



News

Laurie Fenlason
Media Relations Director
T (413) 585-2190 F (413) 585-2174
lfenlason@smith.edu

Office of College Relations
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
www.smith.edu/newsoffice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Experimental Poet Kim Hye-Sun From South Korea to Read at Smith College

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. – Smith College will present a poetry reading by Kim Hye-sun at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 4, in Stoddard Hall Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

Kim Hye-sun's poems first appeared in the early 1980s as Korea began to emerge from decades of authoritarian rule. In a Korean tradition of poetry in which women are expected to be non-controversial, soft-spoken and gentle, Kim's work is a shocking deviation. Her words are harsh, radical and shouted from a shifting ground of what Kim calls women's "diasporic identity."

Kim belongs to the feminist group Another Culture, which emerged in the 1980s and has played a critical role in feminist literary research and publication, including the development of women's studies in South Korea. She resists conventional literary forms long defined by men, instead exploring women's multiple and simultaneous existence as grandmothers, mother, daughters and lovers, and speaks of the creation of a new language for women – a language untouched by the powerful male presences that dominate Korean literature.

Whereas male Korean poetry relies on the manipulation of nature, on what one decides to see, Kim theorizes that women recognize nature's independent existence and understand how to bring forth a poem and let it go its own way, as they must do with a child. She speaks in a recent interview of the forces men impose on their subjects, either by cutting away from nature only the parts they want, or by splicing in convenient metaphors. Women impose their existence not over nature, but beside it, she claims; their language is internal, and their resistance forges a language that is surreal, defiant and revolutionary.

Whether in spite of, or because of, her rebelliousness, Kim was one of the first women poets to be published in the prestigious journal *Literature and Intellect*. The recipient of several major literary awards in Korea, she has published seven collections of poetry and, most recently, a collection of critical essays about women and writing. Kim's work has been translated into both German and Spanish, and her poems in English translation have appeared in the United States in the publications *Arts & Letters*, *Prairie Schooner* and the *Literary Review*.

Married to playwright Yi Kang-baek, Kim teaches at Seoul Arts University, where she is dean of creative writing.

Kim's visit is co-sponsored by Smith's Poetry Center, East Asian Languages and Literatures department, the East Asian studies program and Korean American Students of Smith, with support from the Korean Literature Translation Institute. For more information, call Cindy Furtek in the Poetry Center office at (413) 585-4891 or Ellen Doré Watson, director, at (413) 585-3368.