

Weeping Celestial Maiden (2) :
田辺聖子「泣き上戸の天女」

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Weeping Celestial Maiden (2) —田辺聖子「泣き上戸の天女」*—

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要旨: 主人公野中は、誤って入ったミナミのバーで、自分と同年代だというトモエと出会い一緒に暮らしはじめるが、ある日ともえは野中の前から忽然と姿を消してしまう。野中はトモエと過ごした日々を回想するが、天女のようなトモエの魅力は様々に思い出すものの、いなくなった理由について何も思い当たる節はない。本翻訳は、野中とトモエが暮らすきっかけとなった奈良旅行で、野中が宿泊する部屋の確保を終えて戻ってくる場面から始まる。

キーワード: 田辺聖子、翻訳、メタファー、異文化理解

She said, “Tomorrow is Sunday, isn’t it?” with a satisfied look. They were guided to a room surrounded by a dark grove of trees which looked like deer could drop in at any time. When they got out of the bath, they heard a ringing temple bell somewhere, which was an atmosphere unique to Nara.

“Ms. Higashiura.”

“Yes?”

“Your face looks like a figure carved on the face of the octagonal stone-lanterns standing in front of Great Buddha Hall in Todaiji Temple...”¹

“Oh.”

“... it was a celestial maiden or a Buddhist saint, I don’t know for sure, playing the flute...”

“Is that so? I didn’t know that one.”

“Shall we go see it tomorrow? It reveals a sweet gentle face.”

“By the way,” said Tomoe, “Do you feel a draft around your shoulders?”

“No, not really.”

Tomoe continued, chuckling. “I feel cold around my shoulders. Could I get into your futon?”

“Of course. The gods of Kasuga-Taisha Shrine and Todaiji Temple would be angry if I let the celestial maiden catch a cold.”

Tomoe had said she was ashamed of her figure in her 40s, but her lower belly was, like those of old

Buddhist statues in Nara, soft and like a white marshmallow.

Mr. Nonaka said, “You said, it has been a while, right?”

“Did I say that?”

“You did. I like your honesty.”

It was fun for forty-somethings to be able to flirt quietly. He felt he remembered an old haiku: Full of fun, if you are still, in your 40s.

The next day was a fine, warm sunny day too, not like winter at all. While they had breakfast, a deer actually walked through the moss garden to the edge of the veranda.

They left the inn and started walking to Todaiji Temple, but Tomoe said she was worn out because of the long approach to the First Torii Gate last night, so they caught a taxi there.

“You should take care of your legs as you get older,” said Tomoe continuing that she could not laugh at the elderly woman proprietor.

“That woman proprietor, I heard she’s younger than you.”

“Well, I don’t know.”

Under the bright sunlight in winter, Tomoe’s hair looked thin, brownish, and white at the roots. Mr. Nonaka thought she may dye her hair, but he also had a hairline that recedes from his forehead, so they were even. More than that, Tomoe took her time and

enjoyed unhesitatingly the night before, so for Mr. Nonaka, Tomoe seemed like a woman in her 30s. When he saw her in the morning, contrary to his assumptions, she looked older than her age, so he was not sure.

But, her smiles were always nice, both at night and in the morning.

Tomoe bought an omamori good luck amulet and postcards. Looking up at the octagonal stone-lantern, Mr. Nonaka thought about Tomoe and himself, and that they could appear to be on their honeymoon.

Then, it really came true. Tomoe brought her luggage into Mr. Nonaka's apartment and began living with him.

She was surprised that Mr. Nonaka was so picky, but when he ordered, "Don't buy the one sold at the supermarket. You know the tofu shop in the old-fashioned market across from the station? I like the kind sold there," she went to buy it there every day. She was a good at cooking.

Tomoe said, "...because I've been cooking for myself for decades," but, the foods Mr. Nonaka would eat had been gradually increasing, though he was still picky. When Mr. Nonaka said she should quit her job, she really quit her job and stayed at the small apartment every day. When he went out for drinks with Mr. Takahara, one of his university classmates, and Mr. Takahara asked, "Are you still single?" Mr. Nonaka told his story briefly.

"No kidding! Glad to hear that. How's it going?"

"She's a celestial maiden, there's nothing to complain about her," Mr. Nonaka said and really thought so.

Tomoe was very attentive, amiable, and she did everything very well, so Mr. Nonaka now did not go out for a drink. He went straight home after finishing work. Both of them eventually stopped visiting the bar of the elderly woman proprietor. They should go there together before long and tell her their story, so let's not visit there until then, Tomoe said.

"Are you getting along well with her?" asked Mr. Takahara, and Mr. Nonaka replied,

"Getting along so well. Perfectly."

"It was worth the wait, wasn't it? But, if she's a celestial maiden, she might fly away again. Can I

come visit you?"

Mr. Takahara came with his wife whom Mr. Nonaka had met a few times. Mrs. Takahara was about 35 or 36, and looked brilliantly young, which could have been because she had had no children yet. Compared to Tomoe, Tomoe appeared obviously much older. However, thanks to Tomoe's hospitality, they enjoyed conversation and had a great time. It would not have worked out like that if it had only been Mr. Nonaka. Mr. Takahara gave a relieved look to Mr. Nonaka, and left his house in a good mood.

It was time to get married and make things official, Mr. Nonaka thought and told Tomoe so, but she seemed to not be enthusiastic. "That's it. Just complete the application process," Mr. Nonaka insisted strongly, and she answered, "hmm." Then, the next day, Tomoe disappeared suddenly.

When Mr. Nonaka called Mr. Takahara, he seemed unable to entirely understand what had happened, and said, "You say she 'disappeared'? ... Is there any chance she's gone back to her parents' home, or somewhere else?"

"I've no idea. She said she had no relatives at all."

"Or, she went shopping and got involved in an accident?"

"She left a note."

"What did it say?"

"Thank you very much for everything. I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but please don't look for me. The tofu for dinner tonight is in the fridge."

Mr. Nonaka read the note aloud. Tomoe wrote in a meandering cursive that was difficult to read.

"Hmmm... I don't want to say, but she didn't do anything like steal all your savings?"

"No, though I gave her access to my accounts."

"Hmmm..."

"I have no idea." Mr. Takahara continued, "Doesn't she have any friends? You lived with her for more than a year, are there any letters from her friends or relatives?" Mr. Nonaka had lived comfortably with Tomoe, and he did not ask her about her relatives of his own accord because he did not want any weird relatives to visit them (which might be the reason why he is odd). This was a special circumstance which is why he said they should have their marriage

registered or they should go see Tomoe's relatives.

Tomoe left with her mirror stand and futon. Mr. Nonaka came up with an idea and tried calling some moving companies. However, he did not gain even a single clue because, these days, people might have someone carry their luggage by hiring a moving rental truck themselves.

"What went wrong?" he kept thinking, and one week, two weeks passed. No matter how he looked at it, he could not think of how he could have offended her. Tomoe was in a good mood until the night before.

Every day, while eating simmered tofu, Mr. Nonaka thinks of Tomoe who has 'suddenly disappeared.' He also thinks, "Did she have a boyfriend?" and keeps thinking, "...but she didn't look that way at all." He comes home from work every day with the hope that she will have already returned.

But she did not come back. Mr. Nonaka is thinking of looking for her instead of waiting for her return.

On the way home from work, he dropped by the South District of Osaka and went to the bar of that elderly woman proprietor. The bar was there as before, but the light was off and the bar's neon sign was gone. He spoke to a girl who seemed to work at the bar next door. He pointed at the bar and asked,

"This bar's closed today?"

"It seems to have gone out of business. The woman proprietor is ill."

"Do you know where she is hospitalized?"

"Well, no. But, a liquor supplier for the bar might know."

Mr. Nonaka got directions to a liquor shop in the back of the amusement quarter. The shopkeeper with an apron came out and said,

"Michikusa? Hmm, I heard she's in a hospital in the North District of Osaka, but I don't know. She's always complaining that something is wrong with her, though she's not that old?"

"She's about forty...or fifty?"

"No, no. She said she was born in the year of the ox, so she's surely over sixty." ²

Mr. Nonaka was embarrassed that he could not remember the order of the zodiac years, mouse, ox, tiger very well, but he was surprised to hear she was

at least sixty.

"Are you sure you're talking about the proprietor of 'Michikusa' ...?"

"Of course."

He felt like it might be true that the old woman proprietor was sixty, but he cannot see how Tomoe could be older than her.

It was totally incomprehensible, he could not understand it at all.

Mr. Nonaka had not heard from Tomoe the name of the bedding company she had worked at.

He looked bedding companies up in a phone book and wrote down the numbers in his pocket notebook.

During a break at his work, he tried calling them. He started from the larger companies and worked his way down to the smaller ones, asking them whether a woman named Tomoe Higashiura once worked there.

There were no clues.

These days Mr. Takahara often calls him at night.

Mr. Nonaka hoped the phone calls were from her at first. He had a hope that Tomoe would call him, but the one who calls him is always Mr. Takahara recently.

"The other day you said you were surprised to hear the age of the old woman proprietor," Mr. Takahara said.

"Yes."

"I talked to my wife about that," Mr. Takahara stammered which was unusual for him, "I hate to say this, but she said she thought Tomoe looked pretty elderly."

"Hmm."

"Women are intuitive, aren't they? In fact, she said she liked Tomoe because Tomoe was nice, but her age... Tomoe looked a bit over forty."

"But,..." Mr. Nonaka said and bit his tongue. The gentle line of her chubby abdomen like that of old Buddhist statues in Nara, her fluffy, soft skin, her white body like marshmallow, the warmth enveloping him nicely... but it is hard to tell Mr. Takahara something like "Certainly, those are lingering fragrances of her sexual allure."

Finally, Mr. Nonaka felt the urge to yell, "Age doesn't matter!" Nonaka just wanted Tomoe to come back. The feeling had been getting stronger. If he had

never met her, in that case, his life would have been peaceful.

Since the two no longer visited the old woman proprietor's bar, they had found a cheap bar near home, where they were thought of as a happily married couple from the beginning, and they would sing duets such as "Izakaya" in karaoke. Even the memory of it is becoming increasingly maddening for Mr. Nonaka. He knows he is getting irritated. He is frustrated with bottled-up, confused emotions.

Aside from that, however, he was amazed that people can conceal themselves easily if they chose to do so. Tomoe's destination is not traceable because she never officially registered at his address.

"Was she someone else's wife?" asked Mr. Takahara.

Mr. Takahara has become gradually enthusiastic about deducing the reason for Tomoe's disappearance.

"Maybe, she returned home and went back to her original family or something. You won't know if it's her true name or not."

If Tomoe Higashiura is not her true name, it will be impossible to find her however hard he asks around at bedding companies.

There were two company names left from those he looked up in the phone book. He thought he would stop after calling them. At the last company, a woman with a piercing voice answered.

When he just said "Higashiura Tomoe," the piercing voice replied,

"Ms. Higashiura has already quit our company."

"When?"

"She retired last year."

"Retired."

"Because she turned sixty last year."³

Just to be sure, he asked for Tomoe's address and phone number. The information he received was the same as what Mr. Nonaka already knew. That was an apartment Tomoe had lived in by herself until she came to Mr. Nonaka's apartment. Mr. Nonaka called the number, but someone else had already rented it.

"How many years did Ms. Higashiura work?"

"According to our records, 30 years of service."

The piercing voice seemed to be bothered by his

long phone call, so Mr. Nonaka got off the phone. Did Tomoe make herself invisible because Mr. Nonaka was forcing her to register their marriage, and she was afraid of him finding out her true age?

"Sixty..."

"Signing and submitting the documents...that doesn't matter." Tomoe once said, but Mr. Nonaka replied stubbornly "No way." He should not have been that persistent. That had driven Tomoe into the corner. Now, all things make sense for Mr. Nonaka at last.

"She's like a celestial maiden," he thought about attentive Tomoe, but, in fact, women around the age of sixty are kind, attentive, sociable, cautious, and leave nothing to be desired. On the other hand, they become bold and sometimes over-sentimental, aggressive to the world, saying "Let's fucking sing a song." There was nothing special that she could come to a man's futon and say, "Could I get into your futon?"

Tomoe's thin hair, her white hair at the roots, age spots on the back of her hands, and calluses on her ankles, all of which now make sense to Mr. Nonaka. Tomoe is not sixty for him, though she is really sixty. He fondly remembered her when she transcended age.

He recalled the memories with nostalgia at Kasugataisha Shrine on Setsubun when it was very hot. Mr. Nonaka checked his mailbox morning and evening.

A letter addressed to Tomoe was forwarded from her old address for the first time. That meant she probably arranged to have her letters forwarded here at the post office when she started to live with Mr. Nonaka.

It read "Monument to Women Who Lived Alone.' A memorial service and regular meeting."

Mr. Nonaka did not know what this was about. The letter explained that the monument was built at the corner of a temple in Kyoto, which is famous for autumn leaves. A memorial service will be held because some people were enshrined together there this year. The membership fee is 7,000 yen* including lunch.

Mr. Nonaka decided to go. He has no idea of what the 'Monument to Women Who Lived Alone' is like,

but the letter was addressed to Tomoe, so she may perhaps turn up to the event.

It was a cold Sunday, shady, and chilly to the bone in the Sagano area in Kyoto. There was a crowd of around 200 women in the temple grounds, some were sitting on stools covered with red rugs, some on folding chairs, and they were having a pleasant chat. It was something like an alumni association, but everyone was middle-aged or elderly and today, they were all women almost the same age as the old women proprietor and Tomoe.

Steaming hot cups of amazake were served at the temple, and the women passed them from hand to hand in a friendly atmosphere.

In the meantime, new visitors came incessantly, and they exchanged greetings in an exaggerated way.

At the makeshift reception, where they collected the membership fee, Mr. Nonaka took the letter out of his coat pocket and showed it.

“Oh dear! Is Ms. Higashiura absent today? Who are you? Are you her brother?”

A very horse-faced woman looked up at Mr. Nonaka and spoke to him. She wore thin-rimmed glasses and beautiful makeup and spoke openheartedly with generous expression, so she must be a career woman. Mr. Nonaka told her that he had come to this event because he wanted to see Tomoe.

When he said he did not know about this association, she explained quickly that some women who lost their young men in the war have remained unmarried and are getting older. They have no relatives and no place for their ashes after they die. Therefore, they joined together and built the ‘Monument to Women Who Lived Alone.’

When a member passes away, she can ask the temple to place her ashes in a grave and a memorial service for these women is held once a year. In addition, there is a regular meeting with a party to socialize, and everyone looks forward to the day.

“The purpose of this association is engraved on the back of the monument. Please have a look at it later,” the woman said briskly.

Looking at the horse-faced woman and the women at the event, Mr. Nonaka thought, “that makes sense.”

The women who have lived and worked by

themselves have an air similar to Tomoe. They are innocent and girlish.

Then, like Tomoe, it is difficult to tell their age.

However, they are efficient and businesslike.

They had a mysterious charm. They wore bright clothing and good make-up. Furthermore, it seemed that they liked chatting.

They talked a lot more than younger girls and never got tired of it.

Mr. Nonaka looked carefully for Tomoe from an inconspicuous place, but she did not seem to show up.

The ‘Monument to Women Who Lived Alone’ was about 2 meters high. On the back of it, the easy-to-understand message was engraved in easy-to-read characters. *A lot of promising young men were killed in the war, but we women were also victims. The women were deprived of their loved ones, lived by themselves and got old without enjoying the blossom of youth. We are against a war and long for peace, so that this sadness is not repeated hereafter...*

“Men wouldn’t do such a thing,” Mr. Nonaka thought, while he felt sorry that Tomoe belonged this association. Tomoe must have been twenty immediately after the end of war.⁴ Mr. Nonaka wondered if she could experience the blossom of youth at the age of sixty, which she could not enjoy at twenty.

Tomoe belonged to this association so it was clear that she was a woman in her sixties. But, Tomoe was Tomoe for Mr. Nonaka, she was not an old woman in her sixties.

Mr. Nonaka remembered Tomoe with affection, the woman who said the night in Nara, chuckling, “a woman’s figure in her forties is not something to see, I think.” How mischievous she was!

“A woman in her forties? Oh, she was kidding me,” he thought.

He recalled Tomoe who had a cuteness that never ages with nostalgia. As long as Tomoe can stay the same, Mr. Nonaka wanted to live with her, though he is not sure how long they could have stayed together.

“Tomoe, you know what? Tomoe is what she is. It may be because I’m an oddball, but the things like your age will fly away if I really love you. What flew away was not ‘your age,’ but you yourself... I can’t

believe you did it, Tomoe... I really don't care about it..."

Mr. Takahara's words, "She flew away because she's a celestial maiden, just as expected," came to his mind. Mr. Nonaka thought "Then, there might be some celestial maidens among old women such as the members today, instead of only among young girls," and looked over the women, but he could not see any that could take the place of Tomoe.

Buddhist monks were sitting in front of the 'Monument to Women Who Lived Alone,' and voices chanting sutra prayers resounded in the freezing winter sky. The memorial service seemed to have started. The women were all sitting behind the monks and listening attentively to the sutra chants.

Mr. Nonaka trudged out of the temple. Men will not be able to build something like a 'Monument to Men Who Lived Alone.' He thought about buying some tofu in Sagano area, trying hard to distract himself.

* この翻訳は田辺聖子「泣き上戸の天女」（『田辺聖子全集』第5巻（集英社））にもとづいている。この作品の翻訳についてお世話下さった田辺聖子文学館学芸員住友元美先生、快く翻訳の許可を下さった田辺美奈様に感謝いたします。初出は『オール讀物』（1986年2月1日発行）。

前半の「Weeping Celestial Maiden (1) —田辺聖子「泣き上戸の天女」—」は、本紀要 111 ページ～118 ページに掲載されている。

この小説は3人称小説だが、野中の視点から語られる。物語の前半は、野中のトモエの回想と友人高原との会話が占めている。トモエは野中の記憶の中だけに登場し、その点では「天女」のようなとまへの非現実感がうまく表現されているように思う。とくに、トモエの「大福餅」のようなおだやかな顔、「マシマロのような」体という表現を考えると、いずれも白くて柔らかいイメージが共通している。野中が（例えば肉好きではなく）豆腐にこだわりを持つ設定になっているのは、同じように豆腐が白くて柔らかいからであろう。つまり、白くて柔らかいイメージは、野中の頭の中に存在する、夢のような好ましいものとして描かれている。

それに対立するものとして、物語後半の「独り生きた女の碑」の石碑は固く、野中の頭の外にある現

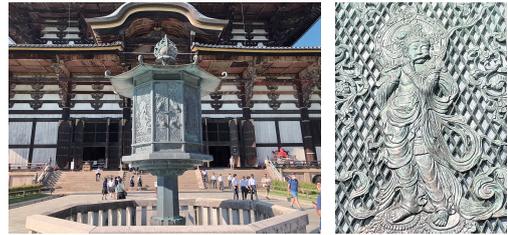
実である。また、野中は姓だけで言及されるのに対し、トモエは「東浦ともえ」という姓名が明確にされているのにも注目したい。

さらに、トモエが「男性から見た天女」というだけの設定であれば、物語では一見「謎」となっているトモエの本当の年齢をはっきりさせる必要はないし、むしろそのほうが非現実感が増すであろう。しかし、以前の勤務先の情報からトモエは61歳であることが明確にされる。これらは、「独り生きた女の碑」と同じく、野中が「天女」のようだと思わせる記憶の中のトモエとは別に、現実の世界を生きたトモエが存在することを強調する仕掛けであると思われる。

作者は、野中の心情に寄り添うように、トモエに対する恋慕を繊細に描きながらも、それとは別の、野中には見えないトモエの「現実」を冷静に対比させている。

Notes:

- 1 「東大寺の大仏殿の前に立ってる八角の灯籠」



東大寺八角燈籠（国宝）。八面になった部分を「火袋」といい、そのうち四面には音声菩薩が笛や笙などを奏でている（奈良県ホームページ https://www.library.pref.nara.jp/nara_2010/0586.html）。

- 2 「いやあ、あんた、丑やいうてはったから六十にはなっちはりまっしゃろ」から、バーのママの生年は1925年（大正14年）だと推測される。
- 3 「東浦さんは去年六十なので」から、小説中のトモエの年齢は60～61歳。バーのママとの年齢差はあまりないであろう。
- 4 「トモエは終戦直後、ハタチであったはずである。」バーのママよりも年上であることを考えると、トモエは1924～1925年生まれ、作品の舞台は1985～1986年頃であることがわかる。

Comments for readers:

Seiko Tanabe is famed for highlighting the lives of women at a time which did not have a diversity of women in Japanese literature. Ironically, Weeping

Celestial Maiden is told entirely from a man's perspective. Yet, much like reality, there is a layered depth in possible interpretations of what is actually happening in Tanabe's story. From Mr. Nonaka's perspective, Tomoe believed that he would have broken off their relationship if he had found out that she was in her 60s. Tomoe thus left before Mr. Nonaka could find this out. This interpretation centers Mr. Nonaka's opinions, desires, and reality as the fulcrum on which all events turn. However, Tomoe may have had other motivations. The society of women that Tomoe belonged to shows the importance of the youth and life that women of this time period lost to the war. By living with Mr. Nonaka as a woman in her 40s, Tomoe may have been creating an identity which allowed her experiences that had been previously lost to her. Thus, for Tomoe, the deepest loss in Mr. Nonaka's discovery of her age could have been her identity, not the relationship itself. Regardless of interpretation, Tanabe closely examines the repercussions of society's categories of gender and age. For a writer who excelled at hyper-localization of stories into a specific time, culture, and place, Tanabe also exposes underlying social conditions which make her work relevant decades after its publication.

