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行方不明の真相は？－イーディス・ウォートンの『ざくろの実』論考

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「ざくろの実 (Pomegranate Seed, 1931)」あらすじ (1931)

シャーロット・アシュビー(Charlotte Ashby)は弁護士のケネス・アシュビー(Kenneth Ashby)が 12 年間連れ添ったエルシー・アシュビー (Elsie Ashby) の後妻として、エルシーが亡くなった 2 年後に結婚していた。シャーロットは友人と過ごす時間も大切にすが、夫のケネスや前妻の二人の子ども、ジョイス (Joice) とピーター (Peter) のことを気に掛けるニューヨーク上流階級の典型的な良妻賢母としての役割を果たす。しかし、新婚旅行から帰ってきた日に家に届いたケネスあての差出人不明の灰色の封筒に入っていた手紙を見たケネスが目を輝かせた様子を見たシャーロットは手紙のことを気にする。手紙の書き手は筆跡から女性のものだとシャーロットは思い込み、手紙が届くたびに顔色が悪くなり、頭痛を抱えるケネスのことが心配になる。ケネスは決して手紙の詳細については口を割らない。このようなケネスの様子を懸念したシャーロットは手紙から逃れるために旅行することを提案し、渋っていたケネスも旅行すること、旅行の手配は彼がすることをシャーロットに約束する。しかし、次の日にケネスが出勤した後、彼からの連絡は途絶え、行方不明となる。シャーロットとケネスの母親であるアシュビー夫人 (Mrs. Ashby) はケネスにあてられた 9 通目の手紙を読んで手がかりをつかもうとするが、その筆跡は亡くなったはずの前妻のエルシーのものではないかと考えてしまう。しかし、どうにかして二人は正気に戻り、シャーロットはケネスの搜索を依頼するために受話器を取り上げることになる。

タイトルの「ざくろの実」

ギリシア神話に由来する。豊穡の女神デメテルの子ペルセポネがざくろの実を食べてはいけないという約束があったにもかかわらず、冥界の王ハデスの策略によりざくろの実を口にしてしまったことがきっかけで、ペルセポネは冥界と関わりを持つことを余儀なくされてしまった。

本作品について（ウォートンの晩年作）

1. The evocative tales of women and ghosts (*A Historical Guide to Edith Wharton*, 252)
2. Edith Wharton's literary vigor and inventiveness were far from flagging. (Lewis 511)
3. . . . in part as a defense of Persephone's acceptance of her place in the underworld (Waid 202)

産業化都市化の進むニューヨーク

4. . . . she had most liked to return to that quite house in a street long since deserted by business and fashion. The contrast between the soulless roar of New York, its devouring blaze of lights, the oppression of its congested traffic, congested houses, lives, minds, and this veiled sanctuary she called home, always stirred her profoundly. (219)

5. Outside there, . . . skyscrapers, advertisements, telephones, wireless, airplanes, movies, motors, and all the rest of the twentieth century. (225)

6. . . . he rambled on about municipal politics, aviation, an exhibition of modern French painting, . . . and the installing of the automatic telephone. (237)”

一方シャーロットはニューヨークの雰囲気から逃れたい

7. . . . her husband’s long shabby library, full of books and pipes and worn armchairs inviting to meditation. (219-220)

シャーロットの思いのままに過ごすひと時、しかし家族のことも大切にする。

8. . . . she sat reading by the fire, or answering notes at the pleasant roomy desk, or going over her stepchildren’s copybooks, till she heard her husband’s step. (220) .

結婚前のケネスの書斎、当時存命中のケネスの前妻エルシーに対する嫉妬

9. . . . she had looked about her with an innocent envy, feeling it to be exactly the drawing room she would have liked for herself. (220)

上流階級の女性として伝統を引き継ぐだけでなく、自らの在り方を主張するシャーロット

10. . . . neither furniture nor hangings had been changed, because there had never been money enough, but which Charlotte had made her own by moving furniture about and adding more books, another lamp, a table for the new reviews. (220)

夫の前妻エルシー・アシュビー

11. . . . Mrs. Ashby—a distant, self-centered woman, whom she had known very slightly. (220)

12. “Elsie gone, eh? . . . Nonsense. Don’t have her back. Two’s company.” (236)

シャーロットはケネスのことをいつも考えている

13. Sometimes friends dropped in; sometimes—oftener—she was alone; and she liked that best, since it was another way of being with Kenneth, thinking over what he had said when they parted in the morning, imagining what he would say when he sprang up the stairs, found her by herself and caught her to him. (220)

ケネスに届く手紙の特徴

14. The letter was always the same—a square greyish envelope with “Kenneth Ashby, Esquire,” written on it in bold but faint characters. (220)

15. . . . in spite of its masculine curves, the writing was so visibly feminine. Some hands are sexless, some masculine, at first glance; the writing on the grey envelope, for all its strength and assurance, was without doubt a woman’s. (220)

16. Wharton explores the complex nature of relationships between men and women in many of her stories. (Pennnel 54)

17. The envelope never bore anything but the recipient’s name; no stamp, no address. The letter was presumably delivered by hand . . . (221)

18. . . . she had seen, alone on the hall table, the grey envelope. Her eye fell on it before Kenneth’s and her first thought was: “Why, I’ve seen that writing before”; but where she could not recall. (221)

疑惑の始まり

19. . . . she would have thought no more of the letter if, when her husband’s glance lit on it, she had not chanced to be looking at him. (221)

20. . . . his seeing the letter, putting out his hand for it, raising it to his shortsighted eyes to decipher the faint writing, and then abruptly withdrawing the arm he had slopped through Charlotte’s and moving away to the hanging light, his back turned to her. (221)

ごまかし？シャーロットとのコミュニケーション手段としての夫婦の会話？

21. Wasn’t it unusually hot at my mother’s tonight? I’ve got a splitting head. Mind if I take myself off to bed? (221)

ケネスの異変

22. It [=the letter] usually came before he got home from his office, and she had to go upstairs and leave it lying there. But even if she had not seen it, she would have known it had come by the change in his face when he joined her. . . . Evidently, whatever the letter contained, he wanted to be by himself to deal with it; and when he reappeared he looked years older, looked emptied of life and courage, and hardly conscious of her presence. (222)

父親としてのケネス

23. . . . it was usually to hint some criticism of her household arrangements, suggest some change in the domestic administration, to ask, a little nervously, if she didn’t think Joyce’s nursery governess was rather young and flighty, or if she herself always saw to it that Peter—whose throat was delicate—was properly wrapped up when he went to school. (222)

ケネスに対するシャーロットの友人の見解

24. He may be glad of a little liberty for a change. (222)

25. He looks twenty years younger. (222)

26. . . he'll mentally compare with what Elsie would have done in your place. (223)

夫ケネスと妻シャーロットとの関係が微妙なものとなる

27. Though she had been sure from the first that the handwriting on the grey envelope was a woman's, it was long before she associated the mysterious letters with any sentimental secret. (222-223)

頑なに手紙のことに口を閉ざすケネス

28. . . . in that case the unknown female must be unusually troublesome, judging from the effect her letters produced. Then again, though his professional description was exemplary, it was odd that he had never uttered an impatient comment, never remarked to Charlotte, in a moment of expansion, that there was a nuisance of a woman who kept badgering him about a case that had gone against her. He had made more than one semiconfidence of the kind—of course without giving names or details but concerning this mysterious correspondent his lips were sealed, (223)

語り手によるシャーロットの人柄

29. Charlotte Ashby was a sophisticated woman. She had few illusions about the intricacies of the human heart; she knew that there were often old entanglements. (223)

ケネスの前妻エルシーとの12年間の結婚生活—あくまでも上流階級としてのプライドと世間体

30. During all the years of their marriage he was more like an unhappy lover than a comfortably contented husband. (223)

ケネスは頑なに手紙のことを秘密にする

31. . . . in that case the unknown female must be unusually troublesome, judging from the effect her letters produced. Then again, though his professional description was exemplary, it was odd that he had never uttered an impatient comment, never remarked to Charlotte, in a moment of expansion, that there was a nuisance of a woman who kept badgering him about a case that had gone against her. He had made more than one semiconfidence of the kind—of course without giving names or details but concerning this mysterious correspondent his lips were sealed, (223)

シャーロットは子供たちといささかうまくいっている様子 (175)

32. . . . an occasional nervous mistrust as to her ability to manage the children—a mistrust gradually dispelled by her good humor and the children's obvious fondness for her (223-224)

ケネスの職業魂？

33. . . . his absorbing professional interests had kept him from suicide after his first wife's death (224)

シャーロットはケネスから自分の個性を出すことを許されている。

34. . . . he knew every woman had her own views about furniture and all sorts of household arrangements a man would never notice, and had begged her to make any changes she saw fit without bothering to consult him. As a result, she made as few as possible. (224)

ケネスのシャーロットへの配慮

35. . . . the portrait of Elsie Ashby, which used to hang over the desk in his library, had been transferred in their absence to the children's nursery. Knowing herself to be the indirect cause of this banishment, she spoke it to her husband; but he answered: "Oh, I thought they ought to grow up with her looking down on them." (224)

シャーロットの本音（前妻は邪魔）

36. . . . she had to confess that she felt more at home in her house, more at ease and in confidence with her husband, since that long coldly beautiful face on the library wall no longer followed her with guarded eyes. (224)

37. . . . unseen character exerts supernatural influence on an otherwise ordinary household, . . .
.(Adams 54)

シャーロットのケネスへの独占欲

38. . . . the secret she hardly acknowledged to her own heart—her passionate need to feel herself the sovereign even of his past. (224-225)

39. He and I must settle it between us.(236)

シャーロットは手紙が来た時のケネスの様子を心配する

40. If her husband turned white and had a headache on the days when the letter came, he seemed to recover afterward; but she couldn't. With her the strain had become chronic, and the reason was not far to seek. Her husband knew from whom the letter came and what was in it. (225-226)

41. She simply felt as if she were fighting her way through a stifling fog that she must at all costs get out of. (227)

42. . . . becomes increasingly terrorized by a series of mysterious letters addressed to her husband . . .
(Boswell 30)

ケネスが手紙を読む様子をうかがうシャーロット

43. . . . what Charlotte first noted there was a look of surprise. Evidently he had not expected the letter—had not thought of the possibility of its being there that day. But though he had not expected it, now that he saw it he knew well enough what it contained. He did not open it immediately, but stood motionless, the color slowly ebbing from his face. Apparently he could not make up his mind to touch it; but at length he put out his hand, opened the envelope, and moved with it to the light. In doing so he turned his back on Charlotte, and she saw only his bent head and slightly stooping shoulders. Apparently all the writing was on one page, for he did not turn the sheet but continued to stare at it for so long that he must have reread it a dozen times—or so it seemed to the woman breathlessly watching him. At length, she saw him move; he raised the letter still closer to his eyes, as though he had not fully deciphered it. Then he lowered his head, and she saw his lips touch the sheet. (227-228)

手紙の差出人について頑なに話さないケネス。ケネスの反応

44. . . . in the cool and faintly ironic tone of the prosecuting lawyer making a point (229)

しかし筆跡から女性のものであると判断したことをケネスにシャーロットが主張すると . . .
45.

“Why do you assume it’s a woman?”

“It’s a woman’s writing. Do you deny it?”

“No, I don’t deny it. I asked only because the writing is generally supposed to look more like a man’s.”

“And this woman—what does she write to you about?”

“About business.”

“Legal business?”

“In a way, yes. Business in general.”

“You’ve looked after her affairs for her?”

“Yes.”

“You’ve looked after them for a long time?”

“Yes. A very long time.”

“Kenneth, dearest, won’t you tell me who she is?”

“No. I can’t. . . . Professional secrecy.”

“Don’t say that—don’t”

“Why not?”

“Because I saw you kiss the letter.” (229)

語り手の見解—ケネスのシャーロットへの対応

46. Her husband, who had submitted to her cross-questioning with a sort of contemptuous composure, as though he were humoring an unreasonable child, . . . (229-230)

手紙にキスをしたと断言するシャーロットへのケネスの弁明

47.

“The writing is very faint; you must have seen me holding the letter close to my eyes to try to decipher it.”

“No; I saw you kissing it. . . . Didn’t I see you kissing it?”

“Perhaps.”

“Kenneth! You stand there and say that—to me?”

“What possible difference can it make to you? The letter is on business, as I told you. Do you suppose I’d lie about it? The writer is a very old friend whom I haven’t seen for a long time.”

“Men don’t kiss business letters, even from women who are very old friends, unless they have been their lovers, and still regret them.” (230)

ケネスは観念してしまう。シャーロットへのあきらめがつく

48. “It’s not easy to prove anything to a woman who’s once taken an idea into her head.”(230)

シャーロットの感情、ケネスから無視されてしまうと感じる

49. “She felt herself excluded, ignored, blotted out of his life.”(233)

50. “If it costs me your love, I don’t care! If I can’t have your confidence I don’t want anything from you.” (234)

ケネスは妻との会話で場をほぐそうとする、妻への優しい愛の象徴

51. “. . . Ashby began to make conversation with an assumption of ease, . . . (237)

ケネスに対する気遣い。(激しい思い込み)

52.

“You must go to bed early; you look terribly tired. I’m sure they overwork you at the office.”

“I suppose we all overwork at times”(237)

手紙からの影響を受けないため、町を離れ旅行することを提案

53. “Kenneth, is it that? She won’t let us go away together? You needn’t answer. I see I’m right,” she said. (240)

54. If once she could get her husband away under other skies, and all to herself, she never doubted her power to release him from the evil spell he was under. (241)

灰色の手紙のことは決して口にしないが旅行へ行く提案をするシャーロットに観念するケネス

55. Suddenly, as she rose, he turned and drew her down again. His heads caught hers and pressed them so tightly that she felt her rings cutting into her flesh. There was something frightened, convulsive in his hold; it was the clutch of a man who felt himself slipping over a precipice. He was staring up at her now as if salvation lay in the face she bent above him. "Of course we'll go away together. We'll go wherever you want," he said in a low confused voice; and putting his arm about her, he drew her close and pressed his lips on hers." (240)

出来過ぎた偶然その1－シャーロットの寝坊

56. When she woke, it was long past her usual hour, and she sat up in bed surprised and vexed at having overslept herself. She always liked to be down to share her husband's breakfast by the library fire; but a glance at the clock made it clear that he must have started long since for his office. . . . their relations were sufficiently lover-like for her to regret having missed their morning hour. (241)

出来過ぎた偶然その2－メイドはケネスからの伝言を忘れかける

57. Oh, ever so sure, ma'am. I don't know how I could have forgotten to mention it.(242)

出来過ぎた偶然その3－ケネスは職場に着くや否や出かける

58. Mr. Ashby had looked in for a moment early, and left again almost immediately, . . . all they knew in the office was that when he left he had said he was in a hurry because he had to go out of town. (243)

出来過ぎた偶然その4－郊外列車遅延によるケネスの同僚の遅刻出勤

59. She asked for his partner, but the partner could add nothing to her information for he himself, his suburban train having been behind time, had reached the office after Ashby had come and gone. (244)

出来過ぎた偶然その5－ケネスのオフィス終業時刻になってもケニスからの連絡はない

60. Toward seven the telephone rang, and she darted to it. Now she would know! But it was only from the conscientious secretary, to say that Mr. Ashby hadn't been back, or sent any word, and before the office closed she thought she ought to let Mrs. Ashby know. (245)

シャーロットの勝利宣言

61. After all, she had a right to claim the victory, since her husband was doing what she wanted, not what the other woman exacted of him. It was natural enough, in view of his abrupt decision to leave the next day, that he should have arrangements to make, business matters to wind up; it was not even necessary to suppose that his mysterious trip was a visit to the writer of the letters. He might simply have gone to see a client who lived out of town. (243)

62. A busy lawyer held so many threads in his hands that any sudden change of plan would oblige him to make all sorts of unforeseen arrangements and adjustments. (245)

アシュビー老婦人が冷静である。感情的になっているシャーロットとの対比効果がある。

63. I don't believe any good ever came of a woman's opening her husband's letters behind his back, (249)

シャーロットの暴走する思い込み、手紙と距離を置くことはケネスは一言も言っていない。

64. . . . he says he can't tell me anything about the letters but last night he promised to go away with me to get away from them. (249)

シャーロットが抱く不吉な予感—ケネスの死がよぎる

65. She tried to slip her finger under the flap of the envelope, but it was so tightly stuck that she had to hunt on her husband's writing table for his ivory letter opener. (250)

66. In the deep silence of the room the tearing of the paper as she slit the envelope sounded like a human cry. (250)

67. As she pushed about the familiar objects his own hands had so lately touched, they sent through her the icy chill emanating from the little personal effects of someone newly dead. (250)

ケネスのことを楽観視していたケネスの母でさえも不安感を抱くようになる

68. She had never seen her mother-in law's features express any but simple and sound emotions—cordiality, amusement, a kindly sympathy; now and again a flash or wholesome anger. Now they seemed to wear a look of fear and hatred, of incredulous dismay and almost cringing defiance. It was as if the spirits warring within her had distorted her face to their own likeness. (251)

シャーロットの不安をあおるアシュビー老夫人—前妻の肖像画がかかっていた壁を見上げる

69. Mrs. Ashby looked up; her eyes, traveling slowly past charlotte, were lifted to the blank wall behind her son's writing table. (252)

70. Elsie Ashby . . . comes back from the dead to claim her remarried husband and insist on him accompanying her to the grave. (Rattray 188)

71. . . . letters from a dead first wife lure a man from his new bride. (*Edith Wharton: Matters of Mind and Spirit* 227)

72. Entirely consistent with her habit of escape from the modern world, she refuses to confront the issue that has raised itself in her consciousness. In fact, it is only after her husband disappears that she realizes the supernatural nature of her rival. (Griffin 83)

73. When Kenneth suddenly disappears, his wife and mother realize with drawing horror that the letters must have carried a summons of a type impossible for him to refuse. (Hainting 15)

74. The husband also disappears, presumably to join his first wife in the underworld. (Killoran 120)

75. A woman comes back from the dead to haunt the man she loved. (Lee 191)

なぜ幽霊が直接手紙を投函することができたのか？

76. With some exceptions, her ghosts are subtle creations, operating on a subconscious level and more likely to wreak psychological vengeance than physical harm. (Wright 233)

物語の幕切れ

77.

“Tomorrow—tomorrow. You will see. There’ll be some explanation tomorrow. . . . Kenneth himself will, . . . Now without a moment’s delay. We must do everything—everything.”

Charlotte went up to the telephone and unhooked the receiver. (253)

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