



I'm OK, I'm Pig!

Kim Hyesoon

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Kim Hyesoon is one of South Korea's most important contemporary poets. She began publishing in 1979 and was one of the first few women in South Korea to be published in *Munhak kwa jisong* (Literature and Intellect), one of two key journals which championed the intellectual and literary movement against the US-backed military dictatorships of Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan in the 1970s and 80s. Don Mee Choi writes: 'Kim's poetry goes beyond the expectations of established aesthetics and traditional "female poetry" (yoryusi), which is characterised by its passive, refined language. In her experimental work she explores women's multiple and simultaneous existence as grand-mothers, mothers, and daughters in the context of Korea's highly patriarchal society, a nation that is still under neo-colonial rule by the US. Kim's poetics are rooted in her attempt to resist conventional literary forms and language long defined by men in Korea. According to Kim, "women poets oppose and resist their conditions, using unconventional forms of language because their resistance has led them to a language that is unreal, surreal, and even fantastical. The language of women's poetry is internal, yet defiant and revolutionary".' 'Since 1980, Kim Hyesoon has broken the rigid gender traditions of Korean poetry. Unconfined by the so-called "feminine" subjects of love and loss, she creates a seething, imaginative under- and over-world where myth and politics, the everyday and the fabulous, bleed into each other. Her enormously energetic poems are full of dizzying transitions and tonal shifts.' - Sean O'Brien, Independent 'Kim Hyesoon writes flowingly and choreographically a panorama of hovering hate love for the birthing body, for cruelty and existence and for the expansive thinking and dizzyingly borderless universe-geography. Kim Hyesoon writes hate love as a stone-hard feminist life-and-death dance. As garbage, love and death accumulate in her poems, your world will be changed for real!' – Aase Berg. 'Miraculous weaponry! Miraculous translations! This kind of undomesticated engagement and lawlessness and risk and defiance and somatic exorbitance posits a world and a relation to the world where everything excluded is included – the animal and the vegetal, the molten and the mineral, the gaseous and the liquid, not to mention shame, disgust, failure, terror, raunch. The final poem "Manhole Humanity" deserves its place alongside Césaire's Notebook of a Return to the Native Land or Ginsberg's Howl or Inger Christensen's It. Kim Hyesoon's new book is armament and salve, shield and medicinal chant. It's here to protect us' – Christian Hawkey.

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