

--- "I MARVEL HOW SHE COULD
ATTAIN TO SUCH A MYSTERIOUS STAGE
OF PERCEPTION. HER ZEN INTUITION
REACHED DEEP INTO BEAUTY AND POWER
OF LANGUAGE.

SUH JUNG-JU, POET-PROFESSOR

HER POEMS AREN'T A SIMPLE PROMENADE
OF A MORTAL BUT A WANDERING INTO
ETERNITY WHERE SOUL NEVER GROWS OLD.

DR. HUH SE-UK, PROFESSOR OF
CHINESE LITERATURE

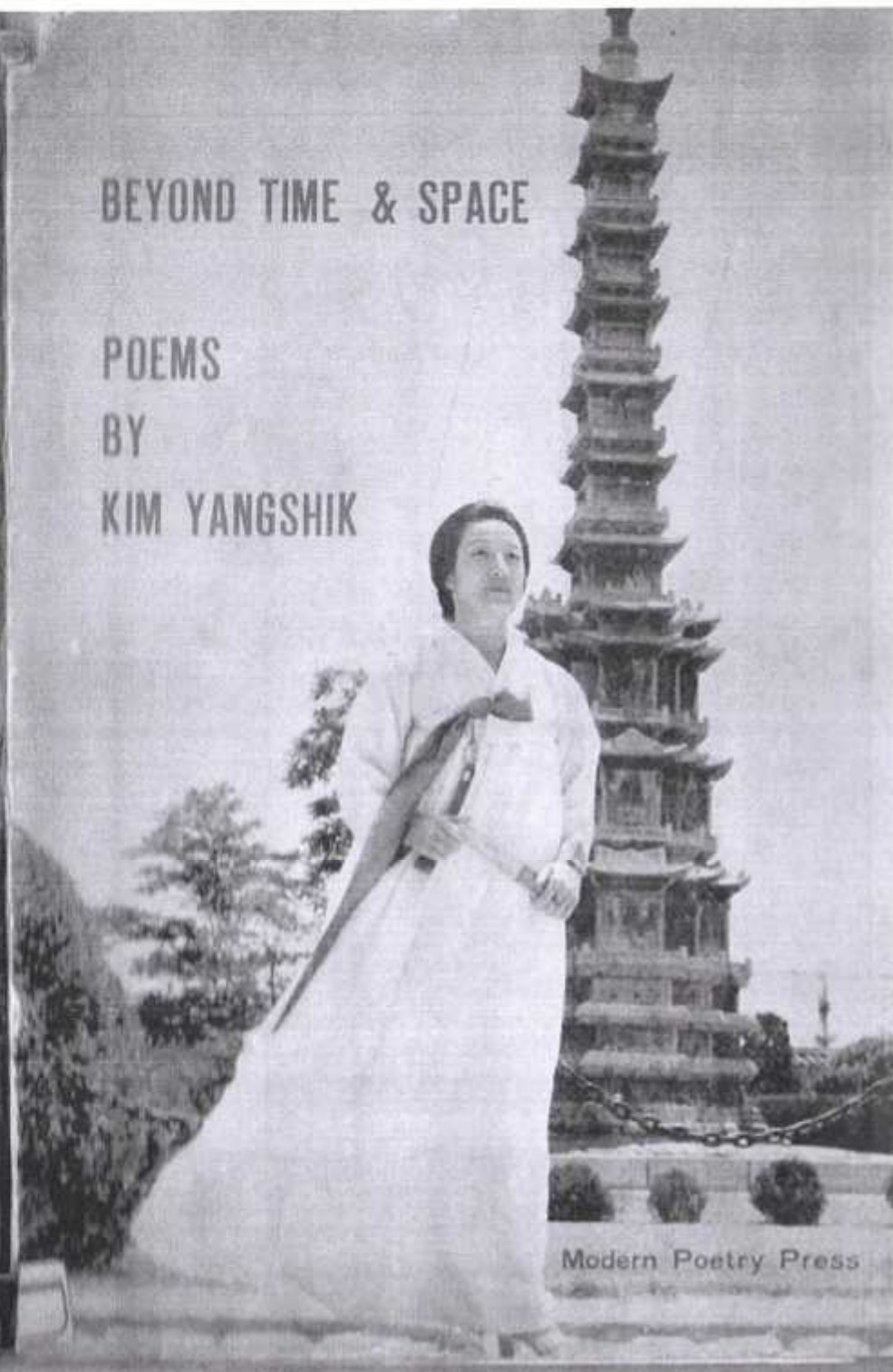
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BEYOND TIME & SPACE

POEMS

BY

KIM YANGSHIK



Modern Poetry Press

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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FOREWORD

IT IS A GENUINE PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE THE WORK OF THE GIFTED KOREAN POETESS, KIM YANGSHIK, TO THE ENGLISH READING PUBLIC. SINCE I AM NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE FULL RANGE OF HER CONSIDERABLE OUTPUT I AM UNABLE TO SAY WHETHER THE PRESENT COLLECTION IS REPRESENTATIVE OF HER BEST WORK BUT MUST ASSUME THAT IT IS - OTHERWISE WHY THESE POEMS AND NOT OTHERS SELECTED FOR TRANSLATION?

IN ANY EVENT, THE ENGLISH READER UNABLE TO READ THE ORIGINALS CAN ONLY BE GRATEFUL FOR BEING THE POSSIBILITY FOR ACQUAINTING HIMSELF WITH HER WORK THROUGH THE GENEROUS SAMPLING THAT FOLLOWS. IT IS ALWAYS A TAINTLIZING PLEASURE TO READ POEMS WRITTEN OUT OF A DIFFERENT CULTURE, OUT OF AN IDIOM AND SENSIBILITY UNLIKE OUR OWN. WORDS AND IMAGES, SUFFERING A SEA-CHANGE, UNDOUBTEDLY MUST LOSE SOME OF THEIR PRESSURE AND EVOCATIVENESS. WHAT MAY MOVE A KOREAN TO DELIGHT OR GRIEF MAY HAVE NO SUCH EFFECT ON A NORTH AMERICAN PROGRAMMED BY HIS CULTURE TO RESPOND TO A DIFFERENT SET OF VERBAL SIGNALS. YET HAVING SAID THIS, WHAT SURPRISES ME - THOUGH PERHAPS IT OUGHTN'T TO SINCE IT IS THE HALLMARK OF GOOD POETRY TO TRANSCEND THE BOUNDARIES RACE AND GEOGRAPHY INVENT - IS HOW FREQUENTLY IS, KIM'S LINES STIRRED ME BY THEIR PRECISION AND RIGHTNESS OF TONE.

HOW TO CHARACTERIZE THAT TONE? TENDER, DELICATE, WISTFUL, SOFTLY ANNUNCIATORY AS THE COMING ON OF TWILIGHT OR THE FALLING OF A LEAF, GENTLE AS THE WORDS OF LOVE OR AN INFANT'S BREATHING.

AND SINCE PASSION AND MELANCHOLY ARE PRESENT IN
THEM AS WELL AS TENDERNESS I AM TEMPTED TO HAIL
HER AS THE KOREAN SAPPHO. HOWEVER, I CANNOT
RECALL ANY IMAGE OF SNOW IN SAPPHO'S POEM, WHILE
SNOW AND SNOWFLAKES FREQUENTLY DRIFT THROUGH HERS.

MY VOICELESS SHOUTING
THAT STARS THE SKY
NO MORE REACHES YOU NOW
BUT CONDENSES INTO SNOW
PILING ON THE PEAKS FAR OUT
DRIFTING BACK INTO THE ANCIENT TIMES

FRIENDS, FLOWERS, RIPPLES, BIRDS, DREAMS, RAIN-
FRESHENED WOODS, JEWELS AND BUTTERFLIES AND BIRDS -
HOW REMOTE FROM THE FRENZY AND TUMULT OF OUR POLLUTED
THOROUGHFARES, THE ZANIENESS AND FEVERED AGGRESSIONS
OF OUR CITIES. IT IS AS IF WORDSWORTH OR PERHAPS
TENNYSON HAD EMIGRATED TO KOREA AND ONE OF HIS
DESCENDANTS WERE PENNING THE LINES THAT CONTAIN
THESE IMAGES. IS IT WORDSWORTH OR HIS DESCENDANT
WHO WRITES "... AND A CUCKOO'S SUDDEN CRY/AND
SOUND OF WIND HARMONIZE GODLIKE BECAUSE/THEY KNOW
HOW TO KEEP COMPANY WITH NATURE.?"

FINE SHADINGS OF EMOTION ARE REVEALED IN EVERY
LINE AND SINCE THEY COME THROUGH EVEN IN TRANSLA-
TION ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE LYRICAL PERFECTION
OF THE ORIGINAL. THE PASSION, UNFADED AND UNFA-
DING, IS NOT THAT OF A FLARING TORCH BUT OF A
STAR THAT GLEAMS STEADILY INTO THE DARK WITH A
GENTLE INSISTENCY, PURE AND GEM-LIKE.

TEARLESS WE TOUCH EACH OTHER'S WOUNDS;
WE RUB THE WOUND TORN FROM THE WORLD'S FLESH.

WE ARE, FINALLY, CRYING FOR DEATH,
CRYING OUT TO BE AT LEAST SOMETHING WORTH SEEING

THESE ARE MURDEROUS TIMES WHEN THE GOOD AND THE
JUST CAN BE EXCUSED FOR LONGING FOR DEATH. THE
POET WITH HIS EXPOSED NERVE-ENDINGS IS ESPECIALLY
VULNERABLE. HOWEVER, HE MUST LIKE HORATIO PUT
THAT 'FELICITY' AWAY SO THAT HE CAN BE A WITNESS
TO THE CRUELTY AND DESTRUCTIVENESS OF HUMAN BEINGS.
KIM YANG-SHIK IS ONE OF THESE WITNESSES, HER LYRICS
WITH SIMPLE AND EFFORTLESS DIGNITY REMINDING HUMAN
BEINGS WHEREVER THEY LIVE OF THE ETERNALLY ACCESSI-
BLE REALM OF NATURE, LOVE AND SONG.

IRVING LAYTON

TORONTO, CANADA
JUNE, 1975