



PROJECT MUSE®

Six Poems

Kim Yideum, Chung Eun-Gwi

Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture, Volume 13, 2020, pp.
157-164 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aza.2020.0020>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/756624>

Six Poems by Kim Yideum

Translated by Chung Eun-Gwi

DRIFTING BLACK HAIR

Deliver us from love
—Suzanne Brøgger

On the ladle catches gaping cow shank. Tunnels are formed in the
long-boiled bone.

With a baby on her back, a woman was running beneath the
underpass. A head fell from the baby wrap and rolled to my
feet. Carelessly I kicked it into the river. The beggar woman was
batshit crazy and kept on running.

A cow mooed from uncle's front yard. My school uniform skirt was
rolled up higher.

Someone sent me a bone. What the sender looked like I had no
idea. I grabbed my stomach laughing. Scrawny legs. Snake-
patterned skin on the bloated belly. Hope to devour a croaking
frog. Summer is there right before dark.

My constitution has changed. Beloved, entropy, excessive.
Lying parallel to the floor, one is caught in the charm of fear.
Deathly pale is a beautiful color.

The newborn was a mixed baby with many fine lines. I drew a line farther than the horizon, or the crescent marks. Milk for the little one, cereal for me. Could we have lived together? I wish latent blue eyes germinate and other forms gradually move on to greater oblivion.

Just pay the medical bill. Online transaction was easy. A body with no single fingerprint on it, the pale little moon. A young couple wraps it and disappears. What matters is the afterword. No need to pay the fare to the baby basket.

The day when all the cows in the village headed for the pit and it poured before seeing clouds. Oh, fluffy hair appeared and vanished between thighs, again.

Is there anything fun enough to risk my life. What's that, walking into the river.

Something round sucked into a white circle across the river.

YOUR SPY

Flowers are withering on the windowsill
On my windowsill, flowers are withering and scented candles are
burning on
as I lie in loose sleep

There was an umbrella
in front of the door

The sound of pausing footsteps
Two pieces of cold bread in front of the door
A wet baby in a wet plastic basket in a wet plastic bag in front
of the door
Baby is not crying
Though my milk overflows

Did your letter burn me and leave like a scented candle
I really don't know the language of this country
I really don't know when I'll wake up

I keep a distance from reality—it is my congenital attitude. I don't
renew my cards and don't feel the need to ventilate my room.
Whenever someone knocks on the door I straighten my eye
mask and go back to sleep. Even if somebody without skin peeps
into my window even if the sun clings to the balcony, my pulse
keeps beating mechanically. Don't worry. I stay still like dead
skin flakes and hair in the vacuum cleaner. Only this dormancy
would continue. It is onerous for me to look up the mission date,
as troublesome as converting lunar dates. However specific, I'm
a spy dispatched by my dreams. My special skills: shaking head
sideways, being confused to the end, confounding things.

HAPPY MUSIC

From the terrace of a Korean restaurant in Montreuil, we were
looking down.

Even after evening fell, the black girls on the street didn't head home.
Nobody was happy there.

A man from North Train Station dragged a girl by her hand and
disappeared into the alley.

We were waiting for that time, as we were watching over them until
their parents came.

A passerby waved his hand at us. We laughed while talking about
Western men's body odor and butts and then pulled out cigarettes.
The matches were wet.
Nobody was happy there, only rich, temporarily pleased or laughing.

My partner was delighted to hear you would come.

Perhaps talking about Incheon is like introducing a pretty friend
to a lover.

Gaëlle was born on the beach and adopted here at three, Korean age,
And now works as a librarian at the Romain Rolland Library.

Without laughing, we talked about Korea in a language that wasn't
Korean. About the place she was born but had never been to,
about the climate, rice, and *makgeolli*, endlessly, about the things
we didn't hate.

What I can show Gaëlle, my friend, my sister, are wet paper and
wet matches in my coat.

There is no flame that does not extinguish.

Parents, like friends, can change, but the fact *I am nothing*
doesn't change.

In the corner, a Tunisian immigrant was playing the guitar.

Gaëlle and I didn't dance, but after a kiss we said nothing.

Happy music that is found nowhere else in this world traveled far.

When I'm going to cover my face, my legs are coming out,
when I'm going to hide my vagina, my breast shows up.
I have no intention to bring up sexual arousal. They,
throwing a piece of paper one by one, say, *I told you Do not lose
your face*
Cut fit for the standard measure.

I am an indigenous in this island. I stroll naked. On the feast day,
I just wear a necklace.
Suddenly on the reason that somebody, a general or a pioneer
whatever, is coming here
a ban on the naked body is placed.

Chasing after a Moon bear, amidst people standing
On the streets where tanks and jeeps are passing through
You sure?
I put on the skin.
I was criticized for being rude.
Come here. Did you put it on as a skirt?
I can't help it because it's a blood-flowing skin of a young bear.

When waving the hands as a sign of welcome
"What is the name of the lake?"
"Get the hell out!"
They wrote it down as Get-the-hell-out lake.
In a few minutes, I would smile.
Pulling out a skirt and hiding my face
I take a piss looking down at an official document.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

I know, you're looking at me I know
That you're stealing glances
I sometimes know I'm beautiful
I know I'm different from the woman beside you

I don't like Lunch on the Grass

I know you're looking for a chance over there on the opposite side,
I know you're hoping I'm straightforward, I know you're hoping
I'll flop naked onto my stomach, I said I KNOW, I know if I hold
on and wait then miracles will compile commemorative coins
and Asian china like diapers for me, I know the time for fish to
become seafood, I said Don't touch me pretending that you fish
and save me, I know I KNOW there is a white-haired guardian
angel baby breaking me over a frying pan, peering down on me,
or even trying to caress, I KNOW

Eating a madeleine, I watch somebody falling into the reservoir
and dying
Is this providence?
Are they beautiful, people who die while saving others?

MY REPAIRMAN

There is an enormous tower crane. The repairman has not come yet.
Once every hour on the dot trains like rain clouds pass overhead.
How do the overflowing sunlight, tears running down the chin
disappear? Like the bask of crocodiles swarming out of a night
swamp, we have no idea of fear and often believe we're still alive.

When I collapsed, the thicket grew thick and like the train tracks
stopping in the woods, no one arrived. There is no repairman
in this town. We, once wriggling in the pile of corpses carried
by a large truck, lost our memory before taking only a few steps.
Oblivion was as easy as burying my palms in the river. My
emotions got richer as a result of torture, but out of use.

Today, I came out of the prison kitchen and went to the memorial
altar. It was students' field trip. I broke a rock in front of
Seodaemun. I smashed and cut the iron at the riverbank laden
with fennel plants. Above my head, I raised high pipes and barbed-
wire fences and then lowered them. A tower crane is rusty like
a century-old playground. All those who are alive smile in the
funeral portrait.