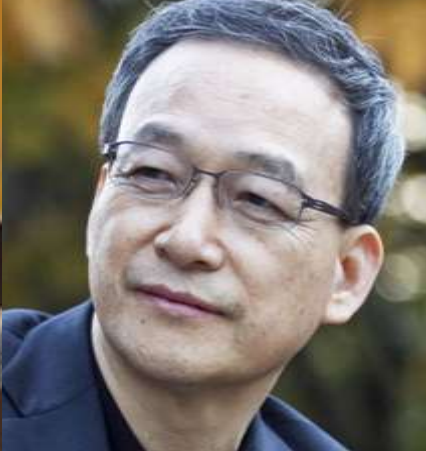


# Brother Anthony Translates



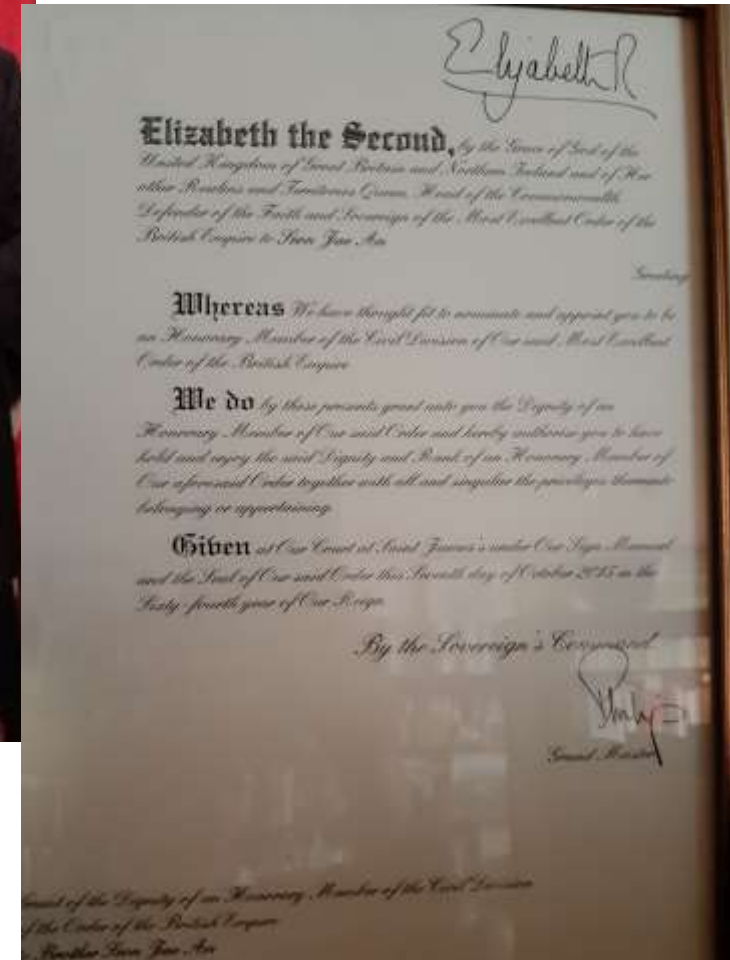


## Prelude

I became President of RAS Korea in 2011, and at the end of 2020 I shall entrust the position to younger hands. I felt that I should give the last lecture for 2020 as my farewell lecture as President.

Midway through those 10 years, in December 2015, the Queen awarded me an MBE for my contribution to Korean-British relations. One part of the contribution was my work as RAS President, the other part was my work translating Korean literature into English so that the English-speaking world could better understand how Koreans live and experience life.

I am most grateful, of course, to Her Majesty, and to the Ambassadors, but above all to the members of RAS Korea and the multiple Korean writers whom I have met during the 40 years of my life in Korea.



I first began to publish translations of Korean poetry (with some fiction) in 1990, twenty years before I became RAS-Korea President. By the end of 2010 I had published some 25 titles. In the past 10 years I have published another 25 or so titles and there are more on the way in various pipelines. . . . .



I was not the first RAS President to translate Korean literature. The first was **James Scarth Gale** (1863-1937) (who gave the first ever “RAS lecture” in 1900 and was President in 1916), who translated the Bible into Korean twice, who loved translating classical Korean poetry into English, but found publishers for none of the poetry he translated. He included many poems in his “History of the Korean People” (which was later published by the RAS) and included poems with other texts in the “Korea Magazine” that he founded and edited, but he left a dozen completed translation projects unpublished, still today. They sleep in Toronto University Library, with a publication project now slowly getting under way.

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/JamesScarthGale.html>





# THE KOREAN REPOSITORY.

APRIL, 1895.

## ODE ON FILIAL PIETY.

That ponderous weighted iron bar,  
I'll spin out thin, in threads so far  
To reach the sun, and fasten on,  
And tie him in, before he's gone;  
That parents who are growing gray,  
May not get old another day.

Translated from a book of National Odes, by Rev. Jas. S. Gale.

The first Korean poem ever published in English translation was this little one, translated by James Gale and published in 1895 in the monthly *Korean Repository*. It's not very interesting.

### **Ode on Filial Piety**

That ponderous weighted iron bar,  
I'll spin out thin, in threads so far  
To reach the sun, and fasten on,  
And tie him in, before he's gone;  
That parents who are growing gray,  
May not get old another day.

The other RAS President to devote time to translating and writing was **Richard Rutt** (1925-2011), a scholarly Anglican priest and bishop (later a Catholic priest), who edited Gale's "History of the Korean People" with a lengthy, deeply-researched **biography** of Gale. Perhaps his greatest achievement, written after he left Korea in 1976 (the year he served as RAS President), was the definitive History of Knitting (as an Anglican Bishop he knitted his own mitres).

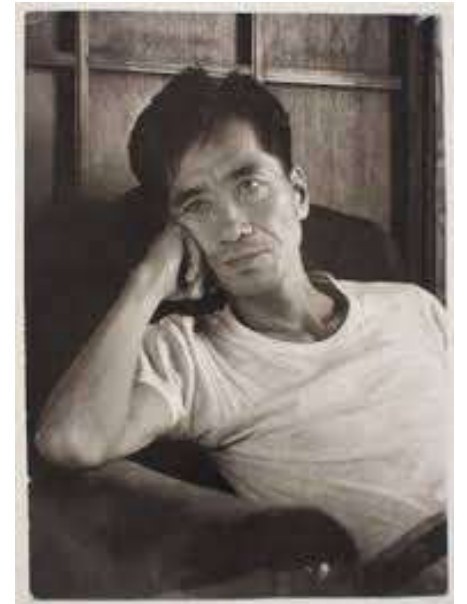


My own interest in translating Korean poetry (and fiction) began in 1988, soon after I started to teach English literature at Sogang University. I decided from the start that I wanted to translate as many poems as possible by contemporary, still-living Korean poets. I began with **Ku Sang** (born 1919) and **Seo Jeong-ju** (born 1915), senior poets who later died, but before 2010 the only 'already dead poets' I had translated were **Cheon Sang-byeong**, who died in 1993, without us ever having met, although later I was a frequent visitor to his widow's little café in Insadong, and **Kim Su-yeong**, who died back in 1968, run over by a bus in front of Sogang University.

Ku Sang: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/EternityToday.doc>

Seo Jeong-ju: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/FlowerSnake.htm>

Kim Su-yeong: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/KimSuYeong.pdf>



**Cheon Sang-byeong** remains many Koreans' favorite poet and "Back to Heaven" is the only poem I know by heart. It is truly a wonderful poem, written when the poet aged 40 was sick and thought he was dying, after having been arrested and tortured for no reason by the authorities, 2 years before. Yet still the world for him was beautiful! <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/BackToHeaven.htm>

**Rivers** (his first poem, written as a teenager)

The way rivers all flow into the sea  
is not the only reason I've been weeping  
all day long  
up on the hill.

It's not the only reason I've been blooming  
in longing like a sunflower  
all night long  
up on the hill.

The reason I'm weeping for sorrow like an animal  
up on the hill  
is not only because of the way  
rivers all just flow into the sea.

### **Back to Heaven**

I'll go back to heaven again.  
Hand in hand with the dew  
that melts at a touch of the dawning day,

I'll go back to heaven again.  
With the dusk, together, just we two,  
at a sign from a cloud after playing on the  
slopes

I'll go back to heaven again.  
At the end of my outing to this beautiful  
world  
I'll go back and say: That was beautiful. . . .





**Shin Kyong-Nim's *Farmers' Dance* (농무)** is what I consider one of my most successful volumes. In his youth, Shin spent ten years working as a building laborer, or a salesman, among the rural and urban poor. Then he published *Farmers' Dance* to great acclaim as a new kind of socially aware poetry. It was revolutionary in that the speaker of many poems is a generic “we,” identified as the country’s poor and exploited, instead of the conventional “poetic” “I.”

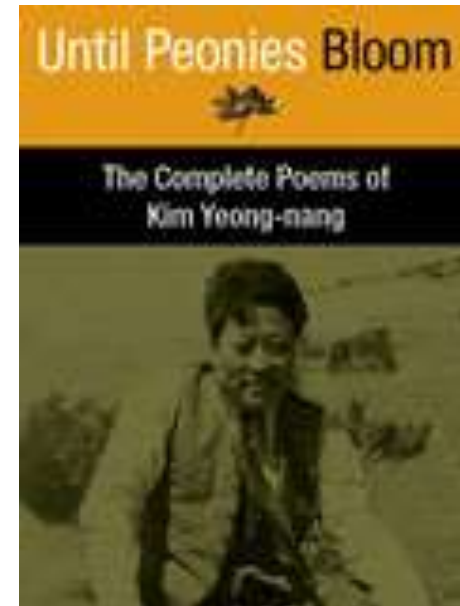
<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/FarmersDance.html>

## Farmers' Dance

The ching booms out, the curtain falls.  
Above the rough stage, lights dangle from a paulownia tree,  
the playground's empty, everyone's gone home.  
We rush to the soju bar in front of the school  
and drink, our faces still daubed with powder.  
Life's mortifying when you're oppressed and wretched.  
Then off down the market alleys behind the *kkwenggwari*  
with only some kids running bellowing behind us  
while girls lean pressed against the oil shop wall  
giggling childish giggles.

The full moon rises and one of us  
begins to wail like the bandit king Kokjong; another  
laughs himself sly like Sorim the schemer; after all  
what's the use of fretting and struggling, shut up in these hills  
with farming not paying the fertilizer bills?  
Leaving it all in the hands of the women,  
we pass by the cattle-fair,  
then dancing in front of the slaughterhouse  
we start to get into the swing of things.  
Shall we dance on one leg, blow the *nallari* hard?  
Shall we shake our heads, make our shoulders rock?

In 2010 the son of the poet **Kim Yeong-Nang** asked me to translate his father's poems. He was a well-loved Korean poet, born in 1903, who had been killed in Seoul in 1950 as the North Koreans were withdrawing. He left a crowded air-raid shelter so that others could get inside, and was killed by shrapnel. He expressed his anti-Japanese feelings by always wearing Korean dress, letting his hair grow long, and not allowing his children to take Japanese names. He also refused to write poetry for much of the Japanese occupation, so his total output was barely 80 poems. His son lives in the US, forced to flee Korea for opposing Park Chung-Hee. <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/KimYeongNangBilingual.htm>



Koreans feel that Kim Yeong-Nang's verse is very musical and he certainly loved music, both traditional pansori as well as western classical music. He was from a wealthy land-owning family and at least once he sold a field in order to cover the cost of going to Tokyo to attend a concert by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. This is Kim Yeong-Nang's most popular poem.

### **Until Peonies Bloom**

Until peonies bloom  
I just go on waiting for my spring to come.  
On the days when peonies drop, drop their petals,  
I finally languish in sorrow at the loss of spring.  
One day in May, one sultry day  
when the fallen petals have all withered away  
and there is no trace of peonies in all the world,  
my soaring fulfilment crumbles into irrepressible sorrow.  
Once the peonies have finished blooming, my year is done;  
for three hundred and sixty gloomy days I sadly lament.  
Until peonies bloom  
I just go on waiting  
for a spring of glorious sorrow.







I nearly forgot to mention **Kim Kwang-kyu**, who is my age, a Professor of German literature. His first poetic activity involved the translation of German poetry into Korean. This gave him the impulse to start writing Korean poetry in a style owing nothing to Korean poetic conventions. Heine, Eich and Brecht taught him the value of subtle humor in writing satirical poems and his early work was hailed for its skill in mocking the military dictatorships. This poem is about surviving under press censorship and fake news. <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/Kkk.htm>

### **The land of mists**

In the land of mists  
always shrouded in mist  
nothing ever happens  
And if something happens  
nothing can be seen  
because of the mist  
for if you live in mist  
you get accustomed to mist  
so you do not try to see

Therefore in the land of mists  
you should not try to see  
you have to hear things  
for if you do not hear you cannot live  
so ears keep growing bigger  
People like rabbits  
with ears of white mist  
live in the land of mists

It was only in 2011 that I finally produced my first collection of poems by a woman, **Kim Seung-Hee**, “Walking on a Washing Line,” and until 2020 it was the only one, to my great shame. A popular feminist surrealist poet, she was also a colleague, being a professor of Korean literature in Sogang University. Late in 2020, I have just had the joy of having a second collection by her published by a very good press in Britain

### **Walking on a washing line**



I'm walking on a washing line.  
I would really like to be engrossed in the task of aestheticizing  
the crisis  
without exaggerating the crisis,  
feeling I'm walking on a washing line high above the clouds.  
If that's a lifelong task, now is the time when it comes to the  
fore in Capital Letters.  
If that's the poet's task, although it may only be at the level of  
family handicrafts,  
ultimately it can include a quite significant cosmic content.  
In this age of vandalistic capitalism it means that this creature  
known as a poet, gaunt and withered  
like the pencil-lead of dire poverty, with nothing to eat or put  
on,  
digging a well in the lines on her palm then planting above it a  
single fantasy rainbow like a clothesline,  
is aestheticizing and maximizing the washing. . . . .

At the same time, I departed radically from my norms in order to publish translations of 3 **ancient texts about tea**, written centuries ago in Classical Chinese. This was only possible because I translated modern Korean versions, then a friend in the US who is an expert in ancient Chinese texts about tea, corrected my translations against the originals and added lots of notes. Seoul Selection did a wonderful design job, it is my most beautiful book!

The first text is the oldest Korean text about tea, by Yi Mok (1471–1498), “Chabu,” a kind of rhapsody to tea, although all the detailed references are to tea in China, and nothing indicates that he ever drank tea in Korea. He was executed in 1498 aged only 27 during the Muo Sahwa purge under the ill-fated Prince Yeonsan because his (already dead) teacher had written a veiled attack on the prince’s great-grandfather, King Sejo. Dangerous times for tea!



傍有天君 懼然戒曰 生者死之本  
死者生之根 單治內而外凋 嵒著  
論而蹈艱  
曷若泛虛舟於智水 樹嘉穀於仁  
山神動氣而入妙  
樂不圖而自至  
是亦吾心之茶 又何必求乎彼也

The Chabu ends ecstatically:

*... Wisdom is to float like an empty boat on water; Benevolence is to admire the trees and fruit of the mountain. When the spirit moves the heart, it enters the Wonderful; even without seeking pleasure, pleasure arises. This is the tea of my heart, it is needless to seek another.*



The book also includes 2 texts by **Cho-ui Seonsa** (1786–1866), a monk who learned how to make ‘caked tea’ from the great scholar **Dasan Jeong Yak-yong** when the latter was exiled in Gangjin. The first is a general text about tea copied from a Chinese encyclopaedia. The second is a poem with copious notes, ***DongChaSong***, composed by Cho-ui in 1837. It refers often to the *Classic of Tea* by the Chinese tea sage Lu-Yu of the Tang dynasty. Although the title says the poem is a celebration of Eastern (Korean) tea, the only mention in it of Koreans brewing tea is far from complimentary:

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/DongChaSongText.html>

Above Hwagae village is Chilbul Meditation Hall. Those meditating there often picked tea late, old leaves, and dried them in the sun. Using firewood, they cooked them over a brazier, like boiling vegetable soup. The brew was strong and turbid, reddish in color, the taste extremely bitter and astringent. As Jeong-So in the kitchen said: “Heaven’s good tea is often ruined by vulgar hands.”





**Ynhui Park** (pen-name Park Imun) (1930 - 2017) was little known in Korea as a poet and extremely well-known as a leading philosopher. He did a first doctorate on French literature in the Sorbonne in Paris then moved to the US and did a second PhD on Merleau-Ponty. He taught philosophy in the US for 20 years before returning to Korea. He wrote and published poems in English and in Korean. We became good friends and he was happy that I translated his poems but by the time the book was published (by kind Seoul Selection) he was very unwell and I never saw him again afterwards. The book did **not** sell well.

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/YnHuiParkpoems.doc>



## Poetic Words

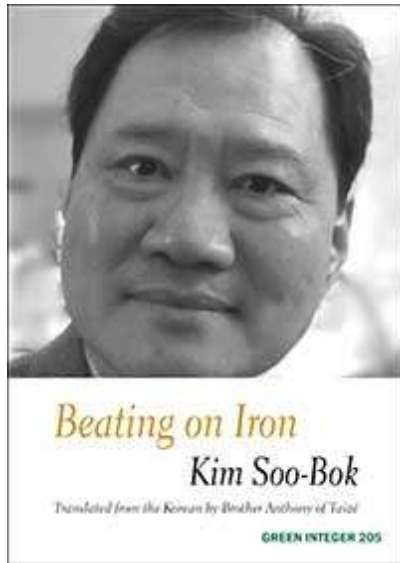
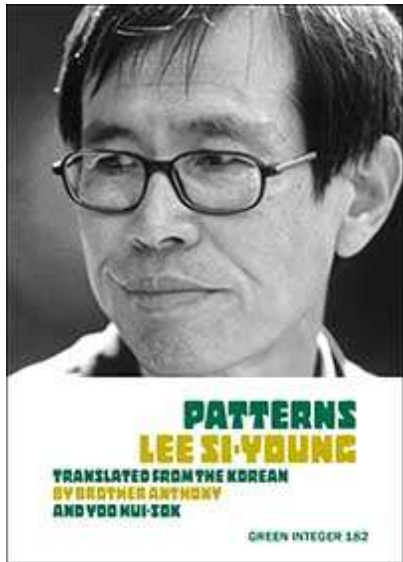
Tangled  
piercing  
like barbed wire  
poetic words  
inflict nothing but pain  
while on the meanings  
scratched, pierced  
blood pools thick

Alienated beings in agony  
poetic words  
pierced when language is read  
and the truth grasped  
breaking when cut  
seek the meaning beyond meaning  
that is no meaning



In 2010 I was appointed “Chair Professor” at Dankook University and have translated 3 poets who are teaching there

**Lee Si-Young** was born in Gurye-gun, South Jeolla province, in 1949. He is in charge of the International Creative Writing Center.



**Kim Soo-Bok** was born in Hamyang, South Gyeongsang Province, in 1953. He is now the University’s President

**Ahn Do-Hyun** was born in 1961 in Yecheon, he also teaches at the International Creative Writing Center.



Poem by Lee Si-Young

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/10LeeSi-Young.html>

### Poem

Minus twenty, the temperature outside,  
and when I got up after sleeping  
a baby squirrel was pressed against the windowpane  
staring up at me with bright eyes.

Ah, those two eyes!

Those eyes the most beautiful person in the world  
closed at the very end, on departing!

The moment I opened the window, that little squirrel  
raised its silvery tail in a flash

and casually vanished into the morning sunlight  
that had just begun to spread.

Poem by Kim Soo-Bok

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/10KimSoo-Bok.html>

### River

When the moon was full, Lake Baikal put its heart's rough  
waves to sleep within, entered its fully pregnant body, sent the  
umbilical cord far away and made a river.

Riding on moonlight,  
the river  
passed birch woods,  
crossed sleeping villages  
passed plains,  
reached the distant dawn sea

gave birth to islands  
one by one  
then came back again.

Poem by Ahn Do-hyun

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/AnDoHyon.htm>

### **One coal briquette**

There are lots of other ways of putting it  
but it's as if what we call life  
means becoming a coal briquette  
for someone other than myself.

From the day the floors first feel chilly till the following spring,  
the loveliest thing on all the roads of Korea  
is the briquette truck chugging  
its way up steep inclines with all its might.  
I eat piping hot rice and soup every day,  
but it's as if I had not realized that once the flame has caught hold,  
each briquette grows scorching hot,  
seeming to know just what's required of it.  
It's as if I have been unable to become a briquette for anyone so far  
because I was afraid of the way, once love has caught fully hold  
all that remains is a sorry handful of ash?

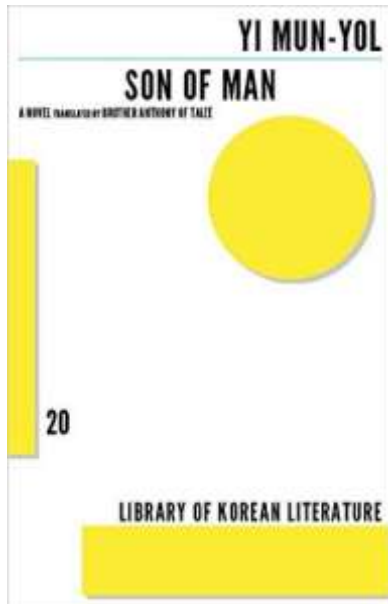
On careful thought,  
it's as if what we call life  
is pulverising me  
in order to make a safe path where someone  
other than myself  
can walk at ease on slippery mornings  
after snow has fallen  
and I had failed to realize that.



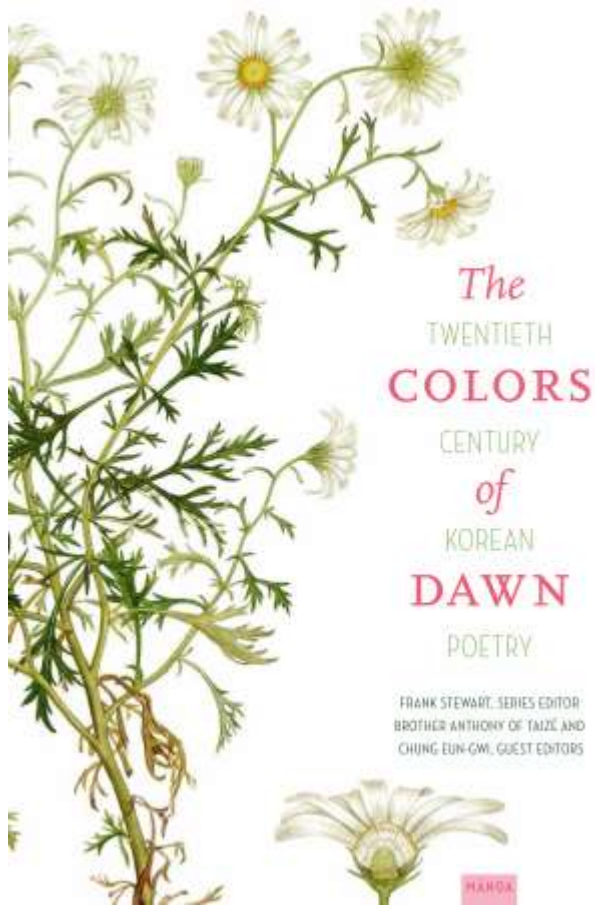
The novelist **Yi Mun-yol** has rather faded from view recently, after espousing right-wing views in multiple newspaper articles. In the 1970s and 1980s he was one of Korea's outstanding writers. His first novel, **Son of Man**, has sold nearly 2 million copies. In 1994 I translated his "**The Poet**," a novel based on the true story of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century wandering poet Kim Sakkat, a very fine work with explorations of themes of inherited guilt and the mystery of pure poetry. I think it is Yi Mun-yol's best novel. The English version was published by the Harvill Press, a fine press devoted to translated fiction. So I felt driven to tackle his token novel, "Son of Man."

Seen as a critique of conservative, fundamentalist Christianity, it was immensely popular among students in the 1970/80s when Korea's Protestants seemed to be on the crest of a wave. Inspired by Yi's reading in comparative religion, the novel is a double work, as a detective investigating the murder of a former seminarian in Daegu discovers (and we read with him) a novel that the dead man had written about the legend of the Wandering Jew and his conflict with Jesus about the nature of God. . . .

"Son of Man" was published in 2015, nearly 10 years after I had finished the translation. It has not yet begun to sell the expected 2 million copies . . . . The effort it took to translate it, and also Ko Un's novel "**Little Pilgrim**," may explain why I have little fiction to talk about.







***The Colors of Dawn*** is an anthology of work by 44 twentieth-century Korean poets, which I guest-edited with Professor Chung Eun-Gwi (of HUFFS English Dept) in 2016. It includes works by poets born as early as 1901 while the youngest were born in around 1970.

To make it more appealing, the book starts with the youngest and goes backward chronologically, the old, dead poets being buried at the back.

It includes a brief history of the development of poetry in Korea during the period. It is definitely the most useful of my books!

Some of the translations of poems by earlier poets were made by the senior poet **Kim Jong-gil**.



**Kim Jong-Gil** was born in 1926 near Andong. He was recognized as a poet in 1947. He studied at Korea University, Seoul, and became a professor in the English Department there in 1958. In 1969 he published his first collection of poetry, having already published a volume of translations of modern British poetry in 1954.

He also enjoyed translating Korean poems into English, but could never publish them as a collection. He gave them to me and I included many in *The Colors of Dawn*. I translated many of his own poems, and "**A Black Kite**" was published in mid-2017 but he died just before that, on April 1, 2017, only two weeks after the death of his wife. We often met, he was a venerable friend.

He had met almost all the famous western writers of his time and published essays about meeting them:

"Have I told you how I met T. S. Elliot in his London office?"

"Oh yes, many times!"

**Christmas** (by Kim Jong-Gil)

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/10KimJong-Gil.html>

Beside a glowing charcoal fire  
in a dark room, all alone,

my elderly grandmother  
was keeping watch over a pitifully fading young life.

At last Father returned home through the snow  
bringing medicine;

Ah, those red cornelian cherries  
Father had picked after plowing through the snow...

I was a baby animal,  
my fever-flushed cheeks being silently rubbed  
with the cool hem of young Father's coat.

From time to time snow beat at the back door.  
I have a feeling that that evening was Christmas Eve.

And suddenly I have reached the age  
my father was then.

That being something irrecoverable from long ago,  
in a town with Christmas drawing near  
those welcome memories from the past come dropping  
down.

If I suddenly feel Father's cool coat hem  
on my sorrowful thirty-year-old brow

is that because the red cornelian cherries  
picked in the snow  
are still flowing, melted, in my blood?



김지하 譚詩 모음집

# 五賊



東光出版社

One of the most amazing poems included in “The Colors of Dawn” is “**Five Bandits,**” a fierce and famous political / social satire by **Kim Jiha** (b. 1941) that earned him years in prison. Written in a style recalling traditional Pansori narrative, its climax is a list of the furnishings in the Bandits’ homes and the food served at a banquet hosted by them (this is only a small segment of the lists):

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/FiveBandits.pdf>

electric clocks, electric rice bowls, electric kettles, electric chopsticks, electric vases, electric mirrors,  
electric books, electric briefcases

iron glassware, clay woodware, Chosŏn celadon, white porcelain from Koryŏ,

Picassos hanging upside down, Chagalls hung sideways,

orchid paintings by Sŏkpa glossily mounted in gold-lacquered frames,

four hundred scroll paintings hanging up, eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight  
paintings of mountains, rivers, flowers, birds, butterflies, people, all crammed together,

broiled cow-hair, fried pigs’ nostrils, goats’ beards in batter, boiled deer horns, shish-kebab of  
four-footed chicken-legs, dried pheasant-fins,

tempura of bream-wings, pickled corvinas’ toenails, the ears of croakers, bass, amberjacks,  
flounders and sweetfish, cut off and served up raw in salads,

stews of the scales from octopus and sea-slugs, pork cutlets of beef, beef cutlets of pork, soup  
of swellfish with its blood not drained, . . . .

honed cookies made of rongalite bleach, honey-cakes of methadone, saccharine condiments,  
poached frog-spawn broth, lentil jelly, seaweed jelly; magniputrescent-fruit liquor . . . .





**Do Jong Hwan** was born in 1954. He began work as a high school teacher. The death by cancer of his wife in 1985, just two years after they married, and a few months after the birth of their second child, inspired him to write a volume of melancholy poems of love and loss, *Hollyhock You*, which brought him instant fame. It has sold over one million copies. He joined the movement to allow teachers to form unions, was duly imprisoned and lost his job. With that he joined the opposition to the authoritarian regimes and entered the National Assembly. From 2017 - 2019 he was Korea's Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sports. His poems are popular, often inspirational in style.

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/10DoJong-Hwan.html>

### Beside your Grave

If I return home, leaving a wild pink beside your grave,  
you rise as a cloud over a lofty peak and follow me;  
if I return home, after offering prayers before your grave,  
you rise as an early evening star and follow behind me;  
if I return home, leaving a line from a song beside your grave,  
you follow me as an insect's chirping as far as the gate;  
if I return home, after letting fall a teardrop on your grave,  
you become a shower and I am soaked to the skin.



Another poem by Do Jong Hwan

## **Ivy**

At times when we feel that  
it is a wall, unavoidably a wall,  
then  
without a word, ivy goes climbing up the wall.  
At times when we say that  
it is a wall of despair  
with no drop of water, where not one seed can survive,  
unhurrying, the ivy advances.  
Hand in hand, several together, it climbs on,  
a span's breadth at a time.  
It grasps the despair and will not let go  
until the despair is all covered in green.  
At times when we shake our heads, saying  
that wall cannot be climbed,  
one ivy leaf leads thousands of other ivy leaves  
and finally climbs over that wall.



Other poets I have translated,  
often with Chung Eun-gwi



Oh Sae-Young



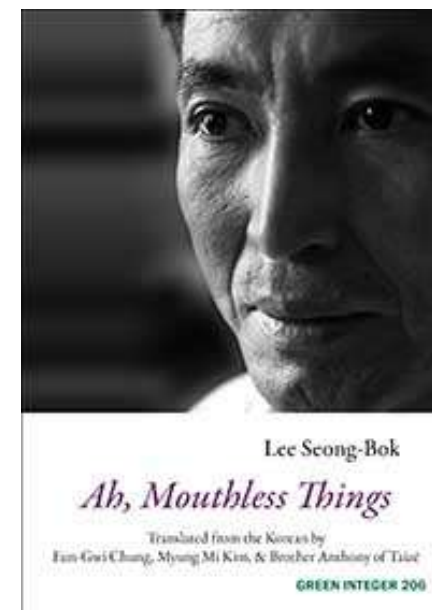
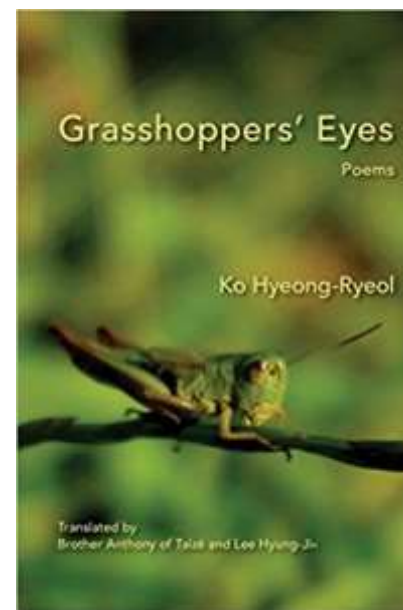
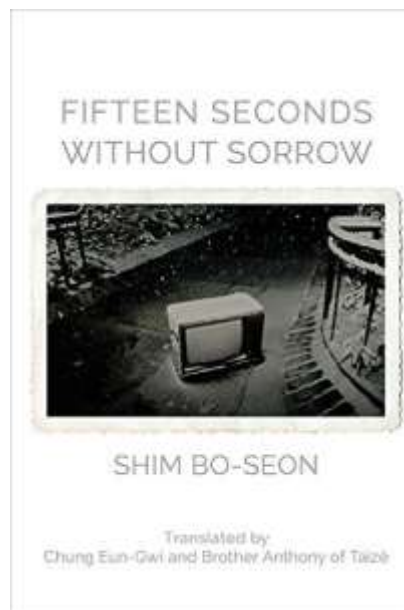
Shim Bo-Seon



Ko Hyeong-ryeol



Lee Seong-Bok





**Jeong Ho-seung** is the most widely read and loved poet in Korea today. He was born in Hadong, South Gyeongsang Province, in 1950 but grew up in Daegu.

He has spent many years traveling as an inspirational speaker, invited all over Korea to give talks to citizens' groups about love, life, hope, sorrow, death . . . .

His poems are often sorrowfully lyrical and many (70 or 80) have been set to music by some of Korea's most popular folk singers, including Jang Sa-ik, An Chi-hwan, Lee Dong-won. I have published 2 volumes by him.

When we visited Los Angeles together some years back he read the Korean, I read the English, then we heard a recording of each poem being sung. Nice!

Jeong Ho-seung has to be one of my favorite poets. We are close friends. He was born on my birthday, 8 years after me but on the same date.



## A Drink

Life has never bought me  
one drink.

Many a time I've shaken out my empty pockets  
in a tent-bar at the end of a blind alley  
to buy life a drink,  
but life has never once  
bought me one drink,  
even on snowy days,  
even on days when stone lotuses,  
without a sound,  
bloomed and faded.

## To Daffodils

Don't cry.

To be lonely is to be human.

To go on living is to endure loneliness.

Do not wait in vain for the phone call that never comes.

When snow falls, walk on snowy paths,

when rain falls, walk on rainy paths.

A black-breasted longbill is watching you from the bed of reeds.

Sometimes even God is so lonely he weeps.

Birds perch on branches because they are lonely

and you are sitting beside the stream because you are lonely.

The hill's shadow comes down to the village once a day

because it, too, is lonely.

And a bell's chime resounds because it, too, is lonely.

## The People I Love

I do not love people who have no shadows.  
I do not love people who do not love shadows.  
I love people who have become the shade beneath a tree.  
Sunlight, too, needs shade to shine bright and dazzle the eyes.  
Sitting in the shade of a tree  
and watching the sunlight sparkling between the leaves,  
how beautiful the world is then.

I do not love people who have no tears.  
I do not love people who do not love tears.  
I love people who have become one teardrop.  
Joy, too, is no joy without tears.  
And is there ever love without tears?  
The sight of someone sitting in the shade of a tree  
wiping away another's tears,  
what quiet beauty that is.

## Hanging a Wind-Chime

On my way home  
after meeting with the reclining Buddhas  
at Unju-sa temple  
I hung a wind-chime  
on the eaves of your heart.  
When the wind blows from far away  
and the wind-chime rings,  
know that it is my heart, longing to see you,  
that has come to visit.

And the visit to Unju-sa underlying this poem  
inspired a whole book-length fable . . . . .

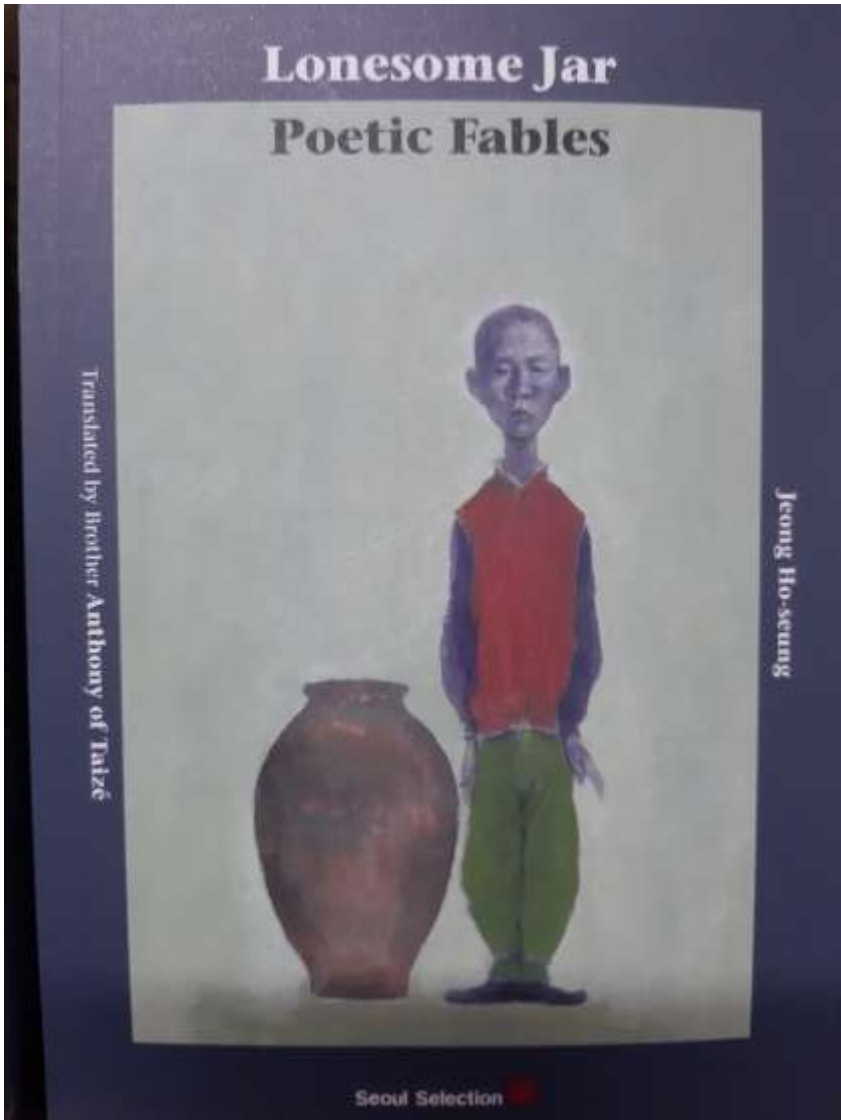




The main character in **Jeong Ho-seung's** extended fable "**Loving**" is a brass fish from a wind-chime at Unjusa temple, named Blue Bubble-Eyes. Coming to life, it goes flying (or sometimes swimming) around the world in search of love and a more fulfilling life. During the search, guidance is given across the miles by the Recumbent Buddhas of Unjusa. Finally Blue Bubble-Eyes understands what love is and returns to be reunited with Black Bubble-Eyes, the brass fish who has been waiting under the wind-chime at the other end of the temple hall's roof.

This book was published by Seoul Selection on November 2, 2020. It includes the paintings from the original Korean.





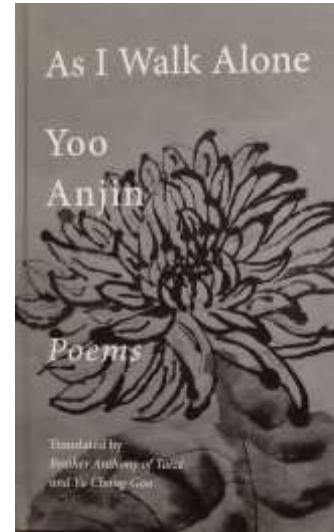
“Lonesome Jar” (Hangari) contains 20 “children’s stories for grown-ups,” fables offering wisdom and insight into life’s challenges.

The first story, giving the book its title, is about the very first *hangari* made by a young potter. The jar's unattractive appearance causes it to be set aside and forgotten. After years of humiliation serving as a pot holding urine, the *hangari* finally becomes a resonance chamber for the great bell in a temple, making it sound truly beautiful. The jar's endurance has allowed it to find the true meaning of its existence.

This book too was published by Seoul Selection on November 2, 2020. It too includes the paintings from the original Korean.

**Yoo Anjin** was only the second female poet that I published a large selection of. She is a senior Korean writer, highly esteemed as a poet, essayist and novelist. She was born in 1941 on the outskirts of Andong. Her poems are light explorations of familiar themes, including evocations of her Catholic faith. Several of her poems deal with the challenges of advancing age.

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/YooAnjinPoems.html>



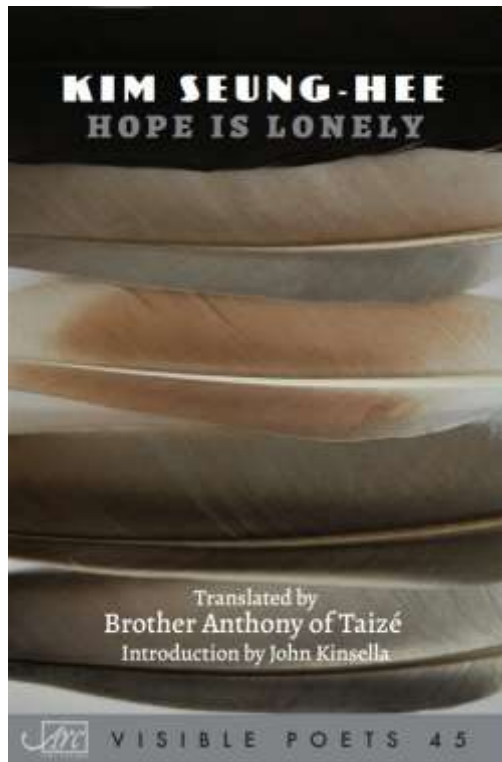
## The Sound of Rain Receding

I awoke to the sound of rain receding.  
I did not realize it had come, like the sound of an ebbing tide.  
It was discordant notes, approaching then withdrawing.

A misty dark, not fully washed by the night rain, a sound of regrets and disappointments following behind with dragging heels, seen from behind like a silhouette looking back to no purpose, a sound of night rain the color of Indian ink departing; it seems as though it is bound to return before this night is over.

I hear it going away, so certainly it came,  
and not night rain alone,  
youth, too, and love, and chances, too,  
come without our realizing it, then as they go  
we just recognize it,  
as the echoes of their going are clearer with age.  
Whatever comes must surely go,  
be it time, night rain, individuals . . . everything.





“**Hope is Lonely,**” a collection of recent poems by **Kim Seung-Hee**, is **my latest publication**, only just printed by Arc Publications in the UK, a wonderful publisher of world poetry in translation.

Her poetry is strongly female and feminist, deeply personal, at times surreal, always humane. Here is the title poem:

## Hope Is Lonely

People often say that despair is lonely  
but I reckon that hope is even lonelier.  
Despair might be termed the peace of gravity.  
For a pig to become bacon  
all it has to do is to let go of everything and subside into a pool of  
blood. . . .  
and still its head is grinning pink. Despair  
has a similar warmth of sorrow.





Hope sometimes provides first aid  
but there may sometimes be people who dislike hope's first aid,  
maybe.

Reckoning that despair offers more comfort,  
following a bright ray of sunlight trembling in the breeze,  
I came from afar to obtain medicine  
but being already convinced that the medicine has no effect  
your sickness grew worse.

The cactus – hope's totem pole. . . .

Even on a night when all the words flew away from the  
dictionary,  
even at that moment like blue lightning  
standing quietly before a chair after taking off my shoes,  
the word hope barely managed to remain  
and because of that one word, hope, I cannot discard  
everything.

The word hope prevents the world's ruins from being  
completed.

Beating my breast  
and asking why I don't let the ruins continue,  
rather because of that hope  
there are frighteningly lonelier times.

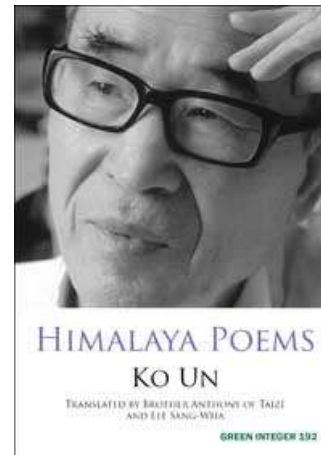
The cactus – hope's totem pole. . . .  
it's an order to love still, more, fully, until  
blood flows freely.

Though I want to escape, put an end to it,  
that bright sunlight being shared out  
for no reason, such a pity,  
like blood spreading in water. . . .

hope and I,  
hope is a life sentence.  
Hope is lonely.



For many years **Ko Un** was Korea's best-known poet, a familiar figure at poetry festivals world-wide. Now in disgrace because of what many consider to be ill-founded Me-Too accusations, he lives a secluded life and continues to write, now in his 88<sup>th</sup> year. I published 10 volumes by him in days gone by and have 2 more ready to be published one day, if ever. . . .



Then there are the poets I have translated but not yet found a publisher for

Mysterious poet Sin Yong-Mok



Worker-activist Song Kyung-dong



**Fearful Sorrow** by Sin Yong-Mok

No snake can know: what it feels like to sit down and rest,  
what it feels like to sleep lying down.

When I flop down onto the floor, when I collapse and roll  
about the floor as though my limbs have vanished

No snake can know

But the reason why frogs' croaking suddenly stops in a pond  
after a lotus leaf opens hiding a night star

Like a snake passing

The reason why the light goes out suddenly in that house

**Nothing Goes First** by Song Kyung-dong

After being deceived by time a number of times  
I've got used to it. When I start to feel  
that a season has lasted too long,  
that moment is the tenderest green  
and whenever I felt inclined to give up,  
saying that there's no way out in sight, not even the size  
of a needle's eye,  
behind my back another wilderness world was  
approaching.

Let's not let ourselves be deceived twice.  
When you feel like putting an end to your life  
that is summer time, opportunity time  
telling you to blossom most beautifully.  
Love never comes as something elderly.  
Even if only a single day remains  
still we can grow sincere again.



Turning from poetry, since the beginning of the Pandemic, I have translated **3 full-length novels** by major **women writers**: the first, **알로하 나의 엄마들** by **Lee Geum-yi**, will be published late in 2022 in the US and the UK as “The Picture Bride,” it is set in Hawaii in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century. The other two, by **Gong Ji-young**, **높고 푸른 사다리** and **먼 바다**, are still knocking on publishers’ doors. Both are depictions of someone recalling a failed love relationship many years later, 20 years for the first, 40 years the second. Both show how hard it is to understand another person, even if (or perhaps especially because) you love them. I wait and hope . . . This is my first entry into commercial publishing through a literary agent (agents won’t touch Korean poetry, with good reason!)



Meanwhile I have also been busy with other projects, especially involving the revolutionary poet and activist **Park Nohae**.

<http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/ParkNohaeBio.html>

**Park Nohae** was born in 1957 in Hampyeong, South Jeolla Province. His original name was Park Gi-pyeong. While working as a laborer in various factories in his teens and 20s, he began to reflect and write poems on the sufferings of the laboring class. He then took the pseudonym Park Nohae (No = 'labor,' Hae = 'liberation') and published his first collection of poems, **노동의 새벽** Dawn of Labor, in 1984, under that name. Nobody knew who he really was.

For seven years he was active underground. Finally arrested in 1991, after twenty-four days of torture, he arrived at his trial smiling broadly. The prosecution demanded the death penalty and he was finally sentenced to life imprisonment as an “enemy of the state.” While he was in prison, a second and third poetry collection were published. Amnestied in 1998 by President Kim Dae-Jung, he helped establish a social organization *Nanum Munhwa* “Culture of Sharing” with Koreans concerned to live communitarian values as a response to the great challenges confronting global humanity.



## **The Dawn of Labor** by Park Nohae

The war-like night shift once over,  
I pour icy soju  
onto my aching heart.

Ah,  
I can't go on like this much longer,  
I can't go on like this for ever.

With three wretched meals a day,  
covered in grease, in a trial of strength,  
all my energy squeezed out, struggling,  
though this war-like labor  
can't go on much longer,  
can't go on for ever,  
I have no choice.

If only I could get free,  
exhausted, phantom-like,  
if only I could fly free of my fate at twenty-nine,  
but, ah,  
I have no choice, have no choice.  
Apart from death, I have no choice.

This tough life,  
the yoke of poverty,  
this fate, I have no choice.

Into my drooping body,  
for the sake of tomorrow's approaching  
workload,  
onto my aching heart at dawn  
I pour icy soju,  
longing for a tenacity stronger than soju,  
I pour wrath and sorrow.

This unavoidable wall of despair  
will break and burst in the end  
in rough drops of sweat and blood,  
as for the sake of our calmly breathing,  
growing love,  
our fury,  
our hope and unity,  
we pour a shared glass of icy soju  
onto our aching hearts at dawn,  
until a new dawn for workers  
comes rising up.

In 2003, at the United States' invasion of **Iraq**, he went there to protect helpless civilians and promote peace. In 2006 he was in **Lebanon** on a similar mission. From the start he combined poetry-writing and photography, as he went to many countries that were suffering from wars and poverty, such as **Palestine, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Aceh (Indonesia), Burma, India, Ethiopia, Sudan, Peru and Bolivia**. In 2010 he held his first exhibition of **photos**, and today his work is on permanent display at the RA Gallery near Gyeongbok-gung, with a new exhibition every 6 months. The **captions** for the photos are translated by me.

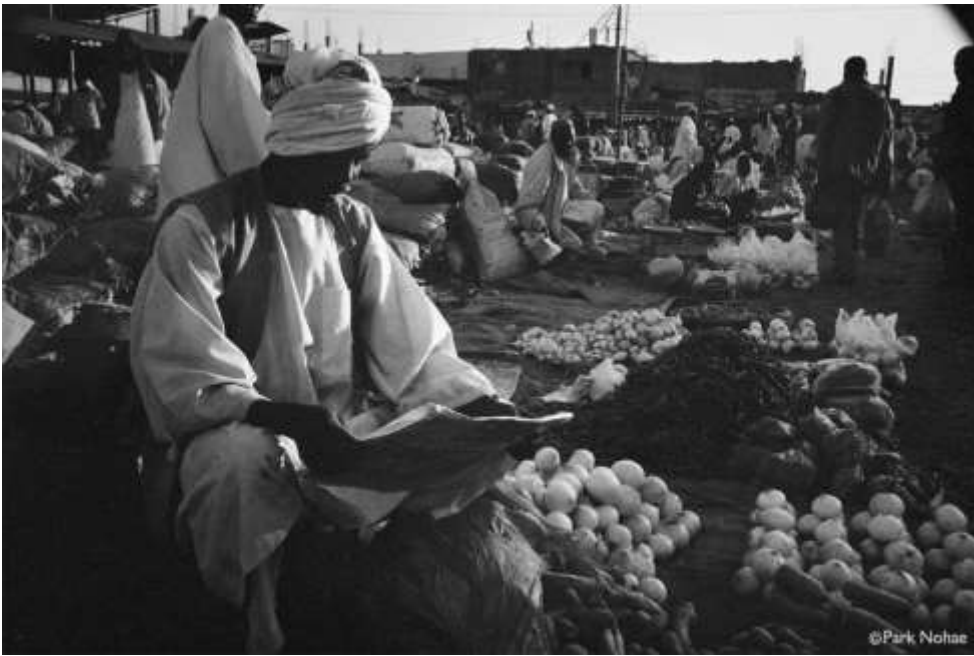


Lalibela, Ethiopia, 2009.

DRAWING WATER AT DAYBREAK.

Daybreak is life's mystery. When night comes walking then the sun rises again, a new life begins. As day dawns in the Ethiopian Highlands, I return home from a long journey to draw water. With this water, I will wash rice, wash myself, and quench the cattle's thirst. My steps bearing such a burden are heavy and slow but if there is love and hope in the weight of this life's burdens, the strength to endure is given. I have ever lived day by day. I am touched, give thanks, endure.





Khartoum, Sudan, 2008.  
Dawn Market in Khartoum.

In the desert where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet the celebrated Khartoum dawn market is being held. Is there any other market as vibrant with such rich, varied, tidy, vivid vitality? After carefully stacking onions he has grown, a merchant opens and reads a precious newspaper that many read in turns. Eating and living are the first priority, of course, but I need to know how the world I live in is going. He reads about the world with bright morning eyes.



Harvesting Potatoes on the Andes Plateau

This is a day for harvesting potatoes by the village's combined labor on the Andes Plateau, birthplace of humanity's potatoes. The owner of the field whose turn it is today is grateful. We of necessity need each other, so he thanks all who thus share their strength. Glad to see all the faces gathered together, he keeps handing round cups of Chicha corn liquor. As the icy wind from snowy peaks dries their sweat, the sound of young men and women singing, talking and laughing is never-ending.



*This is my favorite and my farewell message*

Setting Out Again at Dawn

Any who have come a long way will know,  
any seeking a path today will know,  
that here is not my abode,  
that my own path is calling me.

Oh, I am a wanderer between two worlds,  
a pilgrim ever walking on in search of a path.  
Every day is a good day.  
Once again I set out at dawn.





# Thank you

My home page index: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/>

A list of my published translations: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/Trans.htm>

A page with many translated poems: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/KoreanPoems.htm>

A page with many translated stories: <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/KoreanFiction.htm>

RAS Korea: <http://www.raskb.com/>