



Poet Sakutaro Hagiwara

On the gleaming ground bamboo growing.....bamboo, bamboo, bamboo growing
(‘Bamboo’ from *Howling at the Moon, Tsuki ni Hoeru*).

Sakutaro Hagiwara, one of Japan’s leading poets, spent his final years in Setagaya. Many must have been struck by the vivid imagery and rhythm of his poems through school textbooks or other publications. Sakutaro departed from the forms and rhythms of traditional poetry and sought new ways of expression, breaking new ground with his collection of poems: *Tsuki ni Hoeru (Howling at the Moon)*, which firmly established his position on the poetry scene.

The era in which Sakutaro was active was filled with a climate of ideals for the new era and culture that blended Japanese and Western influences. He himself was also interested in photography, music and design, and attempted to express in a variety of ways. Sakutaro’s words and expressions from his youth when he yearned for the city and new Western culture, to his later years when he experienced divorce and family breakup, show a strong will of an artist who dared to see another world within mundane realities. His attempts to convey a sense of more than just words using everyday language is congruous with the trends of contemporary poetry and continues to influence many poets and authors to this day.

Sakutaro Hagiwara 1886-1942

A poet born in Gunma Prefecture. From when he was a student at Maebashi Middle School, he submitted tanka to prominent literary magazines such as *Bunko* and *Myōjo*. He began writing poetry after being inspired by Saisei Muro’s poems and made his debut in the world of poetry when his work was published in the magazine, *Zamboa* which was presided over by Hakushu Kitahara. In 1917, he published his collection of poems *Tsuki ni Hoeru (Howling at the Moon)* that established his style of colloquial free verse, marking a new epoch in modern poetry. Other works include anthologies of poetry such as *Aoneko (Blue Cat)*, *Junjo Shokyokushu (Collection of Innocent Short Pieces)*, and *Hyoto (Icy Island)*; a collection of aphorisms, *Atarashiki Yokujo (Fresh Desire)*; essay on poetry, *Shi no Genri (Principles of Poetry)*; critique on poetry, *Nihon-eno Kaiki, (A Return to Japan)*; and the short novel, *Nekomachi (Cat Town)*. In 1931, he moved to Shimokitazawa in Setagaya, and the house he designed and built in Daita two years later became his final residence.