

## Article

# Shaping Taiwan's History through Non-human Agents: Wu Ming-yi and His Postcolonial Ecological Writings

Chang, Ti-Han

Available at <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/33153/>

*Chang, Ti-Han ORCID: 0000-0003-1324-2992 (2020) Shaping Taiwan's History through Non-human Agents: Wu Ming-yi and His Postcolonial Ecological Writings. European Journal of East Asian Studies, 19 (1). pp. 74-97. ISSN 1568-0584*

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/15700615-01901001>

For more information about UCLan's research in this area go to <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/researchgroups/> and search for <name of research Group>.

For information about Research generally at UCLan please go to <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/>

All outputs in CLoK are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including Copyright law. Copyright, IPR and Moral Rights for the works on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/policies/>

**European Journal of East Asian Studies**  
**Shaping Taiwan's History through Non-human Agents: Wu Ming-yi and His**  
**Postcolonial Ecological Writings**  
--Manuscript Draft--

<b>Manuscript Number:</b>	EJEA-1106R1
<b>Full Title:</b>	Shaping Taiwan's History through Non-human Agents: Wu Ming-yi and His Postcolonial Ecological Writings
<b>Short Title:</b>	
<b>Article Type:</b>	Full Length Article
<b>Corresponding Author:</b>	Ti-han Chang, PhD University of Central Lancashire Preston, UNITED KINGDOM
<b>First Author:</b>	Ti-han Chang, PhD
<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Ti-han Chang, PhD Ti-Han Chang, Phd
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>In the field of postcolonial Taiwanese literature, a literary tradition that an author follows often consists in contextualising issues of political identity, historical representation or social struggle via the narrative account of a human protagonist. This paper examines Wu Ming-yi's postcolonial ecological novels, <i>Shuimian de hangxian</i> 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a Dream] (2007) and <i>Danche shiqieji</i> 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015), which not only break with this literary norm, but further invite readers to pay attention to the involvement of non-human agents in Taiwan's colonial history. With an ecocritical reading of Wu's works, the paper investigates the significant role of these non-human agents—including butterflies, elephants, a bird, man-fish and a bamboo forest—and further demonstrates that a non-anthropocentric narrative offered by these non-humans are also powerful in the shaping of historical representations and political identities of Taiwan.</p>
<b>Keywords:</b>	Taiwan, postcolonial eco-literature, ecological other, non-human agent, anthropocentrism, national narrative, political identity, Asia Pacific
<b>Funding Information:</b>	

## European Journal of East Asian Studies: reviewer's comments

Pietro P. Masina  
Editor-in-Chief  
European Journal of East Asian Studies

Comments from the editor and reviewers:

Reviewer #1: This article is an interesting insight into one of the major authors of the contemporary Sinophone literary scene.

The author shows acutely, and on the basis of numerous examples drawn from the works of Wu Ming-yi, how the postcolonial writing of Wu is associated with a narration of non-humans. It reveals that the polyphony specific to Wu's works is part of an attempt to make the voices of minor beings forgotten by history heard.

Some minor elements can be improved:

- The link with post-humanism is promising but remains too artificial. I suggest either strengthening this theoretical aspect or removing it and opting for a more eco-critical approach.

- I have removed the term of "posthumanism" in the article. I can see the reason why the reviewer suggests to either further elaborate it or removing it, as my original usage of the term is provided in the text without full explanation. Considering the total length of the article, I think it is rather not essential to further elaborate the term by replace it with "ecocritical".

- The references to Yaxiya de gu'er and Haishen jiazhu seem to me to be little exploited: why these two books in particular, since they have been written moreover at quite different periods and in different contexts?

- In fact, in my first draft, I've included more detail analysis of these two works. But before my submission, I had deliberately removed them and only made essential references to these two works. I would like to give two following reasons to respond to my 1<sup>st</sup> reviewer's comment: (1) The length of my article exceeded 9000 words. And judging by the content of my article, I think it is rather more important to keep my argument focused on non-anthropocentrism and its relevant supporting evidences than to explore in length my secondary analysis on these two works. (2) The choice of these two works which are selected from very different periods of time and contexts was explained on page 12, the paragraph beings with "it may appear to readers...". But perhaps this explanation is insufficient, so I've further added a few sentences for justification at the beginning paragraph of my section "3. An ecological turn in Taiwanese postcolonial literature".

- Pay attention to the transcription of names and titles (Chiu Kuei-feng)

- Many thanks. I've changed the spelling of Chiu Kuei-feng to Chiu Kuei-fen.
- Have checked the consistency of all books' translated titles.

- I think it is important to include at least the titles of the works in Chinese characters.

- I've now included all the Chinese titles for my cited works (when they are first cited).

- The conclusion is too abrupt and deserves to be reworked.

- Taking into account of both reviewers' comments, I've completed the revision of my conclusion.

Reviewer #2: This is a potentially valuable article that applies a posthumanist framework to two novels by Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-yi to argue for the significance of non-human others in the postcolonial writing of Taiwan. The author applies insights from Agamben, Calarco, Kohn and other theorists to elucidate how Ming-yi's novels give voice to the non-human and thus bring to the surface the repression and abuse of animal life by postcolonial societies. I found the analysis of butterflies in Wu's *The Stolen* particularly illuminating of the idea of non-human voice and its importance to postcolonial literature.

I list below some areas of the argumentation and theorisation that might be strengthened in a revised version:

The strong assertion that 'In the field of postcolonial Taiwanese literature, this kind of literary approach is almost non-existent' could be better justified, for instance, through reference to existing studies such as *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment and the Arts* (2016, eds. Chang and Slocic). See Kathryn Yalan Chang's chapter 'If Nature Had a Voice: A Material-Oriented Environmental Reading...' and Yu-lin Lee's 'Becoming-Animal'. How does your study differ to theirs?

- I've answered this question in my revision of my conclusion.

The theory of the 'creaturely' from critical animal studies might allow the author to circumvent the messy distinction between 'non-human animals', 'organic beings' and 'ecosystems and biodiversity' (which I have recommended condensing either way). Plants, animals and fungi can be said to have 'creaturely' characteristics. Anat Pick's idea of the 'creaturely' in *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (2011) underscores the importance of thinking about non-human others as sharing forms of materiality and embodiment. This could be applied to elephants, bamboo, butterflies and other beings.

- I've, as the reviewer advised, read Anat Pick's *Creaturely Poetics*, yet I cannot fully agree that my definitions of different categories of non-humans could be summed up by Pick's proposed theory of "the creaturely". From what I understood, the notion of the "creaturely" that is put forward by Pick is, first of all, charged with theological meaning (in her introduction, she elaborates on the idea with her analysis on the "divine absence"). This aspect has not been raised in discussion in my work. Furthermore, I can understand that, to a certain extent, the characteristic of "the vulnerable" embedded in the concept of the "creaturely" would be useful if I adopt it into my analysis of Wu Ming-yi's works. However, the emphasis that I placed on these different categories of non-human agents is also their different modalities when they are engaged in the semiotic systems. Thus, I don't see how I can put animals' agency and other "non-animal types" of nonhumans into the same category and circumvent it by one umbrella term of the "creaturely".

In terms of the presentation of the article, transitions between sections could be enhanced, as indicated below. There are multiple errors of grammar and spelling that should be corrected. There are also repetitions that should be attended to. With these revisions, I think the article will make a distinctive contribution to ecocritical-postcolonial approaches to contemporary Taiwanese literature.

- Have corrected the grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, and repetition problem as well as add in the transition between sections on page 9, and all the problems that are stated below in the list.

#### Errata

p. 1 Abstract: Should it be 'two' novels rather than 'three'?

p. 1 'the recent publications...' - change to 'the more recent publication of...'

- p. 2 Beginning 'Taiwan's ambivalent political footing...' - this is repeated verbatim from the Abstract
- p. 3 'The chapter...' - Change to 'This article'
- p. 4 'when it regards to..' - change to 'when it comes to'
- p. 5 Change 'chapter' to 'article'
- p. 5 'It then followed' - change to 'It is then followed'
- p. 5 'Taiwanese contemporary' - change to 'contemporary Taiwan'?
- pp. 5-6 Condense the three categories by simply mentioning 'non-human animals', 'organic beings including plants and fungi' and 'ecosystems and biodiversity'. The rest of the detail is extraneous.
- p. 8 Change 'Perice' to 'Peirce'
- p. 9 Change 'Pericean' to 'Peircean'
- p. 9 Add a transition between section 2's discussion of animal language and section 3's discussion of Taiwanese postcolonial literature
- p. 10 'struggling' and 'struggling' - the term is repeated in the same sentence; use a synonym for second usage
- p. 12 Change 'filed' to 'field'
- p. 13 Change 'states' to 'state'
- p. 13 Change 'chapter' to 'article'
- p. 14 Change 'is not unconventional' to 'are not...'
- p. 14 Change 'This sort' to 'These sorts...'
- p. 15 The paraphrase of the quote from Coetzee's novel is an incorrect gloss.
- p. 15 Change 'in the Stolen is' to 'in the Stolen are'
- p. 15 Change 'existent' to 'existence'
- p. 15 Change 'nouvela' to 'novella'
- p. 16 Change 'succeed' to 'succeeds'
- p. 17 Change 'sings' to 'songs'
- p. 17 Change 'declines' to 'declined'
- p. 18 Change 'narrates' to 'narrate'
- p. 21 Change 'chapter' to 'article'
- p. 24 Change 'rhizoms' to 'rhizomes'

Ti-han CHANG

Lecturer in Asia Pacific Studies

University of Central Lancashire

tchang2@uclan.ac.uk

### **Bio**

Dr. Ti-han Chang is a lecturer of Asia Pacific studies at University of Central Lancashire. Her research interests cover a wide-range of topics, including postcolonial eco-literature, ecocriticism, environmental and animal ethics, socio-political movements, political identity, political censorship, migrant and aboriginal studies. Many of these research topics are investigated in the specific geo-historical frameworks of Post-War Taiwan. Her doctoral thesis carried out a comparative study of the postcolonial eco-literature of a Taiwanese author, Wu Ming-yi and a South African author, J.M. Coetzee. Currently, her research works focus on the subject of climate migrants from the Pacific Islands as well as grassroot movements and the politics of borders in the wider Asia Pacific context.

**Public Diplomacy in Taiwan's Grassroots Social and Political Activism –  
Cases Study of Yang Ju-men's "Rice-bombing" Activism and the Sunflower Movement**

**Abstract**

The beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century marked a significant change in the approach of Taiwan's grassroots social movement and political activism. From an historical point of view, radical approaches which involve extreme violent acts – i.e. plotted assassinations of political figures or bombardments that disrupt social mechanism – were commonly adopted measures by the political revolutionists during both Japanese colonial rule and KMT authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, since its political democratization (approximately dated in 2000), Taiwan's grassroots social movement and political activism underwent a significant paradigm change. Peaceful acts and non-violent measures incorporated in the core values of a grassroots political movement become almost a determining factor to the success of a movement. These elements are not only indispensable but has further been translated into an effective public diplomacy that wins over general public's support.

Contextualising Taiwan's historical past and its current political set-up, the paper sets out to uncover reasons that explain why non-violence value is now qualified as an effective public diplomacy for grassroots social and political movements. The paper draws a comparative study of Yang Ju-men's "rice-bombing" environmental activism (2003) and the Sunflower movement (2014), suggesting its "marketing strategy" of non-violence has created a biennial environment to rapidly advance Taiwan's democracy maturity. From the investigation of these grassroots movements, the paper affirms that Taiwan's democracy is now moving forward to its maturing stage. Nevertheless, it also critically assesses the occurrence of this transition. It considers that this significant change is mainly a result from Taiwanese people's tendency to be assimilated in a highly homogenized moral society.

Keywords: Taiwan, public diplomacy, grassroots movements, non-violence, Rice-bomber, Sunflower Movement

**Submission in relation to the Special Issue: "Negotiating Legacies: Opposing,  
Interrupting, Recreating - Taiwan's Ongoing Experience".**

**Submitted Paper Title:**

**Shaping Taiwan's History through Non-human Agents: Wu Ming-yi and his  
Postcolonial Ecological Writings**

**Dr. Ti-han CHANG**

**University of Central Lancashire (Unclan)**

**tchang2@uclan.ac.uk**



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7 **SHAPING TAIWAN'S HISTORY THROUGH NON-HUMAN AGENTS: WU MING-YI AND HIS**  
8  
9 **POSTCOLONIAL ECOLOGICAL WRITINGS**

10  
11  
12  
13  
14 **ABSTRACT**

15  
16 In the field of postcolonial Taiwanese literature, a literary tradition that an author  
17 follows often consists in contextualising issues of political identity, historical representation  
18 or social struggle via the narrative account of a human protagonist. This paper examines Wu  
19 Ming-yi's postcolonial ecological novels, *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Routes in a  
20 Dream] (2007) and *Danche shiqieji* 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015), which not only  
21 break with this literary norm, but further invite readers to pay attention to the involvement of  
22 non-human agents in Taiwan's colonial history. With an ecocritical reading of Wu's works,  
23 the paper investigates the significant role of these non-human agents—including butterflies,  
24 elephants, a bird, man-fish and a bamboo forest—and further demonstrates that a non-  
25 anthropocentric narrative offered by these non-humans are also powerful in the shaping of  
26 historical representations and political identities of Taiwan.  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43

44  
45 1. INTRODUCTION

46  
47 Taiwan's ambivalent political footing—a result of its complex historical ties with China  
48 and Japan—continues to produce an ongoing negotiation process of its political identities vis-  
49 à-vis its colonial legacies since the end of the Second World War. An obvious example can  
50 be shown from Taiwan's attempt to (re)negotiate the legacies of its “Chinese” past in the last  
51 few years, namely its rejection to cultural or political appropriation of China but its  
52 inclination towards strong economic ties between the two. In this (re)negotiation process,  
53 Taiwan constantly tries to reconfigure itself a “suitable” national narrative by reasserting its  
54 Austronesian roots, highlighting its new linkages with Southeast Asian neighboring countries  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 or promoting its value of human equality and democracy (i.e. through the legalization of  
5 same-sex marriage). It is apparent that in negotiating its “Chinese” past, Taiwanese people  
6  
7 are reacting to a homogenous political and historical discourse that is “imagined” to be shared  
8  
9 collectively amongst Sinophone societies. From a postcolonial perspective, these attempts to  
10  
11 redefine its national narrative are not uncommon. Nevertheless, such redefinition of narrative  
12  
13 is often based on an assumption that the country’s complex colonial experiences only involve  
14  
15 human beings and their history. This article challenges this assumption and addresses the  
16  
17 possibility to refashion narrative through the lens of non-human beings with Wu Ming-yi’s  
18  
19 literary examples. It further demonstrates that it is through these non-human beings that the  
20  
21 specific history of global colonization occurred in the Asia Pacific region can be connected.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28  
29 The article investigates the shaping of history in Taiwan, by drawing specific attention  
30  
31 to the postcolonial environmental novels of Wu Ming-yi. It offers a new scope of historical  
32  
33 narrative construction in postcolonial writing that are found in Wu’s works, notably through  
34  
35 non-human agents (including both animals and non-animal beings). Aligning with an  
36  
37 ecocritical position (which highlights the non-anthropocentric perspective) that is recently  
38  
39 developed in the postcolonial studies, the article argues that this narrative voiced through the  
40  
41 non-human agents has the potential to shed new light to the traditional historical narrative  
42  
43 construction in the field of Taiwanese literature.  
44  
45  
46  
47

48  
49 Typically, a traditional literary paradigm that a Taiwanese author follows consists in  
50  
51 contextualizing issues of political identity, historical representation or social and cultural  
52  
53 struggle by presenting a narrative account of a *human* protagonist that is interwoven with the  
54  
55 colonial or postcolonial background. This tradition generally applies to many “post-”colonial<sup>1</sup>  
56  
57  
58

---

59  
60 <sup>1</sup> Here the word, “post-”colonial, is coined with scare quotes because, technically, Wu Zhou-liu’s work should  
61  
62 be classified in the post-war Taiwanese literature. According to Chen Fang-ming’s explanation, literary works  
63  
64 that are published after the removal of the “Order of Martial Law” in 1987 are more representative as  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 novels produced in Taiwan, ranging from the canonical work of Wu Zhuo-liu's *Yaxiya guer*  
5 亞細亞孤兒 [Orphan of Asia] (1959) (hereafter refer to as *Yaxiya*) to the much later  
6  
7 publication of Chen Yu-hui's *Haishen jiazhu* 海神家族 [Mazu's bodyguards] (2004)  
8  
9 (hereafter refer to as *Haishen*)<sup>2</sup>. The historical trajectories unfolded in these novels are based  
10  
11 on the perspective of the protagonist(s)—always a human—of Taiwan's colonial experiences.  
12  
13 Unlike these authors, Wu Ming-yi strives to move away from this literary tradition by  
14  
15 drawing significance to the nonhumans' "voices". Breaking up with this literary norm, his  
16  
17 works further invite readers to empathize with non-anthropocentric perspectives, especially  
18  
19 when it comes to the involvement of non-human beings in Taiwan's colonial history.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 Two postcolonial ecological novels of Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線  
28 [Routes in the dream] (2007) (hereafter refer to as *Shuimian*) and *Danche shiqieji* 單車失竊  
29 記 [The Stolen Bicycle] (2015) (hereafter refer to as *The Stolen*)<sup>3</sup> will be studied in order to  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

---

36 postcolonial literature. Prior to this period, literary writings fall mainly into the categories of post-war  
37  
38 literature, anti-communist literature, modernist literature and nativist literature. Chen's classification, in fact,  
39  
40 highlights the moment where Taiwan's initial democratization was put into legal system, followed by the  
41  
42 termination of the authoritarian rule of Kuomintang. However, one cannot simply dismiss Wu Zhou-liu's  
43  
44 work from postcolonial writing, providing his work foregrounds the complex struggles of postcolonial  
45  
46 identity in relation to Japan's colonization of Taiwan as well as certain Taiwanese populations original ties  
47  
48 with the Mainland China. Chen Fang-ming, *Taiwan xin wenxue shi* 台灣新文學史 [A History of Modern  
49  
50 Taiwanese Literature] (Taipei: Lianjin chubanshe, 2011).

51  
52 <sup>2</sup> Wu Zhuo-liu, *Yaxiya guer* 亞細亞的孤兒 [Orphan of Asia] (Taipei: caogen chuban, 1995); Chen Yu-hui,  
53  
54 *Haishen jiazhu* 海神家族 [Mazu's bodyguards] (Taipei: Ink chuban, 2009).

55  
56  
57 <sup>3</sup> Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Routes in the dream] (Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2007); Wu  
58  
59 Ming-yi, *Danche shiqieji* 單車失竊記 [The Stolen Bicycle] (Taipei: Maitian chubanshe, 2015). To maintain  
60  
61 the consistency of citations in English, I have chosen to use Darryl Sterk's English translation for the latter  
62  
63 work. Hence, Wu Ming-yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, trans. Darryl Sterk (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017). Cited  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 discuss the important role of non-human agents for contextualizing the history of Taiwan  
5  
6 from an environmental perspective. The article first presents definition of the non-human  
7  
8 ecological others. In the meanwhile, it summarizes recent philosophical arguments and  
9  
10 scientific analysis to argue why there is a need to “debunk” our anthropocentric view and  
11  
12 give recognition to the voices of the non-humans. It then followed by an overview of  
13  
14 traditional narrative construction in Taiwanese postcolonial novels, and further looks into its  
15  
16 ecological turn, to which Wu Ming-yi has contributed. The second half of this article  
17  
18 investigates the significant role of each individual non-human agent presented in Wu’s  
19  
20 novels—from butterflies, elephants to bamboo forest...—and further demonstrates that the  
21  
22 non-anthropocentric narratives are powerful in both re-shaping the postcolonial history as  
23  
24 well as re-imagining a community for contemporary Taiwan.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31

## 32 2. The “Voices” of Ecological Others

33  
34 Before further analyzing how Wu Ming-yi draws non-humans’ agency and “voices” in  
35  
36 his works, it is essential to first offer a clear definition of the non-human ecological others  
37  
38 and argue how their “voices” (capacity to use languages and signs) can be confirmed by  
39  
40 philosophical arguments and scientific experiments. By ecological other<sup>4</sup>, I am referring to  
41  
42 organic beings or systems that can be found in nature. They can be identified in the following  
43  
44 three categories: (1) non-human animals; (2) organic beings (including plants and fungi); (3)  
45  
46 ecosystems and biodiversity.  
47  
48  
49  
50

---

51 quotes from former work will be my own translation and for latter work will be from Sterk’s translation  
52  
53 unless specified otherwise.

54  
55 <sup>4</sup> I have argued the subjectivity of non-human “ecological other” elsewhere in my doctoral thesis. The  
56  
57 definition I provided then goes beyond beings, entities or systems that are found in nature. Moreover, I have  
58  
59 also included inorganic beings and manmade artifacts or objects. Keeping the scope of my discussion of Wu  
60  
61 Ming-yi’s works in this article, I have decided to exclude this part of discussion but to focus solely on  
62  
63 categories I listed above.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 From a philosophical point of view, our pre-disposed anthropocentric attitude is *the*  
5 barrier that prevents us from taking account of the “voices” of non-human ecological others  
6 in postcolonial studies. Our strong attachment to this anthropocentric attitude, as pointed out  
7 by many philosophical and eco-critics, became particularly prominent when the modern  
8 Cartesian understanding of (human) subjectivity arose.<sup>5</sup> Generally speaking,  
9 anthropocentrism is associated with an Enlightenment tradition which underscores reason and  
10 language as the distinguishing features of the human.

11  
12  
13  
14 Giorgio Agamben is one of the few contemporary philosophers who seeks to “debunk”  
15 such anthropocentric thinking by reflecting on animals’ relation to language.<sup>6</sup> He draws on  
16 the notion of infancy to express the idea that animals are in fact similar to human infants, and  
17 that “[they] do not enter language, [since] they are already inside it.”<sup>7</sup> The distinctive feature,  
18 which differentiates humans and animals in relation to language, is that humans use language  
19 as an appropriative means to represent themselves and make manifest their being; on the  
20 contrary, animals are inside language, but they do not tend to use language in the same  
21 manner. Hence, we humans often assume—from our anthropocentric viewpoint—that  
22 animals *lack* language. As Matthew Calarco points out in his discussion of Agamben, since  
23 animals are considered beings that *lack* language, people presume that they have no ability to  
24 break with their instinctual and environmental milieu.<sup>8</sup> This “inability” has in many aspects  
25 reduced animals to the status of inferior beings with respect to humans.

26  
27  
28  
29 From a more empirical perspective, results of in-depth studies of many different

---

30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008), 79-102

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History*, trans. Liz Heron, (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 59.

<sup>8</sup> Calarco, *Zoographies*, 83-84.

1  
2  
3  
4 species of animals, has clearly demonstrated it to be an anthropocentric misconception that  
5  
6 animals' lack language. In some case studies, linguistic and animal-behavior scientists have  
7  
8 to a large extent demonstrated that primates which share more distinctive characteristics  
9  
10 similar to humans—including chimpanzees, bonobos, cholorocebus (also known as vervet  
11  
12 monkeys)—have both a good command and understanding of human language.<sup>9</sup> Additionally,  
13  
14 they have also shown that even various non-primates—such as dolphins, parrots, dogs and  
15  
16 rats—could either acquire a language system of their own or possess sufficient amount of  
17  
18 “human vocabulary” (whether these vocabulary are actual “words” in human language or  
19  
20 “signs”), as well as particular kinds of reasoning behind these items of vocabulary, to  
21  
22 communicate and interact with humans.<sup>10</sup> For example, Irene Pepperberg has exhibited the  
23  
24 exceptional case of an African grey parrot, Alex, which even demonstrates the ability to  
25  
26 invent new vocabulary.<sup>11</sup> Pepperberg’s finding is seen as a significant breakthrough for two  
27  
28 reasons. Firstly, it proves that animals *can* in fact engage in logical thinking processes (i.e.  
29  
30 reasoning). Secondly, the ability to “create” has long been regarded as one of the most  
31  
32 distinguished features of human beings—and one that *differentiates us from nonhumans*.  
33  
34 Alex’s example overthrows this premise and obliges us to re-think the possibility that animals  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

---

43  
44 <sup>9</sup> In David Premack’s linguistic experiment on chimpanzees, he discovers that chimpanzees have very good  
45  
46 command of human language because they can both respond to questions and express themselves by  
47  
48 organizing or rearranging given vocabulary in sentences with correct syntax. Moreover, Premack’s studies  
49  
50 also prove their ability to engage in causal inference. David Premack, *Animal Intelligence in Ape and Man*  
51  
52 (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaume Associates Inc., 1976), 6, 25-29. Cf. Yves Christen, *L’animal est-il une*  
53  
54 *personne?* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 118-129.

55  
56 <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 129-137.

57  
58 <sup>11</sup> When the parrot was presented with an apple and was asked what it is, because he had never seen an apple  
59  
60 beforehand, he answered, “bannery” out of his knowledge of the words “banana” and “cherry.” Ibid., 136-  
61  
62 137. Irene Pepperberg, *Alex Studies. Cognitive and Communicative Abilities of Grey Parrots* (Cambridge:  
63  
64 Harvard University Press, 1999).  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 may have the ability to “create” or “invent.”  
5  
6

7 From the above arguments, one understands that a “debunking” of our anthropocentric  
8 thinking in relation to our view on the animal others can be achieved by a re-examination of  
9 animals’ linguistic capacity. Equally, this approach is also explored with other radical  
10 research on other non-animal ecological beings. In *How Forests Think*, Eduardo Kohn  
11 introduces his alternative approach of “anthropology beyond the human,” in which he studies  
12 the non-human life forms’ participation in the sphere of signs (biosemiotics) in order to push  
13 the limits of our anthropocentric understanding of the subjectivity of nonhuman living  
14 beings.<sup>12</sup> With his analysis of Peircean and Deaconian<sup>13</sup> semiotic and symbolic systems,  
15 Kohn forces us to acknowledge the *un-anthropocentric* fact that *both human and nonhuman*  
16 *beings live and share the sphere of signs*. In Kohn’s view, it is not only human beings know  
17 how to represent the world, but also other nonhuman life-forms has the ability to represent  
18 the world.<sup>14</sup> Kohn argues that “[human beings] conflate representation with language in the  
19 sense that we tend to think of how representation works in terms of our assumptions about  
20 how human language works.”<sup>15</sup> For Kohn, representation is one thing, human language is  
21 another; nonhuman beings may not have total access to how human language functions, but  
22 that does not necessarily mean that they are excluded from the realm of representation. With  
23 Kohn’s analysis, we learn that symbols in fact exist only in human language and are used  
24 exclusively as human representational forms. Nevertheless, as he discovered through his  
25 research of the Amazonian Runa Puma tribe, the symbol is *not* the sole modality of  
26 representation; there are other modalities of representation—in Peircean linguistic vocabulary,  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54

---

55 <sup>12</sup> Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley and London:  
56 University of California Press, 2013).  
57

58 <sup>13</sup> Charles S. Peirce and Terrence Deacon are both renown scholars who studies semiotics.  
59

60 <sup>14</sup> Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 8.  
61

62 <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8  
63  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 these are the “iconic” and the “indexical.” He further explains, whether one is a symbolic  
5 creature or not, he/she/it all shares these different modalities, and they share the same bio-  
6 semiosis. It is in this sense that Kohn concludes that beings like a human, a jaguar, a monkey,  
7 a tree, or a forest are all able to *communicate* with one another, as they all are capable of  
8 interpreting certain signs they share.  
9

### 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 3. An Ecological Turn in Taiwanese postcolonial literature

18  
19 The above section argued that nonhumans have the agency to engage in semiotic  
20 systems, and thus demonstrated the existence of their “voices”. If we adopt this non-  
21 anthropocentric position and further use literary texts to incorporate their “voices” so as to re-  
22 tell a country’s colonial or postcolonial experiences, a very different historical account could  
23 be offered. In this section, with my two selected texts — Wu Zhou-liu’s *Yaxiya guer* and  
24 Chen Yu-hui’s *Haishen jiazhou* — I will show that, up to the point where Wu Ming-yi begins  
25 to integrate an ecocritical approach (notably the nonhuman perspective) into his postcolonial  
26 works, Taiwanese postcolonial literature adhered to its tradition of celebrating “humanism”  
27 and was unable to imagine an alternative beyond this anthropocentric view. I choose to  
28 analyze Wu Zhou-liu and Chen Yu-hui’s works because the historical accounts elaborated in  
29 both novels were representative of their different time periods and were published in very  
30 different political contexts. This analysis will show that postcolonial writing in Taiwan,  
31 though it had progressed in its theoretical aspects, was unable to escape from the “humanism”  
32 which held center stage in this field for nearly fifty years.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

53  
54 As outlined earlier, a literary tradition of story-telling often employed in postcolonial  
55 Taiwanese novels largely centers on the narrative account of a human protagonist in search of  
56 his or her sense of belonging (or non-belonging). Indeed, postcolonial Taiwanese novels  
57 typically place more emphasis on the re-constitution of an “authentic” historical narrative  
58 than many other contemporary postcolonial works, J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986) or Salman  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65



1  
2  
3  
4 Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), for instance. These world-renowned postcolonial  
5  
6 novels adopt the approach of postmodern metanarrative, with a view to deconstructing or  
7  
8 defamiliarizing the authenticity of "H"istory, which remains as part of the colonial legacy.  
9  
10 Conversely, works considered canonical or which are at least highly regarded in postcolonial  
11  
12 Taiwanese literature exhibit a story structure that often begins with a protagonist's "quest in  
13  
14 search for the father (尋父 *Xunfu*)" or in search of the lost mother/fatherland (尋找失去的祖  
15  
16 國 *Xunzhao shiqu de zuguo*).<sup>16</sup>  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22 In Wu Zhou-liu's *Yaxiya*, the protagonist, Hu Tai-ming, traverses colonial Taiwan,  
23  
24 imperial Japan, and war-ridden China, wrestling with his internal psychological struggles, in  
25  
26 an extremely turbulent society that has experienced various phases of colonial transition.<sup>17</sup>  
27  
28 Hu Tai-ming's obsession with finding a father figure appropriate for his "orphan-like"  
29  
30 political identity eventually drives him to insanity. Chen Yu-hui's *Haishen* recounts the story  
31  
32 of a woman seeking to uncover her family's genealogy, in a context inevitably bound up with  
33  
34  
35  
36

---

37  
38 <sup>16</sup> Chen Fang-ming, "歷史如夢 序吳明益《睡眠的航線》 *Lishi rumeng—xu Wu mingyi Shuimian de*  
39  
40 *hangxian*" [History as a dream—Introducing Wu Mingyi's *Shuimian de hangxian*], 睡眠的航線 *Shuimian de*  
41  
42 *hangxian* [Routes in the dream] (Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2007), 9; Chen Yu-hui, "附錄:丈夫以前是妻子 評論  
43  
44 家明夏專訪小說家妻子陳玉慧 *Fulu: zhangfu yiqian shi qizi—pinglunjia Mingxia zhuanfang xiaoshuojia*  
45  
46 *qizi Chen Yu-hui*" [Appendix: before the husband, there is wife – interview of Chen Yu-hui conducted by her  
47  
48 critic husband, Mingxia], 海神家族 *Haishen jiazu* [Mazu's bodyguards] (Taipei: Ink Publishing, 2004), 332;  
49  
50 Wu Ming-yi, 單車失竊記 *Danche shiqieji* [The Stolen Bicycle] (Taipei: Miatian chuban, 2015), 27, 45.

51  
52 However, one should note that the "quest in search for the father" introduced at the beginning of *The Stolen* is  
53  
54 already contextualized in a metafiction, with an intertextual reference to Wu's previous novel, *Shuimian*. This  
55  
56 deliberate design therefore informs the readers Wu's adoption of postmodernist approach, attempting to  
57  
58 deconstruct the legitimacy of anthropocentrism.  
59  
60

61  
62 <sup>17</sup> Leo Ching, "Review of *Orphan of Asia*," MCLC Resource Center, February 2007, accessed 22 May 2019,  
63  
64 <http://u.osu.edu/mclc/book-reviews/orphan-of-asia/>.  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 Taiwan's national history. The female protagonist, the "I", may challenge the traditional  
5 colonial narrative that centers on a male-dominating "his-"torical point of view, but it still  
6 respects a linear temporality. Chen's chronological documentation of each individual's lived  
7 historical events, intertwined as they are to the characters' personal experiences – the telling  
8 of which would have been excluded from the dominant political discourses of imperial  
9 Japanese rule and the authoritarian KMT regime– constitutes a strong attempt to surmount  
10 the colonial narratives by re-inventing what Frantz Fanon called, "a new history of  
11 (Wo)Man."<sup>18</sup>

12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24 The pre-disposed anthropocentric attitude present also in the story-telling of postcolonial  
25 Taiwanese novels embraces, in an oblique way, a humanism that was much valued in the  
26 Enlightenment tradition (i.e., an emphasis on the human being's exclusive possession of  
27 reason, language, and subjectivity), and it is further associated to colonial discourse. It thus  
28 overlooks the significant role that non-human agents could potentially play in postcolonial  
29 writings. Wu and Chen's *xunfu* type of narration, in its resistance to the colonial narratives,  
30 nevertheless falls in line with the concept of "new humanism," which Fayaz Chagani sees as  
31 problematically present in the first moment of postcolonial discourse proposed by Frantz  
32 Fanon.<sup>19</sup> Chagani considers that Fanon's argument has divided the world into two camps in

---

33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
<sup>18</sup> Original term that Fanon used was "a new history of Man," here I have modified it into "a new history of (Wo)Man," given the discussed context focuses on Chen Yu-hui's novel. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 238.

<sup>19</sup> Three critical "moments" when postcolonial thinking encounters with humanism are summarized by Chagani: the new humanist moment (represented by Frantz Fanon); the antihumanist moment (represented by Homi Bhabha) and the posthumanist moment (represented by Dipesh Chakrabarty). As Fayaz Chagani points out in his article, postcolonial thinking that evolves throughout these three stages "has reinscribed rather than transcended an anthropocentric and thus exclusionary form of humanism." Fayaz Chagani, "Can the Postcolonial Animal Speak?" *Society & Animals* 24 (2016), 620, accessed July 9, 2019,

1  
2  
3  
4 quite a simple manner, that of the colonizer and the colonized.<sup>20</sup> And the center of Fanon's  
5  
6 debate comes down to a question of race that is essentially linked to a process of de-  
7  
8 humanization. Whereas the colonized were reduce to "the state of an animal" by the  
9  
10 colonizers, Fanon's attempt to avert this "de-humanizing process" is by underlining the  
11  
12 creation of the "new man", which ultimately calls for a return to an anthropocentric thinking  
13  
14 of human *cogito*.<sup>21</sup> Chagani therefore opposes Fanon's position by stating that Fanon's vision  
15  
16 for a new form of postcolonial collectivity (for the colonized) is actually "made on the basis  
17  
18 of *shutting the door behind him to nonhuman others*."<sup>22</sup>  
19  
20  
21  
22

23  
24 It may appear to readers that during five-decade gap between the two publications, the  
25  
26 literary paradigm generally adopted in Taiwanese postcolonial writings was still unable to  
27  
28 break with this tradition of reinforcing a new humanist position. Taiwanese postcolonial  
29  
30 literature seems to be caught in this particular postcolonial moment, unable to move forward.  
31  
32 I therefore propose that an ecocritical turn, which has been well received in recent  
33  
34 postcolonial discourse and which has significantly challenged the postcolonial orthodoxy of  
35  
36 anthropocentrism, should also be accommodated in Taiwanese postcolonial literature.  
37  
38  
39  
40

41 From 2010 onward, Anglo-American postcolonial studies took an ecocritical turn.  
42  
43 Scholars and critics like Dipesh Chakrabarty, Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, Elizabeth  
44  
45 DeLoughrey and George B. Handley proposed that a dialogue between the two disciplines –  
46  
47 postcolonial studies and ecocriticism – is essential, and a consideration of the non-humans  
48  
49 and their agency is urgently needed.<sup>23</sup> In the burgeoning postcolonial ecocritical field,  
50  
51  
52

---

53 <http://cds.bl.uk/delivery/Deliver.action?key=53A018C88466B461B989EA227780587B>.

54  
55 <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 622.

56  
57 <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 622-623.

58  
59 <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 624, italic mine.

60  
61 <sup>23</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," *New Literary History* 43,  
62  
63 no. 1, (2012): 1-18. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals*,  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 literary works such as J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999), Amitav Gosh's *The*  
5  
6 *Hungry Tide* (2004), and Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018) receive high acclaims  
7  
8 because of their non-anthropocentric regards of the non-human beings who had shared *our*  
9  
10 colonial experiences. As DeLoughrey and Handley firmly state, "[t]he ecocritical  
11  
12 interrogation of anthropocentrism offers the persistent reminder that human political and  
13  
14 social inequities cannot be successfully and sustainably resolved without some engagement  
15  
16  
17  
18 *with the more-than-human world.*"<sup>24</sup>  
19  
20

21 As argued earlier, this eco-critical approach that outlines the "voices" of the non-human  
22  
23 others is not generally considered in Taiwanese postcolonial literature. Wu Ming-yi, in fact,  
24  
25 is one of the very few Taiwanese authors who not only dedicates his works in contextualizing  
26  
27 the postcolonial exploitation of environments but also engages such exploitation from the  
28  
29 non-human perspective. What is rather surprising is the fact that Wu Ming-yi's intellectual  
30  
31 trajectory is quite different from other established postcolonial writers listed above, whose  
32  
33 attention towards the more-than-human world often comes out of a realization of the  
34  
35 postcolonial exploitation of the non-humans. Wu is initially considered an ecological writer,  
36  
37 as his early works are mostly under the influence of nature writing. *Midiezhi* 迷蝶誌 [The  
38  
39 Book of Lost Butterflies] (2000), *Diedao* 蝶道 [The Dao of Butterflies] (2003) and *Jia li*  
40  
41 *shuibian name jing* 家離水邊那麼近 [So Much Water So Close to Home] (2007) are three  
42  
43 early collections of essays that show his attentive observation of natural environments and  
44  
45 wildlife. It is through such observation that he comes to realize that many of the landscape  
46  
47 changes or species loss in Taiwan's natural environment actually re-tell the colonial or  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56

---

57 *Environment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010); Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, "Introduction:  
58  
59 Toward and Aesthetic of the Earth," *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. Elizabeth  
60  
61 DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

62  
63  
64  
65  
<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, emphasis mine.

1  
2  
3  
4 neocolonial history, experience and memory of Taiwan, yet they are excluded because of  
5  
6 their “voices” are not recognized.  
7  
8  
9

#### 10 4. Non-human Agents and Different Historical Narratives

11  
12 The second half of the article discusses Wu’s literary examples of non-human others, in  
13  
14 which an agency of evoking alternative historical narratives of Taiwan and debunking the  
15  
16 pre-disposed anthropocentric attitude is present. In Wu Ming-yi’s novels, non-human others  
17  
18 come in many forms. Sometimes they are animals, and other time, they can be organic  
19  
20 entities or ecosystems. From *Shuimian de hangxian* and *The Stolen Bicycle*, I have selected a  
21  
22 number of non-human ecological others for my analysis, including butterflies, elephants, a  
23  
24 bird, fish-men, and bamboos. These non-human figures give “voices” to those exploited  
25  
26 colonial environments and animals as well as the underrepresented “colonial others,”<sup>25</sup> and  
27  
28 they come together to reconstruct a postcolonial history of Taiwan that is often untold from  
29  
30 our anthropocentric point of view.  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36

#### 37 **Exploitations of the colonial environments and animals**

38  
39 Postcolonial works that represent human domination over animals are not  
40  
41 unconventional, since these representations, to a large extent, also symbolize the colonial  
42  
43 domination over the colonized subalterns. These sorts of representations can be equally found  
44  
45 in Wu Ming-yi’s works. Nevertheless, what I would like to emphasize here is that, apart from  
46  
47 using these “wounded animals” as metaphoric references to the colonized subalterns, Wu is  
48  
49 also interested in acknowledging the stories of these “wounded animals” and is more  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54

---

55 <sup>25</sup> In line with my analysis of Wu’s novels, the underrepresented “colonial others” here comprise two specific  
56  
57 sets of people, the Han Chinese colonial settlers who arrived in Taiwan around the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (prior  
58  
59 to the Japanese imperial rule in Taiwan) and a Japanese soldier. The narratives of these people are often  
60  
61 excluded or marginalized in the history of Taiwan, and their voices unheard. A more in-depth definition of  
62  
63 this term will be put forward when I come to analyze the work of Wu.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 concerned with how to let them “speak” for themselves. J.M. Coetzee’s invented literary  
5 figure, Elizabeth Costello, once states, “[i]n the olden days the voice of man, raised in reason,  
6 was confronted by the roar of the lion, the bellow of the bull. Man went to war with the lion  
7 and the bull, and after many generations won that war definitively. Today these creatures  
8 have no more power. Animals *have only their silence left with which to confront us.*  
9 Generation after generation, heroically, *our captives refuse to speak to us.*”<sup>26</sup> As Costello  
10 underlines, *there is only their silence remained to confront us*, particularly when we put them  
11 in submission to the industrial and economic exploitation that are much embedded in a  
12 colonial culture. In line with Coetzee’s view, Wu also sees the need of letting the dominated  
13 non-human others speak to us again.<sup>27</sup>

14  
15  
16 In Wu Ming-yi’s *The Stolen*, two “wounded animal” figures -- the butterflies and an  
17 elephant named Ah-mei -- “tell” the story of their wounded bodies that were under  
18 exploitation throughout the Japanese imperial period to the later Kuomintang’s military  
19 regime. To allow these animals to “speak” for themselves, Wu Ming-yi employs the  
20 postmodern *metanarrative* writing technique to frame these wounded animals’ narratives.  
21 The metanarratives introduced in *The Stolen* are effective in the sense that readers’ reliance  
22 on the “legitimate author” to tell the “true stories” is completely destabilized and the  
23 existence of an omnipotent author is removed. At the very beginning of *The Stolen*, Wu refers  
24 to his previous published novel, *Shuimian*, suggesting that his intention to write *The Stolen* as  
25 a sequence is to resolve a question that was raised by one of his readers. Yet, we later  
26 discover that the protagonist is in fact meant to be a fictional invention but not Wu Ming-yi  
27 (the omnipotent author) himself. This intertextual reference between Wu’s two novels puts

---

28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
<sup>26</sup> J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* (Croydon: Vintage, 2004), 70, emphasis mine.

<sup>27</sup> It is evident to see that Wu’s writing has, to some extent, been influenced by his readings of Coetzee’s works. This can be shown in his direct quote of Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) in his novel, *Shuimian*. Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian*, 71.

1  
2  
3  
4 forward a first layer of metanarrative in *The Stolen*.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the stories about the  
5  
6 butterflies and the elephant Ah-mei are both contextualized in a second layer of  
7  
8 metanarratives. The story of the butterflies and a female character, A-hûn, who has the ability  
9  
10 to “communicate” with butterflies is in fact created as a novella by a female character, Sabina.  
11  
12 Wu’s metanarrative structures A-hûn’s tale as “story-within-story.” On the other hand, the  
13  
14 story about the elephant Ah-mei is either structured by an “indirect narrative”<sup>29</sup> or in the form  
15  
16 of a dream. None of these stories seem to offer a sense of reality that is at least true to Wu’s  
17  
18 characters, yet it is through this paradox created by the metanarratives that Wu succeeds in  
19  
20 convincing his readers to rely solely on the narratives of the stories themselves. Readers are  
21  
22 obliged to be open to different interpretations of “truths” that are presented in these  
23  
24 metanarratives, and they have to be sympathetic and willing to “listen” to the stories these  
25  
26 non-human agents recount.  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

33  
34 In a parallel plot line to the main story of *The Stolen*, Wu inserted a meta-fictional  
35  
36 story<sup>30</sup> about the making of a butterfly-painting.<sup>31</sup> A-hûn is portrayed as a girl who can  
37  
38 identify butterflies by their scents and odors. Very early in her childhood, A-hûn helped her  
39  
40 father capture butterflies for sale when they were in high demand for foreign export. A talent  
41  
42  
43  
44

---

45 <sup>28</sup> Wu Ming-yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, 45-47.

46  
47 <sup>29</sup> The story of Ah-mei is first introduced to the readers through a taped-recorded memoir of Basuya, a  
48  
49 deceased Tsou aboriginal soldier who had fought for the Japanese Emperor in the Battle of Northern Burma.  
50  
51 It is then retold by a female character, Shizuko, who recalls her observation of Squad Leader Mu (a Chinese  
52  
53 soldier who also fought in the same battle) interacting with Ah-mei.  
54

55 <sup>30</sup> Wu Ming-yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, 105-107, 110-111.

56  
57 <sup>31</sup> Butterfly-painting is painting made with butterfly wings. The craftsman makes a sketch of a scenic view or  
58  
59 of a worldly famous artwork, then arranges and attaches butterfly’s wings on the sketch to complete the  
60  
61 painting. Wu Shing-tsz, “Taiwan puli diqu hudie chanye fazhan 台灣埔里地區蝴蝶產業發展 [The  
62  
63 development of butterfly industry in Puli, Taiwan]” (MA thesis, Fong Jia University, 2012), 86-95.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 of hers that nobody knows about is that she can easily sense the pheromones of the male  
5 butterflies.<sup>32</sup> This unusual ability may not immediately strike readers as an important element  
6 that allows the wounded animal beings (i.e. the butterflies) to “speak” directly of their  
7 experience under colonial exploitation. But if we follow the logic of Eduardo Kohn’s  
8 argument that all beings, whether humans or non-humans, *live with and through signs*, we  
9 understand that A-hûn’s physical sensitivity to butterflies’ pheromones is a way to interpret  
10 signs that are produced by these non-human others, hence her ability to “communicate” with  
11 these animals. It is in this sense that one can regard A-hûn’s meta-fictional narrative *as* the  
12 butterflies’ narrative. One can even claim, it is through A-hûn’s body that the butterflies  
13 “voice” their physical suffering under the colonial exploitation.  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 Intrigued by Sabina’s short story, the protagonist of *The Stolen*, Ch’eng, begins to carry  
29 out research into the subject of butterfly-painting in Taiwan, and he discovers that during the  
30 colonial periods the catching of butterflies supported a huge industry involving specimen-  
31 collecting and butterfly-painting. As the protagonist recounts, both Japanese and Taiwanese  
32 traders sold enormous amounts of the processed Taiwanese butterfly specimens to Japanese  
33 entomology researchers.<sup>33</sup> At the highpoint of butterfly exportation, in the post-war era, more  
34 than 500,000 butterflies were sold annually to an American company in just one order.<sup>34</sup> As  
35 the butterfly industry matured over time, more techniques were developed to process powders  
36 made from butterfly scales for imprinting; and a variety of commodities, including kimono  
37 belts, parasols, postcards, porcelains, were imprinted with these powders.<sup>35</sup>  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

---

53 <sup>32</sup> “A-hûn didn’t have to pry a butterfly’s wings apart with a pin to know its sex. This was her secret. She’d  
54 never told anyone that she could smell a male butterfly’s odour. It made her shudder—it was like someone  
55 seize in hold of her, like someone slamming on the brakes.” Wu Ming-yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, 107.  
56  
57

58 <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-110.  
59

60 <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.  
61

62 <sup>35</sup> The imprinting technique for powdered butterfly scales uses resin, a sticky, organic substance abstracted  
63  
64  
65



1  
2  
3  
4 “From the 1960s to the mid-1970s [the KMT colonial period], Taiwan exported tens of  
5 millions of butterflies annually, an important source of foreign currency. P’u-li’s  
6 butterfly habitats suffered as a result, and the local butterfly population declined.  
7  
8 Butterfly businessmen started to look for butterflies further afield, buying in the south  
9 and east of Taiwan, and setting up processing plants in the north to supply the export  
10 market. *A decade later, Taiwan’s butterfly handicrafts, and the butterflies themselves,*  
11 *once ubiquitous in the hills and fields, gradually took their leave of the era and the wild,*  
12 *never to return again.”<sup>36</sup>*  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

23 This metafictional story gives a clear account of the rise and fall of the butterfly industry in  
24 Taiwan as well as a detailed depiction of the cruelty involved in processing the captured  
25 butterflies. Wu’s writing thus shows that the massive colonial and capitalist exploitation of  
26 the natural environment and animal species is an important story that cannot be eliminated  
27 from Taiwanese postcolonial history.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

36 The presence of the elephant in the story occurs first through the tape-recording of  
37 Basuya – a deceased Tsou aboriginal from Taiwan who fought for the Japanese Empire in the  
38 Battle of North Burma. According to Basuya, an elephant herd was valued as good  
39 commodities that the Japanese troop invested for the battle since they have a high tolerance  
40 for extreme weather as well as a nearly impenetrable skin, which prevents them from dying  
41 of gunfire. Ah-mei and the other elephants were therefore deployed to transport supplies for  
42 the battle.<sup>37</sup> These elephants, in Wu’s portrayal, become the paradigmatic wounded animal  
43 reference to demonstrate both the colonial exploitation and the human domination of the  
44 animals.  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56

---

57 from fir or pine trees, as glue to attach butterfly wings to paper. When the resin is completely dry, the  
58 powdered scales of the butterfly will remain on the paper. Ibid., 120.  
59  
60

61 <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 121, emphasis mine.  
62

63 <sup>37</sup> Ibid., 217.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 Basuya is not only a figure who is doubly-colonized, for he was first a Japanese colonial  
5  
6 subject and was then forced to be politically “sinicized” in his home island of Taiwan. At the  
7  
8 same time, his doubly-colonized identity also epitomizes the otherness of these animal beings,  
9  
10 whose narrative is always excluded from our anthropocentric history. Similar to A-hûn,  
11  
12 Basuya is able to “communicate” with the animal other (i.e., Ah-mei) and to feel the  
13  
14 traumatic war experience that is trapped both inside his body and in the body of the animal  
15  
16 other.<sup>38</sup> In his memoir, Basuya states, “[t]hough I’d lost almost all my hearing in my left ear  
17  
18 [during the battle], at night I can often still hear the [voices of the] elephant herd[,] the sound  
19  
20 travelling across the ocean, straight to the village where my body lies sleepless.”<sup>39</sup> This Not  
21  
22 only can Basuya hear the elephants in his dream, at the time of his first encounter with Ah-  
23  
24 mei he was taught to “speak” the elephant language – in words and whistles – by a Karen  
25  
26 elephant trainer from Burma, K’nyaw. In this respect, Basuya’s memory of the war and his  
27  
28 account of its cruelty, which destroys both the human and non-human beings, can be  
29  
30 qualified as a reconstructed postcolonial narrative about Taiwan from a non-anthropocentric  
31  
32 perspective.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

41 In the chapter entitled “Limbo,” Wu depicts both the unconscious and the memories of  
42  
43 elephants (notably that of Ah mei) as present in a dream. The chapter stands out from the  
44  
45 others in the novel because it is the only one that is entirely written from the perspective of  
46  
47 the elephants. Wu’s approach corresponds to what one finds in Kohn’s anthropological-  
48  
49 biosemiotic analysis of the Amazonia Runa Puma tribe, who regard the dream as *the* space  
50  
51 where human being is in contact with the more-than-human world. For the Runa Puma, it is  
52  
53  
54

---

55 <sup>38</sup> Wu has deliberately emphasized on the physical link between Ah-mei the elephant and Basuya, as both  
56  
57 characters are portrayed to have physical defect of impaired hearing.  
58

59 <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 223. Sterk’s translation writes, “... still hear the elephant herd tramping through the jungle...” but a  
60  
61 more literary translation that is closer to Wu’s original Mandarin text is “... still hear the ‘voices’ of the  
62  
63 elephant herd...” hence my modification.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 not only humans that dream, but also non-human ecological others. In line with Kohn's  
5 reasoning, Wu writes, "[t]he elephant acknowledged that pain and fear as its burdens to bear  
6 in this life – *that the life of an elephant was a dream* in which various torments had to be  
7 endured."<sup>40</sup> The reader may thus recognize that it is between dreams and reality, in a liminal  
8 space that resembles limbo, that the elephants come to narrate us their story. Sadly, it is also  
9 in dream that the young elephant, Ah-mei, questions his involvement in the brutal colonial  
10 war.<sup>41</sup>

11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21 Living through wars and then undertaking a long journey of migration—from Burma to  
22 Mainland China then to Taiwan—, these psychologically tormented and physically exhausted  
23 creatures narrate their rage, anger and despair that are associated with the colonial war time.  
24 Watching his mother died, Wu describes that Ah-mei has become almost emotionless and  
25 unresponsive.<sup>42</sup> Yet, this suppressed traumatic experience does not escape him. According to  
26 Wu, "[b]ut the elephant would sometimes resent its memory and its ability to sense what  
27 fellow elephants were experiencing. At certain moments of the day, the elephant would  
28 helplessly return to the painful war."<sup>43</sup> Later, in his old age, when Ah-mei is kept in the  
29 Yuanshan zoo, the zookeepers notice that he is often emotionally unstable and behaves  
30 aggressively. For the veterinarians who know little about Ah-mei's past, the diagnosis is that  
31 Ah-mei experiences experiencing irregular periods of musth (i.e. the rise of the reproductive  
32 hormone in male elephant). But for those who know more about Ah-mei's history, like Squad  
33 Leader Mu, Ah-mei is "traumatized, haunted by the painful memories he'd carried around for  
34 many years in the depths of his mind."<sup>44</sup> Thanks to Wu's non-anthropocentric narration, one

---

35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 299, emphasis mine.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 300-301.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 286.

1  
2  
3  
4 comes to understand that it is not only the human beings (i.e. the soldiers and their family)  
5  
6 that must endure memories of the colonial past; the animal others are also incapable of  
7  
8 escaping such haunting memories, and for the rest of their lives.  
9

### 10 11 The underrepresented “colonial others” 12

13  
14 In Wu’s works, specific types of underrepresented “colonial others” are also mentioned,  
15  
16 and their stories are *re*-presented via the non-human agents. The term, “colonial others,” as it  
17  
18 is employed here, should not be construed as an alterity or an otherness that the colonials try  
19  
20 to decipher, construct, or fixate on in the colonized, and thus as the sort of stereotype of  
21  
22 colonial discourse criticized by Homi Bhabha.<sup>45</sup> Instead, the word, “others,” must be  
23  
24 understood in much the same way as in the concept of ecological “others” outlined above,  
25  
26 where it designates the state of being marginalized. The “colonial others” refer to specific  
27  
28 types of populations whose relations to the colonial regimes have traditionally been  
29  
30 overlooked and unquestioned. To be more specific, the colonial others are those settlers, who  
31  
32 at some point represented or served the colonial regimes, but whose service to the regimes  
33  
34 does not come from a sense of loyalty or belief in the colonial cause. Like the colonized  
35  
36 subalterns, these colonizers are simply *subjects* of the colonial regimes. In the particular  
37  
38 colonial context of Taiwan and in Wu Ming-yi’s novels, the colonial settlers comprise both (1)  
39  
40 the Han Chinese migrants, who have settled in Taiwan since Qing government’s rule over  
41  
42 Taiwan (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century), and (2) the Japanese soldiers, who participated in the  
43  
44 colonial war in the Pacific and were obliged to serve the Japanese Emperor. These colonial  
45  
46 settlers, in some respects, qualify both as the exploiters and the exploited, but their narratives  
47  
48 are often regarded as insignificant, and they are thus excluded from postcolonial writings. In  
49  
50 order to tell their stories, they must first *become* non-human beings, which is why in Wu’s  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

---

61  
62 <sup>45</sup> Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse,” *Visual Culture: The Reader*,  
63  
64 ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publication, 2005), 70.  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 novel they undergo a process of metamorphosis and turn into animals. However, one should  
5  
6 note that this “becoming animal” is not associated with the negative meaning that Fanon  
7  
8 criticizes as a process of de-humanism. On the contrary, this becoming is charged with a  
9  
10 positive meaning. Acquiring a non-anthropocentric standpoint through the process of  
11  
12 metamorphosis, the “colonial others” come to understand their ties with the land, the people,  
13  
14 and the natural environment they once exploited, and thus also the need to seek reconciliation.  
15  
16  
17

18  
19 In *The Stolen*, the stories of the underrepresented “colonial others” are not only re-  
20  
21 presented from a non-anthropocentric perspective, but they are unfolded in a *magical realist*  
22  
23 moment in which human and animal (and also animal hybrid) encounter each other. Old Tsou,  
24  
25 a retired “Chinese” Kuomintang military man, shares similar traits to the communication skill  
26  
27 with animal being like the Karen elephant trainer. Everywhere he goes, Old Tsou carries  
28  
29 around a light-vented bulbul<sup>46</sup> that always stands on his shoulder. The bird does not utter a  
30  
31 word, but according to Old Tsou, he understands the bird’s twittering, and this is why he  
32  
33 knows that the bird is the incarnation of a dead Japanese soldier who died accidentally in a  
34  
35 bombardment rather than during his military service.<sup>47</sup> Taking into the account the political  
36  
37 position that Old Tsou identifies himself with (i.e. being a “Chinese” veteran who once  
38  
39 fought against the Japanese soldiers), it is surprising that Old Tsou makes peace with the little  
40  
41 bulbul, in which the dead Japanese soldier’s spirit inhabits.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 I [Old Tsou] always felt that Japs were savages — heartless brutes. ... I hate that Jap  
49  
50 devil’s guts, and I’ve tried everything to get rid of him [the Chinese bulbul]. I hire some  
51  
52 Taoist master to perform a ceremony, even hung up a crucifix, but nothing worked. So I  
53  
54 just let him stay and do what he wants. He doesn’t take up any space or bother me  
55  
56 anyway, just perches on my shoulder or snuggles into the goggles on the shelf. I was  
57  
58  
59  
60

---

61 <sup>46</sup> Also known as Chinese bulbul, a small bird that is commonly found in the North East Asia.

62 <sup>47</sup> Wu Ming-yi, *The Stolen Bicycle*, 80-81.  
63  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 going to throw them out, those goggles, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to do it.<sup>48</sup>  
5

6  
7 As Old Tsou states that he could not bring himself to throw the goggles out, in a sense, the  
8  
9 metamorphosis of this Japanese "colonial other" and the creature's attachment to Old Tsou  
10  
11 eventually allow a reconciliation to happen. One possible reading of this event is: by  
12  
13 assuming the position of a non-human, the Japanese "colonial other" understands that his  
14  
15 second life must be about making amends and about co-existing with those he previously  
16  
17 exploited or was at war with.  
18  
19

20  
21 Another moment of reconciliation occurs when the bird further requests Old Tsou to go  
22  
23 on an investigation journey on his behalf at a ruined tunnel filled up with water at a deserted  
24  
25 countryside building.<sup>49</sup> As the story develops, Old Tsou convinced his friend, Abbas  
26  
27 (Basuya's son), to accompany him and inspect the water-filled tunnel with diving gears. In  
28  
29 the tunnel, Old Tsou and Abbas come across a school of disfigured fish-men. These fish-men,  
30  
31 as Abbas describes, hold various sorts of traditional Chinese weapons in their hands, and  
32  
33 some of them were even armed with agricultural implements, like hoes, scythes, shovels and  
34  
35 rakes.<sup>50</sup> From Abbas' description, readers know that these fish-men are in fact the Han  
36  
37 Chinese colonial settlers who came to Taiwan prior to the Japanese colonization and had  
38  
39 defended their "homeland" against the Japanese colonialists. Their torn skin and flesh and  
40  
41 their pinkish wounds say much about their suffering during war time. The request of the  
42  
43 bulbul bird tells us that a reconciliation must be achieved and the buried stories (as the fish-  
44  
45 men live in the underground tunnel) of these Han Chinese "farmer-soldiers" finally told.  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53 When Abbas and Old Tsou come out of the water, Abbas bursts into tears, for he is shattered  
54  
55  
56  
57

58  
59 \_\_\_\_\_  
60 <sup>48</sup> Ibid., 80.

61 <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 82-86.

62 <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 90.  
63  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 by the overwhelming emotions stirred up by these disfigured human-animal hybrids.<sup>51</sup> His  
5  
6 crying symbolizes in a way that there are still many hidden memories about the sufferings of  
7  
8 these “colonial others” that are yet to be recounted.  
9

### 10 **Re-shaping the history of Taiwan from an ecological perspective**

11  
12  
13  
14 So far, the article has shown how Wu Ming-yi succeeds in giving voices to the non-  
15  
16 human animals, thus allowing them to “speak” of their memories and experiences of  
17  
18 suffering related to the exploitation characteristic of the colonial periods. This final section  
19  
20 concludes the present article by introducing an example of a non-animal ecological being,  
21  
22 found in Wu’s *Shuimian*, and which makes it possible to re-fashion the postcolonial narrative  
23  
24 of Taiwan. As Gwennaël Gaffric points out, the *mise en scène* of animals or of “animal-  
25  
26 becoming” has over time come to play an increasingly significant role in many postcolonial  
27  
28 works of literature; but in Wu’s postcolonial writings, this “becoming” goes beyond animals  
29  
30 and is further extended to plants and ecosystems.<sup>52</sup> It has often been imagined that it is from  
31  
32 the soil that humans first arose. Citing a surreal dream of the narrator in *Shuimian*, in which  
33  
34 plants and vegetation grow out of human bodies, Gaffric suggests that for Wu the relation can  
35  
36 sometimes be the other way round, for Wu thinks that “humans can [also] be the soil that  
37  
38 nourishes many other organisms.”<sup>53</sup>  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

45  
46 Undeniably, reconciliation is one of the important themes that is evoked in Wu’s certain  
47  
48 portrayals of the animal agents. Indeed, the theme of reconciliation is not something new to  
49  
50 contemporary postcolonial works. Chen Yu-hui’s *Haishen*, for instance, also underlines the  
51  
52 theme of reconciliation through the union of a marriage.<sup>54</sup> However, what distinguishes Wu’s  
53  
54

---

55 <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 90.

56  
57 <sup>52</sup> Gwennaël Gaffric, *La Littérature à l’ère de l’Anthropocène* (Le Pré-Saint-Gervais: L’Asiathèque, 2018),  
58  
59 250-260.

60  
61 <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 258; Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian*, p. 116

62  
63  
64 <sup>54</sup> Chen Yu-hui, *Haishen jiazu*, 315-319.  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 discussion of reconciliation is directly associated to his attentiveness to non-human beings.  
5  
6  
7 As a matter of fact, at the bottom of Wu's attempt to give voices to non-humans, is not the  
8  
9 aim of achieving "a reconciliation" within the postcolonial society of Taiwan. Human beings  
10  
11 are moral actors who are able to entertain the possibility of reconciliation among themselves.  
12  
13  
14 But, for Wu, faced with a nearly extinct species (e.g. the butterfly example in *The Stolen*  
15  
16 *Bicycle*) or a destroyed natural environment (e.g., the river in 家離水邊那麼近 *Jia li*  
17  
18 *shuibian name jin* [So much water so close to home] (2007)<sup>55</sup>) caused by violent colonial  
19  
20 exploitation, no reconciliation can be made between humans and non-humans. What is more  
21  
22 critical, as Wu's writings remind us, is *a co-habitation with* non-humans. By opening and  
23  
24 concluding his works with the "narrative" of an ecological other, like a bamboo forest, the  
25  
26 non-human agents become the root and the context in which a non-anthropocentric  
27  
28 postcolonial history of Taiwan is able to "grow."  
29  
30  
31  
32

33  
34 *Shuimian* is known as Wu's first postcolonial novel. Rather than beginning the book by  
35  
36 recounting the historical events of the colonial periods, as many others have done, Wu  
37  
38 chooses to start with his protagonist's discussion of a type of bamboo, Usawa Cane.<sup>56</sup> The  
39  
40 bamboo introduced in the prelude in many respects represents Wu's ecological interpretation  
41  
42 of Taiwan's colonial and postcolonial society. As Wu writes, the stalks of bamboo produce  
43  
44 rhizomes underground, and they reproduce by means of these underground rhizomes.  
45  
46 Technically speaking, bamboos reproduce asexually. However, for bamboos to flower, it  
47  
48 requires sexual reproduction. The flowering cycle could be very irregular from species to  
49  
50 species, but normally once the bamboos have flowered, they die. One explanation for this  
51  
52 peculiar phenomenon, highlighted in Wu's text, is that the flowering is in fact the bamboo's  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

---

58  
59 <sup>55</sup> Wu Ming-yi, 家離水邊那麼近 *Jia li shuibian name jin* [So much water so close to home] (Taipei: Eryu  
60  
61 wenhua, 2007).

62  
63 <sup>56</sup> Wu Ming-yi, *Shuimian de hangxian*, 20.  
64  
65



1  
2  
3  
4 “migratory strategy.”<sup>57</sup> Whilst the bamboos that flower eventually die, the wind *carries their*  
5 *seeds away from where they are and disseminate the population elsewhere.* Without  
6  
7 undermining the violence embodied in colonization, this migratory strategy exemplifies Wu’s  
8  
9 understanding of the legacies left behind in the postcolonial society of Taiwan, in terms of its  
10  
11 population diversity, cultural dynamics, or language complexity. A specific symbolic  
12  
13 reference to bamboo that is associated with these ethnic, cultural or linguistic multiplicities is  
14  
15 shown in Wu’s account of Tik-á tshù [bamboo village].  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21 Before the mall was built, people came to this town [Taipei] looking for work, doing  
22  
23 business, and they improvised their own houses at Tik-á tshù [bamboo village]. Some of  
24  
25 them came here because they had given up their lands in the countryside, some came  
26  
27 here because they had failed their business ventures elsewhere, and others came with the  
28  
29 military troops of the Kuomintang army. ... That’s why there were people who talked in  
30  
31 Japanese, dialects of Fuzhou and Sandong<sup>58</sup>, and sometimes even in aboriginal Amis  
32  
33 language. [...] Although people could not communicate in one single language, with  
34  
35 some guessing of each other’s words and expressions, every one of them seemed to  
36  
37 learn a little bit of the others’ languages. [...] [E]verybody spoke a sort of “mixed  
38  
39 language” like the “vegetable noodle stir fry” made and sold by the Cantonese guy on  
40  
41 the second floor.<sup>59</sup>  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 Bamboo is therefore chosen as the non-human agent that allows us to reconstruct  
49  
50 Taiwanese postcolonial narrative, for its qualities of resilience, regeneration and co-  
51  
52 habitation. Towards the end of the novel, Wu writes,  
53  
54

55 The underground rhizomes of the bamboo forest are intertwined. They feed each other,  
56

57 Ibid., 22.

58 Fuzhou and Sandong both are provinces in mainland China, the former is situated in the South East and the  
59  
60 latter is at the North East.  
61

62  
63  
64  
65  
<sup>59</sup> Ming-yi Wu, *Shuimian de hangxian*, 86-87.

1  
2  
3  
4 and they grow together as one. However, above the ground, they appear as individual  
5  
6 entities that are unrelated to one another. If one begins to flower, the rest will flower. If  
7  
8 one dies, the rest eventually die as well. Nonetheless, I [the protagonist] later realize, not  
9  
10 all the bamboos die after they flowered. *There are always one or two of them which live*  
11  
12 *on with its resilience. They grow new shoots, and occupy the place where the other dead*  
13  
14 *ones did not manage to live.*<sup>60</sup>  
15  
16  
17

18  
19 As a metaphor, one can read the dying of the bamboos in multiple ways. On the one hand,  
20  
21 they represent the colonized people who survived traumatic war experiences and hardship.  
22  
23 On the other, they also refer directly to the highly exploited non-human species or natural  
24  
25 environment. While reconciliation may be difficult to find with non-humans, Wu's text  
26  
27 suggests that we are, to a large extent, still interconnected with them, like the rhizomes that  
28  
29 grow underground. The passage informs us of the imagined narrative that Wu thinks it is  
30  
31 most important for postcolonial Taiwanese society to adopt —*a narrative that lays out way to*  
32  
33 *co-habit and move forward with what has been left behind*, regardless of whether it is with  
34  
35 people, animals, or the environment.  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

## 41 5. Conclusion

42  
43  
44 Through scrutinizing the literary works of Wu Ming-yi, one comes to understand that his  
45  
46 attempt to offer an ecocritical turn in postcolonial Taiwanese literature is both radical and  
47  
48 significant. With his non-human others, Wu's works have successfully demonstrated the  
49  
50 agency of non-human beings in re-shaping Taiwan's postcolonial narrative from a non-  
51  
52 anthropocentric point of view. In fact, Wu's approach can be considered to make an original  
53  
54 contribution to postcolonial writing both domestically (in Taiwan) and globally. As I have  
55  
56 argued, postcolonial literary texts or critical analyses that integrate discussions of the agency  
57  
58 of animals (e.g., Amitav Gosh's *The Hungry Tide* or Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*) and  
59  
60  
61  
62

---

63 <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 279, emphasis mine.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 embody ethical questioning about the exploitation of animals are not rare to find. Nonetheless,  
5  
6 *non-animal types of ecological beings* are often absent these texts and analyses. In  
7  
8 contemporary literature, writings that pay specific attention to non-animal ecological beings  
9  
10 thrive in the niches of nature writing or climate fiction, they have remained little explored in  
11  
12 postcolonial literature. In Taiwan, although ecocriticism was first introduced as a discipline in  
13  
14 the context of postcolonial studies<sup>61</sup>, its development over the last two decades has not  
15  
16 witnessed significant growth at the point of encounter between postcolonial analysis and non-  
17  
18 human agency. In *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment and the Arts* (2016), the  
19  
20 first English-language collection that aims to illustrate Taiwan's contribution to international  
21  
22 ecocriticism, other than Huang I-ming's postcolonial perspective on Taiwanese mountain and  
23  
24 river literature, studies of Taiwanese eco-literature which value the agency of nonhumans  
25  
26 generally maintain their focus on climate fiction or nature writing.<sup>62</sup> As the present paper has  
27  
28 shown, a re-construction of Taiwan's postcolonial narrative or a re-imagination of its  
29  
30 postcolonial history via the "voices" of the nonhumans – especially the non-animal ecological  
31  
32 beings — thus remains insufficiently exploited. This is also why the article argues that Wu  
33  
34 Ming-yi's postcolonial works, which foreground nonhuman "voices," can be seen to possess  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43

---

44  
45 <sup>61</sup> The earliest introduction of ecocriticism occurred in Taiwan when National Taiwan University's *Chung-*  
46  
47 *wai Literary Monthly* published a special issue devoted to eco-literature and postcolonialism in 1995. Two  
48  
49 years afterwards, the university also organized a conference on ecology and postcolonialism. Chang Chia-ju  
50  
51 and Scott Slovic, "Introduction," *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment and the Arts* (London:  
52  
53 Lexington Books, 2016), Kindle edition.  
54

55 <sup>62</sup> For instance, Chang Ya-lan's article offers original insight on the agency and "voices" of nature and  
56  
57 matters (e.g. mountains, tsunami, earthquakes, trash vortex), but her selected text for analysis is Wu Ming-  
58  
59 yi's climate fiction, 複眼人 *Fuyen ren* [The Man with the Compound Eyes] (2011), which has not taken the  
60  
61 postcolonial approach into consideration. Equally, Lee Yu-lin's developed concept of "animal-becoming" in  
62  
63 the same collection mainly draws upon examples of Liu Ke-xiang's natural writing about birds.  
64  
65

1  
2  
3  
4 a unique quality, for it offers a new landscape and an alternative path for the general  
5  
6 development of postcolonial writing, be it in Taiwan or elsewhere.  
7  
8

9 Considered a rising star in the Taiwanese literary field, Wu's recent fictional works have  
10  
11 achieved a huge success in Taiwan and have begun to receive readers' attention overseas,  
12  
13 especially *The Stolen Bicycle*, which was longlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize in  
14  
15 2018. The reason for this recognition of his works is no doubt related to the way his writings  
16  
17 have enabled the voices of non-human beings to speak to his readers<sup>63</sup> One can thus claim  
18  
19 that Wu's popularity is not merely a historical contingency but a result of the environmental  
20  
21 perspective that he has deliberately introduced into the genre of the postcolonial novel.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

---

53  
54 <sup>63</sup> As Chiu Kuei-fen notes in her recent publication, the reception and comments of Wu's works from the  
55  
56 international readers often highlight the key words of "spiritual," "beautiful," "fantastical," "stunning," and  
57  
58 "heartbreaking." These key words thus imply that the appeal of Wu's works to his readers is associated to his  
59  
60 writing technique, which renders the non-human beings vivid and lively in front of readers' eyes. Chiu Kuei-  
61  
62 fen, "Worlding 'World Literature' from the Periphery: Four Taiwanese Models," *Modern Chinese Literature*  
63  
64 *and Culture* 30. 1 (2018), 26.  
65

1  
2  
3  
4       **References**  
5

- 6  
7 Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History*, trans. Liz Heron (London and New York: Verso,  
8       2007).  
9  
10 Bhabha, Homi. “The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse,” *Visual*  
11       *Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publication, 2005).  
12  
13 Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press,  
14       2008).  
15  
16 Chagani, Fayaz. “Can the Postcolonial Animal Speak?” *Society & Animals* 24 (2016): 619-  
17       637.  
18  
19 Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,” *New*  
20       *Literary History* 43, no. 1, (2012): 1-18.  
21  
22 Chang, Chia-ju and Scott Slovic. “Introduction,” *Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity,*  
23       *Environment and the Arts* (London: Lexington Books, 2016), Kindle edition.  
24  
25 Chen, Fang-ming. “Lishi rumeng—xu Wu mingyi *Shuimian de hangxian* 歷史如夢 序吳明  
26       益《睡眠的航線》 [History as a dream—Introducing Wu Mingyi’s *Shuimian de*  
27       *hangxian*],” *Shuimian de hangxian* 睡眠的航線 [Routes in the dream] (Taipei: Eryu  
28       wenhua, 2007), 9.  
29  
30 Chen, Fang-ming. *Taiwan xin wenxue shi* 台灣新文學史 [A History of Modern Taiwanese  
31       Literature] (Taipei: Lianjin chubanshe, 2011).  
32  
33 Chen, Yu-hui. *Haishen jiazu* 海神家族 [Mazu’s bodyguards] (Taipei: Ink chuban, 2009).  
34  
35 Ching, Leo. “Review of *Orphan of Asia*,” MCLC Resource Center, February 2007, accessed  
36       22 May 2019, <http://u.osu.edu/mclc/book-reviews/orphan-of-asia/>.  
37  
38 Chiu, Kuei-fen. “Worlding ‘World Literature’ from the Periphery: Four Taiwanese Models,”  
39       *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 30.1 (2018): 13-41.  
40  
41 Christen, Yves. *L’animal est-il une personne?* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011).  
42  
43 Coetzee, J.M. *Elizabeth Costello* (Croydon: Vintage, 2004).  
44  
45 DeLoughrey, Elizabeth and George B. Handley. “Introduction: Toward and Aesthetic of the  
46       Earth,” *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. Elizabeth  
47       DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).  
48  
49 Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills, ed. Marie-Louise  
50       Mallet (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).  
51  
52 Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press,  
53       2004).  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65

- 1  
2  
3  
4 Gaffric, Gwennaël. *La Littérature à l'ère de l'Anthropocène* (Le Pré-Saint-Gervais:  
5 L'Asiathèque, 2018).  
6  
7  
8 Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals,*  
9 *Environment.* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010).  
10  
11 Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley  
12 and London: University of California Press, 2013).  
13  
14  
15 Pepperberg, Irene. *Alex Studies. Cognitive and Communicative Abilities of Grey Parrots*  
16 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).  
17  
18  
19 Premack, David. *Animal Intelligence in Ape and Man* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaume  
20 Associates Inc., 1976).  
21  
22  
23 Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota  
24 Pres, 2010).  
25  
26 Wu Ming-yi. *Danche shiqieji 單車失竊記*[The Stolen Bicycle], (Taipei: Miatian chuban,  
27 2015).  
28  
29  
30 Wu, Ming-yi. *Jia li shuibian name jin 家離水邊那麼近* [So much water so close to home]  
31 (Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2007).  
32  
33  
34 Wu, Ming-yi. *Shuimian de hangxian 睡眠的航線* [Routes in a Dream], (Taipei: Eryu wenhua,  
35 2007).  
36  
37  
38 Wu, Ming-yi. *The Stolen Bicycle*, trans. Darryl Sterk (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017).  
39  
40 Wu, Shing-tsz. “Taiwan puli diqu hudie chanye fazhan 台灣埔里地區蝴蝶產業發展 [The  
41 development of butterfly industry in Puli, Taiwan],” (MA thesis, Fong Jia University,  
42 2012).  
43  
44  
45 Wu, Zhuo-liu. *Yaxiya guer 亞細亞孤兒* [Orphan of Asia] (Taipei: caogen chuban, 1995).  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65