

Toriko Takarabe

translated by Hiroaki Sato

Rhetorical Dog

From the end of the wasteland a wind runs toward me like a wild dog,
I wrote, and thought that there was something I didn't like about "like a wild dog."
That must have been because it was a useless modification.
Over the wasteland in the darkness before daybreak something that I can't tell is a wind
or a wild dog runs toward me.
That is the way I turned my first sighting into words.
The fact was, from the end of the wasteland a wild dog ran toward me like a wind.
That is, several starving wild dogs as one solid mass ran toward me.

Winds smell like a hairy beast.

Winds have unidentifiable hair streaming from them.

Winds ferociously collide against one another.

Winds whirl around a newborn, growling low.

Winds run taking what is sweet and soft.

Because the day hadn't broken yet,
the dogs even looked like a whirlwind.
Let's say the corpses of refugees you haven't been able to take away are lying there.
Will wind be more "poetic" than dog?
Will it give more sense of self-salvation?
In the end the newborn will be eaten by wild dogs.
Even if there is that reality,
I don't want to make a distinction between wind and wild dog.
Why, both run with their hair streaming from them, don't they?

Toriko Takarabe was born in Niigata in 1933, but immediately emigrated with her family to Manchuria, where she lived until 1946. She began writing poetry around the age of 30, and published “Itsumo miru shi” (“The death I always see”) in 1964. Her collections of poetry include *Watashi ga Kodomo datta Koro* (When I was a Child), *Saiyûki* (Journey to the West), *Chûtei Gentô Hen* (Magic Lantern in the Courtyard), and *Uyû no Hito* (Nonexistent Person), many of them winning prestigious Japanese awards for poetry. She currently lives in Tokyo, and translates poetry from modern Chinese.

A leading translator of Japanese poetry into English, **Hiroaki Sato** has won the 1982 PEN American Center Translation Prize for *From the Country of Eight Islands: Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Anchor Books, 1981, with Burton Watson), as well as the 1999 Japan-United States Friendship Commission Japanese Literary Translation Prize for *Breeze Through Bamboo: Kanshi of Ema Saikō* (Columbia, 1997).