

Introductory Notes to *Howling at the Moon*

An Essay for the Study of Hagiwara Sakutarō (1)

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SICKLY FACE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GROUND

At the bottom of the ground a face emerging,
a lonely invalid's face emerging.

In the dark at the bottom of the ground,
soft vernal grass - stalks beginning to flare,
rats' nest beginning to flare,
and entangled with the nest,
innumerable hairs beginning to tremble,
time the winter solstice,
from the lonely sickly ground,
roots of thin blue bamboo beginning to grow,
beginning to grow,
and that, looking truly pathetic,
looking blurred,
looking truly, truly, pathetic.

In the dark at the bottom of the ground,
a lonely invalid's face emerging.

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The title of the poem, "Sickly Face at the Bottom of the Ground" itself is imagistic. At the same time, it makes one think of the physical pain of a sickly body. Grass-stalks in the dark, rats' nests, innumerable hairs — all these things conjure up a vague ominous sense of apprehension, something that cannot be disentangled, that is confused. Here the impenetrable and enigmatic entity of disease is suggested. An eerie thing clings onto and becomes a parasite of the flesh. It entangles itself among the nerves. At this point, the sickly flesh is nothing but the "bottom of the

※ All translations in this article are from *Howling at the Moon: Poems of Hagiwara Sakutarō*, trans. Hiroaki Satō (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978).

ground" itself. The thin blue bamboo — this also symbolizes bodily suffering. The roots tremble like a mist, "looking blurred." It is this trembling that Hagiwara alludes to in his preface to *Howling at the Moon* when he talks of physical terror. What is most interesting is the "invalid's face" that emerges at the bottom of the ground. Is there substance behind this "face"? It seems that despite the repeated references to "a face emerging," "a lonely invalid's face emerging," the contour and outline of the "face" is rather ambiguous. It can be said that the fundamental sense of unrest that this poem creates rests wholly on the "face's" ambiguity.

BAMBOO

Something straight growing on the ground,
something sharp, blue, growing on the ground,
piercing the frozen winter,
in morning's empty path where its green leaves glisten,
shedding tears,
shedding the tears,
now repentance over, from above its shoulders,
blurred bamboo roots spreading,
something sharp, blue, growing on the ground.

BAMBOO

On the gleaming ground bamboo growing,
blue bamboo growing,
under the ground bamboo roots growing,
roots gradually tapering off,
from root tips cilia growing,
faintly blurred cilia growing,
faintly trembling.

On the hard ground bamboo growing,
from the ground bamboo sharply growing,
straight, blind, bamboo growing,
at each frozen joint gallantly,
under the blue sky bamboo growing,
bamboo, bamboo, bamboo growing.

The two "Bamboo" poems, the first of which had the postscript "a poem of pur-

gatory," were published in the February issue of *Poems* in 1915. This postscript was deleted when the poem was included in *Howling at the Moon*, but it must be noted that the same postscript was appended to the poems "Chrysanthemum Gone Rancid," "Flute," "Winter," "Hanged in Heaven," and "Eggs." We can see from this that the issue of "purgatory" was on Hagiwara's mind at that time. Moreover, even in several of the poems that do not explicitly have this postscript appear words that have to do with sin, repentance, and conscience. For instance, in the second "Bamboo" poem published in *Poems*, the following two lines were included: "If I pray, if I pray, growing towards the sky / from the sinner's shoulder bamboo growing." These two lines were deleted when Hagiwara included the poem in *Howling at the Moon*.

We can see that the group of poems entitled *The Poems of Purgatory* were written in one concentrated period of Hagiwara's life. There is evidence that Hagiwara in these days went to church and read the Bible more or less thoroughly. Around 1916, Hagiwara exchanged letters frequently with the poet Takahashi Motokichi who resided in Maebashi, and these letters discussed the issue of God and Faith.

However, we would be jumping to conclusions if we were to assume from the aforementioned facts Hagiwara Sakutarō was a Christian. Rather, we should say that Hagiwara in those days was in the process of forming his ideas through the contemplation of such things as God, Faith, and conscience.

A CASE OF MURDER

In a distant sky a pistol-shot.
 Another pistol-shot.
 An my detective in a crystalline costume
 sneaks in through his lover's window,
 the floor is of pellucid gems,
 from between her fingers,
 deathly pale blood flowing,
 on the sad woman's corpse,
 a cold katydid is chirping.

One morning early Frost Month,
 the detective in a crystalline costume
 turned the town crossroads.
 At the crossroads an autumn fountain.
 Already alone with himself the detective feels melancholy.

Look, along a distant lonely marble sidewalk,
the suspect is sliding off, desperately.

The poem "A Case of Murder" is indeed an elegant poem. The "murder case" carried out on a clear autumnal November day is as cool as a glass object. The poem creates a world without sound. It is a verbal costume of dandyism, a smart detective story created for pleasure. A katydid chirps, a fountain shoots its waters into the sky. This aesthetically structured scene of Hagiwara's "A Case of Murder" may be seen as a poetic drama projected against the autumnal screen.

SAD MOONLIT NIGHT

A damned thief dog
is howling at the moon above the rotting wharf.
A soul listens,
and in gloomy voices,
yellow daughters are singing in chorus,
singing in chorus,
on the wharf's dark stonework.

Always,
why am I like this,
dog,
pale unhappy dog?

A "damned thief dog" is "howling at the moon above the rotting wharf." Young girls are "singing in chorus" over there by the stonework. This dismal scene gives us the feeling of *déjà vu*, the feeling of having seen it somewhere before. The poem "Sad Moonlit Night" makes one feel such peculiar sensations. If we are to suppose for one moment that this is not so much Hagiwara Sakutarō's poem but a scene we have seen somewhere, we would realize that it is a scene we have seen projected on the screens of our minds. The reason why we should be so graphically attracted to this unrealistic, illusory picture is because we see projected in the work the melancholy shadows that lurk within our own hearts.

DEATH

From the bottom of the earth I stare at,
a ridiculous hand sticks out,

a leg sticks out,
 a neck protrudes,
 gentlemen,
 this damned thing, what on earth,
 what kind of goose is this?
 From the bottom of the earth I stare at,
 looking foolish,
 a hand sticks out,
 a leg sticks out,
 a neck protrudes.

What is Death? Generally, it signifies the separation from life, or the end of it. Does death in this sense exist in this piece? I think not. What we find here is a goose-like thing, a ridiculous-looking thing — something that is clumsy and awkward. What we can see here is that this goose-like and awkward thing is the expression of Hagiwara's idea of death, an image of a corpse under the ground. What does it mean if a corpse has the ability to thrust its hand, leg or neck out of the ground and speak through its dead mouth? Presumably, it means that the corpse is an afterimage of a living body — which means that the dead body has its prototype in Life itself. This poem at least serves as an unconscious metaphor which helps us towards determining what Life for Hagiwara is.

Although the piece can be interpreted in such terms, there is no gloominess to this poem. Rather, there is a sense that the poet intends to ridicule Death.

ALCOHOLIC'S DEATH

Supine, dead, an alcoholic,
 from somewhere near his snow-white belly,
 things that are unidentifiable flow,
 transparent blue serum,
 a distorted multilateral heart,
 rotten entrails,
rheumatic shrunken wrists,
 rubben organs,
 all over,
 the ground glitters,
 grasses are sharply pointed,
 everything gleams like *radium*.

In this lonely landscape, detached,
the murderer's dust-white face,
like grass, is flabbily smiling.

The poem, "Alcoholic's Death" does not imply the poet has seen the actual body of an alcoholic. The body illustrated here metaphorically unites itself with something that is abnormal, grotesque, distorted, and nauseating. Can all such abnormalities and distortions be totally negated in our daily lives? Superficially, maybe so. However, way down in our minds lurks a kind of fondness for the abnormal, a liking for the grotesque. We become aware of such likings in the flicker of moments during our daily lives. This poem can be said to make such shadows of out subconsciousness manifest through the grotesque phenomenon of an "alcoholic's death. Whose "dust-white face" is it that "flabbily" smiles "like grass"? Is it our face — that fondness for the abnormal that lurks within us — or the distorted doppelganger of the poet?

FROG'S DEATH

A frog was killed,
the children made a circle and raised their hands,
all, together,
raised their lovely,
bloody hands,
the moon appeared,
on the hill stands a man.
Under his hat, a face.

Hagiwara adds that this piece is a memory from his childhood and indeed, it has the power to conjure up the 'prototypical experience,' or the 'prototypical scene' that exists in the minds of us all. The last three lines are especially striking as far as the poem's sensory expressions are concerned. There is nothing unusual in the description of "the moon appeared, / on the hill stands a man." However, with the last line, "Under his hat, a face" the poem becomes a miracle of poetic expression as if by a magic trick of some kind. Nevertheless, is there anything unusual about a face beneath a hat? There isn't. If someone wears a hat, then naturally there is a face under the hat. Is this poetic expression then to be taken as an everyday expression? No. There is something peculiarly introverted in it. The attraction of Hagiwara's poetic expression lies in this peculiarity.

Perhaps nobody can see the face under this hat. All that can be seen is the dark

contours of a face that is hidden under the hat's shadow. Its expression is totally invisible. There is only an empty darkness where there should be a face. Could this be Hagiwara's other self? If so, then this doppelganger without a face must point to a most essential aspect of Hagiwara, as did the "Sickly Face at the Bottom of the Ground."

The thing that is stamped in the image of this witness without a face is actually a completely characteristic 'gaze' of Hagiwara's. He is constantly unable to stand apart from his 'self' but this is not because he believed in some 'ego' with an absolute value, like many other devotees of the modern age, but rather because he formidably grasped the absence of his self (or lack of it, perhaps) in his instinctive uneasiness. Therefore, with Hagiwara, the tenacity with which he searched for his self signified his wish to capture the self as unclear, and the more vivid the image, the stronger was the sense of uncertainty.

THE REASON THE PERSON INSIDE LOOKS LIKE A DEFORMED INVALID

I am standing in the shadow of a *lace* curtain,
that is the reason my face looks vague.
I am holding a telescope in my hands,
I am looking through it far into the distance,
I am looking at the woods,
where dogs and lambs made of nickel and children with bald
heads are walking,
those are the reasons my eyes look *somewhat* smoked over.
I ate too much of the plate of *cabbage* this morning,
and besides this windowglass is very shoddily made,
that is the reason my face looks so excessively distorted.
To tell you the truth,
I am healthy, perhaps too healthy,
and yet, why are you staring at me, there?
Why smiling so eerie a smile?
Oh, of course, as for the part of my body below the waist,
if you are saying that area isn't *clear*,
that's a somewhat foolish question,
of course, that is, close to this pale window wall,
I am standing inside the house.

The language and expressions in this poem are unique. On the whole, there is an

inexplicable, peculiar rusticity in the vocabulary of this poem. In such diction as, "of course, that is, close to this pale window wall," there is a trickiness that arises from the peculiar arrangement and combination of the language. By using language on a supra-logical level, the poem invites the reader into a kind of hallucinatory world. Therefore baby talk intrudes; or in such expressions as "dogs and lambs made of nickel and children with bald heads," Hagiwara must be alluding to the impression he receives as he watches them play under the outdoor daylight, but each expression is somehow ironically humorous, which in turn contributes to the sense of eeriness. Moreover, the double structure of this poem, the person inside the window and outside it being in actuality one and the same (the author), makes this poem all the more interesting.

However, deep within this piece there is, after all, a "deformed invalid." Even though the person within the window claims that "I am healthy, perhaps too healthy," the face "looks so excessively distorted" and the person who is looking at the face from outside the window is "smiling so eerie a smile." That the "part of the body below the waist" is not "clear" also shows that there is some hidden shadow there. The temptation to interpret this image in terms of sexuality is great, but its basic meaning is that Hagiwara fears he has lost his roots — half of his existence.

It is my belief that *Howling at the Moon* is fundamentally a world consisting of alter ego's, for whatever one looks at, what emerges is finally nothing but a likeness of one's self. What is being looked at is, in the final analysis, always one's own self. It goes without saying that even if one should look at the outside scenery through a telescope from inside a house, nothing would appear as a thing in itself. Or rather, the self that is supposedly looking at the outside world from within the house is, in reality, being looked at before it has a chance to be the one to be looking. This is why the subject that should be doing the looking needs to issue forth suddenly with such questions as, "and yet, why are you staring at me, there?" The subject is transformed into the object. Or rather, there is a paradox which consists of the subject being able to be the subject only so long as it is the object being looked at. Thus, the original situation in which one is looking out at the outside world from within the house is overturned and made into one that is being watched.

SPRING NIGHT

Things like littlenecks,
things like quahogs,
things like water-fleas,

these organisms, bodies buried in sand,
 out of nowhere,
 hands like silk threads innumerably grow,
 hands' slender hairs move as the waves do.
 A pity, on this lukewarm spring night,
 purling the brine flows,
 over the organisms water flows,
 even the tongues of clams, flickering, looking sad,
 as I look around at the distant beach,
 along the wet beach path,
 a row of invalids, bodies below their waists missing, is walking,
 walking unsteadily.
 Ah, over the hair of those human beings as well,
 passes the spring night haze, all over, deeply,
 rolling, rolling in,
 this white row of waves is ripples.

The lukewarm, sticky atmosphere of "Spring Night" invites the weary invalid to a hellish place. The illusion of "these organisms" such as littlenecks, quahogs, and water-fleas growing innumerable "hands like silk threads." A daydream where "a row of invalids, bodies below their waists missing, is walking" along the beach shore. These sensual expressions of morbid gloominess, these abnormal expressions gave a shocking novelty to the modern poetry of Japan in its poetic development of a fantastic world.

THE WORLD OF BACTERIA

Bacteria's legs,
 bacteria's mouths,
 bacteria's ears,
 bacteria's noses,

bacteria are swimming.

Some in a person's womb,
 some in a clam's intestines,
 some in an onion's spherical core,
 some in a landscape's center.

Bacteria are swimming.

Bacteria's hands grow right and left, crosswise,
the tips of their hands branch out like roots,
from there sharp nails grow,
capillaries and such spread *all over*

Bacteria are swimming.

Where bacteria live their lives,
as if through an invalid's skin,
a vermilion light shines thinly in,
and only that area is faintly visible,
looks truly, truly sorrow-unbearable.

Bacteria are swimming.

"The World of Bacteria" is an unknown world. Bacteria's legs, mouths, ears, and noses are poetical expressions of non-existent images. Moreover, we are made to feel as though we are in the midst of the bacteria ecology; we are made to feel that this diseased world is attached to the author's mind. To put it the other way around, it is like the world we keep hidden within ourselves.

DAYBREAK

During the long illness and pain,
spiders have covered his face with webs,
his body below the waist has faded like a shadow,
a bush has grown above his waist,
arms gone rotten,
body all over, truly messed up,
oh, today again the moon is out,
the daybreak moon is out,
and in the opaque light like a lantern
a deformed white dog is howling.
With eastern clouds near,
in the lonesome road's direction, howling, a dog, you see.

In his envoy to *Howling at the Moon*, Saisei Murō writes of how he felt when he

first read Hagiwara's "Daybreak" in the following way:

"He is walking, like a faint invalid who has been ill for a long time, in the moonlit night while a deformed dog is howling. Perhaps the time is the end of spring. When he goes out walking on a lukewarm night just as he feels he is beginning to recover from two long years of illness, he feels the world has changed entirely. Even while Eternity ignores the existence of his physical body, the sky and the earth will continue to exist. Along the road, a white dog howling in a dream-like mysterious way. Oh, the moon is out."

CATS

Coal-black cats, two of them,
on the roof of a sensual night,
from the tips of their taut, erect tails,
a thread-like *crescent* blurs.
"Owaa, good evening."
"Owaa, good evening."
"Ogyaa, ogyaa, ogyaa."
"Owaaa, the master of this house is ill."

Hagiwara later says the following of "Cats": "I wanted to express through that poem the morbid hallucinatory world and psychological effects that emerge from a lukewarm spring. By transcribing the eerie crying of cats into the poem, I tried to produce a sensual ghost story effect."

The onomatopoetic method he uses is thoroughly effective. In Japanese, such sounds as 'Owaa' and 'Ogyaa' reminds one of the crying of a baby. That these are interchanged with those of cats is a magnificent performance on the part of the author. It effectively creates an ominous sensation. But, the hidden metaphor of this cry is not accomplished through a cheap trick, as will be readily seen.

The reason I say this is because of the following. Within the onomatopoetic expressions, the technique of repeating and overlapping the 'o' vowel and the 'a' vowel. In Japanese, the repetition of the 'oa' and 'aa' combinations, especially, engenders a mood with its own meaning in itself. This mood makes one feel as if one is about to be diffused into an elusive world, or as if one is moving around in circles without a center of gravity. (I could mention the linguistic principle of the 'i' sound signifying proximity and the 'a' sound, distance as an example to back this up.)

ROTTEN CLAM

Body half-buried in sands,
 still it's lolling its tongue.
 Over this invertebrate's head,
 pebbles and brine rustle, rustle, rustle, rustle, flowing,
 flowing,
 ah so quietly as a dream, flowing.

From between the sands that go on flowing,
 the clam again has its lolling tongue flicker and flare red,
 this clam is very emaciated, I'm saying.
 Look, its rubbery entrails seem about to rot,
 and so when sad-looking evening comes,
 sitting on the pale beach,
 flickering, flickering, it lets out rotten breaths, I tell you.

The poem "Rotten Clam" grasps, in quite a graphic way, a world invisible to our eyes but one that lies behind and controls everyday facticity. Is there such a thing as a rotten, and yet animated, creature? Well, there is. Quite certainly there is something that keeps itself alive, secretly hidden in a mollusk-like nauseating manner within our lives and sensations. It may be, as the author suggests, something like a "rotten clam." Here Hagiwara introduces an invisible thing such as a "rotten clam" into the poem and then through it materializes that rotten thing that dwells within our physical bodies and sensations, this being invisible as well.

LOVE-PITY

Sharply with cute granite teeth,
 gritting on the green of grass, woman,
 woman,
 with this light blue grass *ink*,
 let me paint your face, leaving no spot untouched,
 to arouse your lust,
 let us play secretly in a lush grass thicket,
 look,
 here a bluebell is shaking his head,
 there a *gentian's* hand is moving pliantly,
 ah I'll hold your breasts tight,

you on your part push my body down with all your might,
 and in this field without a soul,
 let us play a serpentine play,
 ah I on my part will pierce you through with love,
 will on your beautiful skin, smear blue grass leaf juice.

"Love-Pity" ("Pathos of Love," or "Ai-Ren") consists entirely of a 'game' in a world of imagination, what Hagiwara Sakutarō refers to as a world of yearning. That is, it is a self-dramatization without an Other. It goes without saying that this 'acting out' is accompanied by something sensual and erotic. Through the self-conclusive staging of this sensuousness, Hagiwara has secured an exceedingly unique style and pointed out a new area of poetic aestheticism. Moreover, although there is an adhesive quality in the vocabulary and the imagining of the 'game,' still there is no decadence here. Aestheticism and decadence are frequently confused with each another. Depending on how one looks at it, perhaps there is something sickly about this piece as well. However, even including such interpretations, this poem still excels in its aesthetic expression of that sensuousness. Or, put in another way, it is remarkable in its realistic presentation of the attempt to discover the location of sensuality.

LOVE OF LOVE

I painted *rouge* on my lips,
 and kissed the trunk of a new birch,
 even if I were a handsome man,
 on my chest are no breasts like *rubber balls*,
 from my skin rises no fragrance of fine-*textured* powder,
 I am a wizened man of ill-fate,
 ah, what a pitiable man,
 in today's balmy early summer field,
 in a stand of glistening trees,
 I slipped on my hands sky-blue gloves,
 put around my waist something like a *corset*,
 smeared on my nape something like nape-powder,
 thus hushed assuming a coquettish *pose*,
 as young girls do,
 I cocked my head a little,
 and kissed the trunk of a new birch,
 I painted rosy rouge on my lips,

and clung to a tall tree of snowy white.

"Love of Love" also has a strong sense of sensuality, something that might be termed sexual inversion. However, the inversion found here can be redefined as one that departs from 'sexuality' the more the author tries to express it. The same can be said of "Love-Pity" ("Pathos of Love," or "Ai-Ren"). The Other is constantly absent in Hagiwara's expression of sexuality. For one thing, how much can comparing a woman's "breasts" to "rubber balls" serve as a convincing simile for sexuality? What is found here is a double-binding of anxiety and suppression within the sexual consciousness which merely makes detours around the sexual object without ever getting at it and which, as such, does not tend toward homosexuality or heterosexuality as much as toward autoeroticism.

WHITE MOON

From the violent pains of rotten teeth,
holding my swollen cheek,
I was digging under a jujube tree,
thinking of sowing some grass seeds,
soiling my svelte fingers with mud,
I was digging up the cold ground,
ah, I remember it,
toward evening on a chilly day,
under the brand-new hole,
flicker, flicker, an earthworm was moving,
when from behind a low building,
as if to slip over and caress
a woman's snow-white ear, a moon rose,
a moon rose.

Within one's memory of childhood, the misty and the vivid are intermixed. The location where the "white moon" is viewed is thought to be within Hagiwara's family's estate, but there must be many people who are able to recall having thought of "sowing some grass seeds" at some time "toward evening on a chilly day." when one imagines a child digging up the ground soiling his "svelte fingers with mud," one becomes confused into thinking that this child is in fact oneself. This piece enshrines a call from something prototypical scenes that resemble the *déjà vu*.

Surrealism had not yet been introduced into the Japanese literary world at the beginning of the Taisho Era. Many of the poems of that period were written in free-style and colloquial language that approximated the realism of the naturalistic movement. However, the poems "Sping Night" and "The World of Bacteria," published in the spring of 1915, the fourth year of the Tasho Era, were poetic expressions of a surrealistic/non-realistic world, even though they did not exactly follow the principles of surrealism. Hagiwara called them products of a "purely imaginary vision" but they are no illusions or hallucinations per se. Fantastic elements were included, to be sure, but they were more an attempt to put into verbal shape things that could not be seen. Herein lies the absolute novelty of *Howling at the Moon*.

Hagiwara's early works, beginning with his "Sickly Face at the Bottom of the Ground," revealed a strong 'physiological sense of fear.' The shadow lurking in everyday emotions — loneliness — was grasped on a sensory level and sharply expressed. The senses and physiological perceptions served the role of poetic method. However, toward the second half of *Howling at the Moon*, the sense of 'loneliness' develops into something like 'consciousness' and by the time the poems, "Lonely Personality" and "Looking Up at the Top of a Blue Tree" were written, the theme became one that might be termed the 'emotion of psychological loneliness.' We witness in this a kind of maturity of Hagiwara Sakutarō. It is a fact that in the latter half of *Howling at the Moon* we can perceive things that are absent from his earlier works, although we must add that maturity does not always lead to poetic impact. We can also say that what could be seen in the first half of his works was no longer to be seen in the latter half. That is, the latter works can no longer be grasped in terms of poetical images. From this 'emotion of psychological loneliness' developed the poetical world of "Blue Cat" with its expressions of inactivity and boredom, destiny and nihility.

FEAR OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

I fear the countryside,
 fear the rows of rice stalks growing thin and long,
 trembling in deserted paddies of the countryside.
 Fear the swarms of poor human beings living in dark dwellings.
 When sitting on a ridge between paddies,
 the billow-like weight of soil darkens my heart,
 the rotten smell of soil blackens my skin,
 winter-withered lonely nature oppresses my life.

The air of the countryside is gloomy and oppressive,
 the touch of the countryside is gritty and sickening,
 when I sometimes think of the countryside,
 I'm tormented by the smell of animal skin coarse in *texture*.
 I fear the countryside,
 the countryside is a pale fever dream.

What a gloomy place the countryside expressed in this poem is! Deserted paddies, dark dwellings, poverty, oppressive soil, winter-withered nature. In Hagiwara Sakutarō's conception of the countryside, such gloominess pervaded. It oppressed him. It troubled him like the eeriness of an animal skin coarse in texture or the torments of a feverish malady. It is almost a nightmarish world. In reality, Hagiwara's birthplace, Maebashi, was a middle-class city surrounded by households that engaged in silk-raising. However, Sakutarō's sense of separation from this city was absolute until the later "Blue Cat" phase. The problem was not simply a matter of countryside life vs. urban life.

The Essential Poet

I hope I can say, without fear of being misunderstood, that I believe Hagiwara Sakutarō was more a 'true' ('essential') man of letters than a 'great' – centrally representative – poet. This is where my entire interest in Hagiwara rests. We must regard the symbolic world *Howling at the Moon* was markedly able to point to, as lying not in the poetic form it established, but in the essence of the agony at the root of its expression.

To be sure, perhaps what he succeeded in grasping was nothing but a radical self-awareness – one which leads to tears and which he called sentimentalism. However, through this sentimentalism, he was able, more than many another man of letters, to succeed in reaching a higher level of imaginative expression, and in exploring a dark and essential part of human existence. Moreover, this 'dark and essential part of human existence' was adjacent to the contradiction that the Japanese modern age has inadvertently become involved in. Ignoring its own Japanese mentality and struggling on blindly towards Europeanization, Japan fell into a pit of confusion. This was an ironical result, considering that the aim of Europeanization had been to strengthen its national identity and consolidate its national power.

To begin with, what is meant by human maturity or national maturity? Can we actually find a maturity that might be uniformly measured, believed in, and promoted in reality? On an individual basis there may be such a thing. However,

when 'maturity' becomes a taken-for-granted premise, we have, in reality, become oblivious to what maturity originally signified. For instance, if we take a 'mature person' (a frequent example of the concept of maturity), we should question whether this concept of a mature person is that steady and solid. Is't a 'mature person' a kind of fictional being that exists only relatively on each individual level according to its proximity to whatever is being meant by maturity? However, when one believes in this fictional thing as a self-evident phenomenon, and ceases to question oneself, beginning to depend instead on 'righteousness' and 'justice,' then this so-called 'mature person' begins to reveal a fatal immaturity that stands at the other pole. This reminds us of the ironical incident in which the supposedly immature child was the only one to cry out, "The Emperor, hasn't got anything on! He is naked!"

In short, what I would like to say here is this: Japan was in the midst of a trial and error period from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus Japan's 'modern age' could not but show symptoms of distortion like a darkness within itself, as the result of the age itself that believed too much in the equation of 'the modern age,' or 'Europeanization' with 'maturity,' or 'a mature person.' It is like the trap called common sense, or commonly accepted ideas, that would not allow even the 'mature person,' the 'Emperor,' to be questioned. Hagiwara Sakutarō, the poet of *Howling at the Moon*, was the only Japanese of his age who could discover the fictionality of the fiction hidden within the concept of maturity, and who could recognize the trap hidden within common sense as a 'trap.' By remaining faithful to his own sense of 'anxiety,' he was able to avoid all fictions that would have prevented a faithful expression of that anxiety. Therefore, if we are to follow this line of logic, Hagiwara tended to recreate the innocence of a child's sense of things. The expressed world of *Howling at the Moon* is something like the cry of the child that expresses his real feelings. The human voice that declared that the Emperor was naked is what constitutes the exceptionally essential value of *Howling at the Moon*: it expressed darkness wholly as darkness itself.

Editions and translations

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付記

本稿は、1988年の8月から12月にかけて、米国テネシー州・テネシー大学マーティン校で日本文学（萩原明太郎の詩）を講義する際に用意したノートの一部である。ただ、表題が示すように、これは、あくまで『月に吠える』導入のためのメモに過ぎず、本論となるべき英文原稿の大方は、幸運にも、現在、出版（テネシー大学出版局）のための準備下にある。つまり、"The Thought and Method of *Howling at the Moon*" への導入として本稿はまさに〈私的〉に、しかも〈簡便〉に書き下ろされた。ヒロアキ・サトーの名訳 *Howling at the Moon* を得て、講義の前座を立派(?)に果たしたのだ。その意味でも、捨てるに忍びず、かく日の目を見ることになった。（最後に英文をチェックしてくれた友人のJ. N. ウェスタハーベンに、この隅をかりて、お礼申し上げる。）