

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dukkyu Park: Two Poems

Dukkyu Park · Wednesday, April 5th, 2017

Born in 1958, Dukkyu Park grew up in Daegu. He graduated from the Department of Korean Language and Literature of Kyung-hee University, Seoul. His first poems were published in the coterie magazine *Siundong* in 1980. In addition to his collections of poems *Beautiful Hunting* and *Butterfly Flying in an Alley*, he has published volumes of fiction and literary criticism. He received his Ph.D. from Dankook University, where he is currently a professor of creative writing.

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Family History

I keep dreaming about running away from home as a child.
 I recall making my way down a long alley, sniffing,
 standing on tiptoe and pressing against walls
 to make way for carts and bicycles laden with junk.

Hanging upside down on a climbing frame at school
 I saw a plane flying along writing with smoke in the sky.
 In the flower-bed depicting a map of the world
 in the school's back yard I hopped from one nation to another.

I tried marching to order: left, right, left, right,
 like baseball club members running in file on the sports ground.
 I bought a moon-shaped bun,
 soaked it with tap water in my mouth, then ate it.

My third eldest brother came out to fetch me
 as I lingered by night at the alley entrance gazing at the far-off gate.
 Father stood me by the wash-up and slapped me on the calves.
 My fifth older brother primed the pump, worked it to fill a pail
 with water,
 then carried it carried to the kitchen

Father shouted:
 If you're going to do it again, get out now.
 Mother looked out from the kitchen
 and not begging me to admit I'd done wrong
 weighed in with: What are you doing?

Ah, Mother's puckered lips, without any dentures,
 and from the corners gruel is dribbling from an inserted spoon.
 At one side of the dark yard my wife stands,
 holding the children by the hand
 and staring at me where I sit on the edge of the wooden floored porch.

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A Tree's Dream

One autumn day, as we walked across the fields,
 Father asked, "What kind of flower is this?"

and when I replied, "Azalea," I became a laughing-stock.

I grew up knowing nothing of plants, flowers, or trees.

I liked singing songs about chives, shepherd's purse, lettuce,
filled drawings with green meadows, dense forests,
but I did not live in that kind of place.

While learning the names of wild flowers from an illustrated book
did not cover more than two seasons.

Still now, butterflies sometimes come flying into my dreams
but flowerbeds do not figure.

In my memories
from that time the persimmon tree in our yard is all there was.
It was a tree where crimson fruits never ripened.
There were times when I gathered the unripe persimmons as they fell,
put them on the warmest part of the floor
then waited, day after day.
It was at that time that I saw a pink tree in my dream.

There is nothing like a buckthorn tree mentioned in my poems,
nor a flower that looks like my sister.
I have no sister.

All there was were the bean sprouts, green or yellow on the meal table,
the cabbage and lettuce, spinach, chives, water parsley, mugwort,
the perilla leaves, bean leaves, pumpkin leaves that I used to pick out and eat.
I still cannot draw a persimmon flower.

As a result I still
do not know how to yearn for someone.

And I do not know how to cry.

As a result, even now
as I go walking along
and look up at the sky,

all alone,
quite on its own
it opens its arms, an empty blue sky,
unfolding branches, sending flowers flying.

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