling
Such feeble things contain.

In the moonlit night, sand-bright
As a gasolier, what pain,
What pity eddies after
That slow moth-hurricane.

Mountain Top
Movingly strange,
In one wide swathe the view’s
Unfolding folds pale blues
Over that wifely mountain-range
Whose summit on my forehead shines.

Ah, pampas-grass and ague-weed,
Already whitened into seed,
Wither away. My hand declines
Under the weight of writing paper.

And colours that the autumn thinned
To pallid washes of blue-grey
Now from the mountain peel away
To leave, like some gigantic taper,
Its whiteness shining in the wind.
GRAEME WILSON

Scarecrow

Over the flesh so sadly shrunken
The whites and whitey-greens
Of broken glass, sharp-shining, stretch
A skin of smithereens.

White eyes behind bare spectacles
Watch how the faraway
Sad, sad mountains bear themselves;
And whitely through the day
With things like shells of shellfish
My guts hang glittering.

To me the hands are two.

Two hands that hang like string
Whose fray of finger-endings
Rakes from the misted air
Wee whitenesses of water
On faintly shining hair.

Hunched like an icicle,
What none else bears, I bear.

Until the eggs of the long-horned beetle
Hatch, my nerves will glow
White in this sad sunlight,
Trembling to and fro,
Pure white,
Glass-shivered,
Shining,
Stark-naked in the snow.