

## Translations of Seven Poems by Kenji Miyazawa

Michiko Ono

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### TO MY STUDENTS

How pleasant  
These four years have been to me!  
I have spent each day  
Singing bird-like in the classroom.  
I swear that through this work  
Never have I felt tired.

Boys, when the deep blue horizon swells and rises  
Do you want to sink into it?  
Indeed, you should be mountains  
Of every shape on the horizon.  
Do you not feel the transparent, clean wind  
Blowing from your Future Circle?  
It is a ray of light sent out,  
South wind determined.  
Do you want to suffer like a slave  
Forced and led by the times?  
Rather, boys, make a fresh new age of righteousness.  
The world perpetually changes because of us.  
Instead of using up all the natural power  
Such as the tide and wind  
You must endeavor to form nature anew.

Copernicuses of a new age,  
Release this galactic system  
From the too oppressive law of gravitation!  
Marxes of a new age,  
Change this world which moves on blind impulse

Into a gloriously beautiful construction!

Darwins of a new age,  
 Further, on board the Challenger, with quiet oriental watch,  
 Get outside of the galactic space!  
 Show still more clearly and deeply the correct history of the earth  
 And enlarged, revised biology to us!

Exalt to the sphere of dance  
 By cold and transparent analysis  
 Along with its deep blue shadow  
 All the agricultural work  
 Which is done as if on impulse.

New poets,  
 Receive the new and transparent energy  
 From the clouds, light, and storm  
 And suggest to people and the earth  
 The forms they should take.

#### **A RICE CROP EPISODE (WORK NO. 1082)**

You see the rice field over there—  
 It contains too much nitrogen.  
 Drain the water thoroughly,  
 Weed not a third time.

—Running intently through the footpath between the rice paddies,

Amid the green rice, the boy wipes away the sweat from his face—

Is there any phosphoric acid left?  
 Or have you used it up?  
 Then if this weather  
 Continues five more days,  
 Those drooping leaves,  
 Leaves drooping like this,  
 Pluck them up and get rid of them.

—Restlessly nodding, the boy wipes the sweat from his face.

When he attended my course last winter,

Though he had been working in the fields for one year,

He still had a bright smile and cheeks like red apples.

Now so tanned is he from sun and tears,  
He looks worn away from many sleepless nights—

Mind you,

At the end of this month

When that rice has grown taller than your chest,

Use the top button of your shirt as a ruler

And cut the tips of the leaves.

—Not only the sweat

Is he wiping, but tears as well—

I have seen the rice paddy,

The one you tried out with your own idea.

The one with Rikuu NO. 132,

You did that very well.

There is no unevenness of fertilizer at all,

And the rice is growing strong.

You spread the ammonium sulfate yourself, didn't you?

People may say various things,

But there is nothing to worry about with that paddy.

If you are to get eight straw bags of rice,

You can count on that.

Work steadily.

True future study is

Not to learn with a sense of duty

From a professional teacher, while playing tennis,

But, like you,

Finding a little time for study

During snowstorms and between working hours,

Crying,

To learn through the physical work.

That kind of study will soon sprout strong and steady,

And never will we know how tall it will grow.

That is the beginning of a new study.

Now farewell.

—From the clouds and wind

May this transparent power

Be transported

To the boy—

**PINE NEEDLES**

This is the clean branch of a pine tree  
I gathered some sleet from a while ago.  
Oh, as if jumping at the green needles,  
You place your flushed cheeks against them.  
How great is my surprise  
That you let the green plant needles  
Sting your cheeks so passionately  
As if devouring them!  
You wanted to go to the woods that much.  
While you were burning with fever,  
Writhing in sweat and pain,  
I was working pleasantly in the sun  
Or strolling in the woods, thinking of other people.  
— Ah, how pleasant! I feel refreshed.  
I feel as if I were in the woods—  
You loved the woods  
Like a bird, like a squirrel.  
How I envied you!  
Alas, my sister, who is leaving for a distant land within a day,  
Are you really going alone?  
Ask me to accompany you.  
Cry and tell me so.  
Your cheeks, nevertheless,  
How beautiful they look today!  
On your green mosquito tent  
I will place this fresh pine branch.  
Drops of water will soon fall on you.  
And see?  
You can smell the fresh  
Scent of *turpentine*.

## FROM "WINTER SKETCHES"

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The Waga River, with pale-yellow waves,  
 Flowing at the reddish brown bottom  
 Of a steep-sided valley  
 In the white snow in the mid-day spring.

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The Buddhist saints amid the sleet—  
 Their response like a hollow sound—  
 Just like an ephemeral love—  
 Retrieving the Way of Truth.

—Alas! I am dying  
 here today—

Alas! I am dying here today—  
 Having a fervent wish—  
 Involved only in outer matters—  
 Ten years have elapsed in vain.

Ah, my parents have grown old.  
 People come to visit me.  
 Not finding the Way of Truth,  
 Why was I ever born?

Burning with the sweat of repentance—  
 Coughing up blood of agony—  
 Wishing if only there were an altar  
 To dedicate this weakened body of mine.

If I were to be born again—  
 Remembering this wish of mine—  
 Praying that I may be strong enough  
 To repay people's kindness I have received.

**NOT BEATEN BY RAIN**

Not beaten by rain,  
Not beaten by wind,  
Not beaten by snow or the heat of summer,  
With a strong body,  
Without greed,  
Never getting angry,  
Always smiling quietly—  
Eating each day four *go* of unpolished rice  
And miso and a few vegetables,  
Without reckoning myself,  
Looking and listening well  
To all kinds of things,  
And Never forgetting them—  
Living in a small thatched hut  
In the rear of a pine woods—  
A child suffering from illness in the east,  
Going there to nurse him—  
A tired mother in the west,  
Going there to carry the bundles of rice plants for her—  
A dying person in the south,  
Going there to tell him not to be afraid—  
A quarrel or a lawsuit in the north,  
Going there to tell the people to stop such worthlessness—  
Shedding tears over dry weather,  
Walking upset on a cold summer,  
Called Blockhead by everybody,  
Not praised,  
Nor taken to be bothersome—  
Such a person  
I wish to be.

**SPRING AND ASURA (MENTAL SKETCH MODIFIED)**

In the gray steel color of my mental sketch modified  
 The vine of *akebi* is entangled in a cloud—  
 The wild rose bush and the marsh of humus—  
 All around—all around—the world of flattery—  
 (Fragments of amber fall  
 More often than the wind-instrumental music at noon)  
 The bitterness and blueness of anger  
 At the bottom of the bright atmosphere of April—  
 Spitting and grinding, I pace back and forth—  
 I am a man like Asura.  
 (The scenery is blurred with tears)  
 Through a rift of broken clouds  
 Over the clear and beautiful celestial sea  
 The holy crystal wind blows, coming and going.  
 ZYPRESSEN in a line in spring  
 Imbibe ether into blackness.  
 Through the rows of their dark legs  
 Even the edge of snow on the celestial mountain shines.  
 (The heat-waving air and polarized white light)  
 Words of truth have been lost.  
 Clouds are scattered and fly in the sky.  
 Alas, at the bottom of brilliant April—  
 Grinding and burning with anger, I pace back and forth—  
 I am a man like Asura.  
 (Chalcedony clouds are drifting—  
 Where is the spring bird singing? I wonder)  
 When the sun is shadowed in blue  
 Asura reverberates in the wood.  
 From a sinking and darkened bowl of heaven  
 Extends a group of calamite clouds—  
 The branches sad over their thick growth—  
 In the scenery—all double  
 From a treetop of the wood of a mourning god  
 A crow flies away fluttering.  
 (The atmosphere clearer than ever—  
 White cedars standing quietly against the sky)  
 Something comes through a golden meadow.  
 Soon it is a figure of a man  
 Wearing *kera*—the farmer who looks at me—

Can he really see me?  
 At the bottom seas of dazzling atmosphere  
 (Sadness is deep blue)  
 ZYPRESSEN quietly sway.  
 A bird cuts across the blue sky again.  
 (Words of the truth are not here—  
 Tears of Asura fall on soil)

When I breathe in the air afresh from the sky  
 I feel as if my lungs had shrunk dim white.  
 (This body be broken into pieces and scattering skyward)  
 The treetop of a ginkgo tree glistens—  
 ZYPRESSEN blacker than ever—  
 Sparks of clouds pouring on—

**PREFACE (from “SPRING AND ASURA”)**

The phenomenon, I,  
 Am a blue light of an electric lamp  
 Under supposed organic alternating current—  
 (A composed body of all transparent ghosts)  
 A blue light of an electric lamp  
 Under alternating current of causation  
 Along with the landscape and other people  
 Restlessly, restlessly blinking—  
 Yet continues to really exist.  
 (The light is kept—the electric lamp is lost)

From the direction perceived as the past  
 Of twenty-two months  
 With paper and mineral ink  
 (All that is blinking with me—  
 What we all sense at the same time)  
 This is a chain of light and shade  
 That has been retained so far—  
 The exact mental sketch modified.

About these things, people, galaxy, Asura, and sea urchins,  
 Eating dust of the universe, breathing in air or salty water,  
 Each may think out a new ontology  
 But, after all, all this is among the scenes of the mind.  
 Nevertheless, these scenes that are truly recorded  
 Are the recorded scenes as they are—  
 If they are nihil, nihil itself is real—  
 And this applies to all to a certain extent.

(As all is all in me—  
 All is all in each)

However, these words that must have been copied correctly  
 Within this enormously bright integration of time  
 Of the Cenozoic alluvial period  
 Have already changed their construction and quality swiftly  
 In the light and shade equal to one point—  
 (Or one billion years of Asura)  
 And it can happen as a tendency  
 That both the printer and I  
 Feel as if they have not changed at all.  
 Indeed, as we sense our own senses, the landscape, and persons,  
 And as we simply sense them mutually,  
 We merely sense  
 (Under the restriction of time and space of causation)  
 Records, history, or geological history  
 Together with their various data.  
 Perhaps, two thousand years from now  
 An appropriate, different geology may be applied,  
 Proportionate evidences from the past turning up one after another—  
 People may suppose that two thousand years back in history  
 Transparent peacocks filled the blue sky—  
 Rising scholars may excavate nice fossils  
 From around the sparkling, frozen nitrogen  
 In the uppermost part of the atmosphere—  
 Or, they may discover the huge footprints of a transparent mankind  
 On the stratification plane of the sandstone from the Cretaceous period—

All these propositions  
 Will be established within the fourth extension  
 As the nature of mental sketches and time itself.