

LEE Chae Won

Wish to Become an Unforgettable Flower

In the modern arts, the standard of worth is originality, in any genre. The work needs to have its own individuality, and the worst thing is appearing similar to other work. There are many possible topics around us, and we must first choose one, then choose how to express it. This is a sense of beauty in modern art, and creates a standard for art. However, this sense is in a state of flux, and changes frequently. I think the novel has less mobility; it changes very slowly and dully, and the most difficult part is reflecting that change. Fiction takes much longer than other genres to catch on to new trends.

Now, pairing fiction and media is more useful than at any other time. Actually, pairing media with fiction is growing in South Korea. A great deal of fiction has been paired with theater, and is also blended with film, music, and TV dramas. After the year 2000, many magazines, newspapers, and writers' memorial associations began to offer literary awards for multi-genre work, with monetary prizes.

I wrote a novel for young adults which was a winner, so I also received prize money. The story is about a girl who is a student at Northwest Junior High School in Coralville, Iowa. Her family has been shocked not only by her dad's bankruptcy, but also by the news of a terrible shooting at a high school in Colorado, which deeply affects the main character's school, and the whole country. She overcomes her grief by drawing murals on the wall in her school, as part of an important project under the name of the "Celebration for the New Millennium." The murals open a new world for her.

The prize winners have written in several different genres. Some of the winners wrote multi-genre work, which has been growing. I think the pairing of work from different genres seems to be similar to the relationship between one's foreign language and native language. I'm also not sure what this panel exactly focuses on, because English is a foreign language for me. It never comes quite clear for me; I hear it only indistinctly. Whenever I hear it, it appears through the mist. I feel like I am veiled in this mist. So, I just wrote this according to what I understood.

For many people, reading is more difficult than watching movies. They don't want to read boring narratives. But when fiction is paired with media, the story comes clear for those who don't read books, and it brings them close to the original literature. This makes understanding the original plot easier, and might also lead people to buy the book. It's like opening a new world to people who are not familiar with a written language. Understanding a language is not so different from gaining a new world. In the same way, if I am paired with someone who helps me to speak English, I understand more clearly.

Now, I'll refer to a Korean poem:

“Until I spoke her name,
she had been no more than a mere gesture.
When I spoke her name,
she came to me and became a flower.
Now speak my name,
one fitting this color and odor of mine,
as I spoke her name,
so that I may go to her and become her flower.
We all wish to become something,

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You to me and I to you
wish to become an unforgettable gaze.”¹

My fiction and essays have been made into audiobooks and e-books, but have not progressed in more various genres, though I hope this will be the case. As the poem says, I hope it will become your flower someday, too.

¹ Kim Chunsu, “Flower,” tr. Kim Jong-gil

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