

Odyssean Journey: Searching for J. Joyce in Korea*

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I have chosen the partial title of this paper "Odyssean Journey," to the corollary that our Joycean research in Korea has hitherto not been an ineffectual dream, but rather a real, dreary journey. At times we've been tried, shipwrecked in a storm—our efforts perhaps best compared to another Ulysses, consequently leading us to a faithful Penelope. For the Korean Joyceans it has been an exploitable ground of hopeful audacity to come to greater grips with Joyce's artistic microcosm.

In this paper, not necessarily a research to raise a wind, but a brief historical survey of Joyce scholarship in Korea and its current status, including this writer's own humble dedication to this fascinating journey, will mostly be presented.

It is no longer true to say that recognition of James Joyce and his works of

* This paper is partially an expansion and revision of the writer's previous paper entitled "Joycean Study in Korea," published in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27.3 (Spring 1990): 465-72.

art is restricted to Western scholars and readers. Joyce has in fact been attracting the attention of many Eastern scholars as well as ordinary readers. In particular, not only his early works but also the later ones, specifically his *Ulysses*, an endlessly open book of so-called "utopian epiphanies" (in Declan Kiberd's words), have bound many Korean scholars, students, even common readers under their luring spells. Just as the young adventurer of "Araby" in *Dubliners*, the wandering Jew Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, and the ever-lasting dreamer H. C. Earwicker in *Finnegans Wake*, look toward the East again and again with a sense of awe and admiration, so, too, do Eastern people find themselves drawn toward Joycean literary mysteries, and launched into his monstrousness, paronomasia, and redemptive glimpses of a future world.

The Odyssean journey in search of Joyce, and the Joycean spell drifted softly at first into "the land of morning calm," as the Indian poet Tagore once so beautifully described Korea. It is true that this journey, with its frightening symbols and bold literary experiments of theme, language, myth, etc., has not been a smooth highway to travel, particularly for Eastern readers, but notwithstanding the difficulties and complexities there is a tremendous curiosity and a provocative fascination for this century's virtuoso across the land of morning calm.

According to one written record, Joyce was first introduced to Korea in the early 1930s by Korean writer Jungwoo Choi with his translation of "A Little Cloud" from *Dubliners*. It was published in the monthly, professional magazine, *Mun Ae*, (Vol. II, No. 2, March 1, 1930). This was followed by his translation of "The Boarding House," which was widely recognized at the time as a very inciting translation. In 1934, Joodong Young, who had majored English literature at a university, translated "Counterparts," which was serialized in eight parts of *The Dong A* (April 1 to April 11), a major daily Korean newspaper of then and now.

Hayun Lee, a poet and scholar, his translation of "Poem I" of *Chamber Music* appeared in 1935. His translation of "Poem II" starting with 'The twilight turns from amethyst...' and the "Poem XXXVI" with 'I hear an army charging upon the land...' appeared together simultaneously in the literary magazine *Hak Won* (Vol. I, No. 1,

Feb, 1935). This last poem is considered to be Imagistic, and it's one that Ezra Pound sought and obtained permission from Joyce to publish in his 1914 anthology called *Des Imagistes*. The translated version of the poem, in particular, surely exerted a conscious or unconscious impact upon Korean Imagists of the contemporary time including the poet Keelim Kim, as well as his peers. In 1937, Bongho Lee translated two short poems from *Pomes Penyeach*, "Watching the Needleboats at San Sabba" and "Tutto e Sciolto," which appeared in the magazine called *Hak Dong* (No. 23, March 1). Unfortunately, however, we are today facing the difficulties of obtaining the research sources which will furnish their proper data and backgrounds.

At present, Joyce's complete works including *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, *Exiles*, *Stephen Hero*, even *Finnegans Wake*, and his complete poems of *Chamber Music*, *Pomes Penyeach*, with "Giacomo Joyce," his major critical writings like "Drama and Life" and "Ibsen's New Drama," (both of which serve as a useful gloss in his aesthetic and artistic views), have been translated into Korean. For instance, the above *Stephen Hero* is very much worthy to be put into another language, because it can stand on its own merits as a remarkable piece of art. Though it is not as carefully planned as the prototypical modernist novel "A Portrait," it has a freshness and directness, an accuracy of observation and an economy of style, something to be translated for its own sake. It does not have to be considered in relation to the later novels to be estimated worth translating. The Ibsenian *Exiles*, Joyce's only extant play, is desirous to be translated for the better apprehension of his other translated works, because it sums up the major themes of the writer's other works. This totality of translation of all these Joyce's works in Korea so far might deserve to be called Tim Finnegan's exaggeration: "a waalworth of skyerscape of most eyeful hoyth entowerly, erigernating from next to nothing (거의 無에서 創建起源된, 全塔的으로 最高眼의 摩天樓의 壁價.)" (*FW* 4.35-5.1)

In addition to these translations, Joyce's earlier works in particular have been lectured upon at many universities as they are very ideal and challenging texts for

English majors. The awesomeness of *Ulysses* has had a magnetic effect on a number of graduate students due to the charm and challenge which the text so lavishly offers them. Also, Joyce's works have offered their ineffable influence upon the creation of Korean native literature. Korean scholars are continually debating the Joycean influence upon their native literary world, and doing their comparative research between Joyce and Korean writers. One fine examples can be seen in the comparison of *Ulysses* and a Korean novel titled *The Wing* written by Sang Lee in 1936. Like Joyce's work, this idiosyncratic piece was characteristic of its psychological, reflective, internal monologue of an existential hero, which describes a human self-consciousness of ego like Stephen Dedalus' solipsism. Another example is Taeun Min's recent comparative study of Joyce's *Ulysses* and "A Day of Mr Goobo the Novelist" by Taewon Park, one of the first Korean modernist writers. This study, though a brief and superficial comparison, indicates many correspondences between the two novels, and is published in our 2004 *International Joyce Journal*. In a sense, it is perhaps too infantile to be able to see clearly the effect Joyce is having upon Korean writers, and the comparison of them as a whole. It is a humble but very undoubted example of "The Joycean Industry" actively working in this part of the world.

More than a hundred M.A. theses on Joyce's works, more than 30 dissertations on *Ulysses*, home and abroad, in Korea up to date are approximate statistics on the current Joycean Industry. (Let's assume there is no other writer in English—aside from W. Shakespeare—around whose work so many scholarly degrees has been produced in this country.) Recently, young ambitious Korean scholars who have studied overseas and have been introduced to new critical techniques of some modernist writers like Joyce, and they are very conscious of the necessity of bridging the intellectual gaps that exist between East and West. They are doing this very effectively by applying their newly acquired Joycean knowledge to their own native literature. This approach has been welcomed by many as something fresh and challenging.

The James Joyce Society of Korea, now the omphalos of Joyce studies here in

Korea, was established in November 1979, with the intention to increase Joycean activities on the Korean university campuses enriching our students' understanding and appreciation of James Joyce. During the past quarter of the century, the Society totals approximately its fifty regular members and one hundred sporadic ones, including professors and a number of graduate students.

What we call "The JJSK Industry" has performed its task of three or four scholarly events so far. First, two kinds of major symposiums on the various aspects of Anglo-Irish literature with special emphasis on Joyce are held every year by the Society. These kinds of symposiums have been a very popular means of presenting papers and receiving new information on Joycean studies worldwide. In 2004, a year celebrating the centenary of the so-called "Bloomsday" in Dublin, several Korean Joyce scholars of the current generation were reaffirmed by their scholarship in presenting their dynamic papers on various Joycean subjects to call attention to the international dimension of Joyce studies in Korea.

The JJSK explored Joyce's texts from international and interdisciplinary perspectives, celebrated the festivity of the First International Joyce Symposium two years ago in 2004, which was organized by the society headed by Kiljoong Kim, the former President of the Society, whose capability, diplomacy and hospitality—in a fine Irish style—as a program organizer were widely acknowledged. It demonstrated the importance it had as a milestone in Korean Joyce studies, and had a turn-out much larger than expected. Scholars from the United States, Ireland, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea, participated in exciting exchanges of ideas about the works of Joyce and their places in multi-cultural scholarship. We read in the recent *James Joyce Quarterly* (Vol. 41, No. 1/2, Fall 2003 and Winter 2004) one symposium participant's essay on "the spectacular conference" (in her words): "Such a community of scholars, an apogean humanity of beings created through their passion for Joyce's works, was reaffirmed by the fellowship and intellectual exchanges at the conference in Seoul." We all feel more strongly that with every recurring year this exiting and worthy opportunity will flourish into the tradition which does it so much honour, and which might be guarded by others with envy and jealousy.

The Society publishes its own professional publication, *James Joyce Journal*, twice a year. With its first edition in 1987 and it has served as a very useful and necessary outlet for professors and scholars alike to publish their insights on Joyce's works as well as put forward some new ideas on what direction Joycean scholarship should take in Korea in the future. The first all-English special issue (how exciting it was to see that published!) was the by-products of the afore-mentioned International Conference. It included the very pronounced articles of new insights such as those of Margot Norris, Morris Beja, Emer Nolan, Shigeo Shimizu, Eishiro Ito, Kiljoong Kim, and others.

Five years ago the Society started its monthly reading of *Ulysses*, a mixed bag of miscellanea, and it has now become a regular event and receives a very warm and active response from the many in attendance. During a period of four or five hours a day such a Brobdingnagian mound of curios or the world of Molly Bloom's metempsychosis, is read by the "seasoned" Joyceans in a very scrupulous way, word by word, phrase by phrase. We have just finished the "Sirens" episode of musical hilarity and orchestration.

The Society also makes a rule to attend the annual Bloomsday celebration which is for the wandering and wondering, a real gatherings of the matured people and the famous diplomats, with the feast and jollification of fabulous food and copious drink like an early passage from *Finnegans Wake*: "a barrowload of guenesis hoer his head...the tootal of the fluid hang the twoddle of the fuddled, O! (머리맡의 수레 가득한 創世酒... 興行酒의 總計가 비틀 만취 어리둥절하게 하나니, 오!)" (*FW* 6. 27-28). It takes place regularly at the Irish Ambassador's Residence in Seoul with its green grass-garden party, with the readings of several passages from *Ulysses*. Last June, we had the privilege of attending a party, hosted by Dr. Conor Murphy, the current Irish Ambassador in Korea and devoted Joycean, and witnessed the enjoyment of an audience composed of so many nationalities derived from reading from the novel. On that occasion, Mrs. Murphy's impressive reading of the concluding passage of the "Penelope" episode was a pure voice, soaring resplendently into the starry sky of the summer night.

As mentioned above, the translation of Joyce's works was very phenomenal, and its notion of translation was toyed with during the past half a century, just as Joyce did for all his life. The various Korean versions of Joyce's earlier works in the successive years were fostered as empirical and theoretical disciplines and aimed at deepening an appreciation of Joyce across language and culture. The pioneering Korean versions of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* by Sukkee Yoe were published simultaneously from Dong-A publishing company in 1959. We have now, roughly 6 different Korean versions of *Dubliners*, 5 different *A Portrait*, 1 *Ulysses* and 1 *Finnegans Wake*.

The first Korean *Ulysses* was published as early as 1968 by the writer of this paper. This was followed by a six-volume set (3,000 pages) of Joyce's major works in 1988, and it contains Joyce's complete poems, and annotations for *Ulysses*. In 2002 the Korean version of *Finnegans Wake*, in which Shem the penman "would wipe alley english spooker, multaphoniaksically spuking, off the face of the erse" (比喩的多音性的으로 敢言하거니와, 모든(셋길) 영어 幽話者를 譬地球 표면 밖으로 짝 끌어 없애 버리려고 했나니, *FW* 178. 6-7) was also published, which was accompanied by a hundred ninety-page translator's guide and criticism of the book. The translation of Joycean auxiliary and critical works cannot be underestimated: one of the representatives is the translation of *James Joyce*, R. Ellmann's definitive biography, into Korean, by Eunhyung Chun, current President of the JJSK. Her work is a testimony of an Ellmannian devotion and scholarship.

Besides these, over a hundred critical and scholarly articles on Joyce up to date have been written in literary magazines and academic journals, along with the production of ten critical books on Joyce as well as eight annotated editions of his works. Thus, the ongoing popularity of Joyce's works, not only among scholars but also among ordinary readers, comes from their deep appreciation of the various and beautiful styles, not to mention the fresh dynamic concepts contained in his writings. Joyce's works have become indispensable materials and a happy hunting ground for genuine Joyceans of this country, specifically to obtain degrees. The aesthetic and moral dimensions, together with Joyce's pronounced experimentation of themes and techniques in *Ulysses*, for example, have spellbound scholars and

readers in a way no other writer has ever been able to accomplish.

The earlier Korean version of *Ulysses*, a seven-years-long immersion in research and translation, with its preface in which the translator described his royal fidelity to the original, was applausively welcomed by the general public as well as students and professors throughout the country, specifically by the Korean Pen Club Writers. It provoked a sensitive and serious response from some creative writers who focused their attention, particularly on Joyce's literary styles, which they tried to imitate in their own creations. Scholars and students, armed with the weapon of modernist criticism from I. A. Richards through all the New Critics', have been continuously engaged in discussing various aspects of the translated work.

The Korean translator, while translating *Ulysses* into Korean, realized from the outset that the translated text would be marred significantly by its many flaws, and thus it became apparent to him that a revised translation would sooner or later be inevitable. In the process of translation, "errors...are the portals of discovery," to quote Stephen Dedalus (*U* 9.229). He has readily admitted that his work was "incomplete and unfinished." At the same time, though, he felt a certain sense of accomplishment, and that in spite of the weakness in his translation, the Korean literary audience was able to get a taste for the first time of how Joyce created his literary microcosm, "a whole galaxy of new devices and stances and verbal antics..." (in Ellmann's terms).

The second revised Korean version of *Ulysses* was published in 1988, which was the work of mainly revising the first one according to the Gabler's new corrected text published in 1984. The Gabler's is, however, still flawed, which forced the translator to revise his earlier version. Helped along by Gabler's insights, the translator's existing criticism compiled from various international conventions, he, with various dictionaries and lexicons, annotations and Homer beside him, made many corrections in his 1968 edition with varying degrees of conscientiousness. Now the translator, with the help of many young Joycean scholars, is close to completing the product of its third translation, another process of retrieval from this "claybook." After Joycean studies of nearly half a century thus far, he now modestly hopes this forth-coming edition will be a definitive one, and will have a

historical validity which no other translation has ever had.

The translation of Joyce's books, which is not only part of our everyday experience but also an enrichment of literary nuances, requires skill and sensibility. This is further true in translating *Finnegans Wake*, "the book of Dublends Jined (二重블린 集計書)," (*FW* 20. 15-16) into Korean. The work's revolutionary style of course renders it all but impossible—and paradoxical—to translate the dream pandemonium into a single target Korean language. It is characteristic that the translator incorporates ideographic Chinese characters of etymology into the Korean phonogramic alphabet of Hangul in order to approximate the construction of *Wakean* words. The major principle of Korean translation is based upon the premise that *Finnegans Wake* is fundamentally a text of content and form, the manifesto of literary modernism. Joyce's active but risky use of the so-called ultrasonic language is his basic spirit of creation, the wordplay, whose rich palette of coinages varies in their complexity, and accessibility even for the native speaker.

Consequently, the translator, hoping to reveal as many layers as significantly possible, contained in Joyce's *Wakean* language, tried to be very much faithful to its multilingualism and to message its playfulness to his readers. In putting these into Korean, his solution, conquering many obstacles in a pessimistic assessment regarding the possibility of a satisfactory translation, was to invent numerous Korean neologisms for his scholarly, artistic translation. This was to capture the spirit of the original, to lead to a new discovery, even though no matter how much fidelity to the original, there still remained an infidelity. A translation is never the same as the original, especially one that is untranslatable. Occupied with such a tenor of translation, the cultural difference, chauvinism, skepticism, the outsider of language, he once concluded, in his essay titled "On Korean Translation of *Finnegans Wake*," with the following:

So many new *Wakean* coinages of the Korean text, a new kind of communication—unique, original and difficult—may be strange to the public eye and ear at their very inception. As time goes by, they may be gradually familiar to them and be listed in existing vocabularies. This is one of the

common phenomenology in the history of linguistic development. The text may be rendered readable, paradoxically, as embodiment of unreadability.
(Kim 2004, 172)

Over all, in retrospect, we have had a thought-tormented Odyssean journey in search of Joyce for some three decades and more, during which we have often been torn by conflicting doubts and agonized with the struggle between body and mind. Yet, granted even that, we continually find ourselves returning to a voice deep within saying Molly's final monologue: "and yes I said yes I will yes." Our wholehearted effort continually will bring the must to the sacred fire and cease not day and night from our toil. It was, is now, and forever shall be our intention and ambition to continue our Odyssean journey to search for lights shining in the metaphoric darkness of Joycean scholarship.

"O foenix culprit! (오 福不死鳥 죄인이여!)" (FW 23.16) Hoping that our 2006 International Conference of this time will be brought to great fruition, now let me close this tepid paper by quoting a passage from Book III, Chapter 2 of *Finnegans Wake*, which ends with the promise of Haun's return, hero represented by the diurnal resurrection of the sun, whose voice seems to reflect our Odyssean journey into a much more energetic infliction:

Brave footsore Haun! Work your progress! Hold to! Now! Win out, ye divil ye! The silent cock shall crow at last. The west shall shake the east awake. Walk while ye have the night for morn, lightbreakfastbringer, morroweth whereon every past shall full fust sleep. Amain.

용감한 足痛 혼이여! 그대의 진행을 작업할지라! 붙들지니! 지금 당장! 勝達할지라, 그대 魔여! 침묵의 수탉이 마침내 울지로다. 西가 東을 흔들어 깨울지니! 그대 밤이 아침을 기다리는 동안 걸을지라, 光急輕朝食運搬者여! 明朝가 오면 그 위에 모든 과거는 充分落眠할지니. 我主眠. (FW 473. 20-25)

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Abstract

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The James Joyce Society of Korea was established in 1979 and has performed its task of three or four scholarly affairs such as its symposium, its international conference, the publication of its academic journal, its monthly reading of *Ulysses*, its attendance of the annual Bloomsday celebration, etc.

The third revised Korean version of *Ulysses* is close to its completion. After Joycean studies of nearly half a century thus far, the translator now modestly hopes this forth-coming edition will be a definitive one, and will have a historical validity which no other translation has ever had.

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■ **Key words:** Search for Joyce, Joycean scholarship, Joyce's Korean versions, JJSK, Bloomsday Celebration, 3rd revised Korean version of *Ulysses*