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INTRODUCTION OF POST-ECOLOGICAL POETRY

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Abstract: This paper explores contemporary Korean poetry through two distinct ecological perspectives. First, it reflects on the anthropocentrism inherent in conventional ecological poetry. Second, it investigates the potential for a post-ecological poetry that transcends this anthropocentrism. Traditional nature poetry aims to address ecological concerns but often relies on an anthropocentric perspective shaped by human-centered views. This tendency reduces nature to an aesthetic and comforting entity for human consumption. Despite the poet's sincere ecological intentions, ecological poetry often risks emphasizing the poet's ethical superiority rather than fostering a deeper connection with nature.

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

In contrast, poets like Kim Hye-soon (김혜순) and Heo Soo-kyung (허수경) have acknowledged the limitations of conventional ecological poetry and experimented with new poetic forms by incorporating hybrid perspectives, blending human and non-human voices, and addressing ecological issues through innovative structures and metaphors. This paper defines their works as post-ecological poetry and seeks to examine the significance of these creations.

Keywords: Modern Poetry, Ecology, Ecology Poetry, Post-Ecology, Post-Humanism, Kim Hye-soon, Heo Soo-kyung

포스트생태시 입문

초록: 이 논문은 현대 한국 시를 두 가지 뚜렷한 생태적 관점에서 탐구한다. 첫째, 기존 생태시가 내포하고 있는 인간중심주의를 성찰한다. 둘째, 이러한 인간중심주의를 초월하는 포스트생태시의 가능성을 모색한다.

전통적인 자연시는 생태적 문제를 다루고자 하지만, 종종 인간 중심적 관점에 의해 형성된 시각에 의존한다. 이러한 경향은 자연을 인간에게 미적이고 위안을 주는 대상으로 축소시킨다. 시인의 생태적 의도에도 불구하고, 전통적인 자연시는 자연과의 깊은 연대를 도모하기보다는 시인의 윤리적 우월성을 강조하는 위험에 빠질 수 있다.

이에 반해 김혜순과 허수경과 같은 시인들은 기존 생태시의 한계를 인식하고, 인간과 비인간의 목소리를 혼합하거나 생태적 문제를 독창적인 구조와 은유를 통해 탐구하는 하이브리드적 관점을 시도함으로써 새로운 시 형식을 실험해왔다. 이 논문은 이들의 작품을 포스트생태시로 정의하며, 이 창작물들의 의미를 분석하고자 한다.

키워드: 현대시, 생태주의, 생태시, 포스트생태주의, 포스트휴머니즘, 김혜순, 허수경

1. Introduction

The following is an example of an ecological poem worth examining. Lee Seong-seon (이성선, January 2, 1941 – May 4, 2001),¹ a profes-

¹ Lee Seong-sun (李聖善; January 2, 1941 – May 4, 2001) was a celebrated poet born in Goseong, Gangwon Province. Coming from a prosperous farming family, his early life was stable, but it took a dramatic turn when his father defected to the North during the 1·4 retreats, leaving him to be raised by his single mother. His upbringing in Sokcho Middle School and High School paved the way for his admission to Korea University's agricultural department in 1961, where he graduated in 1967.

Initially delving into agricultural science, Lee briefly studied beans in a crop test class at the Rural Development Administration. However, his career trajectory shifted as he became a teacher at Donggwang High School, near his hometown. While teaching, he pursued advanced studies, earning a master's degree in Korean Language Education at Korea University Graduate School of Education in 1987. Lee wore many hats during his career, serving as an adjunct professor of literary creation at Soongsil University, a standing member of the Korean Poets Association, co-chair of the Sokcho, Yangyang, and Goseong Environmental Movement Association, and director of the Wonju Land Literature Museum.

Lee's poetic journey saw two significant debuts. In 1969, he founded the "Seorak Munwoohoe (설악문우회)." A year later, he debuted formally in Culture Criticism (문화비평) with four works, including "The Poet's Folding Screen" (시인의 병풍). His re-debut in 1972 through Poetry Literature (시문학) cemented his literary presence. Over his career, Lee authored 13 poetry collections, which were later compiled and published in two comprehensive editions.

Poetry *Poet's Folding Screen 시인의 병풍* (Hyundai-Munhaksa, 1974), *With A Knock On The Sky's Door 하늘문을 두드리며* (Jeon Ye-won, 1977), *Body Is Tied To The Ground 몸은 지상에 묶여도* (Si-insa, 1979), *Rope 밧줄* (Changwonsa, 1982) *A Child Dreaming Of Being A Poet 시인을 꿈꾸는 아이* (Yul Do-guk, 1997) *My tree to your tree 나의 나무가 너의 나무에게* (Oh Sang-sa, 1985) *A Starry Roof 별이 비치는 지붕* (Jeon Ye-won, 1987), *별까지 가면 된다* (Goryuwon, 1988) *Dawn Flower Scent 새벽꽃향기* (Munhaksasangsa, 1989) *Scent Night 향기나는 밤* (Jeonwon, 1991) *The Climax of a Song 절정의 노래* (Changjakgwa-Bipyungsa, 1991) *A Bug Poet 벌레 시인* (Goryuwon, 1994) *Mountain Poetry 산시* (Siwa-sihaksa, 1999) *The Universe Put a Hand on My Body 내 몸에 우주가 손을 얹었다* (Segyesa, 2000) *Collection Lee Seong-seon's Poetry Collection* (Siwa-Sihaksa, 2005) *Lee Seong-seon's Poetry Collection 1st and 2nd* (Seojeong Sihaksa, 2011)

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

sor of creative writing at Soongsil University (崇實大學校), centered his entire literary career around the theme of communicating with nature. His ecological awareness extended beyond poetry and into real-life activism. Since July 1995, he actively participated in establishing local branches of the Environmental Movement Union² in Sokcho (속초), Yangyang (양양), and Goseong (고성) later serving as the union's co-chair. Consequently, Lee's research and creative works were deeply rooted in the regional and ecological contexts of places like Goseong and Sokcho, where he spent most of his life. His poetry reflects a profound natural consciousness that forms the core of his work.

Tree.

You are a temple.

There's a sound of wood crackling in you.

after it's cleared up

Looking at your shadow in the water

I'll stand upside down and open up another world.

From you on your way.

² The Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM) is a South Korean environmental advocacy group established in April 1993. Its origins can be traced back to the Pollution Elimination Movement Coalition, which was formed in 1988 by the "Citizens' Movement Council Against Pollution" and the "Youth Council for Pollution Elimination Movement." KFEM was founded with the goal of creating a grassroots environmental movement driven by increased civic participation, especially following the June Uprising. Today, KFEM operates 54 regional branches across the country and represents South Korea as the official affiliate of Friends of the Earth, a globally recognized environmental organization. Much like the interconnected branches of a tree spreading outward, KFEM's network has grown to touch communities nationwide, advocating for sustainable practices and ecological awareness.

I can hear the blooming of flowers.

I can hear the sound of a butterfly flying.

The pain of laying new eggs is reflected.

a cloud flower blooming on four branches

Playing while eating star flowers...

fish

the quivering whispers of the universe

Inside you, I hear.

the sound of a mountain walking.

Looking at you, I see again.

upside down in the water

A monk on his way to chant

(Lee Seong-seon 이성선, 1985: 39)³

The poet's work can be understood as a form of what might be called Buddhist ecology (Son Jin-eun 손진은 2020: 263). It is evident that the poet projects Buddhist concepts onto nature. For instance, in the poem titled "Temple in a Tree," (나무 안의 절) the natural landscape is likened to a Temple (절), a chanting (염불), and

³ “나무야/ 너는 하나의 절이다./ 네 안에서 목탁소리가 난다./ 비 갠 후/ 물 속 네 그림자를 바라보면/ 거꾸로 서서 또 한 세계를 열어 놓고/ 가고 있는 너에게서/ 꽃 피는 소리 들린다./ 나비 날아가는 소리 들린다./ 새 알 낳는 고통이 비친다./ 네 가지에 피어난 구름꽃/ 별꽃 뜯어먹으며 노니는/ 물고기들/ 떨리는 우주의 속삭임/ 네 안에서 나는 듣는다./ 산이 걸어가는 소리/ 너를 보며 나는 또 본다./ 물 속을 거꾸로/ 염불 외고 가는 한 스님 모습.” (Lee Seong-sun 이성선, 1985: 39)

“A monk on his way to chant.” In this poem, all elements of nature are seen as scriptures or the embodiment of Buddhist law (불법). Observing nature becomes a process through which the poet contemplates unavoidable suffering, such as the “The pain of laying new eggs is reflected” and perceives the movement of the cosmos, like “the quivering whispers of the universe.” Thus, it is fitting to describe Lee Seong-seon’s perspective as Buddhist ecology(불교생태학), which can be interpreted as “a world of insight that operates in a new and dynamic way, free from a human-centered viewpoint.” (Kim Ji-yeon 김지연 2016: 106)

On the one hand, the poem reflects a form of aesthetic contemplation. Even when considered apart from a Buddhist perspective, the poem evokes a sense of calmness in nature. This is because the poetic speaker maintains an aesthetic distance from natural objects, such as “trees.” As suggested by verbs like “hear” and “looking,” the natural objects in the poem are not meant to be physically touched or interacted with, but rather observed from a contemplative stance. In other words, the speaker does not regard nature as a means of production, as a farmer or entrepreneur might. Instead, nature is merely appreciated for what it is. Here, nature is neither a place of labor nor an object for development. It feels relaxed precisely because it is treated as a subject of observation, without any intention to alter its purpose or properties.

Thus, the nature depicted in this poem is not the “nature at hand” (손 안의 자연) that can be touched and engaged with in everyday life, but the “nature before our eyes” (눈으로 본 자연) as conceptualized in Buddhist philosophy. In this sense, the poem lacks the depiction of nature as a living, breathing entity. Therefore, one could argue that what Lee Seong-sun observes is not truly nature itself, but rather his own thoughts, which are projected onto and compared with nature.

If we take these doubts into consideration, we can see that this poem takes the form of a dialogue. From the very first line, the poem addresses the “Tree,” speaking to it directly. The speaker, “I hear,” also refers to the tree’s reflection on the water as “Inside you,”

using the second person. This approach establishes a form of communication that transcends the distinction between human and tree. For example, in the phrase, “Inside you, I hear.” it appears as if the speaker reaches a level of understanding that penetrates the essence of how “you” exist. However, this understanding is not equivalent to human communication. Rather, it reflects a form of shared existence that philosopher Martin Heidegger described as “being.” (존재)⁴

Yet, it is important to note that all of these statements belong solely to the poet, not to the tree. This is because verbal expression, at least in the conventional sense, is an ability unique to humans. In this sense, Lee Seong-seon’s poetry is more like a monologue disguised as a dialogue. His poems can certainly be considered ecological, but when his poem attempts to create a conversational relationship, we must question in what sense it can truly be called a conversation.

Let’s move on to a broader question. Given the inherent limitations of language in literary art, is nature poetry or ecological poetry merely a monologue about nature, or is it a conversation with nature? Is the dialogic form necessary in the creation of natural scriptures? These questions lead us to the concept of controversy. The term “controversy”(쟁론)⁵ here refers to the notion of *différend* proposed by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998). *Différend* signifies a dialogue between two parties who do not possess equal linguistic capabilities—where one has the right to speak, while the other is denied that right. In other words, it describes a forced dialogic situation despite the asymmetry in language skills, resulting in a controversy. Lyotard used this term to critique situa-

⁴ “Sharing together is by no means the same as moving an experience, such as an opinion or wish, from the inside of one subject to the inside of another. Being there together [co-present existence] is essentially revealed in understanding as well as being already together.” (Martin Heidegger 1998: 223).

⁵ “Unlike *litige*, a dispute differentiates would be a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be fairly resolved due to a lack of judgment rules applicable to both discussions. In this case, one side is justified. *Legitime* does not mean that the other side is unjustified.” (Jean-François Lyotard 2015: 9)

tions where a Holocaust denier like Robert Faurisson attempted to rationalize his claims by calling upon victims who perished in the Auschwitz gas chambers as court witnesses. In such a scenario, the very act of attempting to create a dialogue becomes inherently problematic, as it disregards the fundamental imbalance in the ability to speak and be heard.⁶

How can we speak to the other? Lyotard raises this question as follows: “The problem is not to write ‘in the second person’ according to your own system, but to write to the other according to the laws of the other.” (Jean-Francois Lyotard 2015: 207). In a similar vein, in modern times, the question becomes how nature can be engaged with as a true other, respecting the laws of nature itself.

Thus, I would like to apply the term “controversy” to the genre of nature poetry. The aim of this article is to reconsider the genre known as nature poetry and, if possible, to explore the norms of a genre that could be called “ecological poetry.” The question is this: Ecological poetry places nature in the position of a witness, but nature, in its own right, cannot testify within the framework of ecological poetry. Instead, it is spoken for by the poet. If nature poetry is essentially a genre that functions as a human monologue, how can it truly claim to be “about nature”?

2. A Hybrid Voice

What is equal dialogue? In Homer's *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus loses contact after fighting in the Trojan War, his son, Telemachus, gathers an assembly of soldiers. These soldiers sit in a circle at the

⁶ Lyotard summarizes Robert Porisson's argument as follows. “To confirm that a place is a gas chamber, I accept only the victims of this gas chamber as witnesses. However, according to my counterpart, only the dead victims are bound to exist. If not, this gas chamber will not be the same as he claims. Therefore, the gas chamber does not exist.” (Jean-Francois Lyotard 2015: 20)

center of the Agora. The ancient Greeks referred to this circle (圓) as *isēgoria*. Within this circle, soldiers engaged in open discussions to decide on future military actions. Any Greek citizen could participate in these deliberations and express their opinions. In ancient Greek society, *isēgoria* thus represented “the right to speak equally” or “the right to speak freely and equally.” (Yang Tae-jong 양태종 2009: 133~158) Even in modern times, *isēgoria* is often considered synonymous with freedom of expression.

Etüden imSchnee (2014), a novel by Japanese author Yoko Tawada (多和田葉子; born 1960),⁷ explores the unique concept of writing an autobiography of a polar bear. The novel features three polar bears as protagonists, each appearing one after another, living in human society alongside various animals. However, this work is far from being a simple fable or allegory. In the three-part narrative, the main character of Chapter 1, Barbara, experiences “bear-like” sensations of thirst and hunger, uses objects with her claws, serializes her writings as an author, and builds a community with other animals. In this sense, Barbara embodies a complex blend of human and polar bear characteristics.⁸ Rather than merely personifying animals, the

⁷ Yoko Tawada (多和田葉子; born 1960) is a Japanese translator and novelist. He is also a bilingual writer who creates in both Japanese and German. He visited Germany on a Siberian train alone in 1979 despite his young age of 19 when he was in Tachikawa High School. After receiving a degree in Russian literature from Waseda University in 1982, he moved to Hamburg, Germany, where he entered the business of distributing books with his father's business colleagues. In 1990 he received a master's degree in contemporary German literature, and in 2000 he received a doctorate in German literature from the University of Zurich. He has lived in Berlin since 2006. He began his career in Germany by translating the Japanese poem he had written into German and publishing the 1987 poetry collection “*Nur da wo du bist da ist nichts—Anata no iru tokoro dake nani mo nai.*” He also began his career in Japan in 1991 when he published his first novel, *I lost my heel* and received the Gunjo New Literature Award. In Germany, he received the Goethe Literary Award and the Clist Award, and in Japan, he received the Akutagawa Award, the Tanizaki Junichiro Award, and the Yomiuri Literary Award.

⁸ *Etude in Snow* was first published by Japanese publisher 新潮社 on January 27, 2011, under the title *A Trainee With Snow* 雪の練習生. And This novel won the Noma Literary Award in the same year and the Yomiuri Award in 2012. Later in

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

novel can be better described as employing a form of *hybridization*. The characters transcend conventional boundaries between humans and animals, creating a unique narrative that goes beyond typical anthropomorphism.

The novel begins with Barbara's recollection of her childhood (Yuko Tawada 2020:18). What is interesting is that this scene quickly transitions into a meeting setting. During this meeting, Barbara highlights the "basic principle of democracy," stating that everyone should have the freedom to express their opinions. She then proposes "bicycle riding" as a key environmental policy. By riding bicycles, she argues, it is possible to reduce public transportation emissions and save electricity. Through these two scenes—recollecting her childhood and participating in discussions—the author introduces two modes of communication: a hybrid subject capable of both monologue and dialogue. Barbara, as a polar bear who is also aware of her own existence in a human-like manner, advocates for environmental preservation and emphasizes the "existence of polar bears" as beings deserving of attention.

This form of mixed voice, where human and animal perspectives overlap, is similarly present in the works of Kim Hye-soon (born 1955), a prominent Korean poet known for exploring these themes.

I didn't steal it, but I have to die.

I didn't kill him, but I have to die.

without trial

without a beating

You have to bury yourself in a hole.

2014, the German version of *Etüden im Schnee* was published by Konkurs-Buch Press. The reference in this study is *Etude in Snow* (Hyundai-Munhak, 2020).

A black forklift came in.

Kill him! Kill him! There's no time to do it.

There's no time for blood to splatter on the dung wall.

As soon as I got out of the boat, my skin was peeled off, and I didn't have any time to be a cheap pair of shoes.

An interrogator with a blue face and black glasses blow! French! There's no time to do it.

I don't have time to jump rope in desperate fear that I won't be able to withstand this torture.

It's like biting a friend's palms on the cheek coming from the next room.

I don't even have time to bite the flesh in my mouth.

Tie your hands and feet together, tilt your head back, and water them.

Mom, forgive me. I'm sorry. I won't do that again. There's no time to do it.

No rope, no handcuffs.

...

In the grave, I kick the broth in my stomach. I kick the gas.

My stomach explodes in the grave.

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

It boils like an ugly stew in the grave.

Blood flows out of the grave.

On a rainy night, the fishy pig goblin lights flash.

A burst bowel rises through the grave and over the mound.

It's a resurrection! The intestines are alive! It's alive like a snake!

Bloom up, pig!

Fly pig! ⁹

(Kim Hye-soon 김혜순 2016: 45)

Since the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Papyeong-myeon (파평면), Paju(파주), in 2000, the Korean government has treated livestock epidemics by burying living animals as if they were disposable waste. To the authorities, livestock are commodities, not living beings, and if sterilization is not an option, their bodies are “to

⁹ “흠치지도 않았는데 죽어야 한다/ 죽이지도 않았는데 죽어야 한다/ 재판도 없이/ 매질도 없이/ 구덩이로 파묻혀 들어가야 한다// 검은 포클레인이 들이닥치고/ 죽여! 죽여! 할 새도 없이/ 알전구에 똥칠한 벽에 피 튀길 새도 없이/ 배 속에서 나오자마자 가죽이 벗겨져 알록달록 싸구려 구두가 될 새도 없이/ 새파란 얼굴에 검은 안경을 쓴 취조관이 불어! 불어! 할 새도 없이/ 이 고문에 버틸 수 없을 거라는 절박한 공포의 줄넘기를 할 새도 없이/ 옆방에서 들려오는 친구의 뺨에 내리치는 손바닥을 깨무는 듯/ 내 입 안의 살을 물어뜯을 새도 없이/ 손발을 묶고 고개를 젓혀 물을 먹일 새도 없이/ 엄마 용서하세요 잘못했어요 다시는 안 그럴게요 할 새도 없이/ 포승줄도 수갑도 없이 ... (중략)... 무덤 속에서 복부에 육수 찬다 가스도 찬다/ 무덤 속에서 배가 터진다/ 무덤 속에서 추한 찌개처럼 끓는다/ 핏물이 무덤 밖으로 흐른다/ 비오는 밤 비린 돼지 도깨비불이 번쩍번쩍한다/ 터진 창자가 무덤을 뚫고 봉분 위로 솟구친다/ 부활이다! 창자는 살아 있다! 뱀처럼 살아 있다!// 피어라 돼지! 날아라 돼지!” (Kim Hye-soon 김혜순 2016: 45)

be buried in a pit.” Only humans are afforded the right to medical treatment, trial, or punishment. Moreover, pigs cannot even be “tortured.” They die as beings unable to testify, unable to voice their fear, empathize with the suffering of their family and companions buried alive, or beg for mercy.

Thus, human violence against animals does not reflect the limits of humanity but rather reveals an abyss—a bottomless pit of cruelty that fails to recognize such actions as violence, even when murder is being committed right before our eyes. In confronting the reality of violence inflicted upon both humans and animals, the poet delves into the intersections of human history and natural history. He critiques the anthropocentric perspective that documents human torture but omits the slaughter of nature. It is, in essence, a confession of sin—a confession of humanism’s fault in portraying only humans as active subjects while reducing other animals and nature to passive backgrounds or non-existent entities.

This work, therefore, reminds us of a trauma that humanity cannot easily process. By departing from the historical view that separates perpetrators and victims among humans, we confront a deeper natural historical truth: all humans are complicit as murderers.

Interestingly, this poetry collection was initially recognized as an award-winning work for the 5.18 Literary Prize (5.18 문학상), but the decision was later revoked. This can be seen as a move to protect the spirit of the 5.18 pro-democracy movement. However, at the same time, it highlights the fact that the slaughter of pigs cannot be simplified into the realm of human history alone. We must ask ourselves: Can humanism truly address the trauma of natural history? No, human history tends to suppress such trauma. The slaughter of humans and pigs must be treated qualitatively differently, and in doing so, ‘genocide’ becomes a term exclusively applicable to human history. As a result, the narrative emerges: only humans are “massacred.” Animals are either consumed or silenced. They belong to the history of abandonment—the history of non-subjects, marked by the absence of history or by suffering that can only be testified through the body.

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

In this context, filth and odor become the true language of Kim Hye-soon's poetry. The broth seeping from the abdomen, the stench of a mass grave, and the will-o'-the-wisp flickering above it—these are the only ways in which pigs can bear witness to their slaughter. This is what she means by, “the word ghost read” (from *My Words Hurts* *글씨가 아프다*). Throughout her collection, Kim Hye-soon speaks for beings who are forced to express themselves not through language, but through the body's lower parts. By shedding blood and filth, animals testify to their pain. The smell of a decaying corpse becomes their final scream—a new, eerie form of nature that unsettles humanity.

Kim Hye-soon cries out, “Let's shot the last poem and die!” (from *Twin Octopus* *쌍둥이문어*). Animals do not bleed as martyrs; they bleed so as not to be silenced. The grotesque imagery presented by the poet evokes the mental trauma that permeates the history constructed by human reason. Humanity's existence is sustained by the death of animals. We are all complicit in this sin simply because we are human. So how, then, does the poet overcome this trauma?

I'm a pig who doesn't know I'm a pig.

But if you spill your face in the wash, you'll see a pig.

I'm a teacher who doesn't know I'm a pig.

I just draw on the blackboard every day.

I'm a patient who needs to soothe the pig in people's body.

And then I see only pigs in people's bodies.

What should I do with this animal that smells every other day?

What should I do with this pig who screams when I don't feed him
for a day?

Monk! Monk! Monk ‘Wall Facer’!

Does it open if I look at the wall for a long time?¹⁰

(Kim Hye-sun 김혜순 2016: 36)

Declaring himself to be a pig, the poet emphasizes the animalistic nature of humans. Who dares claim that humans are fundamentally different from pigs? Humans, who eat, excrete, and sleep like pigs, are merely “the pig in people’s body” with the intelligence to draw dirty water on a blackboard. By shocking readers with this degrading portrayal of humanity, the work invites us to see the world from the perspective of animals. The statement “I’m a pig who doesn’t know I’m a pig.” makes human look from the same eye level as pigs, rather than down at pigs. This refusal to idolize humans as superior beings is one of the most striking aspects of the poem.

However, certain doubts arise. In what sense does the paradox, “I’m a pig who doesn’t know I’m a pig,” serve as a way to avoid the obvious fact that the poet is human in reality? Through the motif of a “wall” and its practice, the poet dreams of the possibility of dehumanization—of transcending the boundaries of being human. In these daydreams, “I” is no longer human. “I” am either a pig or something beyond human. If this is the case, the hidden message behind the poem could be a negation: “I am not a person who slaughtered pigs.” Perhaps the poet is attempting to declare that, by identifying as a pig, he no longer needs to bear the sins of humanity. Isn’t

¹⁰ “나는 돼지인 줄 모르는 돼지예요/ 그렇지만 세숫물에 얼굴 씻으면 일단 돼지가 보이죠/ 나는 돼지인 줄 모르는 선생이에요/ 매일 칠판에 구정물만 그리죠/ 나는 몸 안의 돼지를 달래야 하는 환자예요/ 그러고도 사람들 몸 안에 좌정한 돼지만 보여요/ 하루만 걸러도 냄새 진동하는 이 짐승을 어찌할까요/ 하루만 먹이지 않아도 짹짹 소리를 지르는 이 돼지를 어찌할까요// 스님! 스님! 면벽 스님!/ 벽을 오래 바라보고 있으면 열리나요?” (Kim Hye-sun 김혜순 2016: 36)

this nothing more than a rhetorical tactic to avoid guilt and responsibility? Rather, does this rhetoric contain a sense of being the chosen people or even evil in that it distinguishes oneself from other humans?

The implications of this paradox are further explored in the poet's essay *To Do Woman-Animal-Asia* (여자짐승아시아하기). "The journey of the beast is not about traveling outside myself, but about sharing the externality of the beast's realm with me. Doesn't this challenge the concept of unity within existence? **My body and the beast's body voluntarily create a hybrid form.** By reclaiming the language that belittles women and beasts, I seek to become my beast. Thus, the emerging monster—the human beast—becomes the future, arriving in a new domain of life. **Isn't this beyond the category of humanity that is constructed through language and power?**" (Kim Hye-sun 김혜순, 2019: 21) Through these counter-statements, the poet reveals his true aim. Paradoxical statements are a way of becoming a "hybrid non-body" (혼종의 비체) that does not speak as a human but also does not speak on behalf of a pig. It is a strategy devised by the poet to escape the power structures of the "category of humanity." (인간이라는 범주)

In this way, Kim Hye-soon confronts the unresolved agony of trying to completely deny the undeniable fact that she is human. What kind of human beings can claim not to be human? For this reason, we can reverse her statement and affirm the following: Kim Hye-soon is human. Even when she thoroughly critiques and questions humanity, she remains human. Moreover, can we truly say that the conscious creation of a "hybrid non-body" through the voluntary merging of human and animal is not inherently human-centered? Who can verify the willingness of pigs in the process of becoming a hybrid body? Pigs are still subjects of human reflection or remain in our consciousness as representations of guilt. We remain human beings.

Perhaps the poet is fully aware of this contradiction. When Kim Hye-soon's poetry is interpreted as "recreating a dehumanized self" or "creating a hybrid non-body," this kind of de-subject discourse risks being seen as a compromise that prematurely avoids the

guilt one must bear as a human. However, there is a subtle difference between how her poetry has been interpreted and how it is represented. Her poems question more than they affirm, and they stop at a precise point rather than advancing forward. In the poem *It's Okay to Be a Pig—Pig 禪*, the poetic speaker asks, “Does it open if I look at the wall for a long time?” This speaker’s position is located within the “wall.” In other words, the poetic speaker stands at a crossroads, reflecting on and confronting humanity from within the “wall,” while simultaneously exploring the potential for de-subjectification beyond it.

Above all, while Kim Hye-soon advocates for the post-historical, de-humanizing concept of “homelessness” with a confident voice in her poetics, her poetry itself does not speak with the same certainty. “I am a pig who doesn’t know I’m a pig,” she hesitates, speaking in an ironic tone. This suggests that the ultimate expression of humanity is the irony of being “a pig that is not a pig” or “a human that is not a human.” What does this structure of ironic statements mean? We must remember that we cannot assert that de-subjectification is truly possible or that we can transcend the “wall” of humanity. Such a belief is just another compromise. We must acknowledge ourselves as human and confront the guilt of being human. We must deal with the consequences of being human as humans. The “wall” that Kim Hye-soon’s poetry encounters is the interface between humanity and dehumanization. Thus, whether the poet intended it or not, her work leads us to the following questions: Where exactly is the place that can bear the sins of the animal holocaust? Where is the position to accept responsibility? Is it the moment when you look at your own face in the mirror, or is it the moment when you say that you have surpassed a human being?

3. Inequality of Speech

In Yoko Tawada's novel and Kim Hye-soon's poetry, we observe the phenomenon of blending human and animal voices. While this may ultimately be no more than a human attempt at dialogue that crosses species boundaries, it nonetheless reflects a deep-seated desire for such communication. What matters is the impact of this ontological *yō* (揺)—the wavering or shifting of being—on people. Fundamentally, their literature aspires to establish an equal dialogue between two entities: humans and animals, which can be understood as *isēgoria*.

However, Jacques Rancière has argued that true equality cannot be achieved solely through the right to speak equally. In his seminal work *La Méésentente* (1995), influenced by a Marxian perspective, Rancière introduces the concept of *mésentente*, or “discord,” which highlights the impossibility of communication between classes. Here, the term “class” is not limited to economic divisions but also includes differences in political ideology, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

What is crucial, according to Rancière, is that the failure of communication between these classes does not stem from using different words but from using the same words in fundamentally different ways. He defines *mésentente* as “a conflict between those who say ‘white’ and those who also say ‘white,’ but who do not understand the same thing or are unsure whether the other is referring to the same thing when using the term ‘white.’” Just as the political right and left both use the term “freedom” but attribute entirely different meanings to it, each class cannot communicate with others because they understand language in entirely different contexts.¹¹ For

¹¹ Rancière's political philosophy aims to understand the discord of a particular era. Discord refers to a state of conflict caused by the use of the same vocabulary in completely different ways, such as a paradoxical situation in which the left and the right use the vocabulary of freedom equally to justify their practice. “We understand

this reason, Rancière criticizes Habermas's theory of the public sphere. The process of sharing opinions and reaching a consensus does not lead to true equal dialogue.

Similarly, Lyotard raises two major issues in *The Differend* (1983). The first is the impossibility of true dialogue in the public sphere. Even if every member of society participates in the conversation, equal dialogue cannot be achieved. This is because each individual's perspective is different, and their capacity for communication varies as well. The second issue he addresses is the practice of engaging in dialogue under the guise of fairness or neutrality, or speaking on behalf of others who are incapable of expressing themselves. For instance, Lyotard states, "The harm lies in putting oneself in the position of the other and, instead of acknowledging their otherness, saying 'It's me,' thereby neutralizing their transcendence." (Jean-Francois Lyotard 2015: 201) At that time, this argument was not only aimed at criticizing hypocrites who pretend to be "neutral," but also at challenging the very concept of objective neutrality—the premise upon which modern scholarship is built. The notion of objectivity, which is said to encompass multiple perspectives, is a fiction. Lyotard argued that the process of "gagner," in which different positions compete to establish themselves as the neutral stance within the "genre of discussion," is at the core of modernity (Jean-Francois Lyotard 2015: 231). The fundamental insight underlying the thoughts of both Rancière and Lyotard is that the standard of "fair dialogue" itself can serve as a mechanism for generating discrimination. Public discourse is inevitably asymmetric as long as all individuals belong to different classes and possess varying abilities. In public opinion shaped by such asymmetry, discrimination is justified by ignoring these differences.

discord as a predefined language situation. That is the situation in which one of the interlocutors understands what the other is saying but does not. Discord is not a conflict between someone who says white and someone who says black. It is a conflict between those who say white and those who say white, but those who do not understand the same thing or whether the other person is saying the same thing under the name of white." (Jacques Rancière 2015:19).

Moreover, the scope of verbal expression has long been used as a criterion to separate humans from animals. From Aristotle, who defined humans as “linguistic animals,” to the Christian tradition that attributes “sensory souls” to animals but denies them “intellectual souls,” and to European explorers during the Age of Discovery who referred to South American natives as “lesser animals,” (Dominique Lestel 2001: 1~3) the presence or absence of language skills has been a persistent standard of discrimination.

Similarly, we need to consider the inherent controversy embedded in nature poetry. When viewed as the poet’s unilateral testimony about nature, nature poetry can become a tool for defining and subjugating nature, reducing it to a form of dispute. Heo Soo-kyung (허수경; 1964–2018)¹² was a poet who actively engaged with the controversial nature of poetry or literature that addresses nature.

“We cannot decipher the dreams of rocks. We can't decipher the language of rocks. Does that mean that rocks have no relationship with us? That's not true. That's the relationship we have with rocks. Rocks can't relate to us. We are the only ones who believe that we

¹² Poet Heo Soo-kyung debuted as <Silchun-Munhak> in 1987 and published the first poetry of *There's no manure like sadness* 슬픔만한 거름이 어디있으랴 (Silchun-Munhak, 1988). He worked as an MBC broadcast writer in his mid-20s to support his family and support his father's cancer fight for five years. Since then, his father has passed away, and after announcing his second book of poetry *The Distant Home for One's Own Life* 혼자가는 먼 집 (Munhakgwa-Jisungsa, 1992) in which he goes alone, he has gone to Germany to study archaeology. Later, as a foreigner, he published four poetry and posthumous work in Korea. During his lifetime, the poetry *But My soul is old* 내 영혼은 오래되었으나 (Changbi, 2001) *Time for Bronze, Time for Potatoes* 청동의 시간, 감자의 시간 (Literature and Intelligence History, 2005) *What the hell, a cold heart* 빌어먹을, 차가운 심장 (Literature and Intelligence History, 2011) *At a Station That No One Remembers* 누구도 기억하지 않는 역에서 (Literature and Intelligence History, 2016) and posthumous work *The Writings before I die* 가기 전에 쓰는 글들 (Nanda, 2019) *Today's illusion* 오늘의 착각 (Nanda, 2020).

have something to do with rocks.”¹³ (Heo Soo-kyung 허수경 2019:78)

On September 12, 2011, in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, Heo Soo-kyung wrote the diary entry mentioned above. Heo, who received his doctorate in Ancient and Eastern Archaeology from the University of Münster in Germany, participated as an archaeologist in the excavation of a tomb site for about two months, starting from August 10, 2011. His choice of the word “rock” instead of “ruins” carries a double meaning. The term “rock” refers both to the remains being excavated and to natural objects in their pure form. Thus, what the poet encounters through the rock is both human history and natural history.

What stands out is his attempt to treat rocks not as tools or weapons, but as beings related to people. The underlying theme of this work is a sense of incomprehension. Rocks cannot be objects of relationships because they cannot be deciphered. However, by using metaphors like “dream of a rock” or “language of a rock,” the poet elevates rocks to the status of a “dreaming” and “thinking” entity, akin to a human being. Of course, this is an anthropocentric metaphor based on human experience, and it serves as a rhetorical device to highlight the inevitable reality that we can only perceive rocks from a thoroughly human perspective. Through this reflection, the poet suggests that while it may be impossible to truly relate to rocks, it is still possible to hold the belief that a relationship exists.

Just as rocks hold dual meanings as symbols of both human and natural history, Heo Soo-kyung’s poetic thought, developed throughout his life, also evolved within a dual framework: one of realism and ecology. This duality is expressed as both a realist gaze that reveals the structure of sociological “transference” and an ecological gaze that reproduces the cycle of life, or the “eat-and-be-eaten” dynamic.

¹³ “바위가 꾸는 꿈을 우리는 해독하지 못한다. 바위의 언어를 우리는 해독하지 못한다. 그렇다고 바위와 우리와의 관계는 없는 것일까? 그렇지 않다. 그것이 바위와 우리가 맺는 관계이다. 바위는 우리와 관계를 맺지 못한다. 우리만 바위와 우리가 관계가 있다고 믿는 것이다.” (허수경 2019: 78)

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

In the suburbs of local cities, there is a river where every greenhouse glows, and a factory that goes under with iron sulfide, and The countryside dying to support the city.

It is a place where mercury and biological oxygen demand coexist.

There is an election commission, there is a reserve force headquarters, and there are empty houses for people who have moved their resident registration.

This is historical site of Gaya (가야), and we are oviparous, and we are infertile, and my father frequently violates the traffic laws in the administrative district, and I frequently spread rumors.

Unexplained plants and insects grow.

My father and I..

I'm living here.¹⁴

(Heo Soo-kyung 허수경 1988: 86)

¹⁴ “지방도시 근교에는 비닐 하우스마다 한 개씩의 태양이 이글거리고 황화철로 삭아내리는 강과 공장과 사람은 살지 않으나 도시를 먹여살리느라 죽어가는 도시 근교가 있습니다// 수은납과 생물학적 산소요구량이 공존하는 곳/ 선거관리위원회가 있고 예비군 본부가 있고 주민등록을 옮겨간 사람들의 빈 집이 있는 곳// 여기는 가야터였고 난생 (卵生)인 우리들은 불임인 채 행정구역 안에서 아버지는 수시로 도로교통법을 어기며 나는 수시로 유언비어를 퍼뜨리며/ 해명되지 않는 식물들과 곤충들이 자라고/ 아버지와 나는/ 살고 있습니다” (허수경 1988: 86)

The poem *We Live in the Suburbs of Local Cities* (우리들은 지방도시 근교에서 살고) illustrates an ecological awareness while using urbanizing as its subject. In particular, it reveals that Heo Sookyung's early poems were written with a clear consciousness of geographical displacement. The poem describes "The countryside dying to support the city." Environmental destruction is carried out to support the comfortable life of the "city," yet the byproducts of this destruction are displaced to the "nearby countryside." As a result, the "city" occupies the central position in the hierarchy of geographical transfer, while the "nature" is positioned on the periphery, ultimately affecting the "river, polluted with iron sulfide" and "Unexplained plants and insects." In this way, insights into ecological consciousness and social relations intersect along the same hierarchy.

The poem suggests that the location of "father and I" is closer to the "suburbs of local cities" and "nature." Above all, the description, "This is historical site of Gaya (가야), and we are oviparous, and we are infertile, and my father frequently violates the traffic laws in the administrative district, and I frequently spread rumors." It means that they continue to be relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy. The time zone they live in is close to the historical past, and the space they live in is close to nature where animals and plants reside. And they are at risk of death due to city pollutants.

There are women in the village who are good at giving birth.

Having a child, Abandoning the child, Having a child, Abandoning
the child

Abandoning ten children and raising animals. Children

hanging like persimmons from trees

When children hanging from persimmon trees cry,

A crow flies in and pokes at the children.

Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

Sleeping in a horse cage, sleeping in a pig cage,

I was squatting next to the dog house.

I was sleeping next to the rooster.

Women go to the flower garden.

Earthworms live in the flower garden.

Children born between a woman and an earthworm,

They are living in my village.

There is a flood, and the pigs flounder in the water, go to the nearby sea, become food for cutlassfish, drift further away, and become food for root plant.¹⁵

(Heo Soo-kyung 허수경 2001: 45)

In Heo Soo-kyung's third poetry collection, which prominently features the motif of the apocalypse, what stands out is the

¹⁵ “아이를 잘 낳던 여자들이 우리 마을에는 있네/ 아이를 낳고 버리고 아이를 낳고 버리고/ 열쯤 버리고 짐승을 낳아 키우네 버린 아이들은 파란 감처럼/ 감나무에 매달려 있네/ 감나무에 매달린 아이들이 울면/ 까마귀가 날아와 아이들을 쪼아대네// 말우리에서 잠을 자다가 돼지우리에서 잠을 자다가/ 개집 옆에서 쪼그리고 잠을 자다가/ 수탉이 잠든 옆에서 잠을 자다가/ 여자들은 꽃밭으로 가네/ 꽃밭에는 지렁이가 살고/ 여자들과 상관한 지렁이가 낳은 자식들도/ 우리 마을에 살고 있네// 홍수가 나고 돼지들은 물에서 허우적거리다 근처에 있는 바다로 가서 갈치밥이 되고 더 멀리 떠내려가서는 산등성이에 던져져 산더덕의 먹이가 된다” (허수경 2001: 45)

unique way in which the end of humanity is depicted. The process of human extinction in Her poetry is not portrayed as synonymous with the destruction of the world. Rather, it is a process in which humans—who “consume” nature—eventually return to the natural cycle by becoming beings that are “consumed” by nature in turn. This work uses dramatically exaggerated imagery to express the loss of human vitality.

The poem describes how “women who once gave birth easily” gradually move between “horse cages” and “pig cages” while abandoning their “children,” and even give birth to hybrid offspring with “earthworms.” Eventually, when the village is filled with “children” born from interfacing with beasts instead of human children, a flood sweeps through the area, and the villagers become “food for cutlass-fish” in the sea and “food for root plant.”

It is not surprising to approach this grotesque imagery—which is difficult to accept from a human perspective—through an ecological lens. All living beings are interconnected, existing within a relationship defined by “consuming and being consumed.” If this work evokes a sense of horror, it may not be due to any explicit cruelty within the poem itself, but rather because it challenges the human consciousness that sees itself only as being in the “position of the consumer” and never the “consumed.”

For Heo Soo-kyung, the end of humanity is not simply an image of human extinction. It inevitably involves a return to the “position of being consumed” by nature. This portrayal reveals that his poetry is deeply rooted in an ecological and holistic perspective.

4. Conclusion

Is ecological poetry possible? Let’s expand this discussion to reach a conclusion. In the latter part of *The Differend*, Lyotard shifts toward a contemplation that transitions into another of his works, *The Post-modern Condition*. He poses the following question: if it is impossi-

ble to always know something universally—whether it be the “ideology of nature” or social “commitments”—when different linguistic acts intersect with different purposes, “weren’t we modern people in this sense?” (Jean-François Lyotard 2015: 239). This question soon transforms into skepticism about humanism. If modernity is the period in which countless expressions are proposed while maintaining the belief that a person is a “subject” capable of knowing and speaking about nature, then modernity itself becomes a suspicious sign. Who can testify to modernity? If every person can only speak through their own eyes and mouth, who is the subject that sees the world as modernity? Consequently, Lyotard’s conclusion is that the modern thought, which defines the world as an object to be “known,” is a fiction. He argues that there is only a system where countless discourses compete, leading to the later definition of modern society as postmodernism in his subsequent works.

How, then, can ecological poetry overcome anthropocentrism? What we need to consider here is the deconstruction of ecological poetry based on posthumanism. From a postmodern perspective, there is no “outside” of humans; rather, there are only countless human monologues about nature. In fact, the more nature is represented as neutral, the more the work ends up reinforcing the superiority of the subject that guarantees objectivity. According to Lyotard, such a conclusion is already based on humanism. He argues that escaping humanism is a new form of practice that genuinely embraces nature. This is because human life is fundamentally indebted to non-human entities and is only made possible through relationships with them.

The three poets mentioned earlier each attempt to overcome humanism in different ways. Heo Soo-kyung presents an imaginative reversal of the human-animal hierarchy through the “consume-and-being-consumed” cycle, while Kim Hye-soon envisions a “hybrid non-body” where human and animal voices intertwine. The focus here is on exploring the possibility of post-ecological poetry—an ethical practice that seeks new relationships with animals and objects. The poet’s unique contemplation is his unique perspective on nature.

For this reason, ecological poetry, which thoroughly pushes subjective perspectives, can be a practice that dismantles humanism toward nature. From this perspective, post-ecological poetry opens up new horizons for nature for us.

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The author states that there is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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Dong Eok PARK: Introduction of Post-Ecological Poetry

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