

## Environmental Literature and the Change of Its Canon in Korea

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**Abstract:** In his article "Environmental Literature and the Change of Its Canon in Korea" Won-Chung Kim examines how US-American ecocritical writings were introduced and received in Korea and how the change of educational curricula in Korea is influenced by changes owing to globalization. Kim shows that the limited reception of US-American ecocritics' works led Korean scholars to reformulate the canon of works in Korean ecocriticism and how they reinvestigate their own cultural heritage and ecological ideas. Kim refers in particular to the thought of thirteenth-century Kyubo Lee and today's Chiha Kim and argues that Korean ecological discourse has the potential to contribute to global environmental discourse and that it suggests a broader constituency beyond its local relevance.

## Won-Chung Kim

### Environmental Literature and the Change of Its Canon in Korea

Korean environmental discourse was formed through the endeavor of Korean scholars who reinvestigated the traditional environmental thoughts of the East while reacting to environmental ideas of the West. At the beginning of the Korean environmental movement in the 1970s, major ecological thinkers of the West were introduced into Korea (e.g., works by H.D. Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry). Interestingly, however, the reception of their ideas has been mixed. In spite of efforts to popularize Western—i.e., English-language and mostly US-American—environmental thought, Koreans have shown indifference and publishers have seen slow sales of US-American ecowriting in Korea (see, e.g., Shin). Because of the specific interests and social conditions of Korea, US-American pastoral visions are often irrelevant to Korea's complex political, economic, and social problems. Partly owing to the development of postcolonial studies in Korean scholarship and to the recognition of the importance of Korea's own ecological literature and ideas, environmental studies and ecocriticism have undergone a change from the almost wholesale importation of Western thought to a more vigorous investigation of Korean literature and ideas (on recent work in ecocriticism see, e.g., Estok and Sivaramakrishnan <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss4/>>; see also Náray-Szabó <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2316>>).

The change of focus to Korean ecocritical work reflects the controversy over canons in departments of English began in the 1990s. For example, the 1991 conference of the English Language and Literature Association of Korea was entitled *What Should We Teach in English Departments?* and it suggested that many scholars wondered about the validity of the traditional curriculum and its similarities to those of major US-American universities. Several factors lie behind this controversy. First, Korean scholars began to feel that the study of English in Korea cannot be the same as in the United States or the United Kingdom. Because English has been one of the most powerful channels for modernization in Korea, it has enjoyed uncontroversial, premier status in Korean academia, and Korean scholars are realizing that it is not enough just to follow or catch up with more "advanced" English studies of the West, and that the object and role of studying foreign literature should be to contribute to the development of Korean culture rather than the enhancement of scholarship in general. Second, this canon realignment stems from changes in global, political, and economic power dynamics and the diminishing of economic and political power of Europe and the U.S. in contrast with the growth and emergence of East Asian countries. Along with Korea's newly earned economic power and the spread of *한류* (*Hallyu*, Korean Wave) not only through East Asian countries, but also in the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas allowed Koreans to regain their cultural confidence and re-evaluate their place in the global cultural realm. The diminishing power of the U.S. and the more ready acceptance of foreigners allowed Korean scholars to escape from the colonial reign of US-American culture to engage in the study of Korean culture on its own terms.

The dominance of Western, especially of US-American environmental discourse, was inevitable and understandable. But the problem is that "the almost uniformly Americanist slant of ecocriticism" was "a kind of colonial expansion" (Estok 88). This could not be sustained for long especially given the shifting power alignments of the world and Korea's growing cultural influence across Asia. Furthermore, the ecological ideas and environmental problems of the U.S. are so different from those of Korean society that Koreans cannot help but to feel "discomfort about the unidirectional flow of theory, of literature, and of cultural capital from the US" (Estok 86). The movement away from monoculturalism also plays a role in the process of canon change in Korean ecocriticism and shows that the overvalorizing of Western nationalisms is unsustainable. As Lawrence Buell suggests, "to think 'environmentally' or 'ecologically' requires thinking 'against' or 'beyond' nationness even more self-evidently than thinking 'culturally' does" (221). Thus, ecocritical discourse should transcend the hegemonic prevalence of US-American environmental thought. Ursula K. Heise also notes that the most serious problem facing ecocriticism today is monolingualism: "The environmental ambition is to think globally, but doing so in terms of a single language is inconceivable – even and especially when that language is a hegemonic one" ("Hitchhiker's" 513). If the danger of ecocriticism is "one of exclusion and narrowness" (O'Brien 186), the cure is for ecocriticism to become "a multi-ethnic movement when

stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (Glotfelty xxv). The Korean voice is arguably one of these critical, diverse "other voices" which bring great value and perspective to global ecocritical discourse.

The shift in ecocritical studies in Korea is most apparent when we look at the disparity among the number of studies dealing with non-Korean ecological writers and Korean ones in *Literature and Environment*, the flagship journal of the Korean Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE-Korea). Since ASLE-Korea was founded in 2001, its members are almost evenly divided between Korean literature specialists and non-Korean literature specialists. Most of the non-Korean literature specialists focus on English literature, with a few German, Russian, and French literature scholars. In the first issue of *Literature and Environment*, studies are about two US-American writers (Hawthorne and Cooper), one British writer (Wordsworth), one German (Christa Wolf), and three Korean writers (Jeongju Seo, Seungho Choi, and Youngrae Kim). This ratio suggest a balanced treatment of various literatures and this was maintained until 2005 after which fifteen articles on Korean literature and four on non-Korean literature were published. These numbers show a growing focus on Korean writers thereby pursuing a more balanced and comparatist perspective in Korean ecocriticism.

Among the four US-American writers I discuss in the study at hand, Snyder takes the most conspicuous position. He was first introduced in Korea in the 1970s, but it was only in 1990s that interest in the ecological problem grew in all areas of Korean society that scholars introduced and studied him. My 1995 article "자연에의 애무: 게리 스나이더의 생태학적 이상" ("Making Love with Nature: Gary Snyder's Ecological Vision") is the first Korean ecocritical study of Snyder's work. To date, two books of Snyder's selected poems and two books of his prose, *The Practice of the Wild* and *A Place in Space*, have been translated into Korean. At present, five Ph.D. dissertations and two dozen M.A. theses, in addition to more than forty articles on Snyder have been published in scholarly and literary journals in Korea. Snyder's popularity is largely owing to the fact that he himself has been influenced by East Asian philosophy and religions, especially Buddhism. His writings have significance to Koreans in that they have offered Koreans an opportunity to re-evaluate their own cultural heritage and overcome their sense of cultural inferiority. Snyder's popularity contrasts with Berry's poor reception in Korea despite the fact that *녹색평론* (*Green Criticism*)—one of the most important environmental journals in Korea—published several of Berry's studies. Moreover, the publication of one of his novels (*A Place on Earth*) and the translation of five books of his prose produced little interest among Korean scholars: only six articles about his works are published and only one M.A. thesis is devoted to his work. The lack of interest in Berry's work can be attributed to the perception that his ecological vision of farming in a rural community is somewhat removed from their own lives and interests and this makes sense considering that traditional farming communities in Korea have been all but destroyed by rapid industrialization and almost ninety percent of Koreans now live in metropolitan areas (see, e.g., *The Ratio* <<http://geozooonee.tistory.com/242>>). Further, the fact that Berry's ecological vision is mostly based on Christianity which Lynn White Jr. has noted as one of the main causes of environmental destruction and the somewhat didactic tone of his works, especially prose books, proves a hindrance in gaining wide popularity among the Korean public. By contrast, Thoreau's work is the known best in Korea among all ecological writers. *Walden* was first translated into Korean as early as 1956 and now there are more than ten different translations of the work from which Korean readers can choose. Apart from *Walden*, Thoreau's other works have been translated more recently: *Civil Disobedience* was translated in 1988, *Wild Apple, Walking and Other Essays* in 1994, *Selections from the Journal* in 2003, *The Dispersion of Seed* in 2004, *A Week at the Concord and Merrimack River* in 2012, and *Natural History Essays* in 2013. That *Walden* has been a steady seller in Korea for the last twenty years proves its favorable reception among general readers. Thoreau's popularity extends to scholarship with five Ph.D. dissertations, more than 25 M.A. theses, and more than 150 papers on him in scholarly journals since 1972. If we only think quantitatively about the amount of Korean publications regarding each author, Thoreau is a veritable beacon when placed in the company of Aldo Leopold, Gary Snyder, and Wendell Berry. But if we narrow our focus specifically to ecocritical studies of Thoreau, only four M.A. theses fit into this category. Among the rest, the approach to Thoreau ranges from the perspective of Confucianism and Buddhism and the other papers study his transcendentalism, his view of nature and civilization, and his ideas on philosophy, education, and morality. From these facts, we can

conclude that Thoreau, despite being the most well-known and widely-read writer, is still popular mainly as a philosopher, meditator, and teacher rather than as an ecologist.

Leopold's reception in Korea is somewhat different from the other three writers. Most scholars writing on his works in Korea are not professors of English literature, but teach in other fields such as geography, urban planning, ethics, philosophy, environmental studies, and forestry. There are two translations of Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*: one by Myeongkyu Song who works in urban planning and the other by Yeochang Yoon who works in forestry. There is only one M.A. thesis focusing exclusively on Leopold written by Kangwon Lee who works in geography. About two-dozen papers have been published in scholarly journals, with most focusing on ethical perspectives with regard to land. The fact that only four studies about Leopold have been authored by scholars of English literature indicates that he is yet to be fully recognized as a major ecological writer in Korea. This is partly due to the interdisciplinary characteristics of *Sand County Almanac* in which natural science and humanities are woven together. Because the book does not fit into given genres such as poetry, novel, or drama, and does not seem to belong to literature proper, it is not taught frequently at universities in Korea.

The relatively low popularity of US-American environmental writers' works among the general Korean public illustrates how vastly one country's environmental issues and problems differ from those of other countries. As Heise points out, "the assumptions that frame environmentalist and ecocritical thought in the United States cannot simply be presumed to shape ecological orientations elsewhere" (*Sense* 9). As a country still living under the threat of war and as a nation that has transformed itself from one of the poorest in the world into one of most developed in an unprecedented, short period of time, Korea has a different environmental agenda compared to that of the United States. The relative popularity of Snyder and Thoreau and lackluster responses to Berry and Leopold are largely owing to the fact that Koreans are able to find in these writers' texts a reflection of their own traditions and culture. However, seeing that their own traditions can provide wisdom for solving worldwide environmental problems, Koreans have an ambivalent reception towards these writers: a simultaneous sense of pride and belatedness. US-American eco-writers were surely an inspiration to Korean environmentalists leading them to investigate their own cultural heritage from an ecocritical perspective. Along with the endeavor to find ecological ideas in the works of Korean writers, some environmental thinkers worked to launch a uniquely Korean ecological discourse. In ancient times Kyubo Lee (1168-1241) and today Chiha Kim (1941-) are two examples of important writers in ecocriticism who should be included in the canon to present a more balanced curriculum of environmental writers in Korea. Korean scholars have found in Lee a rich mine to unearth traditional ecological wisdom of East Asia. Kim launched his own "life philosophy" by combining the wisdom of Eastern and Western ecological discourses, thereby presenting a more viable ecological way of life.

Lee, one of the most prolific writers of the Koryeo Dynasty, wrote more than fifty books of poems and prose and nearly seven thousands poems. But what is most remarkable about Lee's work is the fact that his ecological insights were far ahead of his time. He had a deep interest in and care for the poor, common people and for non-human beings of the world. At the heart of his ecological ideas is the idea of "the essential oneness of ten thousand things" (만물일류) which is similar to the modern ecological idea of biotic egalitarianism. This idea of the essential oneness of beings shows that Lee has overcome anthropocentric biases. Lee asserted that humanity, seen ontologically, is not much different from other things in the universe, because each of them is occupying a niche in the ecosystem. In this sense, Lee's idea is more humble and ecologically advanced than the traditional East Asian aesthetics of nature, "the union of self and thing" (물아일체), in which the recognizing self still plays a more positive role than the thing recognized. Lee achieves "the oneness" not by discriminating himself from things, but by positioning himself within the category of the "ten thousand things": "All living things including cows, horses, pigs, and insects want to live and hate to die because they have the same mind about life and death, the same life phenomena. How can only bigger ones hate death and smaller ones do not? Death is same both to a dog and to a louse... Both the dog and the louse are independent creatures, and how does this one like death and that one hate it? Go back and think silently with your eyes closed. And cultivate the mind to see the snail's horn and ox's horn not differently, and to see a quail and a roc indiscriminately" (Poetical 235-36). As we can infer from this episode, Lee thinks every life form has its own value and reason for existence, regardless of its size or usefulness

to humanity. He parodies the folly of speciesism and advocates biotic equality and the intrinsic value of nature—both of which are key ideas of modern ecology.

Lee achieves his vision of oneness by abandoning the mechanical mind (기심). According to Zhouang Zhou, if one has a machine mechanical mind, one's pure and innate nature cannot be fully developed and thereby cannot keep one's original mind. The mechanical mind is a self-interested mind, one not yet awakened into the true nature of all things in the cosmos—specifically, the mutual interconnectedness of all beings. Therefore, forgetting the machine mind means seeing things with a mind of emptiness and getting away from anthropocentrism. This attitude leads Lee to see all creatures as fellow beings sharing the ecosphere: "Because I am a person who has forgotten the machine mind / I see ten thousand things as one / But mountain birds do not know this / And fly away, being scared of me" (Collected 2, 32). The harmonious rapport with nature is not yet possible because humanity, on the viewpoint of animals, is still a being to be feared. The hostility between humanity and nature is caused by the machine mind and will be alleviated only when some radical change of human attitudes is made. Lee's idea of the oneness of "ten thousand things" manifests itself as compassion and love in the realm of action. His discourse is comparable to Berry's insistence that all things of the world are god's creation and that this sense of co-creatures is the basis of husbandry. As Soon-Hong Moon points out, love is recognition of mutual interdependence while compassion is an ability to feel a kinship that unites all beings in the ecosystem (159). This is well illustrated in Lee's "여원 말을 두고" ("On a Skinny Horse"): "A few cries in your cold and dilapidated stable / Not only you but also your master have gotten old / My heart aches, looking at your thin bones" (Complete 1, 360; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). Lee's sense of compassion is owing to his identification with the horse and the recognition that both he and the horse are fellow beings living in the same ecosphere. This "sense of living together" is a prominent characteristic of Lee's ecological vision and is best illustrated in his poem "이를 잡다" ("Catching Lice"): "Is there any other premier except me / Who always catches lice? / Though the brazier is burning besides me / It is my compassion to throw you on the ground. // Having no other house to live in / You have taken me your home. / Without me, you will not be here either. / It is lamentable indeed that we have body" (Collected 5, 261). Contrary to expectations generated through title of the poem, the poet does not kill the lice by throwing them into the burning brazier; instead, he releases them to the ground. This compassion, through which the poet justifies his unusual behavior, stems from Lee's sense of fellow beings who have mortal bodies, as the last line of the poem suggests: "It is lamentable indeed that we have body" (Collected 5, 261).

If Lee's compassion for animals is one aspect of the idea of the oneness of beings, then his criticism of the anthropocentric behavior of the humankind is another. Yeon-Jeong Jeong, a specialist of Buddhism and ecocriticism writes that "from the viewpoint of nature, humanity is also nothing but a part of ecosystem whose importance is not much different from any other organic or inorganic things" (73). Seeing a cow herd beating his cow, Lee scolds him severely by saying "What burden is she to you? / She has traveled even a hundred miles carrying a heavy load on her back. / Her shoulders ache instead of yours. / She has plowed your fields panting with her protruding tongue, /and made your mouth and stomach happy" (Literary 2, 104). The cow of the poem stands for nature and by rebuking the cow herd's thankless behavior, Lee demonstrates how ridiculous humanity has become, being caught in its own narrow utility-oriented vision. Lee's ecological understanding of the world extends even to the modern concept of the food chain. In "거미 그물" ("Spider Web") he describes how the food chain works in the ecosystem. After asking "What being with blood and vigor / Can live without eating," he describes the scale of the food chain in minute detail: "Among the bigger ones, tiger and bear / Kill and eat animals selectively/ And among the smaller ones, rooster and ibis / Peck insects in the dung heap" (Literary 1, 307-08). For this reason he lets the spider alone to hunt insects, although he personally does not like its sly tactics. His idea of the oneness of beings reaches not only to animals, but even to plants. In one of his poems he asks the boys not to cut the spring grass that has grown thick, although nobody has sown them. The boys call the grass "weed"—useless things in the ecosystem—and try to cut them down. By contrast, the poet finds value even in the weed-like grass and endeavors to save them: "They suit well to my front door" (Literary 1, 387). These episodes show Lee's ecological vision has grown to the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature and biotic egalitarianism. The rediscovery of Lee as an ecological writer is a good example of Korean scholars' endeavor to delve into their cultural tradition instead of importing Western ideas. Considering the fact that Lee was a

writer in the thirteenth century, the ecological ideas embedded in his works are remarkable because he was able to combine in his vigorous imagination the ecological ideas of major East Asian religions. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are mingled seamlessly in Lee's texts.

Chiha Kim, one of the most important ecological poets and thinkers of contemporary Korea, shows another endeavor of Korean writers and academics are taking—that is, to launch Korea's own unique ecological discourse. Like Lee, Kim also combines ecological ideas of traditional Korean thought and East Asian religions to form his "life philosophy" or "life discourse." Kim insists on using "life" instead of "ecology" because "life" is for him a more comprehensive term than "ecology" and can thereby cover all things of the earth, both organic and inorganic. For Kim life is not exclusive to organic things which have the capacity to reproduce themselves, but encompasses all things which self-organize by diversely circulating and relating with others (Sick Sea 147). This enlarged view of life stems from his struggle against the powers that prevent him from enjoying a "real" life, which was first thwarted by a military government and then by Korea's relentless pursuit of industrialization and consequent contamination of the environment. The modern environmental crisis is, Kim diagnoses, not caused only by our misguided view of nature: far more complicated political, economic, and social factors have contributed to the devastation of nature and human life.

The driving force of the ecological movement in Korea is political in that it aims to change the dominant mode of life that is forced upon the Korean people by industrial economy. Beginning from his speech at the Lotus Award in 1975, Kim has consistently insisted that an historical turn of civilization is needed to cure the diseases of this culture heading for "death." He claims that the roots of the disease sweeping the whole world are "the worship of materials, [the] worship of consumption, [the] worship of speed, [the] worship of violence" (Night Country 321). What he defines as the culture of 죽임 (*jookim*; killing), driven by the engine of industry and commercialism, has placed itself as the order of the world and threatens all life forms of the earth. His criticism of industrial society culminated in *환살림 선언 (Hansalim Manifesto)*, the organization Kim has played a major role in establishing: "Industrial civilization is inhuman and anti-ecological and a system of life-alienation. At the same time, it is a world of confusion that sets everything upside down. It produces a world in which life is replaced with machine, being with possession, subject with object, master with slave, knowledge with technology, freedom with conformity, labor with goods, waste with necessity, destruction with production, price with value" (429). Moon claims that the culture of death "operates by three subordinate processes, that is, the development of technology and science which controls and governs humanity and nature through machines, the expansion of governmental authority, and the pursuit of industrialization based on a national economic policy. These processes expanded and accelerated economic value to every corner of the Korean society and resulted in an annihilation of the value of life. They have alienated people from their own nature, that is, their true self, and made people lose their community and separated them from nature, the very ground of their survival" (180). In the same address, Kim argues that the disease will be cured only when "we realize into our life a universal truth of 'respect for and love of life' and create a new and extensive worldview and a new mode of life that is spiritual and community-centered at the same time (Kim qtd. in Night 323). In this sense, what Kim dreams of is no less than a total revolution of our way of life.

Kim's alternative to this self-destructive culture of *jookim* is the culture of *salim* (살림; housekeeping). Because *salim* in Korean means both "housekeeping" and "bringing things to life," it demonstrates aptly in one word what Kim intends to accomplish. The original meaning of ecology is housekeeping, and house, in this case, is "earth house" as in Snyder's title of his book *Earth House Hold* and Kim, likewise, wants to keep this ailing earth house healthy by "bringing [dying] things to life." Kim finds the driving force of *salim* in the traditional idea of Korean people that ten thousand things of the world are important and equal because a god or a divinity lives in each of these things. He insists that the handed-down four-character idiom of 접화군생 captures the main ideas of modern ecology. The idiom means, Kim elaborates, "to acknowledge not only human, animal, and plant but also inorganic things such as stone, earth, water, wind, and even dust as living things and to be intimate with them and love them so as to move them and change them" (Digital 92). Each of the four characters stands for a different characteristic of life and modern ecology: 接 (*jeob*; relatedness) 化 (*hwa*; circularity) 群 (*kun*; variety), and 生 (*saeng*; spirituality) (Searching 490). Although these four characteristics of life are interdependent from each other, spirituality takes the most prominent position. Because every-

thing has spirituality within it, everything is alive and should be respected and Kim's poem, "Whatever" portrays this idea more artistically: "At the dead-end of / My thoughts / Sudden illumination blazes // My life is not so simple / But is a vast universe / Where every bug and every sound lives and leaps // A bitter / Laugh / And then / A smile // I bow with respect / To the tree outside that withered // And a leaf / Falls down like a prayer" (*Heart's Agony* 76). The recognition that the human is not an isolated being, but a part of the vast universe leads Kim to acknowledge the "relatedness" of all things in the universe. If we consider that this illumination came when he was stuck immersed in his thoughts, the poet's bitter laugh can be interpreted as admitting the folly of his egocentric or anthropocentric idea about himself, while the smile shows his joy in discovering himself as part of the a cosmos. To this illumined mind, even bugs and sounds—the tiny annoying pests and even inorganic waves—are fellow beings constituting the cosmos. Humans' interrelatedness with other beings in the universe is captured again in the lines of "Somewhere Far in the Universe": "There is a star suffering my disease / Somewhere far in the universe / An nameless petal / Is suffering my disease" (*Heart's Agony* 28). And in "Tonghak Thoughts and Life Culture Movement," Kim wrote that "love should become respect in the age of environmental crisis" (256; on this see also Kim, Wong-chung). In a previous study, I posit that "Kim does not stop here, but goes farther and asks us to 'revere' the cosmic life living in things: While an exact translation for 'gongkyung' (공경, [恭敬]) is absent, roughly it means both to 'pay homage to,' 'to respect,' 'to serve,' or 'to worship.' Because deity or cosmic life lives in things also, we should respect, Kim thinks, those things as we serve or worship god" (21). Chiha Kim highlights this idea as unique to East Asian environmental literature by saying that "The West has no world view which allows deep reverence beyond mere respect. The spirituality that they emphasize is somewhat limited to humanity. It does not go beyond, into the divinity of nature. They don't have the tradition of ecological politics or politics of spirituality" (Complete 2, 283). The poet's "bow[ing] with respect / To the tree outside that withered" in the aforementioned poem is an acknowledgement that cosmic life resides within the useless withered tree and therefore should be respected.

Kim's life philosophy is not only a theory, but also a practical norm for action. By asking for a total change of our attitude to nature, it shares some characteristics of deep ecology, as well as some components of social ecology because it tries to reform our present social system. In Korea, life philosophy has been put into practice in three different levels: on a personal level to encourage inner transformation among people by empowering them to recognize the value of life, on a social level to make prominent the value of life to be practiced in peoples' daily lives (mainly through the movement for a new life community and community-oriented co-op system), and on a cultural level to shift the cultural paradigm so that the culture of life can replace the current culture of death. Kim's life philosophy is more explicitly presented in *Hansalim Manifesto* whose two most important doctrines are, according to So-Young Lee, a Korean sociology expert, the organic connectedness of all life forms in the world and the idea of humanity as a spiritual being. It can be roughly summarized as three awakenings: a cosmic awakening of life, an ecological awakening of nature, and a communal awakening of a society (302). The process of life philosophy practice starts from the *salim* movement (recovery of spirituality), goes through new-life movement (life-community), and finally aims to launch a new civilization movement (Moon 193).

In conclusion, because the environmental movement was first initiated in the West, Korean environmentalists followed and have been guided by the works of Western scholarship and discourse. Canonical works of these Western writers, however, have not been so well received in Korea partly because the environment these works expound upon differs too much from Korea's environment and because Korea was struggling with other pressing political and social issues such as the confrontation between the two Koreas and the struggles for democracy in North Korea. But by understanding the pivotal role of East Asian religion and traditional thoughts in the ecological discourse of the West, Korean scholars have regained confidence in their own cultural heritage and have thus been able to form their own environmental perspectives. The rediscovery of Kyubo Lee's ecopoems and Chiha Kim's life philosophy are the two most conspicuous fruits of this endeavor. Lee's thought in the thirteenth century in particular suggests that ideas about the environment can (and ought to) applied today not only in Korea, but also in the West. Similarly, Kim's contemporary life philosophy presents an ecological framework as comprehensive as the various ecological ideas of the West. By enlarging the circumference of the concept of life to include all things in the universe, Kim's life philosophy presents an alter-

native in which the oppositional relationship between humanity and nature can be mitigated. The development of environmental literature and scholarship in Korea reflects the postcolonial perspective to produce one's own discourse rather than to import such from the West. Given Korea's unique perspective from having experienced the environmental problems as a developing country and now battling the socioeconomic and environmental issues plaguing developed countries, Korean environmental literature and its adjoining field of ecocriticism has a distinct potential to expand to global environmental discourse and garner a wide audience both in and out of Korea.

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