



Glory Hole

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Seagull Books (May 20, 2022)

Softcover \$24.99 (264pp)

978-0-85742-987-2

Kim Hyun's collection *Glory Hole* exists in a liminal space, defying neat categorization. It's a mix of poetry and prose that blurs the lines between stories and essays. The moment a form or pattern emerges, the pieces shift. Footnotes accompany every piece, acting as their extensions, needing to be parsed as nonfiction or some kind of hybrid.

Here, dreams are reality, and myths and legends exist side by side with objective truths. "A World History of Midwives" explores the power and skills of older women and midwives within the construct of local stories. Some pieces, like "When They Were High on Drugs," feel like the rough, crusty morning after a poppers-fueled night on the town. Others are sharp, aiming straight at the center, like "S," a poem about memory. Still other entries, like "Blow Job" and "Lone Wood's Retirement Party," seem to revel in queer tumescent licentiousness.

Pain features in as often as pleasure in the collection. "Sad Vagina" examines regret in the context of cannibalism. In "A Cathedral," a priest submits to mortification of the flesh by his parishioners during the penitential act. But it is not all uncomfortable—or, at least: not only so. The collection is filled with religious, literary, and pop culture references. "Cobweb Carpet" starts with a selection from the Upanishads, and spins out the tale of a man who eats spiders. "Nightswimming" is a R.E.M. song tribute.

Though there is little cohesion between pieces, as a whole they showcase a singular creative mastery. With as little interference as possible, the translators facilitated a smooth transition from Korean to English, maintaining the richness of the original.

The point and the goal of the pieces that make up *Glory Hole* is to invite the impenetrable and the subversive into the light.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (May / June 2022)

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