T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land and Kim Ki-Rim’s Ki-Sang-Do

Abstract

This essay surveys some literary and cultural criticism of T. S. Eliot and Kim Ki-Rim, focusing on each writer’s works, The Waste Land and Ki-Sang-Do. In Eliot’s creative and critical practice, his primary concern is to depict his own literature and culture. In other words, he seems to concentrate only on the fate of European literature, art, and cultural heritage, including the political balance of European countries. Therefore, the important issue for Eliot is how they can preserve and develop the tradition of Europe, both to make political peace among the European countries and to achieve “maturity” of their own culture. But Kim Ki-Rim, whose colonial circumstances are quite different from Eliot’s, is affected by double obstacles, the chaos of the pre-modern, underdeveloped Cho-sun and the period of colonial-imperialism from Japan (and the western countries), the prevalent international order then, with cultural ideology of modernity or modernism. In such a situation, Kim Ki-Rim does not concern himself with the idea of preserving the tradition of Europe-originated modernity. Rather, he suggests a possibility of breaking through the very western modernity and modernism, ultimately to build a whole new world, in which post-modern Cho-sun can hold a secure, culturally leading position.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, Kim Ki-Rim, Ki-Sang-Do, Modernism, Tradition, Post-modernity