



Hitorigurashi [Living Alone]

By Tanikawa Shuntarō

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ひとり暮らし

谷川 俊太郎

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For half a century, the contemporary poet Tanikawa Shuntarō has demonstrated the utmost flexibility in his use of the Japanese language. Readers can only admire the extent of his sophistication and the precision of his phrases as they bring the familiar world into clearer focus.

Hitorigurashi is a collection of essays conveying the miscellaneous daily impressions of the poet—who in his younger days considered the basic unit of human society to be a man and woman as a couple—as he begins solo life in his late sixties after three marriages and three divorces. The second half is in the form of a diary covering the years 1999 to 2001.

Centered on the poet's residence in Suginami, a district not far from the heart of Tokyo, the book describes his casual excursions to exhibitions, movie theaters, and social gatherings with young poets, as well as meals farther afield at the homes of European friends. He is an unusually healthy senior, living by himself and taking a light pleasure in his lifestyle, although some nights he feels lonely as he listens to the radio.

“Yearning to return to an illusionary community where we can belong, we call and call each other's cellphones, toil away at directionless email chat, throng at rock concerts, assemble at *izakaya* pubs, and throw ourselves into dubious religions,” he writes. “We, who once lived in unity, cannot bear the loneliness of individuality.” The poet's ruminations on society and the world today are highly apt. (OM)

Tanikawa Shuntarō

Born in Tokyo in 1931. In 1952 he caught the attention of the literary world when his poetry appeared in the magazine *Bungakukai*. In the same year he published his first collection, *Nijū oku kōnen no kodoku* [trans. *Two Billion Light Years of Solitude*], which received high praise for its youthful sensitivity. His many other works include *62 no sonetto + 36* and *Teigi* [trans. together as *62 Sonnets and Definitions*], *Seiken shirazu* [trans. *The Naif*], *Kotoba asobi uta* [Wordplay Songs], and *Toromuso corāju* [Tromsø Collage].



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谷川 俊太郎

1931年東京都生まれ。1952年「文學界」に詩を発表して注目を集め、処女詩集『二十億光年の孤独』を刊行、みずみずしい感性が高い評価を得る。『62のソネット+36』『定義』『世間知らズ』『ことばあそびうた』『トロムソコラージュ』など、著書多数。

谷川俊太郎は半世紀にわたって、もっとも柔軟に日本語を活用し続けてきた現代詩人である。身近なものを見つめて書く短い文章の正確さ、洗練の度合いも、さすがというほかない。

『ひとり暮らし』は、若い頃は男女の一对が人間社会の基本単位と考えていたこの詩人が、三度の結婚と離婚を経て单身生活を営み始めた、60代後半の日々の雑感を伝えるエッセー集だ。後半は1999年から2001年にかけての日記形式をとる。

東京都心から少しだけ離れた杉並区内の家を拠点に、若い詩人との懇談や展覧会、映画館へと気軽に出かけ、欧州の友人宅へも足を延ばして食卓を囲む。これほど軽快に暮らしを楽しむ、健康な独居老人もめずらしい。たまにはラジオに耳を傾け、「寂しさ」を想う夜もあるけれど。

＜私たちは帰属出来る幻の共同体を求めて携帯電話をかけまくり、電子メールで埒もないお喋りに精を出し、ロックコンサートに群がり、居酒屋にたむろし、怪しげな宗教に身を投じる。＞ <「和」で生きてきた私たちは、「個」の孤独に耐えられないのだ。＞ 同時代の社会と世界に思いをめぐらせるこの詩人の考察は、なんと的確であることか。(OM)

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