

NAGAE Yuki
Poems

Absentee Cities

Alternating memories
Pale blue tinted
Time goes fracturing on

(Every last flower, every form, gone extinct.
Pure nostalgia reigns, saturated fragrance
Drifting through the water surface.)

Morae melt into syllables
Touched off by fragmented recollections

The gist of reddened bygone days plunged down into extremity
Swaying away
Waning toward silence

Incessantly
Born entangled in collapse, one-hundred billion molecules grow warm, glow,
Gather the waves in their methylene blue

(Phosphorescent cerulean glimmerings.
That would be a dream.
Unseen by anyone, conserved in a lonely purity,
never drifting away,
flickering on at the ocean floor)

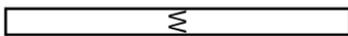
Eons ago, there was
A glorious prosperity that often lay down
Whispers
Indignation
All of this now below sea level

The circling recurrence
The demolishing persistence
Prepared for the day of its repetition

And the methylene's blue glare. Rolling waves.
Now only the shadows
Remain straight
Running the water surface

(Between the waves, images wavering
...Helsinki.....Soul ...Tai,pei...Kuala Lumpur...
Krung-thep,Bangkok...New, York...
Mexico,city.....Tokyo
Wrong. That would be a dream.
Unseen by anyone, so modest.
Cities and flowers too, innumerable abundance,
Someday, surely,
Will have gone extinct)

From Collection "Absentee Cities" Shichosha, 2018



Shibuya Dini Scramble

Nagae Yūki

— generalized helicoid surface with constant negative curvature from a point just outside the Dogenzaka-shita Scramble intersection, Tokyo, Shibuya Ward.

※Observation Period: 20 April 2017, 12:46-13:02 P.M.

Shibuya, here and there the land divided. Hōjō’s historical dreamglow collapses, lodging in that pine,
Shibuya Police Bureau public notice: be alert for malicious “scouts”

Caution! This is a scam! TOKYO can easily see
the self, for countless years, keeps lookout with gaze high, vocabulary hunting pedigree kicking
“It’s me—I lost my bag!” ART SCRAMBLE anyone the art

for you Gather together in my stomach! Yuriko, mayor of Tokyo.
Dōgen, no matter what people say. He casually repels it like drizzle, human talk dismissed in snickering
BifIX Yogurt! BifIX Yogurt! I’m Koike I want

to build a city with kindness will transform! multifunctional station, Shibuya’s
make-up, the end ultimately lost in a grove. His demise, compiled vestiges, a livelihood from pulling in
flooded Shibuya Station Japan’s first underground pathway

lounge is born! In this situation, to confirm the caller's number. for Shibuya
scant strings of standing prayers, Fuji-kō's lofty outlook, golden age waterglow lesson, daimyo shomyo genius fool
Pretty-pretty PRETZ pretzels! be sure to call back Tomorrow's weather report

The latest Conan anime Episode The Shrinking
one careful step at a time then bam Edo-scape fades power source, ballet of electricity dreams
Mostly clear skies, 17°C coming soon on DVD! *ONE* Ace Detective!

“You've won a large sum — Definitely, your family or the police first
naptime's over now, Nippon Steel Tama-den Trolley Line networks, fireless lanterns steadily consuming,
we'll just need your bank account info” consult with Shibuya Station

the plaza in front of Hachiko offered here. stand still that way at the ATM
every dream is of dogs. Kill the Strong Army, Rich Country Military Prison Police, a proposition taught, *Myōjo*
FREE Wi-Fi smart phone it's easier to see Yurui-san

I can't withdraw anything! Let's get on with it!! *Roots* Starting May 1!
died of bronchial inflammation, Shibuya, here and there the earth split. Capital city of new wives aiding each other,
Expeditions

from government offices, etc. “You have a refund on your medical expenses.” I feel like
provisional district boundaries drawn by prosperity, Hyakkendana summons the bustle, Teito Transit's Toyoko conceits
first episode 2-hr special phone to say it's fraud! at long last

you finally understand me♪ the courage to report, will not be tolerated fortune
lanterns doused in Asakusa Rokku cinema dreams vacate premises. Population centers domino fall, but ordinary life
Kireto Lemon drink terrorism today's #3: Virgo love outlook:

Now's the time to make your move! Urgent news NEWS© Prime Minister Abe
pays no mind in this Pleasure District, Co-Prosperity propped on bodies dispatched, revival into conflagration,
Passively © SHIBUTANI HEADLINE and President Trump

held a phone conference it's FREE there
flying ember alert, canine finally crudely liquefied, Shibuya here and there the land cracks. Cessation
Hachiko Plaza Japan

Welcome to Shibuya McDonald's for coming. a once-in-a-century
compiles vestiges, glowing phantasm of Washington's proxy, daylight glides in at will
Thank you so much May I take your order? revolution

Shibuya's transformation continues Just say *NO!* FREE WiFi
to overlook black markets, commerce barracks bustle din, renewed dog returns to the dream. Shopkeepers
Smart-phone-walking on the *GO?* Hachiko Plaza is available.

Notice: Shibuya City Hall to a brand new office building, relocate. lotion rankings
return, shake off the specters Love Letter Alley, neon prosperity streetlights as go-betweens for the epochs,
will be moving so will temporarily @cosme

CHECK! one word, "*Konnichiwa*" from the Shibuya of tomorrow.
the Vision screen's interpretation dilutes the shadows look listen, Parco and Loft scorn the old tales
prevent shoplifting Expect big things

has turned green! for safety
109 Building, prayers, Dōgen, center, dreams dance, Shibuya here and there a land divided.
Tokkyu Group light Look both ways before crossing

Notes to 【*Shibuya Dini Scramble*】

Shibuya Ward in Tokyo is one of the major urban centers, known for nightlife, shopping, and restaurants. The Ward contains the Dogenzaka hill area, known primarily today for its concentration of love hotels. This poem fashions the layers of Dogenzaka's history over the past six centuries. Owada Dōgen was a famous bandit infamous in the area that now supposedly bears his name in Shibuya. He was the subject of many tales, woven into many forms, from poetry to kabuki by Kawatake Mokuami (1816-1893). This poem blends in the sounds from the street in late 2017, woven through the poem via the ruby sections above and below the main lines. You might say that the flow of history is the central through-line, while the chatter of the present weaves itself around this structure.

The area's name may also come from the survey conducted by shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, from whose observations Nagae derives the repeated line about Shibuya being divided or split—which also denotes the earthquake of 1923 and the aerial bombings at the end of WWII.

Hōjō designates the legendary family (北条) of the wife of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), the first shogun of Japan. Dōgen was said to be a descendent of Wada Yoshimori, whose family was defeated by the Hōjō. This connection also emphasizes the poignancy of the ephemeral nature of human life as captured in another “Hōjō” — Kamo-no Chōmei's *Hōjōki* (*Account of my Ten-Square-Foot Hut*, penned in 1212). “Hōjō” (豊穰) also signals the power of a rich harvest.

“Rich Country, Strong Army” (富国強兵 *fukoku kyōhei*) was a government policy of using military power to shore up Japan's economic position. It was increasingly employed from late Tokugawa through the end of Japanese empire (1856-1945).

Hachiko is the famously loyal dog, said to have waited patiently at Shibuya station for his master to return—even after his master's death. A statue designed by Ando Takeshi was commissioned to commemorate the legendary canine, but it was melted down for the metal during the late days of the war. Another statue was later built by Ando's son, Teru, and it currently stands in the plaza next to Shibuya Crossing.

“In a Grove” refers to both the idiom of being unclear and to the Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927) short story narrated from multiple perspectives. Similarly, Dōgen is seen here as an object of historical curiosity subject to competing interpretations.

There are also numerous references to Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), particularly to the essay “Dreams and Art” (「夢と文芸」). Yanagita is widely considered the founder of Japanese folklore studies.

Myōjō (『明星』) was a poetry journal co-edited by Yosano Akiko and her husband, Yosano Tekkan from 1900-1908. This poem also references one of Akiko’s most famous poems:

のれん
暖簾のかげに伏して泣く
あえかにわかき新妻を、
君わするるや、思へるや、
— 与謝野晶子「君死にたまふことなかれ」

Your lovely young wife, newlywed,
Withdrawn beyond the shop curtains, crying,
Have you forgotten her, have you thought about her?
— Yosano Akiko, “My Brother, You Must Not Die”

The word 新妻 (*nidzuma*), meaning “newlywed wife,” can also be creatively read as *shinsai*, a homophone for earthquake (震災). This homophonic suggestion bridges the twin disasters of war with Russia (1904-5) with the Tokyo earthquake of 1923.

Hyakkendana (百軒店) was a shopping district in Dogenzaka, developed to draw customers from Ginza and Asakusa in 1924 and completely destroyed in the air-raids on Tokyo in 1945.

Asakusa Rokku is an area in eastern Tokyo known since the Edo period for bawdy theater and entertainment. Along with Ginza, the area competed with Shibuya for crowds of customers as various disasters in the early- to mid-20th century forced closure for rebuilding.

“Co-Prosperity” refers to the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (大東亜共栄圏), the name used from around 1940 as a guiding concept for a rational East Asian system with Japan as ruling center.

“Snowfalling.”

Sigh, sweep, drift.
Snowfalling.
Cold and bright
Snowfalling.
Ocean rumbling quelled, a peaceful plain
Yesterday, the green laughing mountain and
drawing steam cooling to lukewarm the tile roof too
at the whipping of salt winds
reclined, in car window
grooves in the wood grain saltwater stained
from the sky, wet melancholy.
The snow-children
Rooouund, tiny,
The snow-children
lazily,
lazily,
driftpiling
Kabuki pantomime, rolling
Over the anchor
Idly, rusting
Over the steel
Hushed,
Tearfallingly
driftpiling
On a trembling babysmall pure white cheek
sputtering feverish pale forehead
Utterly, recklessly, snow-children
Terribly cold snow-children
From the sky they gaze up to
Sigh, sweep, drift.
Sigh, sweep, drift.
(Recklessly chill brilliance)

For Great East Japan earthquake 2011

Mortar Stratum of Memories

《*tanθ+ sinθ*》

From “√3”

Collapsed ambiguity heaped year by year and age by age, this mortar stratum's upper layer with sounds of a drizzle on mineral mud mingled exhalations thoroughly spit away patrolling the circumference of lingering love it's spring it's autumn, we say in vindication, sludge years slush into hot colloidal gel layer on layer, that red ash surface, time and again sobering into frozen hard foot soles, embedded all the more in this mortar layer hot, wet mud colloid, tread the mud begrudgingly trudging away can't go on, thus carp about it, but while looking back on it the gel of annual mud assimilated into the mortar stratum mineral mud lingering love recklessly piled layered finally into ambiguity this surface of mortar stratum



*This QR code is a link to an audio file that a Japanese audio of a Buddhist priest intoning the original poem sutra-style.

From Collection “√3” Shichosha, 2016

Night of the Yukar

«*tan θ + sin θ*»

Up in deepened sky of carbon
From fringes of the Milky Way
Amethysts
Mimic zodiac figures as they come,
Star-cries for companions, blazing down:
Night of the *yukar*

People of this world—*kanna-mosir*
Dream of the next—*pokna-mosir*

Under the red oxide roofs,
Summer insects manufactured from thin silver
Emit quavering voices
Limbs soaked in the dark carbon night
Deep beneath eyelids,
Carving sounds of a clock wound in reverse
A torrent of sunlight

At that point

Bay leaf aroma from motley knoll of roses
Sagittaria's rank luxury in pond water
Its bed a brocade of shed *koi* scales,
Stiff glossed in gelatin,
When it shines in wind-polished multicolor cellophane,
Harmonies from foreign deities
Spill translated rays round the enamel,
Then in the landscape
Fade in unison

Faint winkings of Sirius
From a flickering galaxy,
Moonlight warps, entangled in magnetism

Slathered buttery lethargy
The summer night begins to hum out a *yukar*
People of this world—*kanna-mosir*
Dream of the next—*pokna-mosir*

Note: A *yukar* is an Ainu saga. In one understanding of Ainu cosmology, *kanna-mosir* designates the world of above ground, while *pokna-mosir* designates the underworld.

From Collection “√3” Shichosha, 2016

Elle me raconte (She tells me)

She goes on to tell me, “Away beyond yonder, in a nameless place where ocean meets ocean, differences embedded in my mother tongue collapse under the sunlight, lines untangled in the water, the evenly interwoven spray becomes prism, becomes poetry, and all opens wide.”

*

Morning comes,
As per usual,
While the coffee is brewing,
I look toward the imminent appearance
Of someone from a distant continent
Thinking about dreams,
Before I leave the house,
Before I post on social media,
Must prepare the rhetorical flourishes and such,
Virtuously,
Via Kana, wind through the liaisons,
Thereby
Nothing but a mass of lines mended
On the exterior of the words,
What is irrelevant to us,
To those of us who read each other,
May be the speeches,
Or perhaps,
It may be the poetry

“The half-spoken words,
Unwritten lines: it is precisely these
That speak the truth.”

Long ago, on a street corner in Eurasia,
A girl closely resembling me

Rolled her accent into a ball in her hand
And spoke those words to me.

Or better said,
Since people read only what is written,
At times I tell myself it is not solitude,
I who commute between endless ends,
Today too
I alight in the blank margins

But even so, why is it that
Here too, in the land of Cartier,
Here too, in the urban tumult,
I have the feeling there's no one around,
Everything grows warm,
Just piling up,
Only I
Am wet with light,
Am breathing audibly,
Touched by the piling accumulation.
The lively bustle that will linger after,
Wandering lost,
Is listening.

*Kana is Japanese language's specific character.

Liaison is French language's specific grammar.

For poetic dance performance in Reims, France 2018

– All Translations by Jordan A. Y. Smith