

Kajii Motojirō, Poet of Darkness:

Four Translations and a Commentary

“Blue Sky,” “The Story of the Bamboo Water Pipe,”
“Underneath the Cherry Trees,” and “A Picture Scroll of Darkness”

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Kajii Motojirō (1901-1932) was fascinated by the darkness, in all its forms: as murky shadows on the ground, as forests shaped and twisted by the black of night, as a hollow, dark void concealed in a late spring sky. His simultaneous attraction to and repulsion of darkness was undoubtedly driven by his own battle with the shadows; at nineteen years old, Kajii was diagnosed with tuberculosis—an incurable disease at the time, which eventually consumed him at age thirty-one.

Before passing, Kajii left twenty completed short stories that were compiled into a single volume titled, *Lemon* (檸檬 *Remon*). Although Kajii’s work was mostly ignored by the literature community while he was alive, due to the efforts of friends such as poet Miyoshi Tatsuji, Kajii’s writing began to garner attention after his death, and today, the eponymous story of the collection can be found in high school textbooks across Japan.

Kajii researchers tend to think of *Lemon* in two halves, with the story “Winter Days” (冬の日 *Fuyu no hi*, April 1927) as the slice in the middle. It was around this time that Kajii was handed a grim diagnosis by a physician, and his battle with darkness tipped in favor of the shadows. From that point on, darkness began to play an increasingly major role in Kajii’s works. The four stories presented here—“Blue Sky” (蒼穹 *Sōkyū*, March 1928), “The Story of the Bamboo Water Pipe” (筧の話 *Kakei no hanashi*, April 1928), “Underneath the Cherry Trees” (桜の樹の下には *Sakura no ki no shita ni wa*, December 1928), and “A Picture Scroll of Darkness” (闇

の絵巻 *Yami no emaki*, September, 1930)—are all taken from the latter half of Kajii's oeuvre, thus they all share a fascination with darkness as a common theme.

As a writer, Kajii has several unique characteristics that distinguish him from his contemporaries. His style can best be described as a kind of prose poetry (散文詩 *sambunshi*) that is elegant, refined, and concise. Kajii frequently uses metaphors, and his writing is filled with vivid sensory imagery. Additionally, as Kajii was a physics student before switching to English literature, he occasionally uses scientific terminology or expressions in his stories. This tendency can be seen in Kajii's description of the young leaf buds in "Blue Sky" as "gas-like," his anatomical cross-section of a cherry tree in "Underneath the Cherry Trees," and in his detailed, methodical account of a midnight stroll in "A Picture Scroll of Darkness." It is perhaps this unusual, poetic style of writing that does not lend itself easily to translation, as there is currently no formal translation of Lemon, or any of the four stories presented here, available in English.

As Kajii's illness gradually worsened, his relationship with darkness saw an evolution. In "Blue Sky," the darkness Kajii discovers in the misty spring sky fills him with anxiety and dread—as if he has caught a glimpse of the ominous underside of reality in midafternoon. The shadow of pitch-black despair that overlaps with the "illusion of life" in "The Story of the Bamboo Water Pipe" is a testament to the tedium of Kajii's isolated life as a convalescent. In "Underneath the Cherry Trees," Kajii flagrantly upends traditional Japanese aesthetic notions by taking the image of cherry blossoms and juxtaposing it with the image of dead bodies, producing a combination that is both resplendent and grotesque. By the time of "A Picture Scroll of Darkness," however, Kajii's view of darkness transcends dread and horror; rather, he remarks on his "love" for the night, and indeed, the story is an ode to the beauty of darkness.

Although the themes of illness and darkness occupy a large portion of Kajii's

work, it would be perhaps be a mistake to say that his literature is dark or forlorn. Rather, there is a vitality, strength, and daring that courses through his writing. As Mishima Yukio commented in his review of “Blue Sky,” “while there are some writers who have sound bodies and sick spirits, there are also writers like Kajii Motojirō, who are ill but whose spirits are healthy and strong.”⁽¹⁾ Despite the inevitability of a premature death, Kajii never averted his eyes from his illness, or tried to escape from it. Rather, he relentlessly pursued and investigated it with a simultaneously poetic and scientific gaze until his completion, and by doing so, was able to transform it into something poignant and beautiful.

There is something that can be learned from Kajii’s love of darkness. As Kajii himself comments, most modern cities—especially Tokyo—are flooded with light even during the nighttime, making complete and total darkness no longer accessible in day-to-day life. What is it that we lose by being separated from this experience of total darkness? Kajii’s stories seem to tell us that, in exchange for a feeling of security, we have lost an opportunity to overcome our fear of the unknown, and to find unparalleled beauty in the shadows.

Note

- (1) Mishima, Yukio, “Sutegatai shōhin,” *Mishima Yukio zenshū vol. 27* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1975), 333.

Blue Sky (March 1928)

One afternoon in late spring, I was sunbathing on a bank next to the village highway. A large cloud was languishing in the sky, a wisteria-colored shadow etched onto its underbelly. That pale lavender shadow, coupled with the cloud's massive bulk, infused it with a vast, boundless melancholy.

I had been sitting on the edge of the broadest stretch of flatland in the village. Most of the village's terrain was comprised of mountains and valleys, so that everywhere one looked, there was nowhere without an incline. The landscape seemed as if it were under the constant threat of the law of gravity. Moreover, the alternation of light and shadow imparted the people of the valley with a constant restlessness. In such a village, there was no other spot that quite calmed my spirit as much as the view from this flatland did—high up above the valley, bathed in sunlight. The view, which was filled with sunlight from dawn until dusk, felt nostalgic to the point of sadness. The land of the Lotus-eaters, where it is always afternoon—that was how I imagined it.*

The cloud was stretched out above a forested mountain on the other side of the flatland. The ceaseless cries of a cuckoo sounded from within it. Aside from a glittering watermill at the foot of the mountain, everything within sight was still, and all of the hills and fields, speckled with the gentle light of late spring, were imbued with a quiet listlessness. The cloud seemed as if to be mourning this landscape of idle misfortune.

* Translator's note: the Lotus-eaters were a tribe from Greek mythology that subsisted on the narcotic lotus fruit, which lulled those who ate it into a state of listless content. The term can also refer to idle pleasure-seekers in general.

I shifted my eyes to the direction of the valley. Beneath my gaze, two valleys converged from amidst a cluster of mountains centered in the heart of the peninsula. Between the two valleys, where one mountain stood between them like a wedge and another closed off the front end like a painted screen, a line of mountains appeared to be piled up on one another like a twelve-layer kimono along the upstream of one of the valleys. On the farthest horizon, a mountain towered in the distance, clutching a giant, withered tree on its peak, making it appear in an especially heightened state of emotion. Every day, the sunlight would pass over these two valleys and set over that mountain. In the early afternoon, however, the light had just fallen past the first valley, and the nearest side of the mountain that was stuck between the two valleys was resting conspicuously in a death-like shadow.

In mid-March, I often saw a strange smoke rise up from the cedar forests, as if there had been a fire. The smoke was actually pollen that the cedar trees would scatter in unison, if the day happened to be sunny and windy, with the right temperature and amount of humidity. By this time, however, pollination had long been over, and the cedar forests had a rust-colored, settled tinge to them. The gas-like green buds that clouded the zelkovas and oaks had matured into their early summer stage. The young leaves, well into their prime, each formed their own shadow; the gaseous dream was no more. Only the chinquapins, thick and swollen up in the valley, appeared as if they had been dusted with soybean flour after countless germinations.

As my eyes played over the landscape, I watched where the clouds, thin enough to allow blue sky to peek through, endlessly swelled up over the top of the cedar mountain, where the two valleys converged. Gazing at the sky, I felt myself slowly, unconsciously, being sucked in. I watched as the clouds swelled up, burst forth, and—illuminated by sunlight—spread their massive bodies

across the sky.

This slowly circulated along with the ceaseless generation of clouds from one end of the sky. On the other end, the swirled-up edges of the clouds disappeared into the heart of the blue void. There is no other sight that stirs the human heart with such a profound, unspeakable emotion as when watching the clouds change shape. Eyes that attempt to ascertain that change inevitably drown in the unending cycle of generation and dissipation. While that cycle repeats itself, a strange, fear-like emotion seizes one's chest. That same emotion begins to stifle the throat, until the body gradually loses its equilibrium. If this continues, then at its climax, the body will seem as though it is falling into an abyss. Like a paper doll on a firework, losing strength from all parts of the body...

I was swept up in this feeling as my gaze gradually drifted beyond where the clouds were. At that moment, my eyes happened to land upon a curious sight. The source from where the clouds swelled up was not right above the now-shadowed cedar mountain, but rather a spot somewhat distanced from there. You could make out the shape of the clouds only after they came to that spot. From there, they slowly revealed their giant bodies...

I was seized with the inexplicable feeling that there must be something like an invisible mountain hidden in the sky. As this thought came to me, something else surfaced in my mind: it was the memory of a moonless night at the village.

That night, I had been walking along the highway without a lantern. Along the road, there was a solitary house encompassed by an immense darkness, and the light in the house made it resemble the kind of scenery one observes when looking through a knothole in a door. The light from that house was casting a glow on the highway road. All of a sudden, a figure appeared in the light. It was most certainly a villager, who—like myself—was walking without a lantern. I did not think the figure to be odd or suspicious, yet I found myself watching

it as it disappeared into the black void. The light reflected on the figure's back slowly dissolved as it became consumed by the darkness. From there, it remained only as an afterimage on my retinas, then as a figment of the darkness, then—finally—even that figment was severed. I felt a prick of fear at the thought of that ultimate darkness, in which place has no meaning. I imagined myself vanishing into the darkness in that same despairing sequence, and was overcome with an unspeakable terror and passion...

When that memory surfaced, I came to a sudden realization. What was in the sky, where clouds swelled up and disappeared, was not an invisible mountain, nor some mysterious cape; it was nothingness! —It was teeming with a blinding white darkness. I felt a great unhappiness, as if my eyesight had temporarily weakened. At that moment, the more I gazed at the misty, deep blue sky in that season, the more it seemed to me as nothing but pure darkness.

The Story of the Bamboo Water Pipe (April 1928)

There were two paths I used for when going out on walks. One was a highway that ran along the side of a valley; the other was a mountain path accessible from the highway by crossing a hanging bridge over the gorge. The highway path had an excellent view, but because of its nature, one's concentration soon faltered. In contrast, the mountain path was somewhat gloomy, but it calmed the spirit. Each day's mood determined which path I chose.

For this story, however, I must choose the quiet mountain path.

After crossing the hanging bridge, the path immediately plunged into a cedar forest. The branches of the cedars obscured the sunlight, lending a cool dampness to the path. Stillness and isolation seemed to press in on one from all sides, as when traversing the inside of Gothic architecture. My eyes drifted below of their own accord. All manners of seedlings, moss, and ferns dotted the sides of the trail. These diminutive plants felt somehow familiar—they appeared as though they might break into insidious chatter at any moment, as in a fairy tale. Along the sides of the trail, exposed red clay worn down by rain assumed a shape just like craggy, weathered rocks. A small rock had been placed upon each sharpened peak. This path was not completely devoid of sunlight, however; the sunbeams that fell through the tree branches created a soft, candle-like glow here and there on the path and on the trunks of cedars. The shadows of my moving head and shoulders appeared and disappeared within these pools of light. Some of the light beams, almost too fragile to be believed, were dyed green by the blades of grass. I tried lifting my walking stick up and examining it; its splinters were sharply reflected in its shadow on the ground.

Only a short time after discovering this path, I frequently came to walk in its hushed surroundings with a particular anticipation. I aimed for a spot where cool air, as if from an icehouse, flowed onto the path from between the cedar trees. A single, shabby bamboo water pipe was hidden within that deep, dark space. If I listened closely enough, I could hear the faint murmur of water coming from the darkness beyond. What I anticipated was that sound.

How did I come to be so captivated by such a thing? On an exceedingly quiet day, my ears—patiently searching for the sound—discovered the mysterious charm it possessed. Although it was some time before I realized it, I eventually discovered that while listening to that beautiful rustling sound, the surrounding landscape would undergo a strange metamorphosis. The roots of the cedars were dark and damp, with only scentless, scrawny wild orchids growing in patches. And as for the water pipe—of course, like its surroundings, it was merely an old, decaying thing laid down in that space. Despite my rationality telling me, “it’s coming from there,” if I listened to that clear, limpid sound long enough, my sight and hearing would lose their unison, and my spirit would be filled with that peculiar illusion and its curious charm along with it.

I experience a similar feeling whenever I gaze at the blue flowers of the spiderwort plant. Their particular shade of blue is oddly deceptive, tending to blend in with the green of wild grasses. I happily believe that this is a kind of optical illusion that comes from the spiderwort flowers possessing a hue similar to that of the sky, or the ocean. The lure of the invisible sound of water was somewhat similar.

Instability, like a small bird quickly flitting from branch to branch, irritated my senses. Impermanence, like a mirage, filled me with sorrow. The sound’s mystery deepened further and further. Before long, it began to ring like an auditory hallucination in the midst of the dark, gloomy surroundings bestowed

onto me. A flash of light illuminated my being. At that moment, I thought, “Ah! Ah!” It was not, however, because the infinity of life dazzled me; it was because I had to witness deep despair all around me. What an illusion, indeed! Like a drunk who sees objects in pairs, I was forced to witness two images that come from the same reality. One was illuminated by the bright light of ideals, while the other was burdened by pitch-black despair. As soon as I attempted to distinguish the two, they overlapped to become one, and I returned to my original, tedious reality.

The water in the bamboo pipe dries up if there is no rain. On certain days, my ears would become completely numb to all sounds. As a flower that has passed its peak, the water pipe eventually lost all of its mystery for me, and I found myself no longer lingering by its side. Yet, whenever I pass by that spot on the mountain path, I cannot help but think about my fate in the following way:

“I have been assigned an eternity of tedium. The illusion of life is overlapped with despair.”

Underneath the Cherry Trees

(December 1928)

There are dead bodies buried underneath cherry trees!

You can believe it, all right. Otherwise, how could the cherries bloom so magnificently? I've been restless for the past few days, because I couldn't trust that beauty. But now, I've finally understood; there are dead bodies buried underneath cherry trees! Oh, you can believe it.

Why is it that every night when I return home, of all the many tools in my room, why should I be reminded of something as small and thin as a razor blade?—you said you couldn't understand that—and frankly, neither can I—but I think this and that are just the same.

No matter the species of flowering tree, whenever it reaches full bloom, it diffuses a mysterious aura into the air around it. It's as when a spinning top comes to a complete halt, or when a piece of music is expertly performed, carrying a sweet illusion with it—like a halo surrounding the scorching hot hallucination of reproduction; it never fails to stir the human heart with its mysterious, virulent beauty.

Yet, for the past few days, that same beauty has made my heart ill. For some reason, I couldn't fully trust something about that beauty. Instead, it made me anxious, melancholic, empty. Now, though, I've finally understood.

Just try to imagine that underneath each cherry tree, gorgeous and resplendent in full bloom, a dead body is buried. I think now you'll understand what was making me so uneasy.

Horse carcasses, the dead bodies of dogs and cats, and of course human corpses—all of them rotting and flowing with maggots, all unbearably smelly. All

of them leaking—drip, drip!—a crystal-like liquid substance. The roots of the cherry tree embrace the cadaver like a greedy octopus, sucking up the liquid with root hairs like the feeding tubes of a sea anemone.

What makes those delicate petals, what forms those elegant stamens? I can envision that crystalline liquid being sucked up by root hairs, forming a silent procession up vascular bundles, as if in a dream.

...Why do you make such a grimace? It's a splendid cross-section! I feel as though I can truly gaze at the cherry blossoms now. I've been freed from the mystery that has troubled me over the past few days.

Two or three days ago, I went down to the valley and walked along the tops of stones. From among the sprays of water, here and there and there and here, ant lions emerged like tiny Aphrodites, dancing high above the valley, pointed at the sky. As you well know, it is there that they perform their beautiful marriage. After walking for a time, I came upon something out of the ordinary. It was inside a puddle, left over from where the water in the ravine had turned into shore. The surface of the puddle shone brilliantly, as though petroleum had accidentally spilled into the water. Just what do you think that was? It was the countless dead bodies of the ant lions. They covered every inch of the water's surface, their wings overlapping and emitting a luster similar to that of spilled oil. It was their grave for after spawning had ended.

When I observed that gruesome sight, something pierced my chest. I tasted the same grotesque joy as a perverse fellow who digs up graves to partake of the corpses.

In this valley, there is nothing that pleases me. The fowls of spring—the bush warblers and great tits—and the white sunlight clouded in a green fog of young leaf buds; these things by themselves are merely vague images. What I require is atrocity. When that balance is achieved, those images finally become clear. Like

a demon, I'm thirsty for despair. And only once my despair is complete may my spirit finally attain peace.

...I see you're wiping your underarms. Did you break a cold sweat? If so, then we are the same. Oh, there's nothing to feel uncomfortable about. Just imagine it as sticking, clinging semen! Then our despair will be complete.

Ah, there are dead bodies buried underneath cherry trees!

I have not an inkling as to where the image of the dead bodies came from, yet now, they have already become one with the cherry trees, and I cannot rid myself of the image, no matter how hard I try to shake it.

At last, now I feel as though I have the same right as the other villagers to drink sake beneath the cherry trees!

A Picture Scroll of Darkness (September 1930)

Recently, a notorious thief that sent Tokyo into a frenzy was arrested. The thief claimed that within total darkness, if he had but a single staff, he could run for miles at a time. By hoisting the staff in front of his body and constantly thrusting it forward, he could run through fields—or any sort of place—blind.

Upon reading this article in the newspaper, I was unable to conceal a pleasant shiver of fear.

Darkness! In its heart, we are unable to see anything. The endless pulsations of an even blacker darkness draw in on us closer and closer; rational thought is impossible when in its bosom. How is it that we may step forth into a place, not knowing what it holds? Certainly, we have no other choice than to move forward with dragged feet; yet, each step into that darkness is brimming with uneasiness, fear, and agony. To take that step with confidence, we must call upon demons. Step on briars with bare feet! We must be passionate for such despair.

In the darkness, if we are able to discard our volition, then a wonderfully deep sense of peace will encompass us. To conjure up such an emotion, we merely have to recall the experience of a blackout in the city. Once the power fails and the room turns to night, we initially experience an inexplicable feeling of discomfort. Yet, if we change our mood and have fun with it, that same darkness transforms into a soothing restfulness we cannot savor beneath the light of a street lamp.

What is the meaning of that peace we experience in the midst of deep darkness? “I am hidden from the eyes of everyone” — “I have become one with the vast night” — is that what this feeling is?

For some time, I lived in a sanatorium in the mountains. It was there that I learned to love the darkness. Just beyond the valley, I could see Mount Karekaya, which looked in daytime as if golden-haired rabbits were playing on its peak. At night, however, it transformed into jet-black awe. Trees that I had paid no special attention to in the daytime appeared in the sky as twisted, deformed shapes. One usually had to carry a lantern when going out at night, but a moonlit night meant that a lantern was unnecessary—this sort of discovery is the city dweller’s first step in knowing the darkness for when they unexpectedly find themselves in the mountains.

I relished going out into the darkness. I would stand at the foot of a large chinquapin near the edge of the valley and gaze at a solitary lamppost on the distant highway. There is not a sight more moving than gazing at a tiny, faraway light from within the yawning darkness. I discovered that the light would travel all the way to my kimono, interwoven with the night, to faintly dye it with its feeble glow. At another spot, I became absorbed in throwing rocks into the blackness of the valley. A single yuzu tree stood there in the dark. One of the rocks passed through its leaves and scraped against a cliff. After a moment, the fragrant scent of yuzu fruit wafted up from out of the night.

These sorts of things are inseparable from the biting loneliness of life at a sanatorium. Once, I rode a vehicle to the cape of a port town, where I purposefully abandoned myself on a mountain pass at dusk. I watched as the cavernous gorge sank into darkness. As the night grew deeper, the ridges of onyx-colored mountains began to look like the ancient skeleton of earth. They broke out in conversation, without realizing my presence.

“Hey. How long do we have to keep doing this?”

I still remember one of those dark roads at the sanatorium as if it were yesterday. It was the path that I took home from an inn towards the lower reaches

of the valley to where my inn was located upstream. The road was slightly uphill, following the outline of the ravine. I suppose it was about three or four hundred yards in length. Along that path, street lamps were rarely to be found. In fact, I believe I could count them all in my head even now. The first lamp was located where you stepped out of the inn onto the highway. In summer, multitudes of insects swarmed around it. A single green frog was always there, stuck firmly to the bottom of the pole. If one watched long enough, the frog would routinely bend his back legs in a strange fashion and feign scratching his back. Perhaps small bugs from the street lamp would fall down and stick to him. He would do it as if it vexed him terribly, so I would often stand to watch him. It was a quiet spectacle to behold in the dead of the night.

After awhile, one came to a bridge. If one stood upon the bridge and looked out toward the upper reaches of the valley, a coal-black mountain blocked the sky in front. Halfway up the mountain, a single lamp was lit, and that faint light roused an indescribable feeling of fear, like the crashing of cymbals. Every time I crossed that bridge, I could feel my eyes wanting to avoid looking at that light.

Gazing downstream, the river was furiously creating rapids. Rapids appear white, even in darkness. They made thin, tail-like streams that disappeared into the shadows of the downward current. On the banks of the river, in the midst of a cedar forest, white smoke from a small coal-burning hut crept upwards along the steep precipice of a mountain. Sometimes, the smoke would trudge heavily towards the highway. This is why the highway would occasionally smell of resin, and other times of horse-drawn carts that had passed through in the afternoon.

After crossing the bridge, the road ascended alongside the valley. To the left: a drop-off into the ravine. To the right: the cliff-face of a mountain. In front: the white light of a street lamp. The lamp marked the back gate of an inn; it was a straight road to that point. My mind went blank when surrounded by that

darkness, because of the white light in front and the slight incline of the road. These things signify work assigned to the flesh. Once I reached the white street lamp, I stopped to catch my breath at the top of the road. Difficulty breathing; I had to stay still. I pretended I was standing on the road at night, staring dimly at the fields for no real reason. Presently, I resumed walking.

From there, the road curved to the right. A massive chinquapin stood beside the ravine. The tree's shadow was exceptionally large. If you stood under it and looked up, it appeared as if you were looking into the great expanse of a cave. Sometimes, the calls of an owl sounded from within its interior. On the side of the road, there was a small land marker, and the light it emitted made a bamboo thicket that was spilling onto the path glow white. Among all the different kinds of trees, bamboo is the most fluorescent. Bamboo thickets, growing in patches here and there on the mountains; even in pitch-black darkness, they project a faint, white light onto their surroundings.

Passing through, the road curved around the mountainside and suddenly opened up to a spacious clearing. How is it that one's field of vision can change the heart so much? Once I reached that spot, I felt that I was able to shed the uncertainties that had occupied my heart until that moment. A new resolution was born within me, and I was filled with a quiet passion.

This landscape of darkness has a simple, yet powerful, composition. On the left-hand side, mountain ridges, like the back of a reptile, crept along the opposite side of the valley, framing the night sky. A blackened cedar forest circled in front of me like a panorama, shrouding the path ahead in deep darkness. From the right-hand side, a cedar mountain leaned into the foreground. The path continued around this mountain. The road ahead was buried in inexorable darkness. The distance until one reached this darkness was about one hundred yards or so. In that span was a single house, and in front of it was a tree—

seemingly a maple—that was soaking in light, like a magic lantern. That spot alone was richly lit inside of the immense landscape of darkness. The road ahead was also faintly illuminated, but this had the effect of making the darkness beyond that point seem even blacker, as it swallowed up the path.

One night, I noticed there was a man in front of me, who was—like myself—walking alone without a lantern. His figure had suddenly appeared within the pool of light in front of the house. The man slowly entered the darkness, with the light reflected on his back. I watched this scene with a peculiar sort of feeling. To phrase it bluntly, it was the feeling that, “soon, I, too, will disappear into the darkness, like that man. If someone were to stand here and watch me, I would surely disappear in the same way.” The disappearing figure of that man was just that emotional for me.

Walking past the front of the house, the road approached a cedar forest that lined the valley. A steep cliff loomed on the right-hand side. The road there was bathed in complete darkness—what a dark road it was, indeed! It was dark even on moonlit nights. The longer one walked, the darker it became. Anxiety gripped my heart. When my anxiety neared its climax, a rushing sound abruptly sprung up from underfoot. It was a gap in the cedar forest. The sound of the rapids from directly underneath had suddenly surged up through that gap. The noise was deafening, enough to cause confusion in one’s mind. Occasionally, it sounded as though a group of carpenters or plasterers were having a mysterious kind of drinking party in the middle of the valley, their high-pitched laughs echoing into the night. My heart seemed ready to break. Just then, a lone street lamp appeared on the path ahead. The darkness ended there.

From that spot, my room was near. The street lamp marked the corner of the cliff; my inn was just around the corner. A road is comforting if one gazes at a street lamp while travelling it. And so, I walked that street with an ultimate sense

of relief. However, let us not forget about foggy nights. Lights seem farther away when they are clouded by mist. It creates an odd sensation, like no matter how far one walks, one will never reach their destination. The usual feeling of relief dissipates, and instead, one feels far, far away.

The landscape of darkness never changes. I walked this road countless times, and each time, I repeated the same fantastical visions, until their impressions were engraved into my mind. The highway at night, trees blacker than darkness—their murky shapes are traced into my eyelids even now. Whenever I remember them, I cannot help but think that the city I live in at present—flooded with lights even at night—as dirty and abhorrent.