

第14章

ジム、島崎藤村を見くださす

私はジムに明けジムに暮れの毎日でありましたが、この頃、昼間の弁護士事務所での仕事だけではあきたらず、夜はバー・リツ・語学学校で日本語を教えたりもしています。

『あきたらず』と言えば、ちょっと聞こえがいいのですが、実情はジムが仕事・勉強・仲間同士の付き合いで忙しい時、ひとりアパートでヘロンとしてジムの電話を待ち焦がれているようのが嫌だったからなのです。

しかし、日本語を教えることは、そもそも大好きだったし、なによりもジムが、私は私で時間を浪費せず、有意義に使っているという風に、誇らしく見てくれるのが励みでもありました。

そういうわけでその頃は、私も時間があり余っていたわけではないのですが、それにしては、ジムがああ言った、こう言った、式のことを微細に我が父母に報告していました。ジムのことを『路傍の石』としか思っていない母は、当然これお気に召さずで、

「長文の手紙を書くより、その時間を読書に向けたら？」

と、しばしば手紙で言ってきました。

ところで、この読書とジムですが、ジムは少年時代、外で遊ぶことに忙しくて、世界の名高い児童文学、また私が少女時代に読みふけった

Chapter 14

Jim Doesn't Like Shimazaki Tōson

I thought of Jim every minute of the day.

I continued to work at the law firm, but I soon found typing legal documents day after day was not very stimulating. I could do more. I started to teach Japanese, a few nights a week, on the side, at the Berlitz School of Languages.

Well, I think the truth is that I did not want to be just waiting for Jim to call me at night, sitting in the apartment, doing nothing. Indeed, Jim was always busy working, studying at night, and going out with his buddies. I loved to teach Japanese to Americans who were interested in learning this difficult language. Besides, I liked to see Jim being proud of me, using my time meaningfully.

Thus, I kept myself occupied. I never stopped writing to my parents, though. Whenever I had a chance, I sat down and wrote about Jim – every detail of what Jim said, and what Jim did.

My mother, who was obviously not a big fan of my spending such an inordinate amount of time writing about Jim, kept saying in her letters that I should read books just like I used to do as a young girl.

Incidentally, Jim said that he was too busy to read when he was young, for playing outside with his friends was his top priority.

探偵小説など(例えば、アガサ・クリスティ、イーデン・フィルポッツ、エラリー・クイーンなどなど)は、まるで読まなかつたと、自分でも言つていました。

ある時、私がアガサ・クリスティの『アクロイド殺害事件』の話をして、

「これはね、探偵小説を沢山読んでる、いわゆる探偵小説通の人でも、犯人は絶対最後まで分からないくつになってるの」

と前宣伝し、「読んでみる？」と聞くと、俄然読む気になって、私の本棚から借り出して行きました。

翌日、たちまちジムから電話。

「まだ途中だけど、僕思うに、あれ、語り手の主治医が怪しいね」

ときました。

私は、忽ちまたも感嘆して、父母に筆を取り、

「探偵小説を読みなれてもいないのに、緻密な頭脳と、優れた分析能力がなかつたら、あの推理は出来ない筈！」

とかなんとか、。。。

He didn't know any of the world-famous children's books that I read. He didn't know any one of the well-known mystery writers that I read avidly in high school: Agatha Christie, Eden Phillpotts, Ellery Queen, etc.

One day, I told him about Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, saying that the book is notorious for its surprise ending, and that it won't let the most experienced and trained mystery book readers, who are good at finding the perpetrator before the end of the book, guess "who done it." That prompted Jim to read this famous book.

He called me the next day and said,

"I've read the first few chapters. I think the family doctor who is telling the story is the bad guy."

Well, let me tell you that Christie's Murder of Roger Ackroyd is known throughout the world as a landmark detective story because the author made the narrator the murderer, which was unimaginable before this book. No other detective story writer had used that trick. It was how Christie challenged her readers.

I was completely taken aback, and I marveled at Jim's power of deduction. I recall writing to my parents, saying

"What an awesome power of analysis! He is brilliant! And, to think, he has not read any of the well-known detective stories of the world!"

又ある時は車の中で私が

♪名も知らぬ、遠き島より、
流れ寄る、椰子の実ひとつ、
故郷(ふるさと)の岸を離れて、
汝(なれ)はそも、波に幾月 ♪

なんて歌っていたら、訳してくれ、と言いました。
私が自分では一番好きな三番の、

♪実を取りて、胸にあつれば、
新(あらた)なり、流離(りゆうり)の愁い
海の陽の、沈むを見れば、
たぎり落つ、異郷の涙 ♪

を訳して差し上げると、ジムさん、

「その男はあんまりダイナミックじゃないね。リヨ
ーコのデートには向かないよ」

文豪島崎藤村もこれでは気の毒と、私は涙が
出るほど笑って、又その話をつぶさに、父母に
書き送る、という風でした。

かくしてジムは、文学の素養はなかったのですが、私が少女時代から熱中してた、アメリカ映画のことも、あまり知りませんでした。ハンフリー・ボガートの『カサブランカ』とか、エロール・フリンの『シー・ホーク』とか、私がまだ日本に居た頃見まくった映画について、まるで無知。私は、シカゴ市内で、そうした往年のハリウッド名画が上映されるチャンスがあると、決して見逃さず

One day, I was singing an old Japanese song, "The Little Coconut," in his car.

♪♪A lone coconut, traveling across thousands of miles of ocean, from a Southern island far away, is now sitting on this beach, quite forlornly.... ♪♪

Jim asked me to translate the song. I translated the third verse which was my favorite:

♪♪I pick up the lone coconut on the beach and I hold it tight against my heart. My solitude returns. As I watch the sun going down beyond the ocean's horizon, I feel once more that I am in a foreign land all alone, and tears come down my cheeks ♪♪

"Well," Jim says, "You wouldn't like the guy who wrote that poem to be your date. He's a wuss."

I burst into laughter. I am terribly sorry, Mr. Shimazaki Tōson, for my translation did not do justice to your celebrated poem.

I immediately wrote to my parents about Jim's dislike of the Japanese literary great.

[If the American readers are interested, here's the URL to tell you about this great Meiji-Taishō Era poet and novelist of Japan, Shimazaki Tōson:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C5%8Dson_Shimazaki]

It was obvious that Jim grew up without developing any love of the world's great literature. He didn't know much about the movies of his own country, either. He had little or no knowledge of Casablanca or The Sea Hawk, the American movies that I watched with my parents in Japan when I was young.

「絶対見て損する映画じゃないから」

と説得し、足を運んでもらいました。

先ずはヴィヴィアン・リーもジャネット・リーも、一緒にいたったジムですが、私がジムのお蔭で、プロ・スポーツに通じた如く、彼も私のお蔭で、次第に映画通となりました。メデタシ！

ジムは非常に同情心に厚く、わけ隔てなく他人への思いやりを示す人でしたが、一方厳しい面が十分ありました。

ある日ハイウェーを飛ばしている時、横から乱暴且つ失敬きわまる割り込みをしてきた車がありました。ふつうなら、コノヤローと、すぐさま追い越しにかかるのでしょうが、ジムは違います。その割り込み男のうしろにピタリとついて、同じスピードで執拗に走り続け、その男がうんざりして、レーンを変えれば、ジムも同時にレーンを変え、決して離れません。

「あいつは僕がすぐ追い越すと思ったんだろうが、こうして追い回されるほうが、どんなに我慢ならないか、思い知つただろう」

と落ち着き払って追跡し、その男が、ほうほうのていでハイウェーを下りていくまで、許しませんでした。

He barely knew names like Humphrey Bogart or Errol Flynn. Whenever there was an old-time movie shown in Chicago, I would say,

"Oh, I saw that one in Japan when I was in junior high, but I want to see it again with you. You won't be disappointed!"

Eventually, Jim, who didn't know the difference between Vivien Leigh and Janet Leigh, became somewhat knowledgeable about Hollywood movies in general, just like I learned a lot from him about football. Bravo!

Jim was full of compassion. He was caring about everyone, indiscriminately. He had, however, a sufficiently unforgiving side.

One day, as we were driving on Lake Shore Drive, a car cut him off in a very rude and insolent way. An ordinary man would immediately speed up and try to pass the offender. Not Jim. He went close behind him, and stayed right there, driving at the same speed.

"Let's see how long he can take this. This is much more annoying for him than if I had passed him," said Jim. If the man changed lanes, Jim changed lanes, and finally, the man fled for an exit, obviously feeling quite distressed and scared by Jim's tenacity.

My Mother's Letter Dated July 13, 1970:

<... You and your tireless praise of Jim.... I know that you are far from being homesick,

<1970年7月13日、母より>

[、、、毎度ジム礼讃の手紙で、、、異国にあってホームシックも起こさず、楽しく暮らせることは、あなた本来の持ち味にも依り、又周囲の人にもよることは分かりますが、手放してジム礼讃を繰り返すことに一種の不安も持つのは、親心の取り越し苦労でしょうか、、、

あなたがいつか悲しむことははっきりしているのなら、矢張り今のうちに身を引くほうが賢明だ、とゆう気がします。でも人間は誰でも、死という最後の大悲劇に向って、喜びや悲しみの織りなす人生行路を、まっしぐらに急いでいるのですから、それを強く薦めるわけではなく、人生最後の死を、別に大悲劇と感じなくてもいいわけで、要はあなたの現在の心の在り方でしょう、、。

一つだけ私の思うことは、ジムは戦争の真っ只中にいた経験の持ち主だとゆうこと、これは人間形成の過程で、男の人には大変な影響があるのです、、、あなたはもっと理性的に彼を見つめる必要はあります、。

自分の小さな周囲にのみ、恋々としているようなところも見えるあなたに、少し社会風を吹き込もうと思い、安岡章太郎の『アメリカ夏象冬記』と写真集『日本の花々』を送ります。]

「自分の小さな周囲」とは、即ちジムを指してゐるに違いなく、我が厳しき母は、こうして、

and you are thoroughly enjoying your life in a foreign city thanks mainly to your personality, your built-in stance in life, so to speak. Naturally, it's thanks to the people around you, also.

I worry about you, nonetheless, for you certainly praise Jim a little too excessively in your letters. I hope I'm worrying for no reason, for mothers are known to do this for their daughters....

Nevertheless, if you are destined to grieve some day, then you'd be wise to pull back before it's too late. Men and women all take this journey of life, where joy and sorrow intertwine and crisscross, back and forth. We are all hurrying, as it were, straight to the final denouement of life we call death. I don't mean to force you to pull back now. No one needs to view the final moments of his journey as tragedy. What's important is your present state of mind, your inner self....

One thing about Jim is that he has experienced the war. He was in the midst of the Viet Nam War. In the process of making a man out of a young boy, that experience means a lot.... You might want to think about him with a little more "level" head, a little more like a grown-up woman....

I know you are smart, but it is also true that you are too attached to your small world surrounding you currently. I wanted to send a breath of fresh air from the outside world to awaken you a little bit, so I am sending you two books: one is Shōtarō Yasuoka's recently published

しばしば私に本を押し付けてきました。ジムのことを恋々と書く時間があるなら、本を読みなさい、と。

ところで、敬愛する母の言ではありますが、上記、ジムが「戦争の真っ只中にいた経験の持ち主だ」という点に、少々物言いをつけるなら、以下です。

第9章に挿入した写真から分かるように、ジムのベトナム時代というのは、最初から最後まで、サイゴン市郊外、冷房完備の陸軍司令部オフィスにおけるデスク仕事だったそうで、彼は弾丸が飛来する前線を駆け回ったわけでもなく、泥まみれの重装備でジャングルの中を行軍したわけでもなかったそうです。その間、鉄砲の音は只の一度も聞いたこと無かったとか、。。。

さて、次に、これはその頃であったか、または、もっと後になってからであったか、記憶定かならずですが、ある時私はジムに次のようなことを言いました。

「私はあなたが大好きで、それはコップになみなみと注がれた水のような。つまり、あなただけで、コップの縁までヒタヒタと水が一杯だから、他の人間が入る余地はないの」

これに対しジムは、ちょっときびしい顔をして、次の如く返答：

「リョウコ、それは間違いだろう。

essay, "America As I See It," and the other is a photo collection entitled "Flowers of Japan." >

There she goes again! She means Jim by the "small world surrounding you." Also, didn't I say earlier that my mother kept saying in her letters that I should read books, rather than write about Jim? I don't think I liked the novels or essays of Shōtarō Yasuoka, anyway.

Additionally, if I may add one more comment regarding her insightful *"One thing about Jim is that he has experienced the war. He was in the midst of the Viet Nam War,"* Jim's Viet Nam experience was limited to his one-year desk work in an air-conditioned office at the Army Headquarters near Saigon (ref. photos in Chapter 9). He was not in the battlefield where the bullets flew. He did not march in the muddy rice paddies, being weighed down with heavy equipment. He said he never once heard the sound of artillery!

I don't recall exactly when it was, but I'm sure it was around that time of my friendship with Jim when I said,

"Jim, I like you so much. You see, it's like a glass of water filled to the rim. You are completely and at all times filling my glass to the rim, there's no more room in my glass for other people to come in."

Jim responded to this, looking a little serious:

"Ryoko, I'm afraid you are wrong to think that way. If you truly love me, the water in

僕のことを真実愛してるなら、コップの水はもつと溢れ出て、誰をも優しく受け容れてあげられる余地が、いつもある筈じゃないか。」

your glass will keep pouring out, and it will have room always to receive and accept others generously into your glass."

<End of Chapter 14>