

## Layers of Contemporary Korean Literature

### Keys to Korean culture

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In the globalizing world today with a growing scale of international contacts, the importance of understanding cultural specifics, of a variety of approaches as well as their interpretation depending on the cultural background is hard to overestimate. In Korean culture, literature and text in general have always been attributed a special importance, therefore many mental perspectives and behavioral patterns may be found in literature, and many of them trace their roots to traditional texts. Therefore, literary texts can serve an informative source on the Koreans' understanding of the world, as well as their perception of human relations and social matters.

Conventionally pre-modern and contemporary literatures are usually perceived as two completely different phenomena, viewed separately. At the same time, it would be wrong to say that the new forms are fully independent from traditional ones. A more careful consideration of texts belonging to contemporary literature discovers multiple and complex relations with traditions of pre-modern literature (both intentional and arising from the author's sub-consciousness).

Literature related issues are crucially important for a Korean studies specialist due to the following features:

- An especially high role of text in Korean culture since ancient times;
- literature related knowledge is expected from a person majoring in Korean studies whatever an exact specialization is;
- in Korean culture, high educational level and intellectuality is associated with a high proficiency in literature and text;
- for the past decade, reading has been placed as a way to social success. One of the main representatives of this idea is the President Mun Jae-In.

The objectives are as follows:

- familiarize with representative literature pieces,
- tackle upon artistic aspects of literature,
- view cultural transformations through 20th century,
- speak on specifics of dealing with current matters,
- reconstruct elements of Korean *weltanschauung*,
- trace general specifics of Korean mentality.

### Backgrounds

The division of traditional (pre-modern) and modern&contemporary literature goes back to the break between the 19th and 20th century when readers in Korea had a chance to know Western literature (through Chinese and Japanese translations). An interest to the new phenomenon and attempts to make experiments with form and contents applying new methods results in trends lead to the new stage of Korean literature development. Literature of the first half of the 20th century is usually called modern literature, and literature after the Liberation (1945) is determined as

contemporary literature. Today we are going to examine the examples of relations in between the above stages and focus on contemporary literature and the elements tracing their roots to pre-modern literature. The examples that are to be discussed are those that give actual information on Korean culture, its basic models and patterns of understanding the world and society, examples that help understanding some specifics of behavioral and communicational culture of Koreans, as well.

Due to the geographic position of the Korean Peninsula, in ancient times it was a territory of cultural migrations that took two directions, i.e. from the continent to the islands, and the opposite directions: from the Austronesian culture to Siberia and even further. Korean texts contain elements that one can find in plots of India, of Tangut, even of Greece and Rome. In a way, this “bridge-like” role of the Korean Peninsula may be compared with the Appenine peninsula, having a similar shape, also a space of cultural migrations due to the Roman colonies on the African continent<sup>1</sup>.



Cultural migrations resulted in the multi-layered character of Korean culture with complicated relations between authentic and borrowed.

The main areas of traditional elements are as follows<sup>2</sup>:

1. Plots and elements of plots
2. Symbols, metaphors, allusions
3. Structural specifics, models, space and time patterns
4. Patterns of consciousness and understanding the world

### **Plots and elements of plots**

Pre-modern plots inspire contemporary authors, mostly playwrights and masters of prose. Among representative examples there are the following.

“Tale of Simcheong” 심청전 (having roots in earlier local stories) tells readers of a girl who was raised by her blind father after her mother died in giving her birth. To give her father a chance to regain his vision by offering money to a Buddhist monastery, Simcheong sells herself to sea-men looking for a sacrifice to the sea. Through into the sea, she does not die, but welcomed by a Dragon-king. She refuses marriage and becoming a sea-princess and goes back to the earth where she meets her future husband and becomes a queen. After a happy reunion her father miraculously gains his sight.

This pre-modern plot served the base for the plays “Moon, moon, bright moon...” (“달아, 달아, 밝은 달아...”) by Choe In-hun 최인훈(1936-2018) and “Why Simcheong threw herself

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<sup>1</sup> Nikitina M.I. Lectures on Ancient Korean literature. Written down by Guryeva A.A. 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The contents of the lecture bases on the following paper: Guryeva A.A. General Trends of Traditional Elements Usage in Contemporary South Korean Poetry//Materials of the International Academic Conference «Problems of Far Eastern Literatures», Saint Petersburg University. 2018, 164-172.

into the sea twice?” (“심청이는 왜 두번 인당수에 몸을 던졌는가”) by Oh Tae-seok 오태석 (born 1940). E.g. Oh Tae-seok in his play uses the figure of Simcheong – a representative of filial piety in Korean literature - to show the dark side of contemporary society. Together with Dragon-king, another protagonist of the traditional story, she visits Seoul metropolitan and faces a number of scary situations. While Dragon-king easily adjusts to the contemporary reality, Simcheong can not put up with it, and plunges into the sea not to return<sup>3</sup>.

Another virtuous figure of Korean literature is Chunhyang, a model faithful wife.



Chunhyang (as imagined by a Korean artist)

Several events of the “Tale of Chunhyang” 춘향전 are the base for the poems by Seo Jeong-ju 서정주 (1915-2000). The poems about Chunhyang also mostly express the emotions of the main protagonists: the girl and her beloved. Among Seo’s early poems there is a cycle “Excerpt from Silla” 신라초 *Sillacho* (1960) dealing with events and plots of the ancient state of Silla described in the “Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms” (Samguk Yusa 삼국유사 compiled by Il Yeon and published in 1245).

Among the above mentioned Choe In-hun’s works there is also the novel *Ku Un Mong* 구운몽 (“The cloud dream of the nine”), sharing its title with the famous novel by Kim Man-jung (1637-1692).

The fact that characters are familiar to the readers enriches the meaning of the work in general<sup>4</sup>. One of the features that most of these works share: there are no emphasized, historicistic stylizations of the language. The characters just speak the language contemporary to the author and the readers. We can see that the authors use the established familiar characters of those classics to highlight common human traits, with the effect that these characters become closer to the contemporary readership.

### Symbols, metaphors, citations and allusions

This group mostly includes the following:

- Symbolic images: e.g. sun&moon (a senior, a ruler), pine (a servant), goose (a herald bringing a message);
- Literary associations, allusions: e.g. Dream in Chu as a symbol of a romance; Peach-blossom stream 桃源;
- Metaphors: e.g. wind, water;
- Fixed expressions.

Let us view in more detail the (무릉武陵) 도원 桃源, i.e. an allusion to “Peach-blossom spring”, *Wulin*, by the Chinese poet Tao Yuan-min 도연명陶淵明 (365-427). “Peach-blossom

<sup>3</sup> Komarova A.P.: Specifics of Sim Cheong’s Personality in Oh Tae-seok’s play “Why Did Sim Cheong Threw herself into the Sea Twice?” (‘심청이는 왜 두 번 인당수에 몸을 던졌는가’) // Korea and Russia: Society, Politics, History, Culture. For 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Korean studies in Saint Petersburg University. Saint Petersburg University Press, 2019. Pp. 373-376.

<sup>4</sup> Guryeva A.A.: Traditional Elements in Contemporary Korean Culture // Korean Peninsula. Lessons of History. Proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> academic Conference of Korean Studies Researchers of Russia and CIS. Moscow. Institute of the Far East, Russian Academy of Sciences. 2010.

spring” is an ideal place with a harmonic society, which a fisherman occasionally reached following a spring full of peaches in blossom. He wanted to share this space with his family and went back home to inform them, but could not find the ideal place anymore. This work is the first social utopia in the Far Eastern literature. It enriched pre-modern Korean literature with lots of images giving a hint that the Peach-blossom spring is near: peach-blossom petals in water, fragrance etc. Besides, as Tao Yuan-min is one of representative Taoist poets, therefore this symbol is often a part of texts containing ideas of free life.

In contemporary prose, we can find such an example as in the short-story “Black Widow” *흑과부* by Park Wan-seuh 박완서 (1931-2011) where the allusion is applied in a sarcastic way: the apartment complex where the main characters spend their dramatic life has the name *Murueng*. The author creates a contrast in between the idealistic name of the district and misery of the protagonists’ life.

One of examples in prose, we can see the poem “Heart is a seed leaf”( 마음은 떡잎 ) by Jeong Hyeon-jong 정현종 (born 1939) also containing an allusion to the legend about the Peach-blossom stream 桃源:

*When we went to the Peach-blossom spring  
To see the waves of peaches,  
That country-boy, kept silence  
Whatever he was asked by his Seoul uncle.*

This part of the poem reminds of the following *sijo* by an unknown author:

*Hey, boy, riding a calf stepping the long glass blades,  
Tell me, do you know what is good and what is bad in this world?  
And the boy plays a flute smiling and does not give an answer*



A sculpture of a boy on a calf by the Institute of Kasa poetry in Southern Cholla province.

It is important to note, that the silence, one of the central elements in both texts, also belongs to the Taoist level of thought (“Tao which is expressed is not Tao”). The boy with a flute riding a calf is one of the manifestations of a Taoist immortal, and silence is a normal state of such a character. At the same time, looking for an ideal space associated with peach-blossoms, continues this semantic line.

The poem “Dokdo” *독도* by Lee Yeong-deok 이영덕 contains several allusions to a famous short poem in *sijo* genre by Jeong Mong-ju 정몽주 (1337-1392) (Dokdo island is the core of the territorial dispute between the Republic of Korea and Japan).

The following phrase defines the position of Korean nation:

하늘을 향한 한민족 (*The Korean people turned to the skies*) [To the sky oriented Korean people]  
나라 향한 마음 (*The soul turned to the country*) [To the country oriented soul]

The expression “turned to” is an allusion to the last line of the *sijo*, which literary may be translated as follows:

*My small piece of red heart turned to you,  
My ruler, could it ever change?*

In the original of the *sijo*, the heart is expressed with a phrase: “small piece of red heart” *ilpyeondansim* 一片丹心. Functionally it is equal to the ancient concept of *maeum* (heart-mind)<sup>5</sup> and symbolizes loyalty and faithfulness. The phrase “turned to you, my ruler” *임향한* means more than just addressing, and it is a part of the same idea of loyal attitude. Cf. the poetical translation by Kim Yong Nahg<sup>6</sup>:

*Still all my heart and all my love, unchanged remains with you,  
My undivided loyalty, unchanged remains with you.*

The “Dokdo” poem mentions both *maeum* and the phrase “turned to” with the same phrase, and we can assume, that faithful attitude is important in the Dokdo related discourse. Another phrase in the “Dokdo” poem basing on the old *sijo* is:

*This love preserved in the hearts  
And carved in the bones  
Of 48 million people...*  
사천 팔백만의 가슴에 자리 잡은  
뻗속 깊이 새겨진 사랑이니

In Jeong Mong-ju’s six-and-a-half century old poem, there is also a phrase mentioning bones and heart:

이 몸이 주거 주거 일백번 고쳐 주거  
백골이 진토되어 넋이라도 잊고없고  
님향한 일편단심이야 가설 줄이 이시라  
(...)

*Even if my body dies,  
After healing it dies over and over a hundred times  
Even if my bones turn into ashes,  
I do not care if my heart stays alive or not,  
But my soul that seeks after the King  
Will never betray him*

*Though I die and die again  
Although my body perishes, and yet one thousand times dies,  
My bones become ashes,  
Even my soul vanishes.  
Still all my heart and all my love, unchanged remains with you,  
My undivided loyalty, unchanged remains with you*

The same phrase “even if my bones become ashes” *백골이 진토되어* – is used in other *sijo* texts of the same genre but of much later periods. It became a common image for pledging

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<sup>5</sup> Nikitina M.I. *Sijo and hyanga: Problems of Interrelation (with a focus on nature poetry) // Theory of Genres and Literatures of the Orient. Moscow, 1985. (Никитина М.И. Сичжо и хянга. Проблемы взаимосвязи (на примере пейзажной поэзии) // Теория жанров литератур Востока. М., 1985).*

<sup>6</sup> Kim Yong Nahg: *Sijo and Hansi. Old poems of Korea. 2001.*

faithfulness not only for a ruler, but for a lover, as well. Take, e.g., this *sijo* of an unknown author (18-19<sup>th</sup> century):

*My beloved, who enters my room  
Through the edge of window,  
When the lantern is withering,  
And my beloved, whom I embrace when laying down,  
At the fifth watch bell -  
Could I forget  
No matter if white bones turn into ashes*

We can see that the old *sijo* and the contemporary poem on Dokdo share the same idea of faithfulness and the same idea of the inner unity of the person who is ready to sacrifice: the poem mentions body, bones, soul and heart – the main elements of a human according to ancient views. The objective of such an allusion to a widely known text may be that this creates an emphasis. We may conclude that the poem uses a commonly familiar symbol, and while this symbol may be not recognized by some readers (those not well-versed in pre-modern literature), the symbol creates an additional layer of meaning.

Another example is a fragment of a poem by 구상 Gu Sang (1919-2004):

초토의 시 - 8  
*Ode to Burnt Soils 8*  
-적군 묘지 앞에서-  
*At the Red army cemetery*

오호, 여기 줄지어 누워 있는 녀들은  
눈도 감지 못하였겠구나  
...  
이 곳서 나와 너희의 녀들이  
돌아가야 할 고향 땅은 삼 십 리 먼  
가로막히고

The general idea of this fragment is addressing the dead enemies: «you could not close your eyes (meaning: as you died at an outland) and could not return». The second part relates to an old Chinese legend. Thus, the poem contains a phrase: 무주공산 적막만이 無主空山 寂寞, (Deserted mountains are silent), which alludes to the legend about Prince of the Shu Kingdom who was chased away from his country, and after he died his soul turned into a cuckoo-bird weeping for his homeland. A cuckoo's cry was written down as a meaningful phrase: 불여귀 不如歸 relating to the same idea of no return important for the examined poem.

### **Structural specifics, models, space and time patterns**

This is the group with most numerous examples and with a possibility of unconscious usage. Such models as those related to space and time often are a part of general weltanschauung. In pre-modern literature, they can serve a literary mode, but mostly they are also a manifestation of how the author understands the world. With this regard, their meaning is often more than just a key to understanding a certain fragment of a text, but an important element of general vision of the universe.

The space models found in many texts are, most of all the basic triad “Heaven-Earth-Human” (天地人 *cheon-ji-in*); “mountains+waters” 山水 *sansu* or 江山 *gangsang*; “light above+sound below”. Each of them adds to the meaning of the text.

The basic triad “Heaven-Earth-Human” (天地人 *cheon-ji-in*) belongs to the ancient Chinese model of the universe. It is considered to represent a basic structure of the world, and is thus found in spiritual, social, political culture of the countries of the Far East, including Korea. In Korean pre-modern literature, it is used specifically, often in order to show the universal character of the situation or its scale. Contemporary poetry borrows this specific and uses this model to emphasize a scale of the situation described in the poem or to show the central image of a poem as an embodiment of some idea or phenomenon<sup>7</sup>.

The poem “Ritual of memory 1” 기억제 1 *Gieolkje-1* by Jeong Hyeon-jong 정현중 (born in 1939) contains this model in its concluding part:

*Do you know the golden secret of time?  
Remember:  
Garbage is drunk in the lowest place,  
Stars are drunk in the skies,  
While you are standing on the bridge in between them.  
And do not know, what to do*

기억하렴:  
쓰레기는 가장 낮은 데서 취해 있고  
별들은 天空에서 취해 있고  
그대는 中間의 다리 위에서  
어쩔 줄 모르고 있음을.

In the same lines, one can find also the model “Union of Heaven and Earth” 天地合一 *cheonji-habil* often used as a highest state of harmony. Therefore, the poem delivers the idea of the harmonic Nature representing the “secret” of time, which is not easily perceived by a human.

The pairs “mountains+waters” 山水 *sansu* and 江山 *gangsang* symbolize Nature in general. Together the elements serve an embodiment of the eternity of Nature, at the same time, each of them represents different phenomena: mountains are vertical and static, waters are horizontal and dynamic.

The model “Light above+Sound below” (it does not have a certain definition in Korean) was traditionally used in order to create a picture of a universal harmony. In contemporary texts, it can be used for the same purpose<sup>8</sup>. This model may also base on the more profound model of light representing male, and sound – associated with female, therefore, together representing the two oppositions, *ying* and *yang* 陰陽.

One of the examples is a famous poem of Kim Gyu-dong 김규동 (1925-2011) “Tumangang” 두만강 dealing with the period when Korea was fighting for its independence. In this poem, one can find the absence of light (darkness is emphasized) and an obvious overconcentration of sound. Considering the above connotations, we see that this mode may be used to create an atmosphere of the fighting as one of the most masculine phenomena. In the same poem, the lines “However much we make a fire, the ice would not melt” are interpreted by Korean critics as a literary hint to the negative state of current political situation when Jeon Du-hwan headed the

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<sup>7</sup>Guryeva A.A. The role of traditional models in understanding contemporary Korean literature works (based on “Heaven-Earth-Human” and “Light+Sound” // Proceedings of the Center for Korean Language and Culture, Issue 17. Saint Petersburg University Press 2015, 177-189.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

government<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, light represented by the campfire is shown here as deprived of its original power. It speaks for our conclusion.

## Oppositions

Many of the models are based on the oppositions: inner and outer, fast and slow etc. There are texts that are built basing on oppositions.

One of the examples is a poem by 정현종 “아름다움이여” Jeong Hyeon-jong “Ah, beauty!”, which belongs to the cycle “Saint Petersburg verse” 상트페테르부르크 시편 composed after the famous poet visited Saint Petersburg State University in 1997.

*At the inner wall there is a flowers and leaves relief  
Outside of the window there are bright autumn leaves  
Ah, a harmonious chorus of nature and art!  
My heart is dancing, ah, beauty!*

In his personal interview, given to me in 2003, the author shared that he was inspired by the scenery outside of the lecture-room, where he was participating in the panel of the Conference dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Korean Studies in the University (1997). Looking at the trees outside and the carved flowers on the ceiling he composed this text. The first two lines are paralleled on the two levels: first, it is done with the help of the opposition “inside-outside”, and second, through the phonetic similarity in the beginning and in the end of the lines:

안벽에는 꽃과 나뭇잎의 릴리프\* [an - byeok] [rillipeu]<sup>10</sup>  
창밖에는 눈부신 가을 나뭇잎 [chang - bak] [namunnip]  
자연과 예술의 화창이여  
마음은 춤춘다 아름다움이여

This mode reflects the specific of the harmonious interrelations of basic oppositions *ying* and *yang*. The idea of the ambivalence between the inside and outside, is important for Korean culture. It is found in the structure of a traditional Korean house, as well in contemporary architecture.



Library at the building of the Administration of Gwanak-gu, the administrative district of Seoul where Seoul National University and many important institutions are located (which makes this district hold a special importance). The picture shows the idea of the architect to combine inside and outside<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> 전한성의 현대시 해설 *Jeon Han-seong-eui hyeondaesi haeseol*. Contemporary Poetry Interpretations by Jeon Han-seong. ([http://cafe.daum.net/\\_c21\\_/bbs\\_search\\_read?gpid=d37N&fldid=BTxb&datanum=83](http://cafe.daum.net/_c21_/bbs_search_read?gpid=d37N&fldid=BTxb&datanum=83) – accessed in March 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Relief is standing for the sculpture effect of a carving, 양각 in Korean. The author intentionally borrowed this foreign word for creating the similarity.

<sup>11</sup> I thank the head of the Gwanak-gu administrative office, Mr. Yoo Jong-pil, for explaining this idea to me.



## Patterns of consciousness and understanding the world

This is the deepest level of the text mostly influenced by the mentality of the author and the author's belonging to Korean culture. It concerns:

- time and space,
- associations caused by certain elements of the world,
- the importance of certain elements and their role in literature in particular.

Furthermore, specifics determine:

- general vision expressed in a literary work,
- or its main idea,
- an attitude to phenomena.

Examples important for understanding Korean culture in general are as follows:

- perception of text and its role
- attitude to nature
- human relations

### Perception of text and its role

It is important to trace the original meaning of the word 문(文) standing for «writing/culture», «an artistic word as a holder of culture». Etymologically this meaning traces its roots to the original meaning of the word, i.e. “an ornament” which can be found in the contemporary word 천문학 “astronomy” («a science about sky ornaments»). Then it developed into the meaning «Chinese character» as an «ornamental writing» and literature as a «decorated», designed word (found in contemporary words of 문자: a letter, a character, 문법: grammar, 서문, 논문 etc.). Then it widened for culture, related with «book-based education, scholarly activity, ritual and music». Then the framework included also culture, education, civilization (found in the words 문화 – culture or 문명 – civilization).

A special role of text in forming culture and civilization and in creating a better reality may be ubiquitously found in contemporary Korean culture. As an example, let us see the phrase in the booklet representing a campaign «140 books giving strength to your heart» organized in the KYOBO MUNGO (교보문고) book-store in 2004: “It is no doubt that these books will show an essential might in preserving and saving our society and after that – the whole planet”.

This is a special subject to be separately discussed, therefore for this lecture we will limit with setting this particular example as the one demonstrating this perception of the power of a word and text.

This attitude formed in ancient times has been an important part of Korean literature and moreover, culture in general, it has been expressed and applied variously, and not always intentionally or consciously. The same may be said about contemporary literature, namely poetry. Some of the authors, whose works illustrated the contents above (Jeong Hyeon-jong, Park Gyeong-ni), demonstrate this kind of vision in their poems.

### Attitude to Nature

Traditional attitude to Nature was non-anthropocentric. One of the manifestations of this attitude can be seen through the attitude towards animals as an element of Nature equally important to any other including human. In pre-modern poetry, one of the most representative examples is works by Yi Gyu-bo 이규보(1168-1241). He pays attention to the smallest creatures, insects, animals etc. A very similar perception is found in the poetical writings by Park Kyong-ni 박경리 (1926-2008) – a famous writer, who was also a poet. In her poem, animals, birds often are a parallel image to a human, she shares dialogues with them and associates herself with them.

A similar attitude we could see in the above-commented poem “Ritual of memory-1” by Jeong Hyeon-jong, speaking of a human not being able to fully understand the principles of Nature.

#### Human relations: love for the ruler/a senior

Models in human relations also could serve a subject for a separate lecture of paper. For the purposes of this discussion, we will see one of the most characteristic features: love to a ruler/a senior. Roots of such a perception traced to ancient rituals is a rather complicated issue. Anyhow, the idea of a special emotional relation between a senior and a junior (in a social sense) is important for Korean literature. A characteristic example is female-voiced vernacular poems written by male officials in exile expressing their feelings through love poems written on behalf of females left by their beloved. This phenomenon<sup>12</sup> which received a name 연군문학 戀君文學, in Korean literature is represented by the *kasa*-poems of 송강 Songgang 정철 Jeong Cheol 사미인 (“Thinking of my beloved”). For an example, let us look at the following poem:

*Shall you make this choice?  
Or shall you spend your life in a different way?  
Look at how two grapes  
Are interweaving at the Mount Mansu.  
I wish we could be like these grapes  
And interweave with each other for our whole life.*

Without knowing its historical background, a question: “What is this poem about?” is a difficult one to guess. As this question is addressed to the students, most of them associate the contents of the poem with love and relations between a male and a female. At the same time, the answer is as follows:

This text is Taejong’s (1367-1422) proposal to Jeong Mong-ju to serve him and the new dynasty (Joseon State). Taejong is a future ruler of Joseon wanted a prominent official to bring his talents for the New State. The *sijo* of Jeong Mong-ju which we examined above, was his reply to Taejong, and he sacrificed his life to his loyalty.

In contemporary Korea, there are many forms which this phenomenon was transformed into. An important example is Corporate culture with its importance of the concept 애사자 愛社者, i.e. a person who love his/her company. Through experience of people working in South Korean companies, we can hear about the word “love” applied in cases when we would rather think of duty or loyalty (in case we aim to have a deeper look). Love in this context does not relate to Confucianism often referred for explaining specifics of Corporate culture in North-East Asia. It is one of the most profound concepts formed within Korea.

## **Conclusion**

Through this lecture, we established several aspects important for a Korean studies specialist’s competence:

- basic models of space in Korean culture;
- specifics of the world perception different from that of Korea and/or other countries of Chinese oikumene (models or elements being a part of literary tradition of Korea or of the Far East in general (in this case, they usually originate in Chinese culture as Korea is a country belonging to Chinese cultural oikumene));
- relations in between Chinese and Korean pre-modern literature;

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<sup>12</sup> See Roske-Cho, W.S.: “Love Songs to the Ruler.” *Twenty Papers on Korean Studies offered to Professor W.E. Skillend*. Centre d’études Coréennes, Collège de France 1989 (Cahiers d’études Coréennes, vol. 5), 285-299.

- main forms and trends of borrowing traditional elements by contemporary literature and culture;
- literary modes as manifestation of general *weltanschauung*;
- insights into the role of text in Korean culture.

Besides, the examples we chose represented works by some of the most famous authors.

It is quite important to remember, that the traced models and patterns mostly belong to general understanding of the world, not only literary vision. Therefore, their usage in a text does not necessarily follow a certain literary pattern. In literature, general models constituting the world may be applied in literature in some certain way, and contemporary literature usually follows this tradition to add new meanings to the newly created context.

At the same time, traditional models and patterns are introduced in a new context as well and they may therefore function in some way not known by pre-modern literature, often, in a special way created by the author. The usage of traditional elements can show the author's ties of the author with his own culture and/or with Far Eastern culture. It shows that they are mastered in each particular case, how skillfully they interweave with new and original elements. Adding to a Korean specific of a work, they do not limit the specific to the cultural aspect, but demonstrate a complex and artistic mixture of native and global, personal and general, intentional and unconscious etc. This can only add to the value of the work in question.

Learning the above patterns serves one's general understanding of the world by Koreans. These specifics influence not only literature and aesthetics, but also everyday life, communication, even business and professional life. They demonstrate general mindset and wide variations applied to creative work and to multiple life situations. The main objective of the lecture, therefore, is to teach students an approach to a literary work or, therefore, to any material: to ask questions like "Why is this text made like that?", "Why are there such elements?" and discover profound levels of reading and working with a text. Saying "text" we actually mean any system of symbols, including, for example, film or a program.

And another aim is to introduce students with the models and patterns that will help them discover new levels and dimensions of Korean culture and new perspective for themselves as potential specialists.