In historical retrospect, it is acknowledged by people everywhere that the progress of human civilization and the development of science and technology after the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century have, by the fifties of the twentieth century, given rise to grave incidents of environmental pollution in some areas of the world. In Taiwan, as a result of pursuing modernization since the seventies, there have gradually appeared problems involving the destruction of nature and pollution of the environment. In the eighties, environmental protection formed a ring of social movements and aroused concern in many writers; the crisis of ecological imbalance between nature, society, livelihood and environment became the theme of many literary works. Literary expression about nature and environment in Taiwan shares the common disquiet of modern writers around the world concerning the abnormal state of the relationship between human society and the environment that supports life, and by that common engagement merits our efforts at translation in the hope that the modern society of Taiwan and the concerns and literary features of Taiwanese writers will be better understood abroad.

The term “ecology” was first coined by the German naturalist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) in 1869 as the science for the study of the relationship of organisms and their environment; it was translated into Japanese as seitaigaku using Chinese characters (morphemes meaning “study of the conditions of life”) by the botanist Miyoshi Manabu (1861-1939) in 1895 and appears in this form in Japanese and
The study of ecology has developed into plant ecology and animal ecology, as well as bioecology, which comprehends plants and animals on the basis of qualities common to both. Whether plants or animals, their ecology is closely linked with the natural environment, and even more so with human life. Since the natural environment supports the growth and activities of all creatures, plant and animal communities are linked to geographical areas; forests, grasslands, lakes, streams, oceans, mountains and so on all have a definite influence on human activity and survival. Geographical conditions and regional distributions of environments on the earth affect the adaptation and survival of animals and plants, and have a definite bearing on agricultural uses, social order, and economic structure, resulting in specialized studies such as animal sociology, animal economics, and the geography of animal ecology. Environment and society are the background and stage of human activity, and thus provide the objective conditions for creative writing.

The term “environment” denotes the various surrounding elements that directly or indirectly affect human life and development, which generally are divided into two types: natural environment and social environment. Elements of the natural environment include air, water, soil, geology, living things (forests, grasslands, wild plants and animals), and so on. Elements of the social environment include communities (villages, cities), production (factories, farms, mines, orchards), transportation and communication, culture (residences, schools, artifacts, historical sites, scenic attractions, nature conservation areas), and so on. The close relation between humans and environments consists in preserving a certain balance in order to maintain human existence and the continuing development of human societies. Such a concept exists in traditional Chinese culture, where it is expressed as the coexistence of tiandao (the way of heaven=nature) and rendao (the way of man), as well as in the philosophical idea of tianren heyi (heaven and man combined into one); it is even implied in the world view of Laozi, “Man follows earth, earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows ziran (spontaneity, now used as a translation of ‘nature”).” It is also seen in the world view of Zhuangzi, “Heaven and earth coexist with me, and all creatures become one with me.” To put it in a nutshell, once the balance between man and nature is broken, human existence suffers from injury, and the development of human society gives rise to abnormal phenomena. So-called environmental pollution refers to the degradation of environmental quality caused by human activities, which is harmful to the normal existence and development of mankind and other creatures. Such a phenomenon is generally considered a public hazard, which...
comprises air pollution, water pollution, and soil pollution; and the causes may come from human disasters due to the mishandling of waste gas, waste water, and waste material. Nature’s own abnormal changes can also affect human beings’ living environment, for example, natural disasters like earthquakes, typhoons and hurricanes.

In Taiwan, the recurrence of environmental pollution since the seventies awakened public consciousness of environmental protection and brought people into the streets in an all-out struggle for the right of survival. In the eighties, confronting the destruction of nature, Taiwanese writers seriously reflected upon the issue of the interdependence of the ecological environment and living beings, and from that arose the movement for ecological protection. The nativist and aboriginal peoples’ movements in the nineties turned the attention of the Taiwanese people and writers to concern with the island under their feet and the changes in its natural environments. Nature became the moral import for many Taiwanese authors in their creative writing, and there appeared the so-called shengtai zuojia (ecology writer) and the genre of ziran xiezuo (nature writing). A modern writer’s observation of nature is often infused with reflection on history and civilization, gives thought to the continuation of human existence, and explores the dignity of the land and nature, order and ethics; it distinguishes itself from the eulogy of nature and the universe seen in the classical literature and the traditional literati’s singing of pastoral scenery. In November 1997, the Chung-wai Literary Monthly (No. 306) published a special issue, “Ziran bianzouqu: shengtai guanhuai yu shanshui xiezuo” (Nature Variations: Ecological Concerns and Landscape Description), but these studies focused on Western literature and Chinese classical literature. In the following month, December 1997, Chung-wai Literary Monthly (No. 307) published a special issue, “Shengtai, shuxie, houxiandai” (Ecology, Writing, and Postmodernism), which focused on the study of ecology in American literature, and introduced the contemporary French feminist scholar and philosopher Luce Irigaray’s ecological feminism and contemporary writings on nature and ecology in Taiwan. The author Professor C. Y. Chu of National Chung Hsing University maintains that writing on nature differs somewhat from writing on ecology; the former emphasizes description in praise of nature’s beauty and represents natural landscape, while the latter emphasizes exploring the relation between ecology and human beings.

In Taiwan the earliest writing to show an interest in the ecological environment was a work coauthored by Han Han and Ma Yigong, pioneers of ecological protection, entitled Women zhiyou yige diqiu (We Have Only One Earth), published in 1983, which recorded
the spectacle of destruction inflicted on plants and animals by the denudation of wilderness and unrestricted hunting everywhere in Taiwan and made an appeal for protection. After more than a decade, interest in the natural environment and writings on ecology has increased among authors and readers, and there have been several regularly published journals, such as *Taiwan shanyue* (Taiwan Mountains), *Yuan* (Fountainhead), *Lü shenghuo* (Green Life), *Dadi* (Good Earth), and *Daziran* (Nature); and at the same time there have been several books and publishers exclusively dedicated to nature and ecology in Taiwan. Examples mentioned in Professor Chu’s article are *Taiwan shangshu qingbao* (Information on Appreciation of Trees in Taiwan) (1994), which provides guidance for recognizing tree varieties and their features in the surrounding environments of daily life, such as certain sections of streets, suburbs, mountain areas, botanic gardens, parks, and campuses; *Dadi youqing—Taiwan zhiwu de siji* (Affections of the Earth—the Four Seasons of Flora in Taiwan) (1995), which introduces the interdependent relation of the native plants with weather and environments; and *Taiwan hongshulin ziran daoyou* (A Guide to the Red Woods in Taiwan) (1995), which explains the special ecosystem of various organisms in the red woods marshland where the river and the seacoast join. Liu Kexiang is an ecology writer known for his writings on the observation of nature and his description of environmental changes affecting fauna and flora. (We translated two of his essays in the 4th and 5th issues of this journal.) He has published numerous books, from land exploration and bird observation in his early period to travelogue and writings on nature, including *Toukai ziran—xin huwai shenghuo zhinan* (Peeping into Nature—a New Guide for Outdoor Life) (1996), which uses multimedia, such as photographs, pictures from illustrated biologies, writings, and even soundtracks to describe his travels for observing nature, share his enjoyment of the outdoors, and record at the same time many diminishing natural landscapes.

For specialized publishers, there is Chenxing (Morning Star), which publishes a series called “Ziran gongyuan” (Nature Park), which includes “Writings on Nature,” “Travel Records,” “Nature Reportage,” “Environmental Protection Reportage,” and “Environmental Protection Literature.” The main authors, in addition to Liu Kexiang, are nature writer Wang Jiaxiang, bird observer Chen Juan, bird photographer Wu Yonghua, ecologist Chen Yufeng, expert in mountain climbing and ancient trails Yang Nanjun, ocean writer Liao Hung-chi, and ocean pilgrim and aboriginal writer Syama Rapongan. As to studies, since 1998, we see more and more M.A. theses on nature writings from the graduate institutes at National Chengchi University, National Central
University, and National Taiwan Normal University. In 1998, in response to the International Year of the Ocean sponsored by the United Nations, National Sun-Yat Sen University convened an international conference on the ocean and literature, which includes several papers dealing with the subject of the ocean and discussing ocean imagery in the modern poetry of Taiwan.

Among the selections contributing to the theme of this issue, the eminent writer Hwang Chun-ming’s recent work *Fangsheng* (Set Free) complemented by Professor Howard Goldblatt’s excellent translation, deserves our special recommendation as a guarantee of the quality of selection and translation for this journal. Professor Goldblatt’s previous translations of Hwang Chun-ming’s short stories will be published by Columbia University Press next year, under the title of *The Taste of Apples*. Professor Goldblatt’s other translation from Taiwan literature, Chu T’ien-wen’s *Huangren shouji* (Notes of a Desolate Man) was selected as Translation of the Year by the American Translators Association, the first Taiwanese as well as Chinese work so honored. The ocean writer Liao Hung-chi writes only of people, events and sentiments of the ocean. His *Sanyue sanyangsan* (March Madness) won the first prize of the Wu Zhuoliu Literature Award for Fiction in 1996, and is brilliantly rendered by the translation of Emeritus Professor William Lyell of Stanford University. Lin Wen-yi’s essay deals with the changes of social environment in Taiwan, especially the neglect and destruction of historical relics. Nishikawa Mitsuru’s *Sairyûki* (The Sulfur Expedition) is continued from the last issue. On September 21 of last year an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 on the Richter scale occurred in Taiwan with a world-shocking toll of casualties. According to the newspapers, more than two thousand people died, nearly ten thousand were wounded, and over one hundred thousand people became homeless, sleeping in the open or on the streets. The *Li* poetry magazine published a special issue (No. 214), “September 21 Big Earthquake in Taiwan” (December 1999), which is the source of the selected poems introduced here to reflect the theme of this issue on the one hand; and on the other to leave some record of the disaster Taiwan has encountered and give expression of our condolence for the victims. Regarding the selection of the items, we are thankful to Professor Jenn-shann Jack Lin of the University of Alberta, Canada, for his thoughtful recommendation of Professor Chia Fu-shiang’s essay, and to Professor Xu Junya of National Taiwan Normal University for her discerning recommendation of Professor Chen Sihe’s study on the subject of the ocean in Taiwan literature of the nineties.

Finally, we would like say a few words concerning some inconsistency in the romanization of proper names and personal names.
used in the past issues. From the first issue of 1996 to the fifth issue published in June of 1999, we used the Wade-Giles system, which had been, until recently, almost exclusively used in the American academic world. In July of 1999, according to newspapers, the government authorities in Taiwan decided to adopt the Hanyu pinyin system. We accordingly announced in the foreword of the sixth issue (December, 1999) the following decision: “In July of this year the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China in Taiwan officially adopted the Hanyu pinyin system of transcription, which has been widely used in the world, and accordingly we will also use pinyin for transcribing Chinese terms except for some well-known proper names.” Unexpectedly, as it turned out, the news was simply about the recommendation submitted by the Ministry of Education to the Executive Yuan, and for unknown reasons, the recommendation was not officially approved. This last September the issue about which romanization system to adopt revived in the news and remains pending to date. In view of the fact that this journal is an academic publication with English-speaking people as the target readers, that academic publications in the United States since the eighties have gradually switched to the Hanyu pinyin, and that the Library of Congress as the ultimate source for cataloguing books and publications in Chinese has officially shifted to pinyin as the standard, this journal will continue to use pinyin for transcribing Chinese terms in general and Chinese names used in the fiction. As for the English transcription of authors’ names, we will follow the author’s preference regarding which romanization system is to be used, what language Mandarin or other the pronunciation of the names is to be based on, and whether the author has adopted an English given name or not. In principle we will treat authors’ names with due deference and try to be consistent. Hereafter for those authors translated in the journal, their names will be based on the spellings provided by the named authors in the form of “Author’s Consent to English Translation;” otherwise they will be transcribed in the pinyin system. We will appreciate the cooperation and understanding of the authors and readers concerned.