

Preface

I once had a collection of essays published which was later translated into English under the title, “*Viva Nippon!?*” It featured “ruminations on Japan’s cultural, educational and industrial institutions” as stated in the subtitle.

More than ten years have passed since then, and not surprisingly, my surroundings couldn’t stay as they were. I myself couldn’t remain as I once was. I added those things that have taken place in these last ten years to those published before, and the resulting book was delivered at a reception party given by my close friends upon my retirement from Hiroshima University.

In Japanese academia, universities are classified into five categories, in terms of retirement age; 60, 63, 65, 67 and 70. They are organized in a pyramid-like hierarchical framework in such a manner that the younger the retirement age, the higher up they are in the pyramid. A possible interpretation of this correspondence is that the universities placed on a higher level of the pyramid are also those requested to do research of higher quality which can’t be expected from aged professors in the universities lower down in the pyramid.

Recently, universities with no exceptions have been encouraged to start running research activities independently from the financial

support given by the government. This will accelerate the breaking down of the pyramid-like university hierarchy, resulting in a classification of universities into two extremes; universities which strive to collect a good amount of money successfully from industry, and the others.

Since the professors in the former group of universities such as past imperial universities are supposed to be good at pursuing research, they think themselves worthy of staying in the professor position longer than ever in order to maintain high-level research activities at their universities. They now try to extend their retirement age, giving yet another interpretation of an age-based regulation for retirement.

I myself retired on the last day of the fiscal year after turning 63 years old, following the current government regulations. March 31, 2000. The book delivered at my retirement party was entitled, “*Pierrot Requiem*”, a requiem of whoever the *pierrrot*, a clown, was.

*Bah, are you a man?
You're a clown!
Put on your costume and powder your face.
The audience pays and wants to laugh.
And if Arlecchino steals Colombina from you,
Laugh, Pagliaccio ... and everyone will applaud!*

From “*Pagliacci*” by Ruggero Leoncavallo
(English translation by Lionel Satler)

When I became aware of my upcoming retirement, I decided to provide the book in English for potential readers as once I did for “*Viva Nippon!*” in the hope that it will be available in the market.

In selecting the stories to be included in this English version, I have tried to exclude the stories which have already appeared in

“*Viva Nippon!?*” except in cases where they seemed helpful in explaining why and how *Pierrot* has come to take the title role of this book. The stories thus selected have then been arranged essentially in the order at which they had actually been written since it seemed reasonable and even more convincing, resulting in a natural flow of stories reflecting the change of environments, as well as the shifts of personal concerns and experiences of *Pierrot* himself.

Pierrot was always delighted when becoming acquainted with good or bad human activities (SCENT OF A LAGOON). He started worrying about the human lives anticipated in the future while people were excited with them (BATTLE OF WITS!?), and is now much more experienced and aware of the uselessness of shouting whatever he believes in public (MORE THAN JUST ...). He is also well prepared to accept public criticism upon his laziness, thanks to his age.

In providing the English version of “*Pierrot Requiem*”, I first needed to find a good translator. One day I asked Ms. Chie Okazaki who had once helped me as a secretary at my university laboratory to do the English translation. She majored in English literature in her university days, and I discovered with great pleasure that she was one of the very few exceptions among English specialists educated in Japan who are good in grammar but poorly versed in oral English itself.

It was indeed a joy to touch the heart of her English every time I read one of her translations. I also thank her for her thoughtfulness in leaving me room for a slight contribution to the improvement of her English, specifically from a syntactical point of view. I’m thankful indeed for her extraordinary patience in completing the translation as well as her thoughtfulness.

As Japanese, we, of course, also needed the help of a native English speaker. I, therefore, asked my friend Caxton Foster who always used to say, “Shout anytime you need my help,” to assist

us. He immediately returned an OK signal via e-mail but a couple of weeks later, Caxton passed away in January 1999, and I shouted in grief for the loss of my great friend.

Later, in October that year, I visited the place of Caxton's eternal sleep in Cape Cod on a business trip to the United States. His wife, Mary Lou Foster, who had been helping with the publication of Caxton's last work, "Orrery", agreed to take Caxton's place in helping us complete the translation of my book. Mary Lou as well as Caxton appear in "*A Little White House in Cape Cod*" in this book. She had done most of her part of our collaboration but the unanticipated change in her physical condition didn't allow her to complete it.

I was at a complete loss for a while. Fortunately, however, I came to know extraordinarily professional people in a new work environment which I chose after retirement, who voluntarily went through the whole manuscript to refine the English and complete the translation. I'm deeply indebted to them for their friendship. It's incredible indeed. They are Professor Damon Chapman and Professor Yukie Setoyama of Hijiya University in Hiroshima. They, as well as Chie-san and Mary Lou, are among the most trustworthy people I have ever known and it is indeed a remarkable thing that I've come to know just how truly invaluable they are throughout this collaborative work.

Lastly, I can't go without referring to the contribution that my wife, Masako, has made. When my previous book "*Viva Nippon!?*" was published, I conveyed my thanks to her by stating, "To my wife, Masako, who really hoped this book would never be published." Now I would like to thank her, specifically referring to her patience, which has finally made me a bit more moderate than ever before in my way of thinking.

Tadao Ichikawa
September 2000