

Reading Joyce in This Other Word/World: A Plain Reader's Example

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In the fifth chapter of *Ulysses*, Bloom, leaving home to begin his day's peregrination, goes to the Westland Row postoffice to get his letter from Martha, which notoriously contains these curious words: "I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world. Please tell me what is the real meaning of that word?" (*U* 5.244-46) Martha is both confused and willful in her suspension of distinction of 'word' from 'world' and have them both enigmatically qualified by the deictic "that" pointing to some unrevealed extra-textual object of reference. Here, the reader is humorously awakened along with Bloom to the Joycean *idée fixe* of what might be called "word for world" in which vision the word of text could magically stand beyond the limits of mere mimesis for the world of reality. It is ideally a vision of historicity and interiority superbly integrated in one moment.

The subjective intensity with which Joyce creates his word or world is apt to induce his reader to bring up in turn his or her own subjectivity to match it. By subjectivity, I mean the organizing principle by which all personal and collective images, memories, thoughts and desire are brought to the subjective consciousness.

Although this should be ultimately part of the general rule governing any active reading, it would be especially worthwhile for a reader from an alien culture to examine the terms of one's native cultural endowments that correspond with our author. To quote Maeterlinck via Stephen of the National Library in *Ulysses*, "If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep. If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas his steps will tend." As the writer writes himself or herself into his book, so the book might ever be creating the occasion on which the reader sees images of his or her own native culture legitimately reflected in there.

"We seem to be in for another Joyce century." With these veiled superlatives, Jones and Beja begins their recent book that came out at the start of the millenium century (Jones and Beja, 1). I appreciate their appraisal fully, which means that I consider myself a fully legitimate reader. At the same time, I am conscious that I would not myself have put the same words on my mouth comfortably enough because I could not be reassured of the communal "we." Unlike an English-speaking (or a European) reader, a reader from Korea (or any Oriental country for that matter) is emphatically a reader with his or her own native cultural backgrounds which should be as much an asset as it is a liability. The limits of the acquired language is a liability while the state of plurality in perspectives and cultures should add to the resourcefulness of the reader.

The terrain of any literary text is likely to contain its own map somewhere within itself. In the case of Joyce, who is so inviting in that sense, the text is exceedingly subjectivized and the reader is ultimately drawn to the person of the author-figure who is both historical and imaginary. The process of reading naturally involves a constant negotiation between the two engaged subjects: the reader and the author-figure. Whereas this particular author remains figured as a singular entity more or less within the bounds of the text, the reader is problematic being unavoidably divers and many. An Anglo-American or Western European reader would normally assume a common ground of compatible languages and cultural traditions to be shared rather comfortably with the author. Coming from a culture

distanced half the circle of the globe from the origin, I wonder about the meaning of my individual and cultural backgrounds as a non-native Joyce reader. Indeed, what kind of cultural aesthetics are involved in the reading of Joyce done by a Korean for example?

The following three aspects of the issue may be relevant. First, we may look at the more general ways in which a Korean reader draws from his own cultural backgrounds in addressing the writer as a whole or some broader yet specified topic on his characteristics or achievements like his introverted autobiographical elements, the significance of stylistic experiments, his understanding of Dublin social life, *Ulysses* as an Irish epic, and so on. It should be part of the cultural strategy of reading. In principle, all conscious receptions involve comparable receptionist strategies. In the past, challenged by the rushing inroads of Western power and culture, East Asian nations likewise cultivated the modernization motto of "Western material for Eastern spirit."¹⁾ In the similar vein, appreciation of Joyce may incur appropriate cultural self-knowledge in more abstract levels.

Second, we may look more positively into the native traditions of Korean literature to draw parallels. In other words we may take a closer look at those materials from the Korean literary tradition that could meaningfully illuminate the style and sentiments of Joyce. There should be innumerable such instances, either trivial or serious, within the tradition of Korean literature that relate themselves to the illumination of the aesthetic temper of James Joyce. More prominent examples of such authors, genres and works should include *Song of Cheoyong*, *pansori*, *Song of Cheoyong*, Bamboo-hat Kim or Kim Satkat, Kim Chiha, etc. Other cultures will have different lists of compatible native resources, which probably indicates the communicability and universality of literatures across cultural borderlines.

Third, we must be more attentive to the importance of correspondences in Joycean imagination of which Homeric correspondences are characteristic. To set up correspondences is to get the grasp of unfamiliar experiences and create a sense of order by correlating terms of reality. Oriental lores of correspondences may indirectly illumine the nature of Joycean imagination. As Joyce's protagonists

experience their world within the bounds of the fiction, so the Oriental reader may experience "that other word/world" of Joycean text by proxy, which in its turn would take the set of his personal and cultural memories from his own word/world. This kind of double mirroring should be another meaningful form of correspondence bespeaking of the third-world reader who constructs the sense of connectedness by analogy and parallel.²⁾

Joyce is an extremely demanding writer and we need to take a close look at the significance of immersion in his world, which may bring forth several different dimensions of cross-cultural communication and understanding. There could be a totally new vision about ourselves when we go forth to understand the experience of the other.

Here is a selection of materials from the Korean literary tradition that are considered to meaningfully inform and relate themselves to the particular style and sentiments of Joyce. In the following, I list my illustrations in translation with some key words for guidance placed in advance in brackets, which are followed by some minimum and additional comments.

[Kim Satkat: punning, folk spirit, self-exile]

My first selection is Kim Satkat(1807-1863).³⁾ In the popular mind of the Korean people, he is the emblem of self-exiled wanderer-poet. A fifties popular melody titled "Bamboo-hat Kim, the Wandering Poet" illustrates the point beautifully:

A bamboo cane and a bamboo hat—
that's how he wanders over the Land of Three Thousand Li.

The mountain pass overhung with white clouds—
that's where he goes and beyond.
Coming to a great house of twelve gates,
he gets a beggar's meal at the servants' quarters.
Leaving a poem behind for his cup of wine,
he takes the road again—our Bamboo-hat Kim⁴⁾

In addition to his exile image, he is akin to Joyce in penchant for his playful decomposition of language. Kim Satkat is well-known for his expertise in punning based on the double reading of Chinese characters. Here is a short piece written on this principle. Since it involved a double layers of meaning rooted respectively in Chinese-character meaning and vernacular meaning, I choose to present the original along with other two version of translation done according to the different dimensions of pun-meaning. The Chinese origin reads:

二十樹下

二十樹下三十客

四十門前五十食

人間豈有七十事

不如歸嫁三十食 (Kim 1982)

The two versions of Korean translation read with this difference. The italics highlight the double meaning created by the punning.

Under the Tree of Twenty

Under the tree of *twenty* comes a wanderer of *thirty*;

At the gate of *forty* he took the meal of *fifty*.

How could he bear such an affair of *seventy*?

He would rather go home and eat his *thirty*.

Under the *sumu* tree standing before the *accursed* gate

The *ill-fated* wanderer is treated with rice *gone bad*.

How could *this kind of scandal* happen in human society?

"I'd rather go home for some *half-cooked rice*," says he.

[Shin Dong-yeop: epiphany, hypertextuality]

Shin Dongyeop's "A Mountain Lily" begins like this:

Touch it
and you're carried back
to the dawn of history

Taken as a whole, Shin is serious and sombrely tragic and no kin to Joyce in poetic temper. Yet, in this fragment, the sudden leap from the immediate object of nature to the primitive past reminds me of Joycean levity in imagination. This is to show the possible abundance of relevant moments in seemingly irrelevant literary experiences.

["Song of Cheoyong": adultery, cf. "abnegation" of Bloom in Ithaca]

I reveled all night
in the moonlit capital,
came home and discovered
four legs in my bed!
Two are mine;
whose are the other two?
Legs once mine, now purloined,
what am I to do?⁵⁾

[*Song of Chunhyang*: immediacy of narration, oral performance]

The *jajinmori* of *Song of Chunhyang* is a good instance of performing oral literature which is comparable to the similar effort made by Joyce which is absorbed in the oral mood. A passage from the former is comparable to some of the interpolations from the Cyclops chapter in *Ulysses*:

The secretary's hat is broken, and his wide-sleeved coat is taken off. The officer taking charge of the mayor's food has sprained his ankle and so he is hobbling and runs away. The poor chief servant has his eye pulled out, his nose chopped off, and his ear cut. He is grabbed by the scruff of his neck and falls down on the ground. A fellow is running away grabbing the topknot of someone else who fell down. The broken bottles of wine are rolling on the

floor. The dancing gisaeng run away with their arms open. The maid servant comes in carrying a water jar on her head, and says, "Mayor, here's the water for washing your hands and face." (Yu 281)

[Kim Chiha: playful language, satiric cataloguing]

Next in the order comes a passage from Kim Chiha's *Five Bandits*.⁶⁾ The great political reputation and influence from the rebel hero of the 70s' Korea made a detour of traditional form of satiric expression via *pansori* to make his satiric stiletto sharper and more improptrusive:

The prosecutor general turned around, peering through another open door. And what did he see: great quantities of delicious foods piled high on large tables. Cow hair[head] steaks, fried pig snouts, fried goat's whiskers, boiled deer antlers, skewered and roast chicken legs, dried pheasant fin, fried sea bream fin, salted claws, seasoned raw ears of croaker, sea bass, yellow tail, flatfish, sweetfish in soy sauce, broiled scales of octopus and sea slug, beef cutlets made with pork, pork cutlets made with beef, globefish soup, chestnuts (raw and boiled), apples, pear seeds dried and wrapped in gold paper, bananas, pineapples, sweetened fig petals, rice candles containing methadone, frog egg soup, green bean jelly, vegetable gelatin. Field-fruit wine, Suntory, cinnamon flavored distilled spirits, champagne, pine wine, dry gin, plum wine, aralia wine, Johnny Walker, White Horse..... Forgetting to shut his mouth and with spittle drooling out, the prosecutor general sighed: "Aah, such good fortunes are the rewards of banditry! If I had but known this, I would have joined them long before...." (*The Cry of People* 54-55)

[On the difficulty of acquired language]

At this juncture, I'd like to discuss the language barrier the Korean and in that sense any Oriental reader of Joyce. A few pages after the beginning of the 11th chapter of *Ulysses* ("Sirens"), Miss Douce, one of the two bar maids working in the Ormond Hotel, turns to Miss Kennedy, her companion of the bar, and says: "Am I awfully sunburnt?" She gets this answer: "No. It gets brown after. Did you try the borax with the cherry laurel water?" At this, Miss Douce takes a look at

herself in the bar mirror and responds by saying: "And leave it to my hands."(U 11.114-121)

Auguste Morel: Et ce que j'en ai sur les mains!

(And I have it on my hands!)

Sei Ito (伊藤整) et al: そして私の手と來たら、

(And to speak of these hands of mine...)

Hans Wollschläger: Und lass ihn meinen Händen.

(And leave it to my hands)

Jin Di (金隄): 弄得手上怪味爾的.

(I even have bad smell on my hands.)

Xiao Qian (蕭乾) et al: 連我的手都晒黑了.

(Even my hands are turned black by the sunburn.)

Jaiichi Marudani (丸谷在一) et al: 手まで日やけしたの、

(Even the hands has got the sunburn.)

Yu Xiangyu (劉象愚): 連手都晒黑了.

(Even the hands are turned black by the sunburn.)

Kim Chong-keun (金鍾健)[to be published]: 그런데 내손도 이렇게 탔으니.









(And my hands are burnt like this.)

Add to the above list a still another version I collected orally from one of my colleagues in Seoul: As for my hands, they are more burned than my face. This trivial moment of the novel illustrates the dimension of difficulty of the acquired language.

[*Iching*(易經) correspondences: Joyce's schema, other correspondences]

The Linati and Gilbert schema of Joyce that contain Homeric correspondence is recognized by many as the important structural plan of the novel. It is curious that such correspondences are often considered to be part of Joycean medievalism. If they are medieval, they are basically Oriental too in that in the plan a unity of microcosm and macrocosm is assumed. Hence the relevance of the *Iching*-based system of correspondences which has been formed through centuries of folk and scholarly lores and circulated not only in China but also in Japan and Korea.

The *Iching*-based Oriental Correspondences⁷⁾

| Names 名稱 | Tri grams 八卦 | Dire ction 方位 | Nature 性質 | Natural form 形象 | Animal form 動物 | Body parts 身體 | Family member 家族 | Five elements 五行(Color色/ Organ臟器) |
|-------------|---|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Xun 巽 |  | SE 東南 | soft 柔 | Wind 風 | hen 雞 | arm 股 | first daughter 長女 | |
| Li 離 |  | S 南 | beautiful 麗 | Fire 火 | pheasant 雉 | eye 目 | second daughter 中女 | fire 火 (red 赤/heart 心) |
| Dui 兌 |  | W 西 | delightful 悅 | Lake 澤 | lamb 羊 | mouth 口 | last daughter 小女 | gold 金 (white 白/lung 肺) |
| Kun 坤 |  | SW 西南 | comfortable 順 | Earth 地 | cow 牛 | belly 腹 | mother 母 | [middle 中央: earth 土 (yellow 黃/ spleen 脾)] |
| Gen 艮 |  | NE 東北 | obstructive 止 | Mountain 山 | dog 狗 | hand 手 | last son 小男 | |
| Kan 坎 |  | N 北 | trapping 陷 | Water 水 | hog 豕 | ear 耳 | second son 中男 | water 水 (black 黑/ kidney 腎) |
| Zhen 震 |  | E 東 | brave 勇 | Thunder 震 | dragon 龍 | foot 足 | first son 長男 | tree 木 (blue 青/ liver 肝) |
| Qian 乾 |  | NW 西北 | robust 健 | Sky 天 | horse 馬 | head 首 | father 父 | |

Just as the Joycean correspondences are aesthetically acceptable to the Western readers despite their aesthetic nourishing in the modern scientific culture, *Iching*-based correspondences should invite the Oriental reader closer to the Joyce text not because of its direct influence or relevance to the text but because his native culture makes him or her take the Joycean correspondences with readiness. Inversely, it might be asserted that the schema and the author's wholehearted embrace of the system is itself a mark of the author's unconscious freedom from the more immediate constraints of Western ways of thinking and imagination and reach toward some alternative world vision where the limit could be cast off. T.

S. Eliot's well-known comment on Joyce's useful method of creating "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" comes in order here (Deming 270). Another dimension of readerly association may inform the larger scheme of correspondences. For example, many Koreans tend to associate Irish colonial experience with Japanese occupation of their country during the first half of the 20th century whereas Professor Eishiro Ito interestingly associates the same with the defeat of the Ainu of the North-West Honshu by the Yamato conquerors in the history of Japan.⁸⁾

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Notes

- 1) Concerning this, China, Japan and Korea had respectively these different mottoes but their meaning is largely the same: *zhongtixiyong* (中體西用), *wakonyosai* (和魂洋才), *dongdosoki* (東道西器), *Gubonshincham* (舊本新參). From the Oriental point of view, the reading of Western literature that must include Joyce may be part of the unceasing course of modernization or Westernization that started in this region in the latter half of the 19th century. The big difference is that at that time the triviality of novel reading was simply out of the question.
- 2) See *Iching* correspondences below for example.
- 3) Kim Satkat's original name is Kim Byeongyeon. His grandfather Kim Iksun was a local magistrate in the Northwest border province at the time of a peasant rebellion that broke out there and was later indicted and executed for having surrendered to the rebels without fighting. It all happened when the poet was quite young. The fleeing family thoroughly concealed the fact from the growing boy. Later, it happened that the talented boy at the threshold of his adulthood championed a local poetry contest administered by the government with the official theme designated as "On the Glorious Self-Sacrifice of Jeong Gasan Seen against the Base Betrayal of Kim Iksun." Then the family secret was devastatingly revealed to him by his shocked mother, which is said to have occasioned the poet's life-long self-exile in his own homeland.
- 4) The original lyric words are composed by Kim Mun-Eung and the translation is mine. All other translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.
- 5) Translation by Kevin O'Rourke.

- 6) Kim Chiha, Korea's one-time leading rebel poet with great talent and fame, spent many years in prison in the seventies and wrote sensitive self-searching lyrics, essays and political mock epics in modified traditional satire form called *pansori*. His early published works include *Dusty Country Roads*, *Five Bandits*, *A Song of Sakura*, etc.
- 7) The information for the content of this chart comes from several different sources including Choi Wanshik's *Iching* (Choi 13-14).
- 8) <http://p-www.iwate-pu.ac.jp/~acro-ito>

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Abstract

Reading Joyce in This Other Word/World: A Plain Reader's Example

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The current paper is sort of interiorized or aesthetic self-examination on the significance of reading Joyce with his native cultural and literary backgrounds and perhaps implicitly in its neighboring East Asian countries like China and Japan. It is basically planned and pursued according to the expectations of comparative literature. More specifically, the writer examines some of the more familiar aspects of his native literary assets that show aesthetic kinship with some characteristic qualities of Joyce. Korean aesthetic temper found in such writers as Kim Satkat and such genres like *pansori* and some times such Eastern beliefs and correspondences drawn from *Iching* et al are implicated in comparison with some counterpart styles of writing or emotional features in Joyce. Historical experiences of Korea are sometimes cited along with comparable phases or characteristics of Japan and China and Ireland marginally, for the writer's ultimate purpose of discussing the status of Korean readership is to sound for the possibility of creating beyond the national boundary a meaningful community of readers in East Asia although such prospect is not so much discussed as suggested.

■ **Key words:** subjectivity, cultural backgrounds, correspondences, word/world, reader, *pansori*, Kim Satkat, Kim Chiha