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Nokorimono Blues
残りものブルーズ

Adam J. Lebowitz

The bomb has fallen
And we are left behind
The earth has shaken
And we are left behind
The proposition has changed
And we are left behind
The seasons rearranged
And we are left behind

CHORUS

We are nokorimono
Warera nokorimono
We are nokorimono
Warera nokorimono

The Chuo-sen’s derailed
And we are left behind
The ship has sailed
And we are left behind
There’s a fire in our bed
And we are left behind
And the chicken’s lost its head
And we are left behind

CHORUS

All the bottles are empty
And we are left behind
Newspapers fading
And we are left behind
Someone’s shot the piano player
And we are left behind
And Aso’s got a razor
He’s also left behind

CHORUS

The colonels are revolting
They’ve been waiting too long
So we’d better gird our loins now
And get ready for their song

The colonels are revolting
‘Cause we’ve been left behind
So we’d better gird our loins now
Or we’ll be left behind

CHORUS

Author’s note:
残る nokoru “to be left behind” is intransitive. The transitive form is 残す nokosu “to leave behind”. The passive tense of the transitive form is 残される nokosareru “to be left behind (by something)”. Both nokoru and nokosareru are used with 生きる ikiru “to live” forming the compound verbs ikinokoru and ikinokosareru, although generally they appear in the past tense ikinokotta/ikinokosareta.

In general, ikinokoru is translated as “survive”, although a more literal and I believe accurate translation is “to be left behind with life”. This interpretation suits in particular the transitive-passive ikinokosareta since agency is implied (i.e., something has made something else to be “left behind”). When this verb is used for people surviving a difficult and dangerous time such as conflict it assumes a deeper and more existential conceptualization. That is, it is a post-cataclysmic “altered state” where one literally achieved the impossible by continuing to live.

Being “left behind” indicates living through an event, having lost someone or something precious during the event, and bearing some record of it. This record can either be physical, such as a scar, or emotional. In addition, one remains attached to the pre-event period by virtue of having survived the event separating “past” from “present”.

In literature, nokoru/ikinokoru is a narrative mode used to describe catastrophic events associated with the Second World War. For example, Oh’oka Shōhei used his position as “being left behind with life” to express his experiences at the battlefield and to remember his fallen comrades. Atomic bomb survivors (hibakusha) are referred to as ikinokotteiru in the present-progressive. The narrative mode also allows the post-war generation to connect directly with the event.

Nokorimono Blues is a comment (with some black humor) on the condition of being “left behind” through events in recent history.

「生き残る」および「生き残される」について

「生きる」とは「今に居る」ことを意味する。「生き残る」とはどこが違うのか。「残る」の意味は「今に居る」だけではなく、むしろ「前から存在した」ということで、「生き残る」というのは「前からまで生きつづける」ということなんだ。では、なぜ「生き残される」のだろうか。答えは、「前」と「今」の間に「事件」なんかが起こってしまい、生きつづかないほど険しかったとかがえられる。つまり、生きつづけるのは無理あるいは不条理なのだ。だから「生き残る・生き残される」人々が「前」と「今」（事件「以前」と「以後」）の境を超えられたとしても、自分の中の一部がまだ事件と関わっている。

本作は、暗いユーモアを取り上げながらいろんな「事件」を使って「我々残りもの」の状況を描こうと試みている。実際にこれは「曲」だからサウンド・ファイルができたら OTB サイトにて聴いていただけたら嬉しく思う。

About the author: Adam Lebowitz teaches at the University of Tsukuba.