

【翻 訳】

Translations of Stories by Kenji Miyazawa:
“Preface to *The Restaurant of Many Orders*,”
“The Porcelain Vine and the Rainbow,”
“The Good-Natured Volcanic Bomb”
and
“The White-Naped Crane and the Dahlias”

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Introduction: Kenji's Stories of Nature

Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933), as a largely unknown writer and poet in Iwate, published only two books during his lifetime: *The Restaurant of Many Orders: Children's Tales from Ihatov*¹ (1924) and selected poems, *Spring and Asura: Mental Sketch* (1924). In the preface to the former he wrote, “I was given all these tales by the rainbow and the moonlight around a wood, a field, and a railroad.” This statement reveals how deeply nature inspired Kenji.² His stories were born from the deep communication between him and nature, or rather in the unity of his self and nature. Kenji believed that man is a part of nature, and that as long as man is open and modest towards nature, man and nature can share words and feelings. For Kenji, to be a poet means to express those words. Kenji was also a scientist, spending his days as a teacher in an agricultural school and as an instructor for young farmers in his home town, Hanamaki. However, the lives of a poet and a scientist were never incompatible for Kenji, because science for him is what supports harmony between man and nature. We sometimes see science intrude in his stories through the appearance of scientists who do not exploit but appreciate things in nature as, for instance, the geologists in “The Good-Natured Volcanic Bomb.”

¹ In a statement advertising the release of his book, Kenji explained that Ihatov means “Iwate as a Dreamland.”

² The name Kenji Miyazawa is commonly abbreviated as Kenji in Japan.

One representation of the unity between man and nature in Kenji’s stories is the humanizing of things in nature. In the following three stories “The Porcelain Vine and the Rainbow,” “The Good-Natured Volcanic Bomb” and “The White-Naped Crane and the Dahlias” natural objects talk, feel and think just like human beings. However, it is not merely the literary method of personification as seen in fables in which writers project the way human beings are onto things in nature. To Kenji’s eyes, nature and human beings are equally alive with feeling and languages as temporal beings under a providential order.

Another remarkable trait of Kenji’s stories is the poetic sensibility pervading them. Kenji had been an enthusiastic lover of stones and stars and a keen observer of flowers, trees, birds, and weather. His knowledge of these natural objects is sublimated by his imagination into, not conceptual or abstract, but concrete imageries. His picturesque landscape with rich and subtle hues seems to derive from both Japanese tradition and his original sense of colours.

The three stories we chose to translate here are minor but exemplary of these attributes of Kenji’s stories. Our aim in translating them is to see how much the ideas and poetic aspects in Kenji’s stories can be translated into English. To the three stories, we have added “Preface to *The Restaurant of Many Orders*” as illustrative of Kenji’s basic attitude towards creating stories.

Finally, the text on which we based our translation is *New Variorum Edition: Collected Works of Kenji Miyazawa*. (A. Y)

I . Preface to *The Restaurant of Many Orders: Children's Tales from Ihatov*

Even if we don’t have as much rock sugar as we would like, we are able to eat the clean transparent wind and drink the beautiful peach-coloured morning sunlight.

Also, I have often seen in a field or in woods badly tattered clothes changed into the most wonderful velvet, or wool, or jewelled clothes.

I like such beautiful food and clothes.

I was given all these tales by the rainbow and the moonlight around a wood, a field, and a railroad.

When I am walking alone past the oak woods in the blue evening, or standing trembling in the wind of the mountain in November, I really cannot help but feel this way. I only wrote down what I cannot help but feel is really happening.

So some of these tales might be of lasting value to you, while the value of others might not last at all, but I just cannot distinguish between them myself. They might have some parts that don’t make sense, but these parts don’t make sense even to me.

However, how I wish some pieces of these little tales would finally be your true transparent nourishment.

20th December, 1923

Kenji Miyazawa

Ⅱ . The Porcelain Vine and the Rainbow

In the ruins of the castle the plantain bore fruit, the red clover faded into dark brown, and the millet lay harvested in the field.

“The harvest is finished,” said a field mouse who had peeped out for an instant before hurrying back into his hole.

The blazing silver ears of eulalia rippled all over in the wind on the stone wall and in the moat.

In the middle of the castle ruins was a small square mound, and there in a grove above porcelain berries were ripening like a rainbow.

Then, as a faint, faint sun shower came down, the grass glittered and the mountain in the distance darkened.

And as the faint, faint sun shower left off, the grass glittered and the mountain in the distance brightened as if smiling in the dazzling light.

Some butcherbirds flew over from that direction, scattered about on the wind like music notes torn from the page, before all at once landing on the silver ears of eulalia.

Greatly moved, the porcelain vine released a deep transparent breath, and dripped raindrops from his leaves.

A sudden cool wind breathed over the grey mountain range in the east, and a great rainbow showed gently across the sky like a bright bridge of dreams.

Then the pale sap of the porcelain vine heaved violently.

Yes, he wanted to exchange some words this very day, at least one word, with the rainbow. He wanted to tell the rainbow this: a small porcelain vine on the mound would offer to the beautiful, distant rainbow his devotion, which was stronger and sadder than blue fire blazing in the night sky. If he could only do this, he would not mind at all if his berries or leaves were plucked by the wind, or if he sank into the deep sleep of the bright, cold, sheer-white winter, or if he withered and died forever.

“Oh please look over here for just a moment, O Rainbow.” His usual transparent voice being lost, the porcelain vine cried in a hoarse voice that was half stolen by the wind.

The gentle rainbow's big blue eyes, which were gazing in rapture at the blue sky in the west, turned to the porcelain vine.

"May I help you? You are a porcelain vine, aren't you?"

Trembling like a leaf from the beech tree, the porcelain vine, bright and breathless, spoke as though speech would fail him.

"Please receive this offering of my devotion."

As the rainbow let out a deep breath, her yellow and violet shone as though they too would speak. Then the rainbow said,

"But you also deserve such devotion. Why do you look so gloomy?"

"I wouldn't mind if I died."

"Why do you say such a thing? You are still young. And there are two more months until it snows."

"No, my life is nothing. I would die one hundred times for your becoming greater."

"Why, don't you see, it is you who are great? You are like a rainbow that never disappears, like me but never changing. But I am a rainbow, and as a rainbow I am truly inconstant. My life lasts only ten or fifteen minutes. Sometimes just three seconds. However, your seven shining colours never change."

"No, they change! They change! The glow of my berries will be soon carried away by the wind. Or, blanketed by the snow, they will whiten. Among the dead leaves, they will decay."

The rainbow laughed in spite of herself.

"Yes, you're right. In fact, nothing ever really stays the same. Look! The sky over there is deep blue. It is like pure azurite. But the sun will soon pass and sink into the mountain. The sky will be coloured like a petal of the evening primrose, which soon withers. Then comes the silver sky just before twilight, followed by the night sky jewelled with stars.

At that time, where would I go? Where would I be born? And this beautiful hill and field before us are being scraped and are crumbling away second by second. But if true power reveals itself in the heart of these things, then all that fade, all that wither, all that are fleeting and ephemeral, will live forever. Even I have the same joy when I shine for only three seconds as when I span the sky for half an hour."

"But you span the high sky full of light. The grass, flowers, birds; they all sing your praise."

"The same is true for you. All that is revealed to me, all that makes me shine makes you glitter. Every word of admiration given to me is given to you in exactly the same way. Look! Those who see with true eyes would not compare even the riches of Solomon to a single wild lily. They have regarded the prosperity of men as so much scheming and divided from true power and life without end. But in the light of truth, even a speck of the dust rising mysteriously like a cloud from human

pride is not less precious than a sacred lily praised by the son of God.”

“Please teach me. Please take me with you. I would do anything.”

“No, I will go nowhere. I am always thinking of you. All those who live together in the true light always go together. They will never perish. You, however, will not see me any longer. The sun is now too far away. Butcherbirds are taking wing. I have to bid farewell to you.”

A whistle peeped sharply near the railway station.

The butcherbirds took wing all at once and, like music notes scattered about in a frenzy, flew off to the east, singing noisily.

The porcelain vine cried out,

“Please take me with you, O Rainbow! Please don’t go!”

The rainbow seemed to smile faintly, but the porcelain vine could not be sure as the rainbow was already getting quite pale.

And then the rainbow was all gone.

Silver light filled the sky. A lark, fleeing the clamour of the butcherbirds, climbed high in the sky singing a song a little out of tune.

Ⅲ . The Good-Natured Volcanic Bomb

In the shade of an oak in a field below an extinct volcano, a big black stone nicknamed “Bego”³ had been sitting quietly for a long time.

The name “Bego” had been given to him by the jagged and not so big black stones that lay scattered about here and there in the grass. Beside the nickname, he had a real, respectable name, but Bego himself didn’t know it.

With no rough edges, Bego was shaped just like an egg with the two ends pushed flat. What looked like two stony belts were wrapped around his body at an angle. He was very good-natured, and he had never got angry.

So, on a day when a deep, low-hanging fog veiled the sky, the mountain, and the field in the distance entirely and the jagged stones were bored as a result, they all amused themselves by making fun of Bego.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Bego. Have you recovered from your stomach-ache?”

“Thank you. I haven’t had a stomach-ache,” said Bego quietly in the fog.

“A-ha-ha-ha-ha. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.” the jagged stones laughed all at once.

³ “Bego” means a cow in the Tohoku region of Japan.

"Hello, Mr. Bego. Did the owl bring you a red pepper last night?"

"No, the owl doesn't seem to have come over here last night."

"A-ha-ha-ha-ha. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha." The jagged stones laughed awfully.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Bego. Yesterday evening, a wild horse peed against you in the fog, didn't he? What a pity!"

"Thank you. By the grace of God, I haven't had such an experience."

"A-ha-ha-ha-ha. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha." Everyone laughed terribly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Bego. You know, a new law has been issued recently, and it seems that anyone who is round or looks round should be cracked like an egg. Why don't you run away at once?"

"Thank you. Then I shall be cracked together with the sun, the perfectly round captain of the sky."

"A-ha-ha-ha-ha. A-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha. You are too much of a fool to be mended!"

Just then, the fog cleared, the sun threw down golden shafts of light, and the whole of the blue sky appeared. So the jagged stones all began to think about the wine of rain and dumplings of snow. Bego also quietly looked up at the sun, the perfectly round captain, and the blue sky.

The next day was another foggy day, so the jagged stones began to tease Bego again. At least, that was what they intended to do.

"Mr. Bego, we were wondering why only you are so round, while we all clearly have rough edges. Even though we all fell from the same volcanic eruption."

"Perhaps it is because, while I was still burning bright red and rising up in the sky after my birth, I spun round and round."

"Aha! Then why did you alone spin round and round while all of us were still the whole time as we rose up and up in the sky, stopped for a moment at the highest point, and fell down again?"

Yet, for all that, the fact was that they all fainted as they rose to the sky in pitch-black smoke after being smashed to pieces in the eruption.

"I don't know, but, although I didn't intend to do so at all, I couldn't help my body spinning of its own accord."

"Aha! When something frightening happens, the body trembles by itself. So it might, perhaps, have been caused by your cowardliness."

"Well, it might have been caused by my cowardliness. The sound and light were so terrifying at the time."

"That's it. So it must have been caused by your cowardliness. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha."

The jagged stones laughed aloud all together. Just then, the fog cleared, so each jagged stone

looked up at the sky and began to think about their favourite things.

Bego, too, gazed at the glitter of the oak leaves in silence.

After that, the snow fell and the grass grew many times. The oak shed old leaves and bore new ones many times.

One day the oak said,

“Mr. Bego. It has been quite a while since you and I settled down beside each other.”

“That’s right. You have grown very big.”

“No, but when I was very little I had thought you an enormous black mountain.”

“Ah yes, that’s right. Now you are five times as high as me, aren’t you?”

“I can’t deny it.”

The oak became so pleased with himself that he wiggled his twigs.

At the beginning it was only other stones who made a fool of Bego, but he was so good-natured that everyone gradually began to do so. The golden lace flower said,

“Mr. Bego. At last I’ve put on a golden crown.”

“Congratulations! Mr. Golden Lace.”

“When will you put on yours?”

“I don’t know. I guess I won’t put one on.”

“Is that so? How unfortunate! Well now, hang on a moment, aren’t you wearing one already?” asked the golden lace, looking at the short moss that had recently grown on Bego. Bego answered smiling,

“No, this is moss.”

“I see. It doesn’t look particularly nice, does it?”

And then ten days passed. The golden lace flower cried out as if he were surprised,

“Mr. Bego, at last you have put on your crown, or rather your moss has put on a little red hood. Congratulations!”

Bego, smiling wryly, said in a casual way,

“Thank you, but that red hood is the moss’s crown, not mine. My crown will soon arrive in silver all over the field.”

These words indeed frightened the golden lace.

“You mean snow, don’t you? Good heavens! Good heavens!”

With embarrassment, Bego, who noticed now, consoled the golden lace.

“I am sorry, Mr. Golden Lace. You might be unhappy about winter coming, but we can hardly stop the passing of the seasons, can we? However, as soon as the snow is gone next year, why don’t you come again?”

The golden lace flower gave no answer any more. And then the next day came. A mosquito

flew over with a buzz, "eeeeee, eeeee,..."

"It is disgusting that this field has so many useless things. Take this Bego for example. The likes of him will never do. He doesn't dig the soil to make the air fresh like moles, nor make the dew glitter like blades of grass to heal our eyes. eeeee, eeeee,..." With this, he flew back where he came from.

Hearing these unpleasant remarks by the mosquito, the moss on Bego, who had heard all the other nasty remarks about Bego too, now started to make fun of Bego. With the little red hood on his head, the moss began to dance.

"Baked-Black Bego, Burnt-Black Bego,
Don Baked-Black Bego don,
When the rain falls, he is still baked-black, don don,
When the sun shines, he is still burnt-black, don don.

Baked-Black Bego, Burnt-Black Bego,
Don Baked-Black Bego don,
When ten thousand years pass, he is still baked-black, don don,
When one hundred thousand years pass, he is still burnt-black, don don."

Bego said smilingly,

"Good, very good. I don't mind the song, but I'm afraid something bad might happen to you. I will make you another song. From now on, sing this one instead. Here we go."

"The sky. The sky. The milk of the sky:
The cold rain, za za za za,⁴
The raindrop from the oak, ton ten ton,
The white fog, posshanton.
The sky, the sky. The light of the sky:
The sunlight, kan kan kan,
The moonlight, tsun tsun tsun,
The starlight, picariko."

⁴ The Japanese language has a lot of onomatopoeia, and Kenji here and later in the story uses a mixture of standard onomatopoeia and his own coinages.

“What nonsense! Not funny at all!”

“I see. I am not very good at this kind of thing.”

Bego quietly closed his mouth.

Now, everyone in the field mocked Bego in unison.

“Why, even a little red-hooded squirt like that mocks Bego! I’ll have no more to do with him! How shameful! Baked-Black Bego, Burnt-Black Bego, don don! Don Bego don!”

Just then, from over the way came four tall distinguished men in glasses across the field carrying various shining instruments. On seeing Bego, one of them said,

“Here it is! Here! How wonderful! What a nice specimen! A flawless volcanic bomb! The best, most balanced form I’ve ever seen! How neat these belts are! Just getting this would make this trip of much value.”

“Yes. How beautifully balanced, indeed! Even the British Museum does not possess such an outstanding volcanic bomb.”

Walking around Bego, everyone was rubbing and patting him with the instruments left on the grass.

“No specimen has such perfect belts. Look! How clearly it shows the way it spun in the sky. Lovely! Lovely! Why don’t we take it at once today?”

Then they all walked off in the direction they came from. The jagged stones could only sigh in silence, while the good-natured volcanic bomb was smiling in silence.

Early in the afternoon, with their glittering glasses and instruments, those four scholars, some villagers and a cart came from the same direction as before.

And they stopped under the oak tree.

“Please be careful not to break it, since it is an important specimen. Wrap it closely. Let’s scrape off the moss.”

The moss wept as he was scraped off. Carefully wrapped up with clean straw and a straw mat, the volcanic bomb said,

“Thank you for all your help this long time, everyone. Good-bye, Mr. Moss. Please sing that song later, even just once. The place where I am going is not as bright and pleasant a place as here. However, we all have to do whatever we can. Good-bye, everyone.”

The four men attached to him a big tag marked “To Laboratory for Geology, The Imperial University of Tokyo.” After that, they loaded the cart with the bundle, with a “Heave-Ho, Heave-Ho!”

“Now, let’s go, shall we?”

The horse snorted once and started walking towards the green, green field over the way.

IV . The White-Naped Crane and the Dahlias

On the top of an orchard hill were two yellow dahlias who were as tall as sunflowers, and taller still stood a red dahlia blooming a big red flower.

This red dahlia wanted to become a queen of flowers.

Even when the rough wind from the south beat the trees and flowers with big raindrops and with shrill laughter plucked off green burs and twigs from even the small chestnut-tree on the hill, these three splendid dahlias, swinging their bodies softly, looked even more brilliant than usual.

And when Kitakaze Matasaburo⁵ for the first time this year flew across the blue sky with a cry which sounded like a flute, the aspen trees at the foot of the hill swayed restlessly and the pears in the orchard fell, but these three tall dahlias merely released a brief, radiant laugh.

★

One of the two yellow dahlias, casting her mind into the end of the pale sky in the south, said half to herself,

"The sun seems to sprinkle his cobalt-glass coloured light a little more today." Gazing at her friend, the other yellow dahlia said,

"You look a little paler than usual. I am sure to look the same."

"Yes, you do. Good heavens!" she said to the red dahlia.

"My, how brilliant you are today! Why I feel almost as if you might all of a sudden burn out."

The red dahlia looked up to the sky, shining in the sunlight, and answered with a slight smile,

"That alone will not satisfy me. Things around here would be very dull indeed if they weren't brightened by my light. I would be quite irritated."

After a while the sun set and twilight's citrine sky set with it, and then the stars began to twinkle and the sky turned into a bluish black abyss.

Singing "Peetoriri, Peetoriri," the black shadow of a white-naped crane was fleeing away underneath the star-lit sky.

"Mr, White-Naped Crane, am I very beautiful?" asked the red dahlia.

"Yes, you are. You are very red."

Disappearing into the darkness over the distant marshes, the bird called out in a low voice to a white dahlia who brought a white flower modestly to bloom, "Good evening." The white dahlia was smiling modestly.

★

⁵ A personification of the north wind.

The paraffin-white clouds settled over the mountains and the day broke. The yellow dahlias cried in surprise,

“How beautiful you have become! And with a pink halo around you! ”

“That is right! You have only the red light of the rainbow gathered all around you”

“Do I? However, I am still not satisfied. I intend to redden the sky with my light. The sun is sprinkling his gold dust a little more than usual.”

The yellow dahlias both closed their mouths in silence.

The golden afternoon was followed by the refreshing cyanite-blue night.

The shaggy-feathered white-naped crane flew away in a hurry under the jewelled sky.

“Mr. White-Naped Crane, am I shining quite brightly?”

“Yes, you are shining quite brightly.”

Descending into the distant faint-white fog, the white-naped crane again called out to the white dahlia in a low voice,

“Good evening. How are you?”

★

The stars had taken their course, and with the last song by Venus the sky assumed a silver colour all over and the day broke. The light of the sun on this morning was like shining amber-coloured waves.

“How beautiful you are! Your halo is now five times bigger than yesterday.”

“It’s dazzling, really. Your light reaches as far as that pear tree.”

“Of course it does. I am still not satisfied. Nobody calls me queen yet.”

Then, the yellow dahlias looked at each other sadly and turned their big eyes to the lapis-blue mountain range in the west.

The fragrant and brilliant autumn day came to an end, as the dew dropped and the stars took their course, and then the white-naped crane flew high over the three flowers quietly.

“Mr White-Naped Crane, how do I look tonight?”

“Well, you look wonderful. But it is already rather dark here.”

Flying past the shore of the distant marsh, the crane said to the white dahlia,

“Good evening. What a nice evening!”

★

The day was dawning and in the dim bellflower-blue light, the yellow dahlias glanced at the red dahlia, but they looked at each other as if they were frightened by something and didn’t utter a word. The red dahlia cried,

“It is very irritating indeed. How do I look this morning?”

One of the yellow dahlias said timidly,

"You are surely a very bright red. But perhaps you don't look to us as red as before."

"How do I look? Please tell me. How do I look?"

The other yellow dahlia said hesitantly,

"You only look like that to us, only us, so please take no notice. But it seems to us black spots are breaking out on you."

"Oh, no. Stop it. Oh please don't say such a thing!"

As the sun shone all the day, half of the apples on the hill turned bright red. Twilight fell and dusk thickened, and then came the night.

The white-naped crane passed across the sky singing, "'peetoriri, peetoriri."

"Good evening, Mr. White-Naped Crane. Can you see me?"

"Well, it is a little difficult."

Flying off to the distant marshes in a hurry, the crane said to the white dahlia,

"It is a little warm tonight, isn't it?"

☆

The day was just breaking. In the dim light filled with the scent of pale apples, the red dahlia said,

"Well, how do I look today? Please tell me quickly."

However hard the yellow dahlias tried to look at the red flower, all they could see was something dim and trembling.

"We cannot be sure as the day has not broken yet."

This brought the red dahlia close to tears.

"Please tell me the truth. Please. You are both hiding something from me, aren't you? Am I darker? Am I darker?"

"Yes, you look darker, but we cannot quite see you."

"Why! What! I hate having dark spots in my red."

At that moment, a short man with a curious tri-cornered hat whose face was sallow and thin came with his hands buried in his pockets. Seeing the dahlia, he cried,

"This is it! This is the family crest of our master."

He plucked the stem. The red dahlia became limp in the man's hand.

"Where are you going? Where are you going? Please hold me tight! Where are you going?"

The two dahlias could not control themselves and sobbed convulsively.

They heard the faint voice of the red dahlia in the far distance.

(The voice was receding farther and farther)⁶ away, and then it was lost in the rustle of aspen

⁶ These parentheses appear in the original on which the New Variorum Edition is based.

treetops at the foot of the hill. And the tears of the yellow dahlias caught the glare of the rising sun.

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