

# Three Poems

*Musan Cho Oh-hyun*

## Today

To the irrigation ditch, where all the carp  
and minnow lived  
Came murky water – not clean,  
And with that flow, those little bastard  
eels –  
It's that kind of day: a dragon's belch

## The Sound of Ancient Wood

One hears the sound of ancient wood  
In the heart of an old tree

Only when the core is surely rotten  
When all the straight limbs have snapped

And, naturally, some woody toxin  
Remains in the crooked stump

## Bodhidharma

The whole of the West was his – and he  
gave it not a glance  
The master, who sat so long in solitude,  
purifying himself in flame  
Has left us a commodity at the close of the  
global exchange

*Translations from the Korean  
By Heinz Insu Fenkl*



ABOVE *Bodhidharma* by Kim Myeong-guk, 1636–37 or 1643, water-based ink on paper, 83 x 58.2cm. Source: [www.buddhism.org](http://www.buddhism.org)

**Master Cho Oh-hyun**, who writes under the pen name “Musan,” was born in 1932 in Miryang in the South Gyeongsang Province of Korea. He has lived in the mountains since he became a novice monk at the age of seven. Over the years, he has written over a hundred poems, including many in *sijo* form. In 2007 he received the Cheong Chi-yong Literary Award for his book *Distant Holy Man*. The lineage holder of the Mt. Gaji school of Korean Nine Mountains Zen, he is in retreat as the head of Baekdamsa Temple at Mt. Seoraksan. His work has appeared in *The Asia Literary Review*, *Asymptote*, *AZALEA*, and *Buddhist Poetry Review*.

**Heinz Insu Fenkl**, born in 1960 in Bupyeong, Korea, is a novelist, translator, and editor. His autobiographical novel, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, was named a Barnes & Noble “Discover Great New Writers” selection in 1996 and a PEN/Hemingway Award finalist in 1997. His most recent prose translation, Yi Mun-yol’s short story, “An Anonymous Island,” was published in the September 12, 2011, issue of the *New Yorker*.