

Spectacle & Pigsty

Kiwao Nomura



Translated by
Kyoko Yoshida &
Forrest Gander

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Selected Poems of
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Kiwao Nomura was born October 20, 1951 in Saitama Prefecture, Japan. He graduated from Waseda University, majoring in Japanese literature. A leading writer of the post-war generation, he is in the forefront of contemporary poetry. At the same time, he is known to be a prolific critic, translator, and essayist on comparative poetics. His work has been translated into many languages and published in magazines abroad, especially in France and the United States. He has performed internationally and released two CDs of collaborations with musicians. He played a leading role in the Contemporary Poetry Festival 95: Poetry Goes Out and the Contemporary Poetry Festival 97: Dance and Poésie. In 2007, he organized The Festival of International Poetry: Toward the Pacific Rim. From August to November 2005, he was a fellow at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in the United States. In December of the same year, he served as a director of the Japan-European Contemporary Poetry Festival in Tokyo.”

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Introduction

Famous for electrifying performances of his work, Kiwao Nomura is revered in Japan, where he has been awarded major literary honors, including the Rekitei Prize for Young Poets and the prestigious Takami Jun Prize. His inspired work as a writer, editor, performer, organizer, and critic has altered the landscape of contemporary Japanese literature. Two CDs of his readings with musicians have generated a following in both Japan and France.

Nomura's work is iconoclastic—at once playful and heady, saturated by his interest in philosophy, Japanese shamanism, music and art. A poem ostensibly about a pigsty and Oedipal fixation incorporates references to Nietzsche and French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in such a way as to suggest the pigsty as a metaphor for self and poem. (Nomura's insistent syntactical conjunction of "pigsty" and "I" underscores this metaphor). Throughout his work, Nomura overlays the visible world of criss-crossing streets with the microscopic world of "nerve ants," refusing to acknowledge any fundamental difference between cosmic and molecular, far and near, moment and whole, instant and eternity. His poetics, as such, run current with the writings of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose books (on cinema and on Nietzsche, in particular) stress the importance of intuition and insight as a means for disrupting our creatural habits. Both Deleuze and Nomura envision reality as ceaseless movement and invention.

The longest sequence included here is based on a pilgrimage to the place where Kunikida Doppo, a celebrated poet from the turn of the century, once lived. Stylistically, the poem takes place in what French theorist Guy Debord might call "Situationist Drift." Doppo's lodge site is real in as much as it is a historical marker of the spot where Doppo once lived, but it is not real, since the lodge collapsed long ago and the city of Tokyo has risen around its ruin. While the poem's speaker ambles through the city toward the lodge site in order to pay homage to the old poet, he remembers Doppo's poems and wrestles with the continuous, even "infinite" presence of the past in the obliterations and transformations of the present. As his meditation

intensifies, he gradually releases himself from the impossible ambition of arriving at any meaning small enough to be nested in the toponym (as Nomura calls it) or *manifestation* (as Deleuze calls it), “Doppo’s Lodge.” Instead, the sojourning poet submits himself to chance encounters and perceptions, following the Deleuzian insight that “All becomes clear...if, beyond these manifestations, we aim our quest at Life itself.” Along the way to the site of Doppo’s lodge, a fabulous weave of recurring talismanic terms, wild shifts in tonal register, and word play keep both pilgrim-poet and reader alert and in thrall.

(そして豚小屋)

私は豚小屋が
ひとはひと星は星にうんざりして
いま異様に飴のように伸びてくる闇その闇かも

私は豚小屋が
その闇のなかをぼつぼつと光の染みさながらに
回帰する豚よあわれ

母の病んだ松果体の下の
私は豚小屋が
その永劫の梁から洩れる闇に溺れている叫び

私は豚小屋が
その叫びをなおも聴き取ろうとするとき
私より五倍も私なるべし

母の病んだ松果体の下の
私は豚小屋が
その永劫の梁に陽が糞尿のように激しく降る

あるいは糞尿が陽のように
私は豚小屋が
湯気を立てて笑う沈黙の土豊かならしむ

たがいに内に曲がり外に曲がり
たがいに促され誘惑されまたゆるやかに拘束され
私は豚小屋が

私は豚小屋が
眩暈とは全体が中心となることである
と知りコナラの葉むらひるがえるうつつ

毎日が眩暈だその縁から泡のように吹きこぼれて
私は豚小屋が
惑乱の私のかけらをさがす変かしら

(spectacle & pigsty)

it's pigsty I
the darkness maybe darkness stupendously stretching out now like taffy
man fed up with man star with star

it's pigsty I
pity the pig that eternally returns
to the darkness as spattering splotches of light

below Mother's diseased pineal gland
it's pigsty I
screaming drowning in a dark that fenestrates the eternal joist

it's pigsty I
must be five times more I than I
when trying to listen to the scream

below Mother's diseased pineal gland
it's pigsty I
gushing sunlight like nightsoil onto the eternal joist

or the nightsoil like sunlight
it's pigsty I
who mulch silence's muck while it laughs, steaming

each bent in bent out
each urged, cajoled, or shackled gently to another
it's pigsty I

it's pigsty I
vertigo: when the whole becomes center
attuned to the place where fat oak leaves flutter

every day is vertigo its margins boiling over like foam
it's pigsty I
eyeing pieces of I in bewilderment weird is it not?

私は豚小屋が
おお板々しい隙間から燃える頭蓋骨が見える
鹿色のオオスミハルカが流れ込んでくる

おお板々しい眠りの暑い壁
みつめているとぷつぷつと穴があき
私は豚小屋が

私は豚小屋が
なおも穴があき這い出てくる喃語の虫よ
私はやや肌に粟粒を生じをり

私は豚小屋が
死に給ひゆく母よ私を嚙下せよ嚙下せよ
そうして二度ともう私をひりだすな

二度ともう私をひりだすな母よ
私は豚小屋が
このむずがゆい身熱にすぎぬこのかたまりを

私は豚小屋が
いくつかの顔を浮かべてもみなまぼろし
その下から溶けた若い娘のような飢餓よあわれ

永遠が馬のかたちをして走り去ってゆくとき
私は豚小屋が
回歸してくるのは豚だいつも豚だ

私は豚小屋が
運んでいる不穏な筋肉隠れている
よい孤独わるい孤独朽ちかけの朽ちかけの

私は豚小屋が
ぬかるんでいる通路をどのように豚小屋へ
接続されるのかを知らず冬の夕ぐれ

it's pigsty I
see the burning skull through the pain-board gaps oh
fawn-colored Whirlaway gallops by

the thick fire wall of pain-board sleep oh
perforated with pinholes staring out
it's pigsty I

it's pigsty I
babbling bugs clamoring through the perforations
it's like I'm coming down with a rash of pinheads

it's pigsty I
swallow me swallow me Mother expiring
and never again shit me out

never shit me out again Mother
it's pigsty I
this crawling body this wad of nothing but heat

it's pigsty I
imagine faces but they're phantoms under
which the face of a girl comes clear as starvation

when eternity canters off in the shape of a horse
it's pigsty I
it's pig always pig that returns

it's pigsty I
packed with menacing muscles tensed
decent solitude crappy solitude crumbling crumbling

it's pigsty I
didn't notice in the winter dusk how
the muddy corridor leads to the pigsty

私は豚小屋が
この地上わけもなくコンビニに火をつけたくなり
筋肉がひかり豚小屋がうごめく

it's pigsty I
burning to set an earthly convenience store on fire no reason whatsoever
that muscles gleam and piggies wiggle