

1976

The Exercise

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Recommended Citation

Arbelaez, Fernando; Susana Heringman; and Donald Justice. "The Exercise." *The Iowa Review* 7.2 (1976): 81-81. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2060>

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The Exercise

A fish
did not know
what water was.
On asking,
the wisest fish
answered:
if you want to know
what water is
get out of the water.

*Translated by Susana Heringman
with Donald Justice*

To the Calligraphy of Chusa *

A dragon with a writhing body and a beating tail, tearing the heaven with
his scales;
An angry tiger with flashing eyes, leaping up and down an immense crag;
But now the dragon, being helpless, begs power of you;
The tiger, deprived of his muscles, can no longer leap.

What innocent baby would gaze at your strokes without fear? What
emperor's tyranny?
What lunatic or what devil could mimic your breathtaking feat?
What swallow's flight could assume your perfect grace more easily yielded

*"Chusa" is an alias of Kim Chong-hi (1786-1856), a distinguished scholar and calligrapher, admired in Korea as a completely original artist.