

"Takaoki Katta" (VI.B.12: 113)

Yasuo Kumagai

Pages 112 and 113 of Buffalo Notebook VI.B.12 record a curious incident of Joyce having a Japanese named "Takaoki Katta" write down the names of two deities of Japanese mythology, "天御中主命" (Amē no mi naka nushi no mikoto) and "天照大御神" (Ama terasu oh mi kami) and explain what each *kanji* (Chinese character) of their names literally meant.¹

For the last couple of years I had been trying to identify who this Japanese informant was, until recently I came to suspect that he might be Takaoki Katta (勝田孝興 1886-1976), a graduate of the Imperial University of Tokyo, who was the first Japanese scholar to publish a single-volume history of Irish Literature in 1943. Library researches into his life in the mid-1920's yielded a number of positive hints that made me all the more strongly suspect Prof. Katta's possible encounter with Joyce in Paris.

During the first two years of his professorship at Yamagata Higher School (1925-30), he obtained the Japanese government's grant to study abroad in Europe and the United States. After a month's voyage he arrived in London on April 16, 1925 and saw a number of plays starting with G. B. Shaw's *Saint Joan*. On June 26 he made his first visit to Dublin and stayed there for about three months, attending lectures and debates, watching Irish, Welsh and Manx plays, visiting historical sites including Glendalough, going to concerts and even churches to hear sermons. He was also interested in learning Irish and attended the Celtic Congress every day from June 30 to July 8.²

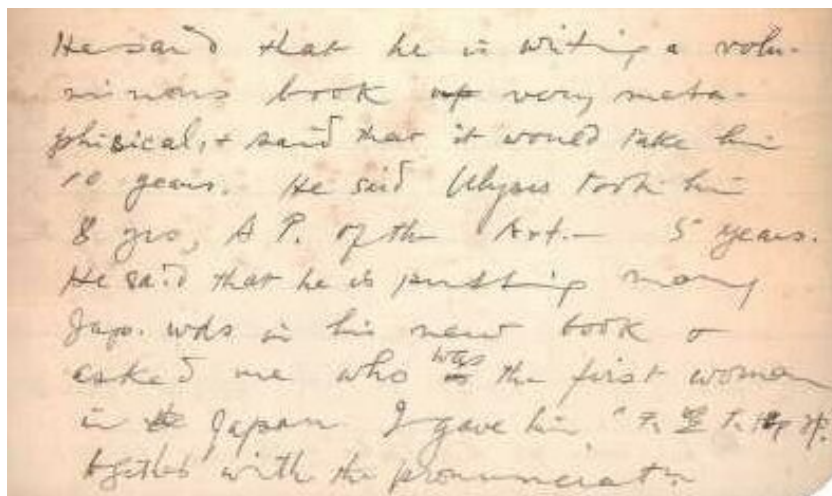


Takaoki Katta in Dublin, July 1925

For literature, he was particularly interested in drama and frequented the London and Dublin theatres for the rest of the year. He met Sean O'Casey at the Abbey towards the end of the year,³ whom he named first in his list of the as yet unknown Irish authors he would introduce to the Japanese reading public.⁴ In the April 1926 issue of *Eigo-Seinen* Prof. Katta reports of the historical incident he witnessed at the Abbey on February 8, 1926, when the night's performance of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* was interrupted by a row caused by Mrs. Skeffy and other republicans among the audience, to be famously countered on the spot by Yeats' admonishing speech: "You have disgraced yourselves again!" In the report Prof. Katta says he had been in Paris since the end of 1925 but was temporarily back in Dublin because he was eager to see the latest work of the author who had won his sustained interest and admiration.

The coincidence of Prof. Katta's presence at the historical night at the Abbey is curious enough, but what is even more curious in view of my investigation into the Katta-Joyce connection is that Prof. Katta was in Paris in the very year when Joyce prepared the notebook VI.B.12 (June-August 1926, according to Rose's *Textual Diaries of James Joyce*). In 1926 Prof. Katta wrote two short notes from Paris for the February and November issues of *Eigo-Seinen* (55.2 and 55.11), and it was in the former note of February 17 that I finally found a line that explicitly alluded to the possible encounter: "I am going to pay a visit to the famous Irish author James Joyce one of these days, for he lives in the neighbourhood" (69). There still remained a puzzle, for the meeting, if it had taken place so soon as he had announced, would have been too early for Prof. Katta to write the 2-page notes in VI.B.12, but his second note from Paris did prove at least that he had been back in Paris from his trip to South France, Italy and Switzerland by July

The most strikingly decisive evidence was obtained when I managed to come in contact with Ms. Yuriko Katta, the eldest daughter of late Prof. Katta, in early March, 2002. Upon my request Ms. Katta kindly looked into Prof. Katta's library and found two notebooks her father used in his European days. One is his "Notes and Observations on Modern English Drama" and the other is his "Autograph" notebook. As its subtitle "Drama VI" indicates, most pages of the former notebook are the record of his attendances at a significant number of theatrical performances in London, Dublin and Paris; it even includes sections entitled "'The Plough & the Stars' par S. O'Casey et la grande sensation dans le Theatre Abbey" (pp. 185-94) and "The meaning of *the Plough & the Stars* & a *soi-disant* interview with O'Casey in which he explains himself" (p. 198). But the notebook also includes a section entitled "The Right Direction for Contemporary Literature and James Joyce's Partial Achievement" (pp. 200-04), followed by "Interview with Joyce" (pp. 208-11). The latter is dated "15 juillet, 1926," and its content unequivocally proves that it was indeed Prof. Katta who met Joyce and wrote the notes on pp. 112-13 of VI.B.12. Prof. Katta writes:



He said that he is writing a voluminous book very metaphysical [*sic*], & said that it would take him 10 years. He said Ulysses [*sic*] took him 8 yrs, A P. of the Art.--- 5 years. He said that he is putting many Jap. wds in his new book & asked me who was the first woman in Japan. I gave him "天照大御神" together with the pronunciation. (p. 208)

The Joyce-related sections of "Drama VI" notebook (whose full transcription is given further below) not only establish the date of the entries on VI.B.12: 113 (and 112) but also lead us to another significant discovery. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver of the very same date, Joyce wrote:

We have had a series of visits here, my brother (2 weeks), my sister (3 weeks), [. . .]. I have also had some curious encounters. [. . .] Requests for translation rights have come from Hungary, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia and Japan. The Japanese came to see me and was delighted with the japlatin I showed him in *\$/bc*." (L1. 242)

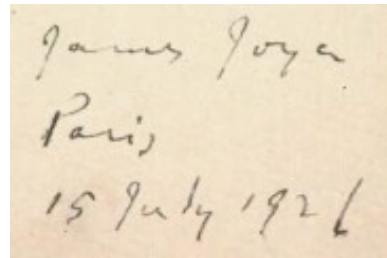
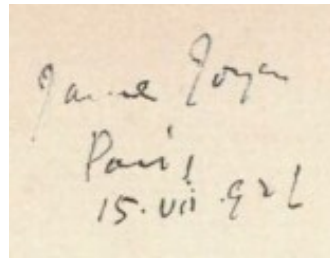
Prof. Katta's interview note proves that "the Japanese" Joyce mentions in the letter is no one but Prof. Katta, and that the work proposed to be translated into Japanese was *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

I showed him a copy of his "A P. of the Artist ---", which I had in my portfolio. Seeing my notes on the flyleaf he was so kind as to say: "I'll answer you your question in my book. Ask now." And I asked some which he answered on the spot. His kindness went further & said: "If you have any question in my "Portr. of the Art" when you want to translate it into Japanese, you can make a list of those questions to send it to me c/o Miss Beach, Shakespeare & Coy." (pp. 209-10)

This passage would appear to indicate that it was rather surprisingly not "the Japanese" who asked for Joyce's permission to translate but Joyce himself that encouraged the Japanese, Prof. Katta, to do so in a less formal way than Joyce's letter seems to imply.

According to his interview note, Prof. Katta received three autographs by Joyce on the day. Two of them

have been located in the "Autograph" notebook, both bearing the same date as that of the interview note in the "Drama VI" notebook. Prof. Katta's copy of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which very likely has the third dedicatory signature by Joyce, is yet to be discovered. Most of Prof. Katta's library, that may or may not include this copy, are sealed in the Kattas' family storage in Matsu? City.



The two autographs by Joyce in Prof. Katta's "Autograph" notebook.

What follows is the whole transcription of the "Contemporary Literature" and the "Interview with Joyce" sections from the "Drama VI" notebook. According to Prof. Katta's account on p. 208, the former was probably written in preparation for the interview with Joyce, but the question would remain if it does not reflect Prof. Katta's thoughts *after* the interview.

I would like to express my special thanks to Ms. Yuriko Katta for her permission to reproduce the whole transcription here together with the scanned images of the original notebook pages and a portrait of Prof. Katta. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Masao Hayashi and other librarians of the Tama Metropolitan Library, Tokyo, librarians of Chofu City Library, Tokyo, and the staff of *Eigo-Seinen* (Kenkyu-sha Ltd., Tokyo), for their invaluable assistance in my researches.

Transcription of the Joyce-related Pages from Takaoki Katta's Notebook "Drama VI"

For the facsimile of the original notebook pages, see Appendix

[Cover Title]

i. 英国ノ近代劇ト其見聞録⁵

ii Drama

VI

行キ詰マレル現代文学ノ進展スベキ道ト J. Joyce⁶

(In Abroad: II)

Ms Works: ----

[p. 200]

現代文学ノ進展スベキ道ト James Joyce ノ部分的成效⁷

I. Words & phrases should sound like the meaning they express.

- a. To attain this the writer may well invent new wds within the extent that the reader can understand the meaning of those new words[.]
- b. The writers should go over grammar and dictionary. Grammar & Dictionary sh^d follow writers. It is a great anachronism & absurdness that writers sh^d follow grammar & dictionary. Writers sh^d always be younger than grammar & dictionary.

[p. 201 (blank page)]

[p. 202]

II. Words must be spelt as they are pronounced.

- a. The object of spelling is to let the reader know the pronunciation of the words. How fool-hardy is it to spell " "8 "" which sh^d be pron. "". There's no reason whatever to keep this silly spelling but the so-called custom & conservativeness.

[blank space]

III. We want to feel literature. We want to see the spirit of life. Various accidents external are merely the voices & shadows of our

[p. 203 (blank page)]

[p. 204]

internal spirit.

Realistic treatment of things external is indirect & round-about way of treating.

We should try to express our spirit flowing from the inmost recesses of our heart without being controlled by external things. External things will follow.

Literature should be a living picture of the living spirit.

[p. 207 (blank page)]

[p. 208]

Interview with

James Joyce

I told him my opinion on the present state of literature (p. 200-) & he was in the same opinion.

He gave me three autographs

(1) his dedication to "A P. of the Artist as a Young Man"

(2) \

in my autog. book⁹

(3) /

He said that he is writing a voluminous book very metaphysical [*sic*], & said that it would take him 10 years. He said Ulyses [*sic*] took him 8 yrs, A P. of the Art. -- 5 years. He said that he is putting many Jap. wds in his new book & asked me who was the first woman in Japan. I gave him "天照大御神" together with the pronunciation.

[p. 209]

He said that he is very afraid of thunder-storm & asked me what is "thunder-storm" in Japanese.

He asked me "Aren't there 4 terrible things in Japan, "Kaminari" being one of them?" I counted for him:

"Jishin, kaminari, kaji, oyaji."

& he laughed.¹⁰

He bound his right eye¹¹ with bandage. I wanted to ask what's the matter, but I daren't.

I showed him a copy of his "A P. of the Artist ---", which I had in my portfolio. Seeing my notes on the flyleaf he was so kind as to say:

[p. 210]

"I'll answer you your question in my book. Ask now."

and I asked some which he answered on the spot. His kindness went further & said: "If you have any question in my "Portr. of the Art" when you want to translate it into Japanese, you can make a list of those questions to send it to me c/o Miss Beach, Shakespeare & Coy."

How sweet of him!

I will do so.

He is so kind. He must be honest too.

It is very difficult to say what is good & what is bad in the strict sense of the words, but this much is

[p. 211]

certain that kindness & honesty are, despite of the difference of time & place, always & everywhere good.¹²

He is a good man.

15 juillet, 1926

P.S. He said he thinks very highly of slang & dialect (pidgin-English even).

Slang & dialect, tho first detested, are very apt to become the standard language not in so long a time.

1 Cf. "[Amenominakanushi no kami](#)" and "[Amaterasu Ōmikami](#)" in [Basic Terms of Shinto](#) (Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University).

2 Katta, "Daburin-yori" [From Dublin]. *Eigo-Seinen* [The Rising Generation] 53.12 (1925): 369. [The Celtic Congress](#) home page explains that the organisation was "founded in 1902 in order to promote the knowlege, use, and appreciation of the languages and cultures of the six Celtic countries."

3 Katta, "Ohkeishi no Shoden oyobi 'Juno' Geki" [A Summary of O'Casey's Life and *Juno*]. Takaoki Katta and Michio Miura, trans. *Juno and the Paycock*, 1928, 610 ..

4 Katta, "Airurando Mitari Kiitari 16" [Letters from Ireland 16]. *Eigo-Seinen* 55.6 (1926): 193. He eventually translated *Juno and the Paycock* in 1928. (See the previous footnote.)

5 Prof. Katta's now archaic form of *kanji* has been modernised throughout this transcription. Trans.: Notes and Observations on Modern English Drama.

6 Trans.: The Right Direction for the Stagnant Contemporary Literature and J. Joyce.

7 This is an addition set in a square box to the right of the Roman numeral "VI." Trans. "The Right Direction for Modern Literature and James Joyce's Partial Achievement." "Bubunteki" (partial) is a curious addition, which he also made on the table of contents page of the notebook (p. 15). On the latter Prof. Katta originally wrote "The Flaws of Contemporary Literature." All the other traces of Prof. Katta's revisions have been ignored in the transcription, for they are mostly concerned with grammatical corrections and stylistic revisions.

8 This and the two following blanks in quotation marks are Prof. Katta's.

9 The two autographs (see the images above) are to be found on two separate pages of the "Autograph" notebook. The other signatories in this notebook include W. B. Yeats, Sean O'Casey, Lennox Robinson, Douglas Hyde, George Russell (AE), Lady Wilde (Speranza), Liam O'Flaherty, and James Stephens.

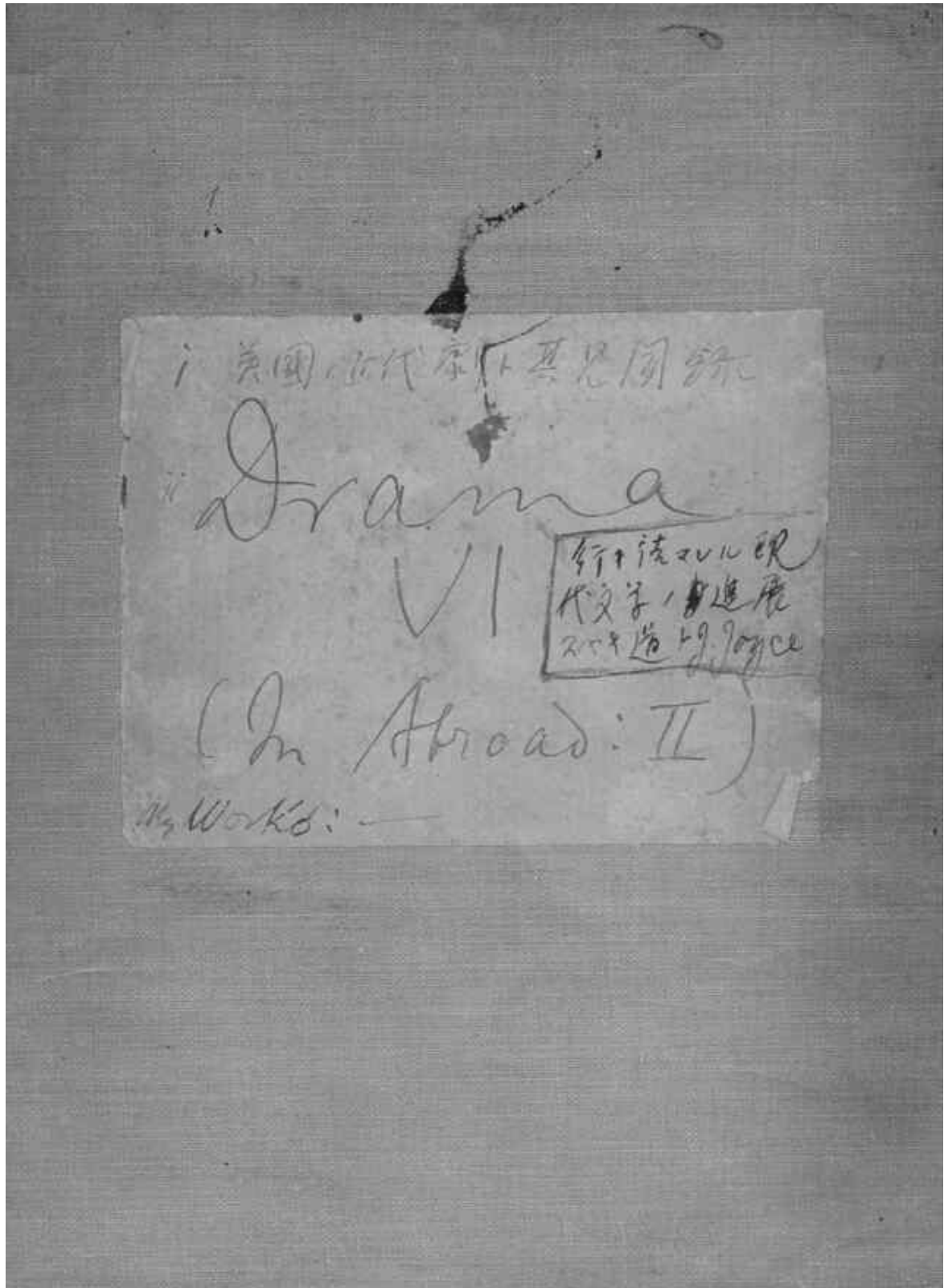
10 Cf. VI.B.11: 13 (late Sep-late Nov 1923, according to Danis Rose): "「Jishin earthquake」^r / ^o kaminari thunder^o / kaji fire / oyaji [pat, paternity]". The first term crossed out in red was used as "jishi" in III:3A.*0; BL 47482b-61v; *JJA* 58:2; #241101; *FW* 475.02. The latter crossed out in orange was used as a component of the first thunderword in I.1:1.*1; BL 47471a-2; *JJA* 44:45; #261100; *FW* 003.15. For the Japanese proverb see [Nihon-no-kotowaza](#) [Japanese Proverbs and Idioms].

11 Probably Prof. Katta's misrecollection. See Ellmann, *JJ* (New and Revised ed.) 579.

12 Double-underscored.

Appendix: Pages from
Katta Takaoki's Notebook
"Drama VI"

[cover - title]



現代之字，此處 2.4 ~ 4

例 1. James Joyce (詹姆斯·喬伊斯)
 1904-1942

I. Words ~~shd~~ & phrases should sound like ^{as} the meaning they express.

a. To attain this ~~writers~~ the writer may well ~~make new~~ invent new words ~~which~~ rather within the extent that the reader can understand the meaning of those new words.

b. ~~the~~ the writers should ~~to~~ go over grammar and dictionary.

Grammar & Dictionary sh^d follow writers. It is a great anachronism & absurdness that writers sh^d follow grammar & dictionary. Writers sh^d always be younger than grammar & dictionary.

internal spirit.

Realistic treatment of things external
is ~~real~~ indirect & round-about
way of treating.

We should try to express our spirit-flowing
from the ^{every} bottom of ^{in most} ~~very~~ recesses
of our heart without being controlled
by ~~at~~ external things. External things
will follow.

Literature should be ~~the~~ a living
picture of the living spirit.

Interview with James Joyce

I told him my opinion on the present state of literature (p. 200 -) + he was of the same opinion.

He gave me ~~two~~^{three} autographs

(1) his dedication to "A P. of the Artist as a Young Man"

(2) } in my autog. book
(3) }

He said that he is writing a voluminous book up very metaphysical, + said that it would take him 10 years. He said Ulysses took him

8 yrs, A P. of the Art. - 5 years.

He said that he is putting many Jap. wds in his new book +

asked me who ^{was} the first woman in Japan. I gave him "F. S. T. H. J. P." together with the pronunciation

He said that he is very afraid
of thunder-storm & asked
me what is "thunder storm" in
Japanese.

He asked me "Are there 4
terrible things in Japan, then
"Kaminari" being one of them?"
I told counted for him:

"Jishin, Kaminari, Kaji,
ayaji."

& he laughed.

He bound his right eye with bandage.
I wanted to ask why what is the
matter, but I daren't.

I showed ^{him a copy of} ~~the right~~ ^{his} "A P. of the
Artist" & which I had
in my bag ~~portmanteau~~ portfolio.

Seeing my notes on the ~~fly~~ flyleaf
he was so kind as to tell me say:

"I'll answer you your question
in my book. Ask now!"
and I asked some which he
~~was so~~ answered on the spot.
^{His kindness went} He was ⁺ further kind ^{to} ~~tell me~~ ^{said:}
~~that I can~~ ^{"If you} ~~Whenever~~ ^I have any
question ~~I can not in~~ ^{my} "Portr. of the Art"
~~I can make a list of~~ when you
want to translate it ~~into~~ Japanese, you
can make a list of ^{the} questions ~~to~~
send ~~them~~ it to me c/o Miss Beach,
Shakespeare & Coy."

How sweet of him!

I will do so.

He is so kind. He must be honest too.
~~He is a good man.~~

It is very difficult to say what is good
& what is ~~to~~ bad, ~~in~~ the strict sense
of the ~~ad~~ words, but this much is

certain that kindness ~~as~~ + honesty
are, despite of the difference of ~~place~~
time & place, always + everywhere
good.

He is a good man.

15 juillet, 1926

P.S. He ~~said~~ ~~to~~ he thinks very
highly of slang & dialect (pidgin-
English even).

Slang & dialect, tho first detested, are
very apt to become the standard language
at not in so long a time.