Photograph of My Grandfather in a Western Business Suit, 1950

not in the three kingdoms of antiquity
but in the tiny kingdom inside my skull
i imagine 할아버지
a wealthy silk factory owner married to my grandmother
and with three concubines
honorable social de facto circumstance father
to how many children i’ll never know where i begin
ceremoniously is the day he dies 육이오
first day of the war the vicissitudes of fortune we’ve learned to accept
like stones into our pockets stones into our mouths
our silence intensifying sound gunfire and bombs and what to wail
when a widow flees with her children
leaves my ten-year-old mother under a chestnut tree to die
gunshot wounds and nowhere to go the factory gone the house gone
the trouble with death is we are always dying
starvation or exposure or war it doesn’t matter
my grandmother will hate my mother all the days of her life will tell her
you should have died instead of him 불쌍함
in the last picture taken my grandfather
admires the landscape unfolding turning white
promises of crocuses their golden blooms bursting
in that final spring before the north koreans appear
shooting him in the chest for owning this land for wearing a western suit