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Embracing Performative Dialects in Hyŏn Chingŏn's "Mistress B and the Love Letters"

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Hyŏn Chingŏn's (1900-1943) short story "Mistress B and the Love Letters" is a paradigmatic example of early modern Korean fiction. Published in 1925, this story, along with the rest of the author's oeuvre, was composed during the Japanese colonial annexation of Korea (1910-1945). In his short stories, Hyŏn renders brief character sketches of life in this particular colonial landscape. Rather than engaging the political climate directly, he focuses on subjects from the everyday. The colonial experience is embedded into the mundane elements of these subjects' existence, shaping their imaginations. In "Mistress B and the Love Letters," Mistress B, a strict dormitory superintendent, guards the moral virtue of the students at an all-girls boarding school. In Korea, universal primary education and formalized education for girls was introduced by the imperial authority through a series of reforms beginning in 1911. Thus, a boarding school for girls was at this time a foreign concept, one that represented the modernizing influence of the metropole along with the pervasive Japanese colonial presence that punished any sign of resistance with a variety of brutal disciplinary mechanisms.

In the story, the metropole permeates daily life, most immediately through modern, imported consumer goods. The reader encounters elements of Western furnishings or modern appliances throughout the narrative. For example, Hyŏn interrupts his story to mention the Western-style bed in the room, in place of the traditional floor mattress. Mistress B's nighttime read-aloud sessions are illuminated by an electric lamp, not candlelight. Along with the tangible objects that locate the story within the modern colonial era, the clash of beliefs between subjects (and perhaps within subjects) is at the core of the narrative. The reign of Mistress B's de-sexed Christian morality is challenged by an unruly European Romanticism in an institution where young women are educated as modern subjects with an allegiance to Japanese colonial (and cultural) authority. In her capacity as disciplinarian for the young women, Mistress B seems to model a devout adherence to Christian teachings, while the students are vulnerable to secular notions of romantic love. In the opening scene, this antagonism surfaces in the Mistress' diatribe. She laments "free love" 자유 연애 (*chayu yŏnae*), a new concept popular with the younger generation. *Chayu yŏnae* celebrates individualism through freely chosen marriage partners, in a revolt of sorts against the custom of families arranging marriage through matchmakers.

New vocabularies of desire allow for new ways of understanding and relating to love. The novelty and possibility that *chayu yŏnae* offered is most poignant in the three students' fantasy imaginings. It is primarily through the format of a motion picture that they are able to make sense of the romantic encounter they overhear from the Mistress' quarters. They are part of the early twentieth-century circulation of cosmopolitan romantic ideals through new media forms such as radio and film. Importantly, love-letter correspondence was a similarly newly-imported practice. These letters read like a student's dutiful imitation of the genre of European Romantic literature. The story's title underscores the novelty of love letters for Hyŏn and his contemporaries, as the term is Romanized from the English (러브레터). Hyŏn also indicates a degree of general unfamiliarity with the convention by prefacing his use of the term with 소위, translated as "so-called". The final scene captures the irony of Mistress B unwittingly enacting the dramas of *chayu yŏnae* for the very students whose moral conduct she regulates through dramas of interrogation and confession.

Within the new and ambivalent setting of the Japanese-style boarding school for girls, the characterization of the Mistress is decidedly performative. The text reads in places like a

script, with stage direction and settings. The rhythmic flow of the lines, most apparent in line breaks and tense shifts, adds a sensation of breath in the work; of a live performance, as with Mistress B's enactment of the confiscated love letters. As a translator, my approach to the text aimed to extend this dramatic perspective. In my reading and interpretation of the text, it was most important to preserve the performative gestures that embodied the original. In order to do so, I made conscious alterations in syntax and emphasis when necessary, in order to establish a corresponding rhythm that would translate effectively for a wide range of target readerships, both commercial and academic. Using this criteria, I opted for a more semantic approach to this translation, according to Newmark's definition, which was to deliver the contextual meaning of the source text "as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow" (39).

To retain the rhythm of the original, I also domesticated certain terms which would have otherwise interrupted the flow. For example, rather than give the full cultural context behind the term 장승 (*chang-sŭng*) (a carved wooden or stone idol thought to bring good luck to villages and communities), I opted for a compromise, using the familiar target language term, "totem pole". In context, the use of the original term simply implies that the student is keeping still, or speechless. With this translation, I attempted to keep the same indigenous connotation while also conveying the idiom in context. It was also important to keep the alternating narrative tone of the original, which varies throughout the story and affects the rhythm in reading. At some points, the narration is curt and commanding, as in the early interrogation scene. In others, the narration tends to be romantic and ornamental, most notably when the three young girls fantasize about a potential love affair taking place in the dormitory. To render these shifts, I chose target-language terms that seemed appropriate to the given tone, as well as to the period in which the story takes place. For example, to translate 활동 사진 (*hwaldong sajin*), I used the term "moving picture" rather than "motion picture". As the story centerpieces the tensions encountered by early twentieth-century Koreans between pre-modern and modern, colonial and metropolitan, and so on, it was critical to make the target audience aware of these differences.

Another challenge was the 'anecdotal' perspective applied to Mistress B's character. The readers' perspective overlaps with that of the students. For them – and, by proxy, for the reader – the Mistress' identity depends on the availability of witnessing students; she is never depicted alone or outside of her interactions with the students. These traumatizing exercises in moral re-education are serialized and dramatized through students' hallway gossip. It is through this intersubjective lens that we access the Mistress' character. Thus, the writing reflects a dramatization of events. Her exaggerated movements and utterances are the result of a snowballing, cumulative rhetoric based on rumor – a mingling of happenings condensed into one exaggerated prototypical happening. In the last scene, however, Hyŏn upsets our prejudiced view in his presentation of Mistress B in her intimate space. Consistent with the stage metaphor, the reader's view of the character is framed by her scripted, onstage performance as "The Mistress". The final scene offers a glimpse backstage through the eyes of the willful, curious, and sympathetic young women living under Mistress' reign of terror. Through her pitiable monologue behind the curtain, we encounter a complexity to her character, a dimension which Hyŏn carefully withholds until the narrative's very close.

With this in mind, I employed a distinctive English dialect to portray Mistress B, which corresponded most closely with the spirit of the original, yet would remain intelligible in English. In this story, the liberal use of onomatopoeic phrases and vulgar metaphors create a flow to the narrative and a metre to the wording. Thus, the summary description of the Mistress embodies both a written and oral flair. A literal or Romanized translation of these unique phrases would not render the same effect into English. Instead, I highlighted their exaggerated,

colloquial quality with verb choices and a few domestic clichés. To illustrate with the underlined phrases in the below excerpt:

달짝지그한 사연을 보는 족족 그는 더할수 없이 흥분되어서 얼굴이
붉으락푸그락, 편지 든 손이 발발 떨리도록 성을 낸다.

(Hyön, 1993:754)

Each time her eyes encounter some sugar-coated message, she plunges into a manic state; shades of red and indigo alternate on her face, the paper trembles in her fingers as the rage boils over.

(My translation)

For the first expression, 얼굴이 붉으락푸그락, I expanded the English translation to emphasize the meaning, inserting a minor alliteration to echo the lyricism of the original. In the following clause, 편지 든 손이 발발 떨리도록 성을 낸다, I added an English colloquialism to the verb in the form of “rage boils over” to replace the visceral aspect of 발발.

Another major issue was the text’s inconsistency in its use of tense. Though it was, and still is, common practice for Korean authors to mix present and past tense indiscriminately, it seemed – at least in this case – to be a clear and tactical use of tense. The deliberate pattern emerges through a line-by-line reading of the source text. The switch to present tense in this story signifies a moment in which the reality or origin of the featured speech is called into question. For example, the tense stays consistently in the past when the three girls are in their room, but switches whenever the mysterious noise outside the room is described. Hyön attaches the same present tense he used during the episodic reprimand scene in the beginning to the unknown origin of this noise (which we later discover is Mistress B). He subtly connects these two events through tense endings, both of which involve the Mistress. This use of tense conveys a dramatic inflection not present in the depictions of the three schoolgirls. Such tense shifts, when read in Korean, are not as apparent as in English, as they alternate fluidly from line to line. When translated, however, they may appear jarring for the reader. Still, I have opted to keep the tense as-is, delivering a similar juxtaposition of dramatic levels within the text. In the process, I have tried to keep the transitions as smooth as possible, while working to deliver their intended mood change.

A thorough appreciation of the range of Hyön’s literary techniques is vital to the interpretation and effective translation of this work. Throughout the translation process, I experimented with syntax and word choice to clarify the text’s anecdotal quality and faithfully render the author’s intent. The performative aspect of this story acts as a subtle interpretation of the outward projection of the self, juxtaposed with the reality discovered in private spaces. To preserve Mistress B’s tragic arc to the full extent of the original, it is important to treat expressions embedded between the lines with the same meticulousness – or even passion – that the Mistress accorded the “so-called love letters.”

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B 사감과 러브레터

현진건

C 여학교에서 교원 겸 기숙사 사감 노릇을 하는 B 여사라면 딱장대요 독신주의자요 차진 야소꾼으로 유명하다. 사십에 가까운 노처녀인 그는 주근깨 투성이 얼굴이 처녀다운 맛이란 약에 쓰러도 찾을 수 없을 뿐인가, 시들도 거칠고 마르고 누렇게 뜬 품이 곰팡 슬은 굴비를 생각나게 한다.

여러겹 주름이 잡힌 횡령 벗겨진 이마라든지, 술이 적어서 법대로 쪽지거나 틀어올리지를 못하고 엉성하게 그냥 빗겨 넘긴 머리꼬리가 뒤통수에 염소똥만하게 붙은 것이라든지, 벌써 늙어가는 자취를 감출길이 없었다. 뽀족한 입을 앙다물고 돋보기 너머로 쌀쌀한 눈이 노릴 때엔 기숙생들이 오싹하고 몹서리를 칠만큼 그는 엄격하고 매서웠다.

이 B 여사가 질겁을 하다시피 싫어하고 미워하는 것은 소위 러브레터였다. 여학교 기숙사라면 으레 그런 편지가 많이 오는 것이었지만, 학교로도 유명하고 또 아름다운 여학생이 많은 탓인지 모르되 하루에도 몇장씩 죽느니 사느니 하는 사랑타령이 날아들어 왔었다. 기숙생에게 오는 사신을 일일이 검토하는 터이니까 그 따위 편지도 물론 B 여사의 손에 떨어진다. 달짝지그한 사연을 보는 족족 그는 더할수 없이 흥분되어서 얼굴이 붉으락푸그락, 편지 든 손이 발발 떨리도록 성을 낸다.

아무 까닭없이 그런 편지를 받은 학생이야기말로 큰 재변이었다. 하학 하기가 무섭게 그 학생은 사감실로 불리어 간다. 분해서 못 견디겠다는 사람 모양으로 썩근썩근하며 방안을

Mistress B and the Love Letters

Hyŏn Chingŏn

Translated by Carrie Middleditch

Here comes Mistress B of C Girls School, whose absolute reign over the dormitory and classroom, along with her righteous singlehood and devout faith, has earned her a certain fame. The blush of youth is entirely stamped out of the almost-forty-year-old spinster's freckle-ridden face. The withered, tough, dry, yellowed skin reminds one of dried-out fish.

Perhaps it's her widening forehead overrun with wrinkles, or the way she combs her thinning hair into a goat dung-sized mound on the back of her head—whatever the cause, any trace of her fleeting youth is long gone. With pursed lips and icy eyes peering over reading glasses, the fierce severity contained in a single glance is enough to induce shudders and shakes in any student.

The foremost appalling and vexing concern of this Mistress B was the so-called "love letters". As a girls' dormitory, notes of the like are to be expected. Still, the high repute of the institution or the uncommon number of beauties contained therein likely caused several lovesick ballads to flutter in daily. And with all correspondence monitored, these love letters invariably end up in Mistress B's hands. Each time her eyes encounter some sugar-coated message, she plunges into a manic state; shades of red and indigo alternate on her face, the paper trembles in her fingers as the rage boils over.

However unfairly, these letters spelled calamity for the recipient. The girl is summoned to the Mistress' office at the end of class. Unable to contain her fury, Mistress B paces lines across the room, seething through her nostrils. The

왔다갔다하던 그는, 들어오는 학생을 잡아먹을 듯이 노리면서 한 걸음 두 걸음 코가 맞닿을만큼 바짝다가 들어서서 딱 마주선다. 웬 영문인지 알지 못하면서도 선생의 기색을 살피고 겁부터 집어먹는 학생은 한동안 어쩔 줄 모르다가 간신히 모기만한 소리로,
"저를 부르셨어요?"

하고 묻는다.

"그래, 불렀다. 왜!"

콧 무는 듯이 한 마디 하고 나서 매우 못마땅한 것처럼 교의를 우당통탕 당겨서 철석 주저앉았다가 학생이 그저서 있는 걸 보면

"장승이나? 왜 앉지를 못해!"

하고 또 소리를 뺏 지르는 법이었다.

스승과 제자는 조그만한 책상 하나를 사이에 두고 마주 앉는다. 앉은 뒤에도, '네 죄상을 네가 알지!' 하는 것처럼 아무 말없이 눈살로 쏘기만 하다가 한참만에야 그 편지를 끄집어내어 학생의 코앞에 동맹이를 치며,

"이건 누구한테 오는 거냐?"

하고 문초를 시작한다. 앞장에 제 이름이 찍었는지라,

"저한테 온 것이야요."

하고 대답 않을 수 없다. 그러면 발신인이 누구인 것을 재차 묻는다. 그런 편지의 항용어로 발신인의 성명이 똑똑지 않기 때문에 주저주저 하다가 자세히 알 수 없다고 내대일 양이면,

"너한테 오는 것을 모른단

말이나?"

고 불호령을 내릴 뒤에 또 사연을 읽어 보라 하여 무심한 학생이 나직나직하나마 꿀같은 구절을 입술에 올리면, B 여사의 역정은 더욱 심해져서 어느 놈의 소행인 것을 기어이 알려 한다. 기실 보도 듣도 못한 남성이 한 노릇이요, 자기에게는 아무 죄도 없는 것을 변명하여도 곧이 듣지를 않는다. 바른 대로 아뢰어야 망정이지 그렇지 않으면 퇴학을 시킨다는 등, 제 이름도 모르는 여자에게 편지할 리가

moment the girl steps over the threshold, she pounces. One stride, and another, until their noses nearly touch. The oblivious pupil sees the woman's state and dread begins to sink in. Stupefied, at last she musters the thinnest voice,

"Did you summon me, Miss?"

"That's right, I did. Do you *mind*?" she snaps.

Demonstrating her displeasure, she drags a chair across the room and crashes down. Eyeing the girl still standing, she strikes again, screeching,

"What are you, a totem pole? Sit down!"

A small desk separates teacher and student as they sit facing one another. The Mistress continues her piercing glare, as if to say, "you know why you're here!" Eventually, she produces a letter and shoves it under the girl's nose.

"Who is this addressed to?"

The interrogation begins.

Spotting her own name on the page, the student can all but reply,

"To me, Miss."

The next question – the identity of the sender. The girl hesitates. With such correspondence, one can never be sure... She eventually answers that she doesn't know. The Mistress erupts,

"So, you have *no* idea who sent this to you?"

She then orders the girl to read out the contents. As the unwitting student mumbles through each honey-soaked line, the Mistress' frenzy escalates to the point that she must know the culprit's name. No matter the girl's pleas – that she's never heard of that name, that it doesn't involve her – the Mistress won't hear it. The student is threatened to fess up or face expulsion, and goaded for an explanation as to how it was possible for the boy to send a letter without knowing her name. The Mistress makes accusations of immoral behaviour,

만무하다는 등, 필연 행실이 부정한 일이 있으리라는 등…….

하다못해 어디서 한 번 만나기라도 하였을 테니 어찌해서 남자와 접촉을 하게 되었느냐는 등, 자칫 잘못하여 학교에서 주최한 음악회나 바자에서 혹 보았는지 모른다고 졸리다 못해 주위댈 것 같으면 사내의보는 눈이 어떻더냐, 표정이 어떻더냐, 무슨 말을 건네더냐 미주알 고주알 캐고 파며 어르고 북아서 넉넉히 십년 감수는 시킨다.

두 시간이 넘도록 무초를 한 끝에는 사내란 믿지 못할 것, 우리 여성을 잡아먹으려는 마귀인 것, 연애 자유니 신성이니 하는 것도 악마가 지어낸 소리인 것을 입에 침이 없이 열을 띠어서 한참 설법을 하다가 뉘지도 않은 방바닥 (침대를 쓰기 때문에 방이라 해도 마룻바닥이다)에 그대로 무릎을 꿇고 기도를 올린다. 눈에 눈물까지 글썽거리면서 말 끝마다 하느님 아버지를 찾아서 악마의 유혹에 떨어지려하는 어린 양을 구해 달라고 뒤삼고 곱삼는 법이었다.

그리고 둘째로 그의 싫어하는 것은 기숙생을 남자가 면회하러 오는 일이었다.

무슨 핑계를 하든지 기어이 못 보게 하고 만다. 친부모, 친동기간이라도 규칙이 어떠니 상학 중이니 무슨 핑계를 하든지 따돌려 보내기가 일쑤다.

이로 말미암아 학생이 동맹 휴학을 하였고 교장의 설유까지 들었건만 그래도 그 버릇은 고치려 들지 않았다.

이 B 사감이 감독하는 그 기숙사에 금년 들어서 괴상한 일이 '생겼다'느니보다 '발각되었다'는 것이 마땅할는지 모르리라. 왜 그런고 하면 그 괴상한 일이 언제 '시작된' 것은 귀신밖에 모르니까.

그것은 다른 일이 아니라 밤이 깊어서 새로 한 점이 되어 모든 기숙생들이 달고 곤한 잠에 떨어졌을 때

insisting the girl has brought it upon herself.

She applies more pressure, insisting the two must have met at least once. If the student, unable to endure more harassment, creates an excuse that they accidentally met eyes at a school-sponsored concert or charity event, the Mistress probes every detail. How did the boy look at you? What was his expression? What did he say? She digs and digs until she's dug at least ten years from the girl's life.

After over two hours of questioning, the Mistress begins a crazed sermon. She spouts that boys cannot be trusted... they're demons set to prey on females... the likes of "free love" and "sacred love" are the devil's fictions... She rambles on in a feverish state without stopping, not even to swallow saliva. Then, collapsing to her knees, she begins to pray on the coarse, unkempt floor (as the beds are of the Western style, the concrete floor is left unfinished). Her eyes swell with tears as she repeats her pleas to the Heavenly Father, repeatedly begging deliverance for this young lamb who has strayed onto Satan's path...

After love letters, the Mistress above all hated male visitors to the dormitory students.

Regardless of whether they were a parent or relative, she made any excuse necessary for the meeting not to take place. She might say that the student was busy in class, or cite some other regulation, and send them away. This led to students skipping lessons in protest, with the issue going as high as a reprimand from the principal. Still, the Mistress made no efforts to change her habit.

As autumn set in, a strange happening was "discovered" involving Mistress B in the dormitory she oversaw. "Discovered" is a more accurate term than "began", because only the ghosts would know just when this happening "began."

난데없는 깔깔대는 웃음과 속살속살하는 날말이 새어 흐르는 일이었다. 하룻밤이 아니고 이틀밤이 아닌 다음에야 그런 소리가 잠귀 밝은 기숙생의 귀에 들리기도 하였지만 잠결이라 뒷동산에 구르는 마른잎의 노래로나, 달빛에 날개를 번뜩이며 울고 가는 기러기의 소리로나 흘려 들었다. 그렇지 않으면 도깨비의 장난이나 아닌가 하여 무시무시한 증이 들어서 동무를 깨웠다가 좀처럼 동무는 깨지 않고 제 생각이 너무나 어렵고 어이없음을 깨달으면, 밤소리 멀리 들린다고 학교 이웃집에서 이야기를 하거나 또 탄 방에 자는 제 동무들의 잠꼬대로만 여겨서 스스로 안심하고 그대로 자버리기도 하였다. 그러나 이 수수께끼가 풀린 때는 왔다. 이때 공교롭게 한방에 자던 학생 셋이 한꺼번에 잠을 깨었다. 첫째 처녀가 소변을 보러 일어났다가 그 소리를 듣고 둘째 처녀와 셋째 처녀를 깨우고 만 것이다.

"저 소리를 들어 보아요. 아닌 밤중에 저게 무슨 소리야." 하고 첫째 처녀는 휘둥그레진 눈에 무서워하는 빛을 띤다.

"어젯밤에 나도 저 소리에 놀랐었어. 도깨비가 났단 말인가?"

하고 둘째 처녀도 잠 오는 눈을 비비며 수상해 한다. 그 중에 제일 나이 많을 뽀뽀러 (많았자 열여덟밖에 아니되지만) 장난 잘 치고 짓궂은 짓 잘하기로 유명한 셋째 처녀는 동무 말을 못 믿겠다는 듯이 이윽고 귀를 기울이다가,

"땀은 수상한 걸. 나도 언젠가 한번 들어 본 법도 하구먼. 무얼 잠 아니 오는 애들이 이야기를 하는 게지."

이때에 그 괴상한 소리가 뿃대굴 웃었다. 세 처녀는 귀를 소스라쳤다. 적적한 밤 가운데 다른 파동없는 공기는 그 수상한 말마디가 곁에서 나는 듯이 또렷또렷이 전해 주었다.

"오! 태운씨! 그러면 작히 좋을까요."

간드러진 여자의 목소리다.

The discovery occurred during the darkest part of night, when every student was fast asleep. It was at this hour when sudden bursts of laughter, mingled with soft murmurs, were heard echoing through the halls. Occasionally a few lighter sleepers were roused by the noise, but in their drowsiness they passed it off as dried leaves blowing on the nearby hill, or geese fanning their wings under the moonlight. One girl spooked herself with the thought of goblins playing pranks. She tried to wake her roommates to no avail, but eventually realized her childish logic. Assuring herself of a simple neighbourly ruckus, or girls talking in their sleep, she drifted off again. The mystery was soon brought to light. As it happens, one night three students of the same room all woke by chance. The first girl, after stirring to use the toilet, heard the noise and woke the next two.

"Listen to that! What could that be at this hour?" She said, her eyes glossy with fear.

"I heard the same noise last night. It can't be a... goblin... can it?" ventured the second girl, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. The third and eldest among them (though, despite this distinction, she was just seventeen), known for her playful, mischievous manner, kept a doubtful silence before perking up her ears, adding,

"How strange. Come to think of it, I've heard this same noise before... I'm sure it's just some girls who can't sleep."

Just then, the strange noise erupted in a roar of laughter. The three shrunk in fear, their ears homing in on the sound. Every odd word rang out clearly in the still night, where no other sound carried through the air. It was as if it were transpiring right next to them.

"Oh! Mr. T'aeun! How marvelous that would be."

"경숙 씨가 좋으시다면 내야 얼마나 기쁘겠습니까? 아아, 오직 경숙 씨에게 바친 나의 타는 듯한 가슴을 이제야 아셨습니까?"

정열에 뜬 사내의 목청이 분명하다.

한동안 침묵……

"인제 그만 놓아요. 키스가 너무 길지 않아요? 행여 남이 보면 어떡해요?"

아양떠는 여자 말씨.

"길수록 더욱 좋지 않아요? 나는 내 목숨이 끊어질 때까지 키스를 하여도 길다고는 못하겠습니다. 그래도 짧은 것을 한하겠습니다."

사내의 피를 뺨는 듯한 이 말끝은 계집의 자지러진 웃음으로 묻혀 버렸다.

그것은 묻지 않아도 사랑에 겨운 남녀의 허물어진 수작이다. 감금이 지독한 이 기숙사에 이런 일이 생길 줄이야! 세 처녀는 얼굴을 마주보았다. 그들의 얼굴은 놀랍고 무서운 빛이 없지 않으되 점점 호기심에 번쩍이기 시작하였다. 그들의 머리 속에는 한결같이 로맨틱한 생각이 떠올랐다. 이 안에 있는 여자 애인을 보려고 학교 근처를 뒤돌고 곱돌던 사내 애인이 타는 듯한 가슴을 건잡다 못하여 밤이 이슬하기를 기다려 담을 뛰어 넘었는지 모르리라.

모든 불이 다 꺼지고 오직 밝은 달빛이 은가루처럼 서린 장문이 소리 없이 열리며 여자 애인이 흰 수건을 흔들며 사내 애인을 부른지도 모르리라. 활동 사진에 보는 것처럼 기나긴 피륙을 내리워서 하나는 위에서 당기고 하나는 밑에서 매달려 디롱디롱하면서 올라가는 정경이 있었는지도 모르리라.

그래서 두 애인은 만나 가지고 저와 같이 사랑의 속삭그림에 잤아졌는지 모르리라…….

꿈결같은 감정이 안개 모양으로 눈부시게 세 처녀의 몸과 마음을 휩싸 돌았다.

그들의 뺨은 후끈후끈 달았다.

괴상한 소리는 또 일어났다.

A coquettish woman's voice.

"If you agree, Kyöngsuk, how happy would I be! Do you now trust my burning devotion to you?"

Undoubtedly, the fervent pleas of a young man.

A long pause...

"Let me go! Your kisses are too lengthy, are they not?" the lady bleats. "What if someone catches us?"

"The longer the better, surely? If my lips never left yours, even till the day I die, I wouldn't think it lengthy... but I'll keep it short."

His heartfelt words were obscured in the woman's peeling laughter.

Without question, it was some unrestrained exchange between lovers. That such an affair could occur in the dreadful confinement of this dormitory! The three girls exchanged looks. Shock and fear mingled in their faces... but a sheen of curiosity soon took over. A whole host of romantic scenarios formed in their minds. Perhaps this man had come to see his love, and wandered around the school walls, unable to quell the scorching embers in his heart... and awaiting the cover of night, leapt over.

With every light extinguished, the lady pushes open the moonlight-dusted window ever so mutely, dangling a white handkerchief to signal to her lover. Like a scene in a moving picture, a long sheet lowers for one to pull above and one to climb below; the cloth sways to and fro.

In this way, they unite and are carried off by whispers of love...

A dreamy haze of shimmering sentiments swathed the three girls, body and soul.

Their cheeks glowed.

The strange noise erupted again.

"난 싫어요. 당신같은 사내는 난 싫어요."

이번에는 매몰스럽게 내어대는 모양.

"나의 천사, 나의 하늘, 나의 여왕, 나의 목숨, 나의 사랑, 나를 살려 주시오. 나를 구해 주세요."

사내의 애를 줄이는 간청…….

"우리 구경가 볼까?"

짓궂은 셋째 처녀는 몸을 일으키며 이런 제의를 하였다. 다른 처녀들도 그 말에 찬성한다는 듯이 따라 일어섰으며 의아와 공구와 호기심이 뒤섞인 얼굴을 서로 교환하면서 얼마쯤 망설이다가 마침내 가만히 문을 열고 나왔다. 쌀벌레같은 그들의 발가락은 가장 조심성 많게 소리나는 곳은 향해서 곰실곰실 기어간다. 컴컴한 복도에 자다가 일어난 세 처녀의 흰 모양은 그림자처럼 소리없이 움직였다.

소리나는 방은 어렵지 않게 찾을 수 없었다. 찾고는 나무로 깎아 세운 듯이 주춤 걸음을 멈출 만큼 그들은 놀랐다. 그런 소리의 출처야말로 자기네 방에서 몇 걸음 안되는 사감실일 줄이야! 그렇듯이 사내라면 못 먹어 하고 침이라도 배알을 듯하던 B 여사의 방일 줄이야! 그 방에 여전히 사내의 비대발괄하는 푸념이 되풀이되고 있다…….

"나의 천사, 나의 하늘, 나의 여왕, 나의 목숨 나의 사랑, 나의 애를 말려 죽이실 테요. 나의 가슴을 뜯어 죽이실 테요. 내 생명을 맡으신 당신의 입술로……."

셋째 처녀는 대담스럽게 그 방문을 뺄뚱히 열었다. 그 틈으로 여섯 눈이 방안을 향해 쏘았다. 이 어쩐 기괴한 광경이냐! 전등불은 아직 끄지 않았는데 침대 위에는 기숙생들에게 온 소위 러브레터의 봉투가 너저분하게 흩어졌고, 그 알맹이도 여기저기 두서없이 펼쳐진 가운데 B 여사 혼자—아무도 없이 저 혼자 일어나 앉았다. 누구를 끌어당길 듯이 두 팔을 벌리고 안경을 벗은 근시안으로 잔뜩 한 곳을

"I hate you. I *detest* men like you!"

This time a tone of cold refusal.

"My angel, my sky, my queen, my life, my love! I beg you, spare me, *please!*"

The man cries in agony...

"Shall we go have a look?"

The mischievous third girl sat up, suggesting. The others rose in agreement, each exchanging looks. They wavered in hesitation a few moments, shades of doubt, fear, and curiosity mingled on their faces. Finally, they opened the door softly and crept out. Their toes wiggled toward the sound, each like tiny rice weevils. Their pale silhouettes stirred silently, like shadows along the dark hallway.

They found the room easily. And in their shock, each turned rigid like boards. Who could have guessed! The source of the sound, only a few paces from their own, was Mistress B's room! The same Mistress B who would happily spit in the face of any man! From within, the young man's exacerbated woes continue...

"My angel, my sky, my queen, my life, my love! Will you drag out my love and slay me? Will you carve out my heart and end me? With those lips, those which control my fate..."

The mischievous third girl boldly cracked open the door and six eyes peered into the room. And what a bizarre sight it was! With the electric lamp still burning, envelopes belonging to the students' so-called love letters were strewn across the bed, their contents scattered here and there. Perched among them was the Mistress, alternating poses—completely alone. With her arms stretched out, she reaches to pull someone close; without the aid of her spectacles, her short-sighted eyes strain to locate their target. Her

노리며 그 굴비쪽같은 얼굴에 말할 수 없이 애원하는 표정을 짓고는 키스를 기다리는 것같이 입을 쭉긋이 내어민 채 사내의 목청을 내어 가면서 아까 말을 중얼거린다. 그러다가 그 녀두리가 끝날 겨를도 없이 급작스레 앵돌아지는 시늉을 내며 누구를 뿌리치는 듯이 연해 손짓을 하며 이번에는 툭툭 쏘는 계집의 음성을 지어,

"난 싫어요. 당신 같은 사내는 난 싫어요."

하다가 제물에 자지러지게 웃는다. 그러더니 문득 편지 한 장(물론 기숙생에게 온 러브레터의 하나)를 집어 들어 얼굴이 문지르며,

"정말이야요? 나를 그렇게 사랑하셔요? 당신의 목숨같이 나를 사랑하셔요? 나를, 이 나를."

하고 몸을 추스르는데 그 음성은 분명히 울음의 가락을 띠었다.

"에그머니, 저게 웬일이냐!"

첫째 처녀가 소곤거렸다.

"아마 미쳤나 보아, 밤중에 혼자 일어나서 왜 저러고 있을꼬."

둘째 처녀가 맞방망이를 친다.....

"에그 불쌍해!"

하고 셋째 처녀는 손으로 귀 때 모르는 눈물을 씻었다.

dried, fish-like face is puckered up in anticipation, impatient for a kiss. One moment she grumbles pleas in a masculine low-tone, the next, she assumes a woman's rejecting mode, waving her arms in protest.

"I hate you. I *hate* men like you!"

Then, in an eruption of laughter, she snatches up another letter (one addressed to a student) and rubs it over her face.

"Really?" she cries. "You really love me that much? You love me with your whole life? *Me?*"

She draws herself in, a tearful pinch caught in her throat.

"Oh my, what *is* this!" whispered the first girl.

"She must be mad," chimed the second. "What else could explain this?"

"How sad..." muttered the third, swiping away the unbidden tears brimming in her eyes.