

*Translations from the Japanese of  
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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.

*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.

*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.