

### *Renting a Room*

To rent a room in Damyang or Changpyung  
to visit like a chipmunk,  
I looked in every village I came across.  
Walking past a place in Jasil,  
I saw common flowers in the yard  
between a traditional Korean house and a modern annex.  
When I entered through the open gate,  
a man was sharpening his scythe on the grindstone  
and his wife's scarf was wet, as if she had just returned from the fields.  
"Excuse me, I wonder if I could rent a room.  
I'll stay here two or three nights a week."  
When I pointed at the traditional house  
she smiled. "Well, our children moved to Seoul,  
so we live in the annex. Yes, the main house  
is unoccupied. But in our hearts we still live there,  
our family history is embedded in it."  
Listening to her, I saw the clean wooden floor  
on which lay the last light of the day.  
I left without pushing for a room,  
wondering if the couple knew  
that I had already rented it, was living in their words—  
that in their hearts they lived in the vacant house.