[page 15]

**Chong Chi-Yong’s Night and Mountain Poems Eight Poems from the Poet’s Mature Years**

Translated by Daniel A.KISTER

These translations are based on the text of The Collected Works of Chong Chi-yong, Vol. I: Poetry, 1st ed., rev. (Seoul: Minumsa, 1988. Dates of the publication of the poems are given as recorded there,pp. 227 ff., with the dates of composition included in parentheses when recorded. I am grateful to Misters Cho Yong-hun and Shin Dong-ch’ol for help in the preparation of these translations and to Professors Kim Hak-dong, Kim Wook-dong, and Lee Tae-dong for their comments.

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Poem 1 WINDOW 1

\* Something cold and sorrowful

shimmers at the glass Drawing listlessly near,

I make it blurr with puffs of breath; And as if tame, it flutters frozen wings, rhough again and again

I wipe and take a look, The pitch black night\_\_

surging out，surging inᅳ collides; And watery stars, gleaming,

are set like jewels. To wipe the glass alone at night In lonely, spellbound meditation\_\_ Lovely lungs all torn, Ah, you’ve flown away like a wild bird!

1930. 1 (1929. 12)

\* This poem was written after the death of a child of the poet.

[page 16]

Poem 2 STARS 2

I open the window and lie down; For the window must be open for the sky to come in.

I put on the glasses I,ve removed. On a night after the sun’s eclipse, the stars are all the more blue.

On a night that is feasting the stars, I keep form with white dress and white mat.

Love with a wife in the world\_

Compared with the stars, an untidy roost

Turning on my side, I voyage, Chartless, from star to star.

As the stars rise in clusters,

One shines more lavish;

One faintly flickers,

As if newborn;

One, shimmering red,

Must give off heat.

Even the stars are swept by the winds\_ Round and round,

candle flames coming alive.

Washed in cold water And spilling gold dust\_

the silver currents of the Milky Way!

Islands have ever

come running beneath the mast; And the stars yearn for harbor

in a blur beneath our eyebrows.

The Great Bear Revolves at a tilt! [page 17]

In the tragedy of a beautiful clear sky, We curb even the sound of our breathing; Be there cause or not in the other world, We have a night

when none can bear to close their eyes. Even without a lullaby,

Sleep comes.

1941.9

\* The Korean word for Milky Way literally means “silver river.”

Poem 3 WINDOW

A day without Even a redwing Wanes.

Frozen boughs hung

with icicles Are pierced in the sagging sky.

Above the old pond,

where even the stars sink not, Lotus stems, withered, moan in the wind;

In the far-off fields, Not even grass fires rise;

And after

even the landscape Goes lavishly Away,

At my window Again comes the dark, Lovely like vapor.

1942.1

[page 18]

Poem 4 OKRYU VALLEY

\* The valley’s sky

Opens wide;

And the sound of waterfalls Roars rumbling spring thunder\_\_

Ply on ply, the branched warp, Like folded peony petals.

Peaks jutting precariously, As if about to shift and softly fall.

As, deep and deeper,

the valley folds on, The mists form

a jumbled, keen blue din.

The sun, wings spread,

As if smeared with pollen, soaring;

As its violet rays Spread aslant in a swath,

On the lower slopes A hubbub of herbs breathing!

Broad daylight,

when field birds cease flying in And mystery holds full fair.

Water doesn’t soak in, But roles on white stones;

And at every roadside, one’s collar is tart With seeping fragrance.

Even the crickets, As if helplessly drunk

Cease Wriggling.

 1937.11 \* Okryu Valley: Flowing Jade Valley

[page 19]

Poem 5 PIRO PEAK 2

\* 1 The ivy

Is tinged;

The chipmunk’s tail, A lush dark.

An autumn path

On the mountain range

Just above the brow, Even the sun is fragrant;

And, staff Tap-tapping,

\*2 White fields

Laugh.

White birch slip off Their outward show;

And billowing clouds， Asleep by the flowers,

In the breeze Feel empty.

1938.8

 \*1 Piro Peak: The highest peak of Kumgang (Diamond) Mountain in the northern part of Korea.

\*2 These two lines could also mean: “White fields/Cry.”

Poem 6 RED HANDS

Shoulders round, Lush hair-braid trailing, Bred in the mountains,

Forehead white as an egg.

\*1 She wears black poson patched white

at heel and toe [page 20]

And, hands frozen red like mountain berries,

Plows through a path of snow

To pluck water tapped from stone crannies

As a strand of blue smoke rises,

The roof, too, is red and warm

in the sunshine;

And the virgin, in the snow, Gives off again the fresh green scent of midway up a parasol tree.

\*2 Shy, she sits turned

And, becoming an out-of-season wayfarer, Casts the image of her face in the gathering steam And peeks at the spring water, that between the stones is strangely like the sky.

1941. 1

\*1 Poson: short, padded Korean stockings. Black poson were worn by the lower class.

\*2 The bark of the parasol tree has a green color, even when old.

Poems 7 HOT SPRINGS

The wind now occupies the far-off ravine that you and I left behind us since morning. As if caught, as it blows, in the bent branches of the tree out front, how the wind beats against the window! As the night wears on, the fire-pot fire becomes a sorry sight; and even the candle blinks as from the cold. The pupils of my eyes, bright through the night, keep watch where I lie. Your warm words brought sleep straight away and carried me off—to a homely pillow. Now that you’ve gone, nothing for me but to bolster anew my good sense and loneliness! Cleaving the earth, gushing, gathering, ever hot from time immemorial, the water chatters alone in the dark; and sparse snow flies along the starless road. 1938.4 [page 21] The text in The Collected Works of Chong Chi-yong is faulty here in that it does not contain the word “road.” The translation-is made from the originally published text in the periodical Literature of 3,000 Ri, 2 (1938. 4).

CHANGSU MOUNTAIN

It s said to be the din of downing trees; and it could well be the felling of a huge pine, girth greater than arms can grasp. The valley roars with what may well be the sound of resounding echoes. Deep mountain silence numbs the bone even more—no chipmunks chasing, no mountain birds singing; and the snow and the night are whiter than paper! The moon, too—is its white intent, as it awaits fullness, a stroll through the valley in the dead of night? Now that the monk from the upper temple lost six out of six, laughed, and went on up, is the moon gathering the scent left by the homespun old chap? Though anxiety reels in the windless silence, oh, I’ll bear it. Cold, heedlessly, without sorrow or dreams, on Changsu Mountain, through a deep winter’s night— 1939.3

Changsu Mountain: Long-Lire Mountain.