

Three Po-Proses

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Translated from Korean by Jack Jung

O Real Poem!

When her students say that a poem is really good, n't asks them why.

The students answer.

The poet is being real. The poet is talking about their experience.

n't questions her students again.

How did you figure out that this poet is being real?

Could it be that the poet used another's experience and made it their own?

Wouldn't it have been better for the poet to write a memoir instead of a poem?

Which genre is the least real? Memoir, biography, or history?

(It may be the case that n't can't trust a memoirist who uses their life as their writing's ingredient. Is the content of a memoir the writer's reality, or the writer's hopes?)

In their poems, or memoirs, is it possible that the writer wrapped themselves in the hypocrisy of "I am being real" as if it were a scarf, and then manipulated a poetic self into creation?

(How can anyone make order out of so many confessions, and then plot out a narrative?)

n't keeps questioning.

We question and answer to be nearer to "poetry."

Literature is inherently unreal.

Poetry lies against the conventional use of language and

Fiction lies against the conventional use of reality.

Perhaps, a writer is someone who knows that after we disappear, what will remain is our lies.

Poetry is when the poetic speaker forgets they share their body with an ordinary self.

It is when they cut out the intestines of an ordinary self and scatter its smell to the winds.

(Like when a Mongolian nomad's wife slaughters a lamb and scatters the shit from the animal's colon on a tree's branches.)

It is when a structure, already built, emerges from underneath the language. But it is also when the structure is immediately destroyed.

It is when the structure embraces the world.

It is when you stretch out with one of your arms toward somewhere that is not here.

It is when that arm contracts and deforms after reaching somewhere that is not here.

This is what we should call poetry, isn't it?

Instead of being real, it is when the poet's sensitivity and the vast universe rendezvous.

It is when life is not linked again and again in chains.

It is like when mentally exhausted patients return from their lodgings, feeling that meaning has evaporated from their ordinary experience.

After seeing the world in its entirety, a child drags their dog by the leash, then sits by the side of a road, and there is desolation, and it is like that.

How can the poetic self be real when it is not even our ordinary self, and how can we measure what is real about it, and what is not.

To write poetry is to spin the machine of oblivion, placing something that is nothing in the middle of a spoke. Against the judgement of usefulness, producing absences that can't even be used as ingredients of a story, it is utterly useless.

Empty Frame

The oldest wooden building in Aerok is a dark Buddhist temple.

When she arrived at the temple, a memorial was being held, a rite performed three days after funeral.

The sorrowful chanting of the sutras echoed all the way toward the temple's main gate.

A monk chanting the sutras.

A monk rapping on a moktak.¹

A monk holding a washbasin.

A monk with their neck dressed in bandage.

The monks led the procession in a single file, followed by someone in a leather jumper jacket carrying a large bundle, followed by a family member, withered from their sorrow, holding a frame.

Inside the frame was a portrait of a young woman, who had a face you might encounter in the markets, the streets, and the stalls.

Curly permed hair, red plastic jumper.

Inside the frame was a face of a woman whose cheeks were turning rosy in a heated room after coming in from the cold.

The procession trailed toward a brazier, which looked like a stone lantern, below the temple. n't followed them.

Finishing their chant, they entered the bundle of dead girl's clothes into the brazier's flame.

White skirts, jackets, and rubber shoes of mourners entered the flame.

And the last thing to enter the flame was her portrait from the frame.

The empty frame didn't enter the flame.

The smoke rose above the chimney.

Her face was set on fire. It was now grey smoke.

Only the empty frame remained.

The glass that had covered the photograph remained, too.

The place where her face once was remained without her.

Now "her absence" entered her frame.

The youngest monk collected the frame.

A blank sheet of paper left inside the frame briefly flashed.

¹ A wooden percussion instrument used during sutra recitation by Buddhist monks.

Arriving at a Form

n't's time is a dream dreamt by n't's death.

Poetry is the discovery of a form that deconstructs this dream.

A poetic subjectivity's work is to go beyond death's content, a movement that erects the form. A structure of the moment built outside of time. A poetic speaker's rhythm bringing tension to the structure.

It neither pierces nor transcends the content, for it is a multidimensional map in the form of a hidden weeping. (Therefore, the best reader deciphers each poem's map of bones, which is made from the weeping that is specific to each piece.) It is likely that following a thin and taut thread made from an invisible voice will lead to the sudden manifestation of a poem's beauty.

Every time a poem is written, what happens isn't the renewed inventions of dreams and perceptions, nor the manifestations of existence, instead

What is happening is like a river, where they are all converging, making it impossible to separate them, so that their muscles are supported by one another, while they flow like a tapestry filled with patterns.

Believing that this ugly reality, this reality of sameness that continues day after day, this reality that comes for us all, will be atoned by it.

Poetry is when the sad wounded things, and the things that do not exist yet, come together within a form, through which thought rises.

Speaking in reverse, it is a frame breathing within various grains.

A thought riding a poetic frame and flowing.

All the literary content of the world is imperfect, and this can't be helped. They are incomplete and secret. Their incomplete secrets are embraced by the invisible frame called form.

In that moment of embrace, the text becomes a singular space. Where loneliness and ennui flow like fog, where war bleeds and emptiness screams, where madness flows like a ghost, where death soars, where joy chirps, where grief becomes as pathetic as a dinner table for one, where waves run across the sky, where silence burns like a wounded breast, where the voice of light is heard, where beauty and fear of death disappear in the moment they are heard.

Therefore, a form is a sewn orchestration using those steely veins that remain after the layers of a steel mesh scrubber wore off from use.

A form of thin veins appearing after the greenery of tree leaves wears off. A form of a musical score through which tree branches radiate outward. Like humidity that manifests itself as morning dew on leaves which yet remains invisible as it spreads out into the air.

Blood veins on a piece of liver. Like neural pathways of a brain, like lines on your palm.

Not the content of desperation or howling

But the form of that desperation!

Felt the moment the first breath leaves the body.

The pulse that beats regardless of there being a meaning, the unidentified flying object's engine leaving for the grand freedom, our home.

And yet, it is a blueprint for reaching toward nothingness! Inside a steel mesh scrubber, which is shaped like some fruit, its steely veins are thin and tough like fishing lines, and they weave a room around an emptiness at the scrubber's center, and that is the same as how
The whirlwind of the poetic world radiates outward infinitely, while keeping the nothingness at the center of its centrifugal and centripetal forces.
Within that place, because it is endlessly forgotten, a poetic consciousness exists, trembling in its longing.
A beauty trembling to extinction. The reader striker.

But the kind of poetry that seeks to win over as many readers as it can is different.
It is not form but content, the ceaseless sentimental overflow of a poetic consciousness, aphorisms of murder providing immediate satisfaction. The all-too-common poetic speaker's grief and sentiment. Something disguised in holiness seeps out from them, but once uncovered, it is nothing more than flesh trembling in unbearable narcissism.
Another name of vanity is naivete.

